

MAZDA

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That's welcome news for City Councilman Dennis Norton, who championed the new "Shop Capitola" ordinance.

Santa Cruz Subaru wanted to expand in Santa Cruz but faced zoning issues.

"They offered us the Harley space (at 1142 Soquel Ave.), but this is a better fit for us," Perrin said.

The new location has a showroom three times larger — nearly 18,000 square feet — a larger lot, more parking, recycled water for washing autos and a shuttle for customers with cars being serviced.

The dealership has 30 employees, 15 from Subaru in Santa Cruz and 15 from Marina Motors, which closed in September due to the downturn.

"It's nice to see the economy getting better," said master technician Bruce Chaney, 50, who has 20 years' experience. "More cars are coming in."

Chaney is among the nine mechanics and detailers from Marina Motors.

"I didn't want to change brands," he said, standing in front of the bay bearing his name.

Perrin said the dealership wanted to pair Subaru, which is known for reliability, with Mazda, which is pushing fuel efficiency. The 2010 Mazda3 subcompact gets 30 highway miles per gallon, earning the SmartWay designation from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Like other auto-makers, Mazda has been hit by the recession.

About 22,000 Mazdas were sold in March in North America, down 31 percent from 2008. Honda sold about 88,000 vehicles, a 34 percent decline from 2008.

Perrin hopes buyers will like the sporty new look of the Mazda3, rated No. 5 by U.S. News & World Report out of 35 compacts priced under \$20,000. With the options package, it's \$25,000. The 2010 models, which usually arrive in the summer, are already in the showroom.

"Look at the grille," said Perrin. "It has more of a smiley face."

Diane Frazier of La Selva Beach agreed, "It's a good style. I don't have the money to buy a car, but if I did ..."

Spotting a creme-colored 2009 Mazda Miata convertible priced at \$16,305, she said, "That's cute, too."

The vacant Ocean Honda lot is being used to display Toyotas. Perrin said the Toyota dealership plans to use the space for a truck center and used car lot.

Hours at Santa Cruz Subaru Mazda are 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday.



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Tim Perrin shows off a 2010 Mazda3 that recently arrived at the new Santa Cruz Subaru Mazda dealership in Capitola, which has just started selling Mazdas.

Subaru dealership adds Mazda to lineup

Capitola to reap benefits from sales tax on autos

By JONDI GUMZ

jgumz@santacruzsentinel.com

CAPITOLA — Mazda is back on Capitola's Auto Row.

Santa Cruz Subaru, which moved from 1219 Soquel Ave. in Santa Cruz to Capitola's Auto Row in October, got a shipment of 60 Mazdas last week. Thursday is the grand opening.

"It's an opportunity to save jobs and add jobs," said Santa Cruz Subaru Mazda sales consultant Tim Perrin, predicting the move will help replace sales tax revenues Capitola lost when Ocean Honda left for Soquel.

Santa Cruz Subaru Mazda is at 4100 Auto Plaza Drive, in the space vacated by Marina Motors, which had sold and serviced Mazda and General Motors Corp. The move puts the dealership near its sister company, Toyota of Santa Cruz. The Seaside Co., which owns the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, is a major investor in both dealerships.

Perrin, 62, who worked at Marina Motors for five years, said 15 to 20 cars were typically sold per month, generating sales of 180 to 240 vehicles a year.



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Tim Perrin looks over the new arrivals at Santa Cruz Subaru Mazda in Capitola. The showroom is three times larger than the former one in Santa Cruz.

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