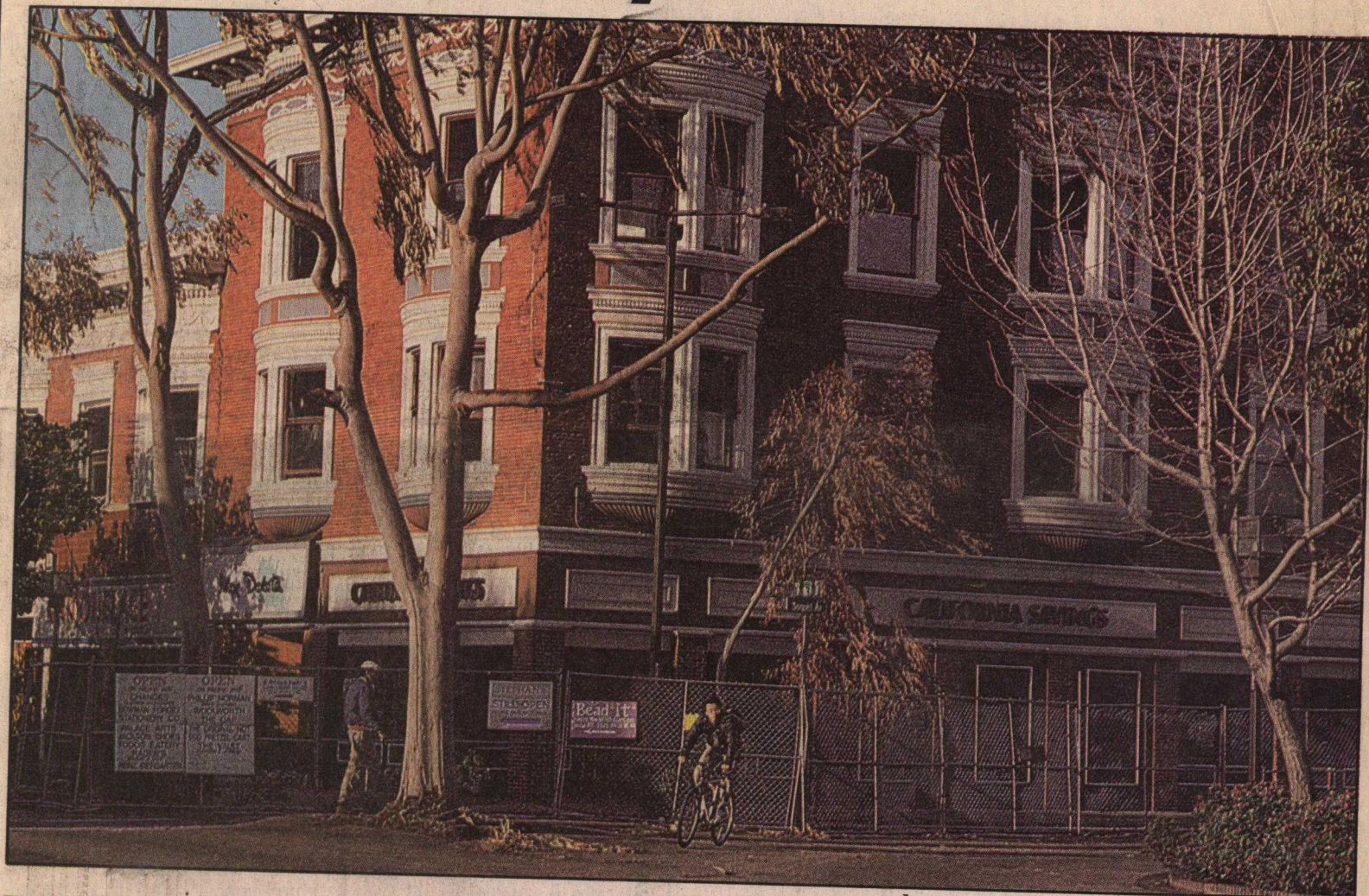


Trustworthy?

Historic Buildings



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

The historic Trust Building: It can be repaired, engineers say, but at what financial cost to the owner?

Study says Trust Building salvageable

By MARK BERGSTROM
Sentinel staff writer

3-14-91

SANTA CRUZ — The historic Trust Building at the corner of Pacific and Soquel avenues can be repaired, an independent structural-engineering report says, but at what cost?

That will be the big question when the city begins hearings on a request by the building owners to tear it and a companion structure down.

The Trust and Elks buildings are owned by the estate of Stewart Kett of Watsonville. Property manager Ruben Fuentes has applied for demolition permits and has submitted plans for replacement buildings.

But because plans for the replacement buildings don't show all four views, the public-hearing process cannot begin, according to Principal Planner Ken Thomas.

Once complete plans are submitted, the proposals will go before the Historic Preservation Commission, the Zoning Board and ultimately the City Council.

One major criteria for determining whether a demolition permit should be issued, according to Thomas, is whether denial would result in an "immediate and substantial" financial hardship on the owner.

In his application for demolition, Fuentes says structural engineers he hired concluded that repairing the colonial-revival style buildings would be more costly than repairing them.

Fuentes could not be reached for comment on the new report Wednesday afternoon.

"In general, it is our opinion that the Trust Building and Elks Building performed well in the recent earthquake," said the city's report by H. J. Degenkolb Associates of San Francisco.

Damage repair "would be reasonably simple," the engineers said, but strengthening the buildings to survive future quakes will be more difficult.

In conclusion, the report says, "It is our opinion that the buildings can be repaired and strengthened to an acceptable level of safety, but an economic analysis is necessary to confirm the financial feasibility."

In the meantime, the engineers reported, the buildings pose a potential threat of debris falling onto the sidewalks of Pacific and Soquel avenues so the protective fences erected around the buildings should remain. Those chain-link fences were erected in the aftermath of the quake.

A brick that worked its way loose from the facade and now hangs over one of the Trust Building's ornate bay windows remains a powerful image of the quake.