

3.0 Environmental Setting

3.1 Project Site Setting

Project Location

The approximately 134-acre Town Center project site is located in the unincorporated community of McKinleyville in Humboldt County. The site boundaries consist of existing roads and existing parcel lines. Central Avenue functions as the main north-south access to the site. Railroad Drive forms the northern boundary and McKinleyville Avenue constitutes the western boundary. Various parcel lines form the southern boundary, with the eastern boundary comprised primarily of parcel lines of properties on the east side of Pierson Park. [Figure 3-1, Location Map](#), presents the regional location of the project site.

Existing Site Conditions

The project site is comprised of a mix of developed and vacant parcels and includes public facility (park and fire station) uses. [Figure 3-2, Existing Conditions](#), shows the site, existing site features and uses, and adjacent land uses. Notable existing developed uses within the site include commercial development along both sides of Central Avenue (including the McKinleyville Shopping Center at Central Avenue/City Center Road), a mobile home park located between Gwin and Dahlia roads east of Central Avenue, a fire station located on Central Avenue, and apartments located along the easternmost segment of Railroad Drive near Central Avenue. Pierson Park, located east of Central Avenue between Gwin and Pickett roads, constitutes the primary existing public facility use.

Biological resources within the site are described in Section 6.0, Biological Resources. Of particular note is the presence of wetlands in the vacant area west of Central Avenue.

This site has no notable topographic or geologic physical features.

[Figure 3-3, Site Photographs](#), includes representative images of project site conditions.

These existing site conditions represent the baseline conditions for assessing environmental impacts resulting from the proposed project. More information about existing setting conditions is provided in the individual environmental topic sections of this EIR.

Adjacent and Vicinity Land Use Setting

As shown in Figure 3-2, the site is surrounded by existing urban development located within McKinleyville. McKinleyville is defined as an Urban Area per the 2020 U.S. Census (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>). Consequently, development within the project site could be considered as infill. Residential uses are adjacent to the western, northern, and eastern boundaries, with residential and commercial uses bordering the site to the south. There are no known unique natural or cultural resources adjacent to or near the site.

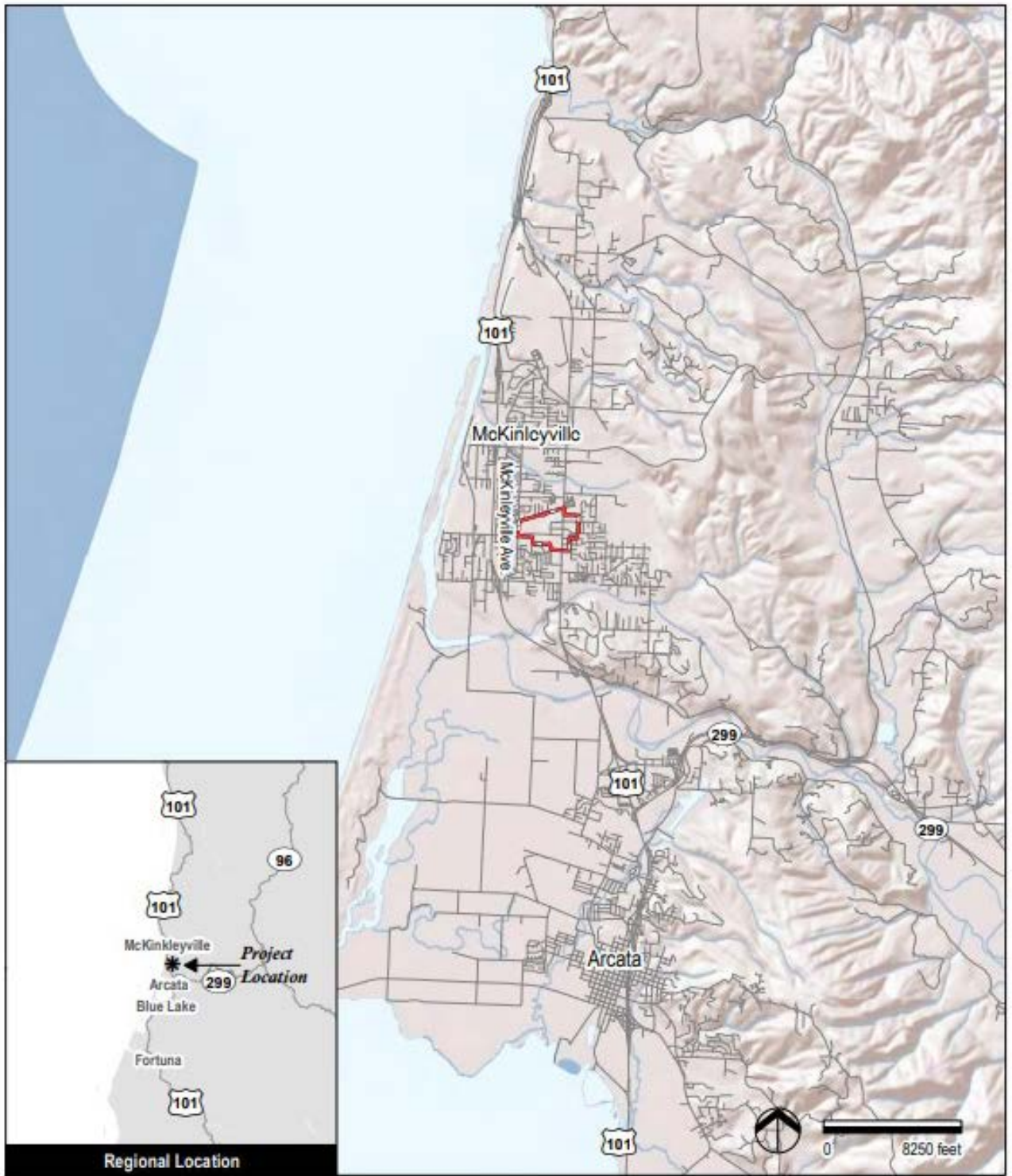
3.2 Community Plan, General Plan, and Zoning

