



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 10/20/2025

File #: 25-1212

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Public Hearing

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Ordinance Rezoning Parcels in the McKinleyville Town Center from Community Commercial (C-2) with Combining Zones for Noise, Wetlands, and Airport Safety and Residential Multi-Family (R-3) with Combining Zones for a Q Zone for Housing, Noise, Wetlands and Design Review to a Mixed Use Zoning Designation with a Q-Zone Overlay Expressing Development Criteria and Permitted Uses in the Town Center

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the Resolution to certify the Environmental Impact Report including adoption of the Statement of Overriding Consideration for the McKinleyville Town Center Zoning Amendment Ordinance (Attachment 1); and
2. Adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (Attachment 6); and
3. Adopt the resolution to make all required findings for approval of the Zoning Ordinance Amendment to change the zoning in the Town Center to Mixed Use with a Q-Zone Overlay to establish development criteria (Attachment 2); and
4. Adopt the ordinance to change the zoning in the Town Center to Mixed Use with a Q-Zone Overlay to establish development criteria (Attachment 3).

STRATEGIC PLAN:

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

Area of Focus: A Diverse, Equitable & Robust Economy

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

DISCUSSION:

Executive Summary:

The Board of Supervisors is being asked to approve an amendment to the zoning map to create regulations for the Town Center in McKinleyville. The proposal would rezone the area from C-2 and R-3 with a variety of combining zones to Mixed Use with a Q Overlay zone to create development standards for development in the Town Center.

The Town Center comes out of policy direction in the McKinleyville Community Plan. The proposed zoning was developed in a public process through the McKinleyville Municipal Advisory Committee (MMAC) as the advisory committee facilitating the public discussion. This process started in 2019. The Planning Commission conducted a workshop on August 21, 2025, and held a public hearing on Sept. 18, 2025. The Planning Commission recommended the Board of Supervisors certify the EIR and approve the ordinance with a 5-0 vote.

The Planning Commission received significant public testimony at both the workshop and public hearing. The most significant comment was directed at the proposal to narrow Central Avenue from 5 lanes to 3 lanes. There was also concern expressed relative to wetlands and to the need for more open space.

The staff report to the Planning Commission is attached (Attachment 7) identifying the policy background for the Town Center and discussing the issues that had been raised going into the Planning Commission's consideration. Ultimately, the Planning Commission recommended no changes to the work completed by the MMAC, but was concerned about the road diet. The Planning Commission recommended that there be a comprehensive transportation plan prepared for McKinleyville, and that plan and any future plans for Central Avenue be reviewed by the MMAC to allow public engagement. This report will focus on the issues likely to receive the most attention, and the Planning Commission staff report has the background information.

Central Avenue - Road Diet

This is the most controversial issue of the Town Center Proposal as reflected in the correspondence directed to the Board of Supervisors for this hearing. As shown in the Q-Zone, Exhibit 1 and below, Central Avenue between Heartwood on the south and Railroad Avenue to the north would be converted to three lanes (north, south and center turn) with sidewalks, buffered Class 1 bike lanes and landscaping on both sides of the street.



This is the design the MMAC voted to approve. It was not a unanimous vote, which is an indication of the controversy associated with this proposal. Most people, even those opposed to the three-lane cross section, recognize something must be done about Central Avenue. Central is designed to support high-speed automotive and truck traffic with wide lanes. For many people, Central Avenue is not a comfortable place to walk or bicycle. Central Avenue cuts through the middle of the area designated as the Town Center. The McKinleyville Community Plan recognized the need to do something about Central by including the following policy:

The Town Center Area shall identify implementation alternatives associated with a Central Avenue pedestrian crossing. The alternatives should contain solutions which ease pedestrian traffic, including longer time frames at the crosswalk light, funding mechanisms for a pedestrian bridge over Central Avenue, and traffic calming measures as illustrated herein.

While the proposal is not to create pedestrian overpasses, the objective is traffic calming by

narrowing down the street. This also leaves a shorter space for pedestrians to cross the street. Corresponding to the traffic calming, other communities have found that slowing traffic also helps with commercial success. Where there are better pedestrian facilities and public spaces and slower traffic, the public tends to spend more time there and, as a result, spend more time in the stores and shops.

The MMAC action to approve the recommended cross section removed trees from the planters adjacent to the travel lanes as an accommodation to the McKinleyville Community Services District which has utility lines under what would be the bike path. Many people are concerned about the three-lane design particularly related to the work MCSD does on their utility lines. Testimony was provided that the last time there were lane closures it resulted in traffic being backed up.

