

# Farmers Market location mulled

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SANTA CRUZ — Stung by the notion they're vegetable-haters intent on killing the Farmers Market, weary Downtown Association members promised to take one more shot at finding an acceptable site.

"We're not anti-Farmers Market," said John Lisher, executive vice president-elect of the board. "We are anti-Farmers Market the way it plays itself out as an attractive nuisance in downtown Santa Cruz."

The board's vote stemmed from a meeting with city officials on Monday that revealed a deck stacked with negatives against the association's latest proposal to move the market to San Lorenzo Park.

According to Downtown Association board member Carol Elsworthy, police officials refused to waive some \$12,000 in fees to pay for extra weekly patrols at the park for the market.

In addition, Parks and Recreation Department representatives said the turf along the benchlands at the park would be destroyed by the weekly onslaught. The area also could be underwater during much of a typically wet winter, curtailing the year-round market.

Mayor Mike Rotkin welcomed the association's decision to take another stab at finding an accept-

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able site. He said he would include members on a task force he plans to create to mull possible locations.

One suggestion for an alternative site would be Front Street in front of the post office, which was designed during post-earthquake planning to be a community gathering place.

But association members feared that site would impact merchants at the head of Pacific Avenue and on Front Street.

"What about the Comerica (Bank) parking lot?" asked board member Jim Mullen. "Come on, they've already got an armed guard. They'll have to give him an Uzi."

Lisher said the association must stand firm against any proposal that would hurt even one downtown merchant because of unwanted social problems tied to transients who flock to the market.

"It's not right for us to penalize one member for the benefit of the rest of us," Lisher said. "We don't have to be apologetic about being concerned about our members and how they're doing in business."

News of the city's opposition to the benchlands site demoralized some association members, who suggested the board should simply drop the Farmers Market and let the City Council worry about it.

"We've kicked this around for nine months non-stop," said John Craver, president-elect of the association. "We've done our job. ...

Let's encourage the farmers or the city to come up with new ideas."

But that suggestion didn't sway members who believed that if the association gave up control of the market, the council simply would find another sponsor and force downtown merchants to continue to play host.

Rotkin reiterated that he believes the council will not allow the market to fold as enthusiasm from the association deflates. He noted that City Hall received at least 70 calls since Thursday from market supporters who were worried the event might end.

"Clearly there are problems with it," Rotkin said about the market and the element it attracts to its periphery. "It's not a situation where the merchants around it are just making things up."

Both Rotkin and Councilman Scott Kennedy suggested that the association could help the city combat social problems around the market by plowing more of the \$20,000-plus annual profit into better management and more security patrols.

The association said that if the city forces downtown merchants to accept the market in an unpopular location, there would be repercussions.

"If we give it up, the farmers will take it over and it will be back in (Cathcart Street merchant) David Plumlee's front yard," said board member Kate Nolan.

"Well, if it is put back in David

Plumlee's front yard, it's time we get the pitchforks and march on City Hall," Lisher said.

Merchants, especially those near Lincoln Street, where the market has been staged for more than two years, overwhelmingly support the notion of moving it to the outskirts of downtown to minimize the problems created by transients.

"We're in charge of the Farmers Market, but the city is in charge of social issues," said board member Priscilla Ma. "Until that gets solved, we're beating a dead brocoli."

Association members vowed to push a site at the Civic Center, because they think it's hypocritical of officials to reject a site because it's an inconvenience to city workers.

City staff members have suggested that the loss of parking would be a problem, but the Civic Auditorium site also poses problems because the market could conflict with events scheduled for Wednesdays.

Kennedy said he was open to many of the possible sites that have been suggested, including in front of the Civic Auditorium, between City Hall and the library, and at the site of the proposed new police building on Center Street south of Laurel Street.

"It seems to me the council is destined to get in the middle of where it's going, but I'm sure we'll find a location," Kennedy said.