

RESOLUTION NO. 13-23 (PC)

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING TO THE CITY COUNCIL TO ADOPT THE DOWNTOWN WATSONVILLE SPECIFIC PLAN, A SPECIFIC PLAN PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 65460 ET SEQ.

Project: Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan

WHEREAS, the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP) has been prepared as a planning tool to implement the General Plan and to guide development in a specific area; and

WHEREAS, the DWSP is intended to be a tool for developers, property owners, City staff and decision makers by providing strong and clear policies, development standards, and a vision that guides land use decisions, infrastructure improvements, design, and economic development activities in the project area; and

WHEREAS, the overarching goals of the DWSP are to facilitate housing production and preservation; increase retail-entertainment activity; encourage higher-density mixed-use residential projects; add visitor-oriented uses; support a greater range of civic and cultural activities; improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians; enhance bicycle infrastructure and connections; and target uses and activities that appeal to a wide range of Watsonville's residents and employees; and

WHEREAS, the DWSP establishes new zones and overlays, which are intended to concentrate urban activity and intensity in the center of downtown and allows development to transition to existing lower-intensity neighborhood settings at the periphery of the DWSP plan area and to industrial activity to the south; and

WHEREAS, the new zones consist of the Downtown Core and Downtown Neighborhood Zones; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Core Zone is an active, walkable environment, characterized by buildings up to six stories. This is the heart of Downtown—generally flanking Main Street—where the most active and intense development patterns and uses are anticipated. Upper floors contain residential units or office space. Buildings are close to the sidewalk and have little-to-no side setbacks; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Neighborhood Zone is characterized by smaller scale buildings than those of the Downtown Core Zone and generally includes a similar mix of active and residential uses; and

WHEREAS, the land use and development standards in the DWSP supersede the land use and development standards in the Zoning Ordinance (Title 14 of the Watsonville Municipal Code) for properties within the DWSP plan area; and

WHEREAS, as part of implementing the DWSP, the City intends to amend the Zoning Map to reflect the boundaries of the DWSP plan area; and

WHEREAS, as part of implementing the DWSP, the City intends to amend the Zoning Code to create a new DWSP district and reference the permitted uses and development standards in Chapter 6 of the adopted DWSP document; and

WHEREAS, as the DWSP's zoning is inconsistent with the Watsonville General Plan, the General Plan is being updated concurrent with the Specific Plan to ensure consistency between the two documents; and

WHEREAS, as part of implementing the DWSP, the City intends to adopt a General Plan Amendment to add two new mixed-used land use designations and align the General Plan land use diagram by changing the existing land use designations of the DWSP plan area to correspond with the zones shown on the Regulating Plan, Figure 6-1, of the DWSP; and

WHEREAS, the proposed General Plan Amendment also includes amending implementation measures 4.A.3, 4.C.6 and 10.C.2; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 14-12.700 of the Watsonville Municipal Code, the General Plan text and land use diagram may be amended whenever the public necessity, the general community welfare, and good zoning practice permit such an amendment to the General Plan; and

WHEREAS, the proposed General Plan Amendment would satisfy the requirement of State law applicable to General Law cities for zoning and General Plan consistency; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 65358(b) of the Government Code, the General Plan may only be amended four (4) times during any calendar year; and

WHEREAS, the proposed General Plan Amendment, if adopted, will be the twenty-ninth (29th) amendment, since its original adoptions, to the *Watsonville 2005 General Plan* and the second (2nd) amendment of the 2023 calendar year; and

WHEREAS, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared for the DWSP (SCH #2022100602) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and

WHEREAS, before considering making a recommendation on the proposed General Plan Amendment, the Planning Commission of the City of Watsonville reviewed and considered the potential environmental impacts of the project and adopted Resolution No. 11-23 (PC), recommending that the City Council adopt and certify the EIR for the DWSP, as well as a set of CEQA Findings and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program; and

WHEREAS, notice of time and place of the hearing to consider approval of the General Plan Amendment was given at the time and in the manner where appropriate

public noticing procedures have been followed and a public hearing was held according to Section 14-10.900 of the Watsonville Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has considered all evidence received, both oral and documentary, and the matter was submitted for decision.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Watsonville, California, as follows:

