

Granite Construction to triple headquarters

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WATSONVILLE — There's no place like home.

Granite Construction Co. started in the rough-and-tumble railroad town of Watsonville in 1922 and shows no sign of stopping its growth or leaving its hometown.

On Monday the giant government contractor opened a newly consolidated Monterey Bay office at 580 West Beach Street and is planning on trebling the size of its corporate offices across the street at 585 West Beach to keep up with rapid growth.

A new 10,000-square-foot build-

ing for the Monterey Bay office replaces offices spread throughout the bay, said Granite Construction spokeswoman Jacque Underdown. Across the street the company will be adding 46,400-square-feet to its current 28,000-square-foot office space along with 170 more parking spaces. The company's Heavy Construction Division will be moving a short distance to the same facility from San Juan Road Extension in Pajaro.

"Basically, we're consolidating our operations into one campus," Underdown said. "We've done some tremendous growth."

In the last five years annual rev-

enue for the firm has jumped from \$500 million to \$1 billion, Underdown said. Although the company now has offices in 32 states, its corporate headquarters remain in Watsonville, where the company first incorporated. The new building and parking lot has become a necessity as the company has grown and hired staff to handle all the work, Underdown said.

"Everybody's space is shrinking," Underdown said of the existing building. "This will give everybody some room."

Watsonville officials are looking forward to the expanded facilities since it increases potential jobs

and potential spending in Watsonville's downtown area, which is currently the focus of intensive redevelopment efforts. Although the city will not directly benefit from sales taxes from Granite Construction as it would from a retail shop, more Granite employees in town is a definite indirect economic benefit, said Mari Alsip, associate planner for Watsonville's Community Development Department.

"It will be a good move for Watsonville," Alsip said. Over time that benefit will increase as Granite continues to grow and add employees, she said.

The corporate office e project will be on land that is already zoned by the city for industrial use, Alsip said. Among the steps being undertaken to move ahead with the project are a negative declaration of environmental impact and a design review. The negative declaration is now under way and a review of architect Russ Haisley's design by the Watsonville Redevelopment Agency will follow, Alsip said.

If all goes according to plan, construction by contractor George Davis could begin by June and be completed by late 1999, Underdown said.

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