



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Mulcahy

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: June 9, 2025

Approved:

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SUBJECT: GP23-011: Early Consideration for Denial for a Privately-Initiated General Plan Amendment to Change the Envision San José 2040 General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram from Neighborhood/Community Commercial to Transit Residential for Property Located at 826 North Winchester Boulevard.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Accept and approve the Staff's recommendation and deny the proposed General Plan Amendment.
2. As part of the General Plan Four Year Review, recommend that the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement evaluate 826 N. Winchester (APN: 275-50-061), in the context of evaluating the surrounding sites, as an area that would allow for residential or mixed-use development in the future.

SUMMARY:

On November 21, 2023, Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement (PBCE) received an application for a General Plan Amendment at 826 N. Winchester Blvd. This site is currently designated as Neighborhood/Community Commercial; generally, a designation used for retail and office that serves surrounding neighborhoods. This falls in line with the surrounding parcels, which are either designated as Neighborhood/Community Commercial or Residential Neighborhood. The applicant's proposed General Plan designation, Transit Residential, is typically chosen in areas to support high-density, mixed-use development in dense, urban corridors with access to robust public transit.

PBCE staff has noted a variety of reasons why changing this site to Transit Residential would be detrimental to the city's goals of focused growth. While there is need for housing of all types and at all levels of affordability, the leap of this proposal is counter-intuitive to the designation that the applicant is requesting. Transit Residential is intended for sites located in proximity to transit, jobs, amenities, and services. This location has only one (1) bus line that has a stop within a half-mile with no proximate connection to a regional transit facility, such as Caltrain, future BART or VTA Light Rail. In practice, this site, with a Transit Residential designation, would be heavily car dependent which goes against the City of San José's stated goals of minimizing housing's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and the City's Vibrant, Attractive, and Complete Neighborhoods Policy.

While I do not support the current application for the proposed designation change, the City of San José must proactively explore ways to expand housing opportunities where it makes sense along our key transit and commercial corridors. Current City of San José policy includes the stated goal of preserving commercial spaces for economic development and tax revenue; however, it is undeniable that this stated goal has contributed to a severe shortage of much-needed housing. The Winchester Boulevard corridor holds untapped potential to help address our region's growing housing needs in a way that supports smart growth. This site, without the hard corner owned by another property owner, is an inferior commercial site and should be further explored as a mixed-use site with housing or a housing only site within parameters that blend with the predominantly single-family housing communities around it.

For these reasons, this memo recommends that the PBCE consider a designation that allows housing at 826 N. Winchester Blvd. (APN: 275-50-061) in the upcoming General Plan 4-Year Review scope update. Although the site's current designation technically allows for a 100% affordable housing project to be developed by right, this alone should not preclude a more comprehensive analysis. PBCE should evaluate whether a change to the General Plan Land Use designation is appropriate. A site-specific evaluation in the broader context of the 4-Year Review will help ensure that land use decisions are made strategically, in alignment with the city's overall housing production goals, climate action targets, and the evolving role of commercial corridors in a post-pandemic environment. Winchester Boulevard's proximity to services and existing infrastructure makes it a strong candidate for targeted residential growth, and it deserves thoughtful consideration through the city's formal planning processes scheduled to begin in earnest by the end of this calendar year.