

Downtown Land Use and Economic Revitalization Plans



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Introduction

This report summarizes the history of recent Downtown study efforts and policy documents. The report illustrates an extensive effort over the past several years to achieve clear built-environment and economic development goals for the Downtown. These study efforts build on the following policy documents:

Downtown Zoning Vision and Purpose Statements

The following purpose statements were updated and refined by the Downtown Development Committee in 2005 based on substantial public input:

The city shall retain and enhance the Downtown Los Altos village atmosphere and shall seek to attract businesses to the village. The primary characteristics of the desired village atmosphere include:

- A. A mix of uses emphasizing retail businesses and services that meet the needs of community residents and visitors, and with housing located aboveground floor businesses;
- B. Buildings and streetscape elements that enhance the pedestrian experience, reflect quality design, present a diversity of appearances, and contribute to the architectural and historical interest of the village;
- C. An attractive, pedestrian-oriented shopping environment that encourages social interaction, with substantial landscaping and open space, and adequate public parking;
- D. Business and specialty stores that will attract customers from the local community and surrounding region; and
- E. Encouragement of activities that enhance and extend commercial vitality, including nighttime activities.

In addition to the vision statement, the specific purposes for the CRS District are as follows:

- A. Promote the implementation of the Downtown design plan;
- B. Encourage pedestrian-scale design and minimize blank walls and other dead spaces at the ground level;

- C. Continue the pattern and scale established by existing buildings by requiring building designs that express the underlying twenty-five (25) foot frontages originally established, either by building structure or by architectural design;
- D. Create continuous building frontage without major interruption by disallowing driveways and parking lots on shopping street frontages;
- E. Allow latitude for creative design and architectural variety within limits established;
- F. Provide pedestrian amenities such as paseos, outdoor public spaces and outdoor seating;
- G. Establish a sense of entry into the Downtown;
- H. Encourage historic preservation for those buildings listed on the city's historic resources inventory;
- I. Encourage the upgrading of building exteriors, signs, passageways, and rear entries; and
- J. Encourage the use of solar, photovoltaic, and other energy conserving devices.

Downtown Commercial Design Guidelines

Adopted in 2009

Downtown Design Plan

Adopted in 1992 and revised in 1993, 2005 and 2009

General Plan Community Design, Land Use and Economic Development Elements

Adopted in 2002

The above documents are attached in the Appendix to this report. The following summarizes the various Downtown Committee accomplishments over the past several years.

Downtown Committee Accomplishments

Expanding on the above policy documents, the primary Downtown zoning districts – i.e. the CRS, CD and CD/R3 districts – were also carefully evaluated by the Downtown Development Committee, resulting in the following decisions:

Downtown Committee I

The City Council directed the first Downtown Zoning Committee to review and recommend to Council any appropriate modifications to the zoning regulations for the three primary Downtown commercial districts. These are the central Downtown core Commercial Retail Sales district, the south triangle area Commercial Downtown district, and the Commercial Service district which covers most of First Street. The goal of the first Committee was to look at ways of fostering a more successful Downtown. The make-up of the Committee changed as various milestones were accomplished, but always included two City Council members, two Planning Commissioners, community and business representatives, and the Community Development Director.

The Committee completed their first phase of this effort in 2006 and the zoning regulations for these districts were comprehensively updated. The updates simplified the regulations and made them more understandable and effective and corrected inconsistencies and vague language. The updates further bolstered the vision and purpose statement and design criteria elements contained in the zoning ordinances.

Downtown Committee II

The second phase of the Committee's effort was to look at broader means to foster a successful Downtown. The following is a summary of the affected districts and the changes recommended and adopted for each.

Commercial Retail Sales

The CRS designation is reflective of the City's desire to promote and strengthen the retail and pedestrian-serving vitality of the Downtown core area. Buildings in the CRS district were previously limited to two stories and 100% Floor Area Ratio.

Recommended and Adopted Change

Eliminated the 100% FAR regulation.

Commercial Downtown

This district covers the majority of the south triangle area. In general, the CD designation provides for a wider range of general retail and personal service uses than the CRS district. This district also allows offices, banks and other similar types of professional services. Buildings in the CD district were previously limited to two stories and 80% FAR.

Recommended and Adopted Changes

Increased the allowed building envelope from two stories in height to three stories and eliminated the 80% FAR regulation.

Commercial Service

This district is limited to First Street Downtown, and was subsequently replaced with the CD/R3 form-based zoning designation. The CS designation also provides for a wider range of general retail, personal service and office uses than the CRS district, but was specifically tailored to acknowledge the service and repair businesses that are unique to this district. Buildings in the CS district were previously limited to two stories and 50% FAR.

