



## Corte Madera Celebrates Volunteer Spirit

Town Park Plaza opens with a gala celebration, but project organizers aren't done yet.

By Derek Wilson, Patch Staff  
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The people of Corte Madera prepared for one of the town's biggest celebrations of the year Sunday as the San Francisco Giants warmed up for the National League Championship Series opener against the St. Louis Cardinals.

The party started long before the first pitch with the unveiling of Corte Madera's new Town Park Plaza and a chance to honor the people who made it possible.

"Thank you all for your generous donations to create the plaza and to create Phase 1 that you see here today," said Jana Haehl, the project coordinator and head cheerleader. "Corte Madera is known for its amazing volunteers that give such strength and texture to the fabric of community life in our small town and for the many public-spirited citizens that fund such amenities as the hanging baskets that have become a symbol of Corte Madera."

Residents had the chance to enjoy the new plaza with snacks brought from the kitchens of their neighbors. A scoreboard was set up to keep track of the Giants game, which was playing in the Community Center across the street.

The plaza offers a new look to the entrance of Town Park and courtyard for patrons of the new Cafe Verdé, which is tentatively scheduled to open in two weeks. The cafe is a new venture by the owners of local landmark Benissimo Ristorante. Tony and Mario proudly showed off the flavor of their new cafe, which they said fulfills a decades-long dream.

"I want to thank all the Town Council members for having the vision and the courage when this started a year-and-a-half ago to keep this space open and to find the right tenant," Mayor Bob Ravasio said. "It was a tough time for the town and they did it. And I thank all of you for embracing that vision."

The project replaces the former Sanitary District No. 2 building which was due to be torn down. Over and over people agreed the site looks a lot better now.

The space is owned by the Town, but the project was paid for by public donations. The Corte Madera Community Foundation and donors have put \$71,775 into the project so far.

"It was Pat Ravasio's vision of replacing the old cinder-block building with a community gathering place that generated an amazing response and inspired people to donate funding that made it possible," Haehl told the crowd.

Several donors, including Phyllis Galanis, Suzi Beatie, Kitty Prosser, Earl Hart, the Ravasios, Suzy and Wulfrin Oberlin and more were honored with engraved tiles on planters around the plaza.

"The Corte Madera Community Foundation agreed to take on the challenge of raising the funds for the plaza because the Town did not have funds budgeted for this project. So the Corte Madera Community Foundation agreed to raise what was necessary to provide all the amenities in this space," Haehl said.

The amenities include a bike rack, paving stones, a drinking fountain for people and dogs, tables, fencing and planters.

Haehl continued, "it was MacFarlane Partners and local civic organizations such as Corte Madera Lion's Club, Corte Madera Women's Club, Beautification Committee and Corte Madera-Larkspur Mothers Club as major donors that gave the project a jump start. Today, we're glad to recognize and congratulate all the organizations, individuals and businesses that put it over the top. And that's all of you."

The sun was shining bright Sunday, perfect for the opening of the Park Plaza. The warm weather was also a good lead-in for Phase 2 of the project. Organizers are seeking donations to purchase and erect a shade arbor for the plaza.

The original plans also called for a water feature, bocce court and gas-fueled fire pit. Supporters are still hoping to raise funds for those amenities.

"This thing was built as a unique partnership between the Town, the business community and, most importantly, the citizens," Mayor Ravasio said.