



DATE: May 14, 2013

AGENDA ITEM # 18

**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Kathy Kleinbaum, Economic Development Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Revised wayfinding sign design concept

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the revised draft wayfinding sign concept and budget estimate for consideration in the CIP.

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**SUMMARY:**

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:**

**Amount:** \$240,700 to \$506,650

**Budgeted:** To be considered for inclusion in the CIP

**Public Hearing Notice:** Not applicable

**Previous Council Consideration:** May 22, 2012, July 24, 2012, and January 8, 2013.

**CEQA Status:** Not applicable

**Attachments:**

1. Original sign family design
2. Revised sign family design
3. Comparative size illustration
4. Preliminary cost estimate and phasing plan
5. City-wide sign location map
6. Downtown sign location map

## **BACKGROUND**

Wayfinding signs are directional signs that guide people to key destinations and help them locate important resources within the area, such as the location of commercial districts and the public parking lots within them. The City of Los Altos currently has a wayfinding sign system made up of a collection of different sign types and styles that have been developed over the course of several decades. The existing signs lack cohesion and are not comprehensive in nature. Not all destinations are signed for and there are no signs within the commercial districts that direct patrons to parking.

The City contracted with Explore Creative to develop a design concept for a new wayfinding sign system for the seven commercial districts of the City. Additionally, a Wayfinding Task Force was formed in May 2012, which consists of representatives from the City Council, Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC), Los Altos Village Association (LAVA), Los Altos Chamber of Commerce, and business and property owners from the commercial districts, to work with the design consultant and staff to provide input on the design, sign locations, and messages. From the beginning, that Committee was mindful of costs, and eliminated several initial considerations based on those factors, and instead focused on less expensive alternatives.

The draft wayfinding design concept was presented to the City Council for review on January 8, 2013. The City Council directed staff to proceed with developing cost estimates for the draft sign concept and to consider some cost savings alternatives to the materials in the original concept.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Summary of Comments from City Council**

The following list presents a summary of the key comments made by the City Council at the January 8, 2013 meeting:

- Measures to reduce the cost of the overall sign program should be considered.
- The stone base may not be visible over landscaping and therefore should be considered for elimination as a cost-saving measure.
- The height of the Parking Plaza identifier signs may result in blocked sight-lines for drivers exiting the plazas. A smaller size alternative should be considered.
- In general, height reductions should be considered for some of the signs.
- Opportunities to reduce the number of signs and reduce sign clutter should be considered.
- A phasing plan should be developed that identifies priority locations.

The draft design concept was also presented to the business community for review. Staff made presentations of the draft design concept and location plan to the boards of the Chamber of Commerce and the Los Altos Village Association. Both boards agreed on the importance of improving Los Altos' commercial wayfinding signage and supported the draft design concept.

## **Design Modifications**

The Wayfinding Task Force was very mindful of costs when choosing the design direction for the wayfinding sign program. Cost concerns were balanced with a consideration of the importance of quality materials to match the aesthetics of the Los Altos community. The Task Force considered several design directions prior to selecting the design that was presented to City Council in January. Other options that were considered but were rejected included stone signs and custom metalwork materials. The high cost of manufacturing these other design concepts was one of the main reasons the Task Force decided to go with the current design concept.

In response to the comments made by the City Council, the design consultant did a preliminary analysis of the budgetary impact of several design modifications as follows:

- The piled stone bases can be replaced with a solid metal base made of the same material as the sign frame.
- An alternative option to the tall V-shaped parking plaza identifier sign was developed that is 3 feet tall by 3.5 feet wide and can be single or double-sided depending on how it is oriented in the parking plazas.
- The message panels on the signs are designed to be reflective so that they are visible to cars at night without providing external lighting.
- If external lighting is still desired, solar LED lights that would not require any connections to existing electrical systems were used as the basis for the cost estimate.

The family of signs that was presented at the January 8, 2013 City Council meeting is included for reference in Attachment 1. The modified sign family with an iron base is shown in Attachment 2.

These design alternatives were completed for the sake of developing the preliminary budget. If this project moves forward, the proposed modifications to the design concepts will be considered in more detail during the design development phase of this project with further input from the Wayfinding Task Force and based on site-specific review by the City's traffic engineering staff.

Revisions to the heights of other sign types were not made for the purposes of creating the draft budget since the impact of height reductions on the cost of manufacturing the signs is fairly nominal. The size of the current sign program is actually based on the size of the existing wayfinding signs within the City. All of the proposed sign types are the same height or shorter than the signs they are replacing. The sole exception is the downtown monument sign at San Antonio Road and Main Street, which is sized to be the same height as the signs along San Antonio Road. Attachment 3, shows the proposed signs in context to the size of the City's existing signage program. It is important to note that the existing parking plaza signs are actually over six feet tall as demonstrated on page 6 of Attachment 3.

The Wayfinding Task Force strongly recommends analyzing mock-ups of the proposed signs at key locations during the design development phase since signs often look smaller in

context. Additionally, in several of the median locations, the landscaping adjacent to the signs is fairly tall and could block the text on a shorter sign. Modifications to the heights of the signs can still be made during the design development phase, if desired by City Council.

### Preliminary Cost Estimates

The signs are designed from high quality materials, including reclaimed wood and sturdy iron, with the intention of creating a sign system that will last 20 or more years and will require minimal maintenance. Reclaimed wood is a very durable material since it is pre-weathered and therefore does not shrink or warp. The fabricators that provided the inputs to the cost estimates are experienced craftspeople who understand the need for performance and longevity of the materials.

Based upon input from several expert sign fabricators, the design consultant developed an initial cost estimate for manufacturing and installing each of the proposed sign types. This estimate is based on the schematic designs of the signs and will need to be further refined once the sign design and installation specifications are further developed. The additional cost for the stone bases and the solar LED lights are presented as add-alternatives.

A summary of the estimated cost to manufacture and install each sign type is shown in the table below. The variations in cost for each sign type relate to whether the signs have a message on one or on both sides.

<b>Sign Type</b>	<b>Sign Description</b>	<b>Base Cost</b>	<b>Stone base add-on</b>	<b>LED Solar Lights add-on</b>
A	Expressway signs (Foothill and El Camino)	\$7,750 - \$8,900	\$780	\$750-\$1,000
B	Collector signs (San Antonio and El Monte)	\$9,000 - \$10,350	\$680	\$750-\$1,000
C	Civic Center monuments (along San Antonio)	\$14,000	\$1,170	\$1,000
D/DD	Downtown monuments	\$10,265 - \$12,075	\$680	\$1,000
E	Post-mounted signs	\$465	-	-
PD	Directional signs to parking plazas in downtown	\$425 - \$500	-	-
PL	Directional signs to parking lots in Loyola Corners	\$425	-	-
PZ (original)	Parking Plaza identity signs (6ft tall V-Shape)	\$7,175	\$780	-
PZ (revised)	Parking Plaza identity signs (3ft tall alternative)	\$5,500	\$780	-

The total cost to manufacture and install the full sign program (with the modified metal bases and the shorter parking plaza signs) is estimated to be \$440,500. Adding the stone bases back into the program will cost an additional \$40,900. The LED lighting (applied only to a portion of the larger sign types and not to the post or bracket mounted signs) will cost an additional \$25,250. The total cost of the sign program with both options included is estimated to be \$506,650.

### **Proposed Implementation Plan**

The Wayfinding Task Force developed a prioritized implementation plan for the wayfinding sign program. The draft prioritization plan with the associated budget is included as Attachment 4. The sign location maps that reference the exact locations of the signs referenced in the prioritization plan are included as Attachment 5 and 6.

The Task Force placed the majority of the proposed signs in Phase I since the members felt it was important to include all of the directional signs that assist visitors with locating our commercial districts and the parking within them. A key goal of this project is to create a consistent signage program for the City. Implementing the signs one corridor at a time would undercut this goal and it would likely cost more to fabricate and install the signs in smaller batches.

