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The Kalich Co. Building on Main Street in downtown Watsonville.

Kalich bought by locals

President of West Marine has plans similar to the redesigned Jefsen building

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WATSONVILLE — The historic Kalich Co. Building in the downtown area has recently been bought by the president of West Marine and his wife, both of Watsonville.

Randy Repass, president of West Marine, and his wife, Sally Christine Rodgers, purchased the Kalich building located at 427 Main St. from previous owners Stanley and Loretta Meyer of Saratoga Oct. 1. The property closed escrow at the beginning of the month.

John Fry of CDM Real Estate Co. in Watsonville is the project manager of the building, and says that internal demolition and seismic upgrades will begin in three to four weeks. He said the goal for opening the building is set for early next summer.

Neither Repass nor Rodgers were available for comment.

Plans for the building are similar to what is happening at the Jefsen building, one block north of Kalich: The first floor will be reserved for retail businesses, and the second for 14 apartments. The only

difference between the plans, he said, was that Kalich will have "normal apartments" while Jefsen apartments are considered single residents occupancy only.

Fry said the retail spaces will be available for local small businesses in order to form an incubator program in the building, similar to the setup in Plaza Vigil on the same block.

"Our intention is to basically continue the same kinds of businesses as the plaza," he said. He added that he has met with the city and with the Community Development Corporation (CDC) to "finalize an agreement" on being an incubator program.

Plans for improvements to the rear of the building are also underway, including the building's facade and the parking lot, Fry said. The plan is to improve the rears of all the buildings on the 400 block so that they are welcoming to passers-by. "It's all working together," Fry said. "It will not look like the back of a building."

The ultimate plan for the entire block includes the design and construction of a paved walkway with planted trees and flowers that will unite all of the businesses that use the parking lot, from Plaza Vigil to Taylor's Office Supply. The walkway, called Plaza Paseo, is a project of Main Street Watsonville, Inc.

The Meyers acquired the Kalich building through foreclosure last February. Dave Smith of CDM Real Estate Co. in Watsonville is the broker of the property.