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Mike McCollum

State Youth Authority consultant Rachel Rios toured the city's under-construction youth center yesterday. Vice mayor Lowell Hurst is in background.

## CYA says center is money well-spent

A consultant with the California Youth Authority was in Watsonville yesterday, touring the city's youth-center-in-progress.

The Youth Authority has contributed \$750,000 toward the \$1.3 million center, which is now under construction at Maple and Union streets. The consultant, Rachel Rios, said her orga-

nization considers the money well-spent, and is backing 50 similar projects elsewhere in the state.

The idea, Rios said, is to offer youngsters recreation and counseling programs that can help keep them out of the criminal justice system. It costs less to help build a youth center than

to house people in prison, she said.

The center is expected to be completed late this year or early next year. In addition to arts and recreation programs, the center will provide children ages 8 through 18 with counseling and health services, offered by Fenix Services and Salud Para La Gente, respec-

tively.

The recreation portion of the center will be run by the city's Recreation Department, and will include an indoor wood-floored gym, a "club" room with pool tables and games, a snack bar, a weight room and an outdoor area with a volleyball court.