The Planning Commission took all this information into account and recommends that the Board of Supervisors require a transportation plan for McKinleyville before proceeding with the road diet. It is not clear whether the Planning Commission was aware of this, but there was a traffic analysis done evaluating the Level of Service at intersections in the area showing the impacts of the project and the road diet (see last study in Attachment 4). The study does show some intersections will be impacted. This is summarized in Table 6 of the W-Trans Study reproduced below.

Table 6 – Future and Future plus Project Peak Hour Intersection Levels of Service

Study Intersection Approach	Future Conditions				Future plus Project			
	AM Peak		PM Peak		AM Peak		PM Peak	
	Delay	LOS	Delay	LOS	Delay	LOS	Delay	LOS
1. Murray Ave/McKinleyville Ave	20.9	C	11.8	B	32.9	D	18.9	C
Signalized	-	-	-	-	10.9	B	10.8	B
2. Murray Ave/Central Ave	16.4	C	14.7	B	26.2	D	55.4	F
Signalized	-	-	-	-	25.5	C	24.9	C
Roundabout	-	-	-	-	9.2	A	10.5	B
3. Railroad Dr/McKinleyville Ave	3.0	A	2.1	A	8.0	A	57.1	F
EB (Railroad Dr) Approach	12.8	B	12.3	B	19.4	C	22.3	C
WB (Railroad Dr) Approach	12.8	B	13.2	B	37.2	E*	**	F
Add AWSC and turn pockets ¹	-	-	-	-	13.0	B	21.8	C
Roundabout	-	-	-	-	6.3	A	8.3	A
4. Railroad Dr/Central Ave	13.8	B	9.2	A	23.7	C	24.3	C
5. Hiller Rd/McKinleyville Ave	11.1	B	13.0	B	80.7	F	**	F
Signalized, add SB left-turn pocket	-	-	-	-	10.2	B	30.4	C
Roundabout with WB right-turn pocket	-	-	-	-	9.3	A	21.0	C
6. Hiller Rd/Central Ave	6.7	A	8.3	A	34.5	C	81.9	F
Add SB right-turn pocket, modify phasing ²	-	-	-	-	19.9	B	45.9	D
Close driveway on east leg ³	-	-	-	-	15.4	B	33.3	C
7. Heartwood Dr/McKinleyville Ave	3.6	A	2.8	A	6.0	A	13.4	B
EB (Heartwood Dr) Approach	12.9	B	12.7	B	31.7	D*	77.4	F*
WB (Heartwood Dr) Approach	11.9	B	12.2	B	22.3	C	73.2	F*
8. Heartwood Dr/Central Ave	9.0	A	10.0	B	18.0	B	57.9	E
Resume 2 SB lanes 100-ft north of intersection, add EB right-turn pocket	-	-	-	-	14.2	B	29.4	C

Note: Delay is measured in average seconds per vehicle; LOS = Level of Service; AWSC = All-Way Stop Controls; EB = Eastbound; SB = Southbound; WB = Westbound; Results for minor approaches to two-way stop-controlled intersections are indicated in *italics*; * = minor movements operating below LOS C considered acceptable if intersection operates acceptably overall; ** = delay greater than 120 seconds; **Bold** text = deficient operation; Shaded cells = conditions with recommended improvements

¹ add left-turn pockets southbound and eastbound, add right-turn pocket northbound

² split left-turn phasing eastbound and westbound, right-turn overlap phases southbound and eastbound

³ includes SB right-turn pocket and phasing changes; access to east remains at driveways north and south of signal

The study makes the following recommendations to address the delay at certain intersections:

- Murray Road/McKinleyville Avenue: Install traffic signal.
- Murray Road/Central Avenue: Install traffic signal or a roundabout.
- Railroad Drive/McKinleyville Avenue: Install all-way stop controls with turn pockets or a roundabout.
- Hiller Road/McKinleyville Avenue: Install a traffic signal with a southbound left-turn pocket or install a roundabout with a westbound right-turn slip lane.
- Hiller Road/Central Avenue: Add a southbound right-turn pocket and modify the signal phasing. To achieve LOS C operation, the county would need to consider closing the driveway on the east leg of the intersection.
- Heartwood Drive/Central Avenue: Retain two southbound lanes beginning 100 feet north of the intersection and add an eastbound right-turn pocket.

