

# Capitola farmers market folds due to lack of parking

Farmers Market

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CAPITOLA — Nesh Dhillon wanted a small farmers market in the Capitola Village to serve the local shopper. So he helped start one. If locals don't support it, he said last summer, then it won't stay.

It turns out the locals didn't support it.

So now Dhillon, who also manages the more popular downtown Santa Cruz and Live Oak mar-

**'If I bring my lettuce and carrots it would be just for decoration.'**

TOM BROZ, MARKET VENDOR

kets, is pulling the market out of the village.

Meanwhile, a new farmers market will open on the Westside of Santa Cruz, at the old Wrigley building parking lot at Western

and Mission streets. It will run every Saturday, beginning in May, and comes in addition to the nearby Swift Street market that runs on Friday.

The problem with the 14-vendor Capitola market is one that plagues the village: insufficient parking.

The idea was to get area residents to walk to the beachside market, but the reality is it just didn't happen, Dhillon said.

"The name of the game is to make money," he said. "And

more importantly, it has to work for the farmers."

Small-scale organic farmers like Tom Broz of Live Earth Farms in Watsonville rely on steady business from local shoppers.

Broz said in Capitola the majority of shoppers were tourists heading to the beach who would ignore the greens in favor of ready-to-go items such as baked goods, oysters or strawberries.

"If I bring my lettuce and car-

See **MARKETS** on **PAGE A10**



Nesh Dhillon will open a new farmers market on the Westside.

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## Markets

Continued from Page A1

rots it would be just for decoration," he said.

At the larger Santa Cruz market, which features 60 vendors at Lincoln and Cedar streets downtown, Broz makes up to four times the amount he made in the village.

It comes down to location and access, he said.

"As a farmer, I would love to come back to Capitola, but let's figure out a strategy where we could serve the community better," Broz added.

Capitola residents continue to have the option of shopping at the Live Oak market on Sunday, which features 25 vendors, or the Aptos market every Saturday at Cabrillo College.

There's no guarantee the market will return to Capitola, however, other options are being explored for a possible comeback.

"Everyone is disappointed," Vice Mayor Michael Termini said about the decision to pull the market.

There's talk of moving the market to Jade Street Park, the Pacific Cove parking lot behind City Hall or a church parking lot — places with ample space for shoppers to park and load up on groceries then drive them back home.

Broz would like to set up shop closer to 41st Avenue, which is already a destination for shoppers.

For now, Dhillon said the Santa Cruz Community Farmers' Market is focusing on getting ready for the new weekly farmers market on the Westside.

He said it will be an intimate, boutique-style setting, with 25 vendors and plenty of free parking.

The new Westside market will operate from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday and is set to debut May 20.

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