

City has \$20,000 for downtown tents

EARTHQUAKE '89 - City of Santa Cruz

By GUY LASNIER

Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — The City Council kicked in \$20,000 Thursday to help raise tents in the downtown for the Christmas shopping season.

But a good deal more money must be raised before the tents will go up. At about \$1.30 a month per square foot, the tents will cost more than typical shop space on the Pacific Garden Mall before the earthquake, according to Matt Farrell, the city staffer working with merchants to help get the idea on the ground.

For a year lease, that would amount to \$314,000 for 20,000 square feet. The manufacturer, Sprung* Instant Structures, requires half that amount in advance, plus the cost of windows, doors and other customized improvements. And that price is "flexible," he said.

Farrell said he and others are looking into sources of money to get the project going.

The council said it liked the idea and wants to move quickly. The goal is to be open for business the day after

Thanksgiving.

The Downtown Association has scheduled a meeting Saturday at 9 a.m. at the Civic Auditorium for merchants interested in leasing space in tents, said Mimi Paulsen, the association's executive director.

Farrell said he has letters of intent from three merchants interested in a total of 10,000 square feet. Other merchants have expressed interest in smaller spaces, in the 600- to 800-square-foot range. The Cultural Council has

indicated interest in leasing nearly 6,000 square feet that it would divide up into smaller plots, Farrell said.

The tents would be set up in three parking lots, according to current plans, behind the ID Building at Cedar and Locust Streets; Pearl Alley Bistro, at Cedar Street and Walnut Avenue; and at Cedar and Lincoln streets.

Bookshop Santa Cruz plans to erect a separate tent in the private parking lot behind the damaged store.

Paulsen said the tents would be an

attraction to the downtown. They will be "festive," she said.

Three other locations are being looked at for retail space in time for Christmas. Each would be available rent free to the city, but merchants would pay a nominal rent to cut down on the cost to the others using tents, Farrell said. The Bank of America building has 11,000 square feet, the old County Jail has 5,000 square feet and a portable building donated by the city of Scotts Valley has another 5,000 square feet.