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City of Watsonville

"A Community of Opportunities"

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

Project Title: Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan

Subject: Notice of Availability – Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

Lead Agency:

Agency Name: City of Watsonville
Community Development Department

Street Address: 250 Main Street
City/State/Zip: Watsonville, California 95076

Contact: Justin Meek, AICP
Principal Planner

Telephone: 831-768-3050

Consulting Firm:

Name: Rincon Consultants, Inc.

Street Address: 2511 Garden Road, Suite C-250
City/State/Zip: Monterey, California 93940

Contact: George Dix
Senior Project Manager

Telephone: 831-999-3612

Project Location: Downtown Watsonville is located in the southern area of Santa Cruz County, approximately 14 miles southeast of the city of Santa Cruz and 16 miles north of the city of Salinas. The Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan Area (plan area) covers roughly 195.5 acres within Downtown Watsonville, with about 55.5 acres dedicated to streets and right-of-way. Downtown is centered on Main Street and extends west to the edge of existing neighborhoods and the industrial district, south to Pajaro, and several blocks east to the existing neighborhoods. State Route (SR) 152 runs through the center of the plan area and operates along portions of Main Street and as a one-way couplet along E Lake Avenue and E Beach Street. Riverside Drive on the south end of the plan area is a part of SR 129. One of the major intersections within the plan area is the intersection of Main Street and SR 129. Please note, some properties within and comprising the plan area appear on a list of sites enumerated by Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

Project Description: The proposed project consists of the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP). Generally, a specific plan is a regulatory tool that local governments use to implement their General Plan and to guide development in a localized area. The proposed DWSP has been developed to articulate a community vision and a planning framework for the downtown area of Watsonville that would serve as a guide for the City and other public agency decision makers, community members, and stakeholders over the next 20 to 30 years. The proposed DWSP provides a land use and mobility plan along with development and design regulations to guide future public and private development projects in the downtown area. Additionally, the DWSP includes an implementation strategy and mechanisms to ensure development is coordinated and satisfying the intent of the DWSP. Implementation of the DWSP would require an amendment to the City's current General Plan.

The land use components of the DWSP would help the City achieve its objective of incorporating higher density commercial and housing opportunities by accommodating additional residential uses in a compact and active mixed-use environment through both new construction and adaptive reuse of historic or existing buildings. The DWSP envisions the addition of up to 3,886 new residential units, 231,151 square feet of commercial development, 376,827 square feet of industrial development, and 114,572 square feet of civic space within the downtown area. Because the planning area is mostly developed with commercial buildings and established residential neighborhoods, the DWSP directs future potential growth toward a limited number of vacant or under-utilized sites that could be redeveloped.

The mobility components of the DWSP focus on the provision of multi-modal transportation options in the downtown area, such as vehicle, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian mode options. It includes design concepts for downtown streets, as well as bicycle and pedestrian network improvements. In addition, the mobility component identifies mobility goals, such as the provision of complete streets, effective and sufficient parking, curb management, a road diet, a roundabout, and travel demand management strategies.

Purpose of this Notice of Availability: The purpose of this Notice of Availability (NOA) is to inform agencies and interested parties and persons that in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City of Watsonville has prepared a Draft EIR for the proposed Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan. The Draft EIR has been prepared in accordance with Section 15087 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*. This NOA provides information about the project and its environmental effects and requests that comments be provided on the content of the Draft EIR.

An Initial Study was prepared for the DWSP and is included as an appendix to the Draft EIR. The Initial Study determined that the proposed DWSP would have no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation incorporated for all issue areas evaluated under CEQA except for: aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, noise, population and housing, transportation, and tribal cultural resources. The Draft EIR further evaluates and addresses the potential physical environmental effects of the proposed DWSP for each of these environmental topics. The Draft EIR also addresses the cumulative impacts resulting from other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects combined with impacts of the DWSP. Through the Draft EIR process, the DWSP was determined to have significant and unavoidable impacts to air quality, cultural resources, noise, and transportation. These significant and unavoidable impacts, summarized, include:

- Generation of air pollution during construction and operation of development envisioned in the DWSP and potential conflicts with the applicable air quality management plan
- Removal or alteration of historic-era cultural resources
- Generation of noise and vibration exceeding acceptable standards during both construction and operation of development envisioned in the DWSP
- Generation of new vehicle trips resulting in vehicle miles traveled exceeding established thresholds and conflicting with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(c)

Impacts to biological resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, and tribal cultural resources were found to be potentially significant but mitigable to less than significant. Impacts to other resource areas and environmental topics evaluated in the EIR were found to be less than significant without mitigation.

The Draft EIR is available at the City of Watsonville Community Development offices located at 250 Main Street, Watsonville, California, 95076, or online at: <https://www.cityofwatsonville.org/1626/Downtown-Specific-Plan>

The Draft EIR is also available for review at the Watsonville Public Library, located at 275 Main Street, Watsonville, California, 95076.

Providing Comments and Comment Period: The City of Watsonville is soliciting comments on the Draft EIR. Comments provided will be considered in the Final EIR in accordance with *State CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15088. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date and not later than 45 days after receipt of this NOA. The review period for comments pertaining to the Draft EIR extends from **May 12, to 5:00 P.M. on June 26, 2023**. Please mail or return your comments to **Mr. Justin Meek, AICP, Principal Planner**, at the address shown above, or by email to justin.meek@cityofwatsonville.org. Please note that all comments become part of the public record. Questions about the environmental review process should also be directed to Justin Meek.

Signature: 

 Justin Meek, AICP

Title: Principal Planner
 City of Watsonville

Telephone: (831) 768-3050

Date: May 12, 2023

Reference: California Administrative Code, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

THIS NOTICE HAS BEEN POSTED AT THE CLERK
OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OFFICE FOR A
PERIOD COMMENCING 5/12/2023
AND ENDING 6/12/2023