

New downtown site for UCSC

UCSC - Growth

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Revitalization: The building, which offers off-campus housing, replaces stores crumbled by the Loma Prieta quake.

BY JOHN WOOLFOLK
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The University of California-Santa Cruz on Monday celebrated the construction of its first off-campus housing, a downtown building erected from the rubble of a department store that fell during the Loma Prieta earthquake 10 years ago.

The ribbon-cutting was a milestone for

both the university's growth and the city's recovery from the disaster.

"This building is a concrete example — literally — of the revitalization of downtown Santa Cruz, which we very much want to be a part of," said M.R.C. Greenwood, the university's chancellor. "We're celebrating today the arrival of a UC-Santa Cruz physical presence in the heart of Santa Cruz. It does

represent a kind of integral involvement in the community."

The five-story, \$13 million University Town Center at the corner of Pacific Avenue and Cathcart Street was constructed by San Jose builder Barry Swenson and is co-owned by the San-



Greenwood

ta Cruz Seaside Company, operator of the boardwalk amusement park. It was completed in September.

The building rose from the site of the former Ford's department store and Plaza Books shop. Both crumbled in the 6.9 magnitude earthquake on Oct. 17, 1989, killing a Ford's shopper and leaving a gaping wound in the downtown district that took a decade to fill. To the dismay of neighboring merchants, the empty lot become a gathering ground for vagrants and drug dealers before construction on the new building began in

June 1998.

"Ten years ago, this site, and the rest of the mall, looked like hell," said Bill Tysseling, chairman of the Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce board of directors. "It's a miracle to see it done."

UC has signed a 10-year lease for the building. UC-Santa Cruz Extension, a non-profit, continuing-education program currently leasing space from another Swenson building downtown, will occupy the second floor.

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UC-Santa Cruz gets downtown site

UC-SANTA CRUZ

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The top two floors have 54 apartments that can house up to 106 students. They provide living quarters both for regularly enrolled students and those in university extension's English Language International program, which provides courses in English proficiency. No parking is provided for the students, but they can either take the bus or buy a city parking permit for a car.

The third floor is being leased as offices, the second floor will house classrooms and the ground floor will be available for retail space. Project manager Chris Mahoney said Swenson is still negotiating with prospective tenants, and would not say who they are.

Students living in the new apartments said they like being close to the bustle of activity downtown, a refreshing change from the seclusion of the campus on a hilltop overlooking the city.

"It brings you back to the community a little more, instead of being up on a hill," said Erika Crenshaw, 21, a junior majoring in community studies who lived at the campus's Oakes College for the last two years and now has a fourth-floor apartment at the center.

Virginia Ripley, a 19-year-old sophomore majoring in literature, said she likes being close to

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shopping and the ability to get to class in 20 minutes by bus.

"The location is very convenient," Ripley said. "It's right near supermarkets and everything, and the Metro center is across the street."

Ripley added that she doesn't find downtown too noisy.

"This town goes to sleep early," Ripley said.

University Town Center is the first off-campus housing project built for and managed by the university, said Gesna Clarke, assistant director of housing, dining and marketing at UC-Santa Cruz.

UC-Santa Cruz provides housing for about half its 11,300 students — more than any other UC campus. But with the high cost and limited availability of rentals in town, and with campus officials expecting 4,000 more students by 2005, housing is in great demand, Clarke said.

The university is planning two new residen-

tial colleges that together will provide beds for about 1,500 more students on campus. The first project, College 9 Apartments, will house 280 and is expected to be completed in a year.

Meanwhile, housing has been so tight that the university a few years ago negotiated with 21 local motels to provide month-to-month rentals for students during the off-season. This year, university officials added the Holiday Inn with a deal to house 81 students off campus.

The New Town Center also will allow university extension to expand its Santa Cruz programs, formerly located in the Galleria building on Front Street, which had five classrooms. UC-Extension will keep a registration office at the Galleria and move the rest of its operation into the new building, which has eight classrooms, a computer lab and student lounge.

The UC-Santa Cruz extension program, which served 52,000 students in the past year, also has facilities at the former Fort Ord in Marina and in four locations in Santa Clara County.

Terri Spice, marketing director for UC-Extension, said that in addition to providing more room to grow, the new center will for the first time allow the program's international students to live alongside regularly enrolled students.

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