

# County to break ground on new park in Live Oak

LIVE OAK

By KURTIS ALEXANDER

kalexander@santacruzsentinel.com

✓ LIVE OAK — Daniela Yanez, 17, and her brother Samuel, 13, live across the street from a vacant lot overgrown with weeds and an abandoned home in the heart of this compact residential neighborhood. But that's about to change.

Instead of looking out at dandelions and an abandoned house, the Yanez's Felt Street home will soon face the county's newest neighborhood park, an acre and a half of manicured lawns and gardens with picnic areas, a skate park and bocce ball courts, scheduled to break ground in September.

"I don't think we'd be so lazy anymore," said Daniela, explaining that she and Samuel will no longer have an excuse to sit in front of the TV and instead will head out for a bit of fresh air more often. "We have to drive to get to the nearest (county) parks now. This one is right across the street."

The Felt Street Park, which will run from Felt Street to the back of Del Mar Elementary School, comes after many years, if not decades, of planning. The county has owned part of the property since 1985, and initial preparations for a park almost 10 years ago were put on hold because of funding problems.

"We get calls every day, 'when is it coming?'" said county park planner Bob Olson. "Residents have waited a long time for this to be built."

The estimated \$1.4 million price tag is being footed by the Redevelopment Agency, which uses neighborhood property taxes to fund neighborhood improvements.

The impetus for the park was the lack of open space in the community, say county officials. The Felt Street location is perfect, they say, because it's behind the elementary school on Merrill Street and will provide a thoroughfare to school grounds for



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

The county is proposing to build a small park on this Felt Street vacant lot behind Del Mar Elementary School. An artist's rendering of the park is below.

children living in areas to the north.

"This (project) is going to suit the needs of the neighbors," said county Supervisor John Leopold. "The neighborhood is very under-served in terms of parks."

In addition to the unincorporated county's first bocce ball courts and the small skate area, the park will include a climbing wall, a community garden, a play structure for children 5 to 12, a fenced-in tot-lot, restrooms and off-street parking.

The Felt Street Park is not the only park nearby getting off the ground. County planners are also pursuing projects on Chanticleer Avenue and across the freeway off Sequel Drive.