The signs that were considered a lower priority are the anticipation and/or reassurance signs that provided advance warning for turns and provided reassurance that they were on the correct route (such as the three signs along San Antonio between El Camino and Main Street). In addition, some of the post-mounted signs that serve as internal City directional signs for alternative routes (such as Cuesta Drive or Los Altos Avenue) were considered a lower priority. The downtown monument sign that is proposed for the intersection of Main Street and Foothill Expressway was also placed in this category since depending on what signage goes on the exterior wall of the 400 Main development, this sign may not be necessary.

The cost of completing the Phase 1 project only ranges between \$372,700 and \$427,000 depending on the add-ons included. Phase 2 would cost an additional \$68,300 to \$78,900 to implement. The Council may also want to consider moving the Parking Plaza monument signs to Phase 2. Doing so would more evenly distribute the costs between the phases reducing the cost of Phase I to between \$240,700 and \$276,300, depending on the add-ons selected. Under this scenario, Phase II would cost between \$200,300 and \$229,600. These phasing options are outlined in Attachment 4.

### **Parking Plaza Names**

As part of the wayfinding design concept, the idea was raised to change the names and numbering system of the parking plazas to something that would be easier to remember for visitors. The Wayfinding Task Force suggested a tree-themed concept with names such as Apricot, Redwood, and Pistache. However, they recommend that City Council should be responsible for the final decision of whether to rename the plazas and what names to choose. If the plazas are renamed, there are 20 businesses with plaza addresses that would need to change their business address to reflect the new name. The Wayfinding Task Force

suggested that these businesses should be offered some level of compensation for this inconvenience and the expense of changing their printed collateral. An amount of \$500 per business was suggested as a reasonable compensation.

### **Recommendation of the Wayfinding Task Force**

The Wayfinding Task Force recommends that City Council program the full sign program (Phase I and Phase II) for implementation in the CIP. The Task Force believes implementation of the full sign program will significantly benefit all of the City's commercial districts and not just the downtown. The costs of the full sign system are split fairly evenly between the Citywide wayfinding program that supports all seven of the City's commercial districts and the civic destinations and the signs that solely support the downtown.

The Task Force also recommends the City Council consider moving forward with the stone bases, as originally designed, since they will be visible in many of the proposed sign locations. Additionally, the Task Force recommends that the solar LED lighting be used only for the monument signs (including the two Civic Center monuments and the downtown monument sign at San Antonio Road and Main Street). The estimated cost to implement the program as recommended by the Task Force would cost \$412,100 to implement the Phase I signs and an additional \$77,600 to implement Phase II signs. The total implementation cost for both phases is \$489,700.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The estimated cost to complete the entire wayfinding signage project (both Phase I and II) ranges from \$440,500 to \$506,250, depending on the add-on options included. Several options are presented in Attachment 4 for phasing the wayfinding program. The lowest priced phasing option presented would cost \$240,700 to implement the initial phase.

Funding for this project would need to be programmed into the Capital Improvement Program. Additional consideration will need to be made for long-term maintenance and replacement costs for the proposed sign program.

### **PUBLIC CONTACT**

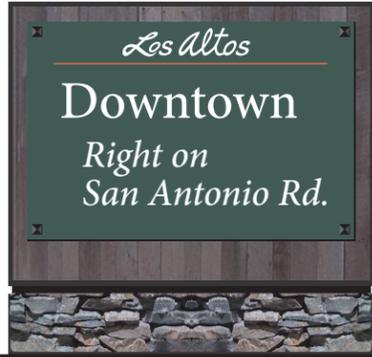
The Wayfinding Taskforce, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Los Altos Village Association have received a copy of this report.

Posting of the meeting agenda serves as notice to the general public.

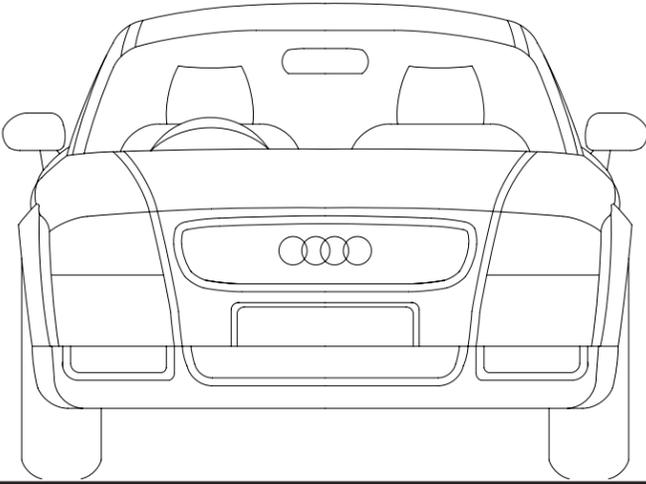
# Complete Sign Family

Scale: 1/2" = 1'0"

Sign Type A



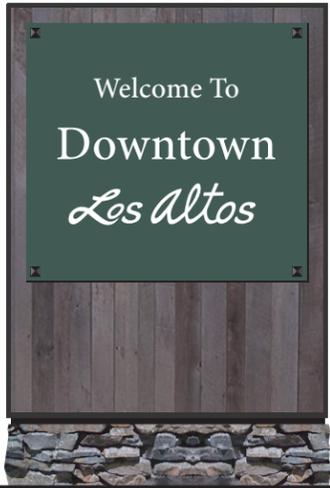
Sign Type B



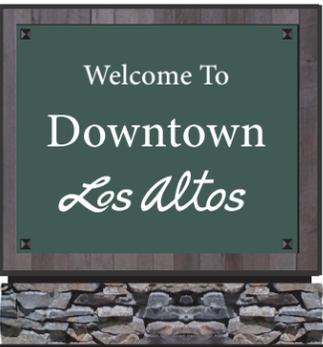
Sign Type C



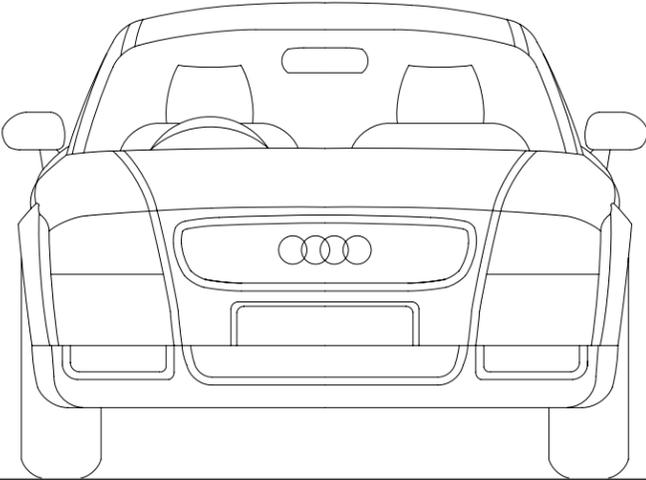
Sign Type D



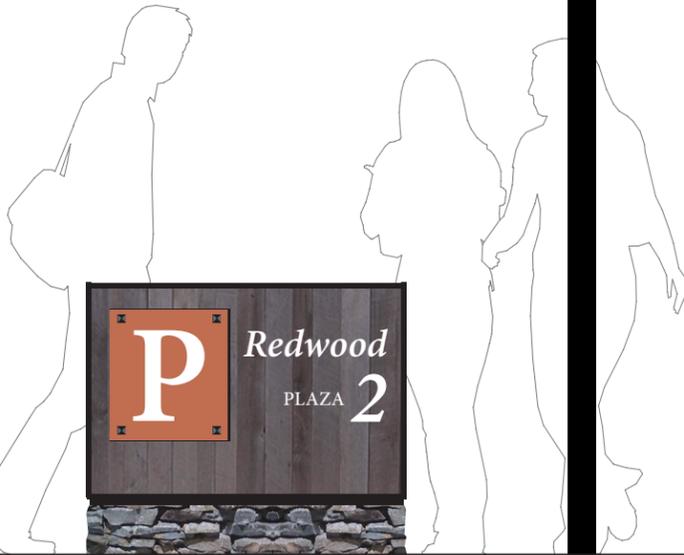
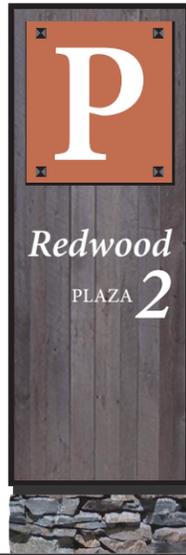
Sign Type DD



