

Commercial Uses in the Public Facilities Zoning District in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan Area

City Council

April 14, 2026

Proposal

Ordinance amending Chapter 14-16 (District Regulations) of Title 14 (Zoning) of the Watsonville Municipal Code to conditionally permit commercial uses on parcels zoned Public Facilities (PF) and located in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan area.

Background

- The Public Facilities (PF) zoning district only permits aviation-related commercial uses on the Watsonville Municipal Airport property.
- No other commercial uses are permitted on parcels zoned PF in any other area of the city.
- There are existing commercial tenant spaces in City buildings located in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP) area that currently have no permitting pathway.

Background - Continued

- City staff is recommending changes to WMC Sections 14-16.802 and 14-16.803 to conditionally permit commercial uses in the PF zoning district in the DWSP area.
- The proposed amendments would conditionally permit commercial uses with an Administrative Use Permit and a Design Review Permit approved by the Zoning Administrator as long as it is not illegal or prohibited elsewhere in the Watsonville Municipal Code.

Background - Continued

- On April 7, 2026, the Planning Commission adopted Resolution No. 03-26 (PC) recommending that the City Council adopt an ordinance amending Chapter 14-16 (District Regulations) within Title 14 (Zoning) of the Watsonville Municipal Code to conditionally permit commercial uses in the PF zoning district in the DWSP area.

Quick Aside - What about Subway?

- Subway was approved with a Zoning Clearance in 2009 when the zoning of the City Hall property was Central Commercial Core Area (CCA) with a Planned Development (PD) Overlay
- Parcel subsequently rezoned to Public Facilities (PF) to match existing use



Discussion Overview

- Proposed Zoning Code Text Amendments
- Overview of Subject Parcels
- Permitting Process
- Zoning Code Text Amendment Process
- CEQA Review

Zoning Code Text Amendments

City Staff is proposing the following Zoning Code Text Amendments:

WMC Section 14-16.802 - Permitted, development permitted, Special Use Permit uses (Table)

- Add subsection (j) DWSP Commercial Uses
 - AUP (in table for Public Facilities)
 - Requires Administrative Use Permit and Design Review
 - X (in table for Institutional)

Uses (See Section <u>14-16.803</u> for use descriptions)	PF	N
(4) Temporary dwelling unit	TUP	TUP
(j) DWSP Commercial Uses	AUP	X

WMC Section 14-16.803 - Use Regulations

- Add subsection (j) DWSP Commercial Uses
 - (1) For parcels with the Public Facilities (PF) zoning designation located in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan area, any commercial use may be allowed with an Administrative Use Permit unless prohibited elsewhere in the Watsonville Municipal Code.

(j) DWSP Commercial Uses

(1) For parcels with the Public Facilities (PF) zoning designation located in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan area, any commercial use may be allowed with an Administrative Use Permit unless prohibited elsewhere in the Watsonville Municipal Code.

DWSP Figure 6-1 Regulating Plan

- Parcels with the Public Facilities (PF) zoning designation shown in blue.
- Some parcels developed with Institutional Uses (educational and religious institutions) and would not be affected by the text amendments
- Nine parcels affected by text amendments



**FIGURE 6-1
REGULATING PLAN**

Source: City of Watsonville (2022); Santa Cruz County (2021); ESRI (2022).

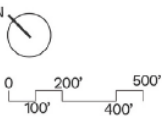
ZONES

- Downtown Core
- Downtown Neighborhood
- Downtown Industrial
- Public Facilities

OVERLAYS

- Main Street
- Gateway
- Neighborhood Transition

- Specific Plan Boundary
- Rail Line
- Waterway



Subject Parcels

Table 2: Parcels with Existing PF Uses and PF Zoning Designation in DWSP Area

	Parcel Address	Parcel APN	Current Use	Parcel Owner
1	275 Main St.	017-781-07	Civic Plaza	City of Watsonville
2	-	017-781-06	Civic Plaza Parking Garage	City of Watsonville
3	105 2 nd St.	017-172-34	Watsonville Fire Department	City of Watsonville
4	350 Main St.	017-112-01	Watsonville Plaza	City of Watsonville
5	310 Union St.	017-122-20	Solari Green Technology Center	City of Watsonville
6	120 2 nd St.	017-101-47	Marinovich Park & Community Center	City of Watsonville
7	215 E. Beach St.	017-033-13	Watsonville Veterans Memorial Bldg.	County of Santa Cruz
8	214 Center St.	017-033-20	American Legion Post 121	American Legion
9	26 W. Lake Ave.	018-231-21	Parking Lot	City of Watsonville

Permitting Process

- Administrative Use Permit (AUP) with Design Review approval
 - Design Review only required for new construction
- Zoning Administrator is final decision-maker for AUPs and Design Review
- Requires findings to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses
- Approvals may be conditioned
- Decision may be appealed to Planning Commission

Zoning Code Text Amendment Process

- Any proposed zoning code text amendment shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission at a public hearing for recommendation to the City Council.
 - Planning Commission adopted Resolution No. 03-26 (PC) recommending the City Council adopt the proposed ordinance
- Upon receipt of the Commission's recommendation, and before adopting any amendment, the Council shall review the matter at a public hearing and make the required findings
- Findings with supportive evidence are included in the staff report and as Exhibit B to the ordinance.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

- Proposed zoning code text amendment is categorically exempt from CEQA under the common sense exemption in Section 15061(b)(3).
- Section 15061(b)(3) states that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.
- Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.
- There is no possibility that the amendments to the Zoning Code would have significant effects on the environment.

Staff Recommendation

City Staff recommends the City Council introduce, for first reading only, waiving full reading of the text, an Ordinance amending Chapter 14-16 (District Regulations) of Title 14 (Zoning) of the Watsonville Municipal Code to conditionally permit commercial uses on parcels zoned Public Facilities (PF) and located in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan area.