Recommended and Adopted Changes

Eliminated the 50% FAR restriction and required retail businesses greater than 15,000 square feet in size to remain retail. This latter provision was specifically included to reduce redevelopment pressure on the two First Street grocery stores.

Floor Area Ratios

Floor Area Ratios were used in the Downtown commercial districts to suppress redevelopment for specific purposes. Only the Downtown commercial districts had FARs in place. The CRS district 100% FAR was adopted in 1989 to control parking demand in the public parking plazas. The CD district 80% FAR had been in place for quite a while and it is not clear what the goal was for this district. The CS district 50% FAR was adopted in 1990 to constrain redevelopment opportunities in order to preserve those businesses and services that currently exist on First Street, such as automobile repair garages.

The City's desire continues to be to encourage appropriate redevelopment of some Downtown sites. The benefits of allowing redevelopment would be to both attain newer, higher quality, commercial buildings that meet retail industry needs and to bring more users to the Downtown area – mixed use projects with either housing or offices above a retail space would provide more pedestrian traffic and patrons for the existing businesses. To evaluate the potential impacts of these changes, the City contracted with a traffic engineering and transportation planning firm in 2007 to prepare a Traffic and Parking Impact Analysis. Of particular concern were potential traffic impacts in the Downtown core intersections on Main and State Streets. The TPIA included the following two scenarios:

Scenario 1

The elimination of FARs for the CRS, CD and CS zoning districts and allowing three-story buildings in the south-triangle CD district. The other two districts would allow full two-story structures.

Scenario 2

The elimination of FARs and allowing full build-out of the entire Downtown triangle with three-story structures.

Only Scenario 1 resulted in no significant traffic impacts. Scenario 2 was noted to potentially require significant mitigation in order to maintain General Plan mandated levels-of-service Downtown and on adjoining streets. Based on the report findings, the City Council chose to implement Scenario 1.

Downtown Committee III

The third phase of the Committee was mandated to study: a) a potential Downtown parking garage from an urban design and physical layout perspective; b) creating a Downtown commercial design guidelines booklet; and c) the zoning for the CRS/OAD properties located at the San Antonio Road end of Downtown. The CRS/OAD study was completed in 2008 and the commercial design guidelines were completed and adopted in 2009. The Downtown parking garage study evolved into a much more comprehensive parking and economic development Downtown Opportunity Study that both brought more office workers and business patrons Downtown, and largely financed a public parking garage. Given the extent of other development activity occurring Downtown, this study was tabled in 2011.

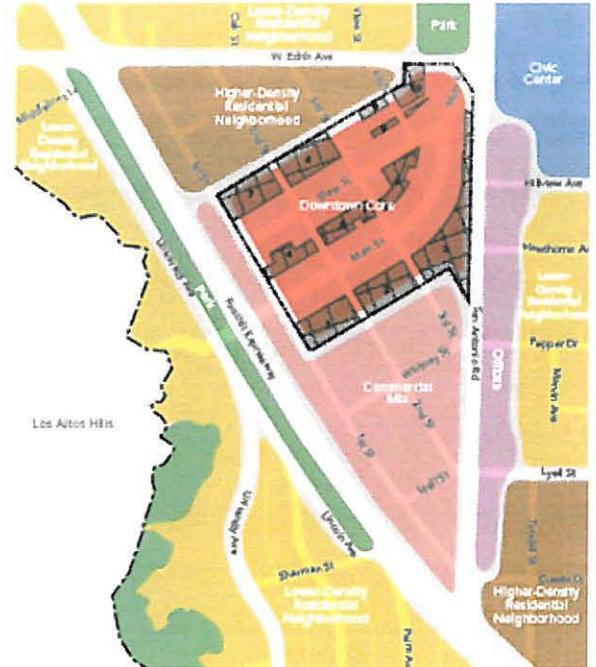
The other major effort undertaken by this iteration of the Downtown Development Committee was the establishment of form-based zoning for all of the commercial districts in the Downtown triangle, and specifically the CD/R3 zoning for First Street. In addition to the substantial public investment in Downtown streetscape and infrastructure improvements, this rezoning effort led directly to the following private investment in Downtown:

- Enchanté Hotel – One Main Street
- Mixed-Use Commercial Building – 240 Third Street
- Packard Foundation Office Campus – 343 Second Street
- Lennar Condominiums – 20 Units at 396 First Street
- Post Office Condominiums – 48 Units at 100 First Street
- Safeway Market – 160 First Street
- First and Main Mixed-Use Commercial Building – 400 Main Street

Downtown Committee IV

The Downtown Committee IV was tasked with specifically looking at the newly adopted form-based zoning and determining how it could be modified to ensure that Main and State Street remained limited to two-story buildings. This task was accomplished via zoning ordinance amendments reviewed by the Planning and Transportation Commission and adopted by City Council on October 23, 2012.

