

Stores, offices proposed for lot

Pacific Ave. - SJmn

12-14-99

BY JOHN WOOLFOLK

Mercury News Staff Writer

Santa Cruz waited nearly a decade after the Loma Prieta earthquake to see its cherished downtown centerpiece, the 19th-century Cooper House, rebuilt.

Now, the same developer wants to build something like it just up the street.

The Jay Paul,
developer is whose five-story
seeking a rebuilt Cooper
parking House opened in
subsidy. October at the
10th anniversary
of the earth-
quake, has
teamed up with
the owners of a

vacant lot at 1547 Pacific Ave., the site of a bookstore wrecked by the disaster. They are proposing an office and retail complex "of similar type and quality as the Cooper House," Paul said in a letter to the city. At 100,000 square feet, it would be just as large.

Such a project would require the addition of two adjacent, city-owned parcels: a parking lot and the former coffeehouse site where two employees perished in the earthquake. The city bought the cafe site three years ago in hopes of speeding redevelopment.

The developer also is seeking a yet-unspecified parking subsidy from the city, which will consider the proposal at today's redevelopment agency meeting.

Paul refused to comment Monday, but said in his letter to the city

See **PROJECT**, Page 4B

Retail complex proposed for lot in Santa Cruz

PROJECT

from Page 1B

that such a project is needed to fill the high demand for office space in downtown Santa Cruz. He added that his own office tenants at the Cooper House say they will need more room to grow in the near future.

"We believe that a high-quality project would be of substantial benefit to the city of Santa Cruz and that economic assistance from the redevelopment agency would be in the community interest," Paul wrote.

But although Santa Cruz officials are eager to see the remaining reminders of the earthquake erased, such a massive project may not be warmly greeted at City Hall. Council members have been so concerned lately about the size of new downtown development that they have proposed leaving some of the last vacant lots unbuilt as a public plaza.

"I think they may run into some serious opposition to a project that size," said Councilman Mike Rotkin.

The site of the proposed building is among the few remaining scars left from the earthquake, which

wrecked 29 buildings in downtown Santa Cruz. It had been home to Bookshop Santa Cruz and the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Company, both of which have since relocated across the street.

The bookstore lot is owned by Ron Lau, who a few years ago proposed a hotel project combined with the adjoining city property. He has since handed authority over the property to his son, Eric, who is working with Paul on the current proposal.

Downtown building projects are not required to include on-site parking, but those without are normally required to pay the city for spaces not provided. Those funds are used to manage public parking lots. In the interest of redevelopment, the city has subsidized a number of downtown projects by paying some of those fees for several years. The Cooper House received the largest such subsidy.

The project at 1547 Pacific Ave. includes a proposal for underground parking, which could greatly reduce the parking fees that would be required.