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Two public hearings set on \$600,000 federal grant

SANTA CRUZ — This week brings a double opportunity for city residents to suggest how an annual federal Housing and Community Development grant should be spent by the City Council.

About \$600,000 is available next fiscal year for programs "to benefit low- and moderate-income households, to remove slums and blight, or to address an urgent need," according to grant guidelines.

The council will hold public hearings at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at the City Museum, 1305 East Cliff Drive, and at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Natural Bridges Elementary School, 255 Swift St.

Speakers at last year's hearings testified about traffic, sewage, housing, street sweeping and other problems.

The HCD grant program began in 1974 under former President Richard Nixon's administration and was designed to combine urban renewal, street, housing and sewer grants under one umbrella. The improvements targeted poor and moderate-income households and neighborhoods.

In past years, the city has used the grants to buy and develop parks, for street improvements, for open space beautification and for housing rehabilitation

programs.

Ongoing projects include:

- Unified Housing Rehabilitation program, which provides low-interest loans to remove health and safety hazards from owner-occupied or rental properties;

- Comprehensive Housing Counseling program, which gives legal advice on housing to residents;

- Beach Flats Multi-Service Crisis Intervention Center, which is run by the Santa Cruz Women's Health Center to help Beach Flats residents in times of crisis;

- Rental conversion services to assist tenants in buying their houses or to remove the houses from the speculative real estate market;

- West Santa Cruz Community Health Center, which provides for health services in a poor and moderate-income neighborhood.

Planning Director Peter Katzlberger said grant amounts had decreased under the Reagan administration until this year. This year's allotment is a slight increase over last year. The money is to be spent next fiscal year, beginning July 1, he said.

Most of the money has been spent on housing rehabilitation programs, said Katzlberger.