



City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: May 27, 2025

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Approved By: Gabe Engeland

Subject: Rezoning of Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan Area

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- ☐ Public Safety
- ☐ Business Communities
- ☐ Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- ☐ Environmental Sustainability
- ☒ Housing
- ☒ General Government

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt three (3) ordinances and considering the unanimous recommendation of the Los Altos Planning Commission April 3, 2025, decision of:

1. An Ordinance of the Los Altos City Council of the City of Los Altos Amending Chapter 14.50 of the Los Altos Municipal Code; and
2. An Ordinance of the Los Altos City Council of the City of Los Altos Repealing in its Entirety the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan of the Los Altos Municipal Code; and
3. An Ordinance of the Los Altos City Council of the City of Los Altos Amending Chapter 14.88 of the Los Altos Municipal Code and Rezoning Certain Parcels Located along San Antonio Road and El Camino Real in the City of Los Altos to Commercial Thoroughfare (CT) Zoning District; and

Find that the proposed zone change and amendments are exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15183 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines since the zone change and amendments are consistent with the adopted General Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT

Not Applicable.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed zone change and amendments are exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15183 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines since the zone change and amendments are consistent with the adopted General Plan.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

- January 28, 2025 – Consideration of Private Zone Text Amendment to the Commercial Neighborhood (CN) District to allow ground floor residential uses.
- May 13, 2025 – City Council Introduction of Rezoning Ordinances for Sherwood Triangle Area.

BACKGROUND

On January 28, 2025, the Los Altos City Council considered a Private Zone Text Amendment as required pursuant to Chapter 14.01 of the Los Altos Municipal Code. The Private Zone Text Amendment was for the consideration of allowing Residential Uses on the ground floor of the Commercial Neighborhood (CN) zoning district.

The City Council received a presentation from staff, accepted public testimony and discussed the request of the Private Zone Text Amendment. The City Council was informed that a rezoning of the parcel in question only would not be allowed as it is considered “spot zoning”. Additionally, the request would not be eligible for a Variance, as Variances are deemed unconstitutional when granted for Use in the State of California. The City Council was further informed that the Private Zone Text Amendment as requested would apply to all CN zoned properties within the city. The City Council clarified that they do not desire to have ground floor residential allowed throughout the City on all properties zoned CN. After further discussion the City Council directed staff to take this item to the Los Altos Planning Commission for consideration and discussion of what the Sherwood Triangle Area could be rezoned to which would allow for ground floor residential, and to further consider the validity and necessity of the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan.

On February 27, 2025, the Los Altos Planning Commission held a Study Session open to the public to discuss the direction of the City Council and the specific request made for the Private Zone Text Amendment. The Planning Commission received a presentation from staff, accepted public testimony and discussed the request of the Private Zone Text Amendment. As part of the Planning Commission discussion regarding the proposed Rezoning of the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan, the commission discussed blending the setback requirements of the existing (CN) Zone with the setback requirements of the (CT) Zone. Additionally, the Planning Commission discussed the validity of the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan.

On April 3, 2025, the Los Altos Planning Commission held a Public Hearing to consider the proposed Zone Change, which included modification to the Commercial Thoroughfare (CT) Zoning District Development Standards. The Planning Commission received a presentation from staff, asked clarifying questions, accepted public testimony, and discussed the draft rezoning initiative. The recommendation was unanimously passed by the Planning Commission.

ANALYSIS

There are currently forty-two (42) parcels within the Sherwood Triangle Area and are identified in Attachment 2, of which thirty-nine (39) are zoned Commercial Neighborhood (CN) and three (3) are zoned Office Administrative (OA). Additionally, all forty-two (42) parcels are designated Thoroughfare Commercial (TC) in the Los Altos General Plan – Land Use Element.

Existing Zoning Standards

Development Standard	CN Zoning	CT Zoning
Density	No Maximum	No Maximum
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	No Maximum	No Maximum
Front Setback	0 feet	20 feet
Side Setback	0 feet	10 feet (interior side) 15 feet (exterior side)
Rear Setback	20 feet	25 feet
Height Limit	45 feet/4 stories (Mixed Use) 30 feet/3 stories (Commercial)	55 feet/5 stories (Residential) 60 feet/5 stories (Mixed Use) 45 feet/4 stories (Commercial)

Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan

The Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan commonly referred to as the “Sherwood Triangle” Area was originally adopted on March 2, 1999, with a minor amendment on February 12, 2008. The Specific Plan as it remains today is largely a vision document as it was written with subjective criteria and is mostly unenforceable. The Specific Plan deviates to the underlying zoning for nearly all Development Standards.

Zoning Designation Inconsistency

The City of Los Altos General Plan Land Use Element establishes the allowed Land Uses for each category. The Zoning Code mirrors the City’s Land Use Element to help enable consistency between the two documents. The parcels located in the Sherwood Triangle Area currently have inconsistent Zoning Designations as all forty-two (42) parcels have a Land Use Designation of Thoroughfare Commercial (TC) per the Land Use Element. The correct Zoning Designation should be Commercial Thoroughfare (CT) for parcels with the Land Use Designation of Thoroughfare Commercial (TC).

DISCUSSION

Based on the existing Land Use Designation as established in the Land Use Element it is recommended that the Sherwood Triangle Area be rezoned to Commercial Thoroughfare (CT). This rezoning would create consistency between the Zoning and Land Use Designations which is required by California Planning & Zoning Law.

It is important to note that as apart of the rezoning that is being discussed the City is precluded by the Senate Bill 330 (SB 330), also known as the “Housing Crisis Act”, from reducing the density or intensity of a Zoning or Land Use designation. Since the City currently does not have a limit on density this means that it must remain as it is today. As can be seen in the Analysis Section of this Agenda Report there are differences in the setbacks and height limits between the CN and CT zoning districts.

The following are recommended modifications for the CT zoning district:

	EXISTING	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Development Standard	CN Zoning	CT Zoning	CT Zoning
Density	No Maximum	No Maximum	No Maximum
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	No Maximum	No Maximum	No Maximum
Front Setback	0 feet	20 feet	10 feet
Side Setback	0 feet	10 feet (interior side) 15 feet (exterior side)	5 feet (interior side) 10 feet (exterior side)

Rear Setback	20 feet	25 feet	20 feet
Height Limit	45 feet/4 stories (Mixed Use) 30 feet/3 stories (Commercial)	55 feet/5 stories (Residential) 60 feet/5 stories (Mixed Use) 45 feet/4 stories (Commercial)	55 feet/5 stories (Residential) 60 feet/5 stories (Mixed Use) 45 feet/4 stories (Commercial)

The table provided above is proposed as a method of blending together the existing Development Standards that exist in the CN and CT zoning districts. This allows the parcels located in the Sherwood Triangle Area (currently zoned CN) to continue to benefit from smaller setbacks as are available today, while taking on the increased height allowances in the CT Zoning District. Effectively the CT Zoning District would reduce the setbacks required by 5-10 feet depending on the specific setback.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1. Draft Ordinance – Amending Chapter 14.50**
- 2. Draft Ordinance – Amending Chapter 14.50 (Appendix A)**
- 3. Draft Ordinance – Repealing Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan**
- 4. Draft Ordinance – Amending Chapter 14.88 with Appendix A and Map Exhibit**