

Watsonville serious about recycling

By **MARIANNE BIASOTTI**

Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — When Ed Minasian began a composting business in Watsonville 20 years ago, he didn't know it would become an example of city efforts to turn its garbage into gold.

Or yard trimmings into compost, in the case of Minasian's Sun-Land Garden Products Inc. City officials hope that by next summer, city yard trimmings can be used in Sun-Land compost sold to farmers and home gardeners instead of going to the city dump.

Watsonville city leaders are joining others in the state in an aggressive effort to attract businesses that make products from recycled

goods. Last month, Santa Cruz County joined San Benito, Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties to form the Central Coast Recycling Market Development Zone, one of 16 in the state created to lure new business that will use recycled products and create markets for recycled goods.

"It's the perfect marriage between environmental protection and economic development," said Nancy Rewtlinger, an analyst for the city's solid waste division.

"Watsonville wants to take the lead role by hosting these companies here," said Mayor Oscar Rios. "(This will) let everyone see that a small little town like Watsonville can take a gigantic step."

Under the new program, a local recycling business called The Plactory in Live Oak is applying for a loan to expand, enabling it to accept more of Watsonville's discarded plastic. The business creates display racks and other plastic products it markets worldwide.

The recycling zones follow state legislation that aims to cut the amount of garbage going into landfills by 25 percent by 1995, and 50 percent by the year 2000. Watsonville city officials estimate their dump will be full within eight years.

Incentives intended to draw businesses to set up shop within the "recycling zones" include: low-interest loans of up to \$1 million; a

40-percent tax credit for businesses purchasing recycling equipment; a quicker permit process; exemption from business license taxes; and receiving technical assistance from participating counties.

Additionally, Watsonville has set up \$1 million in grants and loans from redevelopment and earthquake money from Measure E.

This month, the cost of garbage pickup was increased to encourage recycling efforts in Watsonville, where half of the city's 32,000 residents recycle about 40 percent of their garbage, said Steven Moore, city solid waste division manager. The city began picking up yard waste along with other recyclable materials this month as part of its expanding recycling program.