Sign Type E



Sign Type PZ options



Sign Type PD



Sign Type PL

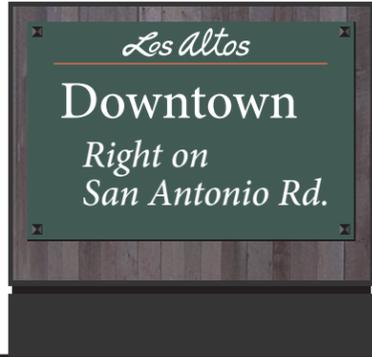


ATTACHMENT 1

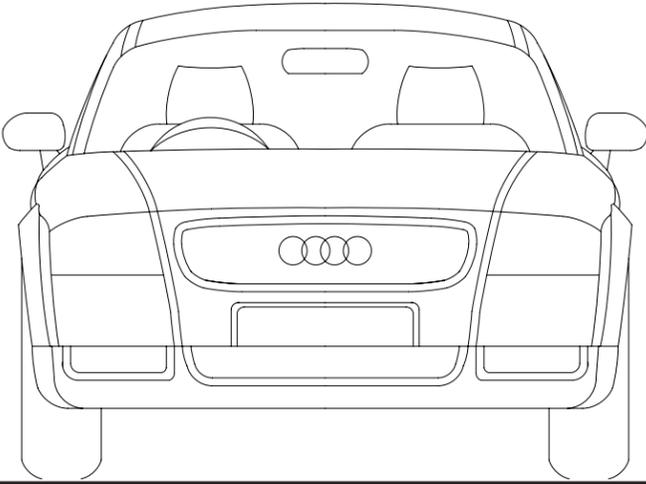
# Complete Sign Family, Modified Option: Iron-clad Base

Scale: 1/2" = 1'0"

Sign Type A



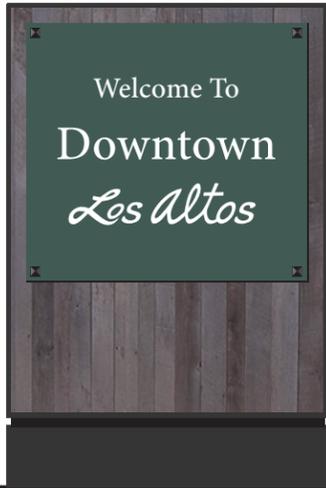
Sign Type B



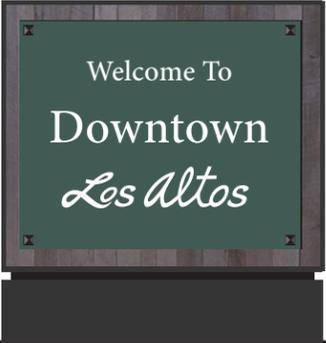
Sign Type C



Sign Type D



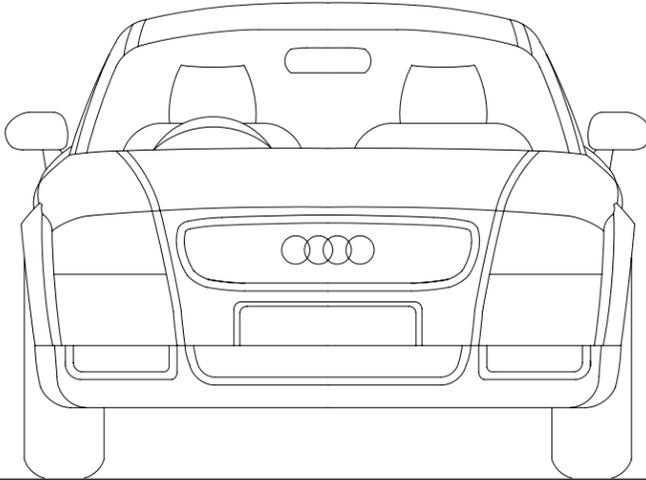
Sign Type DD



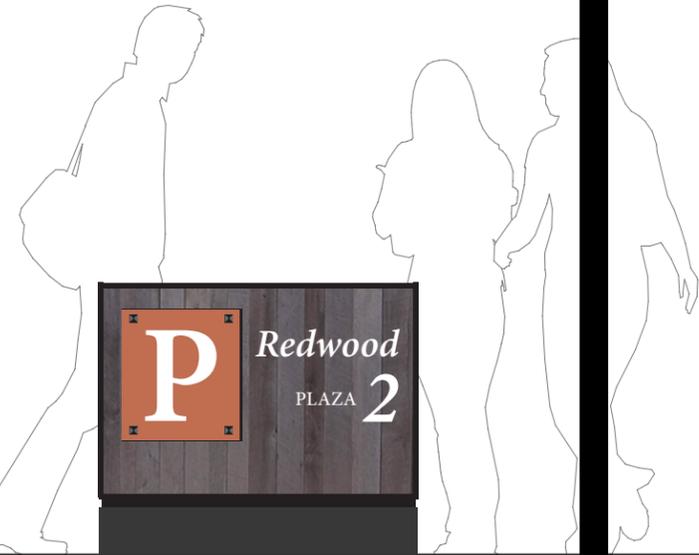
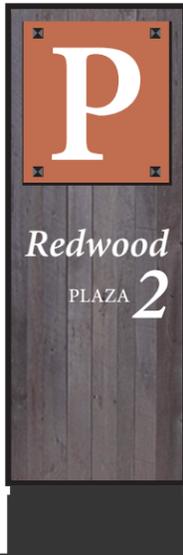
ATTACHMENT 2



