

'Nightmare' project nearly done

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CAPITOLA — A "nightmare" will soon end for Capitola Public Works Director Larry Perlin.

After more than five months of work on the \$300,000-plus Capitola Esplanade restoration, the project is expected to be completed in three or four weeks.

Perlin, who has handled more than his share of surprises from the project, says he finally sees "the light at the end of the tunnel." He calls the project a "nightmare," particularly due to the number of unmarked utilities under the age-old downtown Capitola streets.

"We've hit old water, sewer, gas and electric lines," said Perlin. "It got to the point where one day we opened up the street in four places and hit four unmapped lines."

"When you're working in an area that's so old and records haven't always been kept, it's been a nightmare every time we opened up the street," he added.

Despite the surprises, work is being completed two to three weeks ahead of schedule, said Perlin.

Improvements have centered on beautification and safety around Capitola's main beachside area along the eastern end of the Esplanade between San Jose and Monterey avenues.

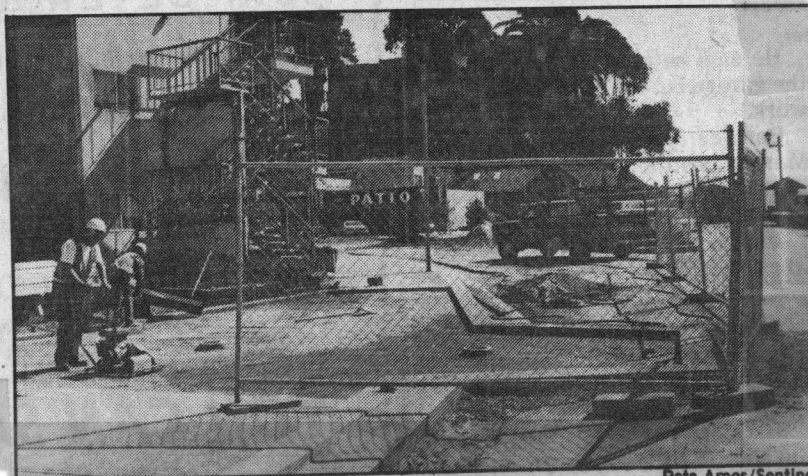
The seawall between Zelda's Restaurant and Esplanade Park has been removed and a new one built. The wall, which features a curved lip, matches the wall in front of the park. Stairways leading to the beach also were added, as well as exposed aggregate sidewalks.

Five pedestrian crosswalks will be installed, utilizing "interlocking paving stones" to distinguish them from the street surface.



A workman can expect to find old pipes down there.

Pete Amos/Sentinel



Pete Amos/Sentinel

Some areas of the Esplanade are being redesigned.

The crosswalks will be located along two portions of San Jose Avenue and the Esplanade, on the Esplanade at Lawn Way, Monterey Avenue at Lawn Way and Monterey at Capitola Avenue.

Work that still needs to be completed includes a two-inch pavement

overlay on the Esplanade, restriping, installation of the crosswalks and landscaping.

Perlin noted that the project will not delete any parking spaces from

the parking-scarce village.

"We had 84 spaces prior to construction and there will be 84 spaces after construction," he said. "It may have appeared we lost spaces be-

cause we did lose a space or two in one area, but then picked it up in another area."

The \$300,000-plus project is primarily being funded by a grant from the state Coastal Conservancy. Capitola received a \$553,885 grant, of which \$240,885 was spent during the project's first phase.

That first phase included the city's acquisition of Hooper's Beach, a once-privately owned beach west of Capitola Wharf, and construction of a stairway on Cliff Drive down to the beach. Capitola received the grant because the work improves public access to the village and the beach.

Several amenities that had to be cut from the second phase of project included special area lighting, fancy benches, planter areas and a flagpole. Perlin said those amenities can be added by the city later.

Project completion is now targeted for late April or early May.