



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, March 11, 2025
TO: CITY COUNCIL
WRITTEN BY: INTERIM ASSISTANT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR ORBACH
RECOMMENDED BY: INTERIM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR MEEK
APPROVED BY: TAMARA VIDES, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF A ZONING MAP AMENDMENT (PP2025-8346) CHANGING THE ZONING MAP DESIGNATION FROM NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL SHOPPING CENTER TO THOROUGHFARE COMMERCIAL FOR A 1.18-ACRE SITE LOCATED AT 632 EAST LAKE AVENUE (APN: 017-321-02), FILED BY VANCE SHANNON, AP

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends City Council:

- 1) Introduce, for first reading only, waiving full reading of the text, an Ordinance approving a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning designation from Neighborhood Shopping Center (CNS) to Thoroughfare Commercial (CT) for a 1.18-acre site located at 632 East Lake Avenue (APN: 017-321-02); and finding the Zoning Map Amendment exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines § 15061(b)(3).

BACKGROUND:

According to the Santa Cruz County Assessor's Office, the subject vacant parcel was established via the Esther Rodgers Trust via map 3314 O.R. 05. In 1870, a single-family residence known as the Rodgers House was constructed. The single-family residence remained on the property until 1998 when the historic residence was relocated to the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds.

On December 8, 2023, Vance Shannon with Quick Quack Car Wash, on behalf of property owner, Bill Hansen, submitted an application for a Special Use Permit, Design Review and Environmental Review and a Zoning Map Amendment (PP2023-6377) for the construction of a new 7,670-square-foot drive-through car wash facility on a 1.18± acre site located at 632 East Lake Avenue (APN: 017-321-02).

On October 22, 2024, City staff presented an overview of Chapter 14-41 Drive-Through Facilities Restrictions to the City Council for review and discussion. City Council provided direction to staff to bring back an analysis of modification options to Council for review (Attachment 2).

On November 19, 2024, Staff presented application #PP2023-6377 to the Planning Commission with a recommendation of denial based on the fact that the proposed project did not meet the 150-foot setback requirement in WMC Section 14-41.100(a)(1). During deliberations, the four members of the Planning Commission present at the meeting discussed the item and made a motion to continue the item to a date uncertain, with direction to City staff to try to identify a date before the end of 2024 to bring the item back for discussion with a full Planning Commission in attendance. Staff identified several potential meeting dates meeting this criteria and polled Planning Commissioners on their availability, but a quorum was not available on any of the dates identified. As such, the project was scheduled for the next available public hearing on January 7, 2025, to continue Planning Commission deliberation of this item (Attachment 3).

On January 7, 2025, the property owner pulled application #PP2023-6377 from the Planning Commission meeting agenda.

On January 14, 2025, City staff presented options for modification of Chapter 14-41 Drive-Through Facility Restrictions to the City Council for review, discussion, and direction. City Council directed staff to bring an ordinance modifying Chapter 14-41 to exclude the Thoroughfare Commercial (CT), Neighborhood Shopping Center (CNS), and Visitor Commercial (CV) zoning districts from the 150-foot setback requirement in WMC § 14-41.100(a)(1) to Planning Commission for consideration and recommendation to City Council (Attachment 4).

On January 16, 2025, the property owner submitted application #PP2025-8346 for a Zoning Map Amendment, changing the zoning map designation from Neighborhood Shopping Center (CNS) to Thoroughfare Commercial (CT) for a 1.18± acre parcel located at 632 East Lake Avenue (APN: 017-321-02).

On February 10, 2025, the Planning Commission adopted a resolution recommending to City Council approval of a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning designation from Neighborhood Shopping Center (CNS) to Thoroughfare Commercial (CT) for a 1.18± acre site located at 632 East Lake Avenue (APN: 017-321-02); and finding the Zoning Map Amendment exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines § 15061(b)(3).

STANDARD OF REVIEW:

The proposed Zoning Map Amendment is a legislative decision as it involves amending the Zoning Map. This legislative decision requires the decision making body to make certain findings, as set forth in [WMC Section 14-12.708](#). Per [WMC Section 14.12.803](#), any proposed Zoning Map Amendment shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission in a manner identical to [WMC Section 14-12.703](#), and is subject to the findings in [WMC Section 14-12.708](#). Per [WMC Section 14-12.703](#), any proposed amendment shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission, at a public hearing noticed in accordance with Part 9 of Chapter 14-10 and conducted in accordance with Part 10 of Chapter 14-10, for recommendation to the City Council. At the conclusion of the public hearing, the Commission shall adopt a resolution, recommending approval or denial of the proposed amendment, by the affirmative vote of the majority of the Commission members, subject to findings required by WMC Section 14-12.708.

