

Building Boom



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

A 15-hour concrete pour is planned Dec. 28 at the Rittenhouse Building project in downtown Santa Cruz.

Three downtown projects keeping local contractors busy

By JONDI GUMZ
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

A construction boomlet in downtown Santa Cruz means local contractors are hard at work.

"It's cool so much is going on," said Santa Cruz developer Mark Westberg, expressing a feeling shared by others in the industry. "I hope it continues."

Three multistory commercial building projects are under way within a few blocks of each other, providing jobs at a time of the year when the construction industry often experiences a slowdown.

All three projects were years in development, so the fact that they all are under construction at the same time is "merely coincidence," said Westberg, partner in Wescoe Inc.

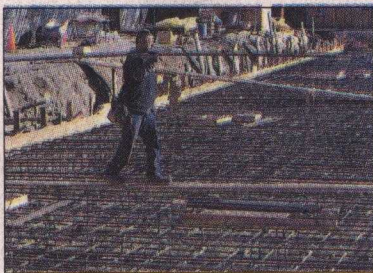
The Wescoe project at 2027 North Pacific Ave., with retail and four townhomes, is the smallest, and is expected to be finished in April.

Another development, 2030 North Pacific, will offer 70 units of for-sale housing, a rare commodity in the downtown business district. An on-site sales office will open in the spring.

The third project, for retail and office space in a prime location at the corner of Pacific and Church Street, is gearing up for what may be the largest single concrete pour in city history.

The job, scheduled for Dec. 28, will take 15 hours to complete, according to Michael Bethke, project superintendent for Slatter Construction.

Instead of phasing the pour, as was done at 2030 North Pacific, the work will start at 5 a.m. and be finished in one day, with the delivery of 2,200 cubic yards of concrete.



Rittenhouse Building

PACIFIC AVENUE
AND CHURCH STREET

Cost: \$8.5 million to \$12 million, depending on tenant improvements

Project: Ground floor and 2nd floor retail, 3rd and 4th floor offices

General contractor: Slatter Construction, Santa Cruz

Architect: BCV of San Francisco

Site work: Reber Construction, Santa Cruz

Foundation steel work: O.T.H. Steel of Santa Cruz and S.O.S. Steel of Santa Clara

Concrete contractor: Tim Whitlow Concrete, Santa Cruz

Concrete source: Las Animas, Santa Cruz

Electric: John Hope Electric, Santa Cruz

Plumbing: Connor Plumbing, Aptos

Mechanical: Not selected yet

Completion date: November 2007

ished in one day, with the delivery of 2,200 cubic yards of concrete.

That much concrete is roughly enough to pave an area as big as four

football fields to the thickness of a sidewalk. The job is bound to grab the attention of people who live and work downtown.

"One truck will arrive every three and a half minutes," Bethke said. "We are trying our best to minimize any inconvenience and/or disturbance to the adjacent downtown businesses, especially during the busy holiday shopping season."

To ease the congestion, he has hired eight off-duty police officers and will pay them time-and-a-half to direct traffic. For the 60-some people who live at the Palomar Hotel across the street, he has arranged for Noah's to cater a complimentary breakfast of coffee and bagels.

"It's a goodwill gesture," Bethke said.

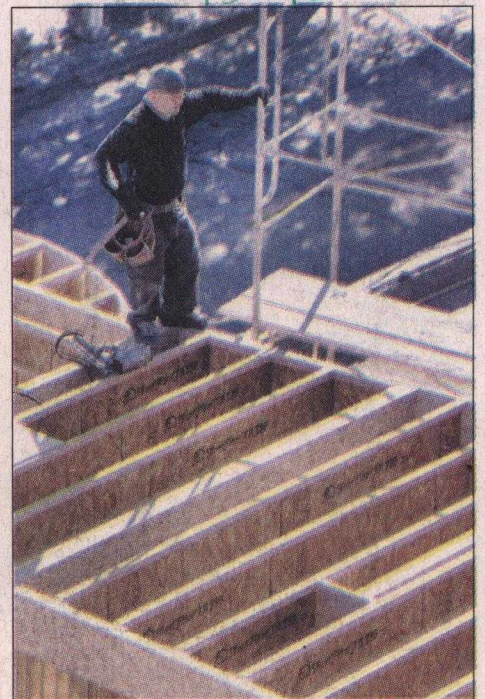
Bethke looks enviously at 2030 North Pacific, a parcel that doesn't have any neighbors next door, residential or commercial.

"Our operational space is very tight," he said, noting that plans call for a 70,000 square foot building on a 20,000 square foot parcel.

Both Wescoe and Slatter have hired mostly local subcontractors. At the third site, supervised by Bogard Construction, decisions on subcontractors have yet to be made.

Westberg of Wescoe, which is the farthest along, said the late start — in September — made it easier to get local subcontractors.