Downtown Los Altos



The Downtown Los Altos triangle is bounded by San Antonio Road to the east, Foothill Expressway to the west, and W. Edith Avenue to the north. The Downtown is a genuine mix of essential resident services, from retail to restaurants, professional offices, personal services and automobile repair. The Downtown also includes a soon to be redeveloped Safeway market, a Draeger's market, Walgreens and Los Altos Hardware. The Downtown retail and restaurant core includes Main and State Streets. The core has prescriptive zoning regulations that essentially limit ground floor uses to retail and restaurants

Results

Public Investment

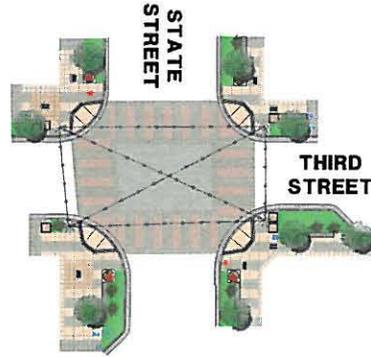
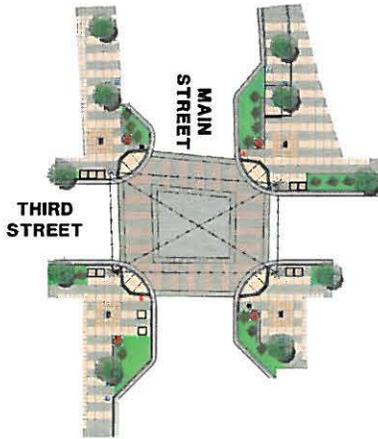
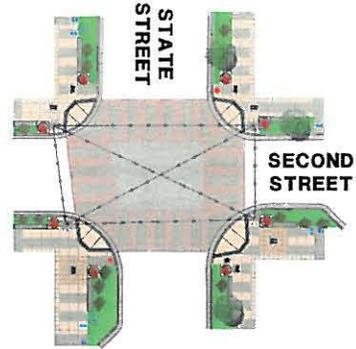
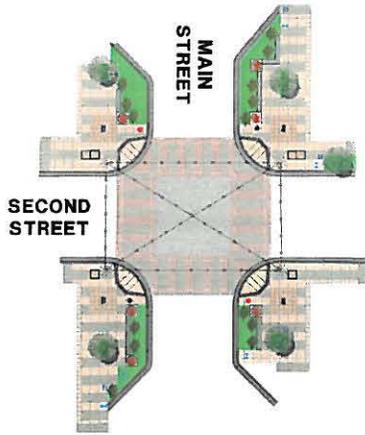
Opportunity Study



The Downtown Opportunity study was initiated in February 2008 as a public parking garage study. It then evolved into a public/private development proposal in order to leverage City-owned real estate Downtown – i.e. the parking plazas – given the unaffordable nature of a stand-alone public parking structure.

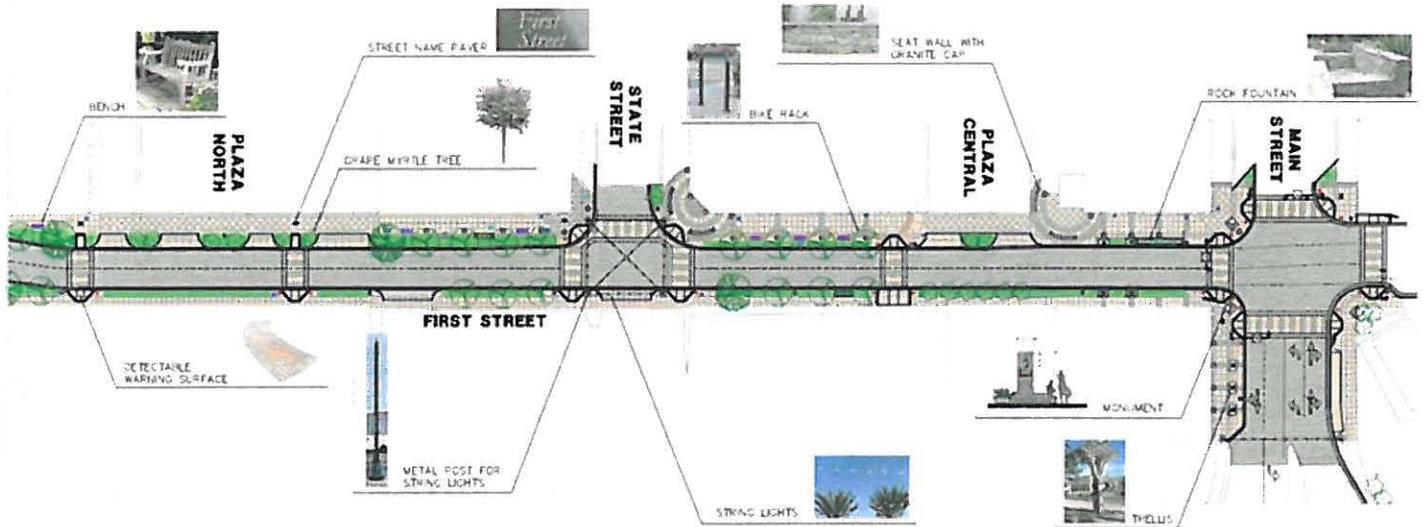
As the Study progressed, it became as much about Downtown economic stimulus as it was about providing additional parking – bringing additional employees and thereby shoppers and business patrons and pedestrian vitality Downtown – it is anticipated that development of the Plazas 1,2 and 3 could bring 500 to 800 additional office workers Downtown. The Downtown Opportunity Study was completed in July 2009 and following extensive public outreach and City Council study session meetings, Council approved the plan in November 2009

