



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 6/10/2025

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File #: 25-682

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**From:** Planning and Building Department

**Agenda Section:** Consent

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**SUBJECT:**

Hartsook General Plan and Zone Reclassification Petition to change the land use designation from Commercial Recreation (CR) and Residential Agriculture (RA 5-20) to Commercial General (CG) and the zone classification from Unclassified (U) to Neighborhood Commercial (C-1)

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the attached resolution (Attachment 1) to make the findings needed to accept the petition and accept the petition; and
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to provide a certified Board Order and executed resolution to the Planning and Building Department to be included with the notification of decision to the appropriate parties.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Safe & Healthy Communities

Strategic Plan Category: 1008 - Update General Plan ordinances for quality of environment

**DISCUSSION:**

The Humboldt County Planning and Building Department received a petition requesting the Board accept an applicant-initiated General Plan Amendment to change the General Plan designation and Zone Classification on APNs 033-271-001 and 033-271-026, which together make up one legal parcel hosting the Hartsook Inn. The current land use designation is Commercial Recreation (CR) and the current zoning is Unclassified (U). The applicant proposes to change the land use designation to Commercial General (CG) and the zone classification to Neighborhood Commercial (C-1) to facilitate the use of the Hartsook Inn as a residential detox center for individuals seeking treatment for substance use disorders. Currently, the CR designation applied to the majority of the property does not allow for supportive housing or health care services as a permitted use.

The purpose of the amendments is to facilitate the use of the former Hartsook Inn as a residential detoxification center that will provide a safe, structured environment for individuals seeking treatment for substance use disorders. The applicant proposes to change the land use designation to Commercial General (CG) and the zone classification to Neighborhood Commercial (C-1) to allow for the operation of the proposed facility, which most closely aligns with the supportive housing use type. The petition is consistent with the General Plan's required findings and criteria for amendments. The applicant submitted a letter (Attachment 2) supporting the findings required to make an amendment to the General Plan.

The applicant's property is comprised of two Assessor's parcels that make one legal parcel. APN 033-271-001 is approximately 17.7

acres, is located on the west side of Hwy 101, hosts the former Harstook Inn, cottages, etc., and is designated Commercial Recreation (CR) and zoned Unclassified (U). APN 033-271-026 is approximately 11 acres, is located on the east side of Hwy 101, and has land use designations of Commercial Recreation (CR) and Residential Agriculture (RA 5-20). The RA5-20 portion of the property is primarily located in a flood zone and would not be an appropriate location for development, however there is a roughly ½-acre portion that could potentially accommodate a residential or similar development. The proposal would change all the property to the Commercial General designation and to the C-1 zone designation.

The project site is in the Garberville area, on both sides of US Highway 101, approximately 0.8 miles north of the Humboldt/Mendocino County line, on the property known as 990 US Highway 101.

**Requirements for a Petition for General Plan Amendment:**

The General Plan Amendment Petition is consistent with the General Plan's required findings and criteria for amendments. A petition for amendment of the Plan may be accepted for processing upon the Board of Supervisors making one or more of the following findings:

- A. Base information or physical conditions have changed; or
- B. Community values and assumptions have changed; or
- C. There is an error in the plan; or
- D. To maintain established uses otherwise consistent with a comprehensive view of the plan; or
- E. The proposed amendment has the potential for public benefit and is consistent with the Guiding Principles and applicable goals of the Plan.

The Board must also determine whether the revision is not appropriate for the next scheduled update.

Finally, for approval of Plan Amendments, the Board must make the findings that the proposed revision is in the public interest and is consistent with the Guiding Principles in Section 1.4 and applicable goals of the Plan.

