

Welcome to Downtown Santa Cruz

Pacific Ave.

High-tech firms, retailers and students head for the Pacific Garden Mall

by Kim Monari Jeannette

NEW NEIGHBORS ARE MOVING to downtown Santa Cruz, bringing a distinctly different look to the city these days. People walking or driving along Pacific Avenue and Cooper Street are confronted with a building that is mysteriously "bagged" in black plastic.

It's the new Cooper Building. The return of the landmark that imploded after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake is eagerly anticipated as both locals and tourists alike miss it.

Walking a little further down Pacific Avenue, there's activity in the former Woolworth's building, as Urban Outfitters prepares to occupy the largest part of it. Negotiations are still ongoing.

There are also signs of life at the small subdivided section of the Woolworth's building. That would be the side where diners once sat on stools at the lunch counter. Baby Gap will now take the smaller space, next to its parental counterpart, the Gap.

"It's a fantastic time for downtown," says Peter Eberle, executive director of the Downtown Association.

"There's lots of anticipation. It's (construction) disruptive for a little while, (but) when the sidewalks open up again, there's a sigh of relief."

Eberle says the change was dramatic when the scaffolding and narrow pedestrian passage-

ways were removed from the front of the 1200 Pacific Building.

There will be that same collective sigh of relief when the temporary façades come down from the University Town Center for the opening of the five-story building at Pacific Avenue and Cathcart Street in September.

Chris Mahoney of Barry Swenson Builder outlines the building directory: The first floor will be retail spaces. She doesn't give any specific names, but does say, "We're working with restaurants, service businesses, a video-rental business, and are also talking to apparel retailers."

Swenson says that most of the second floor will be occupied by the UCSC Extension office, while third floor occupants will be software companies.

Don't overlook the great view from the fourth and fifth floors. There are plans for renting out 53 two-person apartments

located on the upper floors.

Elise Levinson, assistant director of housing, dining and child care services for UCSC, says, "a combination of the University Extension's English Language Institute students and other students who request to do so will live there. The idea was to have the students living close their learning (classroom) environment. It's a great opportunity for our international stu-

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6-10-99 Good Times



The University Town Center brings a high-profile image to the Pacific Garden Mall and Cathcart Street in downtown Santa Cruz.

dents to experience American culture in a lovely, small-town center."

The small-town center is also becoming a tech center. The online trading company eBay has leased a small office in the 1200 Pacific Building.

Philippe Kahn has also decided to lease offices there. The nearly 6,000-square-foot space will be home to LightSurf, his third local company in what he refers to as "Internet Beach."

As for locals, Eberle says there are new ideas on the horizon, one of which is a movie series on Thursdays.

"We get a lot of traffic on weekends. If locals don't want to face the weekend crowds, this would be something for them. We have an exciting downtown. Kids' Day in the spring drew over 2,000 people.

"There's a perception of how downtown used to be. And that perception is so different now than even two or three years ago," he says.