"We definitely do compete a bit," he said, noting that bigger construction projects are under way at Cabrillo College. "But big companies hire big companies."



2027 North Pacific Avenue

Cost: Close to \$3 million

Project: Ground floor retail, four townhomes

Developer: Wescoe, Santa Cruz

Framer: GS Construction, Santa Cruz

Foundation: Avalon Structural Inc., Santa Cruz

Concrete source: Las Animas, Santa Cruz

Drywall: Consolidated Drywall, Soquel

Roofer: Louis & Riparetti, Scotts Valley

Electric: Giant Electric, Santa Cruz

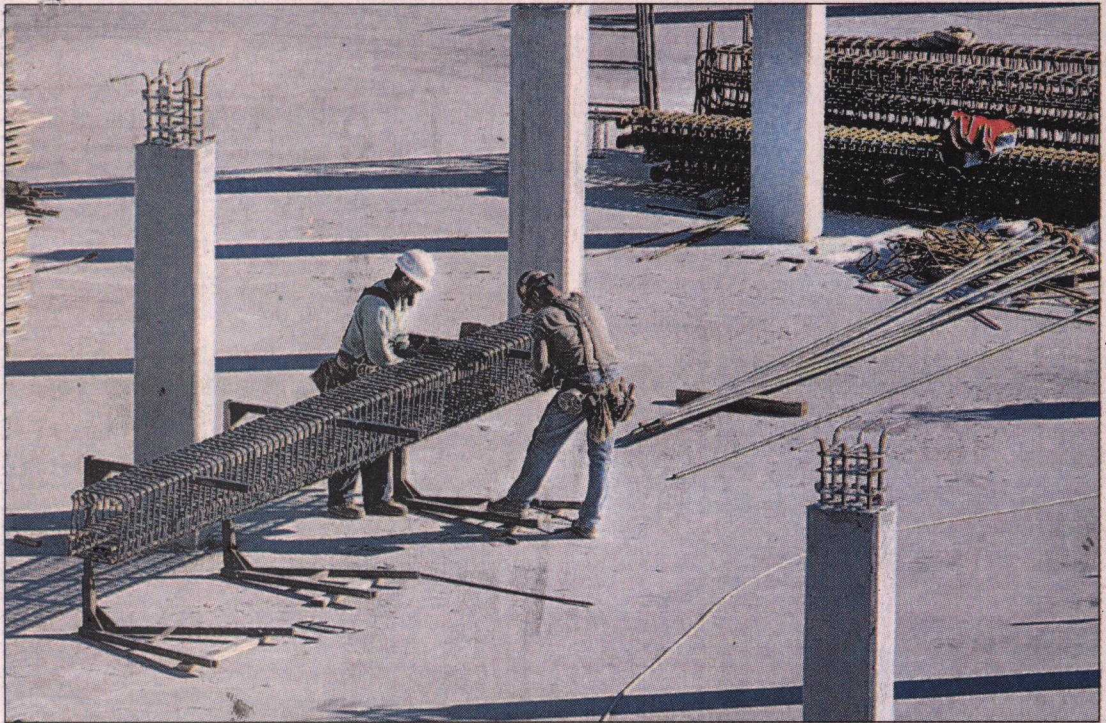
Floor (hardwood): Flooring Outlet, Santa Cruz

Windows: Skylight Place, Capitola

Architect: Daryl Fazekas of Los Gatos

Completion date: April 2007

See **BOOM** on PAGE D10



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

The project at 2030 North Pacific Ave. will offer for-sale housing.

Boom: Projects expected to finish in 2007

Continued from Page D1

He estimated that about 60 people would be employed at his job site.

Bethke said Slatter has developed relationships with local subcontractors.

"Given our excellent working relationships with these subs, they are generally available to assist us with all kinds of jobs and/or problems at almost a moment's notice," he said.

Most of Slatter's work is coming from commercial projects rather than housing developments. Besides the downtown site, the company is working on retail commercial and office buildings, as well as tenant improvements. The job list includes Santa Cruz Medical Foundation, United Methodist

Church, Georgiana Bruce Kirby School, Salvation Army, the Meltzer office building, the Boardwalk, and Erik's DeliCafe.

"Are people busy?" said Bethke, answering, "Is water wet?"

Bogard Construction, which is overseeing 2030 North Pacific, is bidding the subcontracted work now.

"I'll have 130 people out here," predicted superintendent Brian Atchley.

He hopes to award contracts before Christmas.

"Everyone's real busy," he said. "It's good times in the construction industry now."

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2030 North Pacific Avenue

Project: Groundfloor retail and 70 condos

Developer: Santa Cruz River Street LLC, managing partner Chris Garwood

Architect: Thacher & Thompson, Santa Cruz

General contractor: Bogard Construction, Santa Cruz

Concrete contractor: Largo Concrete, Campbell

Subcontractors: Not selected yet

Completion date: December 2007