



**CITY OF SALINAS  
COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

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**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 26, 2023  
**DEPARTMENT:** COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
**FROM:** LISA BRINTON, DIRECTOR  
**THROUGH:** GRANT LEONARD, PLANNING MANAGER  
**BY:** OSCAR RESENDIZ, ASSOCIATE PLANNER  
**TITLE:** GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT 2022-002 AND REZONE 2022-002;  
AMEND THE GENERAL PLAN TO CHANGE THE GENERAL  
PLAN DESIGNATION OF FIVE (5) SITES TO MIXED USE AND  
REZONE THE SAME FIVE (5) SITES TO MIXED-USE (MX)

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

It is recommended that the City Council take the following two actions:

1. Approve a resolution affirming the findings, adopting the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and adopting General Plan Amendment (GPA 2022-002) changing the General Plan Land Use Designations of five (5) “Project sites”; Alisal Marketplace, Edge of Downtown/Front and John Streets, Foods Co Shopping Center, Laurel West Shopping Center, and Sears (Northridge Mall) (portion) from Commercial Retail (CR) and/or Industrial General Commercial (IGC) to Mixed Use (MX); and
2. Adopt an Ordinance to Rezone the same five (5) “Project sites” from Commercial Retail (CR) and/or Industrial General Commercial (IGC) to Mixed Use (MX) (RZ 2022-002).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City of Salinas is proposing General Plan Amendment (GPA) 2022-002 and Rezone (RZ) 2022-002 to change the land use designations and zoning districts of five (5) “Project sites”: Alisal Marketplace, Edge of Downtown/Front and John Streets, Foods Co Shopping Center, Laurel West Shopping Center, and Sears (Northridge Mall) (portion). The purpose of the GPA and RZ is to facilitate the production of housing, consistent with the City’s General Plan. The GPA and RZ


would facilitate the development of up to approximately 2,513 housing units and 727,089 square feet of commercial uses. An Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared for each of the five (5) “Project sites” (ER 2022-10) and are provided as Exhibit 1 to the Resolution and Ordinance.





The Project does not involve construction or other physical changes to the site because there are currently no development proposals. The Project is intended to encourage future housing development that would provide new housing consistent with the Salinas General Plan. This Project is being partially funded by Senate Bill 2 (SB 2) grant funding for the purpose of increasing housing production in the City.

**BACKGROUND:**

The City of Salinas is facing an ongoing housing crisis with a low supply of units, rising rents and home prices, overcrowding, and a significant population of unhoused residents. Like many cities in California, housing affordability challenges have steadily increased in Salinas in recent years and were exacerbated further during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to these challenges, the City of Salinas has focused on advancing housing production and establishing programs to support residents with their housing needs. In December 2019, the City accepted an SB 2 grant award from the state Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) in the amount of \$310,000. The SB 2 grant was awarded to cities for the preparation, adoption, and implementation of plans that streamline housing development approval and accelerate housing production. The SB 2 grant award enabled the City to undertake the planning and environmental study and analysis required to prepare the proposed General Plan Amendment and Rezone for five (5) identified sites summarized in Table 1 and are shown in Exhibit A – Project Locations.

**Table 1. Project Sites and Location Summary**

Project Site	Location	Project Location Map	Area
Alisal Marketplace	Adjacent to East Alisal Street between Front Street and Griffin Street		12.1 acres

Edge of Downtown/Front and John Streets	Adjacent to John Street between Abbott Street and Front Street		3.7 acres
Foods Co Shopping Center	Southeast corner of East Alisal Street and South Sanborn Road		13.5 acres
Laurel West Shopping Center	East of North Davis Road between West Laurel Drive/Calle Del Adobe and Larkin Street		16.2 acres
Sears (Northridge Mall) (portion)	Northwest corner of North Main Street and Madrid Street		8.41 acres of the 10.2 acre site is proposed to be changed as shown in red.

