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Facing charges,
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top planner quits
in Santa Cruz

Employees - city
BY JOHN WOOLFOLK
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Santa Cruz Planning Director Peter Katzlberger has resigned under a cloud of scandal surrounding his arrest on felony marijuana cultivation charges.

"Peter will take an early retirement," said City Manager Richard Wilson, who announced the decision Monday. "It's the conclusion Peter reached."

Katzlberger, who became planning director in 1978, is the highest-ranking city official to resign under such circumstances, Wilson said. Ken Thomas has taken over as acting planning director while the city looks for a permanent replacement.

Following news last month that sheriff's deputies had seized 22 mature marijuana plants growing in pots behind Katzlberger's Fel-

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ton home, he was suspended without pay.

Katzlberger, 52, and his wife, Jeanette, 59, have pleaded not guilty to charges of felony marijuana cultivation. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Novem-

ber 17.

Local attorney Phil Passafuime, who is representing Peter Katzlberger, said his client decided to step down to avoid hurting the city's image.

"I don't think he wanted the city to have any difficulties," Passafuime said. "He is proud of

his accomplishments, and ought to be. He was instrumental in the revitalization of downtown following the earthquake."

Passafuime said he is confident the charges against Katzlberger will eventually be dropped. Katzlberger did not return phone calls to his home, and Passafuime said he did not know the direc-

tor's plans for the future.

Katzlberger, who was drawing an annual salary of more than \$85,000, is still entitled to his pension, although he will not collect as much as he would if he retired at age 60, Wilson said. Katzlberger's retirement date has not yet been determined.