

Aromas residents 'adopt' their town square

By DAN FITCH
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Aromas residents have adopted their town square.

Despite falling \$7,500 short in their fund-raising bid, activists in the town of 2,000 have prevented a 60-by-90-foot plot of trees and grass from becoming the site of a two-story office building.

An agreement reached last week between activists and owners of the land calls for the town square to be officially christened as such on Aromas Day, tentatively scheduled for Aug. 20.

"Aromas will have its town square," said Marty Hoover, who

has participated in the three-year, "Save the Park" effort. "We are very happy the park is going to be saved. It's been hard on us all along, but also very encouraging."

Residents of the tri-county (San Benito, Santa Cruz, Monterey) community have fought for three years to stave off development of the town square land, which sits at the corner of Blohm and Carpenteria avenues — basically at the center of town.

Developer Ian Miles purchased the land in 1986 for \$60,000 but met with resistance from Aromas residents when he proposed an

office building for the site. Monterey County Supervisor Marc Del Piero attempted to secure grant funds to purchase the park but could not.

A group of residents mobilized in 1987 and, with the help of the Aromas Service Club and others sympathetic to the cause, began a drive to purchase the land.

The group received a major financial boost from Steve and Bruce Woolpert, executives of Granite Rock Co. which operates a quarry in Aromas, who pledged to match, dollar-for-dollar, whatever the town square fund raised.

The land was then purchased

by the Trust for Public Land, a national land conservation organization, and leased to Monterey County.

The town square fund-raisers required \$90,000 (half coming from the Woolpert brothers) to make the purchase and were issued a March 31 deadline. If the money was not raised, the Trust for Public Land could sell the land.

The most successful fund-raiser came in the form of an "Adopt a Square of Aromas Town Square" For \$10, individuals could "adopt" square inches of

the park; \$100 would adopt a square foot, and \$1,000 a square yard.

Last week, Hoover and fellow Aromas resident Eric Van Dyke met with Mannie Shaffer of Granite Rock and Thomas Mills, senior project manager of Trust for Public Land.

At the meeting, Hoover announced that the fund was \$15,000 short — or actually \$7,500 short with the Woolpert brothers' contribution.

Both Hoover and Mills, however, said the deal is all but complete.