



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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NEWS RELEASE



Date: June 11, 2024

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COUNTY CELEBRATES SOUTH COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER GRAND OPENING

500 Westridge Drive Delivers One-Stop Services to South County Residents

Joined by dozens of South County leaders and community partners, the County of Santa Cruz on Tuesday celebrated the opening of the South County Government Center, commemorating years planning and development across multiple departments to increase services to residents in Watsonville and surrounding areas.

The renovated 121,000 square-foot-campus – formerly the headquarters of West Marine – provides a centralized campus for residents to access services offered by the Human Services Department, Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, County Clerk/Elections, and Treasurer-Tax Collector’s Office, making them more accessible and convenient for South County residents.

“Bringing these essential services together under one roof is a significant step forward for South County,” Fourth District Supervisor Felipe Hernandez said. “This new campus will not only enhance the accessibility of County services but also better the quality of life for our workforce and increase equity for residents living in Watsonville.”

In 2021, the County Board of Supervisors voted to acquire the building for \$15.6 million. Following substantial improvements including seismic upgrades, the building opened to the public last month. By allowing the County to sunset ongoing lease agreements and consolidate operations under one roof, the renovated building is expected to save taxpayers money. And by reducing travel to North County for employees and clients and locating services where they are most needed, the project is also expected to lower greenhouse gas emissions and reduce traffic congestion on Highway 1.

“500 Westridge is important not just from a financial standpoint, but also helps us better meet the needs of our residents,” County Administrative Officer Carlos Palacios said. “Creating a second headquarters building to balance services is a foundational change in the way we are delivering services that will have lasting benefits for those we serve.”