These improvements are not included as mitigation measures because CEQA impacts are evaluated using Vehicle Miles Traveled, and not Level of Service (LOS). The transportation impact of this project has a less than significant effect using VMT. The struggle of the Planning Commission and members of the public is what does the road diet do to the other streets in McKinleyville. The transportation analysis addresses this. In the future, improvements will be needed to maintain a LOS of C or better at some intersections. There is currently not an identified funding source for these improvements, nor is there a funding source for the Central Avenue improvements. An eventual source of funding used to improve Central could also be available to improve some intersections.

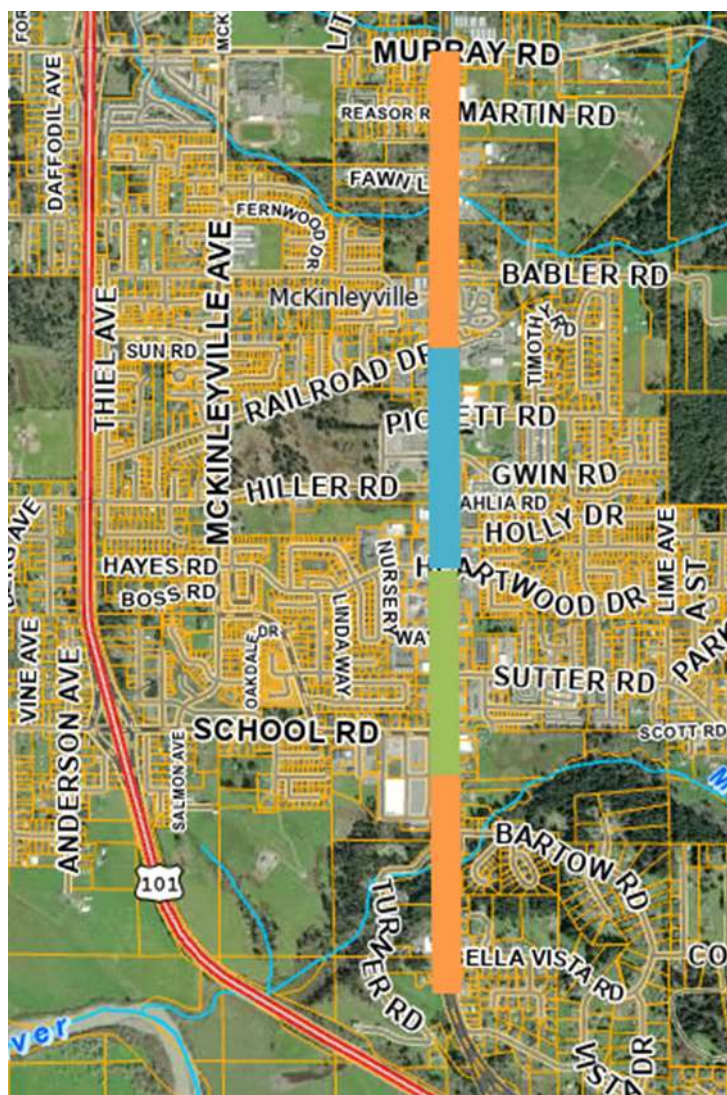
There are currently discussions with CalTrans to install a southbound on-ramp and northbound off-ramp at Hiller Avenue. This would certainly alleviate some of the traffic demand on intersections within McKinleyville, but this is in the early conversation stage.

The expressed concerns center around the fact there is no alternative route to Central east of Central. This is true. There are two alternative routes west of Central and those are McKinleyville Avenue and Highway 101. During the discussion some community members wanted to experiment with blocking off lanes to see the impact, but it was pointed out by an engineer that to make the lane reduction work there would be the ability to rephase the lights to allow better traffic flow. That would not be available with blocking off lanes, so such an experiment would not be accurate.

The exhibit below shows Central Avenue between Murray Avenue on the north and the top of Bella Vista hill. The area shown in orange is currently two lanes. The area in blue is the stretch that would change from 5 lanes to 3 lanes, and the area shown in green is currently 5 lanes and will remain 5 lanes.

Many different designs were considered for McKinleyville Avenue during the MMAC process. While the vote on the Central Avenue design was not unanimous by the MMAC, the vote to move the Town

Center Ordinance forward with this design was. The Planning Commission moved forward with the recommendation to do a transportation plan for McKinleyville.



