

EARTHQUAKE '89 - Watsonville - rebuildup

Watsonville downtown partly open

Traffic flowing; buildings still being demolished

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WATSONVILLE — At least 20 businesses are open downtown and traffic flow is back to normal, despite the presence of heavy bulldozers finishing the work started by the Oct. 17 earthquake.

"My plan is to get downtown open as soon as I can," City Manager John Radin said Wednesday afternoon at a meeting of downtown merchants. "And we want to get the roadblocks down."

Radin said he hopes to get a Federal

Emergency Management Agency grant to hire a planner to help with a master plan for the new downtown.

"We'll have public hearings and get input. The main thing is to have a master plan. I don't want a lot of tilt-up buildings in the downtown.

"We also need a market analysis to give people an idea of what should be done to the area," Radin said.

Demolition began last week on some of the buildings on the 300 block of Main Street and is continuing at a steady pace.

Slated to fall today are several buildings across from the City Plaza, which housed the old Central Electric office and Family Bargain Center.

The Hildreth Building between the Fox Theater and Wells Fargo Bank fell

last week, and La Canada shoe store was demolished Monday.

Radin said Ford's 100,000-square-foot building, which was considered the anchor of downtown, will come down next week.

Also signed off for demolition are some of the landmarks of downtown, such as the brick Odd Fellows building and Masonic Temple, Radin said.

Lupe Flores, owner of Lupe's House of Beauty, asked Radin to notify merchants when nearby buildings will be demolished.

"PG&E asked me if they could turn off my electricity Monday when they took down the Canada Shoe Store, but I refused because I had clients coming in and we work on an appointment basis," Flores said.

"Next time can we be told in advance?" she asked.

As to the future of downtown, Charlene Shaffer, executive director of the Chamber of Commerce said, "We're retaining them (businesses)."

Twenty businesses are open throughout the downtown, including J.C. Penney, John's Shoe Store, McMahan's Furniture, Lupe's House of Beauty, Long's Drugstore, La Manzana, Miramar Grill, Ideal Cleaners, Jack's Cigar Store, Van's Shoe store, Norm's Shoe service, Taylor's Office Supply, Helen's Corner, Kool Katz Ice Cream, Stepick's Photography, Towntri Fashions, Tuxedo World, Goodwill and Esperanza Cafe.

Eight have relocated to new sites, including Ford's Department Store at the Westridge Industrial Park.