



**CITY OF LOS ALTOS  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
September 15, 2015**

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Agenda Item # 7**

**SUBJECT:** Accept the summary of key conclusions from the 2015 survey of City of Los Altos residents regarding Downtown Los Altos

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**BACKGROUND**

On June 9, 2015, Bryan Godbe of Godbe Research presented the preliminary results of the 2015 Downtown survey. A Council ad hoc subcommittee comprised of Mayor Pepper and Mayor Pro Tem Bruins worked with Godbe and staff to review the survey results and develop the key conclusions.

**EXISTING POLICY**

On November 25, 2014, the Council identified implementation of the previously prepared Downtown survey in early 2015.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION**

August 26, 2014; September 23, 2014; October 28, 2014; November 25, 2014 and June 9, 2015

**DISCUSSION**

Key conclusions drawn from the results of the 2015 survey are included as Attachment 1.

**PUBLIC CONTACT**

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

**FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT**

None

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Not applicable

**RECOMMENDATION**

Accept the summary of key conclusions from the 2015 survey of City of Los Altos residents regarding Downtown Los Altos

**ALTERNATIVES**

Not applicable

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**ATTACHMENT:**

1. Los Altos Downtown survey key conclusions



## LOS ALTOS DOWNTOWN SURVEY KEY CONCLUSIONS July 19, 2015

Overall, this quantitative survey of a representative sample of City of Los Altos residents provides important insights into the views of the community as a whole and serves as a benchmark of community opinion for several new questions and tracks the data from the 2012 survey on several other questions. In addition to this summary of key conclusions, information on statistically-significant differences highlighted in the cross-tabulations can be reviewed as specific issues are considered by Council.

Specific conclusions include:

1. Satisfaction with Downtown Los Altos is significantly higher than in 2012. A supermajority of residents (82%) are very (45%) or somewhat (37%) satisfied with Downtown Los Altos; 13% are somewhat (9%) or very (4%) dissatisfied, and 4% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied—a 14% increase in overall satisfaction. In an open-ended follow-up question, the top reasons given by those who are satisfied were “like small town atmosphere/charm” (46%), “like shops/restaurants (27%), and “like activities” (13%). Those who were dissatisfied cited “lack of parking” (15%), “don’t like new buildings/don’t like architecture” (12%), “lack of variety of shops” (12%), and “lack of variety of restaurants” (11%). Respondents 40 to 49 years old showed a higher level of very satisfied responses, and 30 to 39 year olds registered a higher level of somewhat satisfied responses.
2. Residents continue to visit Downtown Los Altos frequently. Residents generally visit Downtown Los Altos a few times a week (28%). 67% visit at least once a week, and another 24% visit at least once a month. Only 1% never visit Downtown Los Altos; 3% visit several times a day.
3. A convenient connection between Downtown Los Altos and the Community Center campus for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers continues to be at least somewhat important to 74% of residents. Additionally, the largest plurality of respondents think “an additional crosswalk with flashing lights by the existing library driveway” (46%) would be the best solution.
4. Parking in Downtown Los Altos has become a more important issue. 55% think it is at least somewhat convenient to park in Downtown Los Altos (11% lower than in 2012), while 42% think it is at least somewhat inconvenient (12% higher than in 2012)—clearly less convenient than in 2012. 15% found parking very convenient, while 16% found it very inconvenient. If more parking were added, vast majorities indicate they would be willing to use an above ground parking structure (86%), an underground parking structure (88%), but on the street parking was an even larger preference (95%)
5. A slim majority of respondents believe that more office buildings downtown would detract from the small town character of Los Altos. 51% believe that office buildings would detract from Los Altos, while 39% believe that Los Altos needs new office building downtown. This contrasts with a slightly different question in 2012 in which office space and housing were combined. In the 2012 question, 43% believed Los Altos needs new office buildings and



housing downtown to increase the number of people working and living there to support existing and attract new restaurants and shops, and 42% believed that office and housing development and the traffic it would bring would detract from the small town character of downtown.

6. The larger plurality of respondents believe that more housing downtown would detract from the small town character of Los Altos. 48% believe that housing would detract from Los Altos, while 39% believe that Los Altos needs new housing downtown. The contrasts with a slightly different question in 2012 noted above.
7. Among those who indicated they agreed with the opinion in question 8 that Los Altos needs new office buildings downtown, those who agreed with the opinion in question 9 that Los Altos needs more housing downtown, or those that had mixed opinions in question 8 and 9 (total for both questions, n=245), a slim majority of that group (53%) would allow 45 foot, three or four story zoning on Main and State. 45% prefer that Main and State stay the way they are now (i.e., mostly one story and limited to two-story buildings).
8. Of recently completed buildings in the downtown area, 242 Second Street was ranked by most favorably, followed at lower levels by 170 First Street, 1 Main Street, 400 Main Street, 240 Third Street, 100 First Street, and finally 396 First Street. The reasons for strongly liking these buildings included “like the style of the building”, “the building adds vibrancy / brings more people downtown”, or the “building is new and replaced unattractive older buildings”. The reasons respondents strongly disliking the buildings included “the building(s) is too massive / bulky / out of proportion with other buildings”, “don't like the style of the building(s)” and “the building(s) is too tall / blocks views”. While a qualitative question, the table below shows the top responses to the follow-up question which asked why respondents liked or disliked by the specific building.