County direction for developing a Town Center in McKinleyville has been in place for many years. The information below is largely taken from the McKinleyville Community Plan and the General Plan. The Community Plan is a component of the General Plan that provides development direction solely for McKinleyville. The information provides context by illustrating the County's intent to develop zoning regulations for the site resulting in the proposed Q-Zone regulations. Existing zoning for the site, which would change with approval of the proposed project, is also described.

McKinleyville Community Plan

The Community Plan calls for creating a unique identity for McKinleyville by developing a viable town center that serves as a community focal point and which contains a mixture of land uses with a center for social/community interaction that encourages bicycle and pedestrian travel and allows for convenient and safe automobile access. Section 2352 of the Community Plan includes the guiding policies for the McKinleyville Town Center:

1. The County shall adopt a Town Center Area ordinance to identify permitted land uses and standards for the Town Center area identified on the McKinleyville Community Plan Zoning Map.
2. The Town Center Area shall permit mixed-use categories of zoning, including higher density urban housing in concert with retail commercial uses and shopfronts, and shall include an abundance and variety of open spaces.
3. The Town Center Area shall offer a full range of commercial, offices and civic activities. Allowable uses may include, but are not limited to, an expanded grocery store, additional shops, a department store, hardware home supply, restaurants, office space, medical and dental clinic, a movie complex, town green for athletic and civic events, civic buildings, library, high density residential, laundromat, farmers market, residences above shopfronts, child care facilities, and art galleries.