Downtown Intersections



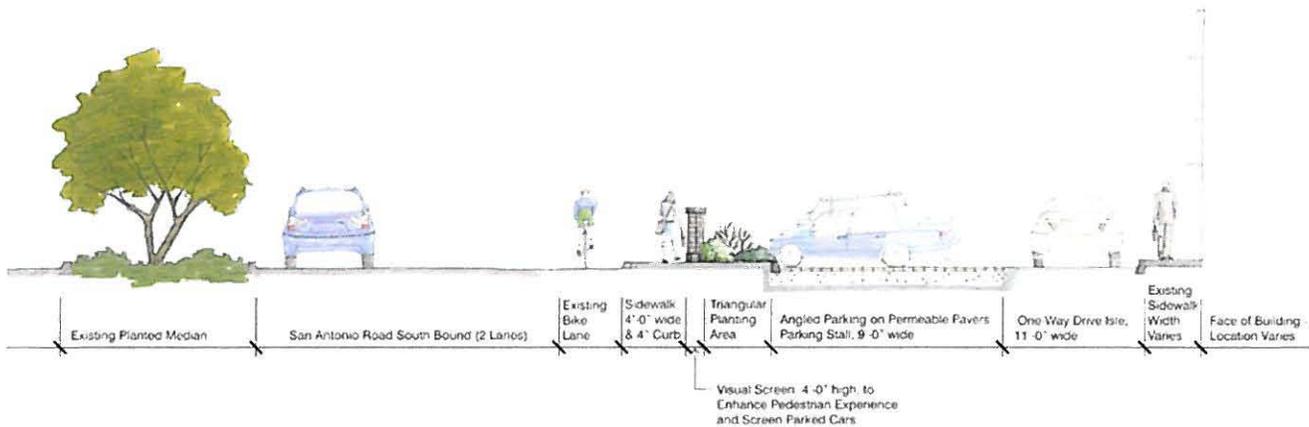
The Downtown Intersection improvements were designed and built in order to provide expanded and more comfortable pedestrian gathering and dining spaces, to beautify the corners with new street furniture, landscaping and crosswalks, and to update and improve infrastructure and storm drainage. The intersection improvements represent a public investment of approximately \$1,600,000.

First Street Streetscape



In the same spirit, the Downtown First Street improvements were designed and built in order to provide expanded and more comfortable pedestrian gathering and dining spaces, to beatify the streetscape and corners with new street furniture, landscaping and crosswalks, and to update and improve infrastructure and storm drainage, including placing all of the overhead utilities below ground. The intersection improvements represent a public investment of approximately \$3,400,000.

