

# Vision Santa Cruz contemplates its future

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SANTA CRUZ — Vision Santa Cruz is about to get a new look.

The 36 members of that public-private group, formed to help plan the rebuilding of downtown Santa Cruz after the Oct. 17 earthquake, will meet at 7:30 p.m. Monday at Loudon Nelson Center to discuss their future role.

Alternatives range from quietly going away to taking on expanded duties.

Most likely, Vision Santa Cruz will select something in between.

The City Council created Vision Santa Cruz last December to answer a handful of questions the council felt were necessary to answer before beginning to rebuild the Pacific Garden Mall.

Among those questions were building heights, parking needs and housing opportunities.

After almost five months of public hearings, consultants' studies and give-and-take at round-table discussions, Vision Santa Cruz answered the questions.

The committee recommended that most new buildings be no taller than three stories and that their design develop individual character while retaining elements of the existing flavor of the mall. It also recommended building a mix of new housing units, including a total rebuilding of all residential hotel-style rooms lost in the quake.

Vision Santa Cruz went a step further than its charge, and recommended that the new downtown continue to favor pe-

destrians over cars and that a strong network of public and private open spaces be constructed.

The council unanimously adopted the Vision Santa Cruz principles and directed that they be adopted into the planning process.

Then Vision Santa Cruz and the City Council appointed a 12-member Technical Advisory Group, composed mainly of property owners and city staff, to work with the Redevelopment Agency on a new master plan for downtown that will become part of the city's General Plan.

Vision Santa Cruz has just sort of existed in the past couple of months while the TAG team set about its task.

Those left on Vision Santa Cruz are now wondering if there still is a role for

them.

Although some, like City Councilman Joe Ghio, say they believe its time to bow out, and others like Ralph Meyberg want\* to keep Vision Santa Cruz intact as a sounding board for the community at large, most see a reduced role ahead.

"This is a terrific vehicle for community input," Meyberg said Friday. He said he does not think Vision Santa Cruz has reached its full potential yet.

Meyberg feels Vision Santa Cruz could bring together public opinion on issues still unresolved.

Transit District General Manager Scott Galloway, who sits on Vision Santa Cruz, agreed that since the formation of TAG, Vision Santa Cruz is in danger of being a fifth wheel.

He suggests that Vision Santa Cruz shed its planning role and direct new efforts in the area of public information. "It seems appropriate that we could be the ones to focus public attention on the re-birth (of downtown)," Galloway said.

Businessman Larry Pearson agreed. Like Galloway, Pearson said the new Vision Santa Cruz storefront in the old PG&E building could serve as a clearing house for public information.

But before Vision Santa Cruz does anything, he said, it should complete work on a "do-this, do-that; be-this, be-that" vision statement for downtown.

As far as coming up with any detailed plan, Pearson prefers to leave that to the TAG team and the city.