

✓ 12-5-90 Earthquake Watsonville Rebuilding

Ford's plans reopening within a year

WATSONVILLE — Officials at Ford's department store plan to have their flagship store operating at its former location by the second anniversary of the 1989 earthquake that wrecked it.

However, Ford's officials still have made no commitment to rebuild their downtown Santa Cruz store.

An application for a new 76,000-square-foot store at the old Main and Beach street location in Watsonville has been submitted to the city's Planning Depart-

ment. It could make its way to the City Council as early as January.

Ford's architect, Michael Stanton of Stanton and Associates in San Francisco, said Tuesday that Ford's hopes to break ground in February. An opening date of Oct. 15 has been targeted — two days before the earthquake's second anniversary.

"The city has been extremely cooperative in moving this ahead so we can put this importance piece of Watsonville

back in place," Stanton said.

The Watsonville Ford's is viewed as a key to revitalizing the downtown area. The Watsonville location was the flagship store for the Central Coast chain. According to Hal Hyde, Ford's senior vice president, the Watsonville store is believed to be the oldest department store in California, dating back to 1852.

Ford's is rebuilding thanks in part to a \$24.1 million Small Business Administration loan.