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# New Ingles on Patton Avenue approved; Emma community members rejoice



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Asheville Citizen Times

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ASHEVILLE - The approval of a new Ingles on Patton Avenue was a victory for more than the grocery store chain — it represented the culmination of a long-fought battle by the Emma community.

Taking the place of the vacant Kmart store and strip mall at 1001 Patton Ave. in West Asheville, a new, large Ingles store, gas station and adjoining retails spaces were unanimously approved by Asheville City Council May 24.

The Emma Community Council, which represents a large Hispanic population in the area, turned out to the meeting in force with about a dozen residents, some representing the PODER Emma team, as well. After the vote, muted cheers could be heard from outside the Harrah's Cherokee Center boardroom in downtown Asheville.

### Previous coverage:

New Ingles on Patton Avenue, affordable housing move forward

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Rocio Alviter represented the community at the council meeting and addressed the council in Spanish, along with ia translator who translated into English for council members.

There to express the full support of the Ingles rezoning request, Alviter said Emma residents have worked with Buncombe County and the city for several years to make the community less vulnerable to displacement and loss of homeownership.

Alviter noted the site is adjacent to the Emma community, "one of the most racially and linguistically diverse neighborhoods of Asheville and Buncombe County," she said, and among the few area communities to continue to have significant, naturally occurring

affordable housing in the form of mobile park homes, where nearly 40% of the neighborhood resides.

"Naturally occurring affordable housing is an essential asset in Asheville and Buncombe County, and we believe strongly that it must be protected," Alviter said.

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The new 88,584-square-foot store, which will include multiple attached retail stores and a detached gas station, passed the city's Technical Review Committee in January and the Planning and Zoning Commission earlier in May.

The vote approved a conditional use permit change from highway business to commercial expansion.

The project involves total demolition and redevelopment of the site, which would total 150,000 square feet of commercial space, 421 parking spaces, 8-foot wide sidewalks along Patton Avenue and minimum 5-foot wide sidewalks along Hawkins Lane.

Among the project's conditions, said Will Palmquist, urban planner with the city, is that the applicant will engage with the neighboring community to identify local businesses that meet community needs when considering the other retail spaces.

Other conditions include two electric vehicle charging stations and improvements to the two bus stops located on North Louisiana Avenue adjacent to the project.

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## **A fear of increased gentrification**

The site was initially included in the city's Urban Centers Initiative, an effort working to rezone sections of the city to encourage denser, more pedestrian-friendly development instead of large, single-story box stores with large parking lots.

Palmquist said the city moved away from that proposal after hearing concerns from the Emma neighborhood and other area communities, which feared potential displacement and other side effects of having a dense, mixed-use development in the area.

Alviter emphasized at the May meeting that the current Ingles proposal is much more in alignment with the community.

"We believe that the affordable housing, small local businesses, intergenerational community ties, and resilient community infrastructure in our neighborhood must have the opportunity to be protected and stabilized before being put at such risk for development pressure," Alviter said.

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Though the project ultimately garnered unanimous council support, council member Gwen Wisler said she was "disappointed at the lack of creativity" in the project, a sentiment council member Sage Turner echoed.

Turner said she would vote in favor because of the support from the Emma community, but questioned how updating the space, adding more retail bays and "jazzing up the joint" won't gentrify the site, but adding affordable housing would.

Affordable housing units were part of the initial plan.

Council member Antanette Mosley, who made the motion to approve the rezoning, said it comes back to a conversation about what affordability means.

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For example, she said, while housing dedicated to those earning less than 80% of the area media income is classified as affordable by the city, which is \$42,100 for a one-person household, she noted this is not actually affordable for an area where the average median income is \$32,000.

When 80% AMI housing moves into those areas, "We have then just, what? Gentrified," she said.

"What I see from the Emma community is very much aligned with what I see in historically Black neighborhoods. I'm not sure if folks realize that 30 years or so ago, maybe a little more, what we now consider the bustling West Asheville community was largely where our Latinx neighbors lived," Mosley said.

"So when they talk about being displaced, it's not some notion. They have lived it."

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She said they aren't paranoid. It's a fear echoed among Black Asheville communities: that if things get "too nice," minority populations will be pushed out.

"So chances are, I want our neighbors to know, if you're white and you moved to Asheville say in the last 30 years ago, and you live in West Asheville, you serve to displace probably the family members of some of the folks here," Mosley said.

### **In other news**

Also at the May 24 meeting, Asheville City Council approved a conditional zoning request for a 1.53 acre site located on Broadway Street.

Located on the edge of the Montford neighborhood, the project has been in the works for years. Developers hope to turn several lots at the corner of Broadway and Cauble streets into a mixed-use development with retail space and 49 apartments, 25% of which will be deeded affordable for 30 years.

This encompasses 10 units at 60% AMI and two units at 80% AMI.

It also includes a community/co-working space and an indoor bike room and storage closets for residents.

Formerly a gas station, the site is now vacant, according to the application.

The proposed project is a mixed-use development that will be constructed in two phases.

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Phase 1 consists of a new four- to five-story residential multi-family buildings with 49 units, along with the existing one-story commercial building and 46 parking spaces. It also includes sidewalk, walkway and other site improvements.

Phase two consists of a new two-story commercial building placed at the corner of Broadway and Cauble Streets, along with surrounding sidewalk, walkway and outdoor gathering areas.

Council also approved an application for a Land Use Incentive Grant for the Reed Creek Greenway Plaza, which qualifies for 21 years of taxes paid for the residential building in Phase 1 of the project.

City staff calculated this will likely amount to \$35,850 annually, which will be granted to the property owner each year for 21 years.

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