

END OF AN ERA

CAFFE PERGOLESİ TO CLOSE AUG. 26

Bus-C 8.12.17



PHOTOS BY DAN COYRO — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Caffe Pergolesi, which offered a one-of-a-kind experience in downtown Santa Cruz, will close as owner Karl Heiman said he's been unable to renew his lease and transients hanging out around the building hurts business.

Owner cites loss of lease for landmark coffeehouse, transient drug use nearby

By Jondi Gumz

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SANTA CRUZ » Amanda Edwards walked up to the counter at Caffe Pergolesi on Friday morning and asked the manager, "Is it true?"

Yes, said Hiram Coffee, 30, who has worked at Caffe Pergolesi for 12 years, and will be one of 10 employees out of a job after the coffeehouse closes Aug. 26.

Edwards, 30, is a regular. She said she's been coming to Pergolesi since she was 12.

"There's nothing else like it in Santa Cruz," she said, taking a seat on a plush sofa. "This is devastating ... I wish there was a way we could get together, if we

could all sign something, telling why this is important. It's a community front porch."

Indeed, the Victorian building, once the dental office of Dr. J.P. Miller, has a wrap-around porch.

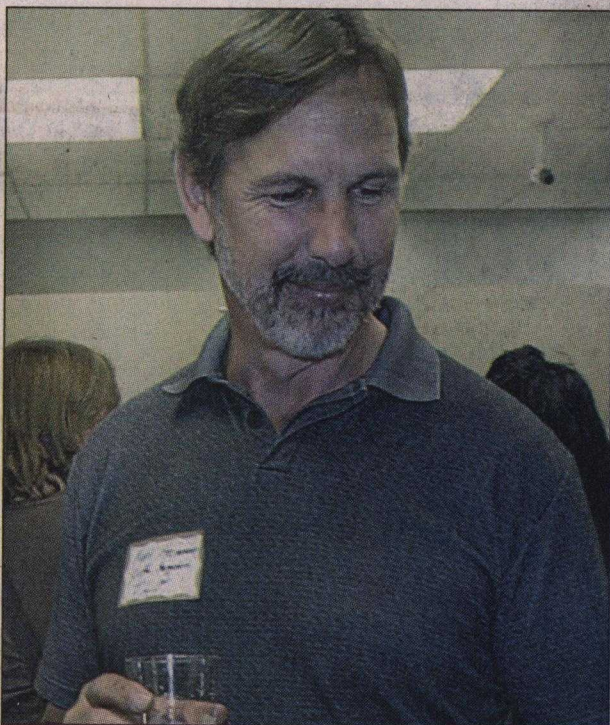
The brick patio is spacious; the landscaping lush.

Inside, the style is eclectic: Stained-glass lampshades, comfy sofas and church pews, a sunflower print and a Marilyn Monroe photo.

Caffe Pergolesi, founded in 1971, has been at 418 Cedar St. since 1986.

"Unfortunately it's the end of an era that had a great run, but this was the only solution I had," said owner Karl Heiman, who bought the business with his wife Nellie 14 years ago.

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Caffe Pergolesi owner Karl Heiman says he's closing the longtime downtown Santa Cruz cafe Aug. 26 with 1973 prices on the last day.

Caffe

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He gave three reasons for closing: The landlord declined to renew his lease, too much competition and transients on the sidewalks scaring customers away.

"Multiple calls to the police daily by us and letters to the mayor and City Council have not helped," he said. "Hope the new police chief can fix this before more businesses go."

Mayor Cynthia Chase said, "I'm sad to hear this is the situation. This is a loss of a longtime business."

She said she saw "perhaps one letter" from Heiman, noting complaints also came in about individuals selling drugs out of the cafe, which prompted an undercover operation that led to an arrest.

"Disrespectful behavior is a challenge many businesses downtown are facing," she said. "We need to find a way to be responsive to that. There are many more unhoused people, and we don't have resources to change that right now."

Around the corner from Caffe Pergolesi is the Elm Street Mission, which has been helping the homeless and hurting of Santa Cruz since 1972 with a focus on people bound by addictions or mental illness.

"I feel for the owner of Pergolesi," said Pastor Mike Crane of Elm Street Mission. "Since they cleaned the levee, people moved down to this neighborhood. People have to go somewhere."

Crane said the mission feeds and clothes people.

"Most people are kind and friendly," he added. "Some are hard to deal with ... We're constantly cleaning our front steps. Things are thrown into our mailbox. Our neighbor gated his porch."

Across the street at Spokesman Bicycles, owner Wade Hall said he's seen "20 rough-looking guys standing there, sitting around," with problems getting worse recently.

"I just put on expanding metal gates to stop them breaking in at night," he said.

Hall said he power-washes the property in the back to flush away urine.

"It's a drug problem ... people dealing drugs, hanging out, being extremely unpleasant," he said. "I want to see moms with baby strollers walking downtown ... It could be so much better."

Asked about calls for police to 418 Cedar St. in the past couple years, Santa Cruz police spokeswoman Joyce Blaschke said there have been 1,015 calls since 2010. Year-by-year data was not available Friday.

"Homeless people have



DAN COYRO — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Transients outside Caffe Pergolesi have hurt business, owner Karl Heiman said.

the same constitutional rights as anyone else, and that means working with them to get off the street is the best way to get them off the streets," Blaschke said.

For decades, the Pergolesi property was owned by Stan and Sandra Mock, who bought the Hinds Victorian guest house downtown in 1981, renovated it and got it on the National Register of Historic Places.

Since Stan Mock died in 2013 at age 81, the property

has been in the hands of his widow.

Heiman said the Mock's children who have been managing the business declined to renew the lease. Attempts to reach them were not successful.

"Without a solid lease, I don't see how Caffe Pergolesi could continue," said Teresa Thomae, who heads the Santa Cruz Small Business Development Center, calling Pergolesi "a destination, legacy business,"

much like Logos, the used book store downtown that plans to close after 48 years.

Pergolesi has a dozen employees, most working there three to six years, said Heiman, a co-founder of Think Local First Santa Cruz County, noting, "12 or so local suppliers will lose our business."

He said two Pergolesi employees will move to Mr. Toots Coffeehouse in Capitola, which he owns.

Heiman and his wife

POLICE TIPS

The Santa Cruz Police Department recommends property owners file a form annually with the department authorizing enforcement action against trespassers.

Step 1: Police educate violators and then provides alternate avenues for food, clothing, shelter and other assistance.

Step 2: Repeat offenses may result in citations and arrests.

Advice for loitering:

- Take action when you first observe a potential problem.
- Post "no loitering" signs.
- Join Business Watch to alert fellow business owners to suspicious activities and crime patterns.

Source: SCPD spokeswoman Joyce Blaschke

bought Pergolesi from the Matthews brothers, who took over from the Ma family, who bought it in 1978. The founders, in 1971, named the business for an Italian composer, Giovanni Pergolesi, according to a 1986 Sentinel story.

On Aug. 26, Heiman plans to offer everything at 1973 prices, "kind of a give back to our loyal customers and the community."

He said he'll focus on his other businesses "and probably start another business."