

New Leaf eyes downtown

Business-n
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WATSONVILLE — Downtown Watsonville, diffused with discount shops, empty lots and used clothing stores, might house an organic health food store. "We'd love to see a New Leaf downtown," said Jan Davison, Director of Hous-

ing and Economic Development.

Requests for a New Leaf market to expand to Watsonville has sparked interest for a study to determine the likelihood for success here in Watsonville.

"The first step is a feasibility study, but we're looking at different locations downtown," said

WPR 10200
Davison.

Receiving several written requests a week from the suggestion box in his Capitola store, Rex Stewart, co-owner of New Leaf Community Markets, is considering expanding his store onto Main

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St, possibly in the Kalich Building on the 400 block, or in the Overlook Shopping Center, next to Starbucks and Target.

"A lot of people in this community who grow organically will appreciate the store," said Jess Brown, Executive Director of Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau.

There are currently 5 New Leaf markets in the county. The stores sell products that are environmentally-friendly, fruits and vegetables that are locally and organically grown as well as fresh meat and poultry that are typically range-free. The first New Leaf store opened in 1985 in Santa Cruz.

A New Leaf store would be the first all-natural grocery store of its kind in Watsonville's history.

The health food store has considered expanding into Watsonville in past years, but studies concluded it wasn't the right market base, according to Kimberely Hallinan, who has worked at New Leaf for 15 years. Recently, however, they have been approached by customers as well as local entrepreneurs to encourage expansion.