

MEMORANDUM



DATE: January 31, 2023
TO: File
FROM: Suzi Merriam, Community Development Director
Justin Meek, AICP, Principal Planner
RE: Ceiba Listening Session: Q&A

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

On Thursday, September 29, 2022, from 6:00 to 7:30 PM, the City of Watsonville (City) and Ceiba College Preparatory Academy (Ceiba) held a joint information and listening session concerning Ceiba's general plan amendment and rezoning application. The purpose of this meeting was to provide community members information on the current status of the project and also to answer questions from the community. The meeting was held in the City Council Chambers with additional seating and live video streaming in the Watsonville Community Rooms located at 275 Main Street, 4th Floor. Spanish translation and interpretation services were provided along with child care for children ages 5-10 years old.

MEETING AGENDA

The agenda for the meeting was as follows:

1. Introductions
2. Intent of the meeting (Rene Mendez, City Manager)
3. Status of the Ceiba general plan and rezoning application and next steps (Suzi Merriam, Community Development Director)
4. Ceiba College Prep presentation and information (Josh Ripp, Head of School)
5. Public comment/questions

QUESTIONS/REQUESTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION & ANSWERS

A number of the parents in attendance at the meeting expressed support for Ceiba and inquired about when its application would move forward for consideration by the City Council for approval. In response, City Manager Mendez noted that a date has not been set but all interested parties would be notified ahead of time.

Below is a list of questions raised during the meeting concerning impacts to the neighborhood. Answers are provided in *blue italic* text.

1. Nick Bulaich requested that staff confirm the number of parking spaces provided at the school site.

As shown on Existing Site Plan (sheet A101), the site provides 63 parking spaces, including 3 ADA spaces. However, as noted on the plan, the area representing spaces 50-57 is not

used for parking; rather, existing pavement markings indicate this area is used by children as an outside play area. (Site visits confirmed that children play outside in this area.) Therefore, the site has 55 parking spaces for staff and visitor use.

2. During Head of School Ripp's presentation, he also indicated that 128 students were observed walking or biking to school during the traffic operations study conducted by Hexagon on June 8, 2022. Nick Bulaich requested that this figure be confirmed.

This figure was based on the Traffic Operations Study prepared on June 8, 2022 by Hexagon for the school. This study indicates that "128 pedestrians were counted crossing Locust Street during the AM peak hour and 106 pedestrians were counted during the PM peak hour."

As shown on Figure 2 (Maximum Observed Vehicle Queues) and included in Appendix A (Traffic Counts), these crossings occurred mid-block at the driveway leading into the school site. The study further clarifies that many students were dropped off or picked up on nearby streets, which may account for the large number of students crossing the street to go to and from school, stating: "On-street drop-offs and pick-ups (including both vehicles parking along the curb and stopping in the travel lane) were observed during the AM and PM peak one-hour periods along Locust Street, Riverside Drive, and 2nd Street."

Hexagon staff observed a total of 89 vehicles dropping students off on the street in the morning, more than the number of parents dropping students off on the school site (80 vehicles exiting the site during the AM peak hour). In addition, Hexagon staff observed 30 vehicles picking up students along the street in the afternoon, which was about half the number of parent vehicles that picked students up on the school site (61 vehicles exiting the site during the PM peak hour). In addition, three students were observed to drive and park on-street. One bicyclist was observed entering the site in the morning time.

3. A member of the public raised traffic and parking concerns, and inquired about the number of students that drive to school.

According to the Traffic Operations Study prepared by Hexagon, three students were observed driving to school and parking on the street.

4. Marta Bulaich asked City staff and Ceiba officials to confirm whether using Riverside Drive (SR 129) between Walker Street and Sakata Lane is an appropriate, safe drop-off location. As a follow-up question, Ms. Bulaich inquired about whether a condition of approval would require drop-offs onsite.