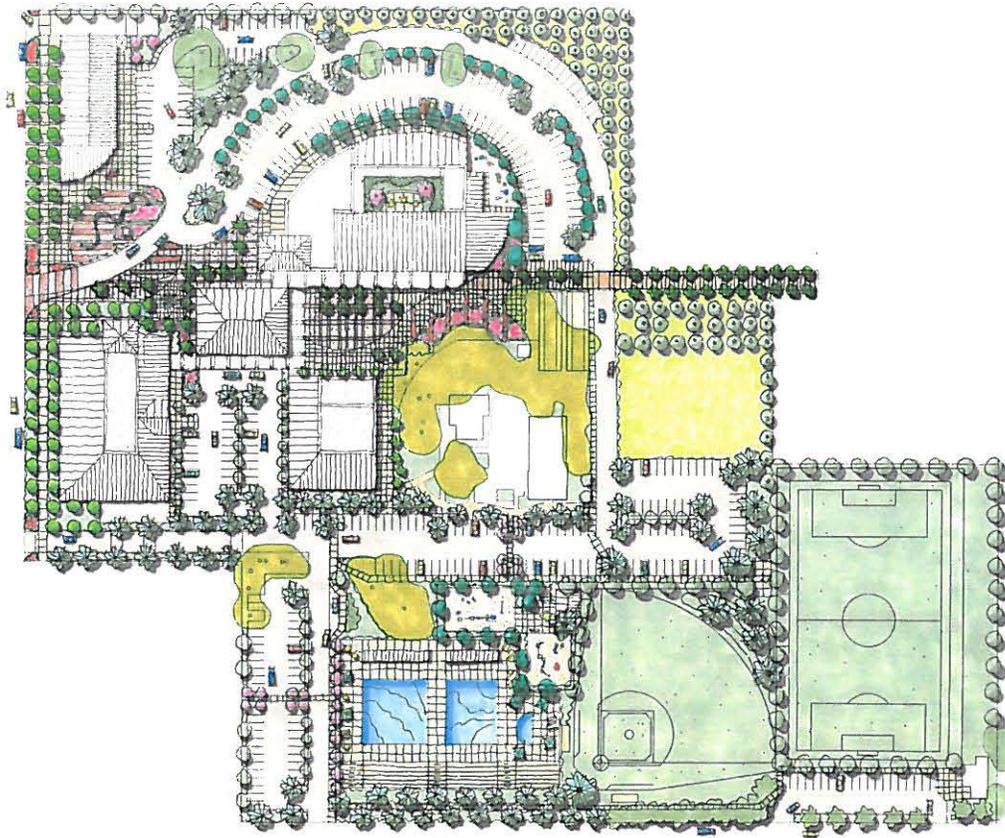
San Antonio Road



The San Antonio Road streetscape improvements were initiated to accomplish several goals:

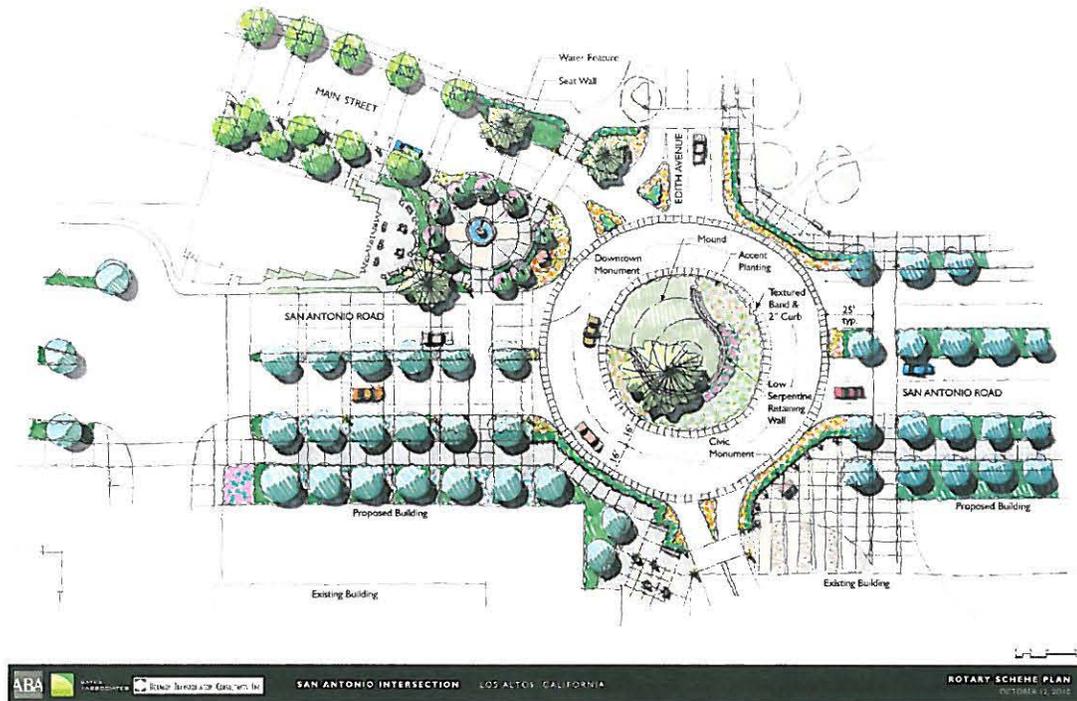
- Build an ADA compliant acceptable sidewalk
- Provide a green-fence screen along the frontage of the public parking plaza that would screen the view of cars but still provide views of Downtown businesses
- Landcape and beautify the streetscape frontage
- Extend the Downtown intersection and First Street design and materials to this eastern edge of Downtown, which carries significant number of commuter cars past Downtown everyday

Civic Center Master Plan



The City of Los Altos has developed a Master Plan for a new Civic Center. This process has included extensive public outreach and involvement as the City has identified goals and objectives, and developed a comprehensive program and facilities needs assessment and a space programming plan identifying functions and sizes of desired facilities. The Civic Center Master Plan provides for not only updating old, obsolete, and energy inefficient buildings, but an opportunity to better configure the 18 acres of land making up the Civic Center. It also provides an opportunity to establish a stronger pedestrian connection to the Downtown area. Additionally, the community has expressed a desire for improved youth and senior programs, improved recreational facilities for indoor and outdoor activities, and community gathering spaces for large and small groups.

