



**Watsonville**  
CALIFORNIA

## CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, May 13, 2025  
**TO:** CITY COUNCIL  
**WRITTEN BY:** NICK MEROLLA, RECREATION SUPERVISOR  
**RECOMMENDED BY:** PARKS & COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR CALUBAQUIB  
**APPROVED BY:** TAMARA VIDES, CITY MANAGER  
**SUBJECT:** RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE CHILDREN AND YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS

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### RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution adopting the City of Watsonville Children and Youth Bill of Rights.

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### BACKGROUND:

The City of Watsonville has long recognized the importance of investing in its youth as a vital part of a thriving, resilient community. With nearly one-third of its population under the age of 18, the City has consistently prioritized young people through its strategic goals and community programming. The City Council's 2023–2025 Strategic Plan emphasizes Community Engagement & Well-being and Public Safety, with a strong focus on Youth Services and Development. Building on this commitment, the City recently adopted the 41 Developmental Assets as a guiding framework to ensure that all youth programs and services foster positive outcomes. In alignment with these values, the adoption of a Children and Youth Bill of Rights serves as a formal declaration of the City's ongoing dedication to supporting the holistic growth, safety, and empowerment of its youngest residents. This resolution establishes the City's intent to collaborate with community partners and institutions to ensure every child and youth in Watsonville is given the opportunity to thrive.

This effort has been led regionally by the Children's Network of Santa Cruz County, a collaborative body established by the County Board of Supervisors, of which the City of Watsonville is a member, to promote the health, education, and well-being of children, youth, and families. The Network has championed the development and promotion of the Children and Youth Bill of Rights as a unifying framework for youth advocacy and policy alignment. Through their leadership and coordination, all other jurisdictions within

Santa Cruz County—including the County of Santa Cruz and the cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, and Scotts Valley—have formally adopted this Bill of Rights, signaling a shared, countywide commitment to the well-being and empowerment of young people. Watsonville’s adoption ensures that the entire county is united in its vision and approach and reinforces the City’s collaborative role in regional youth development efforts. By joining this collective movement, Watsonville affirms its place as a proactive partner in building a safe, healthy, and hopeful future for all children and youth across the county.

## **DISCUSSION:**

Adopting the Children and Youth Bill of Rights represents a significant milestone in the City’s commitment to creating a community where all young people are safe, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential. With youth making up a substantial portion of Watsonville’s population, this Bill of Rights serves as a guiding framework to align policies, programs, and partnerships with the City’s strategic priorities and the 41 Developmental Assets. It affirms the City Council’s dedication to fostering youth well-being through collaboration with schools, community organizations, and families. The Bill outlines the following ten essential rights for children and youth in Watsonville:

- 1. They have a healthy mind, body, and spirit that enables them to maximize their potential.**
  - The City of Watsonville supports this through access to youth recreation programs, mental health resources, nutritious meals at community centers, and physical activities that promote overall well-being.
- 2. They develop a healthy attachment to a parent, guardian, or caregiver and an ongoing relationship with a caring and supporting adult.**
  - Watsonville encourages strong family and mentor relationships through programs like Family Nights, youth mentoring initiatives, and community-building events that strengthen intergenerational connections.
- 3. They have a safe and healthy environment, including homes, schools, neighborhoods and communities.**
  - The City promotes safety through well-maintained parks, safe routes to school, and partnerships with public safety agencies to ensure secure and welcoming spaces for youth.
- 4. They have access to quality education that promotes future success in school, career and life.**
  - The City collaborates with Pajaro Valley Unified School District, local colleges, and nonprofits to provide college and career readiness workshops, and educational enrichment opportunities. The Library plays a key role by offering homework help, free access to computers and Wi-Fi, literacy programs, bilingual story times, STEAM activities, and resources that support learning at all stages of development.
- 5. They have training in life skills that will prepare them to live independently, be self-sufficient and positively contribute to their community.**
  - Life skills workshops offered through the Watsonville Youth Center, Teen Action Council, and other city-supported programs equip youth with tools in financial literacy, conflict resolution, and civic engagement.

