# Building begins on key downtown lot

PACIFIC AVE.

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SANTA CRUZ — Golden garden shovels. Champagne. Hobnobbing with city leaders. If it's in downtown Santa Cruz, it must be a ground-breaking.

In the dirt-turning spotlight Monday was the old Trust Building site, where work is expected to begin today on a four-story retail/office/residential complex that's the brainchild of Redtree Properties.

The 88,000-square-foot structure, which will be named the 1200 Pacific Avenue Building in a nod to the San Francisco style of naming buildings after their address, is expected to be finished next spring.

"This is not only such a key (downtown) site ... but also the building we had before was a beautiful one," said Mayor Cynthia Mathews, explaining the importance of the rebuilding project. "The

wonderful thing about the replacement is that it also is a beautiful building."

Monday's event included the usual ceremonial spade-turning (with special garden shovels that will be donated to the Homeless Garden Project along with a $1,000 check from Redtree), and also a champagne "christening."

Mathews broke a bottle of champagne on a grader that will be used to prepare the dirt lot for construction of the long-awaited replacement of the historic Trust Building.

The site, on the corner of Pacific and Soquel avenues, is one of the few large holes left downtown in the wake of the devastating 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

The turn-of-the-century Trust Building survived the quake with substantial, but repairable, dam-

Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Mayor Cynthia Mathews smashes a bottle of champagne.

## Downtown site under construction

*Continued from Page A1*

age. The Kett family, which then owned the property, said they intended to restore the red-brick, three-story building. But a 1992 fire finished what the quake had started, and the building was torn down that spring.

Redtree Properties, a local family-owned company, bought the long-vacant property in late 1996, and sailed through the city-approval process once the group unveiled its building plans for the site earlier this year.

"This was more than fast-tracked," said John Tremoulis, Redtree's chief operating officer, before the ground-breaking ceremony. "I'm totally impressed. ... I don't know anywhere in the country where you can do it this fast."

Since the City Council approved a downtown-wide rebuilding plan after the earthquake, replacement

buildings routinely have been given special priority in the Planning Department. That's because the goal has been to rebuild downtown as quickly as possible, and that includes providing incentives to developers.

"It's a critical site," said Ceil Cirillo, executive director of the city's Redevelopment Agency. "It is one of the critical parcels that link northern Pacific Avenue merchants to those in the southern part of Pacific Avenue." The building, which was designed by the San Francisco architectural firm of Tanner Leddy Maytum and Stacy in association with local architect Gary Garmann, will feature natural brick, stone, glass and metal in a contemporary design that also incorporates more traditional features.

The building will have retail stores on the ground floor, with two floors of office above. Tremou-

lis said Monday afternoon that Redtree is in the final stages of negotiating a lease with a major office tenant that will occupy two-thirds of one floor.

The rest of the building has not been leased, but Tremoulis said during the ground-breaking ceremony that the Redtree partners wanted to move forward anyway because they have confidence in downtown's recovery.

"They said, 'We believe in downtown Santa Cruz. ... Don't worry if we're going to get tenants. Don't worry if we're going to get financing. Just get it done,'" said Tremoulis.

One of the most unusual aspects of the $7 million building is its top floor, which will feature 20 mostly one-bedroom apartments. The apartments, which will rent for market rates (hovering around $1,000 a month), especially pleased the City Council.