

Bookstore sign design OK'd

Pacific Ave.

■ **Santa Cruz:** This version is smaller than what originally was planned for the Super Crown, with back-lighted aluminum letters that will create a 'halo' effect.

BY JOHN WOOLFOLK
Mercury News Staff Writer

The first round of Santa Cruz's bookstore battle has ended in a draw, with the city council ap-

proving a softened design by Super Crown Books for its new Pacific Avenue store sign.

The council voted unanimously Tuesday night to accept the

smaller design with back-lighted aluminum letters that create a "halo" effect, even though it is still a bit larger than downtown guidelines call for.

Bookshop Santa Cruz owner Neal Coonerty had complained that the company's original design with internally lighted plastic letters belongs in a strip mall. He hoped the council would shrink his rival's sign further but said he was satisfied with the

decision.

"I was happy they changed the type of sign from the garish one to the halo effect," Coonerty said. "Given what they started out with and what they ended up with, I'm pleased."

The sign dispute is part of a bigger battle between Coonerty and Crown, who have sparred in court and whose stores will be only yards apart. It also is symbolic of Surf City's traditional re-

luctance to accept national chains.

"Part of what we're playing out here is Santa Cruz's love-hate relationship with national retailers," Councilwoman Cynthia Mathews said.

Resident Bruce Engelhardt said Super Crown must tailor its look to blend into Santa Cruz.

"Is it going to be Super Crown Santa Cruz or something more ge-

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neric like "Super Crown Cupertino?" Engelhardt asked.

City staff members had approved Super Crown's original 55-square-foot design with internally illuminated, 30-inch plastic letters, saying it is allowable under city zoning laws. There already are three internally lighted plastic signs on Pacific Avenue.

However, the city's Downtown Recovery Plan design standards adopted after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake and incorporated into the zoning ordinance recommend against internally lighted signs. The standards also

would limit the Super Crown sign to 44 square feet.

City staff members approved Super Crown's design anyway, explaining they considered the downtown guidelines flexible and that the large building warrants a bigger sign. Super Crown is a key tenant in a new complex that includes Santa Cruz Cinema 9, Peet's Coffee and Tea, and Blockbuster Music. The Blockbuster sign on Pacific Avenue also is bigger than set forth in the guidelines.

Coonerty, however, said the Downtown Recovery Plan was meant to be followed and that the city should not grant exceptions. He gathered signatures from

6,400 supporters.

After the zoning board upheld Coonerty's appeal last month, Super Crown revised the design to 45.3 square feet with 2-foot-high, back-lighted letters, only 1.3 square feet bigger than the downtown plan's standard.

In reaching their decision, council members sympathized with project developer Jack Bariteau, saying that differences between the zoning law and downtown plan led to confusion. The revised design, they said, was a reasonable compromise.

"The internal illumination was what was obnoxious," Vice Mayor Mike Rotkin said.