PROCESS:

Pursuant to [WMC Section 14-12.802](#), the adopted Zoning Map may be amended in a manner identical to [WMC Section 14-12.702](#), which outlines the process for General Plan Land Use Diagram amendments. Any proposed zoning map amendment shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission at a public hearing for recommendation to the City Council. At the conclusion of the public hearing, the Commission shall adopt a resolution, recommending approval or denial of the proposed amendment, by the affirmative vote of the majority of the Commission members, subject to findings required by WMC [Section 14-12.708](#).

Pursuant to [WMC Section 14-12.805](#), review and decision by the City Council shall be in a manner identical to [Section 14-12.706](#), subject to findings in [Section 14-12.708](#), with the exception that any decision taken shall be by adoption of an ordinance. The City Council shall review the Planning Commission recommendation and all other pertinent materials and information at a properly noticed public hearing in order to make a final determination in the matter. At the conclusion of the public hearing, the Council may choose to adopt an ordinance approving the Zoning Map Amendment or a resolution denying the proposed amendment subject to findings.

For more information, see the [Standard of Review and Process Overview](#) on the City website.

DISCUSSION:

Existing Site

The subject site is vacant, has a General Plan land use designation of General Commercial and is within the CNS Zoning District. The project site is located along Highway 152 (SR-152) on the east side of East Lake Avenue between Eaton Avenue and Tuttle Avenue. The land uses directly surrounding the project site are commercial to the north, commercial vacant land to the south, and residential development to the east and west. East Lake Avenue is the northeastern gateway into the city.



FIGURE 1 Subject site and surrounding uses

Source: Google Aerial (2024)

Proposed Project

The proposed project involves a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning designation of a vacant parcel located at 632 East Lake Avenue (APN: 017-321-02) from Neighborhood Shopping Center (CNS) to Commercial Thoroughfare (CT), in order to permit additional uses on the parcel.

Zoning Map Amendment

The project site, 632 East Lake Avenue (APN: 017-321-02), has a General Plan land use designation of General Commercial and is within the Neighborhood Shopping Center (CNS) Zoning District. [WMC § 14-16.1401](#) and [WMC § 14-16.1403](#) permit the establishment of certain principally and conditionally permitted uses within the CNS Zoning District.

The Zoning Ordinance implements the General Plan, regulates the future growth of the city, and promotes orderly community development. It includes the Zoning Map, which sets forth the designations, locations and boundaries of zoning districts.

The applicant is requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning designation of the subject site from Neighborhood Shopping Center (CNS) to Thoroughfare Commercial (CT) in order to permit the establishment of different uses on the parcel that reflect the parcel's thoroughfare location along SR-152 and align with their development goals for the parcel.

Staff analysis related to the General Plan and zoning code consistency is included in the Zoning Map Amendment Findings Analysis section below.

General Plan Land Use Designation & Zoning

Uses allowed in the General Plan General Commercial land use designation include: retail sales; personal, professional, financial, business, and medical offices and services; entertainment; lodging; and restaurants and automobile sales intended to serve the needs of the community and the surrounding region.



FIGURE 2 Subject site and surrounding General Plan land use designations

Source: City of Watsonville General Plan Land Use Diagram (2023)

The purpose of the Neighborhood Shopping Center (CNS) Zoning District is to establish regulatory controls on commercial shopping center complexes located outside the central business district of the City, and to provide predominantly commercial retail with limited service and amusement uses on a common parcel, or a combination of adjacent parcels with common access for the public to be located on major streets and arterials ([WMC § 14-16.1400](#)).

The purpose of the Thoroughfare Commercial (CT) Zoning District is to provide for retail, commercial, service, amusement, and transient-residential uses which are appropriate to thoroughfare location and dependent upon thoroughfare travel; to be located only in the immediate vicinity of major streets and arterials or on the service drives thereof; and to provide convenient vehicular access and parking for the public ([WMC § 14-16.1200](#)).