Intersection Design



As an extension of both the Civic Center Master Plan and the promotion of Downtown economic development, the City has designed alternative intersection improvement plans for the San Antonio Road, W. Edith Avenue, and Main Street intersection. The goal of the design is to accomplish the following:

- Create a safer, shorter, and more comfortable pedestrian crossing from the Civic Center to Downtown and either prohibit pedestrian crossing at the unmarked library driveway or establish this as a safe crossing point.
- Create a more attractive intersection design using treated pavement materials, landscaping and narrower roadways.
- Better identify both the Civic Center and the Downtown area, and provide stronger physical and visual links to these two areas.

Results

Private Investment

Enchanté Hotel



One Main Street

An 18 room boutique hotel approved for the One Main Street property at the intersection on Main Street and San Antonio Road, directly across from the Civic Center. The project will provide an outdoor dining area that will ultimately connect to the City's intersection improvements and Civic Center. The project will both revitalize this dormant corner and serve as a significant visual and pedestrian connection from Downtown to the Civic Center and the neighborhoods beyond to the east.

Packard Foundation



343 Second Street

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation recently completed a new 45,550 square foot office building at 343 Second Street to expand their headquarters. The goal of the project is to consolidate their offices and construct an environmentally friendly, energy conserving building. The project maintains and improves the three parking lots on Second Street and creates a visitor parking lot at Whitney Street. The project also renovates the Second and Whitney Street intersection and provides private open space along the San Antonio Road frontage.

First Street Safeway



160 First Street

The current Downtown Safeway is approximately 22,000 sq. ft. in size and in need of renovation. The market was built in 1967 and has remained popular with Los Altos shoppers. In early 2012 Safeway received approval for an approximately 45,000 sq. ft. new market designed with signature architecture that strengthens the project's physical and visual connection to the Downtown area and in Safeway's "lifestyle" store format with prepared foods, a coffee shop, and other amenities

Bank of the West Mixed-Use



240 Third Street

A three-story, mixed-use, condominium building is nearly completed at 240 Third Street, the former Bank of the West site. The project contains two retail areas on the first story, office space on the second story, and two residential units on the third story. The project provides an underground parking garage off the rear alley.

Lennar Homes Condominiums



396 First Street

This approved project for a new three-story structure with 20 condominium units at 396 First Street – the former site of Adobe Animal Hospital – is also nearing completion. The project includes an underground parking garage.

Post Office Condominiums



100 First Street

Approval for a new, 43-foot tall, three-story residential structure with 48 condominium units at the former site of the Los Altos Post Office on First Street. The project includes visitor ground level parking one level of underground parking.

City-Owned First and Main Property



400 Main Street

This approved two-story building with retail and restaurant space on the first floor and Class A office space on the second floor will be constructed at the City's First and Main property once permits have been secured and the property has been conveyed. The project provides on-site parking behind and below the building and accessed from First Street. It incorporates features such as new landscaping, wide, café-dining sidewalks, and a water feature and central plaza area that all enhance the pedestrian environment.

VISION STATEMENT FOR THE DOWNTOWN CORE CRS ZONING DISTRICT

The city shall retain and enhance the downtown Los Altos village atmosphere and shall seek to attract businesses to the village. The primary characteristics of the desired village atmosphere include:

- A. A mix of uses emphasizing retail businesses and services that meet the needs of community residents and visitors, and with housing located aboveground floor businesses;
- B. Buildings and streetscape elements that enhance the pedestrian experience, reflect quality design, present a diversity of appearances, and contribute to the architectural and historical interest of the village;
- C. An attractive, pedestrian-oriented shopping environment that encourages social interaction, with substantial landscaping and open space, and adequate public parking;
- D. Business and specialty stores that will attract customers from the local community and surrounding region; and
- E. Encouragement of activities that enhance and extend commercial vitality, including nighttime activities.

