

# Workshop will review quake-safety plan

By JOAN RAYMOND

Sentinel Staff

SANTA CRUZ — The impact on businesses of a proposed seismic-safety program will be discussed Tuesday at a workshop attended by the city's chief building official.

The owners of many downtown buildings will be affected by a proposed "earthquake-hazard reduction" ordinance requiring retrofitting of substandard buildings to withstand seismic shocks.

Buildings not meeting the retrofit requirements would be vacated by order of the building inspector until a structural analysis and repairs are completed.

The Downtown Association is sponsoring the workshop at 9 a.m. Tuesday in the upstairs meeting room of the downtown library, 224 Church St.

Association Director Larry Pearson said the ordinance would have a "profound" impact on downtown businesses. He added the proposed city ordinance goes beyond recently passed state legislation. That law requires communities to identify potentially dangerous structures and to develop a mitigation plan, but does not require retrofitting or abandonment of the buildings.

The intent of the proposed regulations is to prevent deaths or serious injuries resulting from the collapse of buildings in the event of a "strong" or "moderate" earthquake. Santa Cruz is near the San Andreas, Hayward and San Gregorio faults.

The City Council in February formed a technical committee as a preliminary step to comply with the state Seismic Safety Element. Chief Building Official Dave Steeves has drafted the more-stringent city ordinance.

An estimated 175 buildings would need to be retrofitted. About 75 of those buildings, or 42 percent, are downtown, according to a preliminary count.

Exempted from the program are detached single-family homes; attached single-family homes or apartment buildings of five or fewer units; structures built after 1935 that meet the Uniform Building Code requirements at the time of construction.

Also exempted are any buildings of less than 2000 square feet of gross floor area standing 10 feet from any public access (basements are not to

be used in the calculations) and historic buildings that comply with the state historical building code and code for building conservation.

Affected structures would be separated into four classes: essential buildings; low-, medium- and high-risk buildings.

"Essential" buildings include hospitals, fire and police stations, government disaster centers and other emergency facilities.

The risk factor in the other categories is tied to the number of occupants in the buildings — the more occupants, the higher the risk.

Deficient "essential" buildings would have to be retrofitted within two years of ordinance approval; high-risk buildings, three years; medium risk, four years; and low risk, five years.

An appeals board would be established to settle disputes.