**Criteria for Amendment:**

- A - Base information or physical conditions have changed - As the only rehabilitation facility in Southern Humboldt closed in 2023, there are currently no options for this type of health care service south of Fortuna, CA. While there are potentially other venues that could work, the setup of the property, including a main lodge, guest cottages, parking areas, outdoor landscaping, trails, utility buildings and other recreational amenities, provides the foundation for a detox facility that can provide a range of rehabilitation services, including therapy/counseling, intense detoxification protocols and medical oversight, and can accommodate family visitation. As many communities consider the development potential of rehabilitation and other treatment facilities of this type, there is often backlash regarding their locations in proximity to residences, schools, and other community areas. Locating a treatment center in a relatively secluded area of the County would not only address this potential public concern but would also provide clients with a quiet and aesthetically pleasing location to focus on their health.
- D - The amendment will maintain established uses otherwise consistent with a comprehensive view of the plan - Based on the established land use as Commercial Recreation, the land use amendment to Commercial General (CG) and zoning reclassification to Neighborhood Commercial (C-1) will retain original established uses that are consistent with the General Plan while allowing for additional uses that currently have a viable market. The Commercial General land use designation allows bed & breakfast inns and transient habitation, and the Neighborhood Commercial zoning allows, with a use permit, hotels, motels, as well as boarding and rooming houses, which would not preclude the operation of an inn or other transient habitation use from operating in the future should there be a market for this.
- E - The proposed amendment has the potential for public benefit and is consistent with the Guiding Principles and applicable goals of the Plan - It is in the public interest to enhance the diverse character of the County and quality of life by providing needed health care and treatment options in Southern Humboldt; the project offers the potential to support rural lifestyles by providing jobs and health care in remote areas of the County and utilizes practical strategies to maintain/enhance an existing development to provide an alternative use while not precluding the original intent and uses of the property. The Hartsook Inn

property is currently mostly vacant and these amendments would enable a use that is currently seeking to establish itself on the property, while also preserving the ability of the property to be utilized for visitor seeking and recreational supporting uses in the future.

**Not appropriate for next scheduled update:**

APN 033-271-001 (17.7-acre parcel on the west side of Hwy 101): This parcel is currently proposed for a scheduled general plan update to change the land use zoning from Unclassified to Highway Service Commercial (CH).

APN 033-271-026 (11-acre parcel on the east side of Hwy 101): This parcel is currently proposed for a scheduled general plan update to change the land use zoning from Unclassified to Highway Service Commercial (CH) on one half of the parcel and from Unclassified to Agriculture General with B-combining zone, minimum 20 acres, and Floodplain combining zone overlays [AG-B-5(20)F] on the other half of the parcel.

The revisions are proposed as part of a General Plan amendment and zone reclassification. The CH zone allows hotels and motels but would not allow supportive housing and health care services and therefore would not be consistent with the use currently proposed for the property, and accordingly this next scheduled update is not appropriate.

**Public Interest:**

The applicant has provided evidence that the petition for general plan amendment and zone reclassification is in the public interest. From their Petition Findings Letter (Attachment 2):

“Substance use disorders are a significant public health concern in the region, and access to local detoxification services is limited. This project will address a critical need by providing necessary health care services within the community. The location is ideal because of its features such as quiet environment, accessibility to main roads, and separation from densely populated residential areas. The property is well-suited for this use due to its existing infrastructure, including lodging-style accommodations, land layout, and appropriate utilities, which can be adapted for the needs of a detox center with minimal disruption. Its location is only 8 miles away from nearest hospitals (Jerold Phelps Community Hospital), and grocery stores (Ray’s Food Place). The surrounding area includes open space which helps facilitate a healthy and tranquil recovery process.

Additionally, the property is located next to Cooks Valley Patriot Gas Station, a souvenir shop and an RV park. Changing land use to CG and zoning to C-1 and converting the property into a detox center will not adversely impact neighboring properties. Instead, it will enhance the area by providing a professional, managed service while maintaining a low-profile presence consistent with the current inn operations. The proposed land use and project will contribute positively to the local economy by creating jobs, attracting professional health care staff, and enhancing support services in the area. Socially, the facility will provide much-needed resources to combat substance abuse and improve overall public health, directly benefiting the local population. The proposed project will not significantly alter the existing footprint of the property. Environmental impacts will be minimized through existing favorable conditions and low-impact operational strategies.”