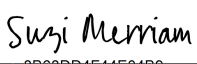
1. Good cause appearing, and upon the Findings, attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit "A", the Planning Commission of the City of Watsonville does hereby recommend adoption of the DWSP, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing Resolution was introduced at a regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Watsonville, California, held on the 5th of September 2023, by Commissioner Vega, who moved its adoption, which motion being duly seconded by Commissioner Sencion, was upon roll call, carried and the resolution adopted by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners: Acosta, Dodge, Radin, Rojas, Sencion, Vega, Veitch-Olson

Noes: Commissioners: None

Absent: Commissioners: None

DocuSigned by:

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Suzi Merriam, Secretary
Planning Commission

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Daniel Dodge, Chairperson
Planning Commission

**CITY OF WATSONVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION**

EXHIBIT A

SPECIFIC PLAN FINDINGS (WMC § 14-12.904)

- a. **That the proposed location of the development and proposed conditions under which it will be operated or maintained is consistent with the goals and policies embodied in the General Plan.**

Supportive Evidence

The DWSP would facilitate housing production and preservation; increase retail-entertainment activity; encourage higher-density mixed-use residential projects; add visitor-oriented uses; support a greater range of civic and cultural activities; improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians; enhance bicycle infrastructure and connections; and target uses and activities that appeal to a wide range of Watsonville's residents and employees.

These conditions for downtown Watsonville are in harmony with the overall intent of the *Watsonville 2005 General Plan*, including the following goals and policies regarding land use, urban design, environmental resources, transportation and circulation, public facilities, and public safety:

- **Goal 4.2 Neighborhoods** – Conserve and improve the living environment of existing neighborhood commercial Services.
- **Goal 4.3 Commercial Land Use** – Revitalize the central business district and provide adequate neighborhood commercial services.
- **Goal 4.4 Industrial Land Use** – Achieve economic diversification, living wage employment, the preservation of agricultural economic base of the Pajaro Valley, and maintain a balance among jobs, housing, and other urban land uses.
- **Goal 4.5 Public Land Use** – Provide public and institutional land uses and service in proportion to population growth.
- **Goal 4.6 Local Employment** – Promote a variety of employment opportunities within the city providing living wage jobs to Watsonville residents. Stimulate creation of 7,500 additional jobs by 2005. Pursue opportunities for jobs skill training.
- **Goal 4.7 Land Use Sustainability** – Ensure that the orderly development of land for the needs of the existing and projected population within the City limit and Sphere of Influence is vased on the land's overall sustainability, including: the accessibility of existing and proposed public facilities, services, and utilities; physical and financial constraints; and/or growth inducing impacts.

- **Policy 4.A Residential Land Use** – The City shall plan for housing production on a five-year cycle consistent with the policies of the adopted Housing Element (See chapter 6, Housing: Goals, policies, and Programs). The overall housing objectives for the General Plan time frame shall also be considered in long-range planning for housing.
- **Policy 4.B Neighborhood Preservation** – The City shall plan for the protection of existing neighborhood qualities and the provision of adequate neighborhood facilities in developing areas.
- **Policy 4.C Commercial Land Use** – The City shall plan for revitalization of the central business district along with the distribution of convenient neighborhood commercial centers.
- **Policy 4.D Industrial Land Use** – The city shall promote modernization of existing industrial plants and the location of new industrial facilities on land planned for industry in Watsonville 2005.
- **Policy 4.F Economic Development** – The city shall plan for economic development.
- **Policy 4.G Land Use Suitability** – The City shall encourage the development of urban uses on those land best suited for urban uses and discourage it on land unsuited for urban uses.
- **Goal 5.1 Visual Resources** – Preserve and enhance the built and natural visual resources within Watsonville.
- **Goal 5.2 Community Appearance** – Blend new development with recognized values of community appearance and scenic qualities, and ensure that new development enhances, rather than detracts from, its surroundings.
- **Goal 5.4 Downtown** – Preserve and enhance the visual appearance of Main Street from the Pajaro River Bridge to Freedom Boulevard.
- **Goal 5.6 Urban Design** – Achieve high standards of street, site and building design that are both efficient, and aesthetically pleasing.
- **Goal 5.7 Heritage Preservation** – Enhance and protect structures, sites, and other landmarks that give residents of the Planning Area a link with their cultural heritage.
- **Goal 5.8 Urban Beautification** – Support public and private urban beautification activities and promote pride in community appearance.
- **Policy 5.A Project Design Review** – The preservation of visual resources shall be accomplished through the design review process.

