

# enterprise



News **KDVS is back on the air after technical difficulties**



WAYNE TILCOCK/ENTERPRISE PHOTO

UC Davis Professor Mark Francis relaxes recently at the Central Park Gardens. He's just released a longterm study of "sittable space" at the UCD Quad area and downtown Davis, with observations going back more than 20 years.

## Come sit a spell

**Professor: Having places to relax helps build community**

By Jeff Hudson  
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

For the past 25 years, Mark Francis has been looking around Davis for "sittable space" — the kind of outdoor place where you can get off your feet, relax, talk with a friend, and watch the world go by. He's finding a lot more sittable space these days — literally thousands of places to sit, where there only used to be a few hundred. And he's convinced that Davis has become a better place to live as a result.

When Francis came to town in 1980, as a newly-hired professor of landscape architecture and environmental design at UC Davis, he was surprised at how few places he could find that encouraged people to get together in a community way outdoors ... the sort of busy public places (like Harvard Square in Cambridge, Mass) he'd studied while on the faculty at City University of New York. He approached the topic with both professional and personal interest. "I was a 30-year-old guy with a family," he recalled. "I looked around Davis, and there was hardly anyplace to sit outside. I think there was one place where you could sit outside and eat ... I think maybe there was an ordinance then that made it difficult to serve food outside. It kind of shocked me: here was this incredible climate, and no place to eat outside and

enjoy the nice, balmy evenings." And in 1980, the streets of the town were quiet — too quiet. "My 2-year-old daughter said 'Momma, where are all the people? Are they sick?'" Francis recalled. The downtown area looked different then. Central Park in Davis was one block square — half its current size — with Fourth Street continuing through from C Street to B Street. The other half of present day Central Park was a dreary gravel parking lot. The fledgling Davis Farmers' Market took place on C Street by Davis Community Church, and didn't have the tall, simple-yet-majestic overhead structure that now frames the event. Francis and several others conducted the "Downtown Davis Urban Ecology Study" in 1981-83. They mapped pedestrian use of downtown Davis on

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**Summit explores aging Boomers' affect on society**

By Jonathan Edwards  
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

They call it a "silver tsunami" — a wave of aging Baby Boomers exploding into old-age and straining social security, government programs and health care. And it's only going to get worse over the next three decades, said Davis Campbell, president of the county Board of Education, who on Friday

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**Davis woman hailed by lymphoma organization**

By Bruce Gallaudet  
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

It was a labor love in honor of a family member. Martha Bernauer of Davis, who spent much of the past three months working to raise funds and awareness for blood cancer research, has earned the Sacramento Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Woman of the Year award.

"It was an honor and exciting to me

and my family, knowing how campaigns like this help people with serious diseases and needs," Bernauer said, adding that her niece Samantha Swimley was the inspiration. Swimley was diagnosed nine years ago with cutaneous T-cell lymphoma — a slow-growing cancer that can be controlled with treatment, including medication and sunlight. Fortunately, 85 percent of its cases

See *LYMPHOMA*, Back page

## Willowbank Park ready to build

First four homes begin soon, talks continue on design of townhomes

By Crystal Lee  
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

Construction on the first four homes of South Davis' Willowbank Park subdivision will begin mid-July and be ready for occupancy in mid-November, according to builder Brix and Mortar Partners. The Davis City Council, at its meeting last week, approved the final component of the 4.5-acre Willowbank Park project on Mace Boulevard, bound by San Marino and Redbud drives. The majority of the project's 29-home design was approved in March. In a 3-2 vote Tuesday, the council approved 15 units to be built on Parcel C, the remaining component on the north side of the subdivision. Nine of the 15 units are townhomes in three-unit clusters alongside Putah Creek. Four of the townhomes can have a third-floor loft, but none of the units can be higher than 32 feet. The lofts, which will have balconies overlooking the creek, are intended to make the townhomes more attractive by compensating for a lack of private yard areas. "I think these units will be appealing to buyers, which is a good thing," Mayor Pro Tem Don Saylor said. "They don't seem to me to be terribly inconsistent with the existing neighborhood." Councilmembers Sue Greenwald and Lamar Heystek voted against the proposal for Parcel C. Heystek said the lofts are not necessary for the homes to be marketable.

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COURTESY PHOTO

Rod Paschke leaves today on the Hoka Hey Challenge, a 7,000-mile motorcycle ride from Florida to Alaska.

