

# Watsonville gets approval to annex hospital site

*Watsonville annexation*  
By DAVE BROCKMANN  
Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — Watsonville Community Hospital officials say Wednesday's approval for annexation of the current hospital site into the city of Watsonville will enhance the re-use possibilities under consideration.

The Local Agency Formation Commission unanimously approved annexing two parcels comprising 17 acres of the hospital's property on the corner of Green Valley and Holohan roads into the city of Watsonville.

"This is a very positive step for the hospital and city of Watsonville," said Omar James, vice president of the hospital's board of directors and member of the reuse steering committee.

"I'm excited about this synergy which will exist as the hospital develops its re-use plan,

which will benefit the citizens of Watsonville," James said Thursday.

The move to the city from the unincorporated portion of the county will be a cost-cutting measure for the hospital. For example, utility rates are lower in the city, so the annexation will cut the utility bills by about 15 percent, estimates the Paladin Group, a consulting firm working with the hospital on its re-use plan.

A new \$67.4-million integrated health care center is under construction on Airport Boulevard and Nelson Road, and an advisory committee has been meeting for several months to come up with re-use plans for the current facility.

In December, the hospital's board of directors unanimously endorsed the concepts developed by the re-use advisory committee and moved into the next phase of the pro-

ject.

"We are now the formal re-use steering committee," said Jennifer Davis, who chairs the 14-member panel consisting of hospital board members, community and business leaders.

The advisory committee devised a plan called "Service Central," meaning the current hospital will be a community-centered location offering a variety of health-related services.

In order to make the plan financially feasible, "the fundamental vision to reuse the facility is to blend private proprietary, private non-profit and public use," Davis said.

Among the possibilities:

- Adult day care facility, including weekends;
- Senior services, including volunteer services, advocacy and food for seniors;

- Health education, including a relationship with Cabrillo College;
- Counseling services;
- Childcare services;
- Legal assistance for low-income people;
- Preventive services and vocational training;
- A conference center for up to 500.

Davis said the cost of the re-use plan will be \$6 million, \$2 million of which will be used in the seismic retrofitting of the four-story tower structure, which was damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

Over 50,000 square feet of the 141,000-square-foot hospital building will not need retrofitting, Davis said, and that will allow the facility to be used immediately once the new integrated health center is opened.