

✓ 1-5-89 GT Down town

It's a Whole New Year For Pacific Mall Plans

THE IDEA of "mall ambassadors" of the Disneyland persuasion or a "theme mall" has been canned, but other changes are in store for Pacific Avenue if the Downtown Revitalization Committee puts its plethora of ideas in action.

The revitalization task force was formed in November, and the city council has proclaimed a new emphasis on downtown for 1989. Their mission: to deal with the stereotype of the mall as a deteriorating hangout for transients rather than a shopping avenue for tourists and residents.

So far, during the holiday months of November and December, the task force oversaw a number of changes on the mall that Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt said spruced up the mall but were only "short-term efforts."

Those changes included free parking on holiday weekends, cleaning the mall with pressure hoses instead of steam cleaners, radical pruning of plants, removing graffiti, and sponsoring caroling and a kids' parade.

But now that the new year is here, more long-term projects to revamp the downtown are planned. To begin, members of the revitalization task force will take a van tour of the mall Jan. 12, complete with checklist, to look at the place with a new eye.

The committee will look for cleanliness, plant overgrowth, maintenance, places to sit, whether the store windows are attractive and "all the details that make up the physical environment," said Wormhoudt.

"1989 is the 20-year anniversary of the mall," she said. "The mall has been enormously successful since its revitalization from 1969. It continues to be a strong and healthy retail market. On the other hand, 20 years seems to me a good time to look critically and see what we need to do."

Furthermore, the time is right for merchants who are feeling threatened by the Capitola mall expansion or Valley Fair over the hill to start



"thinking creatively" to strengthen business conditions downtown, she said.

The city also plans to tighten regulations on events in the city, and city attorney John Barisone has drafted two ordinances dealing with special events, one to regulate promotional events and the second dealing with free speech demonstrations.

The revitalization committee has talked

of requiring permits for street performers, although Barisone hasn't received instructions to draft an ordinance pertaining to them.

One area the revitalization task force has purposely overlooked is the polarized situation between merchants, shoppers and street people. Wormhoudt said the issue tends to get people "so bogged down. It's emotional, divisive, and it encourages people to make a lot of value judgments."

Another committee has formed to deal with the "social problems" of downtown, said Wormhoudt. "We're not trying to deal with social problems," she said. "It seemed to us that the most important thing to concentrate on was the physical aspects of the built environment and the merchandising aspects of downtown."

While at this point the revitalization committee may sound like a cheerleading squad with push brooms, Wormhoudt said appearance is the first step to a stronger business economy. "It is important that any shopping area, in order to be inviting to people, be clean and attractive," she said.

"And furthermore, what we have downtown that no shopping mall will ever have is real depth and breadth. It's interesting architecturally; you find an interesting mix of stores. It isn't like a mall that got built by one person in one year and got filled up with the correct number of different types of stores. You can find the same type of mall in Cincinnati that you can in Duluth." •

— Rose Dean