

# New, bigger 'Cooper House' set

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SANTA CRUZ — Cooper House owner Jay Paul said he plans to build a bigger building on the corner of Pacific Avenue and Cooper Street, where the former county courthouse stood for 93 years.

But the new structure will be designed "with a sensitivity" to surrounding architecture, he said, and will resemble the building that was demolished after the Oct. 17 earthquake. Paul said he plans to use the romanesque architecture of the predecessor.

Paul said Friday that he plans to meet Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt and other city officials next week to outline his proposal.

Paul and others working for him have had extensive conversations with the city planning staff over the past month, but have submitted no definite plans. The Los Gatos developer said he expects to submit conceptual plans for a new building in about three weeks.

At a meeting of city officials and property owners convened Friday by state Sen. Henry Mello, D-Watsonville, Paul said his new building will house retail space in the basement and on the first floor, with offices above. He declined to say how high he plans to build, but his comments indicated a building taller than the old Cooper House.

Pilings must be sunk 70 feet to support a structure of the size he plans, Paul said. Soils engineers drilled 120 feet deep on the Cooper

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House property last month to determine the composition of the old river-bed soil.

Paul said "a little two- or three-story building" would not need such extensive underground pil-

ings to make it earthquake safe.

"We have to create something big enough to generate enough income to support the debt," Paul said.

Paul bought the Cooper House in

1988. He suffered "a couple million dollars" in losses, he said, all uninsured. He was remodeling the structure when the earthquake hit, and had planned to move his offices to the second floor.

"I don't think we can expect help from the city," Paul said during a discussion of city-backed bonds to provide low-cost financing for rebuilding. "We need to make it on our own," he said.

He said he is optimistic about the future of the downtown and believes he could fill a building with tenants.

Paul deflected a question by Assemblyman Sam Farr, D-Monterey, about the rents he would likely

have to charge. Farr said he is concerned Santa Cruz will go the way of Carmel, where rent increases are driving small businesses out of town.

"I don't think rents will be the issue," Paul said. He said he has talked with potential tenants about leasing space. He said he was most concerned that the city have enough money for street improvements and additional parking downtown.

"I think the downtown has a viable future," Paul said. "If the city can create more parking downtown, in essence it can create more development downtown."