**Biker follows his dream of riding across country**

By Elizabeth Kalfsbeek  
SPECIAL TO THE ENTERPRISE

Rod Paschke, an electrical contractor from Woodland, is competing in the Hoka Hey Challenge — a 7,000-mile Harley motorcycle ride from Key West, Fla., to Homer, Alaska — starting today. The winner will receive \$500,000 in Alaskan gold. "This is way out of the box for me," said Paschke, 53. "I think it's everyone's dream to ride across the United States on a motorcycle, and if I don't do it now, I'll never do it." Though he rode motorcycles in his younger days, Paschke took a 30-year hiatus from owning a bike. In the past two years, however, he has bought three and plans to ride his Electric Glide Ultra Classic Harley on the journey. "It was my time to start riding again," Paschke said. "(My wife Michelle and I) just love to ride. It's been a lot of fun."

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Coming Monday, at [www.davisenterprise.com](http://www.davisenterprise.com)



**So you think you can dance?**  
Applegate Dance Studio's "Summer Dance Medley" is next weekend at the Veterans' Memorial Theater, 203 E. 14th St., Davis. Approximately 75 performers, ranging from age 6 to 42, will perform 18 short pieces choreographed by Lisa Applegate-Zimanyi and Cara Rains. The styles will include ballet, theater dance, jazz, tribal, swing and modern dance, and the program will feature pieces such as "Huna Mana" and "Rock Me Amadeus." In *ARTS*



**Keeping it cool**  
Jon Dahlberg keeps the Davis school district's 758 heating/ventilation/air conditioning systems running efficiently — and that's helped the school district save money during these tight budgetary times. When Dahlberg visits a school, you'll usually find him up on the roof. In *NEWS*.

# SIT: He aimed to create community gathering spaces

From Page A1

sidewalks, in open spaces and in shops. And they tallied up the number of sittable spaces outdoors — and didn't find a lot of them.

At the time, there was talk in the community about developing a "town square" where the E Street Plaza now exists, and moving out the cars to create a space where people could gather. But merchants didn't like the idea of losing nearby parking.

## Central Park expands

So Francis and others turned their attention a few blocks west, to Central Park, and the adjacent gravel parking lot. Francis and his students stood outside of grocery stores and surveyed the community about their desired use of the site. They discovered a strong preference for a larger park, rather than a commercial development that was under consideration. A group called Save Open Space was formed, and a referendum was placed on the city ballot in 1984 asking voters to approve the expanded park. The measure passed by a wide margin.

It wasn't easy to make the vision of an expanded Central Park into the reality that exists today. "I remember there was a vote by the Davis City Council. They couldn't decide if they should keep Fourth Street open (which would have cut the expanded Central Park in half). It was a 3-2 vote at 1 a.m." — and the majority favored closing the street, creating a united park.

The city of Davis hired Francis and his newly established landscape architecture firm CoDesign (founded with architect Jim Zanetto in 1983) to plan and design the expanded greenspace. "I did the park, Jim did the structure (for the Farmers' Market)," Francis recalled. "The idea of the park was initially to create what I called a 'mixed use' park. We didn't want to do a typical grass-and-trees park. This was a different space. We had a workshop under the sycamore trees (in present day Central Park), and I learned that the sycamore grove is a sacred space where people gather naturally, whether it's for celebration or protest or mourning."

Francis aimed to create a design that would "take that energy and spread it around" by adding "a civic meadow that would also bring people together. And we put in a vegetable garden — Central Park Garden — and a teen center. We wanted young people to hang out with the older people in the garden. And we put in a kind of Davis beach — the fountain where children could run through the water." "The hardest part was the

"Look around, you'll see kids, and their parents, and older people and college couples. You get that mix. Every community needs a mixed life place where people can come together."

**Mark Francis** recently retired professor of landscape architecture and environmental design at UC Davis

Farmers' Market," Francis recalled. "No one had ever designed a farmers market in a park in California. We were making it up as we went. They originally wanted a building, rather than a structure (with open sides). We convinced them that in a park, a structure was better."

And the narrow central walkway was intentional. "It's so tight that if you run into a neighbor, you can't avoid saying hello. You have to acknowledge other people. And it does happen. It can take half an hour to walk from one end of the Davis Farmers' Market to the other, because you're talking to people."

Another feature: The playground areas for children are deliberately located adjacent to the area where parents (or grandparents) can shop for produce and talk with friends, and still see their kids playing.

And, naturally, the redesigned Central Park has sittable space. Lots and lots of it. Benches. Broad steps and retaining walls. Planters. Shady spots beneath trees.

"The idea was to create a living room for the community," Francis said. And it works. "The numbers (visiting the Farmers Market) are up around 4,000 to 5,000 people on Saturdays and Wednesdays, which for a community of around 65,000 is a pretty impressive number in terms of overall use," Francis said.

Not everything worked out as initially planned. A much loved pedal-powered carousel came later. And the building that was originally a teen center is now a museum devoted to bicycling.

