

# Quake repairs continue in Watsonville

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WATSONVILLE — Preliminary repair work has begun on the earthquake-damaged Porter Building at Main and Maple streets, under the threat of foreclosure from the city, which owns the land on which the building stands.

And four other buildings on Main Street are in the midst of repairs necessitated by the earthquake.

The City Council two weeks ago initiated foreclosure proceedings against the owners of the 1893-era Porter Building in an attempt to force them to stabilize the exterior brick facade.

City officials maintain that the series of aftershocks that rolled through the county April 17 loosened the brick facade to a dangerous condition. As a result, the city closed off all of Maple Street and part of Main to traffic.

The property owners responded to the foreclosure notice by starting preliminary renovation on the building Wednesday. They expect to complete the work by next week.

Although the owners of the building don't agree with the city's assessment of the damage, Nancy Hendee, a partner in the Porter Building Associates, said engineers have determined that removing the loose bricks and placing netting

along the back will make the building safe enough to open the street.

"Structurally, the building is sound," Hendee said. "The building is not falling down."

Hendee said the partners intend to continue negotiating with the city on the terms of their land-lease agreement to avoid foreclosure.

The city owns the property on which the Porter Building sits, and the partners are supposed to pay about \$450 a month in rent.

Since the quake, when the building was ordered vacated, the partners haven't met their payments.

Hendee said the partners, who include San Jose Developer Barry Swenson, are hoping to delay mak-

ing payments on the building and to extend their lease.

"We'll go back and talk to the City Council to discuss extending our ground lease," she said.

"I'm certainly willing to work with them on a repayment schedule," said Acting City Manager Chuck Comstock. "I'll work with them after Maple Street gets opened. That was our main concern."

Hendee said the next step toward a permanent fix is securing financing to make the \$400,000 in repairs that are needed to reopen.

"The Small Business Administration has finished asking us for information and is into the stage of making a decision on our loan in

the next week," she said. If a low-interest, 4-percent loan isn't granted, Hendee said she doesn't know what she will do.

"It just won't work at market rate (financing)," she said. "You're lucky if you can get 75 cents (a square foot) in rents."

A commercial-rate loan of 11 percent would be too expensive to repay, she said.

Hendee blames the city for part of the cost of renovation. Shortly after the earthquake when engineers walked through the building to assess damage, she said, doors were kicked in, glass was broken and walls were damaged.

Meanwhile, repair work is prog-

ressing on four other downtown buildings that suffered minor to moderate damage in the earthquake.

The back wall of the Fox Theater, across the street from the Porter Building, is nearly complete, but work needs to be done on the theater's tower.

Rico Pollo, on the 300 block, is close to completion on a new exterior wall.

Taylor's Office Supply, at 440 Main St., is putting up a new front wall on its building.

And the Lettunich Building, at Main and East Beach streets, has completed its exterior patch work.