



The new Rittenhouse building sits unoccupied in the heart of downtown Santa Cruz.

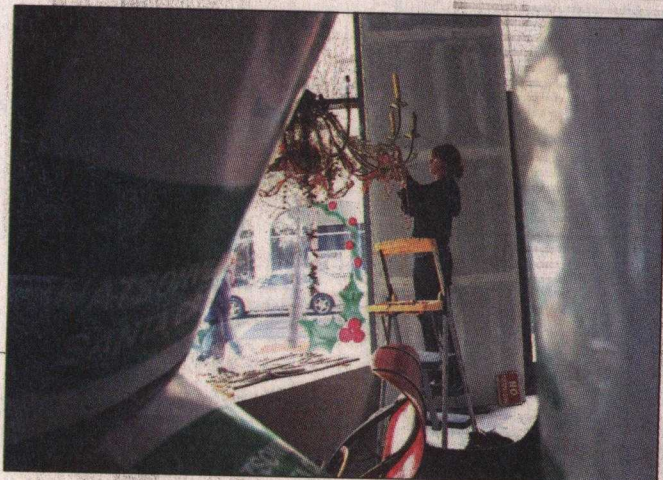
Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Rittenhouse building seeking tenants

Pacific Avenue

12-408

On bright side, artists, food bank filling windows with big-city displays



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Linda Terpstra works on a window display publicizing the Second Harvest Food Bank holiday food drive in the empty Rittenhouse building on Wednesday.

By GENEVIEVE BOOKWALTER
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — The grand unveiling of the multimillion-dollar Rittenhouse building at Pacific Avenue and Church Street over Thanksgiving was not highlighted by a new Apple store or Banana Republic.

Instead, vandals broke out a picture window on Saturday night.

Two years of outside construction work on the 69,000-square-foot, four-story building wrapped up last week.

Project manager Mike Bethke with Slatter Construction said the windows of downtown's new flagship building will not stay empty — even if the inside does — as Santa Cruz welcomes this year's holiday season.

"We'll make this our grand unveiling of our new landmark building,"

Bethke said. "We're not going to let any Grinch steal our Christmas downtown."

So on Wednesday, artists were painting the windows and filling display cases with a sleigh, candelabras and Second Harvest Food Bank barrels to remind shoppers to help others in the community who don't have as much. When finished, the windows should look as big-city as the new building, Bethke said, which fills one of the last lots left vacant after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake devastated downtown.

With the new Seth Thomas replica clock hanging over the sidewalk, the scene was reminiscent of Christmases past at the old Marshall Field's department store in downtown Chicago, whose symbol was a similar timepiece

See **BUILDING** on **PAGE A7**

Building

Continued from Page A1

that projected from stone brick walls and whose Christmas window displays drew huge crowds each year.

The new Rittenhouse building has room for a 14,000-square-foot retail outlet on the ground floor — enough for a small department store or phar-

'It's difficult. I don't see a lot of small or large companies expanding.'

MAYOR RYAN COONERTY

macy — and more than 55,000 square feet for offices on the top three floors.

Neither property owner Louis Rittenhouse nor his property manager returned calls seeking

comment Wednesday. But Mayor Ryan Coonerty said the city is working with Rittenhouse to attract tenants, a prospect made more challenging by the dreary economy.

"It's difficult. I don't see a lot of small or large companies expanding," Coonerty said. "We would be ready and willing to work with anyone who wanted to move in there."

Chip, head of the Downtown Association, joined Bethke in looking on the bright side. He said the Second Harvest display should remind shoppers of the additional mouths the food bank must feed this year.

"As everyone is struggling

with the economy, they're getting hit really hard," said Chip, who goes by one name.

Meanwhile, Bethke said he hopes the windows will help showcase the building and attract a tenant.

"We may get that interest and get someone really, really good in here," Bethke said.

Contact G. Bookwalter at 706-3286 or gbookwalter@santacruzsentinel.com.