

# Watsonville growth outstrips county's

By AMY ZUCKERMAN  
Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — Watsonville's population is increasing at more than twice the rate of the county — and will require more jobs and sufficient planning for the future.

That was the gist of progress reports submitted to the City Council on Tuesday.

"Watsonville has been growing at 2.8 percent per year in the last decade," planner Nancy Alexander of Alexander and Associates told council members.

"I want to alert you to the fact that there are major policy decisions that go along with this."

Alexander presented the draft of a study that will contribute to Watsonville's General Plan to the year 2005. While no recommendations for policies were made, Alexander updated estimated population-growth figures.

She said Watsonville's growth is almost three times greater than the county's adopted a growth rate of 1 percent per year.

And the area's population grew more than estimates predicted before the 1990 census, the results of which were released at the end of July.

While the population within city limits was estimated to be 30,099, the census showed it to be 31,099.

"The planning area outside city limits on the other side of Highway 1 had an early estimate of 15,000. The actual number we're finding from the census is 20,582," Alexander said.

All city and surrounding county areas included, the census found that a total population of 51,681 for

the area.

"What if the city continued to grow into the next decade as it did the last decade? We'd have a total population of 60,000" for areas within and without the city limits, Alexander said.

While Alexander's talk was just a progress report, she told council members, "I would like you to have some of these issues in front of you."

Robert Reese, a subcontractor who worked for Alexander, said the area has an unemployment rate of 12 percent.

But Steven Salomon, city manager, said he is working with a few prospective employers to increase economic development in Watsonville.

Salomon said plans are moving along with Coast Gas, which will employ 35 people at Westridge Business Park. And V.C. Toria's, a manufacturer of hand-painted women's clothing, has signed a lease at 170 W. Lake Ave., where the company will employ another 35 people.

He said "a number of smaller retailers" have signed leases and expanded their operations.

The meeting also provided a chance for UC Santa Cruz Chancellor Karl Pister to introduce himself to the City Council.

Pister said he has begun working with members of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District in "preparing to meet the needs of the changing population of California.

"I look forward to gaining knowledge and applying it to the social and economic conditions of the area," Pister said.