

# An offer the mayor can refuse

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SANTA CRUZ — Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt won't attend the grand opening of Gottschalks' new Capitola Mall store, saying it was "a little insensitive" to invite her after the company pulled out of Santa Cruz leaving a giant hole in the ground.

"Frankly, it does not seem particularly appropriate for me, in my role as mayor, to indicate that I think the opening of Gottschalk's in Capitola is anything wonderful to celebrate," Wormhoudt said.

The decision by Gottschalks last month to sell out rather than to rebuild its earthquake-destroyed

Santa Cruz store was a blow to the downtown rebuilding effort.

Economic consultants had told the city that retaining Gottschalks as an anchor store would be important to attracting new business to the mall.

Wormhoudt said she believes Gottschalks President Gerald H. Blum and Chairman Joe Levy had the best of intentions in extending the invitation, "but I do think it adds insult to injury."

In that invitation, the two store officials asked Wormhoudt to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony this Friday and "to join us for Danish and coffee" afterward.

"We take pleasure in becoming part of your community and in participating with you in your growth," Blum and Levy wrote.