

Mall fix-up plans pondered by council

By KATHY SALAMON
STAFF WRITER

In 1989, the Pacific Garden Mall in Santa Cruz will celebrate its 20th anniversary.

In those 20 years, the mall has flourished as the commercial and aesthetic center of Santa Cruz, though it's had its ups and downs in both categories.

"The overall health of the mall is good," said Teresa Gellis, president of the Downtown Association. "There may be a vacancy here and there, but we've had a lot of stores wanting to move onto the mall. They want to be part of the core."

Competition with stores and businesses on 41st Avenue does not seem to be harming the Pacific Garden Mall either, Gellis said.

"I don't see 41st Avenue as a threat," she said. "As the west side of Santa Cruz and the university grows, we're still going to be attracting lots of people. For one thing, people don't want to battle the traffic there and they want the atmosphere here. Also, we have a good mix of everything here."

But anything 20 years old is bound to have gone through some growing pains, and perhaps needs some revamping.

"The mall could certainly use a face lift," Gellis said.

For instance, Gellis said, she would like to see the mall expand south toward the beach area. Also, sidewalk cafes may be a thing of the immediate future and some fountains could be added on the mall.

This year, the city of Santa Cruz will begin looking at the mall and examining its physical configuration and economic viability.

At a City Council meeting this evening, the council is expected to allocate \$48,000 to that process: \$2,000 would go toward a workshop to develop an overall plan and \$46,000 would be set aside from the city's redevelopment agency to implement the plan.

William Rubel, chairman of the city's Downtown Commission, said the process could amount to some major changes on the mall.

"We need to take stock as we approach the 20th anniversary year of the mall's



Chip Scheuer

In its heyday, the mall had characters like Rainbow Ginger performing at the Cooper House's cafe.

strengths and weaknesses," he said.

Among the elements of the mall plan to be discussed will be the economic viability of the mall, including what types of businesses the city would like to see on the mall and how they could be attracted to come here, whether the mall should have more promotional activities, and whether an agreement on joint hours of operation should be considered.

The landscaping of the mall will also be studied. The condition of the planters and the plants themselves will be evaluated.

"It might be nice if there was more color on the mall," Rubel said. "Maybe we could look to see if we should plant something that would add to that."

Security issues will be a major theme of the mall management plan. Planners will look for "long-term security needs in the downtown and analyze alternative methods for delivering them."

Parking availability and parking needs for the future will also be addressed.

Another element of the plan will look at the financing of improvements.

WATSONVILLE
REGISTER-Pajaronian
June 14, 1988