

UPDATE: Grand Opening Set For New Corte Madera Plaza

Workers are putting the finishing touches on the community plaza and Cafe Verde near Town Park.

By Derek Wilson, Patch Staff 
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The last few tiles were being set into place this week, each inscribed with a name. Each tile recognizes the efforts of a community to bring a dream into reality.

Corte Madera is ready to celebrate its newest attraction next week. The remodeled Park Madera Plaza creates an attractive gateway into Town Park, with an outdoor space to sit, drink and relax.

The Corte Madera Community Foundation sent out word on Monday that it's planning a grand opening celebration of Sunday, Oct. 14 at 4 p.m. Snacks and refreshments will be provided by the Corte Madera Lions Club and Benissimo.

"It will be very well used by the community center folks, the park users and the neighborhood," said Jana Haehl as she toured the construction site. "The crowds at the community center are bigger, especially with the exercise classes. This will be a nice addition to the neighborhood. People can come over here and enjoy a drink and a snack after exercising or when they take the kids to the park."

Plans have been in the works for about a year to renovate the shopping center on Tamalpais Drive. Mario and Tony Farahmand, the owners of **Benissimo Ristorante & Bar**, are expanding their operation with Cafe Verde, which will be one of the anchors of the shopping center.

"This will be totally different than our restaurant," Tony said. "This is a low-price cafe. In this economy, people don't want to spend as much."

Haehl credits Pat Ravasio with planting the seed for the new-look center.

"Pat Ravasio enthusiastically proposed that a community plaza should occupy the Town Park site where a derelict and condemned building ... was being demolished. She made presentations to local groups and set up a Facebook page to generate support for constructing a community plaza on the blighted vacant corner," Haehl wrote in a press release.

There are 118 inscribed tiles that pay tribute to the Corte Madera Community Foundation's fundraising efforts. Those tiles, which bear the names of the donors who gave \$59,027 to the project, lay the foundation for the community plaza. The Foundation chipped in \$13,000 from its own funds.

"It's a tribute to our small town that funding in this amount was so generously donated by members of the community," the Foundation release stated.

Relatively few funds from the Town of Corte Madera's budget were used for the project, according to the Foundation's statement. The Town Council said there was not enough money in the Town's budget to pay for the project, so the Foundation stepped in to raise the funds. The Foundation claims to have paid \$50,075 to cover major construction costs, plus \$21,700 for hanging flower baskets, landscaping, planter benches and other features.

Sanitary District No. 2, which owned the property before merging with the Town of Corte Madera, paid for the demolition of the building, restoration of the site and concrete pavers. The Foundation also got grant funds through the Bay Air Quality Management District to help pay for bike racks.