- **Policy 5.B Design Consistency** – The City shall review new development proposals to encourage high standards of urban design and to ensure that elements of architectural design and site orientation do not degrade or conflict with the appearance of existing structures.
- **Policy 5.D Downtown Design Plan** – The City shall prepare, adopt, and implement a design plan for the urban design, circulation, parking, and commercial sign location within the central business district.
- **Policy 5.E Viewscape Protection** – The City shall use the General Plan Land Use chapter and the design review process to ensure that major new development projects do not impact scenic vistas now enjoyed throughout the city.
- **Policy 5.F Design Factors** – The design review process shall combine elements of aesthetics with considerations for project efficiency.
- **Policy 5.G Historic Preservation** – The City shall evaluate and make recommendations for the preservation of historic structures, landmarks, and buildings of particular architectural interest.
- **Policy 5.H Streetscape Beautification** – The City shall promote streetscape beautification activities and civic pride in community appearance.
- **Goal 9.1 Open Space Network** – Provide a comprehensive network of open space land uses for outdoor recreation and environmental protection.
- **Goal 9.2 Open Space Preservation** – Preserve the open space and agricultural land uses surrounding the urban limit line which contribute to the economic base, provide scenic vistas, and offer opportunities for scientific exploration.
- **Goal 9.3 Natural Resources** – Identify and protect the natural resources of the Watsonville Planning Area.
- **Goal 9.4 Air Quality** – Maintain or improve the present air quality level within the Pajaro Valley.
- **Goal 9.5 Water Quality** – Ensure that surface and groundwater resources are protected.
- **Goal 9.6 Soil Conservation** – Preserve and protect the soil resources throughout the community and minimize the environmental degradation caused by soil erosion, construction impact on soils, and deterioration of water quality caused by suspended solids.

- **Goal 9.11 Hazardous Materials** – Protect the air, water, soil, and biotic resources from damage by exposure to hazardous materials through aggressive management of hazardous materials.
- **Goal 9.12 Energy** – Promote the conservation of energy and the use of alternative energy resources in transportation and residential, commercial, and industrial development.
- **Policy 9.B Natural Resource Protection** – The City shall designate land necessary for the preservation of natural resources and to avoid conflicts with urban land uses.
- **Policy 9.C Air Quality** – The City shall cooperate with the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (MBUAPCD) to maintain and improve regional air quality. In addition to the measures listed below, measures 4.A.4 and 4.G.1 promote improved air quality by providing for a balance of jobs and housing, and by increasing the density of residential development which makes use of transit feasible.
- **Policy 9.D Water Quality** – The City shall provide for the protection of water quality to meet all beneficial uses, including domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and ecological uses.
- **Policy 9.E Soil Conservation** – The City shall prevent degradation of local soil resources through erosion control improvement and grading guidelines.
- **Policy 9.H Archaeological Resources** – The City shall foster and provide for the preservation of cultural resources and artifacts of historic and prehistoric human occupation within the Pajaro Valley.
- **Policy 9.I Hazardous Materials** – The City shall protect the natural environment through aggressive enforcement and compliance with hazardous materials plans.
- **Policy 9.I Energy** – The City shall strive to reduce non-renewable energy resource consumption and promote the use of alternative energy resources.
- **Goal 10.1. Street and Highway Facilities** – Plan and provide for a safe, efficient, and environmentally sensitive network of streets and highways for movement of people and goods.
- **Goal 10.4. Bicycle Circulation** – Plan for and provide a safe, convenient network of bicycle facilities.
- **Goal 10.5. Pedestrian Circulation** – Recognize the importance of pedestrian travel, alone, or in combination with other travel modes, and to encourage walking.

