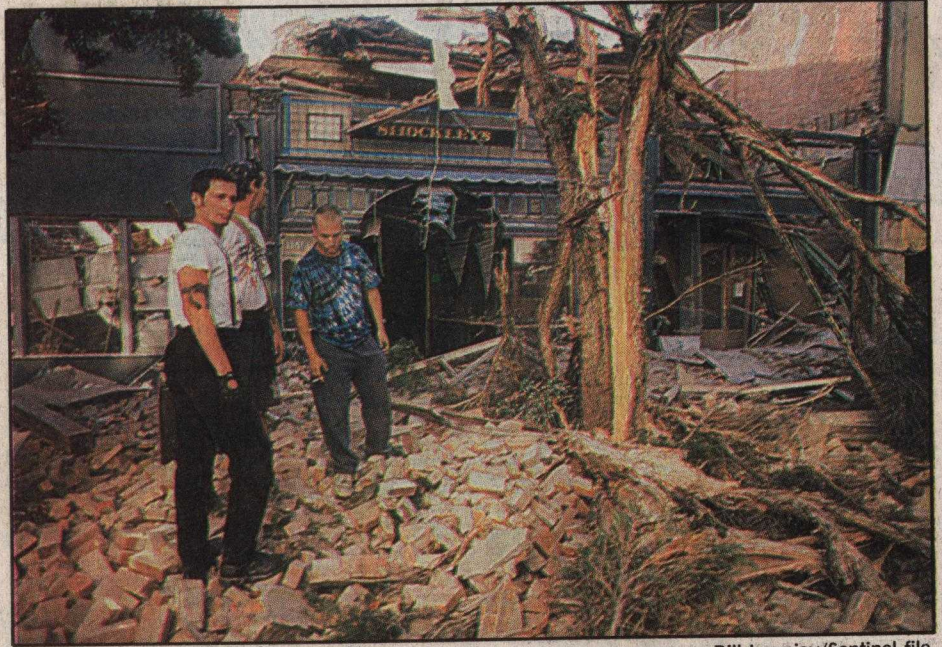


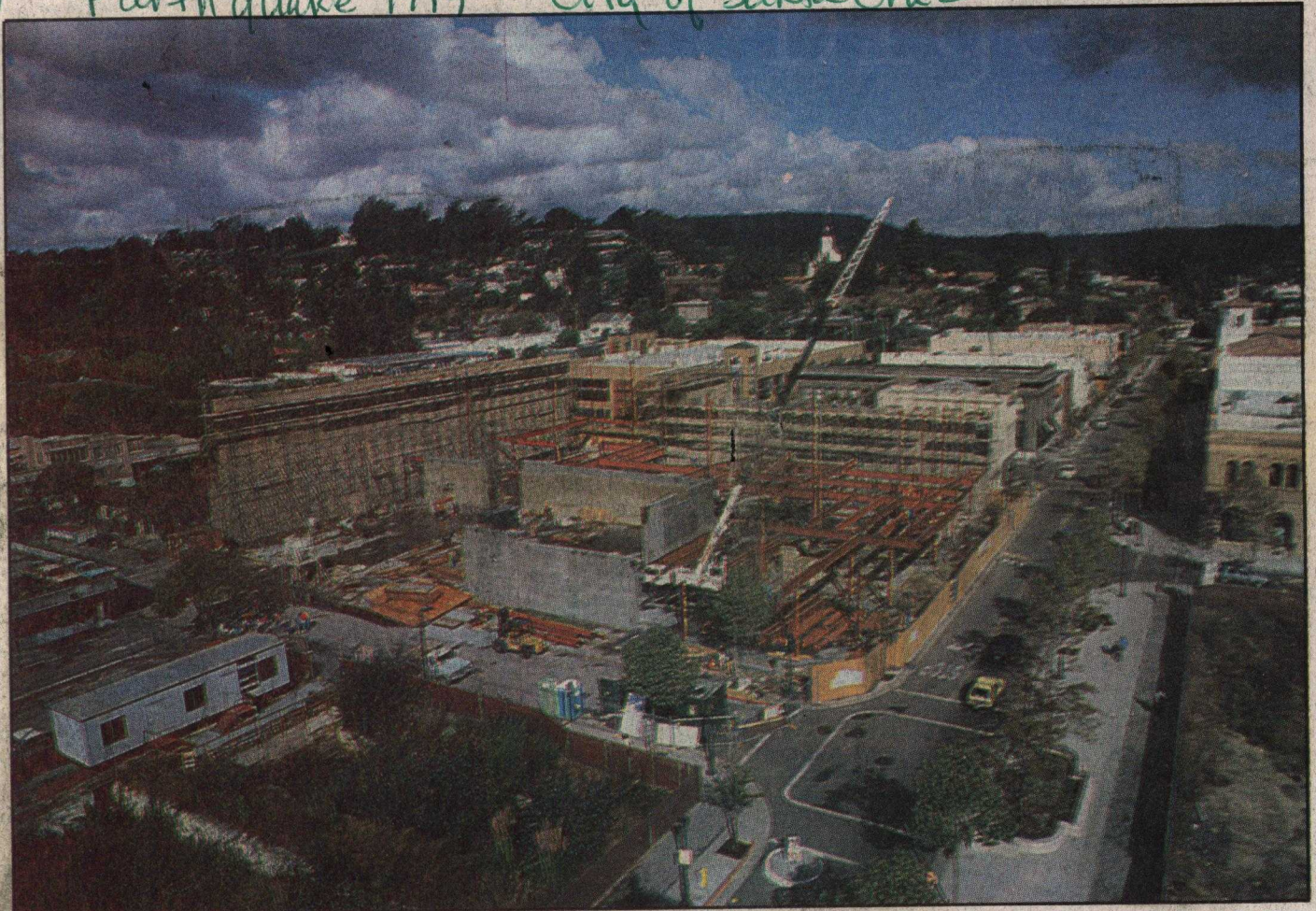
# 5 YEARS

## and 15 seconds



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel file

Earthquake 1989 - City of Santa Cruz



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

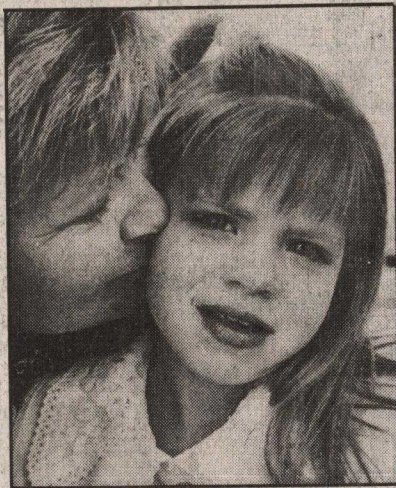
Downtown Santa Cruz in recovery mode in 1994, above, and at the time of the quake, top photo.

## Rhythms of disaster sound off

By ROBIN MUSITELLI  
Sentinel staff writer

**T**HE MUSICAL SCORE for the ruin was the sound of breaking glass. It exploded with deafening clarity, slicing the balmy autumn afternoon. It was 5:04 p.m., Oct. 17, 1989. The Loma Prieta earthquake rolled, roared, and ripped its 7.1 magnitude into our lives. Above the broken shards was a white cloud of dust, the ghostly remains of disintegrating buildings, hanging like a stench in the air. Switchboards of the county emergency dispatchers lit up and stayed lit up for the next 12 hours. Hundreds of dazed and stunned people poured out of buildings onto the Pacific Garden mall. Disbelief at the destruction bound them together. Barehanded, they clawed at the rubble in desperate attempts to uncover those buried underneath. They toiled into the night at the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co., where two young workers were buried, even as aftershocks caused unsteady walls to sway above them.

The smell of natural gas was everywhere. The wail of sirens, the whapity-whap of emergency helicopters singed the senses. On Myrtle Street, a house exploded in flames. Neighbors, armed with fire hoses,



### More inside

- Anne Simpson, above, is a true earthquake baby.....A10
- Their own words.....A10-A11
- Those who died .....A9
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hail of bricks. The chimney of George Pinheiro's home on Peyton Street shook off, and landed, standing up, on top of his camper van, parked at the side of his house. Foundations cracked and fell away. Homes twisted, cracked and buckled in half. John Stow and Chris Telles sat in their Santa Cruz home as the walls popped, the floors buckled, furniture flew threw through the room and walls pulled apart.

## Downtown SC working to come back

By ROBIN MUSITELLI  
Sentinel staff writer

**F**IVE YEARS, 15 seconds later, the Pacific Garden Mall is much like the smile of a 5-year-old child. There are gaps in the smile, holes where there should be teeth, and indications of expensive work ahead, but beaming, nonetheless. Five years ago, after the 7.1 earthquake, Santa Cruz was a city shaken to its foundation, a downtown district collapsed on itself. The rebuilding isn't done: it's about three-quarters of the way. True to the soul of Santa Cruz, the rebuilt downtown has built-in contradictions. The comeback downtown has more entertainment and housing than before — a playground-bedroom mix that hasn't been easy. Cardboard encampments to highlight the plight of homelessness have been erected in front of upscale stores.