Source: ESRI 2024

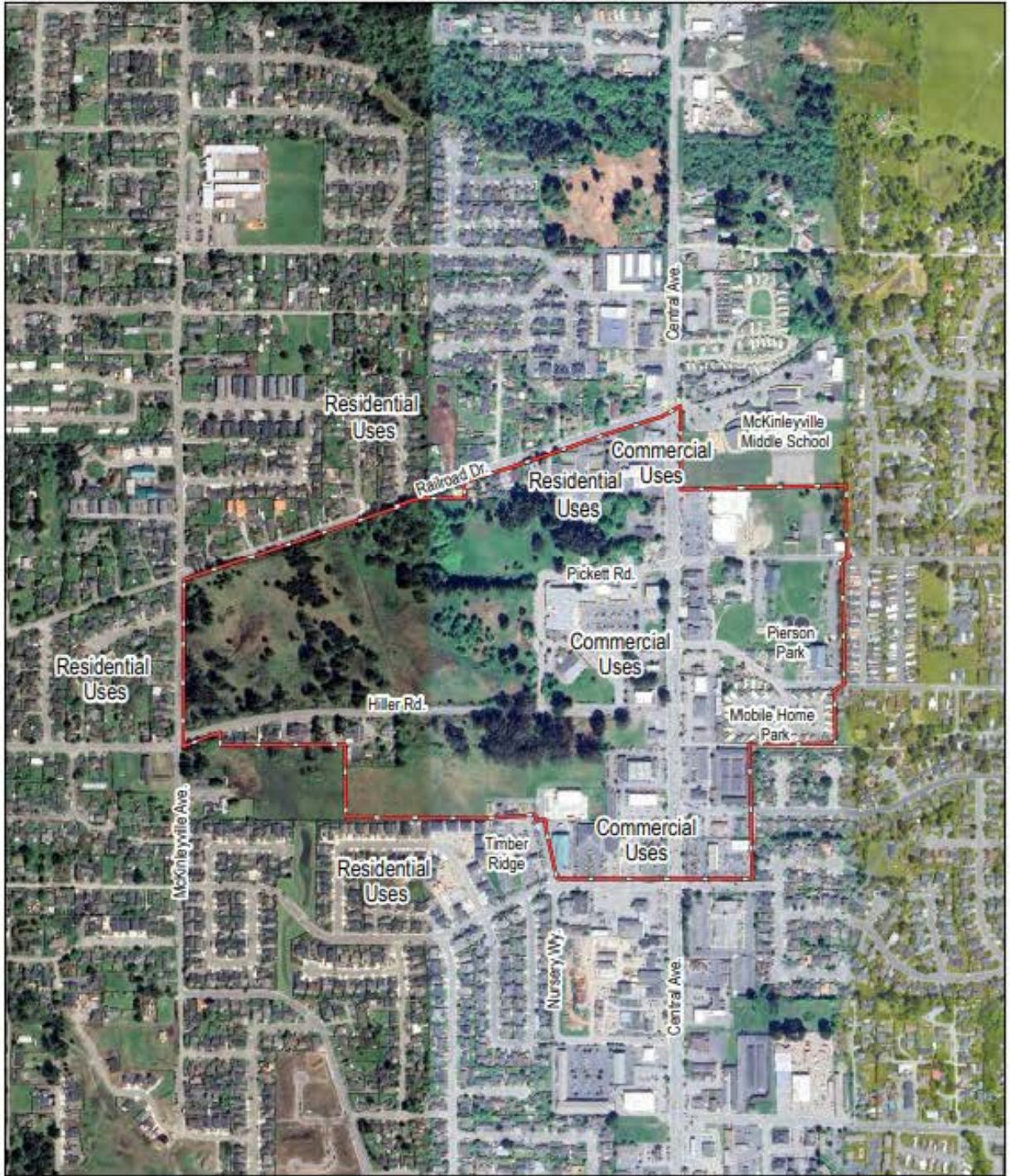
 Project Boundary



Figure 3-1
Location Map

McKinleyville Town Center Zoning Amendment EIR

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Source: Humboldt County GIS 2024, Google Earth 2024

Figure 3-2
Existing Conditions



McKinleyville Town Center Zoning Amendment EIR

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① View to the north on Central Avenue



② View to the west on Railroad Avenue.



③ View to the west along Railroad Avenue.



  Project Site

Source: Google Earth 2024
Photographs: EMC Planning Group 2024



④ View to the northwest on McKinleyville Avenue.



⑤ View to the west on Hiller Road.



⑥ View to the north showing representative wetland habitat.

Figure 3-3
Site Photographs

McKinleyville Town Center Zoning Amendment EIR



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4. The Town Center Area shall have no additional drive-thru restaurants, and no large “big-box” department stores, as defined. Rather, the department stores should be divided into several separate rooms or buildings to avoid the look of the giant retail, department store.

