

EARTHQUAKE '89 - Santa Cruz County
- Rebuilding

Aptos Village Re-Building

The businesses of Old Aptos Village have been precariously perched on the edge of a precipice since the October 17 earthquake—literally and figuratively.

After hanging there for more than six months, with their lives and livelihoods tenuously suspended while waiting for word about reconstruction, property owners finally have received their permits and rebuilding has begun.

But the long delay before the village's resurrection has been costly and, according to some business owners, the wait may eventually prove fatal.

"It has really been deadly for the psyche of the community," said Jim Broadwell, owner of Monterey Bay Business Advisers Inc. "I've been putting as much pressure as I could on the county to make sure this moved along because it's real important for this community. This is the heart of Aptos and all of Aptos takes its tenor from this area."

The importance of the Village appears undisputed. Statements by shop owners, community leaders, the county supervisor, the Planning department and many others reflected Broadwell's. However, the high financial costs and the growing complexity for rebuilding under current county guidelines has forced some businesses to dis-solve, others to relocate, and created some bitter feelings.

Considered by many as the keystone of the area's business community, the turn-of-the-century redwood construction and small-town charm of the Village embodied the rural flavor of Aptos. With its market, garage, restaurants and a variety of professional offices, the Village extended along Soquel Drive from the train trestle to Trout Gulch Road on a bluff overlooking the Aptos Creek basin.

The impact of the earthquake caused damage to building foundations and the support pillars along the rear of some of the buildings as well as other structural



After months of delays, re-building finally gets underway in Aptos Village.

—by Christopher Keane—

damage. A broken water main eventually eroded the substructure of one building which then slid down the hillside. Since October 17, the quaint rural view along that stretch of Soquel Drive had become one of fractured roadway, skewed buildings, buckled sidewalks and collapsed buildings.

The estimated damage was considerable. According to John Hibble of the Aptos Chamber of Commerce, more than a third of the \$15,000,000 of damage suffered throughout Aptos occurred in the Village. Ten businesses were destroyed and 160 employees were displaced. Hibble also estimated that losses could reach \$250,000 for each month of lost business.

Of the original group of stores in the Village, Sandy's Florist, Scarlett O'Haira Beauty Salon, The Aptos Club, The Aptos Card Club and Aptos Village Garage were back in business soon after the earthquake. The law

office of Robert Andersen and Jim Broadwell's Monterey Bay Business Advisers, Inc. also returned to their usual place of business.

But the others had to find another recourse.

"My law offices came through virtually unscathed," said Andersen. "But the building in the back, where I had an architect and a photographer, I think I'm going to demolish it because it isn't worth rehabilitating."

The Village Market, which suffered substantial damage, will also not be reopened. That property, along with the garage, the old Johnston house, and the acreage below the bluff, was purchased this past February by Henri Jeanrenaud. The new owner of this 5.5 acres has quickly repaired the house and placed it for rent. In addition, a salvageable 1600 square feet of the market is also for rent.

However, Jeanrenaud said he has no current plans for rebuilding the rest of the

market nor the buildings which already have slipped down the hill.

"I would like to rebuild the buildings the same as it was before," said Jeanrenaud. "Unfortunately, I don't have the money right now. In two or three years, probably."

Howard Miller's Colonial Barbershop disappeared when his building collapsed down the hillside. Miller has temporarily reopened in a space set aside in the Scarlett O'Haira Beauty Salon around the corner and he is hoping for another rental space to open in the area soon.

Other businesses have also relocated. Michael Blaz of MB consultants has joined 4 Seasons Realty of Aptos. Designs by Lorraine has relocated to Charles Dickens Square and Montag Marketing is scheduled to open in Capitola Village in June. Robert Goldspink has moved his architectural offices home but hopes to return to the Village when construction is completed.

Marianne Cleworth of the Property Center had also hoped to return to her Village office. However, for Cleworth, the decision to move was necessary when building repairs continued to be delayed and she has since moved her business down the road to 9055 Soquel Drive.

"We relocated around the first of the year," said Cleworth. "We were told it would only take a couple of months and then when a couple of months came we were told a couple more months. It just took too long."

Delays in the permit process for rebuilding Old Aptos Village were due to the complexities of the site, according to Santa Cruz County Planning Director Diane Guzman. The proximity of the buildings to the cliff as well as their old age required extensive testing by soils engineers before reconstruction could be safely undertaken.

There was a serious question in the beginning whether it was going to be geologically safe to build there," Guzman said. "So there was an early investigation that we conducted, in addition to the property owners doing a much more complete investigation, to determine that it was going to be okay to rebuild there."

The Planning Department's investigation soon after the quake determined the property was stable but that special engineering was needed to make it safe before permits for any rebuilding could be issued.

"Because there was some pretty extensive geotechnical and engineering work required, it did take a while to get done," said Guzman. "But one of our primary objectives in the rebuilding was to get the commercial areas back in business as soon as possible—but they had to be safe."

Even taking into consideration the issue of safety, some Village property owners felt the permit approval process was slow and had

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