

McKinleyville Town Center Alternative Plan B  
Prepared by the McKinleyville Organizing Committee, December 6, 2021

The goal of the McKinleyville Community Plan Town Center Ordinance is **creation of a unique identity** for McKinleyville through the development of a **community focal point** containing a **mixture of land uses in village-like form** with a center for **social/community interaction that encourages bicycle and pedestrian travel**. Survey data from the 2020 Town Center community survey strongly indicates **active, community** and **engagement** as overarching themes for the Town Center Masterplan. We present an alternative to the County's Town Center Plan, **Alternative Plan B**, with a design driven by active community engagement, providing a unique community identity while also achieving the vision of the Town Center Ordinance and balancing the policies of the McKinleyville Community Plan.

Alternative Plan B as follows:

Design Element 1). Provide Pedestrian/Bicycle Amenities Connecting Community to, and within, the Town Center.

Ped/Bike amenities at Hiller to extend to McKinleyville Ave. Continue ped/bike amenities to circumnavigate McKinleyville Ave, to Railroad Ave to Central Ave, back to Hiller Rd. Ped/Bike amenities connect Mid Town Trail. Ped/Bike amenities at Gwin to Senior Park. Ped/Bike amenities connect at Hiller South to Family Resource Center. With all MCSD facilities around Pierson Park: Youth and Recreation, Library, Senior Center, Azalea Hall along Gwin to Thunderbird Senior Dr., (between Gwin and Pickett) and back to Center along Pickett. Connection from all directions to Family Resource Center. The trail connects to the two middle schools and the high school. This allows the community at large to actively engage with the town center.

Design Element 2). Provide for Community's #1 Open Space Priority

The community's number one open space priority for the town center is "undeveloped nature preserve with trails" (per 2020 Town Center survey results). Recommend creation of a Central Wetlands Park, in wet pasture behind Safeway with approximately 40 acres of TC-AS, showcasing environment as wealth. Wetland improvements and restoration can be monetized to provide wetland mitigation bank credits, meanwhile enriching biodiversity and creating recreational opportunities. Other economic benefits include increased tourism, and the benefits of immediately accessible natural area for shoppers, office & retail workers, apartment residents, and surrounding neighborhoods, for relaxation/refreshment/aesthetic enjoyment. Park includes nature trails, picnic grounds and a connector section of mid-town trail linking existing trail sections. Other amenities such as a campground, native plant gardens, and open-air fairgrounds could also be considered.

Design Element 3). Satisfy County Housing Element

Housing Element (200 units low-income housing) can be met on 12.5 acres with a minimum density of 16 units/acre. Design should include play area for children and garden spaces/nooks for inhabitants.

Design Element 4). Create Viable Commercial Core

Knowing the town center gateway buildings at McKinleyville Shopping Center are old and leaky, with many chronic vacancies, we propose the McKinleyville Shopping Center and other vacant Pierson properties on northwest Central Ave between Pickett Rd and Railroad Ave be redeveloped for village-like development including a cultural center and transit center, along with other public facilities including pop-up business infrastructure.

Design Element 5). Provide for Village-like Mixed Use Development

TC-MU acreage allows for additional housing and economic development opportunities; includes preservation of existing spruce forest.

Design Element 6). Utilize the Central Avenue Sub Area to safely link the Hiller Road Sub Area to the Pierson Park Subarea

Create a "street diet" for Central Ave to accomplish the traffic calming necessary to safely link Hiller Sub Area to Pierson Park Sub Area, while providing for continuity in ped/bike facility improvements. Recommend slimming Central Ave from five travel lanes down to three, with separated bike lane and improved pedestrian facility including "complete street elements" such as street trees, benches, parklets and public art. This provides for a safe, cohesive, and walkable town center. Additionally, to best leverage any progress that may be made by the McKinleyville Multi-modal South Gateway planning project, we recommend that a Central Ave street diet extend from Murray Rd to top of the hill at Bella Vista.

