

Porter Building to be shored up

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The owners of the Porter Building on the corner of Main and Maple streets in Watsonville have responded to an ultimatum from the city and are scheduled to begin shoring up the building's facade today.

Maple Street has been closed since soon after the Oct. 17 earthquake because engineers said it was not safe to walk next to the Porter Building.

On June 26, a City Council that has become increasingly impatient with the building's owners ordered them to do whatever it takes to get the street open by July 26.

In addition, the council voted at the time to begin foreclosure proceedings on the property within 10 days. The city does not own the building, but the Porter Building owners pay \$450 a month to the city to lease the land on which it sits. They are 10 months behind on the rent.

Acting City Manager Chuck Cornstock said crews will put up netting to hold the loose bricks in place. He said Maple Street should be open within a few days.

The building is owned by the Porter Building Associates, a partnership of two San Jose companies. Those companies, Green Valley Corporation (owned by developer Barry Swenson) and Main Street Renaissance Group, have said they can't move any faster than they have because they're waiting on word from the Small Business Administration on their application for earthquake relief loans.

One of the partners, Nancy Hendee, said yesterday they need \$1 million to make earthquake-related repairs and pay off existing debt. They have asked the city if they can postpone making payments on the land lease for five years while the building gets on its feet financially, Hendee said.