



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Lee O'Grady carries out plant at Louden Nelson Center Tuesday.

Nelson Center closed

By JOAN RAYMOND

Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — City Council members Tuesday closed the Louden Nelson Community Center after engineers declared the building unsafe.

City authorities closed the building at 10 p.m. after an engineer's report stated it might fall in an earthquake or extreme winds.

The closure shocked parents, senior citizens and other participants in the center's child care, senior meals, art, music, drug-prevention and many other community programs.

City staff members and program directors were scrambling today to relocate programs at temporary sites.

Parks and Recreation Director Jim Lang said renovation of the Spanish-style building to meet seismic-safety and other building-code requirements would cost about \$250,000 and would take 10 months to a year.

At a council meeting Tuesday, Lang and council members did not indicate money was available to renovate the 1930-vintage building, operated by the city and county.

Chief Building Official Dave Steeves ordered the building vacated, based on a recently completed report by the structural engineering firm Peter Boyce Associates. The seismic study was part of a city application for a state grant for a project to renovate the auditorium and dining room.

The study revealed:

- Inside walls that could serve as bracing are not connected to the roof or to the foundation.
- The connection of the roof to the top of the walls is inadequate. In buildings of these types, these connections have typically been the point of failure under severe seismic loads.

'This is a terrible blow. Many people of all backgrounds, and for many reasons, use the center.'

— Councilwoman
Mardi Wormhoudt