

Downtown merchants sign leases for tents

By GREG BEEBE
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Downtown merchants displaced by the Oct. 17 earthquake lined up Monday to lease space in seven new downtown shopping pavilions.

The mood was upbeat as Rodney Hoffer — whose Santa Cruz Hardware store was damaged in the quake and later demolished — became the first merchant to sign on the dotted line.

Hoffer's business began out of the back of a horse-drawn wagon in 1883. "Now we're selling out of a tent, so there is progress over 106 years," he said.

Work begins Saturday on the six fabric-and-aluminum pavilions,

which will occupy three city parking lots along Cedar Street; three separate shopping areas will also be created in the vacant Bank of America building at the corner of Pacific and Soquel avenues.

The Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce, the Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County and the Downtown Association are acting as landlords of the pavilions, which are scheduled to open for business Nov. 24.

"This is an exciting project," said William Rubel of the Children's Art Foundation, one of the large group of merchants and community leaders who spearheaded the drive to erect temporary, tent-like structures to replace those shops damaged, destroyed or otherwise

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president, Downtown Association*

rendered useless by the quake.

"The future of the mall is with the businesses that were there, and are here," Rubel said. "It's going to lend a festive atmosphere to the downtown. We think people are going to come from all over the county and Bay Area to help Santa Cruz rebuild by shopping here for Christmas," he said.

Unprecedented public-private sector cooperation on the pavilions is an "absolute phenomenon," said Lou Rittenhouse, president of the Downtown Association. "The level of cooperation and concern is wonderful, very heartwarming," he said.

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Organizers of the pavilion plan have worked against time and Mother Nature, with the Christmas season rapidly approaching.

"Somebody said the other day that this is the first time all the merchants in a meeting have agreed on something," Hoffer said.

By signing a lease, the merchants committed themselves to tenancy agreements ranging from two

months to one year.

"I'm very optimistic," said Louis Swisher, whose Crystal Kaleidoscope operated out of the now-raised Cooper House. "It's going to be real rough — I lost everything. I even have to come up with tables to put my stuff on," Swisher said.

"I'm starting from step one, but I'm not quitting, because this is what I do, this is how I make my living."

The pavilions, Swisher said, are an opportunity for Santa Cruz shoppers "to support their local businesses. We need help from the people."

A hole in the ground will soon be all that's left of George Walsh's Pipeline shop. He called the pavilion concept "a real roll of the dice" but said he was "increasingly encouraged" by the plan's speedy progress. "Most people who are in business are gambling all the time anyway," Walsh said.

"It's real," said Richard House of Folk Arts. "The city council has been very flexible and the response was very quick. It took a lot of

courage to pull this off. Government doesn't usually work this quickly," he said.

"My alternatives were to sell out of a warehouse, have a parking lot sale or go to the flea market," said Bunny Payne of Bunny's Shoes. "It's not like we have a choice. The choice is to be positive or negative, and we're staying positive," Payne said.

Several of the merchants expected the pavilions to have a light, festive atmosphere akin to a country Christmas or renaissance faire. Food will be available at almost every location. Plans for extra security officers are under negotiation; organizers promise the pavilions will be well-lit at night.

"The nice thing about pavilions is they have a lot of light. Ours is 24 feet high in the center. It creates a nice feeling inside," Payne said.

Seven businesses will occupy two 4,000 square foot pavilions in the I.D. Building parking lot at Cedar and Locust streets. Sixteen more businesses, seven of them restaurants, will open in two pavilions in the city parking lot at Lincoln and Cedar streets, near Pearl Alley Bistro.

Two more pavilions located in the city lot at Lincoln and Cedar streets, near the START Clinic, will house a dozen mall-area shops.

Bank of America has donated its building "no strings attached," Rittenhouse said. The building, at Soquel and Pacific avenues, will be a 90-day home to at least 15 businesses. Those shops are still somewhat in doubt, Rittenhouse said.

because of the tenuous status of the nearby Trust Building, which was damaged by the quake and subsequent aftershocks.

All of the relocated businesses will operate from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily through Dec. 24.

More than 100 volunteers from throughout the state and Santa Cruz — including a contingent of building tradesman coordinated by the Northern California Carpenters Union — will begin construction on the pavilions Saturday. Trucks carrying the materials will arrive today, Rittenhouse said.

Rittenhouse said he expects the city's two largest parking lots — the double-decker lot on Cedar Street and the triple-decker garage on Front Street — to help make up for parking spaces filled by the pavilions.

PAVILION BUSINESSES

PAVILION 'A,' I.D. Building parking lot, Cedar and Locust streets — Santa Cruz Hardware.

PAVILION 'B,' I.D. Building parking lot, Cedar and Locust streets — Cat 'n' Canary; Shandrydan; Shen's Gallery; Cantor-Wheat Gallery; Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co. (gifts); Zoccoli's deli (gifts).

PAVILION 'C,' city parking lot, Lincoln and Cedar streets — Bento Baki; Yesterday's; Zoccoli's; Little Shanghai; Speakeasy Espresso; Pacific Cookie Co.; Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co.

PAVILION 'D,' city parking lot, Lincoln and Cedar streets — Artisan's Co-Op; Folk Arts; Western Vision; Groff's Luggage; Act Five.

PAVILION 'E,' city parking lot, Lincoln and Cedar streets — Lily Wong's; Plaza Books.

PAVILION 'F,' city parking lot, Lincoln and Cedar streets — Bunny's Shoes; Sock Shop; Pacific Trading Co.; Hat Co.; Pacific Pack & Pants; Altitan; Crystal Kaleidoscope; Santa Cruz Nutrition; Antique Collective; Moderne Life.

BoFA No. 1 — Universes Records, Discount Records; Gateway Bookstore; Cooper House Art Gallery; Tengarra; Bead It; Eclectic; Indulgence.

BoFA No. 2 — Camouflage; Body Option.
BoFA Vault — Shockley's Jewelers; Fingal; Santa Cruz Jewelers; Gensler-Lee Jewelers.