



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

3015 H Street • Eureka CA 95501
Phone: (707) 445-7541 • Fax: (707) 268-3792
<http://www.humboldt.gov/156>

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 11, 2022

To: McKinleyville Municipal Advisory Committee (MMAC) and Community Members

From: Michael Richardson
Supervising Planner
Humboldt County Planning and Building Department

Re: Materials for Special Meeting regarding the Town Center on March 16, 2022 (6pm)

We are at decision point, which you may find both exciting and intimidating at the same time. Our Department has assembled four Town Center Ordinance alternatives for the MMAC to select from at the March 16 meeting, and based on that selection, we will present an ordinance for you to consider at the next meeting as your recommendation for the Town Center Zone.

There are many important commonalities between each of the alternatives. For instance, all of them use the three-parameter wetland criteria for classification of wetlands, they all have a combination of the Mixed Use, Residential Multifamily and Public Facilities (Urban) zone districts, and they all implement the Town Center goals and policies of the 2002 McKinleyville Community Plan (MCP).

Below in no particular order are the zoning ordinance alternatives that attempt to capture the unique themes of the public comment received along with high level consideration of the “pros and cons”.

Rural Character Alternative

- This alternative is characterized as a smaller scale Town Center with lower building heights (two story maximum), less commercial and residential development and more open space.
- Development patterns in the surrounding areas would be replicated in the Town Center - large setbacks, limited building scale and height, and landscape screening from adjacent streets.
- The zoning would limit the multifamily housing allowed to the existing minimum level (200 multifamily units).
- Wetland areas would be identified on the Zoning map.
- Maintain existing road network and function and provide connected network of off-road trails to Hiller Park, Pierson Park, and Mid-Town Trail.

- Design standards use the existing D-Design Review combining zone standards which protect natural land forms and soften or screen visual impact of new development. Landscaping, lighting and sign standards would be developed by a Design Review Committee.

Pros

- Maximizes the preservation of “streams, streamside management areas, wetlands, open spaces, recreational areas and parks accessible to the public at large” in the Town Center which are defined as the rural characteristics of Urban Areas in the Community Plan.
- New development would more closely follow development patterns in the surrounding areas.
- Maintains the existing road network and function of collector and arterial streets as expressly defined in the Community Plan.

Cons

- Reducing the density and intensity of new development and maximizing preservation of “streams, streamside management areas, wetlands, open spaces, recreational areas and parks” in the Town Center Area may increase development pressure outside Urban Areas resulting in new development in rural areas not served by public services, and may lead to increased conversion of resource lands to low-density development.
- Maintaining the priority of collectors and arterials for speed and volume of vehicular traffic may reduce Town Center Area walkability and bike ability.

Walk / Bike Alternative [Pedestrian/Bicycle-Friendly Alternative]

- This alternative is characterized by focused and denser development supporting a range of residential and commercial uses with pedestrian oriented building frontages.
- Site and design standards are incorporated into the Town Center zone which prioritize safe and comfortable biking and walking travel.
- Rights of way reallocated to prioritize walking and biking over automobile use.
- High levels of thoroughfare connectivity for all street users.
- Wetlands and active open space are diagrammatically shown on the zoning map which would allow relocation of wetlands on-site.

Pros

- Maximizes walkability and bike-ability through street design and human-scaled building form.
- Prioritizes infill development allocating more areas to buildings rather than off-street parking areas.
- Encouraging more residential development Center Area may decrease development pressure outside Urban Areas and may result in less conversion of resource lands.

Cons

- Changes to arterial streets may increase travel time in McKinleyville.
- Emphasis on traditional downtown street frontages will create a different character than the existing suburban development pattern in McKinleyville.

Market Alternative [Maximum Flexibility Alternative]

- Simple site and design standards are incorporated into the Town Center zone with clear procedures for exceptions to allow flexibility to address future market conditions in this alternative.
- Allowed uses are generally described rather than precisely listed.
- No net loss of wetlands is the prevailing protection measure, and they could be relocated on- or off-site.
- Flexibility in achieving roads, trails, and open space objectives of the 2002 MCP
- Use existing streets, proposed 2002 MCP streets, driveways, paths, and trails to achieve connectivity.
- Design review is limited to landscaping plan requirements established by the zone.

Pros

- Provides the maximum flexibility for property owners to respond to residential and commercial market changes in terms of building design and the provision of circulation facilities and open space.
- Permit requirements and standards are kept to a minimum.

Cons

- Maximum flexibility creates uncertainty in terms of the ultimate development design and appearance of the Town Center.
- Maintaining the priority of collectors and arterials for speed and volume of vehicular traffic may inhibit Town Center Area walkability.
- Least amount of wetlands and open space are required to be protected.

Status Quo with Design Guidelines Alternative

- This alternative would use the MCP Town Center standards close to verbatim in the ordinance.
- Wetlands areas are precisely mapped on the zoning map.
- Development standards are those already included in the zoning ordinance.
- Landscaping, lighting and design review standards are established by a Design Review Committee.
- Use existing streets, proposed 2002 MCP streets, driveways, paths, and trails to achieve connectivity

Pros

- Most closely follows the policies and standards of the Community Plan.
- Implements Design Review, lighting and landscaping standards for the Town Center Area as expressly defined in the Community Plan.
- Maintains the existing road network and function of collector and arterial streets as expressly defined in the Community Plan.

Cons

- Relying on design review, lighting and landscaping standards that are not yet developed may not result in a unique identity for the Town Center.
- Maintaining the priority of collectors and arterials for speed and volume of vehicular traffic may inhibit Town Center Area walkability.

Central Avenue Discussion

In addition to the Town Center Zone, the MMAC at its last meeting discussed priorities for Central Avenue and seemed to have consensus that walking and biking should be the priority in the Ordinance, and that could best be accommodated by one lane in each direction with a middle turn lane. Also there seemed to be some consensus that the walking and biking street design priority for Central Avenue should extend beyond the McKinleyville Shopping Center, and go from Heartwood Drive at the south end to Railroad Drive at the north end, which is the entrance to McKinleyville Middle School and near where Central Avenue currently transitions from one lane in each direction into two lanes.

Staff would like the MMAC to affirm this description of the MMAC’s discussion accurately captures what you are requesting staff to present in the draft ordinance, or to let us know what we didn’t capture quite right.