- Additional opportunities such as the Watsonville Police and Fire Cadet Programs provide hands-on experience in public service and emergency response, fostering leadership and responsibility.
  - The Summer in the City Internship introduces youth to local government operations and professional work environments.
  - The Opportunity to Work initiative connects young people to real-world job experiences and essential employment skills, preparing them for self-sufficiency and active community participation.
- 6. They have employment opportunities with protections from unfair labor practices.**
- For many young people, their first job is with the City of Watsonville through a variety of positions within youth programs—such as recreation leaders, camp counselors, and program aides—offering them valuable work experience in supportive, community-focused environments. The City further supports youth workforce development through summer job programs, career exploration fairs, and partnerships with local employers to provide safe and equitable job experiences
- 7. They have freedom from mistreatment, abuse and neglect.**
- Watsonville promotes child safety through partnerships with social services and advocacy organizations, public education campaigns, and a commitment to trauma-informed practices across city programs.
- 8. They voice opinions in matters of interest to them, develop their leadership capacity, and engage in their community.**
- Youth voice is elevated through platforms like the Teen Action Council and city-sponsored leadership development programs that ensure young people help shape local policy and priorities.
  - Additionally, the City actively includes youth in civic engagement by appointing Teen Action Council representatives to serve on the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Library Board of Trustees, and the Measure R and Measure Y Oversight Committees, giving them direct input in shaping decisions that impact their community.
  - Various City departments also reach out to youth to gather their perspectives on important initiatives, such as the Parks Master Plan, the Public Art Master Plan, and the Climate Action Plan, ensuring that young people’s views are considered in the planning and decision-making process.
- 9. They feel supported by the larger community and maintain a sense of hope for the future.**
- The City fosters a culture of belonging through inclusive programming, youth recognition efforts, and community events that celebrate and uplift young people and their achievements.
  - In addition, the City is committed to designing culturally relevant programming and events that reflect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of Watsonville’s youth, ensuring that all young people feel seen, valued, and engaged in activities that resonate with their unique identities and needs.
- 10. They are encouraged to explore and express their innate curiosity and creativity.**

- Watsonville supports creative expression through arts programming, music and dance classes, cultural events, and spaces where youth can explore their talents and share their voices.

By adopting this resolution, the City reaffirms its role as a champion for youth and commits to working across all sectors to uphold these rights, promote equity, and build a stronger, healthier Watsonville for generations to come.

Next steps include continuing to support current initiatives, such as youth workforce development programs, civic engagement opportunities, and culturally relevant programming, while ensuring that these efforts remain responsive to the evolving needs of young people in Watsonville. The City will maintain its commitment to collaborating with local organizations, schools, and youth leaders to create a thriving environment for all youth.

## CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) DETERMINATION:

This action is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq. and the CEQA Guideline (14 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 15000 et. seq.), including without limitation, Public Resources Code section 21065 and California Code of Regulations 15378 as this is not a “project” that may cause a direct, or reasonably foreseeable indirect, physical change in the environment and because the action constitutes organizational or administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. Additionally, even if a “project,” the action would be exempt under the “common sense” exception (14 Cal. Code Regs. § 15061(b)(3)) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that this action may have a significant effect on the environment.

## STRATEGIC PLAN:

The Children and Youth Bill of Rights directly supports and reinforces the Watsonville City Council’s Strategic Plan goals, particularly in the areas of

- **Public Safety, Community Engagement & Well-being** - By affirming the rights of young people to live in safe, healthy environments and to be free from mistreatment and neglect, the City is investing in the foundational aspects of public safety and long-term community resilience.
- **Community Engagement & Well-being** - By ensuring youth have opportunities to express their voices, develop leadership skills, and participate meaningfully in civic life—creating a more inclusive and connected community.
- **Efficient and Well-performing Government** - By adopting a clear and unified framework for youth development grounded in equity and evidence-based principles, the City advances its commitment to an **Efficient and Well-performing Government** that is proactive, responsive, and aligned across departments in its support for children, teens, and families. This resolution serves as both a moral commitment and a practical tool for guiding collaborative, results-driven efforts that benefit the entire Watsonville community.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

None.

**ALTERNATIVE ACTION:**

The Council could elect not to adopt the Children and Youth Bill of Rights.

**ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (IF ANY):**

None.