

Why merchants say Pacific Ave. must change



JEREMIAH RIDGEWAY/SENTINEL PHOTOS

This 25-year-old homeless man, who declined to give his name, panhandles for money in front of The Gap on Pacific Avenue last week while his cat surveys the scene.

Santa Cruz City Council set to consider new behavior rules downtown and near the beach

By GENEVIEVE BOOKWALTER

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SANTA CRUZ — Many store owners, city leaders, police officers and shoppers can sum up their frustration with Pacific Avenue and the beachfront by pointing to one man.

Troy Hamilton has not paid the fines on the 60 citations he has received over the past 18 months for an assortment of unsocial behavior, police say. Hamilton's citations total more than \$22,000, yet he has paid nothing and suffered no penalty.

Hamilton, who has earned most of his citations for alcohol-related incidents on Pacific Avenue, might be the most egregious example of what many call a lack of accountability downtown and near Main Beach, said Santa Cruz police spokesman Zach Friend. But he is by no means the only one.

Changing rules to issue a warrant for someone's arrest after that person ignores three citations is just one measure city leaders will

IF YOU GO

SANTA CRUZ
CITY COUNCIL

WHAT: Council to consider downtown behavior rules

WHEN: 7 p.m. today

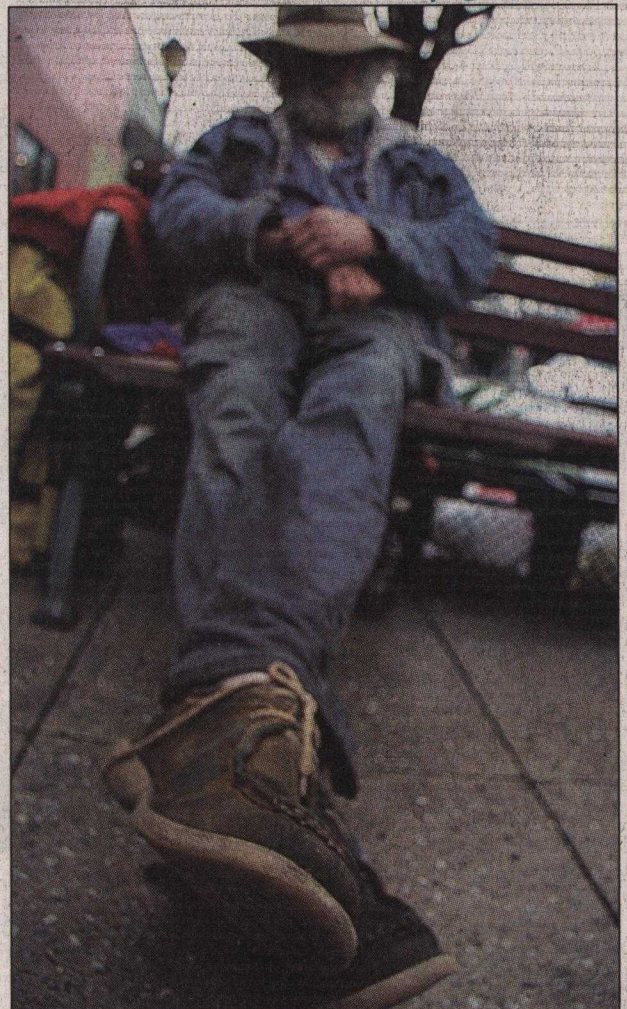
WHERE: Santa Cruz City Hall, 809 Center St., Santa Cruz

consider this evening as they respond to complaints from many women, families and workers who all say they are tired of being harassed and don't feel safe while walking downtown.

While frustration with aggressive panhandlers, public urination and drug dealing is not new, it has taken on extra urgency as owners of downtown's high-end boutiques and quirky shops, already suffering the crunch of the national recession, say they don't need anything else driving customers away.

Even some of Pacific Avenue's longtime homeless said Monday they support

SEE RULES ON A2



C.J. Stock, 57, sitting on a Pacific Avenue bench last week, says he has been homeless for more than 28 years.

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RULES

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many of the rules proposed, which include banning alcohol sales to chronic inebriates, enforcing stronger graffiti laws and arresting those who ignore three citations, among others.

"Some of those guys get so drunk, they get so clumsy and they start a ruckus," said Alden Brown, 52, who has lived in Santa Cruz since the 1970s and spends many of his days on Pacific Avenue. "It's good that they do crack down on those people."

The one proposed rule Brown said he doesn't like would prohibit panhandling within a 14-foot radius of public benches.

Right now, many of the citations given downtown are wiped away by the court's "clean slate" program. That program took

care of 55 of the 60 citations belonging to Hamilton, Friend said. However, the new city rules could allow police to arrest a chronic offender before accumulating that many citations.

Last year, 2,144 citations were issued on Pacific Avenue and 1,246 arrests made;

at Main Beach, 1,531 citations were issued and 951 arrests made.

Scott Roseman, owner of New Leaf Community Market at Pacific and Soquel avenues, said he welcomes the new rules and hopes they will curb the shoplifting and other problems he

suffers in his downtown shop.

"The people that are congregating are making downtown an unfriendly place for not only businesses to operate, but for the people of Santa Cruz simply to enjoy downtown," Roseman said.



Lloyd Hunt, 69, sits on a corner near Pacific Avenue last week asking for spare change. He said he has been homeless since 2000.

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