

✓ Watsonville Growth

Watsonville looks to the year 2005

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WATSONVILLE — Visions of the future are what Watsonville planners want to hear this Wednesday at the first of three public hearings on the revision of the city's General Plan.

The general plan is the city's blueprint for growth, transportation, water use, public safety and a variety of other issues which determine the quality of life. Every 20 years or so, the city undertakes an update of its major planning document.

Because of the large crowd expected, the hearing has been moved to the Senior Center, 114 E. Fifth St., at 7 p.m.

The meeting will focus on some of the key issues facing Watsonville as it reaches toward the year 2005: housing, land use and transportation.

Members of a steering committee that has been meeting for the past year to draw up a new General Plan will lead the discussion at this and two other hearings in May and June.

Planning Director Bud Carney said the meeting will open with a brief discussion of what the General Plan is, followed by presentations on housing, land use and transportation.

To encourage audience participation, Carney said he wants to use a technique he saw at the recent League of Women Voters' workshop on planning for the year 2005. Begin-

ning with a premise, such as "Everyone likes the Monterey Bay area." Then, people will be asked to articulate their dreams of the future.

"We're going to encourage people to become visionaries and express their views to us," said Carney. The common ideas aired during the discussion will be threaded into the city's General Plan policies.

The general plan update has drawn widespread attention, including interest from Santa Cruz County Supervisor Gary Patton, who is encouraging anyone interested in Watsonville's planning process to attend the hearings.

The city has also undertaken a massive survey to gauge public reaction to 30 issues, ranging from the need for more public parks, to the need for a large-scale regional shopping center. Respondents are asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statements, and return their answers by the April 17 deadline.

Carney said so far the response has been tremendous. He encouraged people who answered the survey to attend the hearing.

"The survey is a vehicle for generating interest, but we would still encourage people to attend the hearings," he said.

The second hearing, on open space and conservation, is slated for May 6, with the third hearing on noise and safety set for June 3.