Developers complain that the mosaic of street life has scared off national retail chain stores and that banks won't loan all they need to build because they can't line up tenants for the upper floors. Some of the downtown's largest lots — where the Cooper House stood, for instance — are still vacant. On top of it all, the quake hit while the state was mired in recession.



# Disaster: then and now

*Continued from Page A1*

Tom Rider's leg was crushed under stacks of loaded apple bins that fell on his legs.

At PG&E's Moss Landing plant, damaged equipment knocked out electric service.

Helicopters landed outside her room and patients filled the halls at Community Hospital, while Gloria Simpson held her newborn daughter, Anne Quarnstrom.

Paul and Faye Ellis's house on Rebecca Drive in Boulder Creek sliced off its foundation, a caricature of a home. It was the second house the Ellises lost in a natural disaster.

Soon, lines for supplies snaked across the parking lots at Zanotto's grocery store.

Reports of looting were infrequent immediately after the quake, but some jumpy residents armed themselves anyway.

Elderly residents, bent by the loss and years, waited in temporary shelters as their downtown housing was demolished.

## President Bush arrives

President George Bush, flanked by U.S. Rep. Leon Panetta, came to Santa Cruz's downtown.

Six people lost their lives in the county.

Kay Trieman died when Ford's department store in Santa Cruz fell on her.

Gary Phillip West died on Bonny Doon Beach when a section of the cliff collapsed, burying and killing him instantly.

Lawsuits followed the deaths: some are unresolved today.

In Watsonville, in the poorest section of town where frozen food workers, farm workers, the unemployed and elderly lived, became a graveyard of homes.

Minutes after the quake, four columns of black smoke rose over the city. Emergency vehicles screamed to the rescue.

The temblor knocked fruit off trees and felled the trees themselves. Cold-storage plants doubled over. Agriculture suffered about \$20 million in losses.

Makeshift tent cities followed. Thousands lived in Watsonville's streets, in the parks and in their cars.

Isabel Carrillo spent the night of the quake with her family in a dilapidated, abandoned structure on the verge of collapse. Like other Spanish-speaking residents, she didn't seek shelter because she didn't understand she could. "I thought they were only helping those whose houses fell down completely."

For Spanish-speaking residents like Carrillo, it was a disaster in a foreign language — public announcements about supplies in a language they couldn't understand and English-speaking workers at emergency shelters and food lines.

Harkins Slough Bridge on Highway 1 was closed. Long detours wound through Watsonville.

## Disaster turns deadly

Elida Ortega was crushed as she used her body to shield her grandson at the Bake Rite Bakery.

Ford's department store in Watsonville, the county's oldest family owned business, fell to the wrecker's ball.

Ford's in Santa Cruz was demolished, too. In the months following the quake 20 downtown businesses were demolished. Nine more followed.

Quake security fencing for the downtown was delivered in a skip loader.

The downtown was fenced in; 32 square blocks were within the perimeter at one point.

The businesses that weren't destroyed were closed for more than a month.

For 2½ years, after the cold, crash of wrecking balls delivered cruel aftershocks, 45 business took refuge in tents, the "Phoenix Pavilions." They were the first symbol of the downtown's rebuilding.

The wrecking ball crushed the grand yellow brick walls of the century-old Cooper House, once the old county courthouse which still ranked symbolically and sentimentally as the anchor of downtown.

The wrecking was a wrenching experience, a dirty piece of work, watched by hundreds. Many cried.

Cyclone fencing still surrounds the lot, a hole in its center like an open sore. And five years later, there is

On Myrtle Street, a house exploded in flames.

Neighbors, armed with fire hoses, helped firefighters.

Chimneys all over the county fell in a hail of bricks.

still dispute whether the building could have, should have, been saved.

The list of demolished buildings was so extensive the downtown district's historic status was withdrawn by the state, stripped of its historical significance.

Later, county residents agreed to tax themselves for the earthquake recovery. Officials promised that every penny of the proposed \$43 million tax would be used to rebuild.

## Some reconstruction completed

Most of the money has, but a portion has been used to bail out Scotts Valley's sewer fund and to prop up the county's general fund.

