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# Planners, residents debate zoning options

**By Josh Mitchell**

*Staff reporter*

The city's own Planning Department and a number of area residents have a problem with a Whitney Benefits proposal to zone a one-mile strip of land south of Sheridan College as business.

They say that residential zoning would be more appropriate for the area, which is largely residential and agricultural land, although the Planning Department has also said it could support business zoning if access points are limited and a frontage road is added.

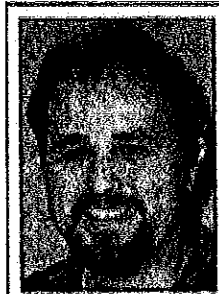
The land is now zoned Urban-Residential by the county.

The City Council will consider giving final approval to a 97-acre annexation Monday and zoning 64 of the acres for business development.

The other land would be for a new Woodland Park School and residential development. All of the land is owned by Whitney Benefits Inc. of Sheridan.

The Planning Department stated in its "development/zoning review comments" document in April that it does not think business zoning is appropriate for the area, which is largely residential.

However, in a document about the annexation in August, City Planner Robert Briggs recommended approval of the annexation if the business district "be limited to two access points requiring the cre-



**Robert  
Briggs**  
Sheridan  
City Planner

ation of a frontage road in harmony with current Wyoming Department of Transportation policy."

Whitney Benefits Board President Tom Kinnison said he has not seen that document, but said the plan is for there to be a road running down the middle of the business strip and for there to be only two access points.

The Planning Department document from April states, "Staff feels it would be more appropriate to zone the entire property with a residential zoning designation."

The land that would be zoned business is currently an alfalfa field running directly south of Sheridan College for a mile down the eastern side of Coffeen Avenue. The business strip would be 500 feet wide.

Whitney Benefits, which owns the land, has said it has no formal plans to develop the site.

Kinnison said Whitney is seeking the business zoning because the land is most valuable under that classification.

The April Planning Department document states that an alternative to zoning the whole site business is to have business "nodes" at intersections.

"The commercial node approach, when properly applied, can be more sensitive to surrounding land uses," the document states.

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The document also states: "Both city and county staff did have reservations regarding the size and strip nature of the B-1 zoning request."

"From a land-use perspective, strip development is undesirable because of the potential exacerbation of traffic concerns, rigid separation of uses, and overall impact to the urban fabric and infrastructure."

However, city Associate Planner Elizabeth Wood said that before the business zone is developed, the city must further review the site when it

is divided into lots.

As for the impact a business zone might have on the area, Wood said, "It just depends on what developers bring to the table."

Mayor Dave Kinskey said he does not have to follow all recommendations of the city planning office. "It's not our job to blindly follow every staff recommendation," Kinskey said.

City Councilman Bob Webster said he favors business zoning for the annexation, because that is what Whitney Benefits wants. He added that he would not tell Whitney Benefits how to use its land.

County Commission Chairman Terry Cram said he has a "minor problem" with the business zoning,

because most land in the area now is residential.

In fact, Cram said the county has refused to allow some business development there. He said the annexation could "theoretically create a strip of business."

Kinskey said he sees "nothing wrong" with B-1 zoning in that area.

Some neighbors to the proposed annexation area have complained in public meetings about the business zoning, saying it should be residential.

The residents have also said that business zoning will disrupt an antelope field south of Sheridan College and create traffic problems.

Throughout the annexation public hearings, Whitney Benefits representatives have said that Whitney has a tradition of developing quality projects, and that this one will be no exception.

Kinnison said when the business zone is developed, a walking path and trees will screen the businesses.

And Kinnison said to help traffic flow, a road down the middle of the strip will preclude individual access points to each business directly off Coffeen Avenue.

Kinnison said he does not know why people would complain about the project, because commercial development is already near the proposed annexation area.

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