

Pacific Avenue

# Santa Cruz rejects proposed downtown arcade

By KAREN CLARK  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A divided City Council flashed the red tilt sign at a proposal to open a video arcade downtown after listening to arguments on both sides late into the night Tuesday.

The council voted 4-3 to uphold an appeal by Stuart Martin, co-owner of Integrand Design across Locust Street from the proposed arcade site in the Cinema 9 building. Martin had cited potential problems associated with teens and video arcades.

Mayor Mike Rotkin joined Council Members Jane Yokoyama and Scott Kennedy in supporting the arcade plan proposed by Jim Melehan, who owns a similar Special Effects arcade in Scotts Valley.

"I say let Mr. Melehan take his risks," Rotkin said. "I think we should allow him to fail, or to succeed."

Rotkin noted that the city could revoke Melehan's operating permit if the problems of loitering, panhandling, blocking the narrow sidewalk and destroying public property across the street at the multistory garage began occurring.

## Merchants had expressed concern that an arcade would attract troublesome youths.

But Councilwoman Celia Scott, joined by Katherine Beiers, Mary Beth Campbell and Cynthia Mathews, said she found concerns expressed by many neighboring merchants to be valid.

Beiers said the fact that security is required at all video arcades, including this one, made it impossi-

ble for her to find that such a business would be in the best interest of downtown.

"I strongly agree with the fact that there are needs that are not met for young people in our community," Scott said. "But that's not the issue here. ... The issue is, is this the best location?"

Merchants had expressed concern that an arcade would attract troublesome youths who would have a negative impact on their businesses.

Special Effects co-owner Trish Melehan said the negative reaction amounted to nothing more than prejudice against young people.

"Face it, this is discrimination pure and simple," Trish Melehan said. "This is about segregation. ... We've been told to go to the south end of the mall. Isn't that the definition of segregation, keeping the kids out of the 'good part' of downtown?"

She questioned whether the council wanted "to give kids the message they are second-class citizens."

But Mathews explained that she worried problems already associated with downtown could be heightened by the arcade.