



STAFF REPORT

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

September 12, 2023

TO: Honorable Chair and Commissioners

FROM: David Loya, Director of Community Development

PREPARER: David Loya, Director of Community Development

DATE: September 07, 2023

TITLE: Consider Additional General Plan Update Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission debrief from the August 22 study session and provide recommendations on Land Use designations.

INTRODUCTION:

The City Council/Planning Commission Study Session on the Gateway Area Plan was held August 22, 2023. This item will provide the Planning Commission the opportunity to debrief and discuss improvements to communicating the Planning Commission's recommendation for the next study session. The next study session is scheduled for September 26, 2023. In addition, this item brings forward a few recommendations for land use designation changes, as well as a discussion on the commercial land use designations. The Planning Commission may provide a recommendation for modifications to the commercial land use designations.

DISCUSSION:

This item has two objectives. First, it provides an opportunity for the Commission to discuss the August 22 study session with an emphasis on how to improve communication at the September study session. The second objective is to review the commercial land use designations and make a recommendation for any modifications the Commission would like to make.

Study Session Debrief

Study sessions are intended to allow discussion among the Council and Commission to improve the Council's understanding of Commission recommendations. The Commission's General Plan and Gateway Code recommendation covers a voluminous amount of discussion and public input. And, there are several significant important policy discussions on several topics in the update. For these reasons, the study sessions are a critical component to the Commission's recommendation.

This item will be an opportunity for the Commission to hear about proposed changes to the format of the study session, provide input on format and content, and to reinforce aspects of its recommendation. At a minimum, the Commission should discuss recommendations for the

next study session, including the format, structure, and content. The Commission may also want to consider which elements of its recommendations are highest priority. This will help the Council develop topics for the next study session.

Staff encourages Commissioners to prepare for this discussion by considering what worked and what did not work well from the last study session and which elements of the current Commission recommendation are of highest priority.

Commercial Land Use Designations

The *General Plan: 2020* contained three commercial land use designations: Commercial-Central (C-C), Commercial-General (C-G), and Commercial-Visitor Serving (C-VS). A fourth, Commercial Mixed-use (C-M) was added in 2008. The current Commission recommendation eliminates the C-VS designation, which was only applied to properties between Valley West Boulevard and Janes Road. In addition, the current recommendation redesignates almost all Commercial General to Commercial Mixed-use. The discussion has been to make C-M a more flexible land use designation, allowing for more residential and increasing the density of this designation.

In reviewing the changes the Commission made to the Land Use Map, staff found that there are only 21 C-G designated parcels between three locations (Attachment A):

- Valley West (north of Giuntoli Lane) -eight parcels
- L.K. Wood Boulevard (currently housing Blondie's)-one parcel
- South of Samoa (coastal)- twelve parcels

These changes beg the question whether to eliminate the Commercial General designation all together. Staff would like to facilitate a discussion about the purpose of the commercial designations to evaluate whether to reassign some areas to Commercial General or to eliminate this designation. The Commission should either clarify the intent of C-G, or dissolve C-G into C-M resulting in two commercial use types:

- 1) Commercial-Mixed as a highly permissive zone, allowing both fully commercial and fully residential projects (i.e. no ground-floor commercial requirement) and a broad range of use types, encompassing all uses currently authorized in C-M, C-G, and C-VS, with the potential to explore neighborhood-specific differentiations to building form and use; and
- 2) Commercial-Central as a more targeted commercial mix clearly intended for Arcata's highly trafficked urban core.

Current proposed General Plan 2045 language in underline/strikeout:

Commercial – Central [C-C]. This designation covers most of the nineteen square blocks surrounding the Plaza and includes retail, professional office, civic, hotel, theater, residential, and similar uses. The Central-Commercial Area forms the center of the City and is designed to be a high density, pedestrian-oriented activity area, with shops and services, banks, offices, restaurants, and entertainment supporting a variety of day and night activities. The Commercial-Central Zone will continue to have no upper density limit.

Commercial – General [C-G]. This designation provides the full range of retail, entertainment, and service commercial uses primarily in ~~Uniontown, Valley West, Westwood/Sunset, Sunny Brae, Greenview, and Bayside neighborhood centers, and other areas, such as Northtown, Giuntoli Lane, and Samoa Boulevard.~~ C-G development must be ~~compatible with the surrounding residential uses and~~ provide convenient access for patrons

arriving by bicycle, public transit, motor vehicle, or on foot. ~~A primary difference between the C-G areas and the Plaza Area is parking. Businesses in the C-G area will be expected to provide sufficient on-site parking. C-G areas are intended to have convenient access from residential areas in order to provide for day-to-day shopping and service needs. Residential densities allow up to 50 units per acre, but commercial uses shall constitute a predominant use of the first floor.~~

Commercial – Mixed Use [C-M]. This land use designation allows high-density infill development with a high degree of flexibility around uses. This land use designation is applied to parcels suitable for infill development, redevelopment, and densification. Residential densities allow up to 50 units per acre.

Commercial – Visitor Serving [C-VS]. This land use designation permits hotels, motels, recreation vehicle parks, theaters, restaurants, auto sales centers, gas stations, mini-marts, and similar uses which attract or serve the needs of travelers, tourists, and local patrons.

~~The C-VS designation is not intended for general retail sales. C-VS uses are appropriate at highway interchanges where they are visible from the road and easily accessible by travelers and tourists. Similarly, C-VS uses are appropriate at locations near natural amenities or other attractions for visitors. The area designated for C-VS is at the State Route 101 and Giuntoli Lane interchange, west of Valley West Boulevard, and along Janes Road/Heindon Road.~~

LU-11 Support and revitalize other existing neighborhood and commercial activity areas. The existing neighborhood centers of Westwood, Sunny Brae, Bayside, and Greenview are designated as multiple-use sites where additional retail establishments, personal and business services, and other neighborhood-oriented commercial services are encouraged to be developed. The City encourages residential uses in mixed use centers. Reinvestment to upgrade and/or expand existing commercial activity areas shall be encouraged. Upgrades should include improvements to existing centers including of parking and landscaping areas; provision of facilities to accommodate bicycles, pedestrians, and transit and to reduce vehicle trips; and residential units on upper floors or in new structures. Appropriate lands near these centers are designated for higher density residential uses to encourage walking and bicycling to commercial services.

LU-1d Mixed-use neighborhood centers. ~~The existing neighborhood centers of Westwood, Valley West, Sunny Brae, Uniontown, and Greenview are designated as multiple-use sites where additional retail establishments, personal and business services, and other neighborhood-oriented commercial services are encouraged to be developed. Substantial additions to these existing centers shall include residential units on upper floors where feasible or in separate buildings. Upgrading these centers shall include additional landscaping, improvement of parking lot designs, and provision of transit access, such as bus turnouts. Appropriate lands near these centers are designated for higher density residential uses in order to encourage walking and bicycling to neighborhood services.~~

In addition to this policy, Table LU-4 (Attachment B) outlines differences in land uses between the commercial designations. Staff will review this table with the Commission to facilitate the discussion. There are certain uses, such as Travel Trailer/RV Park that the City may wish to limit to certain areas though zoning or use permit requirements.

Staff recommends eliminating Commercial General at this point unless the discussion elevates the purpose of this district.

ATTACHMENTS:

A. General_Plan_Update (PDF)

B. Commercial LU Table (PDF)