The Project sites were identified as having the capability to provide more housing and mixed-use development consistent with the 2002 General Plan. The proposed General Plan Amendments and Rezones are shown in Exhibit B, and summarized in Table 2, below:

**Table 2. Proposed Land Use Designation and Zoning District Changes**

Site	General Plan Land Use Designation	Zoning District
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	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Alisal Marketplace	Retail / General Commercial/ Light Industrial	Mixed Use	Commercial Retail (CR)/Industrial General Commercial (IGC)	Mixed Use (MX)
Edge of Downtown	Retail / Residential Low Density	Mixed Use	Commercial Retail (CR) / Residential Low Density (R-L) / Central City (CC)	Mixed Use (MX) / Central City (CC)
Laurel West Shopping Center	Retail	Mixed Use	Commercial Retail (CR)	Mixed Use (MX)
Foods Co Shopping Center	Retail	Mixed Use	Commercial Retail (CR)	Mixed Use (MX)
Sears (Northridge Mall) (portion)	Retail	Mixed Use*	Commercial Retail (CR)	Mixed Use (MX)*
*Note: 1.79 acres of the site will remain Retail and CR – Commercial Retail				

A more detailed discussion of the Project sites and the current and proposed uses is included in Exhibit C – Summary of Project Sites and Proposed Changes. Additionally, Chapter 37 of the City’s Zoning code contains a detailed list of allowed uses per zone, including what is allowed and not allowed under Mixed Use that can be reviewed [here](#).

**DISCUSSION:**

**General Plan Amendment**

Per the 2002 Salinas General Plan, the Mixed-Use land use designation allows for development including a mixture of retail, office, and residential uses in the same building, on the same parcel or in the same area. The intent of this designation is to create activity centers with pedestrian-oriented uses in certain portions of the City. The maximum intensity/density of development is 1.0 floor area ratio plus 10 dwelling units per acre throughout the City and a maximum intensity/density of development of 4.0 floor area ratio + 80 dwelling units per acre (for a total maximum allowable floor area ratio of 6.0) for projects within the Central City.

The proposed General Plan Amendment is consistent with General Plan Policies. The proposed General Plan Amendment would change the existing designations for the Project sites and amend

the General Plan Land Use and Circulation Policy Map to align with the proposed rezoning of each site to Mixed Use (MX). The General Plan Amendment would be compatible with the General Plan land use designation of the adjacent sites of each subject site.

The proposed “Mixed Use” land use designation for the five (5) Project sites is consistent with General Plan Goal H-1, by providing a range of housing opportunities to adequately address existing and projected needs to Salinas. The proposed project also complies with General Plan Policy H-1.3, by identifying adequate sites to facilitate and encourage housing production for the existing and projected housing needs of the City. In addition, the project complies with General Plan Goal H-2, by maintaining and improving existing neighborhoods and housing stock.

### Rezone

Per Zoning Code Section 37-30.230, the Mixed Use (MX) zoning district “provides opportunities for mixed use, office, public and semipublic uses, and commercial uses that emphasize retail, entertainment, and service activities.” Medium and high-density residential uses are encouraged within MX districts to facilitate pedestrian-oriented activity centers. The proposed zoning district would be consistent with the proposed land use designation, Mixed Use. Future development would follow development regulations and design standards of the MX District, by:

- Promoting and providing development opportunities for integrated, complementary housing and employment opportunities in the same building, on the same parcel or within the same block.
- Supporting transit use and providing a buffer between busy streets and residential neighborhoods and providing new housing opportunities in the city.
- Promoting compact development that is intended to be pedestrian-oriented with buildings close to and oriented to the sidewalk.
- Promoting residential development that is appropriate in an urban setting in mixed-use buildings by providing incentives, as well as standards and regulations to minimize conflicts between different types of uses.

### CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS

Chapter 37, Article VI, Divisions 12 and 14 provides for a process whereby all General Plan and Zoning Code amendments are brought before the Planning Commission for a recommendation to the City Council for consideration and a final decision. On September 6, 2023, the Planning Commission held a public hearing to review the proposed Amendments and approved the attached Exhibit G, Planning Commission Resolution 2023-08 recommending that the City Council adopt the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration, approve General Plan Amendment 2022-002 and Rezone 2022-002 (see attached Exhibit F- September 6, 2023, Planning Commission Staff Report, and draft Planning Commission minutes) with some reservations.

The City Council may approve the proposed Amendments if all of the findings set forth in the attached City Council Resolution and Ordinance are established. Per Zoning Code Section 37-60.930(d), an affirmative vote of not less than four (4) votes of the City Council is required for the Council to approve the General Plan Amendment. Prior to acting on the proposed Amendments, the City Council will need to affirm environmental impacts of the project have been analyzed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Consistency with Other Planning Efforts

The proposed General Plan Amendment and Rezone is consistent with previously approved plans, as well as current planning efforts. The City has actively pursued policies that support infill, mixed-use development and has incorporated these policies into community plans like the Alisal Vibrancy Plan, as well as citywide plans like the Economic Development Element and the forthcoming Active Transportation Plan. Furthermore, regional planning efforts by Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) and the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) promote sustainable, transit-oriented development that would be facilitated under the proposed General Plan Amendment and Rezone. The Proposed General Plan Amendment and Rezone is also consistent with the City’s Draft 2023-2031 Housing Element that is scheduled for adoption in December 2023, as well as the Draft Place Types that are being proposed as part of the Visión Salinas 2040 General Plan Update.