A stubborn state recession and new lending rules ushered in by the failure of savings and loans institutions dragged the pace of rebuilding.

The elegant Shandrydan building on Walnut was the first to complete reconstruction: it was in late April, 1990.

The St. George Hotel came back in time for Christmas, 1992.

If Pacific Avenue before was a garden mall before the quake, the new version is a playground — coffee shops, restaurants, nightclubs and theaters have shifted the town's clock toward the evening.

That hasn't always been easy for seniors who returned to downtown to live in rebuilt residential hotels like the Palomar Inn. Some say it's too noisy to sleep.

The czar of Santa Cruz's downtown redevelopment is from San Jose: Barry Swenson Builders, whose projects include the venerable St. George Hotel and next door, the old County Bank.

In Watsonville, the death of Elida Ortega, who used her body to protect her grandson from falling bricks, inspired her niece, Patsy Hernandez, to pursue a career with the Red Cross.

Paul and Faye Ellis, who lost their Boulder Creek home in the quake, retired, moved to Oregon and used their insurance settlement funds to build a log cabin.

John Stow and Chris Telles lost their rented home in Santa Cruz. But they found a home to buy and plan to be married.

## Time fills the holes

Rider, whose leg was crushed by apple crates, has a steel plate and screws in his leg. His leg hurts at the end of each day and he has trouble walking in the apple fields at his plant.

Isabel Carrillo, who experienced disaster in a foreign language, today finds that most city workers speak Spanish.

When, as geologists promise, the next quake comes, Watsonville will be bilingual on many levels.

On the first-year anniversary of the quake, Santa Cruz residents gathered in quiet memorial around the Town Clock, and again, on the second anniversary.

No such memorials are planned Monday, the fifth anniversary of the quake. Time has begun to fill in the holes left by the quake and the rubble of memories.



# Santa Cruz

Continued from Page A1

Despite that, five years, 15 seconds later, downtown Santa Cruz is coming back.

According to figures from the city's Redevelopment Agency, it has:

- Almost three quarters of the square-footage demolished after the quake has been rebuilt, with more housing units than before.
- Twelve buildings have been rebuilt and three more are under construction. Nine have been repaired.
- 147 businesses not located downtown prior to the quake have opened.
- 46 downtown businesses temporarily closed by the quake have reopened.
- Almost \$20 million has been spent on the city streets, sidewalks and amenities and a new parking garage.

## Forever changed

5:04 p.m., Oct. 17, 1989, and 7.1 are numbers that forever changed Santa Cruz's downtown.

The numbers were devastating. Three people dead on the Pacific Garden Mall. Some 206 of 600 businesses in the downtown area were destroyed or displaced; 1,400 employees displaced and 29 buildings were demolished.

Christmas after the quake, the downtown was wrapped in security fencing.

For 2½ years, while the cold crash of wrecking balls delivered cruel aftershocks, 45 business took refuge in tents, the "Phoenix Pavilions." They were the first symbol of the downtown's rebuilding.

Landmark buildings — the Cooper House and St. George Hotel — were demolished as onlookers watched with tears in their eyes.

The list of the demolished buildings was so extensive that the state eventually withdrew its recognition of Santa Cruz's downtown as a historic district.

The rebuilt downtown is an entertainment center, with the new McPherson Art and History Center and 17 new restaurants, pubs and clubs, and coffee houses where none was before, according to a Downtown Association of Santa Cruz summary.

At night, downtown comes alive with lines of college students snaking down the street in front of the popular Redroom bar and 99 Bottles of Beer pub.

Palookaville, a new smoke-free, early-show club opened in late May, with a food court catering to the lunch crowd. Permits are pending for the Dakota Club, a wine and jazz club that will cater to those with alternative lifestyles.

Tables and chairs spill out the sidewalks in front of Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co., Walnut Avenue Cafe and Bookshop Santa Cruz, Logos Books and Records and Acapulco — additions made possible by the wide city sidewalks built as part of the \$20 million reconstruction.

The main attractions in this glitzy entertainment remake are still to come. A nine-screen theater complex is under construction at Church Street and Pacific Avenue, the heart of downtown. A proposal for another theater complex, this one with eight screens to be built on North Pacific Avenue, is pending.

## Home is where downtown is

The emerging Pacific Avenue playground also is the bedroom for some 450 people who live in hotels rebuilt since the quake.

For them, the party never ends, and they wish it would.

The residential hotels — the St. George and Palomar and El Centro — were encouraged to rebuild

after the quake in an effort to provide affordable housing. The residences make good use of the upper stories and provide a financial basis for reconstruction.

