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Chip Scheuer

Chess game goes on in yard of the closed Louden Nelson Community Center

Louden Nelson's closure spurs hunt for alternatives

By KATHY SALAMON
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The closure of the Louden Nelson Community Center in Santa Cruz Tuesday night has left many local groups scrambling for alternative sites.

The building was deemed unsafe because it doesn't meet earthquake-safety standards.

Jim Lang, director of the city's Department of Parks and Recreation, said about 30 groups used the building on a daily basis.

"Surprisingly, things have gone very well," Lang said. "We still have a lot of dis-

placed groups, but for the magnitude of the problem, things have been fairly calm."

One of the biggest users of the Louden Nelson Center, the senior Food and Nutrition Program, is now holding its lunches at the Civic Auditorium.

Beverley Calvo, director of Food and Nutrition's Senior Services, said the change in location went over smoothly.

"It was as near to normal day as could be expected," she said. "We had close to the number of people we usually have — we had 100 yesterday and we usually have 115."

Calvo said only about 15 seniors went directly to the Louden Nelson Center yesterday. Most had heard about the change through the media.

Calvo added that any senior having any difficulty going to the Civic Auditorium may arrange for a ride through Lift

Line. This service will pick seniors up at their doors and take them to the auditorium. The number for Lift Line is 688-9663.

Lang said the groups using the Louden Nelson Center only occasionally present more of a problem in scheduling.

For instance, he said, city workers are scrambling to find a place to hold a Christmas party for 200 disabled children planned for next week at the Louden Nelson Center.

Lang said the problem is finding a large enough site that is accessible to the disabled.

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Winnie Rambo, coordinator of the Loudon Nelson center, said finding alternative sites will be a lengthy task as the center was booked in advance for the next six months.

"It will be a long process of finding sites," she said.

Rambo said most of the staff

and public she has come in contact with are understanding of the reasons for the closure. She said the report issued by the structural engineers appeared to be clear and accurate.

The engineers, Peter Boyce Associates, found the building's interior walls, roof and connections to be inadequate and could be unsafe during an earthquake.

The report was done prior to a planned renovation of the auditorium and dining room.

Mayor Jane Weed said the preliminary repair estimate of \$250,000 may be inaccurate. She said an additional study in the next few weeks should give a more accurate figure.

Meanwhile, she said, the city is pursuing federal Housing and Community Block Grant funds to pay for the repair as well as city capital improvement funds.

The Loudon Nelson Center is funded 75 percent by the city and 25 percent by the county.