

# Cleaning up Santa Cruz's image

By Paul Rogers  
Mercury News Staff Writer

Cheap wine, fixed park benches and a negative reputation will all be relics of downtown Santa Cruz's past if a group of prominent citizens studying social improvements along the new Pacific Garden Mall has its way.

Before the Loma Prieta earthquake wrecked the buildings downtown, persistent problems with vagrancy, public drunkenness and panhandling were chipping away at the area's image and hurting small business profits.

Now, as plans move forward with downtown reconstruction, community leaders are working to

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‘It is really bothersome for someone to have a drunk person stumbling around asking them for money.’

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ensure that the social problems of the old Pacific Garden Mall won't plague the new downtown.

A report just drafted by the Downtown Social Issues Task Force and heading for city council review next week calls for significant changes along Pacific Avenue.

The 19-member advisory body of business owners, elected officials, police administrators and advocates for the homeless worked six

months on the report. Among its suggestions:

✓ Pressure liquor stores to stop selling cheap, fortified wine. High in alcohol content and low in price, such brands as Thunderbird and Night Train are favorites of hardcore alcoholics often accused of harassing passers-by. If the voluntary ban doesn't work, the city should ban fortified wines, the report recommends.

✓ Institute regular security

checks near dumpsters and public restrooms.

✓ Install plenty of public telephones in easily accessible locations downtown.

✓ Regulate the locations of information tables and street musicians to ensure that neither blocks entrances to businesses. Task force members do not suggest banning either, but instead recommend creating open spaces along the mall for them to function.

✓ Construct planters that cannot be used for sitting and install benches that can be easily relocated or moved late at night so vagrants won't sleep on them.

✓ Encourage open events, such as the Farmer's Market, to increase community and pedestrian interaction.

✓ Promote the downtown through publicity campaigns that cite low crime statistics and new developments.

Although many of the suggestions would tighten laws relating to street people, one central feature of the report calls for the construction of a "day center" off the mall

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