FIGURE 3 Subject site and surrounding zoning districts

Source: City of Watsonville Zoning Map (2024)

Zoning Map Amendment Findings Analysis

Staff reviewed the application for the proposed Zoning Map Amendment for consistency with the required findings in [WMC § 14-12.708](#). The findings, with staff analysis, are below.

a) *That the proposed amendment is consistent with the policies embodied in the General Plan;*

Staff Analysis: The subject parcel at 632 East Lake Avenue has a General Plan land use designation of General Commercial. The Zoning Map Amendment would change the zoning district from CNS to CT. The proposed rezoning is consistent with the following General Plan goals and policies:

- **Land Use Element Goal 4.2: Neighborhoods** – Conserve and improve the living environment of Watsonville neighborhoods.

Supportive Evidence: The proposed rezoning would permit additional uses on the parcel that are consistent with the permitted uses of the adjacent parcel located at 952 East Lake Avenue, which has a zoning designation of CT. The rezoning would provide additional development potential on the parcel, increasing the chance that development will occur. The improvement of the vacant lot would improve the living environment of Watsonville neighborhoods.

- **Land Use Element Goal 4.7: Land Use Suitability** – Ensure that the orderly development of land for the needs of the existing and projected population within in the City limit and Sphere of Influence is based on the land's overall suitability, including: the accessibility of existing and proposed public facilities, services, and utilities, physical and financial constraints; and/or growth inducing impacts.

Supportive Evidence: The parcel located at 632 East Lake Avenue is located within the CNS Zoning District, in which some common business types are not principally or conditionally permitted. Rezoning the parcel from CNS to CT, where a larger variety of uses are principally and conditionally permitted would permit uses that are complementary to the existing uses at the adjacent parcel at 952 East Lake Avenue, which is zoned CT. The proposed zoning would also allow for the establishment of certain uses that are not readily available within a few miles of the subject parcel.

- **Land Use Element Policy 4.G: Land Use Suitability** – The City shall encourage the development of urban uses on those lands best suited for urban uses and discourage it on lands unsuited for urban uses.

Supportive Evidence: The subject parcel located at 632 East Lake Avenue is located along one of the City's main commercial thoroughfares (East Lake Avenue/SR-152), provides convenient vehicular access and parking for the public, has a General Plan land use designation of General Commercial, and is bordered by parcels in the CT and CNS zoning districts. The rezoning of the parcel from the CNS to the CT zoning district will encourage the development of urban uses on lands well suited for urban uses.

b) That the proposed amendment is compatible to the extent possible with the actual and general planned use of the adjacent properties;

Staff Analysis: The parcel at 632 East Lake Avenue and the adjacent commercial parcels have a General Plan land use designation of General Commercial. The proposed Zoning Map Amendment would change the zoning district from CNS to CT. The parcel is located adjacent to 952 East Lake Avenue, which has a zoning designation of CT, so changing the zoning designation of 632 East Lake Avenue to CT would be compatible and consistent with the zoning of the adjacent parcels. In addition, the project site is located along a major thoroughfare within the City of Watsonville (East Lake Avenue/SR-152) and provides convenient vehicular access and parking for the public, which is consistent with the purpose of the CT zoning district.

Based on staff analysis, the proposed project is consistent with the required Zoning Map Amendment findings.

The findings are located in Exhibit A to the ordinance.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) DETERMINATION:

The proposed Zoning Map Amendment is exempt from environmental review under the “common sense” exemption in CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that this action may have a significant effect on the environment.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

The proposed Zoning Map Amendment supports the City Council's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan Priority 1: Economic Development.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The proposed Zoning Map Amendment has no fiscal impact.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION:

The City Council may decide to deny the proposed Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning designation of the parcel from Neighborhood Shopping Center (CNS) to Thoroughfare Commercial (CT). If the City Council chooses to deny the proposed Zoning Map Amendment, Council will need to give direction to staff to return with a resolution supporting that determination and provide staff with evidence that would support the findings for denial.

REFERENCES:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Zoning Map
2. October 22, 2024 - City Council Meeting Minutes
3. November 19, 2024 - Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
4. January 14, 2025 - City Council Meeting Minutes
5. February 10, 2025 – Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
6. Planning Commission Resolution No. 03-25