

Main Street's recovery effort: a progress report

By SUSANNA HECKMAN
STAFF WRITER

Main Street redevelopment and earthquake recovery is now clearly visible to passers-by, with some structures going up on the vacant lots, some new paint adding color, and a series of Sunday afternoon concerts in the Plaza.

Weekdays, the downtown is full of the sounds of drilling and hammering on what will be the new Ford's department store.

The lunch counter in the old, earthquake-leveled store will be replaced by a coffee shop run by the owners of Bake-Rite Bakery.

Bake-Rite Bakery was located in the old Odd Fellows building on

East Beach Street which was destroyed by the earthquake. The main bakery has moved to a site on East Lake Avenue, where it

More on downtown recovery efforts on page 11.

will stay. The coffee-shop, which will be in the new Ford's, has been operating in a modular building in Ford's parking lot.

A few of the many projects and changes now visible along Main Street include:

■ The new post office, almost finished on the 200 block, with even the landscaping and windows

in.

"We're just wrapping up a few details," Bill Paul of the Postal Service said.

The post office, which has been in the planning stages for years, had originally been scheduled to open in March, but now it looks like it will be mid-July before it opens its doors, Paul said. Meanwhile, the federal General Services Administration has begun the process of selling the old post office across from the Plaza on Union Street.

Public agencies have first shot at buying Postal Service property, and GSA real estate sales agent Jan Daut said that some public

agencies have expressed interest.

■ Next door to the new post office, the long-vacant lot that is slated for a one-story shopping center still sits empty. San Jose developer Barry Swenson has had a green light from the city to build a shopping center for some time, but hasn't been able to get enough pre-lease agreements with tenants to get financing.

Project manager Lisa Bullen said that she had a number of pre-lease agreements with several shopkeepers for smaller spaces, but that they have the option to pull out now because of the delay. She said she is concentrating on getting a larger "anchor" business nailed down.

Two potential anchors have expressed interest, Bullen said, and the bank is reviewing the credit history and financial capabilities of one of them. The other is not ready to commit yet, and is doing its own marketing study of the area.

Once one of them is signed on, she said, the project will probably be able to break ground.

■ An overhaul of the Fox Theatre is clearly nearing completion on the east side of the 300 block, and a new frame is visible for what will be the Herrera building next door. Both are expected to have shops on the ground floor.

■ The boarded-up Jefsen building on the corner of the 500 block,

which housed Johnson Drugs, the old Chop Stick restaurant, Touch of Elegance bridal boutique, Carpet World, and a number of small apartments upstairs, has been in escrow for a number of months.

Architect Marvin Bamburg, who is drawing up plans to restore the building for the San Jose-based Housing for Independent People, said the delay is due to "red tape and requirements" of the various funding sources.

HIP is coordinating funds from FEMA and the California Disaster Assistance Program as well as private grants, he said.

HIP is also planning to restore the Resetar Hotel.