

Experts map downtown face lift

Design teams plan to emphasize city's historic features

Most people agree that downtown Watsonville needs some rejuvenation, a face lift to draw fresh business and new customers into the heart of the city.

So, as part of the Main Street Watsonville program, a cadre of architects and color and sign professionals will descend on Watsonville Friday and Saturday to conduct a special design study of the downtown area.

Downtown Watsonville has a number of special and historic buildings, but many have been significantly altered over the years by changing tenants, or by landlords trying to modernize their facades to keep up with the trends of the day, says Main Street Watsonville coordinator Jerry Hernandez.

In addition, the after-effects of the Loma Prieta Earthquake can still be seen on many building exteriors.

It all adds up to tarnishing the historic architectural splendor of the downtown, added Hernandez.

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Hernandez said Main Street Watsonville representatives contacted Ned Madonna, Watsonville's deputy redevelopment director, and Paul Davis Jr., past president of the Monterey Bay Area Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, for help.

The outcome of the discussions was a consensus for a low-cost paint and facade improvement program based on a special downtown design study.

Davis contacted other chapter members, who agreed to participate in the Watsonville design. Robert Corbett, Main Street Watsonville design committee chairman and a local Watsonville architect, and Hugh Carter, president of the Architects Association of Santa Cruz County, enlisted the support of AASCC's participation in the project.

Other architects from as far away as San Francisco will also be involved, including Janice Pregliasco, consulting architect to the California Main Street program.

They will be split into four design teams, which will be rounded out by graduate and undergraduate students from the Cal Poly campuses at San Luis Obispo and Pomona.

A fifth design team will address overall issues. It will include: Connie Burd, a historic color consultant for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the California Main Street Program; and Melvin Soderholm, president of "The Display Group" - a custom designer and manufacturer of banners and signs. Other design specialists will round out the teams.

The teams will meet Friday evening for a series of presenta-

tions by local experts, including Michael Bellinger of Callander Associates, the planning and design firm that prepared the streetscape plan for Watsonville's Redevelopment Agency. Local historian Betty Lewis and Watsonville Planning Director Maureen Owens are also scheduled to speak.

On Saturday, beginning at 8 a.m., the five design teams of six members each will review, analyze and sketch design proposals for participating building owners.

Students from the Watsonville High Video Academy will make a video documentary during the two-day study.

A final presentation will be made Saturday at 6 p.m. at the Watsonville City Council chambers, 250 Main St., Watsonville.

For further information, contact Hernandez at 724-3954.

- Bob Smith