

# No major environmental hurdles downtown

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SANTA CRUZ — Reshaping downtown from the ruins of an earthquake won't lead to insurmountable environmental problems, according to a draft environmental impact report released this week. "We're not transforming the nature of the land use in any significant way," said Charles Eadie, project manager of the Downtown Recovery Plan.

"We're re-urbanizing an urban

area ... so the environmental impacts are less significant than compared to a different kind of project in a pristine area." The impact report, prepared by EIP Associates of San Francisco with the help of the city's Redevelopment Agency, targeted 12 areas where significant impacts could be expected.

These impacts, however, "would be reduced to a beneficial or a less than significant level if the mitigation measures noted in this report are adopted," said the report.

Every environmental impact re-

port contains "mitigation measures," which spell out what can be done to reduce negative impacts, such as traffic, noise or the like.

This environmental report differs from most in that it covers an entire downtown, rather than just one project. Individual developers will not need further environmental reports in most cases.

The report is based on a few givens outlined in the Downtown Recovery Plan, which targets an area bordered by Laurel Street on the

south, Cedar and Center streets on the west, River and Water streets on the north, and the top of the west levee of the San Lorenzo River to the east.

They include these factors:

- There are 656 residential units anticipated for the area when building is completed.

- Office space is estimated to reach 990,499 gross square feet.

- Retail space is anticipated to reach 1.33 million gross square feet.

- Building heights will be gener-

ally limited to two and three stories. Some will be as high as five stories, however, but must not shade key public open spaces.

- The area will be designed to "ensure increased opportunities for the public to participate in commercial, governmental, residential, social and cultural activities.

- It will be mostly pedestrian-oriented.

- Parking will be provided in a centralized fashion, and transit options will be stressed.

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## Report

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The goal is to have retail stores and restaurants on the ground floors, with office space or single-room residences on the second and third floors.

It will mean more people living downtown, and a greater mix of land uses than currently exist — or than existed before the October 1989 earthquake.

Two of the key causes for concern are how a renewed downtown would lead to the need for more police and fire personnel.

The report suggested as many as four new police officers could be needed to maintain current levels of service.

In the area of fire protection, both new and existing buildings should be fitted with automatic sprinklers, said the report.

There also is a need, said the report, for the Fire Department to look into maintaining accessibility for its equipment during the construction phase.

Here are some of the other significant concerns listed in the draft environmental impact report, and how they should be mitigated:

- The recovery plan would result in a demand for more parking.

## Report available for review

SANTA CRUZ — The public will have until July 5 to review the draft environmental impact report prepared to anticipate potential problems with the downtown recovery plan.

Copies of the report are in the city library, the City Clerk's Office, the County Clerk's Office, the city Planning Department, the Redevelopment Agency and Vision Santa Cruz. It also can be purchased at Kinko's Copies.

A public hearing to gather comments on the draft report will be on Tuesday, June 4, at 7 p.m. in the Vision Santa Cruz

office on Pacific Avenue.

Anyone who would prefer to provide written comments about the report can mail them to the Redevelopment Agency, 323 Church St., Santa Cruz, 95060.

At the end of the 45-day public comment period, issues raised will be addressed and a final environmental impact report will be prepared.

The Planning Commission is expected to review this final report in August, and then will send it to the City Council for approval later in the month.

"The development of a financially feasible parking plan is the critical element of these mitigation measures," said the draft impact report. "This plan should be sensitive to and include provision for bicycles, carpools and other strategies."

- A new downtown would result in increased energy use for transportation.

The report suggested that the

city develop a comprehensive program of public transit incentives to encourage its use.

It should develop a parking plan that includes remote lots and shuttle service for employees.

The city also could consider double-decking existing parking facilities for shoppers if needed.

- Higher buildings could conflict with the existing character of what's left of downtown. But the

recovery plan called for standards that would include compatibility with adjacent structures and considerations for scale.

- The digging for underground improvements and new buildings could uncover historic artifacts.

But the report called for work to halt in that case, with a qualified archaeologist called in to study the site.

- Construction next to historic buildings could damage them. The draft EIR, however, required sufficient shoring of these buildings to protect them before work begins.

- Construction noise and pollution is a problem in the short-term.

The draft impact report called for limited hours of construction. It also called for dust and odor control measures.

One of the big problems, of course, is that construction would be in an earthquake-hazard zone.

The draft EIR said the city must require that they meet existing code, and all other buildings should be retrofitted.

- The project could degrade water quality through occupation-related chemicals and debris. These could be mitigated with improved drainage standards imposed by the city.