

*Cooper House*

# A Man Of Vision And His Plan For Courthouse

By WALLY TRABING

The stark stoniness of the long abandoned Courthouse on Pacific Avenue will be reincarnated into a colorful mart if the County Board of Supervisors ratifies the sale today by a special county - city committee.

The committee approved the sale to a Max W. Walden who has bid \$75,000 for the building.

Walden, a large, rough-hewn man of friendly bent, has obvious credentials.

He was the creator and developer of Old Town in Los Gatos, a lively and holiday-like aggregation of quality restaurants, art and craft centers, small businesses and a theater.

The rugged, good looking bachelor sold his interest in

Old Town last July and says he has fallen in love with Santa Cruz.

In his late 40s, the developer-contractor has spent most of his career building shopping centers — 20 of them in all.

With this experience behind him he changed his style and following a long smoldering desire, came to Los Gatos in 1964 and carved out an "environmental shopping complex."

"Selling a dress for \$19.95 was a dead end," he said. "I felt that if quality merchandise was sold in a created environment that was pleasant, people would come."

Some of his ideas did not bear fruit. For example, he said, he helped set up shops where artists could create and also sell their art.

"This didn't work too well. They found that creating and

maintaining a shop was just too distracting, so we'll try new approaches."

"Here I am going to try a different way, probably a corporation of people operating the project, not just me on one side of the desk and they on the other."

"It may be difficult to realize, but there is the same square footage as in all the commercial space in Old Town.

"My idea for the Courthouse is to retain its basic physical appearance and create a series of shops, restaurants and art show rooms in the building.

"I see a number of kiosks, like those in front of Leask's, only use them around the building as small boutiques. I would bring out the color on the building with colorful awnings.

"I see a bazaar of small colorful shops in the alleyway

between the Courthouse and Webber's.

"A small amphi-theater would go between the old octagonal Hall of Records and the Courthouse.

"On the Cooper Street side I would like to take off some of the parking and make it a shopping way with these kiosks again.

"Another idea is to install an old-fashioned caged elevator to take people to the various floors inside."

Walden said he guessed it would take about a year to bring his ideas to a conclusion, but he would like to start immediately and open a few shops.

"People like to see construction going on, like to see things progressing," he said.

"What inspires me is Santa Cruz. One of the greatest  
(Continued on Page 2)

## Weather

MONTEREY BAY AREA — Fair thru Thursday. Slightly warmer days. Highs Thursday in mid 50s to mid 60s. Low tonight in 30s to low 40s. Northwesterly wind 10-20 mph.

Temperature for 24-hour period ending at 8 a.m. today, maximum 57, minimum 34.

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# A Man Of Vision Tells His Plans For Old Courthouse

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realizations I have had in 48 years is that Santa Cruz is a whole community, really concerned with unemployment and a better life style.

"The community leaders and department heads I have talked to impress me with the fact that they are more concerned with the people than with trying to build up their jobs so they can move along to a larger city or bigger job. They seem to be here to do a job.

"I have been living in a bedroom community and it is terrible. I didn't realize this until I started looking around Santa Cruz and got the feel of this area. It's just a different feeling to live in a whole community."

Walden said that the merchants he has talked with seem to favor his ideas. He said he

has not encountered any serious roadblocks so far.

He did say that the Fire Zone 1 rule would, however make his plans difficult because of its restriction on using wood.

"I had 10 to 15 letters from people in this area, inviting me to look over the Courthouse. Citizens' groups have approached me on the idea and here I am.

"I am looking for a house now. I want an old house with a large barn in back for storage," he said.

Walden lives with his mother.

If the sale is approved by the committee today, the deal will have to be ratified by the County Board of Supervisors.

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