

BANKING

Citibank to close in Watsonville

Customers must retrieve
items from safe deposit
boxes by Aug. 31

Banks & Banking
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WATSONVILLE » Citibank will close its Watsonville branch at 760 E. Lake Ave. Sept. 19 as the bank focuses on a global strategy and looks to lead in digital services.

A staffer at Citibank's Watsonville branch advised customers to retrieve items from safe deposit boxes by Aug. 31 when the contents will be turned over to the state as abandoned property.

Last year, Citibank's Watsonville branch reported \$36 million in deposits to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., a modest increase from \$34 million in 2008.

A Citibank staffer in Capitola said no change is in store there. Citibank's Capitola branch had deposits of \$56 million last year.

BANK » PAGE 4

Bank

FROM PAGE 1

Citibank's Watsonville customers could move their accounts to the Capitola branch or switch banks.

As of last year, Wells Fargo was the market leader in Watsonville, with three branches and deposits of \$214 million.

Union Bank ranked second with \$179 million, Bank of America, \$134 million, Comerica, \$126 million, Chase, \$102 million, Santa Cruz County Bank, \$78 million, and Rabobank, \$39 million.

A Wells Fargo staffer in Watsonville said small safe deposit boxes are available.

"We're seeing growth in that market," said Mary Anne Carson, spokeswoman for Santa Cruz County Bank, noting its Watsonville deposits just surpassed \$100 million. "We do have safe deposit boxes available at our Wat-

sonville office."

In 2012, Citigroup, which owns Citibank, announced a focus on retail banking in the world's 150 largest cities and later disclosed plans to close at least 44 branches and lay off 11,000 workers.

At year-end, Citigroup had more than 3,700 locations worldwide with fewer than 1,000 in the U.S., according to a securities filing.

Citibank spokesman Andrew Brent issued a statement Thursday saying, "We continually seeking ways to optimize our branch network, which includes opening, renovating and, where appropriate, closing branches. Accordingly, we have determined that a small number of branches do not fit our market strategy and will close in September 2014."

He said the bank is "making every effort" to help affected employees find other positions at Citibank.

Citibank sold 21

branches in Texas this year but, according to Brent, did not attempt to sell its Watsonville branch.

This year, Citibank unveiled ATMs that remember customer preferences and a mobile app where balances can be checked without logging in. They hired Heather Cox from Capital One as chief client experience, digital and marketing officer for global consumer banking. Cox called her new job an "opportunity to shape the future of banking in an increasingly digital era."

Last week Citi agreed to pay \$7 billion to settle federal charges it packaged bad mortgages during the housing boom that busted, including \$2.5 billion for mortgage relief for homeowners.

In the second quarter, Citibank reduced its head count from 149,000 to 145,000 and reported earnings per share of \$1.24, higher than the expected \$1.06 per share.