

Big changes afoot in tiny Davenport



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

Michelle Mattson serves lunch to a table of diners at the Whale City Bakery in Davenport. Despite renovations in the community, business is still humming along.

One-block downtown undergoes extreme makeover

By **SORAYA GUTIERREZ**
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DAVENPORT — This slow-growth coastal town is about to showcase a new artists' gallery, a revamped landmark building and a remodeled Mexican restaurant.

The downtown area — one block in all — is a work in progress.

One of the most beloved buildings in this unincorporated part of the county, the Davenport Inn and Restaurant at the Cash Store, is surrounded by a fence while it undergoes a remodel.

The entire first level of the brick two-story building was gutted and is being upgraded with an all-new interior, a cork floor, a wood-burning oven for the restaurant and an organic kitchen garden in the back.

Owner Renee Kwan, who expects to open in early July, said she's confident the neighbors will welcome the upgrades.

"We're hoping the community will support what we're doing," she said.

Another favorite spot for locals and tourists, La Cabana taqueria, closed its doors and moved to Soquel after the owners could no longer afford the rent. The property owners plan to open another Mexican food restaurant in ear-



The Davenport Cash Store will reopen this summer after a major renovation.

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KRISTEN RAUGUST, OWNER, WHALE CITY BAKERY

See **DAVENPORT** on **PAGE A10**

Davenport

Continued from Page A1

ly May.

In addition, there's a new building in town fronting Highway 1. The building, which a faithful \$2.5 million replica of the historic Forester Hall, is ready to be leased to an artist or artists to open a gallery on the first floor and live above it, said Scott Chalgren of Main Street Realtors.

Locals haven't seen this much change in at least five years, said Glenn Kimmel, a 25-year resident.

Whether the character of the community will change remains to be seen.

"Usually it's a sleepy town, but lately it's just bustling," said Jerry Adame, a teacher at the 99-student Davenport Pacific School.

With all the renovations going on, finding a place to park is chaotic, he said. Trucks are digging up the roads and work crews are seen all over the place. But it's all part of the plan to get things back to normal in this community-oriented village of about 350 residents who regard their town as a special place to live.

Locals like Kristen Raugust, who owns the Whale City Bakery, are looking forward to the changes, as long as they make things better and don't mess with beach access and traffic flow through town.

The cafe is one of the few businesses

that isn't seeing any action as far as construction goes, but it's getting plenty of activity from hungry visitors packing the pastry counter.

A short walk down the block is the Arro's general store, the only other business on the block that isn't in transition.

Manager Thalji Farhat said he's been getting a steady stream of customers.

"Right now business is slow because of the weather — but not bad," he said.

Datta Khalsa, broker at Main Street Realtors, said Davenport tends to be overlooked by many but he believes it has the potential to grow without being overwhelmed.

"It's got flavor," he said. "The key is keeping that in tact."

Some residents couldn't agree more.

"I hope Davenport changes for the better but doesn't become developed," Raugust said, adding, "I wouldn't want to see 7-Elevens or Starbucks. That would be horrible."

Another longtime resident, Don Croll, said that while change is for the better, it should be measured.

That's one of the tasks taken on by the town's informal city council, the Davenport/North Coast Improvement Association. Members meet regularly to address concerns about local topics. The next meeting is 6:30 tonight at Pacific School to talk about the direction of the town after the changes.

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Davenport's first commercial building in years is ready to be leased to an artist or artists to open a gallery on the first floor and live above it.

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