

NEW OPPORTUNITIES



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Earth-moving equipment breaks ground on Thursday in Watsonville as the building of the Cabrillo College Green Technology Center on Union Street gets under way.

Cabrillo College - 2000
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 Green Technology Center will focus on environmentally friendly construction careers

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WATSONVILLE—The heavy equipment chewing into dirt on a vacant lot downtown Thursday marked the start of long-planned

project aimed at bringing educational and economic opportunities to town.

When complete in spring 2012, Cabrillo College's \$6 million Green Technology Center will focus on preparing students for industrial jobs, initially in construction

and energy management.

"Our greater commitment is to use the facility to train people for jobs wherever the jobs are," said Rock Pfothauer, Cabrillo's dean of career education and economic development.

Pfothauer said Cabrillo is pooling resources with Workforce Investment Boards in Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties, as well as several local nonprofits to track the economy and job trends so courses can be developed that will give "our students the skills to be very employable."

SEE **CABRILLO** ON A2

GREEN TECHNOLOGY CENTER

WHAT: Cabrillo College's latest building effort will result in a 14,000-square-foot center focused on industrial careers.

WHEN: Construction started this week and is scheduled to be completed in time for the 2012 spring semester.

WHERE: Union and Trafton streets in downtown Watsonville

INFORMATION: www.cabrillo.edu



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A pedestrian on Union Street catches a glimpse of the first stages of construction of the Cabrillo College Green Technology Center in Watsonville on Thursday.

CABRILLO

Continued from A1

The 14,000-square foot education center, being built to the highest environmental standards, was designed for flexibility so it could be "re-purposed" to meet educational and occupational demand, he said.

The center, under construction on the former Watsonville library site at Trafton and Union streets, has been in the works for several years. Initially, it was expected to bring as many as 1,000 students downtown each year.

Pfothauer said that's not likely now due to declines in state funding, but he does expect to see some shift in students from the Aptos campus to Watsonville.

City Manager Carlos Palacios called the start of construction "very big news for Watsonville." He said the city has two big economic challenges. One is job creation, which it's tackling by moving forward with such projects as the planned Manabe-Ow business park on the western edge of town. The other is ensuring residents have the skills to get jobs and be an asset for employers.

The educational opportunity, the center represents will be "an important selling point for our community, both for companies coming here and also existing companies that want to expand and to upgrade the skills of their employees," Palacios said.