In the past few months, at least three seniors who moved into El Centro, a city-subsidized affordable housing project for seniors, have been driven out by revelers. Six of the 44 rooms are vacant.

"The noise of bongo drums as late as 2 a.m. every night means no sleep day or night," said Mari Tustin, of the John Stewart Co., which manages the property at Pacific Avenue and Cathcart Street.

The complaints have been steady enough for City Councilman Mike Rotkin to reconsider the funtime-bedtime mix. Rotkin has asked the Downtown Association for recommendations on whether the sidewalk cafes should close and have the chairs removed at 10 p.m., and how to better enforce noise complaints.

Redevelopment Agency's Ceil Cirillo says the move to entertainment was driven, in part, by the lack of daytime shoppers after the quake.

"If we don't have daytime, weekday business to serve the retailers and restaurants, it has to happen in the evening. The entertainment provides the evening customers," said Cirillo.

## Out of the garden

In the years before the earthquake, vacancies had crept into storefronts on Pacific Garden Mall. Store owners complained that the mall trees had grown too large, and had become shelters for people who hung out on the street. They wanted the greenery thinned and the thicket of humanity weeded.

The quake resulted in the clear-cutting of the mall trees — the replanted mall is much less varied and dense.

The "garden" of the Pacific Garden Mall was omitted when the city held a grand reopening celebration. It became Pacific Avenue.

But, instead of disappearing, the collection of teens, homeless, panhandlers, vagrants who were mixed among the shoppers became more noticeable as they congregated on sidewalks in front of vacant lots where stores once stood.

Commercial space on the ground floor of El Centro has been difficult to rent because of "socially disruptive activities" on the southern end of Pacific Avenue, said John Stewart Co.'s Tustin.

Earlier this year, Andrew Duncan, whose family owns the lot where the quake-demolished Ford's department store stood, blamed the sidewalk-sitters for scaring away a Ross clothing store. Duncan said he had a deal with Ross to build a department store, until a Ross bigwig saw the people hanging around the lot.

Cirillo, of the city Redevelopment Agency, says Duncan didn't have the deal he thought he did, and speculated that Ross pulled back primarily because it didn't want a downtown store to raid its Capitola store customers.

## Ordinances put in place

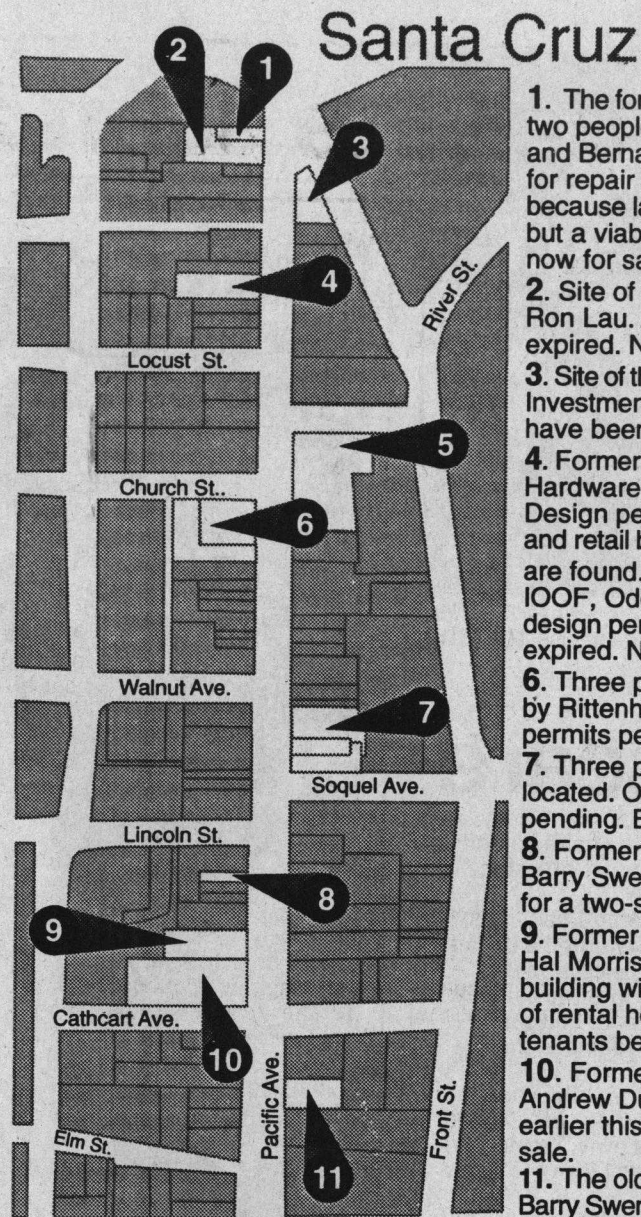
Earlier this year, the City Council enacted a package of conduct ordinances for the city's commercial district. They banned nighttime and aggressive panhandling; prohibited sitting on the sidewalk.