PURPOSE STATEMENT FOR THE DOWNTOWN CRS, CRS/OAD, CD AND CD/R3 ZONING DISTRICTS

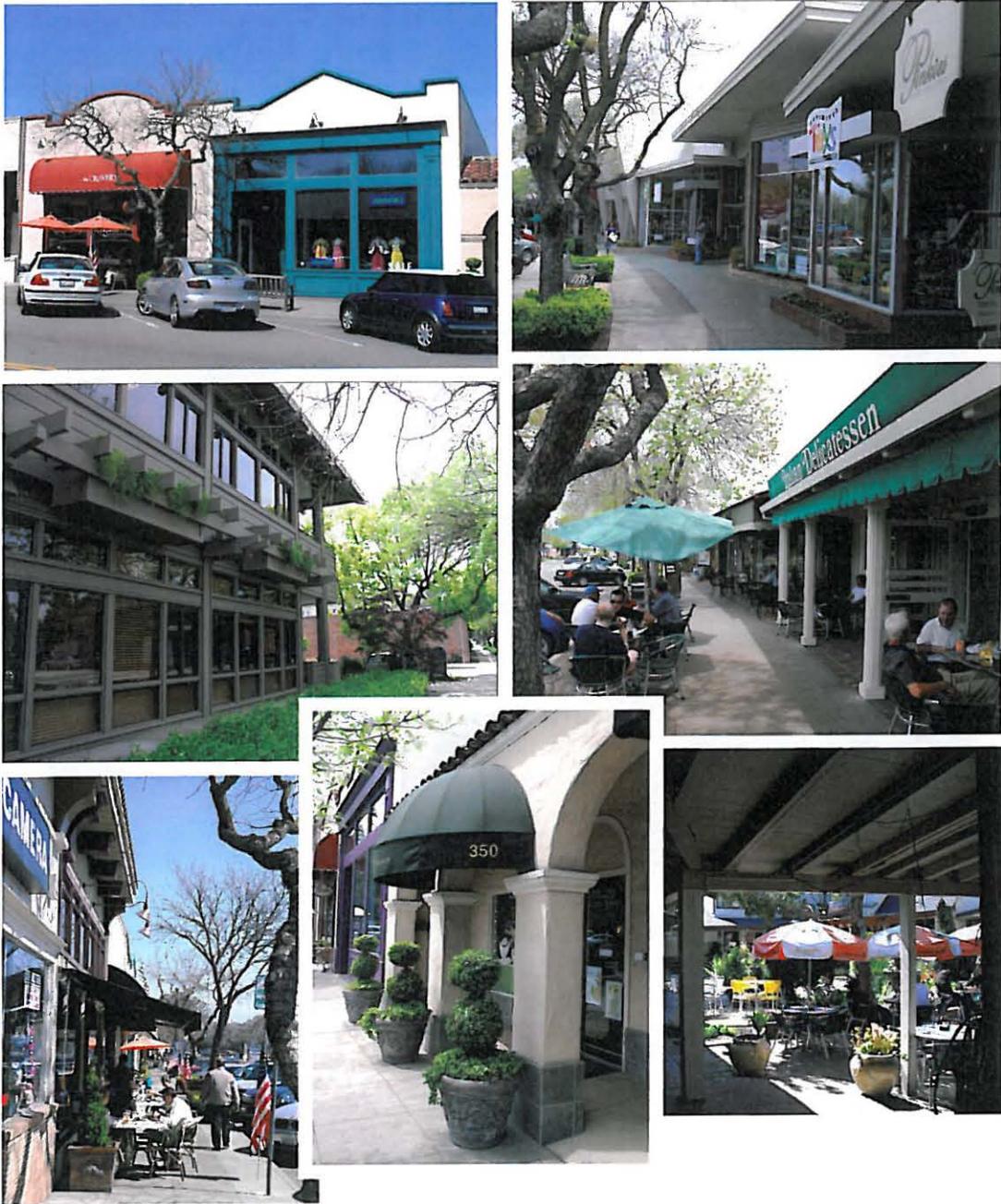
In addition to the CRS vision statement, the specific purposes for the Downtown Districts are as follows:

- A. Promote the implementation of the downtown urban design plan;
- B. Encourage pedestrian-scale design and minimize blank walls and other dead spaces at the ground level;
- C. Continue the pattern and scale established by existing buildings by requiring building designs that express the underlying twenty-five (25) foot frontages originally established, either by building structure or by architectural design;
- D. Create continuous building frontage without major interruption by disallowing driveways and parking lots on shopping street frontages;

- E. Allow latitude for creative design and architectural variety within limits established;
- F. Provide pedestrian amenities such as paseos, outdoor public spaces and outdoor seating;
- G. Establish a sense of entry into the downtown;
- H. Encourage historic preservation for those buildings listed on the city's historic resources inventory;
- I. Encourage the upgrading of building exteriors, signs, passageways, and rear entries; and
- J. Encourage the use of solar, photovoltaic, and other energy conserving devices.

Downtown Design Guidelines

City of Los Altos



Adopted
December 8, 2009

Appendix II

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

1



INTRODUCTION

Los Altos is blessed with a downtown of unique personality and vitality with a wide variety of shops, restaurants, offices, and services focused primarily on serving the local community. Constructed over a period of many decades, the development patterns are supportive of a strong pedestrian environment, and its structures offer a rich palette of the community's history.

