



Agenda Report
Planning Commission
Meeting Date: February 27, 2025
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Subject: Study Session – Discuss Rezoning Options of Sherwood Triangle Area

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- Business Communities
- Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing
- Neighborhood Safety Infrastructure
- General Government

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss rezoning options of Sherwood Triangle Area as directed by the Los Altos City Council.

FISCAL IMPACT

Not Applicable.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not Applicable.

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.

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. Rezoning Area Map**
- 2. List of Parcels**
- 3. Existing Chapter 14.40 (CN Zoning District)**
- 4. Existing Chapter 14.50 (CT Zoning District)**
- 5. City Council Agenda Report (1-28-2025)**
- 6. City Council Agenda Attachment (1-28-2025)**