

Farmer's market heading downtown

By LANE WALLACE
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Plans are being made to establish a farmer's market on Watsonville's Main Street on Thursday evenings beginning June 18.

The market is being set up by the Central Business Improvement District, which has tentative approval from the city to block off the 300 block of Main Street between Beach and Maple streets, from 5 to 8:30 p.m. Peck Street between the Plaza and Wells Fargo Bank will also be blocked off.

"Hopefully, we'll run it through Thanksgiving," said Cal Watkins, the manager of J.C. Penney Co. on Main Street. Watkins, one of the organizers, is working with the city's Recreation Department to provide entertainment, including live music, while the market is open.

The City Council hasn't officially approved the project, but no opposition is expected.

"I've talked to all the council members individually and to (City Manager) John Radin," Watkins said.

"It's a wonderful idea," Mayor Ann Soldo said. "The time is right. This is going to be a go. If it starts out small,

that's OK. It will grow."

Bob Harris, a Las Lomas egg farmer who is helping set up the market, expects 15 to 25 booths initially.

"That's a little on the slim side," but he said most farmer's markets take a few years to hit their stride. "I think we can make it go."

Harris is a member of the Monterey Bay Certified Farmers, a group involved in farmer's markets that operate weekly at Cabrillo College, Hartnell College in Salinas, and Monterey Peninsula College.

Because the Watsonville market is at the same time as the Monterey one, Harris said the group isn't officially participating in the Watsonville market, but is acting in an advisory capacity.

Members of the Certified Farmers must show they've grown all the goods they sell. Only Certified Farmers will be permitted to have booths in Watsonville, Watkins said. A \$15 one-time membership fee will be charged, plus \$8 each Thursday.

Watkins believes the market can be a big boost for downtown Watsonville. "People visualize bad things" about downtown, he said. "We want to change that attitude."