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Steve John's new Ocean Honda complex covers 4.2 acres and includes a 42,000-square-foot building on Soquel Drive near 41st Avenue.

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

# Ocean Honda opens up shop in new 42,000-square-foot home

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Ocean Honda's new service department is twice as big with 28 car bays.

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

SOQUEL — Ocean Honda has got a new look.

Last week, the dealership officially moved to 3801 Soquel Drive, its new 42,000-square-foot home on 4.2 acres near 41st Avenue.

The dealership made its break from the Capitola Auto Mall official with a grand opening celebration Tuesday, St. Patrick's Day, and the luck of the Irish seemed to be working.

"Sales have picked up," said John Prentice, general manager. "During the first weekend in the new store, sales were better than they have been in the past six months."

Ocean Honda sold 24 vehicles last weekend, a 21 percent jump when compared to the prior weekend, Prentice said.

Prentice credits the increase to the new location's visibility to the 49,000 motorists who travel Soquel Drive each day.

"When Ocean started in 1985, it was at 555 Pacific Ave. (in Santa Cruz)," said Prentice, who's been with the company since 1987. "We had lots of traffic at that location, too. Then we moved to the Capitola Auto Mall and traffic was choked off."

Ocean Honda, formerly Ocean Chevrolet-Honda, sold the Chevy arm of the business two years ago, Prentice said.

The recession has taken a toll on sales but the dealership is still making its goals, Prentice said. "Last year was off compared to 2007 but we met our goals," he said. "Our goals were realistic with the economy."

The slow economy was partially responsible for bringing Melinda Iuster of Santa Cruz to the dealership Tuesday seeking a good deal on a Honda Accord.

Iuster has a 2004 gold Honda Accord with a manual transmission, "but my shifter leg can't take it anymore," said the woman who's been a Honda customer since 1978. "I usually trade in my Honda for a new one every 10 years, but I can't wait that long." She decided to drive down after seeing ads about Ocean Honda's grand opening

party.

Her goal was to trade in her car and throw in \$1,500 in exchange for a dark blue 2006 Honda Accord with an automatic transmission — all the money she was willing to part with. Iuster, a speech pathologist, said she doesn't want to spend a penny more, adding that she and her husband have

jobs with companies that are talking about slashing employee pay, she said.

The new Ocean Honda dealership features a host of green-building concepts. The dealership used permeable pavement in its sales lot, which allows rain to soak through the parking area. That replenishes the ground water supply instead of forcing water to run into a storm drain and out to sea.

Inside the 42,000-square-foot building is a car maintenance area lit, in part, by 48 skylights.

And the dealership itself is green, as its products are some of the most fuel-efficient vehicles in the nation, Prentice said.

"Even Honda's biggest cars, the Pilot and the Odyssey, get 30 miles to the gallon," he said.

Ocean Honda has 147 new vehicles on its lot. Honda-brand vehicles also are among the dealership's 68 used products.

## IF YOU GO OCEAN HONDA

**WHERE:** 3801 Soquel Drive  
**SALES HOURS:** 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday-Saturday; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday  
**SERVICE HOURS:** 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday  
**INFORMATION:** Call 464-1500 or visit [www.oceanhondas.com](http://www.oceanhondas.com)

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