



City of Capitola  
420 Capitola Avenue  
Capitola, CA 95010

**August 1, 2025**

**Subject: Request for Business Input – Potential Ordinance to Prohibit Sale of Filtered Tobacco Products**

Dear Capitola Business Owner,

On April 10, 2025, the Capitola City Council considered a presentation on the Santa Cruz County ordinance that prohibits the sale of filtered tobacco products in unincorporated areas of the County. Following the presentation and discussion, the Council directed City staff to return with a draft ordinance to amend Chapter 5.38 of the Capitola Municipal Code and engage with local businesses and organizations throughout the process.

You may view the April 10, 2025, City Council meeting and discussion at the following link:  
<https://www.cityofcapitola.org/citycouncil/page/city-council-meeting-70>

This letter is intended to open a dialogue with Capitola businesses—particularly tobacco retailers and convenience store operators—about the potential ordinance. We value your input and want to ensure that any policy decisions are informed by those most directly impacted.

In May 2023, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors formed the Tobacco Waste Ad Hoc Subcommittee to develop a consistent regional approach to reducing tobacco waste. Over the course of 16 months, the Subcommittee engaged in robust community outreach, including beach cleanups, tabling events, and educational presentations. The effort also involved extensive meetings with local businesses, environmental stakeholders, and community leaders.

On October 29, 2024, the County Board unanimously adopted Ordinance No. 5461, amending Chapter 5.60 of the Santa Cruz County Code to prohibit the sale of "Partially Inconsumable Cigarettes or Cigars," defined as tobacco products that include embedded components not intended to be consumed—commonly known as filters. This includes most filtered cigarettes, little cigars, and cigarillos. The ordinance does not constitute a blanket ban on tobacco products; rather, it specifically targets filtered products due to their significant contribution to environmental waste and their lack of proven health benefit.

The ordinance applies to in-store and online retail sales made within the jurisdiction and includes all tobacco retailers regardless of size. Violations are treated as administrative infractions.

The County's ordinance took effect on November 29, 2024. However, enforcement is deferred until January 1, 2027, or until at least two other jurisdictions in Santa Cruz County adopt similar ordinances—whichever comes later. As of this writing, the City of Santa Cruz is the first of the two jurisdictions to adopt a similar ordinance. On August 28, 2025, the Capitola City Council will



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consider becoming the second jurisdiction to adopt an ordinance at their regularly scheduled meeting at 4 pm in Council Chambers at 420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010.

Santa Cruz County has established a dedicated webpage with extensive resources, including public health data and support for smoking cessation:

<https://www.santacruzcountyca.gov/TobaccoWasteSubcommittee.aspx>

The City of Capitola is committed to supporting a clean and healthy community while also considering the operational realities of local businesses. As we are drafting a proposed ordinance, we want to hear from you. Do you have concerns about the potential economic impact? Do you have suggestions about implementation timelines or exemptions? Your feedback will help shape how the City proceeds.

Please direct your comments, questions, or concerns by email to:

Email: [tobacco.mitigation@ci.capitola.ca.us](mailto:tobacco.mitigation@ci.capitola.ca.us)

We appreciate your time and participation in this important discussion. Your insights are vital as we work together to protect public health and our local environment, while also preserving Capitola's unique business community.

Sincerely,

Katie Herlihy  
Community Development Director  
City of Capitola