Sign Type E



Sign Type PZ options

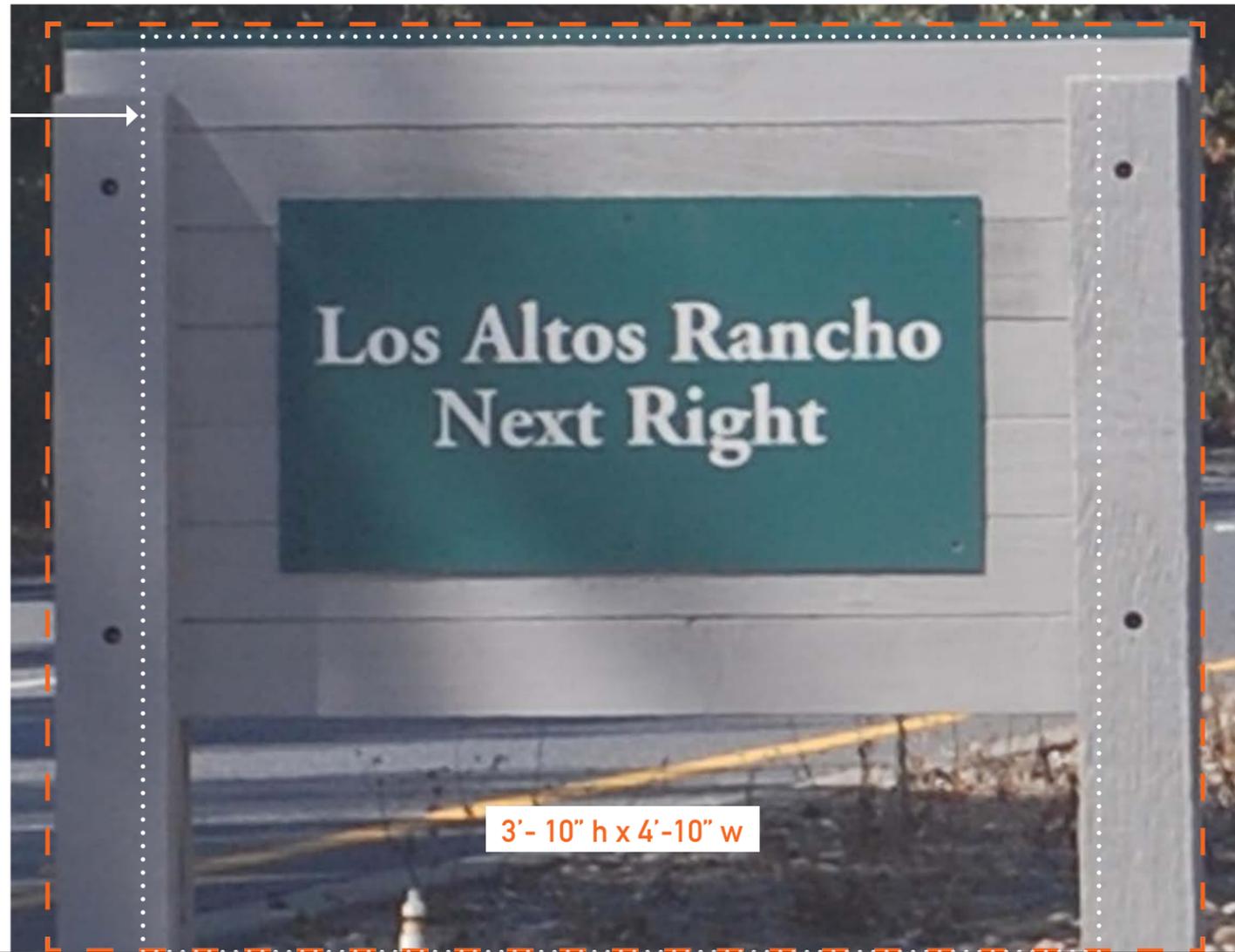


Sign Type PD

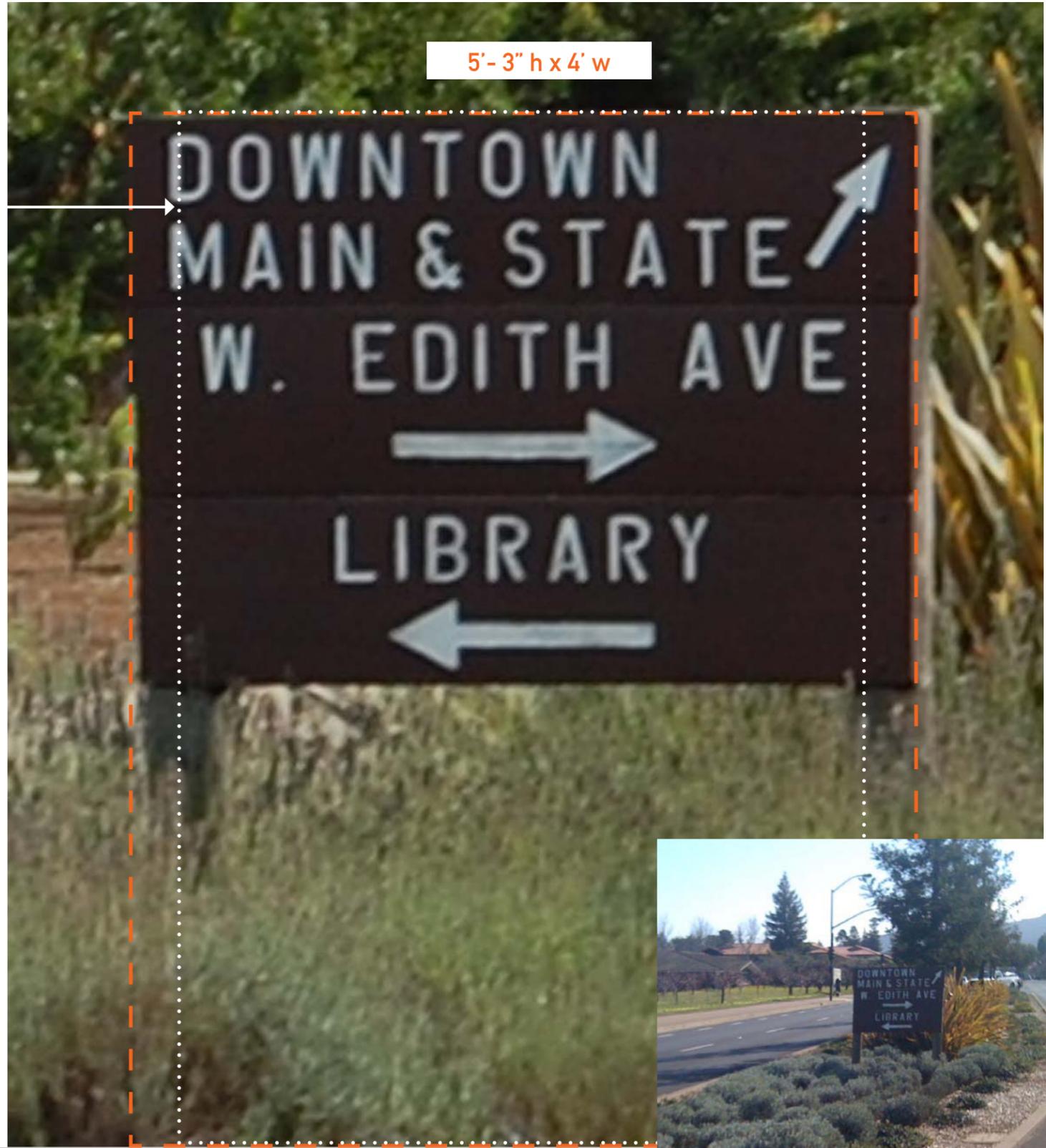
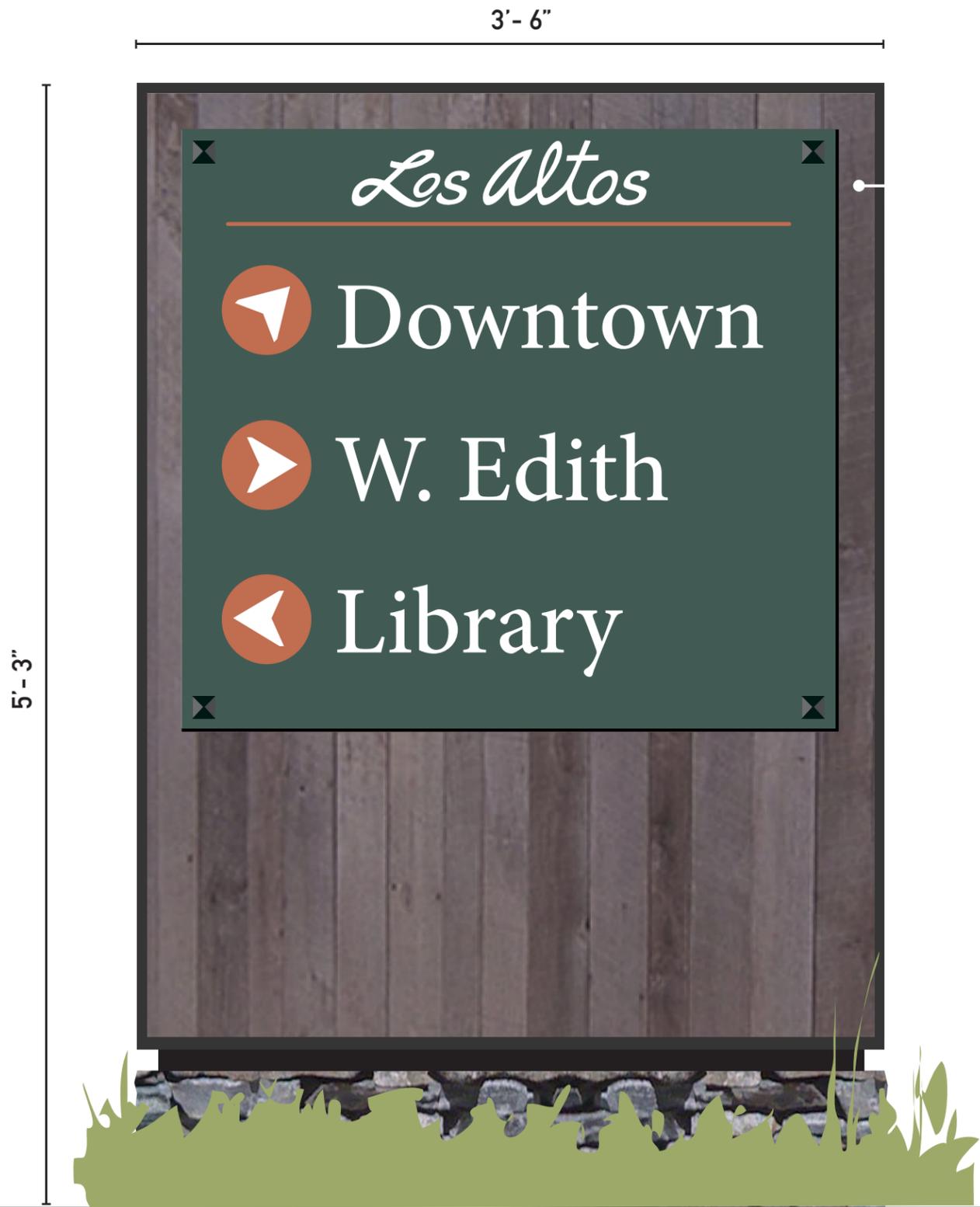