Protesters reacted by sitting on the cold concrete and challenging their citations in court. The sidewalk sitting ordinance was tossed out as unconstitutional and the city back-tracked with a version that generally allows sidewalk sitting.

The national retail chain stores the city has tried to lure downtown have continued to locate along 41st Avenue in Capitola, drawn by available parking and other chain stores, said Cirillo.

She's betting that the success of Noah's Bagels, which opened in late July, and the downtown theater,

# Who owns the holes?



1. The former Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting building where two people were killed in the earthquake. Owned by Kay and Bernard Zwerling. Permits were issued in April 1990 for repair of the two-story building, but work stalled because lawsuits were pending. Lawsuits settled in 1993, but a viable tenant couldn't be found. The property is now for sale.

2. Site of the former Bookshop Santa Cruz. Owned by Ron Lau. A design permit for a five-story building has expired. No plans are pending.

3. Site of the razed Flatiron Building. Owned by Rittenhouse Investment Corp. Design permits for a four-story building have been issued, but construction is not scheduled.

4. Former offices of Zwerling Optometrist and Santa Cruz Hardware. Owned by Rittenhouse Investment Corp. Design permits have been issued for a two-story office and retail building. Construction will not begin until tenants are found.

5. Sites of the former Cooper House and IOOF, Odd Fellows Building. Owned by Jay Paul. A design permit for a five-story building was issued but has expired. No plans are pending.

6. Three parcels which housed five businesses. Owned by Rittenhouse Investment Corp. There are no plans or permits pending.

7. Three parcels where Pacific Cookie Company was located. Owned by the Stewart Kett estate. No plans are pending. Building permits have expired.

8. Former Athletic Shoe Factory. Being purchased by Barry Swenson Builders, which has preliminary drawings for a two-story building.

9. Former Plaza Books/Paper Vision building. Owned by Hal Morris. Property has design permit for three-story building with retail stores on the ground floor and 16 units of rental housing on upper floors. Owner is waiting for tenants before building.

10. Former Ford's department store site. Owned by Andrew Duncan. Plans for a Ross's store fell through earlier this year. Property has recently been listed for sale.

11. The old Upper Crust Pizza owned by Bob Lockwood. Barry Swenson Builders has an option to buy, with adjacent corner property. No plans pending.

Chris Carothers/Sentinel

which is scheduled to open Memorial Day weekend, will induce specialty chain stores to locate downtown.

The downtown will continue its turn to evening — for shopping and entertainment, she predicted.

Meanwhile, four of the downtown's lots sit vacant — three of them are on key corner lots — waiting for either a large retail tenant or a group of them.

Here's why. The city is requiring that those lots over 20,000 square feet have a minimum of two stories and a maximum of five. For a five-story building, that translates to about 100,000 square feet of tenant space, about 80 percent of which must be leased to get financing, said Cirillo.

Two buildings of comparable size have gone up — the theater under construction is owner financed and the St. George Hotel has a variety of lending sources, including owner Barry Swenson.

## Owners in a Catch-22

Louis Rittenhouse, whose prominent Santa Cruz family owns three vacant lots on Pacific Avenue, complains that owners are caught in a Catch-22.

Under more restrictive lending rules that went into effect after the earthquake, the result of savings and

loan institutions failures, banks require that developers have committed tenants before they will lend on a project.

Even if ground-floor retail tenants are found, commitments from office tenants for upper-story space are difficult to get in advance of building, said Rittenhouse.

Rittenhouse said his family does not intend to build without having tenants first.

Often, the national chains locate only in malls, said Rittenhouse. "They won't even return my phone calls."

That's the Catch-22, says Cirillo. "These companies want office space today, not in two years."

Owners have been left with risky options: finance the upper floors themselves or, as builder Barry Swenson has done, build apartments instead of offices.

Rittenhouse contends that the vacant holes left to fill will someday become the downtown anchor stores.

"Anchors don't come first," he said. "They come at the end."