**Note** – the Town Center Plan B graphic (attached at page bottom) includes only our proposed changes; other elements of the current zoning map are not reproduced here.

We have the following comments on the County's Town Center plan:

The McKinleyville Town Center Masterplan is the people's plan; taxpayers are paying for it. It's not the county's, it's not the Pierson's. The MMAC is charged to act as our voice, not to make our decisions.

In the absence of a true City Hall, we request that all town center project information, and other local project and study info, should be made available for public viewing at the Community Center (next door to Teen Center), as an open house, every other Saturday from 9-noon. MCSD should facilitate this de facto "City Hall." Community volunteers can be found to staff this.

Request community discussion to resolve overarching Land Use Plan/Zoning Map issues, prior to community review/edit and adoption of Ordinance language.

Request public walking tour of project for all subareas.

Apartment buildings proposed for Hiller South should be redesigned to provide visual relief from flat surfaces facing north/south. Design should include play area for children and garden spaces/nooks for inhabitants.

With 200 new units on Hiller, traffic congestion will impact Central Ave, McKinleyville Ave and Washington Ave. Request that McKinleyville Ave be made to go through to School Rd to relieve congestion on Washington and Central Avenues.

Between Murray Rd and Anna Sparks Rd, request mapping of the "burden area," a transportation right-of-way (public easement) that runs 45 ft from top of curb outward from street intermittently along both sides of Central Avenue.

Request burden area be utilized in design of pedestrian and bicycle amenities and other complete street elements along Central Avenue from Murray Rd to Anna Sparks Rd. Request that the burden area be included in TC-AS.

The County has proposed approximately 3 acres of TC-AS out of an approximately 80-acre planning envelope. This is not balanced. We recommend much more TC-AS acreage to encourage more active social engagement opportunities. Recommend TC-AS areas should be acquired as public properties.

We recommend a mechanism be put in place to mandate phased development, i.e., buildout of all vacant units, underused parking lots, and land already accessible to cars and infrastructure before allowing any development of open space.

McKinleyville “Where Horses have the Right-of-Way” ... Planners should design the zoning keeping in mind the major policies of the McKinleyville Community Plan: preservation of rural environment, protection of natural resources, provide housing and economic development, and establish a Town Center with village-like development.

We applaud consideration of pop-ups, but request that any location sited for this purpose be acquired as public facility, and that specific infrastructure to facilitate pop-ups be included on-site.

Request that one parameter wetlands within town center boundary be mapped to facilitate full project analysis.

The proposed wetland mitigation ratio is too low. The County town center alternative removes almost all of the upland habitat (one-parameter wetland) which contribute significantly to the functionality of the area wetlands. Additionally, a major wetland feature is proposed to be partially filled, bisecting the feature and negatively influencing hydrology and functionality of the remainder wetland. The County alternative also sites multi-use development adjacent to wetland zones, further compromising the capacity for wetland function. The County proposal to include passive recreational use within mitigation areas/buffers will likely contribute to reduced mitigation success rates. Mitigation is proposed in areas already exhibiting wetland indicators, therefore proposed mitigation will not meet the “no net loss” policy as mitigation will consist of wetland enhancement or restoration rather than wetland creation. We recommend that a 3:1 ratio be adopted.

Request that High Density Multi Family should be capped at a maximum 16 units per acre.

Request all new building construction should maximize passive solar gain.

Request any parking areas should be “roofed” with solar panels, and/or growing “green” roofs.

Echoing CRTP’s comment—request no minimum parking standards for new development.

Request that a Tree Ordinance protecting trees within town center area should be adopted within Community Plan.

Request that a Vacancy Tax Ordinance for chronic commercial vacancies within town center area be adopted within Community Plan.

Request that all changes/amendments to the McKinleyville Community Plan shall be recorded as “strikethrough’s” within the plan; documenting changes to the public record.

# PLAN B

