

# Farmers market banks on consultant

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✓ **WATSONVILLE** — Local farmers market board directors are betting on an experienced consultant to find a way to bring 10 times as many people to the downtown market than it attracts now.

That's why they hired an energetic top-notch business consultant — Vance Corum — to take a

“giant leap” forward in improving the market.

Farmers market manager Lea Goodman said Corum — of Advance Marketing — was hired to evaluate the current market and instruct farmer's market board members how to make it a bigger event.

Goodman said she hired Corum “to determine what we can do to make the market as

good as it can be. We brought Vance aboard as a consultant to help the market.”

This past week, Corum attended a series of meetings to prepare a report he will submit to board members within a couple of weeks. That report will suggest things to bolster the market's attendance.

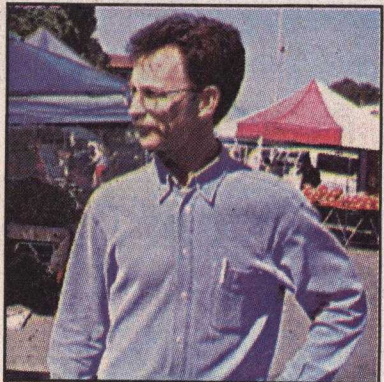
Corum said he wants to “create one successful market that really

excites the community.”

Part of the excitement Corum is referring to will have to come by making the farmers market an event that people look forward to and want to attend every week. “People don't want to miss events,” he said.

Corum outlined several things to make the market more appealing to customers and vendors.

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Kelly Nix/Register-Pajaronian

**Vance Corum at the farmers market Friday afternoon.**

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One of those things is to create greater competition between farmers market vendors. By attracting more vendors of the same kind to the market, such as multiple strawberry farmers, prices will remain competitive, thereby reducing prices, which will attract more customers.

Corum would also like to see more specialty food vendors added to the market offering such delicacies as jams, chutney and oils.

The addition of craft spaces would help diversify the market, as would the introduction of prepared foods.

Corum hasn't ruled out the possibility of moving the farmers market to a different day of the week and time.

Moving the location of the mar-

ket to Main Street and closing a portion of Main Street down may be a way of attracting more vendors and consumers to the market as well. “Parking is a major issue,” Corum admitted, but said people are more willing to walk than drive if they know the market will feature an event-type atmosphere every week.

“The market has a chance to make a difference for a number of businesses downtown,” Corum said. If the market does eventually move to Main Street, Corum said market attendees will inevitably patronize downtown businesses as well. He called it a “win, win situation.”

Corum said that it's a “catch 22” when attracting a greater number of vendors to the market. He said new vendors may be leery of selling at the market because there are other larger markets they can sell at, but the only way to attract more customers is to garner more vendors.

Corum spent 10 years working with the Department of Food and Agriculture and has been involved in developing markets for over 20 years. His company specializes in consulting for a variety of events including farmers markets, public markets, special events and conferences and seminars.

Expanding the number of members on the board to represent different interests in the community is another way of diversifying the market. Corum would like to see the religious and art communities represented at the meetings.

Board member Sam Earnshaw said “there's a history of farmers markets in Watsonville.” Earnshaw said that when the Loma Prieta earthquake hit and devastated the downtown area, it subsequently crippled the farmers market.

The farmers market made a comeback to Watsonville in June of 1998.