"Looking at it now (in retrospect), I think our initial 'mixed use' concept was partly wrong," Francis said. "What I think we got was more like 'mixed life' — that fine grain social life that brings people together. Look around, you'll see kids, and their parents, and older people and college couples. You

get that mix. Every community needs a mixed life place where people can come together. It's partly by design, and it's partly the nature of our community that we have this appetite for public life. We want to come out of our houses, see people, buy good food, listen to music."

## More green spaces

Francis was later invited by developer Mark Friedman to help design the outdoor portion of the Davis Commons shopping center, anchored by Borders bookstore.

"I liked what Mark was trying to do with the green space in the front (of the stores), rather than having a parking lot be the first thing you see," Francis said. And once again, Francis thought of sittable space. "We did it with a long, curved wall. We wanted people to sit and use the space without feeling like they have to buy something, which is typically a problem with shopping centers. The wall is for anyone, you can sit there all day if you want."

The E Street merchants — noticing that the town's social center of gravity was shifting more toward Central Park and Davis Commons — eventually went to the city and asked for a plaza of their own, with (you guessed it) sittable space.

Francis also was involved in another study — The Davis Greenway — that became the open space element of the city's general plan, proposing creation of bikeways that would ring the city, connecting the city's green spaces.

And Francis became a resident of Aggie Village — the small cluster of price-controlled homes for university staff that was built in the 1990s between the Davis Commons shopping center and the UC Davis campus — which made it easy for him to walk to work, Central Park and elsewhere.

## New survey

During the past two years, Francis came full circle, working with several other researchers on a new sittable space survey, comparing their results with the findings of the study Francis helped originate in the early 1980s. They surveyed downtown Davis (an area of about 85 acres) and also surveyed the core area around the Quad at UCD (also about 85 acres). Among the findings (just released in the past few weeks):

■ "There has been an explosion in the number and quality of seating opportunities in downtown Davis and the central part of the UC Davis campus." The new



The Davis Farmers' Market was intentionally designed with a shade structure, instead of a building, to keep with the outdoor setting of Central Park. The narrow walkway between vendors also was intentional, so that shoppers would be forced to talk to people as they — sometimes literally — ran into them.

ENTERPRISE FILE PHOTO

study found 2,276 sittable spaces downtown, and 2,640 in the central area at UCD.

■ "Central Park and the Davis Farmers' Market provide 20 percent of all seating downtown. Davis Commons provides another 14 percent, and the train depot provides another 8 percent. On the UC Davis campus, the Memorial Union provides 22 percent of seating."

■ "A major difference: in downtown Davis, 48 percent of all seating is moveable (including outdoor seating at restaurants)." In the core area on campus, only three percent of seating is moveable.

Francis admits that he's a big fan of moveable seats — he makes no secret of the fact that he'd like to see more moveable seats outdoors at UCD. At his suggestion, the interview that was the basis for this article was conducted at a moveable resin table, using two moveable resin chairs, at Central Park, on a Saturday morning, with the Davis Farmers' Market underway, and children playing on the grass.

"There's also a small plaque — it's one of the things I'm proud of," Francis said.

He pointed out a small metal disk — it could almost fit in your hand — fixed in the cement patio next to the Farmers' Market structure.

The plaque is not highly conspicuous — if you're a Farmer's Market regular, you've probably stepped over the it many times, and perhaps never noticed it.

It reads: "American Society of Landscape Architects 1899-1999 — ASLA Centennial Medallion — This Site is Recognized as National Landmark for Outstanding Landscape Architecture."

## Moving on

Francis recently left Davis — at age 59, he's quietly retired from UCD, sold the house in Aggie Village, and he's now in Norway, where he and his wife have built a house in the town where she grew up.

"It's a small city that has a brand new symphony hall," Francis said. "And they have an incredible fjord where you can go and paddle a kayak." He's working on improving his conversational Norwegian.

So after 30 years, Francis departs quietly, with fond memories. "There are places that are 'go-through' places, and there are places that are 'go-to' places," he said. "Davis

used to be a 'go-through' place on Interstate 80. But now it's a place that people want to be ..." he mentioned community landmarks like the Davis Farmers' Market, and the city's bikeways, and the Village Homes community, and the Mondavi Center.

"And it's happened by design," Francis said, "because of the efforts of a bunch of people who've invested good ideas and love. The town is reflective of that."

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To read "Just A Comfortable Place to Sit: Davis Sittable Space Study," search online for "Mark Francis Sittable Space" or go to <http://lda.ucdavis.edu/people/websites/francis/Just%20A%20Comfortable%20Place%20to%20Sit%20Final%20Report.pdf>

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