5. The Town Center Area shall permit all public facility uses currently identified in the Public Facility land use designation in the Humboldt County General Plan Land Use Element. All existing and proposed public facility uses shall remain as public facilities and shall not be converted to incompatible commercial uses.

6. 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.

The Town Center site is illustrated in the Community Plan and shown in [Figure 3-4, Town Center Boundary](#). Land use designations for the Town Center site are illustrated in [Figure 3-5, Town Center Land Use](#).

Section 2640 of the Community Plan includes design review policies and standards by which new development proposed within the Town Center will be evaluated. All such projects are subject to design review.

The proposed project is consistent with the Community Plan policies listed above. The proposed rezoning of the Town Center site to mixed use and adoption of the Q-Zone overlay regulations, as described in Section 4.0, Project Description, would fulfill the Community Plan intent of creating the opportunity to develop the site consistent with the Community Plan vision.

General Plan

The General Plan describes town centers as hubs of a community that contribute significantly to community character and identity. To promote and guide town center development, the General Plan includes policies to increase the range of allowed uses and streamline approval of projects that are consistent with town center standards.

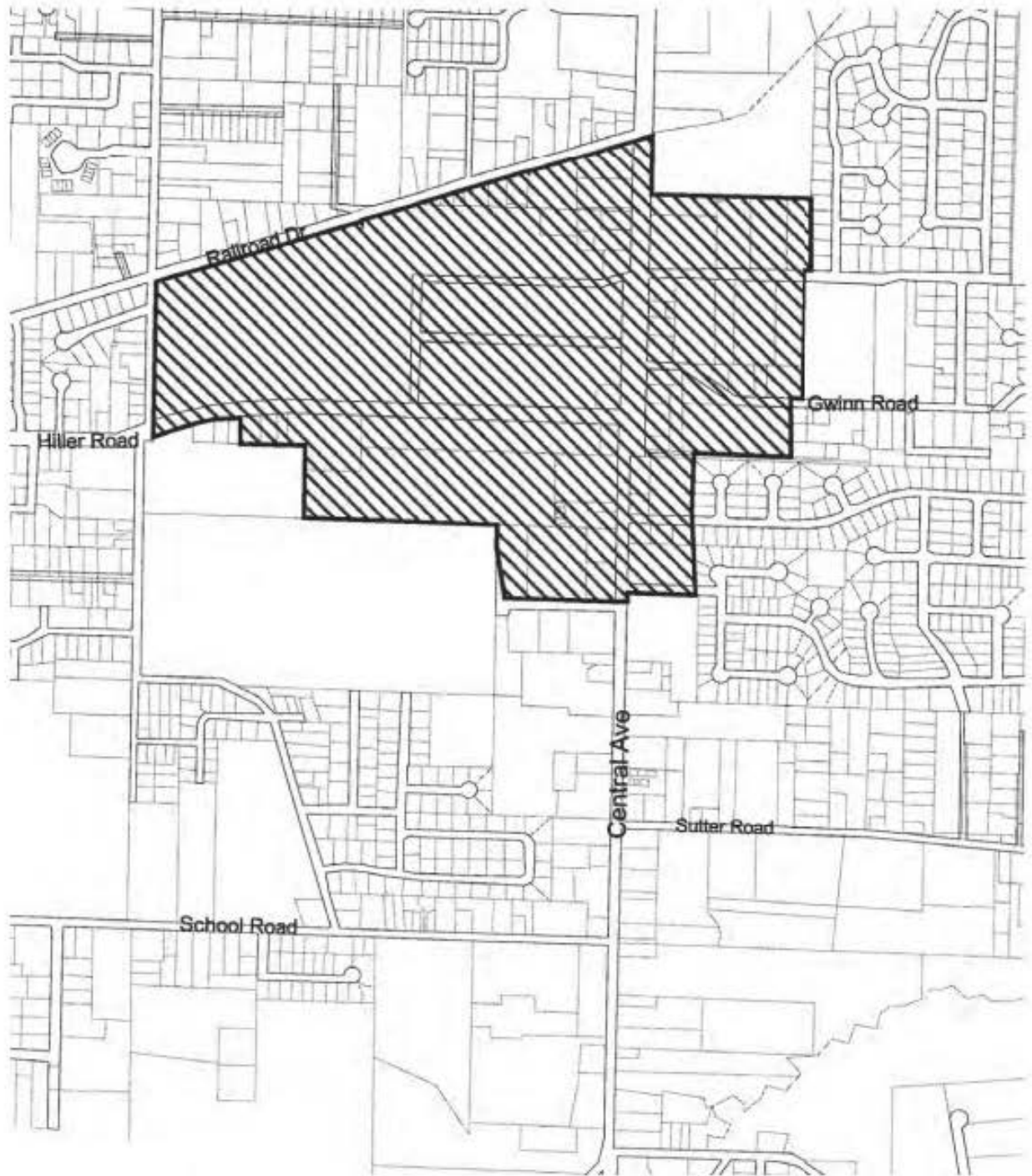
The General Plan identifies the McKinleyville Community Plan as including policies to promote the development of a town center and the development of a town center ordinance that would apply to the town center site. Ordinance standards would grant more flexibility for preferred uses and simplify and streamline the development review process to encourage private investment.