Sign Type PL

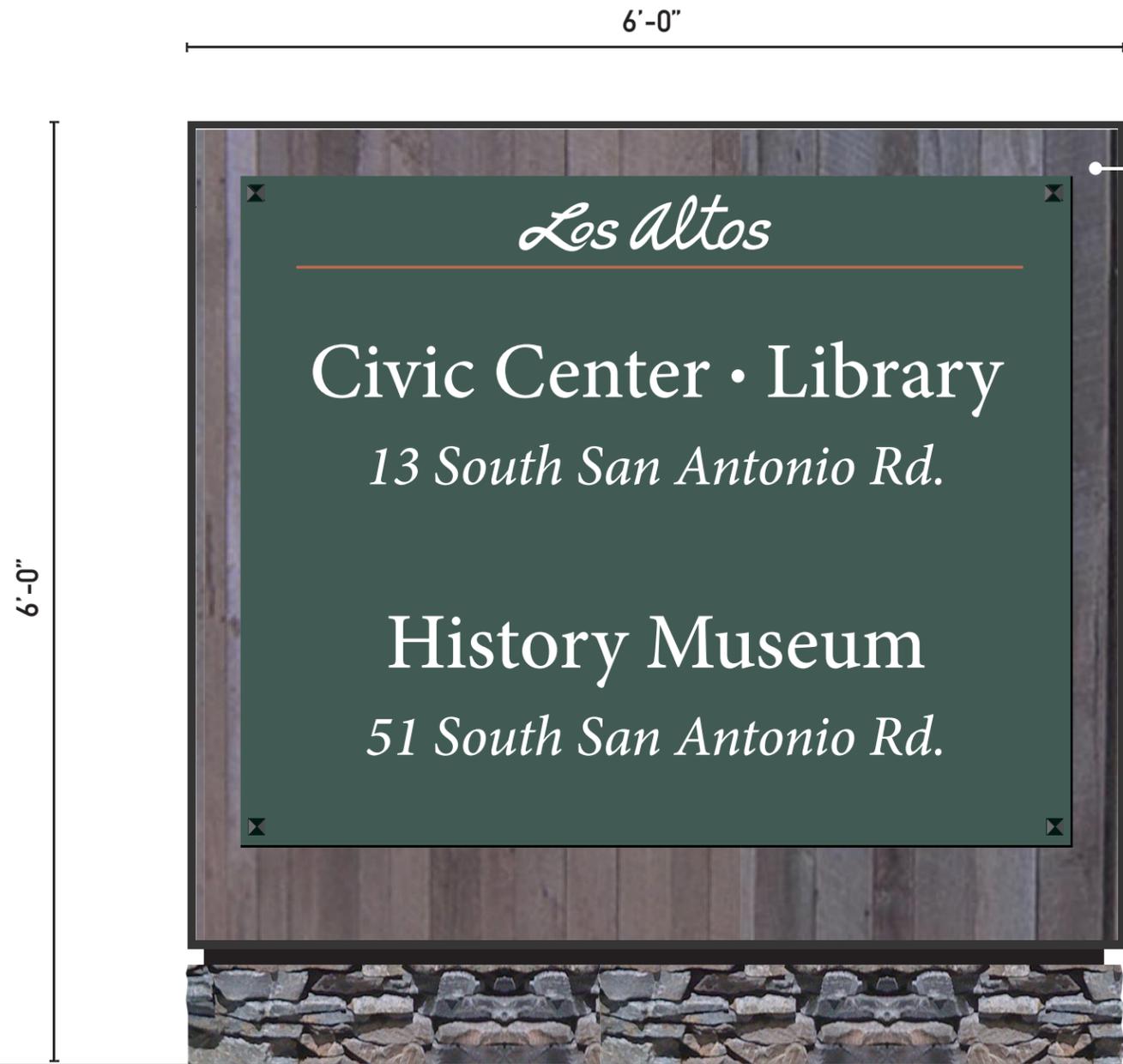




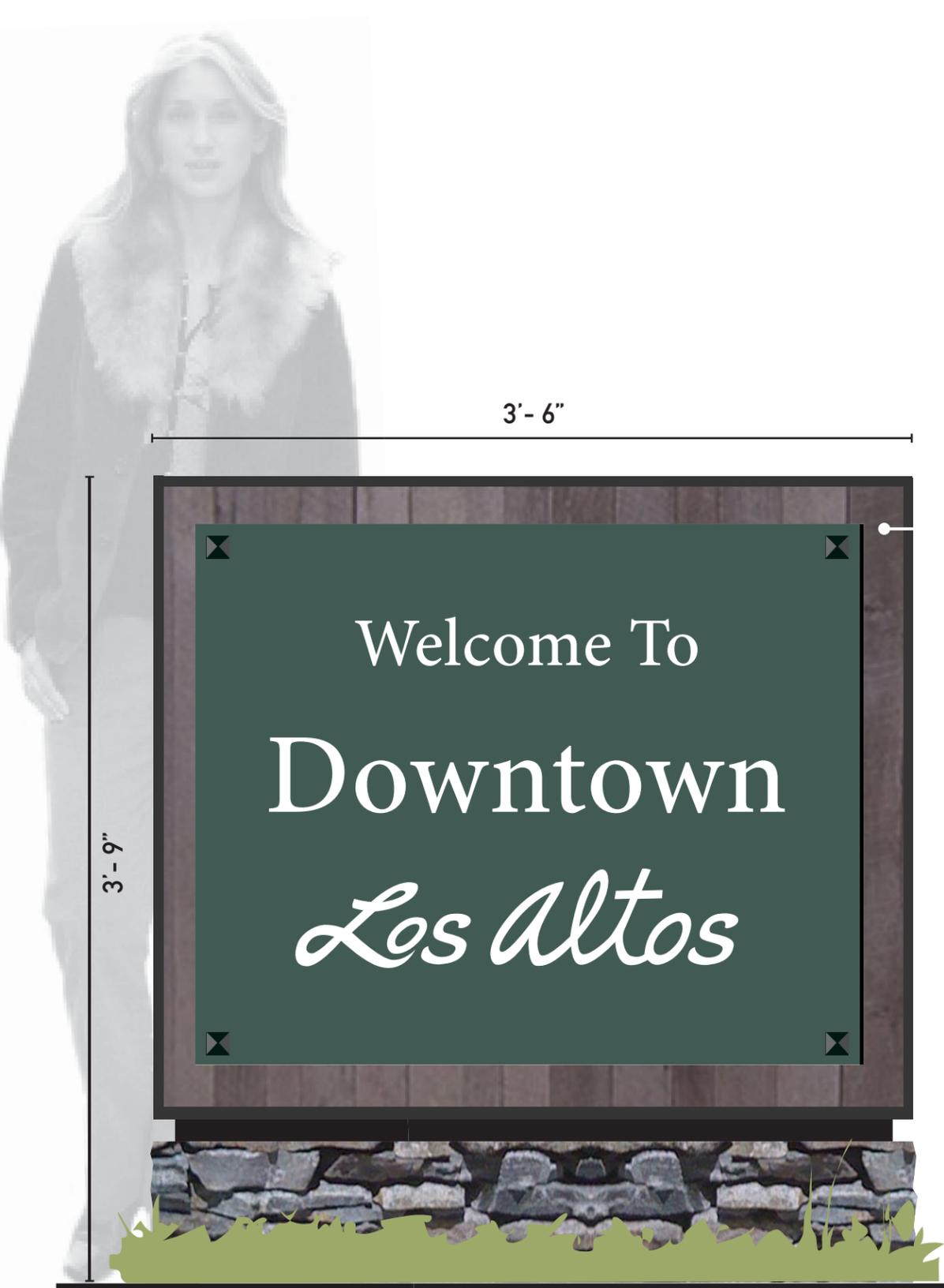
**SIGN TYPE A: Primary Auto Directional - Size Comparison**  
 Scale: 1-1/2" = 1'0"



