

EARTHQUAKE '89 - City of Downtown forecast: 10 years to rebuild

By MARK BERGSTROM
Sentinel staff writer

5-22-90
SANTA CRUZ — Rebuilding downtown Santa Cruz will take up to 10 years, an expert in downtown planning told Vision Santa Cruz Monday night.

Edmund Armentrout, who is president of Downtown Columbus, a private, non-profit organization which is in charge of planning and development in that Ohio city, said it would take seven to 10 years to fund and build a major project anywhere in the country.

"Anybody who thinks it can be done in one or two years is blind," he cautioned.

Armentrout made those comments as members of Vision Santa Cruz grappled with the question of how to accelerate the rebuilding process. Armentrout came to town to "facilitate" a discussion on what

Vision Santa Cruz' next step should be.

Businessman Larry Pearson suggested that a smaller group of professionals be organized to take the principles already developed by Vision Santa Cruz and come up with a recovery plan. That same group would then implement the plan, Pearson suggested. His idea was seconded by Charles Canfield, president of the Seaside Co., and by jeweler Norm Shockley. Pearson proposed that City Manager Dick Wilson, Redevelopment Director Ceil Cirillo head that group. Other members, he said, should include the city's bankers and downtown property owners.

"We now need an infusion of expertise," Pearson said.

Not all of the business represen-

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tatives on Vision Santa Cruz agreed. On the other hand, there was support for the idea from outside the business sector. Former mayor Mike Rotkin supported the smaller group, but warned that whatever plan is developed should first be "mediated" by Vision Santa Cruz before it goes to the City Council.

Rotkin warned that if business tries to go it alone, "There will be six people running out with initiatives and it will go down in flames."

Rotkin reminded Pearson that Vision Santa Cruz was able to smooth out several controversial issues, such as open space, during its first phase of work.

Others on the panel of 36 balked at turning over the process to anyone else and, in the end, the group decided that because of the late hour, they should carry the discussion over to a future meeting.

A statement by Rotkin early in

the meeting that property owners should lay what they want out on the table stirred a lively debate about the mistrust of government harbored by the business community.

Canfield, for example, said that most businesses have a difficult time dealing with the city. Armentrout responded that talk about businesses not trusting the local government was "pretty disquieting." Vision Santa Cruz also discussed what elements remain to be done in the planning process. They decided that much needs to be done, including an up-front environmental impact report, a market analysis and a site-by-site determination of where retail/office, housing and arts and entertainment uses would be best suited.

Armentrout said the long and diverse list did not narrow down Vision Santa Cruz's task. And, he cautioned, many of the elements, such as a market analysis, would cost several-hundred thousands of dollars.