- **Goal 10.7. Aesthetic Considerations** – Plan and provide for a circulation network that preserves and enhances scenic amenities.
- **Goal 10.8. Truck Transportation** – Recognize the importance of a truck transportation to the Watsonville area and to plan for the safe, unobtrusive movement of trucks.
- **Goal 10.9. Utility Routing** – Ensure the adequate provision of necessary public utilities in a way which minimizes their visual impacts and potential hazards to the safety of residents.
- **Goal 10.10. Emergency Access** – Ensure sufficient provision of emergency or secondary access and maintain acceptable response times for all parts of the service area.
- **Policy 10.A Street and Highway Improvements** – The City shall pursue a program of regularly scheduled maintenance and street improvements, accompanies by the planned extension of roadways to serve new development.
- **Policy 10.B State Highway Improvements** – The City shall encourage improvements to state highways within the Planning Area in order to increase their efficiency in the regional and local circulation network.
- **Policy 10.D Project Priority** – The City shall maintain liaison with county, regional, and state transportation planning agencies to ensure the highest priority for completion is given to transportation system improvements that serve to implement the long-range land use policies of *Watsonville 2005*.
- **Policy 10.F Planning for Transit** – The City shall use its land use planning authority to enhance the use of transit.
- **Policy 10.G Transit Promotion** – In order to encourage use of transit by all age groups and for all purposes, the City shall ensure that transit centers and stops are safe, attractive and do not deter transit use.
- **Policy 10.K Bicycle Facilities Development** – The City shall plan for and implement a comprehensive network of bicycle facilities in order to promote the bicycle as an alternative to the private automobile.
- **Policy 10. M Bicycle Support Facilities** – The City shall encourage bicycle facilities in new developments, as a commute alternative.
- **Policy 10.N Pedestrian Travel** – The city shall plan for and implement a comprehensive network of safe pedestrian facilities in order to promote pedestrian travel.

- **Policy 10.O Walkway Aesthetic and Safety** – Pedestrian walkways should be designed to promote walking by providing a safe and aesthetically pleasing path of travel.
- **Policy 10.P Pedestrian Access** – Access for pedestrian travel shall be maintained where it already exists and provided where it does not, in order to prevent or eliminate barriers to pedestrian travel.
- **Policy 10.S Aesthetics** – The City shall seek to preserve and enhance scenic vistas to and from the transportation corridors.
- **Policy 10.T Landscaping** – The city shall encourage the use of vegetation to create or enhance scenic vistas and to serve as buffers for transportation facilities.
- **Policy 10.P Truck Facilities and Routing** – Commodity movement utilizing trucks shall be encouraged and facilitated while related impacts on City streets are minimized to the extent possible.
- **Policy 10.Y Emergency Access** – The city shall ensure that emergency or secondary access is provided for all new development in the city’s service area.
- **Goal 11.1 Service Availability** – Maintain or increase the current availability of public services and facilities consistent with projected population growth in the City limits and Sphere of Influence and according to the fiscal resources of the City.
- **Goal 11.2 Public Services** – Assure new development can be served by adequate public services and facilities.
- **Goal 11.3 Water Supply** – Construct and maintain a water system and institute water management policy that will provide a sufficient quantity of appropriate-quality water to meet the needs of the existing and planned community.
- **Goal 11.4 Wastewater Management** – Continue the safe and efficient collection, treatment, and disposal of domestic and industrial wastewater to meet the needs of the service population, protect the environment, and comply with all applicable regulations.
- **Goal 11.5 Solid Water Management** – Operate an efficient waste management program that protects the health of area residents, prolongs the useful life of the landfill site, and encourages recycling of any and all materials found to be feasible for recovery and reuse.
- **Goal 11.8 Public Services** – Maintain public protection service levels consistent with City standards for acceptable risk levels.

- **Policy 11.B Infrastructure** – The City shall identify public infrastructure needs and use the Capital Improvements Program to schedule improvements necessary for achieving long-term land use and community development objectives.
- **Policy 11.C Water System Design** – The Water system shall be designed, constructed, and managed to provide a sufficient quantity of appropriate-quality water for the existing and planned community.
- **Policy 11.F Wastewater Management Design** – The City shall continue to provide adequate waste-water treatment levels to meet the needs of the City and the service area users. Compliance with applicable state and federal standards will be pursued to the extent possible.
- **Policy 11.G Solid Waste Management** – The City shall continue to operate an environmentally sensitive solid waste management program and encourage the recycling of paper, glass, plastics, and metals. The City shall encourage waste minimization and source reduction of all wastes, with special emphasis on hazardous materials.
- **Policy 11.J Public Protection** – The City shall continue to provide sufficient funding, trained personnel, and all necessary equipment and facilities to maintain city standards for public safety and response time.
- **Goal 12.1 Land Use Safety** – Plan for and regulate the uses of land in order to provide a pattern of urban development that will minimize exposure to hazards from either natural or human-related causes.
- **Goal 12.6 Personal Safety** – Ensure that community standards for personal safety are enforced.
- **Goal 12.7 Emergency Preparedness** – Anticipate the potential for disasters; maintain continuity of life-support functions during an emergency; and maximize efforts for post-emergency recovery.
- **Policy 12.A Environmental and Public Safety** – The City shall plan for and maintain development standards that minimize risks to human lives and property resulting from environmental and man-caused hazards. The City shall protect neighboring residential development from the immediate threats of potentially hazardous industrial or agricultural materials and airport hazards through careful land use planning.
- **Policy 12.B Seismic Hazards** – The City shall use the development review process to ensure that potential geologic hazards are evaluated and mitigated prior to construction.