To stimulate growth, the General Plan includes policies to streamline the approval of commercial development in areas designated as town centers. Town center overlay zoning is intended to allow minimal permitting processes for development that meets specific performance standards applicable to the overlay zone, with General Plan guidance requiring adoption of ordinances that specify performance standards for town centers. General Plan policies and implementation actions that pertain to the proposed project are as follows:

UL-P6. Mixed-Use Zoning. Utilize mixed-use zoning to help create town centers that are community focal points. The mixed-use zone shall promote higher density urban housing in concert with retail commercial uses, day care centers, and shopfronts, and shall include an abundance and variety of open spaces.

UL-P7. Neighborhood and Town Centers. Within designated neighborhood and town centers, the County shall:

- A. Allow buildings with commercial uses on the ground or lower floors and residential uses on upper floors and in other designated areas, as long as residential use is subordinate to commercial uses.
- B. Reduce the County's off-street parking requirements to encourage new business development and to reflect multi-modal access options.
- C. Allow ministerial approval of development that conforms to performance standards adopted by ordinance.
- D. Encourage and provide incentives for the following design characteristics:
 1. Pedestrian-oriented scale and character.
 2. Orientation of buildings toward the street or central open space areas rather than parking lots.
 3. Parking areas to the side or rear rather than between buildings and the street edge.
 4. Placement of buildings that creates a central open space, or plaza, where passive activity can occur.
 5. Transparent ground-level façades designed for pedestrian-oriented sidewalks.