Summary of Comments Received

During the Public Comment Period for the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for General Plan Amendment and Rezoning, the City received one (1) written comment from Monterey-Salinas Transit (Exhibit D), and comments from the public during the September 6, 2023, Planning Commission meeting, along with comments from the Planning Commissioners.

The comments from MST relate to clarifying transit services routes and requesting that future developments include mitigation measures for Green House Gas (GHG) emission and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) reductions. The City’s response to MST’s comments is included in Exhibit E.

The comments received at the Planning Commission focused on the Foods Co. and Sears sites and are summarized below.

Foods Co. Site	Sears Site
Change may lead to increased traffic in an already congested neighborhood.	Change may limit business opportunities at the site because Mixed Use zoning restricts certain uses.

Change may lead to increased parking demands along adjacent residential streets that already experience heavy parking demands.	
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Following the presentation, public comments, and Commission discussion, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of all five (5) Initial Studies and Mitigated Negative Declarations and recommended approval of the General Plan Amendment and Rezone of the Alisal Market Place, Edge of Downtown, Laurel West Shopping Center, and the Sears sites. The Commission did not recommend approval of the Foods Co. Site General Plan Amendment and Rezone. The Commission also wanted to note that they had concerns about the proposed change in land use and zoning limiting future uses at the Sears site. Staff has considered the public and Planning Commissioner comments and has prepared the following analysis:

**Foods Co. Comments:**

Included in the CEQA analysis for this site is a comparison of traffic generated by existing allowed uses and uses that will be allowed if the property is rezoned. Because the Foods Co. site is a large shopping center, it currently generates considerable traffic, estimated to be up to 5,996 trips per day between all the uses - Foods Co, restaurants, bank, and other services. Alternatively, a mixed-use building with ground floor commercial and multifamily housing with between four (4) and ten (10) floors of residential living space is estimated to generate 1,982 trips per day, which is significantly lower than the current use.

The question of parking on adjacent streets is speculative at this point because no project is yet proposed. If a future project is proposed, the amount of parking needed to meet its commercial and residential needs would be determined during the planning and design process for the development. In general, development along commercial corridors with high quality transit and bicycle and pedestrian amenities, such as Alisal Street, requires less parking because residents have access to alternative transportation. Recently completed project examples include the Rabobank and the Bruhn Building apartments in Downtown, and Moon Gate Plaza in Chinatown.

**Sears Comments:**

The concerns about reducing business opportunities were raised by representatives of the current property owner who is seeking to reestablish commercial tenants at the Sears site. With the proposed General Plan Amendment and Rezone, certain uses would not be permitted under Mixed Use land use and zoning that are permitted under the current Commercial Retail zoning. However, new uses, such as housing, would be permitted under Mixed Use zoning, along with most retail uses, restaurants, and entertainment uses.

The primary area of change from the current Commercial Retail use would be the loss of vehicle service-related uses. The former Sears had an automotive maintenance center, and that use would not be allowed under Mixed Use zoning. However, if a vehicle services-related use is established within 180 days of the Rezone going into effect, then that use would be allowed to continue to operate and would become a legal, non-conforming use subject to Salinas Zoning Code Section 37-50.160. The General Plan Amendment and Rezone would, therefore, create a 180-day timeframe for a vehicle service-related use to be established at the Sears site before such a use would not be allowed.

It should be noted that when the City received the SB2 grant in 2019, the former owner of the Sears site was receptive to the proposed land use and rezone and was interested in developing housing at the site. As such, it is possible that a future owner could be interested in pursuing housing on the site or other uses allowed under the Mixed-Use zoning.

#### CEQA CONSIDERATION:

The environmental impacts of the project have been analyzed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An Initial Study (one (1) per site, five (5) total ISMNDs) was prepared to evaluate the potential impacts associated with the project. Based upon review of the Initial Study, the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment because the mitigation measures outlined in the proposed Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program have been included in the project (Exhibit C). The Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declarations were routed to responsible agencies on August 18, 2023, and posted at the County Clerk's Office on August 18, 2023; the deadline for comments was September 6, 2023. The State Clearinghouse received the document on August 18, 2023; the deadline for Clearinghouse comments was September 6, 2023 (SCH Numbers 2023080480). Only one (1) comment letter was received from MST. Both the comment letter and city response are provided as Exhibits D and E.

