

Planning
1976-1985

La Manzana opens to all this weekend

FOR THE past year, a 30,000 square-foot chunk of downtown Watsonville has been quietly undergoing a profound transformation. And the public will get to see and enjoy the results when La Manzana celebrates its long-awaited opening this Saturday and Sunday.

A number of things are unique about La Manzana. The use of space, for instance. From the street there's little evidence of the bold architectural design and colors that have completely changed the space, which takes in the area formerly occupied by the Greyhound bus depot on West Lake Avenue, and the building on Main Street — and the loading areas behind it — that once housed Meadow Gold Dairies.

All the once-open area between and behind the buildings has been turned into a colorful, graceful garden with outdoor stage, surrounded by shops, offices and an elegant restaurant and bar.

Then, there's the concept of combining art and business activities in a garden setting. The bottom line is NOT the bottom line here. An outdoor stage will feature free entertainment throughout the year, weather permitting. Brown-baggers are invited to while away their lunch hours at tables artfully placed under giant trellises with luxuriant hanging plants. The atmosphere is designed to invite people to linger, surrounded by thousands of different plant and tree specimens, including over 200 varieties of roses.

The Art Museum of Santa Cruz County will present a different display of art and sculpture every two months in the special cases that form an important part of the architec-

tural drama of La Manzana.

In addition to bringing bold new designs, colors and concepts to downtown Watsonville, the project will bring a number of new faces, too. The owners of businesses opening this weekend have chosen downtown Watsonville because of their belief in the growth potential of the area. They are:

—La Manzana Restaurant and Ojo Rojo Bar. Owned and operated by Manuel and Alice Santana, this 6,000 square-foot restaurant will feature continental Mexican cuisine. "Mexican cooking isn't all enchiladas, rice and beans," according to Manuel Santana. "That's country cooking, and it's delicious. But in cities — like Mexico City — the cuisine is strongly influenced by Spanish, even French, cooking techniques. That's the kind of cuisine we'll have at La Manzana. Of course, you can also get a great enchilada here if you want one."

Manuel and Alice Santana are also owners of Manuel's Restaurant in Seacliff and Jardines de San Juan Restaurant in San Juan Bautista. Reservations for La Manzana Restaurant are suggested and can be made by calling 724-7999. La Manzana will be open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., seven days a week. In celebration of the opening, the Ojo Rojo Bar will introduce "chingaso punch," a particularly formidable beverage from a secret Santana family recipe.

—Alicia's Delicias. Alice Santana's international gourmet food shop will not be ready to open this weekend. However, samples of her specialties will be available for tasting. When open, the shop will stock hard-to-find items of international origin, such as a wide variety

of pates, imported cheeses, smoked and pickled fish and meats (yes, gefilte and white fish will be available) and specialty cooking ingredients, such as exotic mustards, oils, vinegars. Fine wines and coffees and teas will be on sale, as well as giftwares, such as coffee-making systems, coffee and tea pots and so forth. A delicatessen section of the shop will feature sandwiches and fresh salads to go. The emphasis on all items is quality, with an unusual and exotic flair.

—Notre Pomme French Bakery. Owners Suzanna Waddell and Evie Rodgers met while working at one of the leading French bakeries in Santa Cruz. The opening of Notre Pomme fulfills a fantasy they have shared for years. The bakery will offer old favorites, such as croissants, French breads, French pastries and cakes. The emphasis will be on fresh, local products, such as fruit tarts and cheesecakes, filled with Watsonville-grown apples, olallieberries and strawberries. They have a new idea based on a local favorite that's destined to become an instant classic — French bread chock-full of spicy Corralitos sausage.

Notre Pomme will open for breakfast at 7:30 a.m., and will offer fresh-brewed French roast coffee, as well as pastries and croissants. The bakery will remain open until 6:30 in the evening.

—Tulip Treats. Father and son team Charles and Jack Jordan are behind this combination ice cream parlor/coffee house. Situated in one of the two La Manzana stores facing directly onto Main Street, this attractive shop will feature

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various flavors of ice cream and gelato, espresso, capuccino and custom-brewed coffee, pastries and other hot and cold temptations.

The Jordans settled in Watsonville after touring the South and West in search of the ideal location for Tulip Treats. According to Charles, "We were immediately impressed by the friendliness of the people in Watsonville, and the leisurely pace of living."

Ice cream lovers are advised to hop down to Tulip Treat on Saturday and Sunday, when ice cream cones will be priced at only 25 cents.

—Her Sports. Lynn Vandiver and Art Cabral are partners in this action-sportswear boutique. Art's a serious runner, and Lynn swims and does regular aerobic dancing. The boutique will feature women's active sportswear for four activities: running, swimming, tennis and aerobic dance. Also available will be what Lynn calls "play clothes," action clothing for doing things, such as sailing, beachcombing, playing frisbee. In addition, a complete line of personal care products for after-play, such as soap, bath salts, shampoo, will be on sale. These will be from the Back to Basics line of personal care items, which are manufactured locally by Lynn and another partner, and sold nationally. Special samples of these personal care products will be given away during the opening weekend of La Manzana.

Several store and office spaces in the La Manzana complex are still available.