Source: Humboldt County, McKinleyville Community Plan 2017

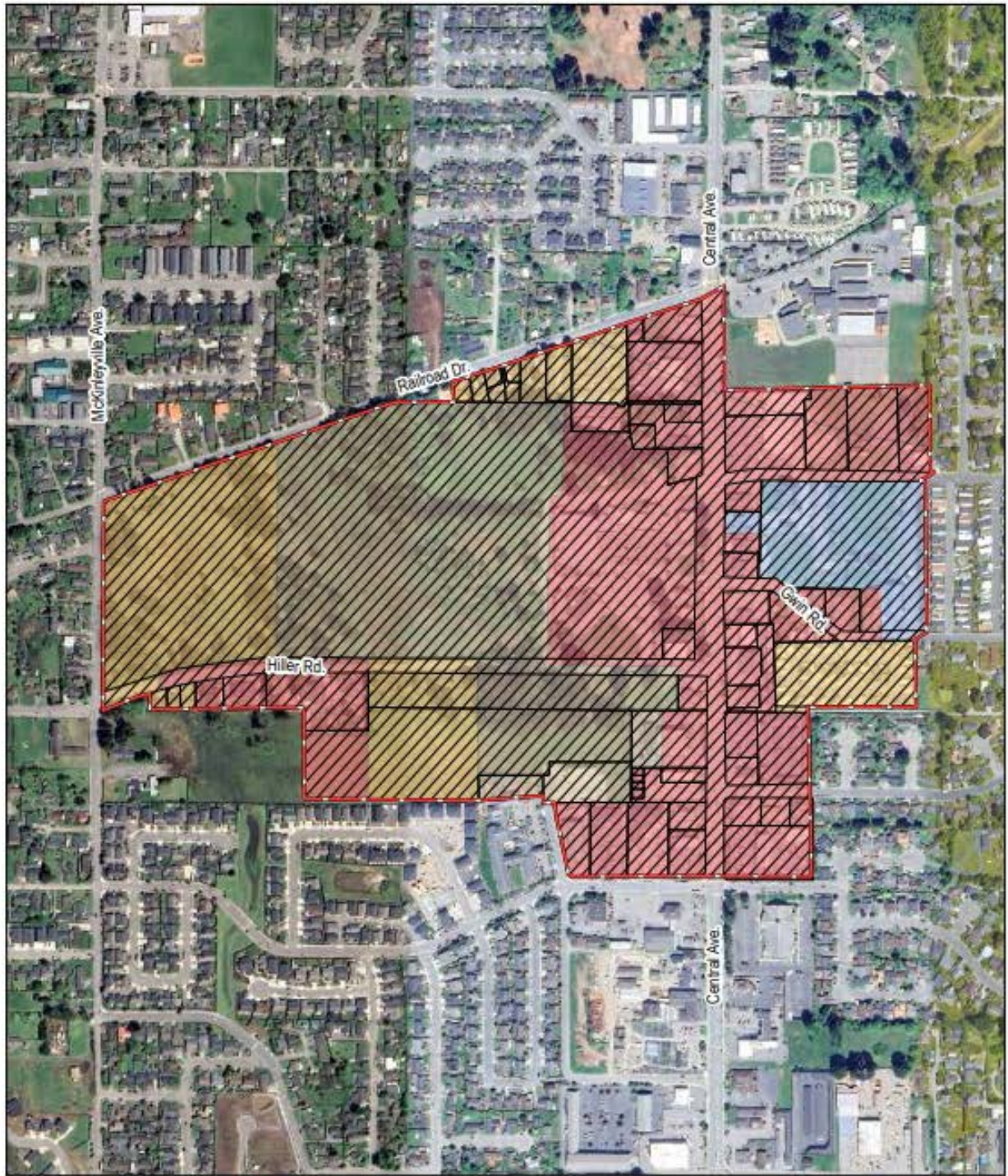
Figure 3-4

Town Center Boundary

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Source: Humboldt County GIS 2024



Figure 3-5

Town Center Land Use

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UL-IM1. Neighborhood and Town Centers. Prepare a Neighborhood and Town Center ordinance and establish Neighborhood and Town Center areas by zoning overlay during General Plan updates and Community Planning processes. Promote a more uniform commercial streetscape by establishing build-to lines rather than setback lines, or a combination of the two. Develop figures in the implementing ordinance to demonstrate design principles; for example, how to orient commercial and mixed-use buildings toward the street or the central open space areas.

UL-IM4. Sites for Commercial Development. Maintain an adequate inventory of sites to accommodate commercial development in Neighborhood and Town Centers.

The proposed project is consistent with these General Plan policies and implementation measures. The proposed rezoning of the Town Center site to mixed use and adoption of Q-Zone overlay regulations, as described in Section 4.0, Project Description, functions to implement General Plan policy and implementation guidance.

Existing Zoning

The Town Center site is currently zoned a combination of Community Commercial (C-2) and Residential Multiple Family (R-3), with portions zoned with a wetland overlay. [Figure 3-6, Existing Town Center Zoning](#), shows these zoning designations.

The County identified the potential development types, intensities, and development capacity that could occur under existing zoning for the site. Existing Residential and commercial zoning development capacity is summarized in [Table 3-1, Existing Zoning and Development Capacity](#).

