

New Leaf, Peet's finalize deals

Wednesday, August 08, 2007

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New Leaf Community Markets and Peet's Coffee and Tea have both signed contracts to open stores in a Half Moon Bay strip center.

The Santa Cruz-based grocery chain will move into the old Albertsons location at the intersection of highways 1 and 92 and will bring its popular approach to health food and community involvement.

"We will continue our policy that I started the company with 22 years ago of giving at least 10 percent of our profits to local nonprofits and community organizations," said New Leaf co-owner Scott Roseman in an e-mail message to the Review. Other initiatives, including fund-raising opportunities for local schools, will be part of the approach as well.

New Leaf is known for buying produce from local farmers, and Roseman said that it would take that practice to the new store and look for Half Moon Bay vendors.

The market will be the anchor business in the shopping center, long viewed as dilapidated and out-of-date by many. But with New Leaf and general upgrades that Roseman said he had discussed with landlord Mike Shami, will come the culmination of another heavily discussed change next door.

Peet's Coffee and Tea has finalized plans to take over two storefronts near New Leaf. The Berkeley-based coffee chain will open on a corner once occupied by Coastside Gourmet Coffee and one of the area's only Laundromats.

"The lease has been signed," said Shami.

A petition drive and public outcry accompanied initial reports that Raman Bechar, the owner of Coastside Gourmet Coffee, would not be able to renew the lease for the 14-year-old business. Bechar closed his doors for good in July and has said he has no plans at the moment to seek a new location.

A Laundromat had been operating at the site next door since 1970. Joung Chai, owner of Thrifty Coin Wash, said he will not open a new business in town, leaving one commercial Laundromat open on the Coastside south of Pacifica.

Shami declined to discuss details of the lease with Peet's. He said the papers had just been signed and that he could not confirm a target for opening.

New Leaf officials plan to be open in about six months.

"We hope to be open in the early part of 2008," said Roseman. New Leaf will begin construction soon, and Roseman has high hopes for his company's largest store and first expansion beyond the Santa Cruz area. "Our market study indicated that we would (do well at the location)," he added. "And we are optimistic that we'll do even better than those projections."