One of the conditions of approval indicates that school access for student drop off and pick up shall be limited to the driveway off of Locus Street, and that the Riverside Drive access shall not be utilized. The intent of this condition is for parents to drop off and pick up their children onsite.

Other conditions require the school to prepare a plan that identifies safe routes to school and for school administration staff to be responsible for traffic flow to and from the site during drop off and pick up periods. The City's Traffic Operations Manager has reviewed and approved the updated safe routes to school plan along with crossing guard training materials. This plan shows drivers entering and exiting the site via the Locust Street

driveway. Please note, however, that according to the City's Traffic Operations Manager, whether parents choose to follow said routes is not something that the City can control.

While Riverside Drive is not considered a safe drop-off location, currently there is a posted 25 mph speed limit in the area of the school. Ceiba is also conditioned to apply for an encroachment permit with Caltrans to establish a "school zone" in this area, in accordance with the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD) guidelines.

5. Imelda inquired about the process for rezoning the site from industrial to institutional and, noting that Ceiba is looking into solutions to traffic congestion, asked what else might impede the requested approval.

Please refer to the Planning Commission staff report dated April 5, 2022 under the heading "Process" for a description about changing the site's general plan designation and zoning. In short, an amendment to the City's General Plan Land Use Diagram and Zoning Map may be changed by the City Council according to procedures in the Watsonville Municipal Code whenever the public necessity, the general community welfare, and good zoning practices permit such amendment. WMC §§ 14-12.700 et seq., 14-12.800 et seq.

The project site is designated Industrial on the General Plan Land Use Diagram and is within the General Industrial (IG) Zoning District. Ceiba is a public charter school on land designated for industrial-type uses. As discussed on pages 7-8 of the staff report under the heading "General Plan / Zoning Amendment," public and quasi-public uses, such as elementary, junior and high schools, are not intended to be located in areas of the City designated for industrial uses. In addition, elementary, junior high and high schools are not an allowed use in the IG Zoning District. These types of educational facilities, however, are allowed in areas designated as Public/Quasi-Public on the General Plan Land Use Diagram and zoned Institutional (N). Since Ceiba was permitted to establish at the site on a temporary basis, has made substantial improvements to the existing building, and has not found another site for purchase, the proposed amendments to the General Plan Land Use Diagram and Zoning Map would enable the formal recognition of the existing school use on the premises. Therefore, the project includes changing the site's land use designation and zoning as follows:

- General Plan: Industrial → Public/Quasi-Public
- Zoning: IG (General Industrial) → N (Institutional)

The purpose of the Public/Quasi-Public designation is to allow government or quasi-public buildings or facilities, including schools. Educational facilities for school-age children are allowed in N Zoning District with issuance of a Special Use Permit and may be operated by a public or private entity. WMC § 14-16.802(a)(6).

6. A member of the public inquired whether people can park in the lot across the street?

No, people may not park in the vacant lot across the street.



City of Watsonville

"A Community of Opportunities"

September 20, 2022

Dear Valued Community Member,

I am reaching out to invite you to an information and listening session for the Ceiba College Prep general plan amendment and rezoning application. The purpose of the meeting is to provide you information on the current status of the process and also to answer your questions. The meeting will be held at the City of Watsonville Community Room located at: 275 Main St. 4th Floor on September 29, 2022 from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Spanish translation and interpreter services will be provided. We will also be providing child care services for children ages 5-10 years old during the duration of the meeting.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

- I. Introductions
- II. Intent of the Meeting (Rene Mendez, City Manager)
- III. Status of the Ceiba general plan amendment and rezoning application and next steps (Suzi Merriam, Community Development Director)
- IV. Ceiba College Prep presentation and information (Josh Ripp, Head of School)

I realize that you are probably very busy, but hopefully you are able to carve out some time to attend.

Sincerely,

Rene Mendez
City Manager
City of Watsonville

Josh Ripp
Head of School
Ceiba College Prep