Too often this type of discussion is focused just on traffic, but the MMAC struggled with the reality that they are involved in place making and what should the community's primary hub say about the community.

The Planning Commission wanted to see a transportation plan developed prior to moving ahead with the road diet on Central. There is a traffic study for the intersections most impacted by the road diet and development of the area. It is not clear whether the Planning Commission desired something more expansive.

Staff recommends that the Board continue with the proposed ordinance with the road diet.

Open Space

There was a plea at the Planning Commission to require the Open Space Requirement in 4.4.5 of the Q-Zone requiring 3% of the vacant and developable land in the Town Center be devoted to open space with at least 20,000 square feet being devoted to a single location to change the 20,000-square-foot minimum be increased to an acre. This request was presented to both the MMAC and Planning Commission and neither chose to modify the requirement. The 3% requirement will result in about 1.5 acres of small park or gathering space.

There are also concerns about public park space. Future development will be required to either dedicate public park space or pay fees to develop future parks. Currently it is the practice to allow payment of fees and MCSD uses the funds to construct parks, with the BMX park being the most recent example.

Wetlands

The wetland concerns are addressed in the Planning Commission staff report. Many people have been lead to believe that the wetlands are being removed. Some may be removed, but they will be required to be mitigated. The ordinance has specific performance standards on this point. The point of disagreement is whether any wetlands should be allowed to be filled and relocated. The ordinance sets aside 14 acres to allow wetland mitigation so other areas of the property can develop without needing to avoid wetlands or wetland setbacks. As discussed in the Planning Commission staff report this is consistent with the wetland policies of the McKinleyville Community Plan. In their letter on the DEIR, CDFW made the following statement:

CDFW appreciates the County's efforts to develop a framework for wetland mitigation, which includes dedicating a 14-acre area to wetland conservation.

The McKinleyville Community Plan defines a wetland as a single parameter wetland. There was consideration given to modifying this for the town center, but there are only .64 acres of single parameter wetlands in the town center and the MMAC decided to remain consistent with the community plan, so no change to the community plan definition of wetlands is being proposed in this action.

Environmental Impact Report

An EIR was prepared for the Town Center ordinance. This is addressed in the staff report to the Planning Commission. There are no outstanding issues with respect to the EIR, and all comments have been addressed and responded to, which in some cases resulted in changes to the DEIR which are reflected in the FEIR document.

The only impact found to be significant and unavoidable is the traffic noise impact on Railroad Avenue and parts of Hiller Road. The traffic noise will not exceed 60 Db but would increase by more than 5Db which was the threshold for a significant impact. Railroad is already a street with a 25-mile an hour speed limit, so slowing traffic is not a viable option, and due to the houses fronting onto Railroad, installing soundwalls is also not feasible. It is an impact that cannot be adequately mitigated.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt the ordinance developed by the community through the MMAC and recommended by the Planning Commission.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

General Fund (1100)

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The total cost of this work is estimated to be \$663,187.00. This includes the hiring of various consultants totaling \$400,000. The funding for the work on the Town Center primarily came from the Long-Range Planning budget (1100282) which is funded by the General Fund, and there was a contribution from two of the landowners in the amount of \$66,000.

STAFFING IMPACT:

During the course of this process there have been eight (8) staff members who have worked on this. Moving forward projects will be processed and the cost of that staff work will be recovered either through Building Permit fees or as part of planning applications which are processed on a cost recovery basis.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Public Works, California Department of Fish and Game and the McKinleyville Municipal Advisory Committee

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board of Supervisors can choose any of the following alternatives:

1. Adopt the ordinance with modifications based on testimony.
2. Adopt the ordinance as proposed with a different cross-section design for Central Avenue.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution to Certify the Environmental Impact Report
2. Draft Resolution to make all required findings for approval of the Zoning Ordinance Amendment to change the zoning in the Town Center to Mixed Use with a Q-Zone Overlay to establish development criteria
3. Ordinance to change the zoning in the Town Center to Mixed Use with a Q-Zone Overlay to establish development criteria.
4. Draft Environmental Impact Report
<https://humboldt.gov/2564/McKinleyville-Town-Center-Master-Plan>
5. Final EIR

<https://humboldt.gov/2564/McKinleyville-Town-Center-Master-Plan>

6. Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
7. Planning Commission Staff Report
8. Public Comment Received for Planning Commission
9. Public Comment Received for Board of Supervisors

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: 09/18/2025 Planning Commission

File No.: 25-1130