

# Santa Cruz to unveil downtown sculptures

## Public art exhibit part of bigger effort to beautify Pacific Avenue

By GENEVIEVE BOOKWALTER

Sentinel staff writer

*Pacific Avenue*

**M**ike Bethke came home from his Colorado vacation with a vision: to place sculptures by local artists along Pacific Avenue like those he saw in the high desert town of Grand Junction.

This weekend, with help from Bethke's Santa Cruz Sunrise Rotary, the city's Redevelopment Agency and the Downtown Association, that vision will become reality as 13 sculptures, including dogs made from river

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rock, a school of steel hammer-head sharks with galvanized anchovies and others, are solidified into their new homes for the next year in Pacific Avenue planter boxes.

"The whole deal is to make people smile," Bethke said, noting that one of the river rock dogs "looks just like my basset hound, old Hoover." The sculptures will rotate each year,

he said, with new ones coming in next November.

In Grand Junction, the 24-year-old program has grown to include more than 100 sculptures.

Bethke's effort dovetails with a renewed effort from the city and downtown business owners to spruce up Pacific Avenue. The new public sculpture exhibit, called SculpTOUR, will include lights that not only illuminate the artwork but also help brighten sidewalks where unsavory activities, like drug sales and aggressive panhandling, have been known to occur

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**'We're trying to keep downtown clean, safe and friendly. (The new sidewalk sweeper) is the clean part.'**

VICE MAYOR CYNTHIA MATHEWS

Michael Bethke came up with the idea for the SculpTOUR project in downtown Santa Cruz, where artists are provided public space to show their sculptures in planter boxes along Pacific Avenue.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Santa Cruz worker Matthew Elbert takes the city's new sidewalk sweeper for a spin down Pacific Avenue on Thursday.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel





Contributed photo

This 'rock dog,' designed by Michael Eckerman of Santa Cruz, will be one of three stone pooches joining the SculpTOUR planned for Pacific Avenue.

## Art

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after dark.

Those spotlights should coincide with the 200 new streetlights the city should soon install, including brighter and more energy-efficient lamps, said project manager Cathlin Atchison.

And Thursday, city staff tested their new sidewalk sweeper, which is like a combination Zamboni and carpet steamer, in that it is a riding sweeper that sucks up its used, dirty water and keeps it out of the storm drain.

"We're trying to keep downtown clean, safe and friendly. This is the clean part," said Santa Cruz Vice Mayor Cynthia Mathews, as she watched the

turquoise machine leave a long, wet stripe on the sidewalk.

SculpTOUR exhibit curator Gabriel Harrison, principal designer for Westergaard and Harrison Design in Santa Cruz, said the new sculptures should be "a big lift for the downtown" and a boon for artists, too: Their creations will be for sale.

It's "a public market for them on the one hand, and a real gift to the city and its urban environment on the other," Harrison said.

Foster Andersen of Santa Cruz, who was downtown as the sidewalk sweeper made its debut, said he welcomes the efforts.

"You know how you feel better when your house is cleaner?" Andersen said, "I think people feel that way about downtown."

The city has six months to



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The sculpture 'Virgin Moon' by Santa Cruz artist Marilyn Kuskht will be displayed in a planter box on Pacific Avenue for the next year, as part of the city's new SculpTOUR program.

decide whether to keep the \$75,000 sidewalk sweeper, which would be paid for by the Redevelopment Agency and parking and trash funds.

A celebration for the SculpTOUR exhibit and businesses that support the arts will be 5:30-

7 p.m. Nov. 21 at the Museum of Art and History, 705 Front St., Santa Cruz. For information on SculpTOUR, call 420-5157 or e-mail [cbirns@ci.santa-cruz.ca.us](mailto:cbirns@ci.santa-cruz.ca.us).

Contact G. Bookwalter at 706-3286 or [gbookwalter@santacruzsentinel.com](mailto:gbookwalter@santacruzsentinel.com).