

First Pacific Avenue trees planted

By JOHN ROBINSON

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SANTA CRUZ — The "garden" is returning to the Pacific Garden Mall, as the first set of sycamore trees were planted along Pacific Avenue Friday morning.

"The trees are representative of the downtown finally coming back to normal," said Donna Maurillo, a public relations consultant for the street contractors. "I remember the mall was a pretty lush place, but after the earthquake, the bulldozers came and knocked everything down, and we ended up with a denuded downtown."

Nine 20-foot sycamore trees were carefully lowered into large holes carved into the edge of Pacific Avenue, providing the first splash of greenery in the barren stretches of con-

crete, gravel and construction debris.

As a tractor carefully lowered the trees into place, a small crowd gathered to watch.

"I'm really happy to see some signs of life down here — it's a sign of progress," said Jeanie Hankins, a worker at La Playa, an import products store.

While the somewhat spindly trees don't exactly return the mall to its former botanical glory, they are a first step.

The only other greenery has been a collection of stunted weeds and willows that sprouted in the holes left by the demolition of buildings after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

"It makes you feel good about what's coming," said Aaron Couch, as he watched the planting of the trees. "It's something positive

after negative things that have happened."

The trees planted Friday will grow to about 40 feet tall and will form barriers in the parking lanes along the avenue. They were planted so that crews can begin paving the lower two blocks of the mall.

"It's pretty much trees from here on out," said Jeff Loomis, a landscape foreman. "They'll be coming in bunches."

As work continues on the so-called "streetscape" project, Maurillo said Cooper Street should be open to traffic late next week providing cars a route across the mall to Front Street.

In September street lights will be installed, and Maurillo said the project is on schedule for completion in early December, including all paving, sidewalks, planters and planting.

Tree-mendous



Nine sycamore trees, planted Friday, provide the first splash of green on Santa Cruz's post-earthquake downtown.

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