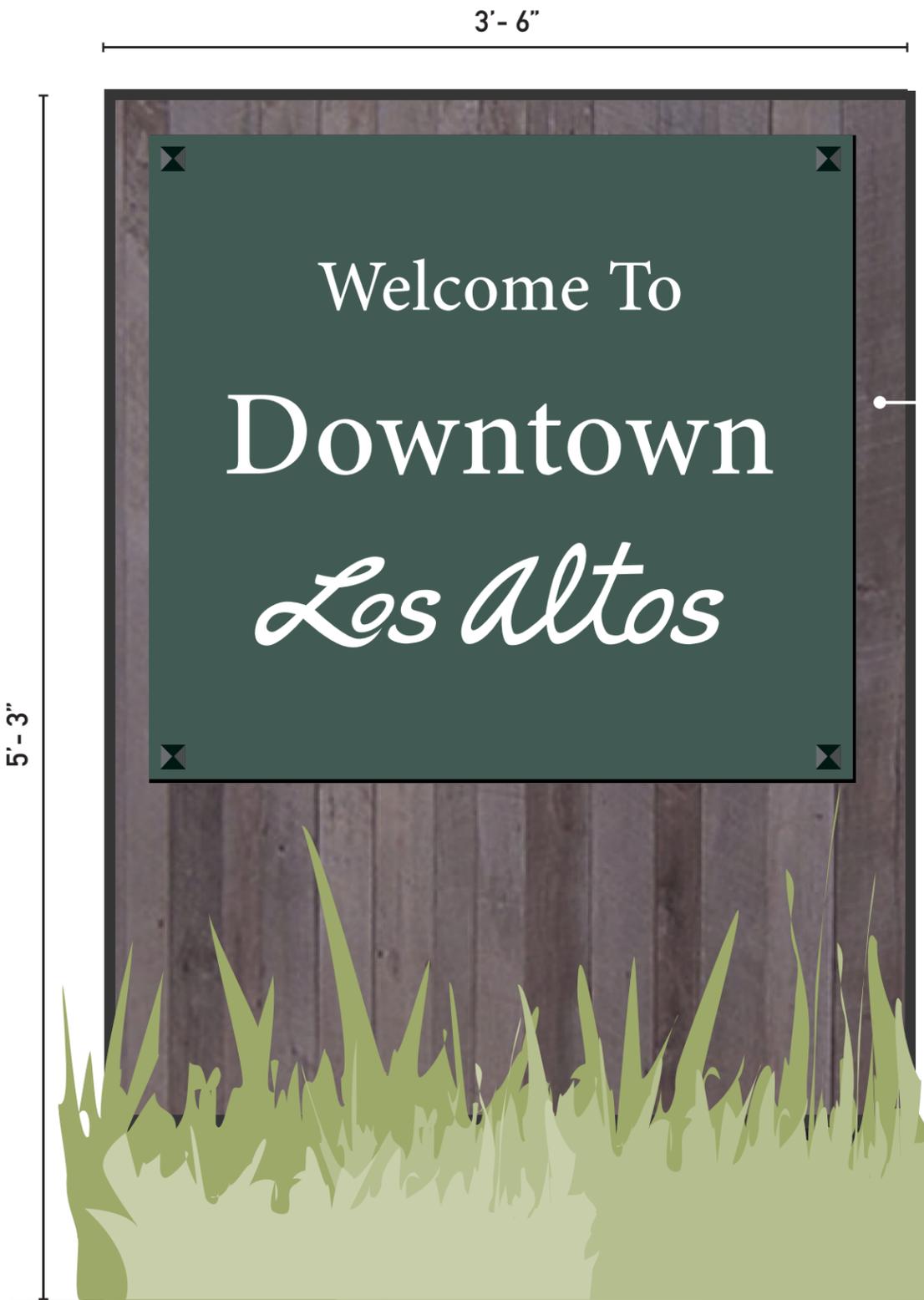
**SIGN TYPE B: Collector Auto Directional - Size Comparison**  
 Scale: 1-1/2" = 1'0"



SIGN TYPE C: Civic Center Monument - Size Comparison  
Scale: 1" = 1'0"



