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Woolworth's to keep store in Santa Cruz

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SANTA CRUZ — Just one day after its 80th birthday, the Santa Cruz Woolworth's store has been saved from the chopping block.

The company announced Tuesday that it was reversing a decision made last month to close the store as part of a \$480 million corporate shakeup.

"It's wonderful," said Mayor Neal Coonerty when he heard the news. "We were just organizing our effort to convince them to not leave that space vacant, but I guess we won't have to now."

Last month, owners of the 114-year-old five-and-dime chain announced plans to close or redesign 970 stores and cut 13,000 jobs in the U.S. and Canada. The Santa Cruz store on Pacific Avenue, and a scaled-down outlet at the Capitola Mall, both were slated to be closed, although the Watsonville store was to remain open, said a Woolworth Corp. spokeswoman.

Tuesday afternoon, Woolworth's Human Resources Manager Don Dill said company officials changed their minds about the Santa Cruz store.

"We took another look at the Santa Cruz store, and decided that we survived the earthquake and weathered all the hard times there, and we think now that downtown Santa Cruz is coming into the best times. It seemed wrong to close now," he said.

Ed Pasby, who manages the Pacific Avenue store, agreed wholeheartedly.

"I was absolutely ecstatic that they were willing to reopen us and make the commitment to stay here in Santa Cruz," he said.

Dill said the Santa Cruz store will now move from the corporation's "closure" list to its "re-design" list, to be remodeled for the first time in years. None of the store's 15 employees will be laid off, he said.

"We're going to get that store straightened up," said Dill. "Downtown Santa Cruz needs a variety store. We belong there."

Dill said there have been few changes nationwide since the original closure list was released, and that the Capitola store will still close and the Watsonville store will still remain open.