

YWCA agrees to save East Beach Street building

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The Watsonville YWCA board of trustees agreed Tuesday night to save rather than tear down the landmark East Beach Street building that has housed the agency for the past 12 years.

At a board meeting held in a trailer on the Beach Street property, trustees approved a Historic Preservation Society mandate to scrap any plans to replace the original Tudor-style building.

Last February, the trustees voted to demolish the 1930 building, which was almost destroyed by the Oct. 17 quake. Repair costs, estimated at \$400,000, would cost nearly as much as a new building, it was decided.

But once the Historic Preservation Society got word that the landmark building was being torn down, it called for an immediate halt.

"They saw the pictures and their red flags went up," said YWCA director Lorraine Phillips. "We had very little choice."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency had screened the YWCA application to demolish the old building and construct a new one, and routinely sent the application to the historical society before approving the grant. The society decided that the building, the home of Bob and Shirley Manfre before it was sold to the YWCA,

was uniquely designed and should be preserved.

The YWCA will have to apply to FEMA again, this time for a rebuilding grant.

Phillips said that although the building holds historic significance for the community, trying to save it presents problems. For one, the upstairs can house only five single women instead of 12 or 15.

"That limits the amount of service we can provide," Phillips said.

Secondly, the building was designed for a family, not a business, she said. YWCA workers have no private office space because people must pass through the room used for an office to get to the kitchen.

The trustees hope to remodel the original building and construct another one next door. Walls in the historic building might be torn down to make space for group activities. The new building would

serve as a transitional boarding house for single women and as a child-care center.

Because FEMA will not cover much of the cost of remodeling, trustees plan to turn to the community for financial contributions.

"We're going to need a lot of support from the community," Phillips said.

Despite the expense, some people were "relieved we were saving the building," she said.

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