**SIGN TYPE DD: Gateway Sign (small) - Size Comparison**  
 Scale: 1-1/2" = 1'0"



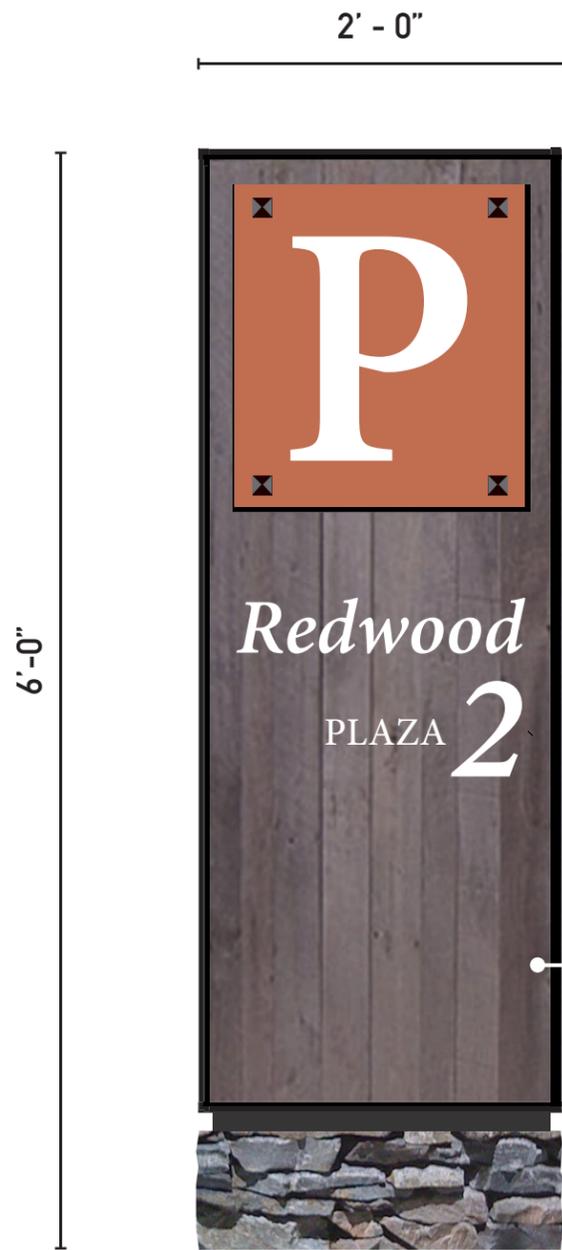
(Location for sign at San Antonio entry)



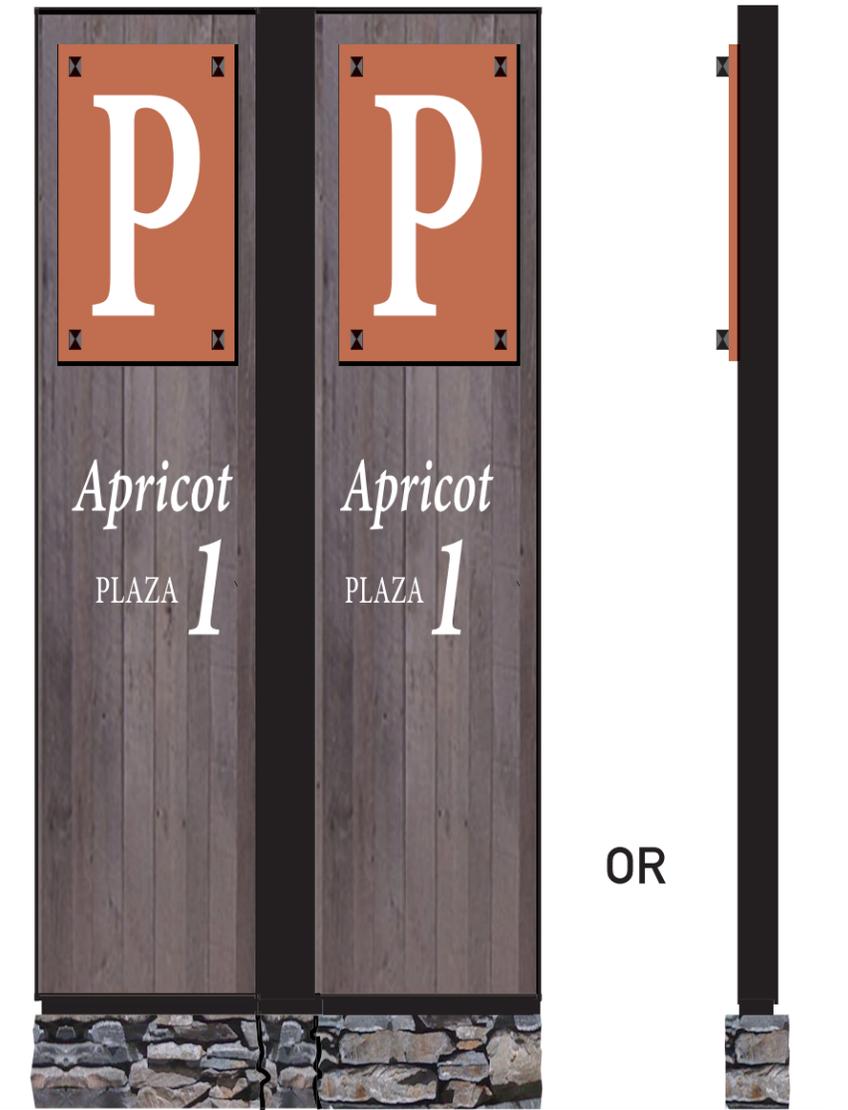
(Sign at Foothill entry)

