

Hospital - Watsonville Hospital

# Watsonville hospital finds a home

New center on Seagate property will replace quake-damaged building

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Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — Watsonville Community Hospital intends to buy the 27-acre Seagate Technology Inc. property as the location for a new hospital and medical center, according to hospital officials.

The selection ends a three-year search for a new site for the hospital, which was severely damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

Bounded by Airport Boulevard, Nielson and Anna streets, near Highway 1, the Sea-

gate property includes two buildings with about 238,000 square feet, room to build additional facilities and easy freeway access.

Seagate developed the site to manufacture disk drives, but has since vacated both buildings.

Watsonville Community proposes to build a three-story, 125,000-square foot hospital and medical office building, which could be completed as soon as 1997.

The new hospital would be connected to an existing 200,000-square-foot building, which would be used for outpatient and lab-

oratory services and a warehouse. A day-care center would sit on a corner of the site, according to plans submitted to the city Planning Department.

Additional details of the pending deal, including new state and federal funding, are expected to be announced Wednesday by hospital officials, who were reluctant to discuss the developments until then.

Cory Allen, Watsonville Community Hospital spokeswoman, confirmed the hospital's intentions to purchase the site.

According to Allen, the new hospital will

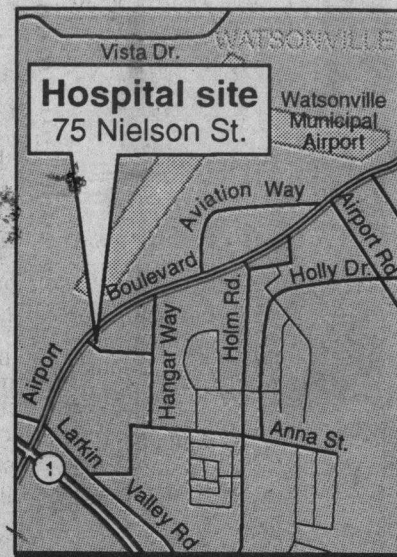
reflect new trends in health care, with expanded outpatient services, a women's center and medical offices, all on one campus.

In keeping with that philosophy, it also plans to reduce the number of inpatient beds, she said. The existing facility has 130 beds.

"I think what we've always talked about is a family-centered area," said Allen. "That concept has not changed."

The Federal Emergency Management

*Please see WATSONVILLE — BACK PAGE*



Chris Carothers/Sentinel

## Watsonville hospital

Continued from Page A1

Agency has agreed to provide \$49 million toward replacement of the earthquake-damaged hospital.

The property purchase and construction of a new hospital building are expected to exceed that amount, although FEMA's contribution has not changed, said Allen.

"We're looking at additional funding," said Allen. "What we're looking at is a total funding package."

She declined to discuss either the purchase price of the Seagate site or estimated construction costs.

Hospital studies in 1991 forecast that most of the county's growth will be in the southern end, and Watsonville will become a bed-

room community for commuters in Santa Clara County and elsewhere.

The search for a new site spanned three years and ranged from Watsonville to Aptos. The search was made difficult by several factors. Hospital officials wanted easy freeway access on about 30 acres of buildable land while, at the same time, avoiding prime agricultural land.

The hospital already owns 17 acres next to the existing 15-acre site. Allen said the existing hospital site is not on the market, although "I would anticipate that it would be at some point."

The hospital submitted an application in early December to build on the Seagate site. But several

more steps are necessary, including obtaining a special use permit from the city's Planning Department and completion of environmental analyses, according to city planners.

Seagate built the main 205,000-square-foot building 10 years ago for about \$17 million, planning to assemble disk drives. It did not occupy the building for several years and has never used it to its full capacity. Employment scheduled to reach 1,500 to 2,000 never materialized when Seagate moved most of its assembly overseas to Singapore.

The company later refurbished the building at a cost of several million dollars and built a 25,000-square-foot cafeteria building.