

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-27

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF SANTA CRUZ AMENDING SANTA CRUZ  
MUNICIPAL CODE SECTION 10.36.040 PERTAINING TO MEDIANS

WHEREAS, the City has a substantial and compelling interest in promoting traffic safety and reducing hazards to bicyclists, motorists, and pedestrians. The Council is concerned about the safety impacts associated with individuals lingering on medians, particularly along high-speed, high-volume, or narrow median locations where pedestrians are especially vulnerable to collisions.

WHEREAS, the City's existing Santa Cruz Municipal Code ("SCMC") § 10.36.040 currently prohibits "remaining" on any median citywide. This ordinance narrows SCMC § 10.36.040 to focus on medians where there is a clear, objective public-safety risk, while ensuring the regulation is content-neutral and consistent with free-speech protections.

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries and increase safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. In furtherance of that goal, in August of 2019, the City of Santa Cruz adopted a Vision Zero policy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and serious injuries on City streets by 2030.

WHEREAS, medians are an important tool for increasing street safety and meeting the City's Vision Zero goal. Medians enhance street safety by physically separating opposing traffic, reducing head-on collisions and cross-over accidents, providing pedestrian refuge islands, and shortening crossing distances. Nevertheless, medians, and especially narrow medians that often simply serve to divide traffic, are not designed as pedestrian gathering spaces. Individuals lingering on medians risk being struck by vehicles, obstruct traffic sightlines, and distract drivers who must focus on the safe operation of fast-moving vehicles.

WHEREAS, the City Council, in consultation with the City Engineer, finds that increased exposure to vehicles from lingering on medians creates safety risks where the median is narrow (four feet wide or less), adjacent to a roadway with high traffic volume, or on or adjacent to a high-speed corridor such as the River Street/Highway 1 intersection. Such medians provide little refuge for pedestrians, particularly from large or commercial vehicles whose mirrors or accessories extend into adjacent lanes. Even wider medians adjacent to high-speed or high-volume roadways place pedestrians at significant risk of being struck or inadvertently entering the roadway. Narrow medians further limit the ability of pedestrians to safely avoid vehicles, increasing both the likelihood and potential severity of collisions.

WHEREAS, the City Engineer has also found that sometimes pedestrians who linger on medians obstruct traffic signs or signals, which is another public safety issue. Traffic devices sometimes installed on medians include regulatory signs and equipment such as turn prohibitions and signal indications, which, if blocked, creates a traffic safety concern.

WHEREAS, the City Council hereby enacts the following amendments to Santa Cruz Municipal Code Section 10.36.040.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Santa Cruz as follows:

**SECTION 1.** Santa Cruz Municipal Code Section 10.36.040 is amended as follows:

“LINGERING ON CERTAIN MEDIANS

(a) Definitions. The following definitions apply to this section:

“Linger” means to remain for longer than two traffic signal cycles, or, for locations without a traffic signal, for longer than three minutes.

“Median” means a raised paved or planted strip of ground dividing a street, roadway, or highway into lanes according to the direction of travel.

(b)

(1) No person may linger on any median within the City of Santa Cruz at a location on the median that is four feet wide or narrower.

(2) No person may block traffic signs or signals located on or within any median in the City of Santa Cruz for more than two traffic signal cycles, or, for locations without a traffic signal, for longer than three minutes.

(3) No person may linger on any median within the City of Santa Cruz at a location that is within 100 feet of any roadway where the speed limit is 35 miles per hour or higher.

(c) The prohibitions contained in subdivision (b) above shall not apply to public employees, employees of public utilities, or employees of public contractors when it is necessary to be upon a median in connection with their employment duties. Nor shall subdivision (b) prohibit anyone from being present on a median as may be necessary to cross a roadway or respond to an emergency.

(d) Any violation of this section is punishable as either an infraction or a misdemeanor.”

**SECTION 2.** This ordinance shall take effect and be in force thirty (30) days after final adoption.

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-27

PASSED FOR PUBLICATION this 18th day of November, 2025, by the following vote:

AYES: Councilmembers Trigueiro, Brunner, Newsome, Golder, O'Hara; Vice Mayor Kalantari-Johnson; Mayor Keeley.

NOES: None.

ABSENT: None.

DISQUALIFIED: None.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fred Keeley, Mayor

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bonnie Bush, City Clerk Administrator

PASSED FOR FINAL ADOPTION this XX day of XX, 2025, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

DISQUALIFIED:

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fred Keeley, Mayor

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bonnie Bush, City Clerk Administrator

This is to certify that the above and foregoing document is the original of Ordinance No. 2025-27 and that it has been published or posted in accordance with the Charter of the City of Santa Cruz.

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Bonnie Bush, City Clerk Administrator