**SIGN TYPE D: Gateway Sign - Size Comparison**  
 Scale: 1-1/2" = 1'0"

**SIGN TYPE PZ: Parking Plaza Identity - Size Comparison**  
 Scale: 1" = 1'0"

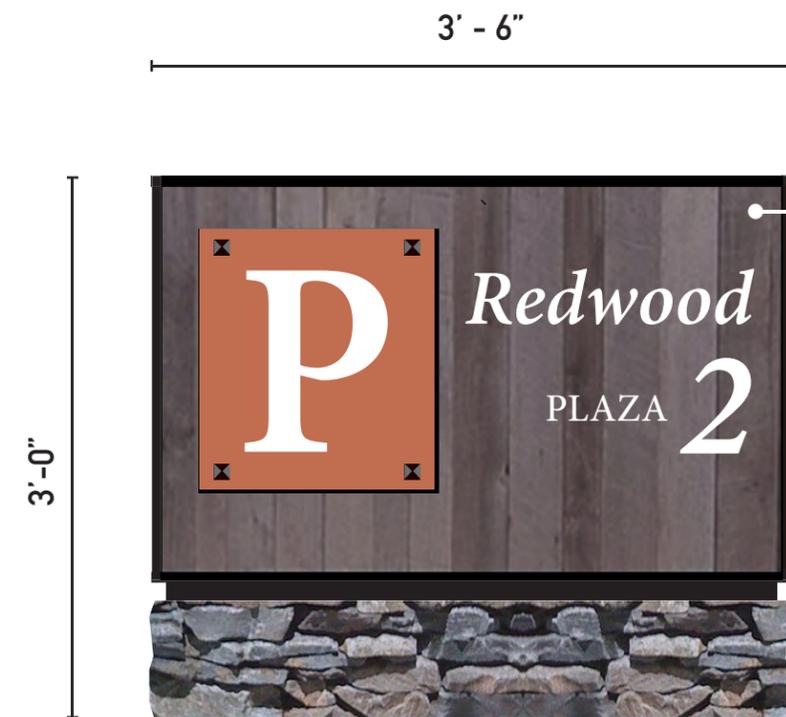


**PLAN VIEWS**



**END VIEWS**

**SIGN TYPE PZ: Alternate Design, Parking Plaza Identity - Size Comparison**  
Scale: 1" = 1'0"



ATTACHMENT 4

Wayfinding Draft Sign Prioritization Plan

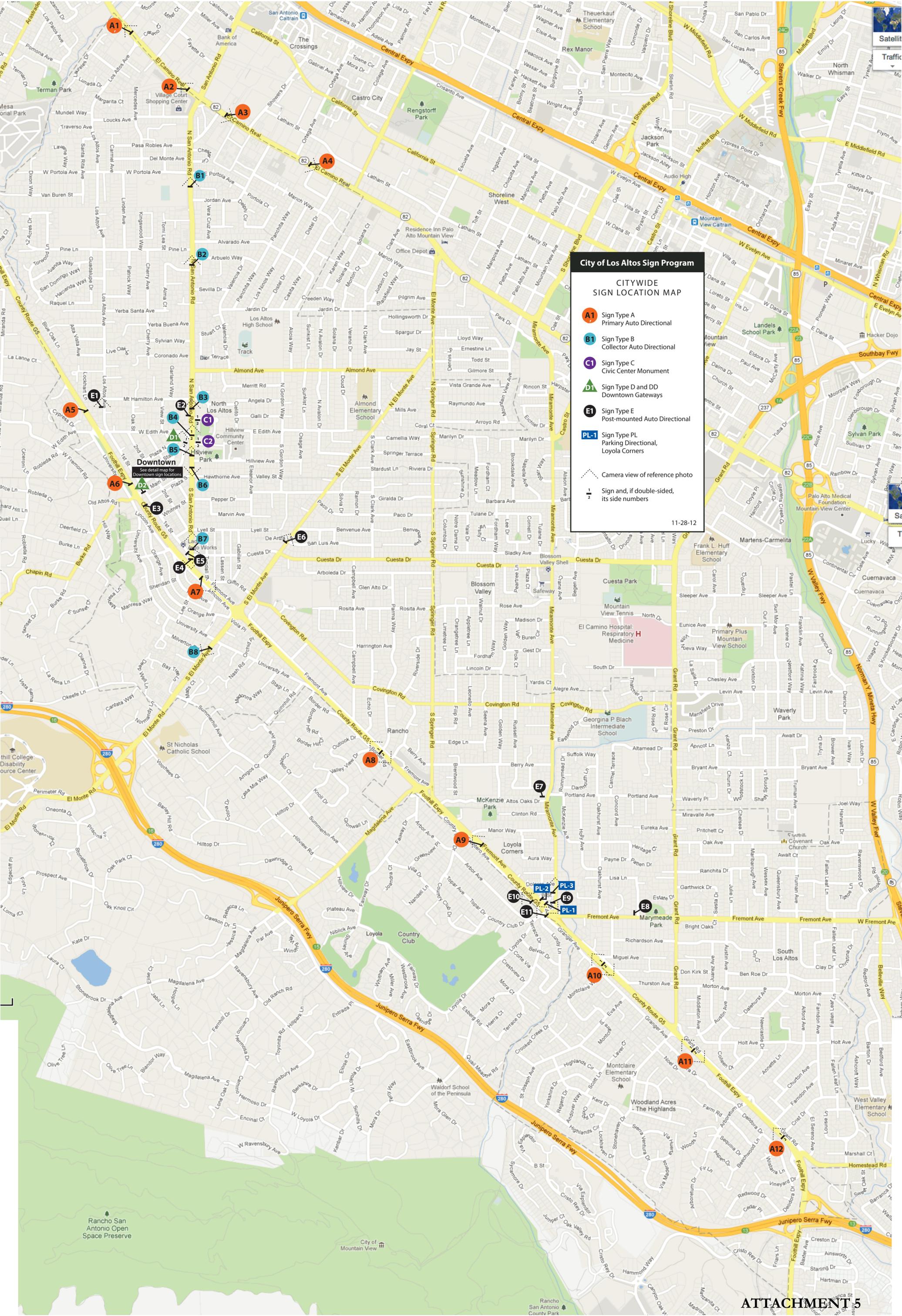
<u>Sign Reference</u>	<u>Location Notes</u>	<u># of Signs</u>	<u>Cost per sign</u>	<u>Base Sign</u>			<u>Total with add ons</u>
				<u>Design</u>	<u>Stone Base</u>	<u>LED Lights</u>	
<b>Phase I</b>							
Sign Type A (A2, A3, A5-A12)	Foothill and El Camino signs	10	\$7,750-8,900	\$82,100	\$7,800	\$8,500	\$98,400
Sign Type B (B3, B4, B5, B6, B8)	San Antonio and El Monte	5	\$9,000-\$10,350	\$46,350	\$3,400	\$4,000	\$53,750
Sign Type E (E2, E3, E4, E9, E10,	San Antonio, Foothill, Loyola Corners	5	\$465	\$2,325	\$0	\$0	\$2,325
Sign Type C (C1 and C2)	Civic Center Monuments	2	\$14,000	\$28,000	\$2,340	\$2,000	\$32,340
Sign Type D (D1)	Downtown Monument at San Antonio	1	\$12,075	\$12,075	\$680	\$1,000	\$13,755
Sign Type PL (all)	Loyola Corners Parking signs	3	\$425	\$1,275	\$0	\$0	\$1,275
Sign Type PD	Downtown Parking Directional	17	\$425-\$500	\$8,275	\$0	\$0	\$8,275
Sign Type PZ (all)	Parking plaza identifiers	20	\$5,500	<u>\$110,000</u>	<u>\$15,600</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$125,600</u>
				\$290,400	\$29,820	\$15,500	\$335,720
<b>Phase 2</b>							
Sign Type A (A1, A4)	El Camino anticipation signs	2	\$7,750	\$15,500	\$1,360	\$1,500	\$18,360
Sign Type B (B1, B2, B7)	San Antonio reassurance signs	3	\$9,000	\$27,000	\$2,040	\$2,250	\$31,290
Sign Type E (E1, E5, E6, E7, E8)	Internal city directionals	5	\$465	\$2,325	\$0	\$0	\$2,325
Sign Type D (D2)	Downtown Monument at Foothill	1	\$12,075	<u>\$12,075</u>	<u>\$680</u>	<u>\$1,000</u>	<u>\$13,755</u>
				\$56,900	\$4,080	\$4,750	\$65,730

<u>Total Program Costs</u>	<u>Base Sign</u>		<u>With Stone</u>	
	<u>Design</u>	<u>Base</u>	<u>With LED</u>	<u>With Both</u>
Final Design Drawings	\$24,200	\$24,200	\$24,200	\$24,200
Phase I	\$290,400	\$320,220	\$305,900	\$335,720
Phase 2	\$56,900	\$60,980	\$61,650	\$65,730
Contingency (20%)	<u>\$69,000</u>	<u>\$76,000</u>	<u>\$74,000</u>	<u>\$81,000</u>
	\$440,500	\$481,400	\$465,750	\$506,650

**Phasing Options (with design work and contingency included):**

*(Numbers rounded to nearest \$100)*

<b>Partial Phase 1 (no PZ Parking Plaza Signs)</b>	\$240,700	\$257,700	\$259,300	\$276,300
<b>Entire Phase I</b>	\$372,700	\$408,500	\$391,000	\$427,000
<b>Phase 2</b>	\$68,300	\$73,200	\$74,000	\$78,900
<b>Phase 2 (with PZ Parking Plaza signs added)</b>	\$200,300	\$223,900	\$206,000	\$229,600



**City of Los Altos Sign Program**

**CITYWIDE SIGN LOCATION MAP**

- A1** Sign Type A  
Primary Auto Directional
- B1** Sign Type B  
Collector Auto Directional
- C1** Sign Type C  
Civic Center Monument
- D1** Sign Type D and DD  
Downtown Gateways
- E1** Sign Type E  
Post-mounted Auto Directional
- PL-1** Sign Type PL  
Parking Directional,  
Loyola Corners

--- Camera view of reference photo

1/2 Sign and, if double-sided,  
its side numbers

11-28-12

**Downtown**  
See detail map for  
Downtown sign locations



**City of Los Altos Sign Program**

**DOWNTOWN PARKING SIGN LOCATION MAP**

- PD-12** Sign Type PD  
Parking sign, Downtown
- PZ-4** Sign Type PZ  
Parking Plaza Identity

**CITYWIDE SIGNS ALSO IN THIS AREA:**

- A6** Sign Type A  
Primary Auto Directional
- B1** Sign Type B  
Collector Auto Directional
- C1** Sign Type C  
Civic Center Monument
- D1** Sign Type D and DD  
Downtown Gateways
- E3** Sign Type E  
Post-mounted Auto Directional

11-28-12



City Parking