

COOPER HOUSE
PACIFIC AVE.

✓ Offices set for Cooper House

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SANTA CRUZ — Music from the patio is livening up the downtown area, people are lining up for tables at the high-profile restaurant, small carts selling everything from hot dogs to jewelry line the front of the building.

Then why is most of the inside of the Cooper House empty? Why do sheets of plastic hang from the rafters to the entrance of the second story and why does a hastily painted cardboard sign announce the top of the building is closed?

Because developer Jay Paul has not completed the historic building's facelift. And because his Los Gatos company will soon be moving to Santa Cruz and into the entire second story.

"We're installing heating in the whole building and we're moving our offices onto the second floor," said Lucille Nickerson, who is in charge of Paul's Cooper House project. "We're keeping the ground floor and the basement totally open for retail."

The switch of the second floor from retail sales to office space is a bit of a blow to the city's sales tax coffers, which will lose whatever potential earnings upstairs businesses might have brought.

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rice use," admitted City Councilman John Laird. "My preference would be for retail and for attracting people."

But Nickerson said she still sees the Cooper House as a central attraction and strong retail center in the downtown area.

"We are definitely going to put the Cooper House back to what it was before — the main destination for people to shop and eat," Nickerson said. "We're really wanting to keep it a retail center and bring it back to the status it had."

Built in 1895, the Cooper House served as the county courthouse until 1967. It was scheduled for demolition in 1971 when developer Max Walden purchased it for \$70,000 and decided to

renovate it. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s it was a central attraction on the downtown Pacific Garden Mall, drawing crowds daily through the summer who enjoyed the patio restaurant, listened to live music and sifted through the building's shops.

The building became something of a sleeping giant, though, when new owners traded it to the Steve Sanchez family in 1986. It sat dormant, awaiting renovation for two years. Then Paul purchased the building for about \$2 million in early 1988.

After renovation of the building, there has been a high turnover of renters. But the Crepe Place took over its restaurant facilities in May and ever since the front of the building has been jumping. Now the inside houses only a take-out sushi bar and a crystals store. Owners of a futon store that had been downstairs moved out earlier this month.

Still, Nickerson said she expects the current work to be completed by Sept. 15, when Paul's company is expected to move into its new upstairs offices. A new art gallery is opening in the building's basement this weekend and Nickerson said she expects the rest of the retail locations to be filled by the time Paul moves into his offices.

"We have a lot of people interested," Nickerson said. "We're trying to find the right combination that would mix."