

RESOLUTION NO. ____-2026
RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A “FIRST YEAR FREE” FEE WAIVER PROGRAM FOR NEW BUSINESSES

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Bragg has adopted a Strategic Plan that prioritizes being business-friendly, supporting entrepreneurship, and revitalizing downtown and commercial areas; and

WHEREAS, the City has implemented a Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention (BEAR) Strategy and adopted a Vacant Commercial Registry in 2025 to encourage activation and reuse of underutilized commercial spaces; and

WHEREAS, Fort Bragg is a low-income, rural coastal community where access to startup capital is limited and early-stage fees can present a barrier to new business formation particularly for microbusinesses and first-time entrepreneurs; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to reduce early-stage financial barriers for new businesses by waiving select City-imposed administrative fees during a business’s first year of operation, while continuing to fully enforce all zoning, building, fire, health, and safety requirements;

WHEREAS, waiving select City-imposed administrative fees during a business’s first year of operation serves the public interest through reduction of barriers without compromising zoning, building, fire, or safety standards; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to implement such fee waivers in a fiscally responsible, targeted, and accountable manner;

WHEREAS, similar first-year fee waiver and facilitation programs have been successfully implemented by other small and mid-sized cities as a means of supporting entrepreneurship, activating vacant storefronts, and improving the customer experience; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to implement this program in a manner that is fiscally responsible, narrowly targeted, geographically focused, time-limited, and subject to ongoing oversight and evaluation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Fort Bragg as follows:

Section 1. Establishment of Program

The City Council hereby establishes a First-Year Fee Waiver Program to support new business formation, entrepreneurship, and activation of vacant commercial spaces.

Section 2. Fees Eligible for Waiver

During a qualifying business’s first year of operation, the City Manager or designee is authorized to waive the following City-imposed fees:

- Sign Permit
- Minor Use Permit-Commercial

- Business License
- Administrative Design Review
- Zoning Clearance

These waivers apply only to City fees set forth herein and do not include third-party consultant costs, enterprise fund fees, or business license taxes.

Section 3. Annual Cap

The First-Year Fee Waiver Program shall be subject to an annual aggregate cap of Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$25,000) in total waived fees per fiscal year.

This cap is intended to support approximately fifteen (15) new businesses per year. Once the annual cap is reached, no additional waivers shall be granted during that fiscal year unless authorized by subsequent action of the City Council.

Section 4. Eligibility Limitations

Eligibility for the program is limited to:

- New businesses establishing operations within the City of Fort Bragg or within their first year of operation.
- One waiver per business entity
- One physical business location
- Locations legally permitted under the Zoning Code

Section 5. Geographic Targeting

The City Manager or designee may prioritize or limit fee waivers to geographic areas identified as economic development priorities, including downtown areas, commercial corridors, and properties subject to the Vacant Commercial Registry.

Section 6. Sunset Clause

The First-Year Fee Waiver Program shall sunset automatically two (2) years from the date of adoption unless extended by action of the City Council.

Section 7. Standards Unchanged

Nothing in this Resolution shall be construed to waive or modify any zoning, building, fire, health, or safety requirements. All applicable codes, standards, and inspections remain fully enforceable.

Section 8. Administration and Reporting

The City Manager or designee is authorized to administer the program, approve eligible waivers, and report annually to the City Council on program participation and fiscal impacts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Fort Bragg and do hereby adopt the fee modifications as shown on Exhibit "A," attached, showing the fees to be charged for the services described therein; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Clerk is authorized and directed to update the Fee Waivers as part of the Consolidated Fee Schedule to reflect the fees described in the staff report; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these fee waivers shall become effective April 20, 2026.

The above and foregoing Resolution was introduced by Councilmember _____, seconded by Councilmember _____, and passed and adopted at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Fort Bragg held on the 9th day of February, 2026, by the following vote:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSENT:
ABSTAIN:
RECUSED:

JASON GODEKE
Mayor

ATTEST:

Diana Paoli
City Clerk