In addition to the public interest described above, it is worth noting the potential negative impacts to public interest. This property is part of the first commercial area that one encounters when entering Humboldt County from the south, effectively a gateway to Humboldt County. It is located immediately adjacent to Richardson Grove State Park and provides frontage to the Eel River. It has historically operated as a visitor-serving entity, namely the Harstook Inn, which had a long history of providing overnight visitor accommodations dating back to the 1920’s. While the potential for a residential detox facility does not preclude visitor-serving uses from occurring in the future, its potential presence can be interpreted as not being consistent with the intended nature of the property. As a residential detox facility that does not allow its clients to leave the premises, the property’s visitor-serving opportunities would be limited, and the associated tourism benefits could potentially suffer. However, the property has not been operational as an Inn (or visitor-serving entity) for many years, and the social, health and economic benefits that could be gained from a professional health care center are worth consideration. While the proposed land use designation would prohibit visitor-serving facilities such as tent camps and amusement areas and larger attractions, it would continue to allow transient habitation and restaurant uses which would serve visitors.

**Requirements for a Petition for Zone Reclassification:**

Amendments to this Division may be approved only if the following findings are made:

1. The amendment is in the public interest; and
2. The amendment is consistent with the County General Plan.
3. The proposed amendment does not reduce the residential density for any parcel below that utilized by the Department of Housing and Community Development in determining compliance with housing element law (the midpoint of the density range specified in the plan designation) unless the following written findings are made supported by substantial evidence:
  - a. The reduction is consistent with the adopted general plan, including the housing element, and
  - b. The remaining sites identified in the housing element are adequate to accommodate the County's share of the regional housing need pursuant to Section 65584 of the Government Code, and
  - c. The property contains insurmountable physical or environmental limitations and clustering of residential units on the developable portions has been maximized.

**Public Interest:**

Please see the evidence presented to support the General Plan Amendment is in the public interest and consider the same to be true for the Zone Reclassification.

**Consistent with the General Plan:**

Redesignation to Commercial General will add potential uses not allowed under the existing Commercial Recreation designation, namely supportive housing and health care services, which would allow for the operation of a rehabilitation facility. The redesignation of the parcels from Commercial Recreation to Commercial General will allow for the rezoning of the parcel from Unclassified to Neighborhood Commercial. Per General Plan Table 4-H (Land Use Element), Zoning Consistency Matrix, the proposed Commercial General land use designation would be compatible with the proposed Neighborhood Commercial zoning reclassification. The amendment and reclassification would allow for the proposed use as a detox facility yet would not preclude the visitor supporting uses from continuing in the future.

**Consistent with the Humboldt County Code:**

The zone reclassification from Unclassified to Neighborhood Commercial would allow for supportive housing as a principal use on above ground level floors and would allow this use on the ground floor with a Special Permit. Health Care Services occurring in a professional office setting would be principally allowed in this zone district. The proposed C-1 District allows for many commercial uses as principal uses. Hotels and motels would be permitted with Use Permit. The proposed changes would allow for consistency between the new General Plan designation and the Zone District.

**Residential Density:**

The parcels were not included in the 2019 Housing Element Inventory. The proposed general plan amendment and zone reclassification does not reduce the residential density for any parcel below that utilized by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

The decision to be made at this time is whether the Board will accept the proposed application for processing, review, and consideration. If accepted for review and consideration, more in-depth analysis will be performed assessing whether the proposed General Plan amendment and zoning change is both in the public interest and consistent with the objectives of the General Plan.

A petition to accept an application for a general plan amendment and zone reclassification is not a project as defined in Section 21065 of the Public Resources Code and is not subject to CEQA.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There will be no impact on the General Fund. The applicant is responsible for paying all actual costs involved in the processing of the application.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

The project was referred to County Counsel, which has not expressed concern with the proposed petition. Should the petition be accepted, responsible and trustee state and local agencies will be involved in the referral process of the Reclassification, including

Native American Consultation pursuant to SB 18 and AB 52, and as part of the environmental review for the project.

**ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Board could accept the petition with modifications, such as adding a Qualified combining zone limiting some of the allowable uses that would otherwise be permitted in the proposed C-1 zone. A Q-zone could potentially restrict uses to the proposed supportive housing as well as visitor serving uses and others that serve in the public interest.

The Board could reject the petition if it believes the required findings cannot be made. Staff believes the necessary findings for accepting the petition may be made, so staff does not recommend further consideration of this alternative.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Draft Resolution  
Attachment 2: Applicant's Petition Letter  
Attachment 3: Site Plan

**PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:**

Meeting of: N/A  
File No.: N/A