- **Policy 12.C Soil Constraints** – The City shall take all appropriate actions to ensure that current land use activities and new developments are mitigated to prevent soil failure and other soil-related dangers.
- **Policy 12.D Flood Hazard Reduction** – The City shall pursue the protection of new and existing development from the impacts of flooding up to the 100-year event.
- **Policy 12.E Hazardous Materials Control** – The City shall strictly enforce ordinances and regulations for the use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials.
- **Policy 12.F Fire Safety Standards** – The City shall use development approval authority, code enforcement, and periodic inspections to ensure that fire prevention standards are maintained.
- **Policy 12.H Fire Suppression Planning** – The City shall maintain a level of fire protection for the community that emphasizes an aggressive initial attack to stop fires in early stages as well as to have adequate staff and equipment (including mutual aid) to prevent a conflagration.
- **Policy 12.I Crime Prevention** – The City shall provide sufficient funding, adequate personnel levels, and necessary equipment to maintain civil order and prevent crime.
- **Policy 12.M Noise** – The City shall utilize land use regulations and enforcement to ensure that noise levels in developed areas are kept at acceptable levels, and that future noise-sensitive land uses are protected from noise that is harmful.

- b. **That the proposed development is in accordance with the purposes and objectives of this title and, in particular, will further the purposes stated for each zoning district.**

Supportive Evidence

The purpose of Title 14 (Zoning) is, in general, to protect the public health, safety, peace, morals, comfort, convenience, and general welfare and, among other purposes, to assist in providing a definite plan of development for the City and to guide, control, and regulate the future growth of the City in accordance with such plan.

The purpose of the provisions in the Zoning Code concerning specific plans are to establish requirements and procedures for the development, adoption and amendments of specific plans and ensure that the City's Zoning Code is consistent with law regulating Specific Plans and in particular, Article 8 of Chapter 3, of Division of Title 7 of the California Government Code, commencing with Section 65450. In accordance with Gov't Code Section 65450, the City may prepare specific plans for the systematic implementation of its general plan for all or part of the area covered by the general plan.

The DWSP would serve as a regulatory tool to implement the *Watsonville 2005 General Plan* and guide development in downtown Watsonville. The DWSP includes all required contents, as set forth in WMC Section 14-12.902(b) and Gov't Code Section 65451.

- c. That the development will not be detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare of persons residing or working in or adjacent to such a development and properties or improvements in the vicinity or to the general welfare of the City.**

Supportive Evidence

Development in downtown started before the City was incorporated in 1868. The area contains a mix of contemporary and historic buildings, urban plazas, higher-density residential buildings, government offices, community-serving retail uses, and is home to numerous community events that attract both visitors and residents.

Once a thriving and bustling downtown, the Main Street has struggled to compete regionally with other commercial areas and has experienced high retail and commercial vacancy rates for the past several decades. The City has taken many steps to revitalize the downtown since the destructive 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, including several downtown plans and downtown design guidelines, as well as the development of a new Civic Plaza that is home to the South County Courthouse, City library, City administrative offices, City Council Chambers, and public meeting space.

The DWSP would help revitalize downtown by facilitating housing production and preservation; increase retail-entertainment activity; encouraging higher-density mixed-use residential projects; adding visitor-oriented uses; supporting a greater range of civic and cultural activities; improving the safety and comfort of pedestrians; enhancing bicycle infrastructure and connections; and targeting uses and activities that appeal to a wide range of Watsonville's residents and employees. Adoptions of the DWSP will not be detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare of persons residing or working in or adjacent to the DWSP area because it will implement the General Plan and guide development in the DWSP area.

- d. That the Specific Plan and resulting development will be consistent with the provisions of Article 8 of Chapter 3 of Division I of Title 7 of the California Government Code, commencing with Section 65450.**

Supportive Evidence

In accordance with Gov't Code Section 65450, the City may prepare specific plans for the systematic implementation of its general plan for all or part of the area covered by the general plan. The DWSP would serve as a regulatory tool to implement the *Watsonville 2005 General Plan* and guide development in downtown Watsonville.