On June 14, 2022, the City of Salinas, pursuant to AB 52 (Chapter 532, Statutes 2014) and SB 18 (Chapter 905, Statutes 2004) sent via certified mail notification letters to 9 California Native American Tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area. The letter was sent to representatives of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of Mission San Juan Bautista, Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe, Esselen Tribe of Monterey County, Indian Canyon Mutsun Band of Costanoan, Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen Nation, Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band, Xolon-Salinan Tribe, and Runsen Am:a Tur:ataj Ohlone. Consultation for AB 52 ended on July 14, 2022, and consultation for SB 18 ended on September 12, 2022.

Chairperson Louise Miranda-Ramirez of the Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen Nation requested formal consultation on September 13, 2022. Formal consultation was held by telephone on June 21, 2023. Nine (9) mitigation measures were requested through the formal consultation. The requested mitigation measures have been incorporated into the proposed Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the project (Exhibit 2 to the Resolution and Ordinance). No requests for additional consultation were received.

It is noted that the circulated Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Sears (Northridge Mall) site incorrectly shows the proposed land use designation and zoning district applying to the total acreage of the site. The Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration shows the proposed land use designation of Retail and zoning district of CR – Commercial Retail



for the entire 10.2-acre site; however, the proposed land use designation and zoning district would only apply to 8.41 acres. The remaining 1.79 acres would maintain the current land use designation and zoning district. The final ordinance for City Council consideration reflects the correct acreage.

The removal of the 1.79 acres does not affect the analysis contained in the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration because the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration analyzed the maximum buildout of the entire 10.2 acres with mixed-use buildings. Therefore, the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration analyzed the “worst-case scenario” for development of the site with higher intensity uses.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

The proposed Amendments support the City of Salinas Strategic Plan 2022-2025 goal of Housing/Affordable Housing by creating opportunities for future housing development. By establishing land use and zoning designations to align the land use approval process to facilitate development of higher residential density that would create more housing opportunities.

#### DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

Community Development Department Advanced Planning and Plan and Project Implementation (APPI) division is leading the implementation of the SB2 grant, managed the preparation of the Initial Study Mitigated Negative Declarations and drafted the Amendments in coordination with other CDD divisions (Current Planning and Housing), Public Works, Economic Development staff and the City Attorney’s office.

#### FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

There are no additional fiscal impacts to the City’s General Fund associated with the approval of the Amendments. Staff time for managing the SB2 grant and managing the preparation of CEQA documents was fully funded with SB 2 grant. Staff time dedicated to preparing the Amendments and this report is already incorporated in the 2022-2023 Community Development APPI division budget.

#### ATTACHMENTS:

1. Exhibit A – Project Locations
2. Exhibit B – Existing and Proposed Land Use and Zoning
3. Exhibit C – Summary of Project Sites and Proposed Changes
4. Exhibit D - Letter from Monterey-Salinas Transit District, from Emma Patel, Planning Manager, Monterey-Salinas Transit District (MST) Dated August 31, 2023

5. Exhibit E - City Response to MST Comments
6. Exhibit F - Planning Commission Staff Report dated September 6, 2023- Packet with exhibits.
7. Exhibit F - Unofficial Planning Commission Minutes for September 6, 2023
8. Exhibit G - Planning Commission Resolution 2023-08 - Exhibits for PC Resolution
9. Draft City Council Resolution for GPA 2022-002 and Mitigated Negative Declaration with the following Exhibits:
  - Reso Exhibit 1: Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (ISMND), dated August 2023 (Revised September 2023)
  - Reso Exhibit 2: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
  - Reso Exhibit 3: Proposed General Plan Amendment 2022-002 (GPA 2022-002) Map and Proposed Rezone 2022-002 (RZ 2022-002) Map
10. Draft Rezone Ordinance for Rezone 2022-002 with following Exhibits:
  - Ord Exhibit 1: Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (ISMND), dated August 2023 (Revised September 2023)
  - Ord Exhibit 2: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
  - Ord Exhibit 3: Proposed General Plan Amendment 2022-002 (GPA 2022-002) Map and Proposed Rezone 2022-002 (RZ 2022-002) Map