

Pacific Ave

Builder offers plans for Cooper House site

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SANTA CRUZ — Shopping center developer Jay Paul returned to the city Tuesday with plans for a five-story building at the site of the former Cooper House.

Paul stopped short of submitting a formal application.

Nevertheless, city officials are delighted that Paul is close to moving ahead with plans to rebuild one of the largest earthquake-vacated downtown sites.

"It's great that something is actually happening," said Santa Cruz Mayor Scott Kennedy. "I think each thing that falls into place builds on the sense of confidence and momentum downtown."

The property at Pacific Avenue and Cooper Street is vacant, bordered by a chain-link fence since the Cooper House and the adjacent Odd Fellows Building were demol-

ished after the 1989 earthquake.

According to city Planning Director Peter Katzlberger, Paul visited planning offices Tuesday to re-submit plans for a Mediterranean-style, 100,000-square foot building with a restaurant and retail shops on the ground floor and offices above.

Those plans were approved by the city, but the approvals expired last year after Paul was unable to get financing to build.

The developer said he was unable to line up tenants for the upper floors, and couldn't obtain financing.

According to Katzlberger, the previous plans were approved before construction began on the multiscreen theater on Pacific Avenue. The theater means less parking is available for Paul's project, he said, predicting that will be the

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Cooper House

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largest stumbling block.

Paul was advised by city planners not to submit an application until the parking problem was solved, Katzlberger said. Once the parking is resolved, he said, approvals would probably be "very routine."

"We've already approved this project once," he said.

Paul's intention to move forward is a sign that "he has the confidence of having tenants," said Ceil Cirillo of the city Redevelopment Agency. "I'm extremely excited. It's one more filling in the cavity."

Paul did not return Sentinel phone calls.

The owner of the Pajaro Hills Shopping Center in Watsonville, Paul has developed shopping centers in Santa Clara and Fresno counties.

He bought the Cooper House 18 months before the Loma Prieta earthquake hit for about \$2 million and began renovating it. He had hoped to establish his offices on the third floor.

Before the renovation was finished, however, the quake irreparably damaged the building. It was demolished within a week. The demolition of the Odd Fellows Build-

ing followed more than a year later.

Earlier this year, Paul purchased the Odd Fellows lot next to his Cooper Street property.

Since then, Paul has said he has talked with a number of tenants, including the fast-growing network software maker TGV Inc., which now occupies the second floor and half of the first floor of the former County Bank building across Cooper Street from the Paul site.

Katzlberger said it was his understanding that TGV has not committed, but that Paul has enough other tenants to go ahead.