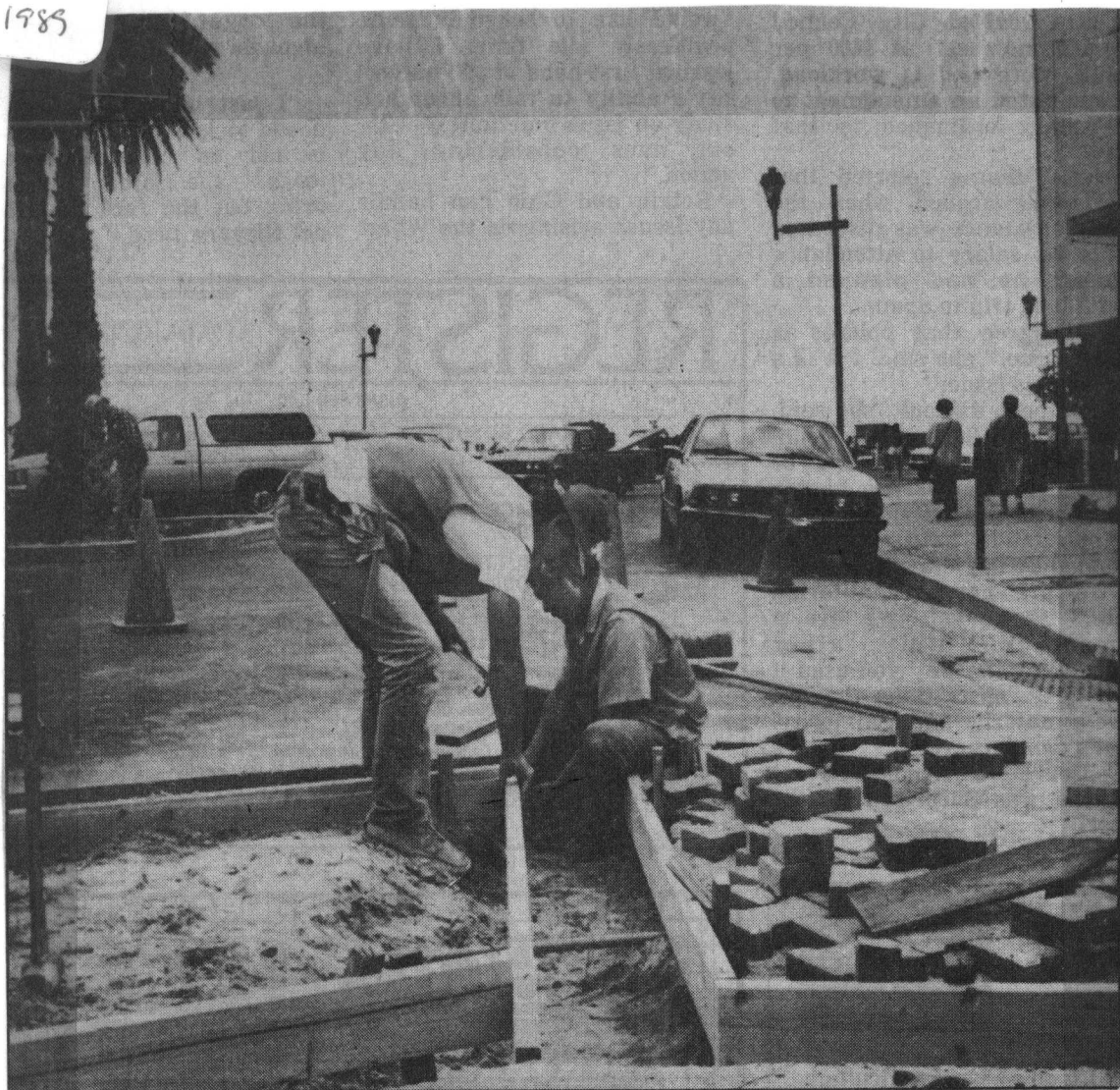


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Chip Scheuer

Mark Nelson and Larry Hernandez prepare forms for decorative paving.

Esplanade's 'endless' project drawing to close — on time

By JENNIFER KOSS
STAFF WRITER

The end is in sight for the Esplanade restoration project in Capitola Village.

The construction that's tied up traffic, blocked shop entrances and tested the patience of Village visitors since October should be completed by mid-May at the latest, Public Works Director Larry Perlin said.

"I think we've got about 10 days of work to go," he said yesterday.

Despite feelings that the project is taking longer than expected, the contractor actually has until May 27 to finish under the terms of his contract, Perlin said. He understands people's frustration, however.

"After a while, after four or five months, you just get tired of it and you can't wait for the project to end," he said.

Installed in the project were cobblestone crosswalks, storm drains, pebbly sidewalks

and a steel-reinforced seawall designed to make waves curve back toward the ocean.

Yet to be completed are installation of parking meters along The Esplanade, restriping of parking spaces, and treatment of the sidewalks with a preservative to prevent the aggregate rock from loosening.

Perlin said he expects the Esplanade restoration to cost about \$350,000, \$285,000 of which will come from a \$610,000 Coastal Conservancy grant and \$65,000 from city coffers.

The remainder of the grant enabled the city to purchase Hooper's Beach, to build a parking lot above it on Cliff Drive, and to construct a stairway connecting the lot to

the beach. The city also purchased a parcel at the end of Lawn Way, between the Six Sisters houses and the condominiums on the next corner.

Though the Esplanade restoration should be completed ahead of the contract date, Perlin said it would have been done sooner still, but for problems associated with burying utilities in "an area that's well over 100 years old."

"I think the biggest problem," Perlin said, "was a real lack of definitive information insofar as the location of existing utilities buried underground."

Many times, wires or pipes turned up that were not on the blueprints, he said. Then the workers had to wait until the appropriate agency, such as PG&E, could be called in to verify the find.

Contrary to earlier reports, Perlin added, no parking spaces and very little of the street will be lost to the restoration. There were 84 parking spaces within the project area at the beginning, and the count will still be 84 when the restriping is done.

"My understanding is, we are not losing one parking space," Perlin said.

Only eight to 10 inches of the street in front of Zelda's deck has been added to the sidewalk, he said. That means there will still be plenty of room for cars to maneuver around someone waiting for a parking space.

In light of the unseasonably warm weather that's drawn bigger crowds to Capitola Beach at an earlier date this year, the sooner the restoration is completed, the better.

Perlin said, "It's been extremely busy on weekends."