

# Candy maker sweet on Hollister

## Watsonville loses 2nd big business in as many weeks

By JOHN BESSA  
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WATSONVILLE — A fast-growing Watsonville candy maker has become the second major business in as many weeks to announce plans to move to Hollister.

Marich Confectionary, one of the top gourmet candy producers in the nation, said Tuesday that it will relocate to the city 25 miles east of Watsonville when a new 60,000-square-foot building is built.

Unlike West Marine Inc., which announced June 14 plans to move its West Coast warehouse but keep company headquarters in Watsonville, Marich will be closing down its operation near the airport and moving some 60 employees out of town.

Like West Marine, the availability and price of land was the major factor in Marich's decision, company president and founder Marinus van Dam said.

"There's nothing (Watsonville) can do on that," he said. "They've done everything they can in their power," van Dam said.

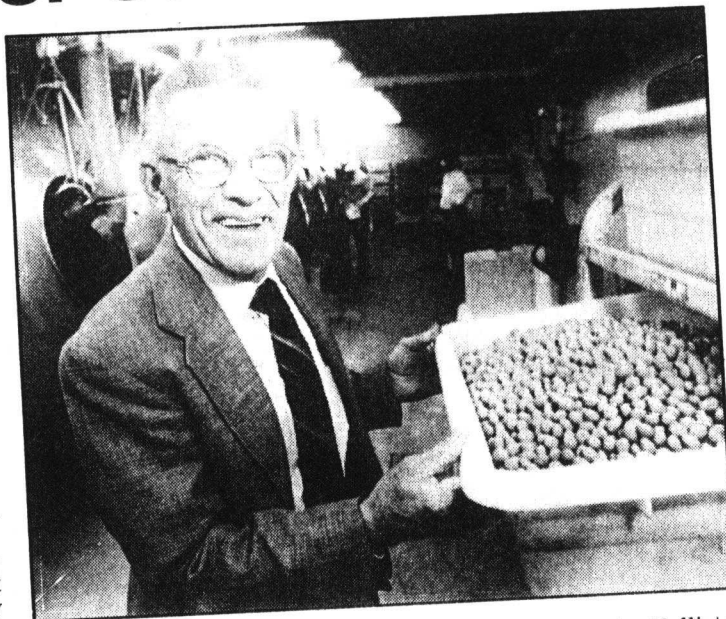
The company can put up its new building for \$4 million, about \$1.5 million less than what it would cost in Watsonville, van Dam said.

Land averages \$5 a square foot in Watsonville, compared to \$1.50 in Hollister, he said.

"That was the cruncher," van Dam said.

Hollister also waived several types of fees, from sewage to police and fire protection, said Barry Johnson, program manager from the Hollister Redevelopment Agency.

Watsonville City Manager Steve Salomon said his city offered more incentives



Company president and founder Marinus van Dam said the lower price of land in Hollister was a key factor in his decision to move the company.

The Associated Press

to discourage Marich from leaving, but the city lacks space.

"On strictly a financial basis that the city has control over, we offered more than Hollister did," he said. But, he added, "The land prices are really dramatically different."

Marich Confectionary has had annual growth of 34 percent a year over the past four years, van Dam said. It recently leased additional space near its Hangar Way factory to make way for \$300,000 in production machinery that will be put to use for the first time today.

Van Dam started the candy company 12 years ago. He runs the business with his sons, Brad and Troy. The elder van Dam, a native of Holland, has been making candy for 40 years.

The company produces chocolate-covered dried fruit, including strawberries, blueberries, and Bing cherries.

Van Dam wouldn't disclose annual sales figures, but said the total is "several million."

The company plans to buy its future home, and has begun negotiating to buy

land in the Hollister Business Park, near the future site of the West Marine warehouse.

Like the business, many of the company's workers aspire to own homes, too, van Dam said.

"The quality of life is definitely good and opportunity to buy your own house is definitely greater there," van Dam said, because of lower home prices.

"For some, owning their own home is probably a dream they would never be able to fulfill here, and over there they will," he said.

West Marine's new, 162,000-square-foot warehouse will employ about 150 workers. Marich's crew will likely be about 75 when the company moves, van Dam said.

Salomon said the candy company's planned departure doesn't signal an exodus from Watsonville. The city has had several new businesses relocating to the city recently, including Gottschalk's Department Store and the California Tub Laboratory Inc.

But, he said, "We would have liked to see them stay."