

Planners want Main Street project scaled down

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The Watsonville planning staff is recommending that a proposal for high-density residential and commercial zoning on a large parcel across Main Street from Watsonville Square be scaled down.

The planning staff is also suggesting the Planning Commission deny the extension of a use permit for a new motel on Airport Boulevard — a project the staff has been opposed to from the beginning.

The rezoning request comes from Struve-Console Farms, which owns two parcels totaling 35 acres just west of Ramsay Park between Main Street and Harkins Slough Road. The zoning and General Plan amendments on the property are now inconsistent. The zoning is single-family residential and open space, and the General Plan designates the land for approximately 2.8 acres of open space, 5.4 acres of commercial, 25 acres of residential and 2.5 acres for a

road.

Struve-Console's proposal would require both a rezoning and an amendment to the General Plan because it doesn't match either. Struve-Console proposes using about 5.8 acres for open space, 14.7 acres for commercial development, 12.6 acres of high-density residential and 2.5 acres for the road.

According to a Planning Department report, the owners of the property are trying to provide convenient shopping for future workers at the proposed adjacent Landmark Business Park and to help meet the city's need for housing. The developer plans to build the project in phases, matching the phased construction of the industrial park.

The city planning staff is suggesting the Planning Commission turn down the rezoning request as presented by the developer, and instead consider another alternative, which would still provide commercial development but lessen the impacts of the project.

The staff suggests the prop-

erty be zoned for 6.9 acres of open space, 8.7 acres of commercial, 17.5 acres of medium-density residential and the same 2.5 acres for the Landmark Parkway that will run through the property.

According to the staff report,

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the developer's proposal would allow for a commercial development bigger than the Watsonville Square shopping center. The staff instead recommends the commercial development be limited to just under nine acres, which would allow for about 95,000 square feet of commercial space and the required parking.

Aside from the reduction of

the commercial space from the developer's proposal, the other significant aspect of the Planning Department's proposal is that it would allow only for medium-density residential development, not high-density residential. The housing ele-

ment of the city's General Plan indicates higher-density residential zoning will be encouraged in the older urban areas of the city, not on the edge of the city.

Also, the residential development in the immediate area is mostly medium density, the report states, and this project should also be medium density to be consistent with that.

The planning staff is also opposed to another request on the Planning Commission's Monday night agenda. The staff is recommending the commission turn down a request to extend a use permit for a 100-unit motel at the southwest corner of Airport Boulevard and Highway 1. The Pajaro Valley Inn, proposed by Triad Associates of Capitola, would also include conference facilities and a restaurant. Triad owns the Capitola Inn.

The staff is recommending the project be denied because it is too close to the airport. "Staff strongly believes that pilot error induced during severe weather conditions could cause a tragic accident at the motel site," the staff report says.

The staff also voiced its safety concerns one year ago, when the project first went to the Planning Commission. The commission voted 4-1, with two commissioners absent, to approve the use permit.

Although the staff found the

question of safety paramount in considering the application, it also indicated concerns about the project on two other counts. The project would promote growth in the area west of the freeway, something the city shouldn't do, and it would add another 100 motel rooms to a city that will likely soon have more motel rooms than it can fill, the staff said in its report.

A 111-unit Ramada Inn is already planned at West Beach Street and the freeway, and an 80-unit Comfort Suites Motel is soon to be built on Green Valley Road at the freeway.

The use permit will expire this month unless the commission grants an extension, which will be considered Monday night.

The commission will also review a request for a use-permit extension by Crocker Fusari Associates to build a mini-storage facility at 1478 Freedom Blvd. The staff is recommending the commission approve the extension.

The commission will meet at 7:30 p.m. at City Hall.

REFERENCE

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