

CRIME + CRIMINALS  
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# County gives red light to prostitution

By MARK BERGSTROM

Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — The county has begun a red-light abatement campaign to close down massage parlors and outcall masseuses by threatening to act against property owners who rent space for such activity.

Investigators say massage parlors and outcall advertising by masseuses are merely fronts for prostitution.

Some 14 property owners and parlor operators have been sent letters by the District Attorney's Office, telling them to close down the offending activity or face having their property tied up in civil court for a year.

The abatement program is similar to ones that have been used successfully in Los Angeles and Sacramento, according

## Crackdown begins on property owners

to sheriff's Chief Deputy Lloyd Gray.

A growing number of crimes associated with massage parlors and outcall masseuses prompted the crackdown, according to Gray. "Sideline problems have been evident to us for a long time," he said, "but they have been becoming more prevalent recently. There have been a string of armed robberies in massage parlors and parlor parking lots and two fatal drug overdoses," Gray said. Even more crimes, he said, go unreported for obvious reasons.

Last month, a jury convicted a Santa Cruz man of murdering a prostitute he solicited from the outcall masseuse

column in a newspaper classified section.

In the past, law enforcement agencies have tried to handle the problem through criminal prosecution. But, said Sheriff Al Noren, hours of work to make an arrest would end with a small fine and short jail sentence and the prostitute would be back out on the street.

Such enforcement did nothing to stop prostitution-related crimes.

In 1975, Noren proposed licensing masseuses to try to handle the problem outside the criminal arena, but the Board of Supervisors did not act on his plan.

Several months ago, the Sheriff's Of-

fice looked into the nuisance abatement practices in Los Angeles and Sacramento, and began compiling complaints to be used by the District Attorney's Office to serve notices on the property owners.

"In this situation, the nuisance is the location and not the individual," Gray said.

Property owners are told to eliminate the nuisance or their doors can be padlocked during lengthy civil court proceedings. "The owner therefore has immediate reason to get rid of the nuisance," Gray said.

In the case of outcall masseuses, after calling and being solicited for sexual conduct, detectives traced the number to a location. A letter then was sent to the owner of that property.