Table 3-1 Existing Zoning and Development Capacity

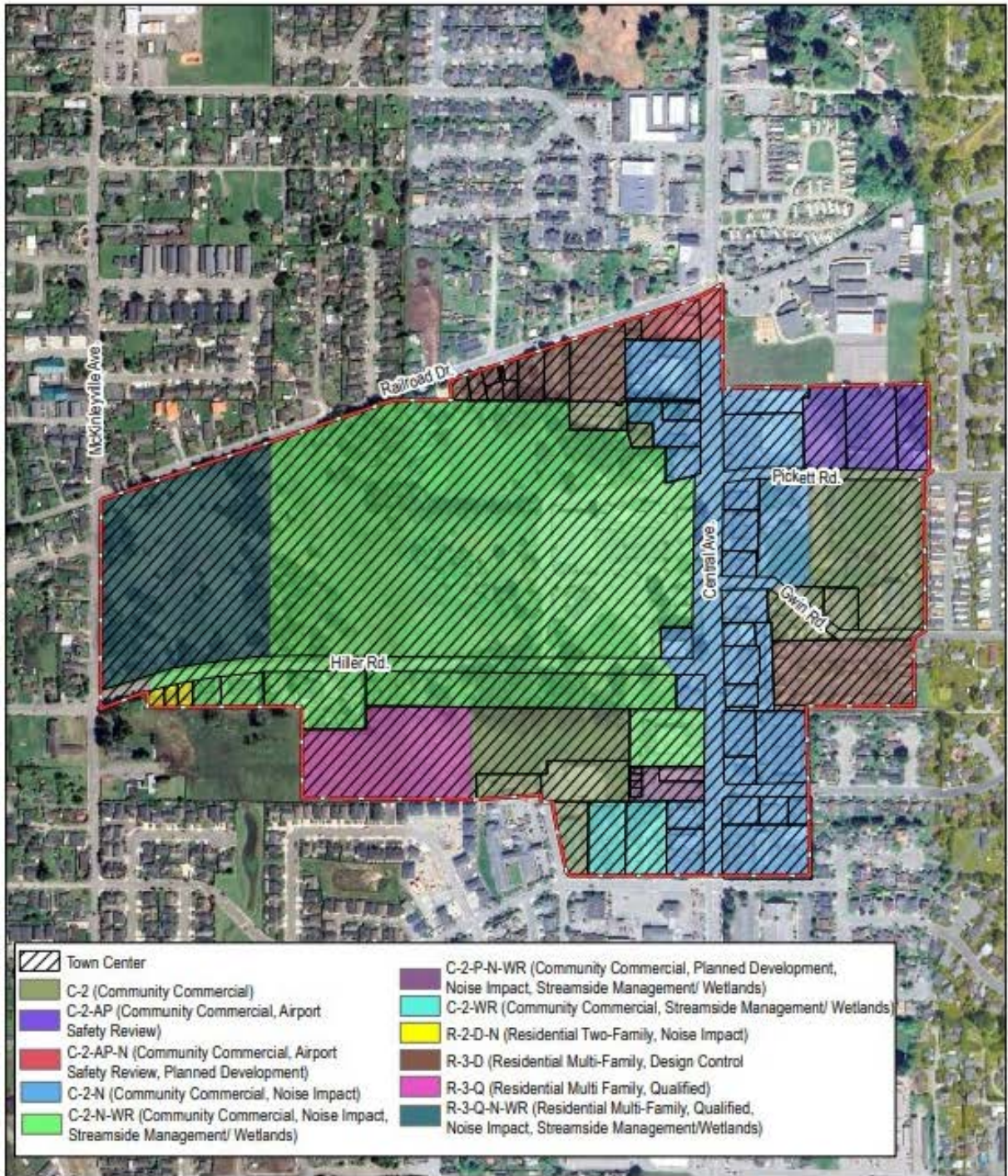
Zoning	Residential Units	Non-Residential Building Square Footage
Residential (R-3)	1,736 ¹	0
Commercial/Office (C-2)	2,550 ²	628,980
Total	4,286	628,980

SOURCE: Humboldt County 2024

NOTE:

1. 650 square feet per unit assumed.
2. 30 units per acre assumed.

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Source: Humboldt County GIS 2024, Humboldt County 2002

Figure 3-6
Existing Town Center Zoning

McKinleyville Town Center Zoning Amendment EIR



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