Building Address	Most Liked	Most Disliked
242 Second Street	Like the style of the building	The building is too massive / bulky / out of proportion with other buildings
240 Third Street	Like the style of the building	The building is too massive / bulky / out of proportion with other buildings
396 First Street	The building adds vibrancy / brings more people downtown	The building is too massive / bulky / out of proportion with other buildings
170 First Street	Like the style of the building	The building is too massive / bulky / out of proportion with other buildings
100 First Street	The building adds vibrancy / brings more people downtown	The building is too tall / blocks views
1 Main Street	Like the style of the building	The building is too tall / blocks views
400 Main Street	Like the style of the building	The building is too massive / bulky / out of proportion with other buildings

9. Los Altos residents were closely split on preferences for future downtown development. 33% indicated they prefer “continued redevelopment of the entire downtown triangle



including Main and State Streets with buildings similar to the new developments on San Antonio Road and First Street”, while 30% indicated they prefer “continued redevelopment of the downtown perimeter on San Antonio Road and First Street with buildings similar to the new developments”. 23% indicated they prefer no additional downtown development. Homeowners and respondents 65 years or older were more likely to prefer no additional downtown development, while renters and 30 to 39 year olds were more likely to prefer continued development in the entire downtown triangle.

10. When asked their level of concern with issues downtown, respondents were most concerned with parking (1.34), then bicyclist safety (1.27), pedestrian safety (1.26), and then traffic (1.24). It is important to note that while there are numeric differences, statistically they are virtually the same.
11. Slightly more respondents (46.8%) believe that downtown should primarily serve the needs of Los Altos residents, while 44% believe that Los Altos should focus on becoming a destination that attracts non-residents. Just 9% had mixed opinions, did not agree with either opinion or did not know.
12. Finally, residents indicated the highest likelihood of patronizing a restaurant serving dinner past 9 pm downtown. At a lower level, this was followed by a Community green in downtown Los Altos, a theatre offering live performances, a movie theatre, a venue with live music for adults, and a Wine bar or brew pub. A place for teens to hang out showed the least likelihood of being patronized by respondents.



Los Altos Downtown Plan Survey -- 2015 and 2012 Comparison				
Question		Increase / Decrease	2015	2012
Now, I'd like to get your overall opinion of living in the City of Los Altos. Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with Downtown Los Altos?	Very Satisfied	15.7%	45.2%	29.5%
	Somewhat Satisfied	-1.5%	37.0%	38.5%
	Neither	-8.1%	4.2%	12.3%
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	-5.3%	9.2%	14.5%
	Very Dissatisfied	-0.6%	3.8%	4.4%
	DK/NA	-0.3%	0.6%	0.9%
How often do you visit Downtown Los Altos	Several times a day	0.3%	3.2%	2.9%
	Daily	4.0%	16.4%	12.4%
	A few times a week	-4.3%	27.6%	31.9%
	Once a week	4.9%	20.1%	15.2%
	A few times a month	-0.2%	16.3%	16.5%
	Once a month	-2.2%	7.6%	9.8%
	A few times a year or less	-2.6%	6.5%	9.1%
	Only for special events [parades, farmers market, etc]	0.5%	1.1%	0.6%
	Never	-0.6%	1.1%	1.7%
	DK/NA	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Would you say it is extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not at all important that there is a convenient connection between Downtown Los Altos and the Los Altos Community Center for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers?	Extremely important	-4.9%	15.8%	20.7%
	Very important	4.8%	34.0%	29.2%
	Somewhat important	2.8%	24.6%	21.8%
	Not at all important	-1.1%	19.0%	20.1%
	DK/NA	-1.6%	6.6%	8.2%
Is it convenient or inconvenient to park in Downtown Los Altos today?	Very convenient	-14.7%	14.7%	29.4%
	Somewhat convenient	3.2%	40.2%	37.0%
	Somewhat inconvenient	9.8%	26.7%	16.9%
	Very inconvenient	2.9%	15.6%	12.7%
	DK/NA	-1.2%	2.8%	4.0%
Opinions about Downtown Los Altos (2015 office & housing averaged)	OPINION A/C: This person believes that Los Altos needs new office buildings and housing in Downtown to increase the number of people working and living Downtown, which will support existing and attract new restaurants and shops	-3.5%	39.0%	42.5%
	OPINION B/D: This person believes that office and housing development and the traffic it would bring would detract from the small town character of Downtown Los Altos	7.5%	49.5%	42.0%
	Mixed Opinions	-1.9%	7.6%	9.4%
	Neither	-1.2%	2.7%	3.8%
	DK/NA	-0.8%	1.4%	2.2%
Current zoning code for Main and State Streets limits buildings to 30 feet in height, which allows one or two stories. Do you think the zoning code should be changed to allow buildings of 45 feet in height, which is three or four stories, similar to some of the new buildings on First Street, or stay the way it is now which allows buildings 30 feet in height, which is one or two stories?	Allow 45 feet / 3 or 4 stories	10.7%	52.6%	41.9%
	Stay the way it is, allow 30 feet 1 or 2 stories	-2.6%	44.7%	47.3%
	Mixed Opinions	-5.5%	2.0%	7.5%
	Neither	-1.3%	0.6%	1.9%
	DK/NA	-1.3%	0.1%	1.4%