

✓ Pacific Avenue

Construction on new Flatiron Building could begin August 1

By KAREN CLARK

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SANTA CRUZ — Construction on a new Flatiron Building at the prow of Pacific Avenue is expected to begin Aug. 1 now that the request for a building permit was submitted Friday.

"We're real excited it's this far along," said Meredith Marquez, principal planner for the city of Santa Cruz. "The things that were difficult, they've already been ironed out. We don't think there will be any surprises."

Marquez said it will take about a month to process the permit, which involves making sure the plans meet the city's building and safety codes.

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— Mayor Mike Rotkin

Completing the three-story project is considered a key component in the city's post-earthquake reconstruction because of its prominent location at the spot where Pacific Avenue and Front Street meet.

"I think this is probably behind the Cooper House as the second most important project in the

downtown in terms of giving the appearance the city has recovered from the earthquake," said Mayor Mike Rotkin. "(The Rittenhouse family) still owns a lot of property downtown for which there are currently no plans ... so I'm excited that we're getting started on this one."

The Rittenhouses recently completed the Henry Willey Building across from the St. George Hotel. The family also owns the three weed-filled lots on Pacific Avenue at Church Street. No plans have been submitted for those lots.

The Flatiron, which gets its name from its unusual tricorn lot, was built in 1859 and was the oldest building in downtown Santa Cruz on Oct. 17, 1989, when the Loma Prieta earthquake rattled it so severely that it eventually had to be demolished.

Former City Councilman Louis Rittenhouse, whose family owns the property, initially persuaded a reluctant council to approve a four-story, brick-front building for

the site.

But he eventually realized that a three-story building would be just as financially feasible and acceded

to the city's desire for a smaller, less imposing structure. The wood-frame building also will be finished with stucco rather than brick.