Residents and visitors alike appreciate the special *Village Character* of Downtown Los Altos, but the identification of those features that are most responsible for the establishment of that highly prized character has often been elusive, and difficult to convey to property owners wishing to make changes to existing structures or build new ones. The intent of these design guidelines is to better describe the nature and elements of that *Village Character* by pointing out special features of existing downtown development and by examples from other communities with a similar village scale and character.

The design guidelines that follow provide practical and time-tested methods for preserving and enhancing the special qualities of the Downtown Los Altos village scale and character while offering ample opportunity for increased economic vitality. They supplement and reinforce the *Los Altos Downtown Design Plan*, and are intended to assist applicants in visualizing appropriate designs and in understanding community expectations, while providing fairness and consistency in the City's downtown development review and approval process.

COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

The community wishes to support and enhance the unique character of Downtown Los Altos. Property owners and developers will be expected to fit their projects into that existing fabric with sensitivity to their surroundings, and a recognition that the sum of the whole is more important than any single building or use. Buildings should be seen as unique, identifiable, and distinct from other buildings, but this distinction should be subtle, not dramatic.

A high quality of traditional architectural and landscape design is expected with abundant detail carried out in a manner that is authentic to the architectural style selected by the applicant.

Applicants are not required to meet all guidelines, but should be in substantial conformance with the design guidelines and the Required Findings set forth in the sidebar on page 11.

INTENT

These guidelines are intended to accomplish the following:

- Support and enhance the unique Los Altos Downtown Village Character.
- Maintain and enhance an attractive Downtown pedestrian environment.
- Provide a mix of uses to meet the needs of community residents and visitors.
- Encourage increased Downtown vitality with additional retail shops, restaurants, offices and residents.
- Encourage creative design and architectural diversity.
- Encourage appropriate historic preservation.
- Encourage sustainable design and development.
- Establish a strong sense of entry at Downtown gateways.
- Provide adequate, attractive and convenient public parking.
- Encourage the maintenance and upgrading of uses, properties and signage.
- Encourage signage appropriate to the Downtown Village scale and Character.
- Implement the Los Altos Downtown Design Plan.

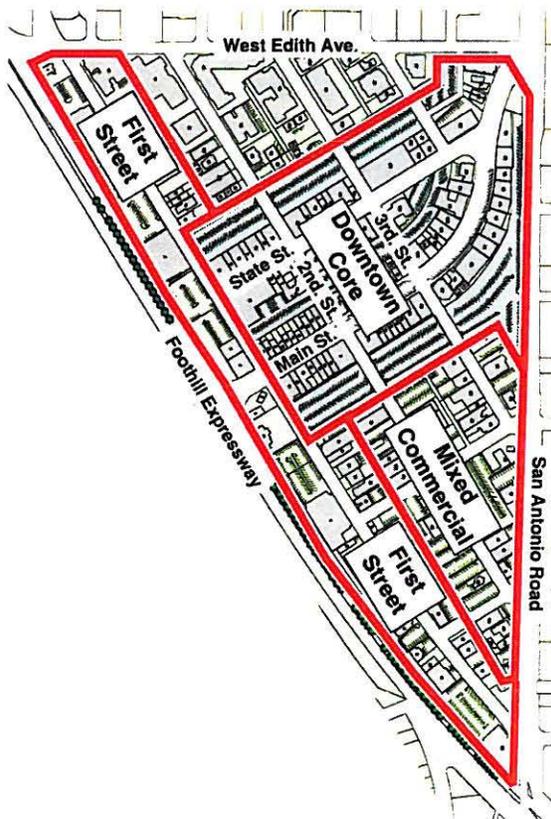
The city will consider development incentives for projects that implement or preserve elements of the Downtown Design Plan (e.g., paseos and courtyards) on a case-by-case basis.

For City staff assistance in the development review process, please contact the City's Planning Department at (650) 947-2750

1



Downtown Zoning



Downtown Design Guidelines Districts

APPLICABILITY

These design guidelines apply to all design review applications for new construction, additions, exterior facade changes, landscaping and signage.

The guidelines are in addition to and subordinate to the zoning regulations. The five downtown zoning districts covered by these design guidelines are shown on the map to the left. Full Zoning Code information for the downtown area can be found on the City's web site at:

www.losaltos.ca.gov

GUIDELINES ORGANIZATION

These guidelines are focused on the commercial areas contained within the triangle bounded by Foothill Expressway, San Antonio Road, and West Edith Avenue.

The guidelines are divided into three sections to reflect the major use areas of Downtown Los Altos. Note that some districts may contain more than one zoning category.

The guidelines set forth in the Downtown Core District establish the level of community expectations relative to architectural form, village character elements, and design quality and details for the whole of the downtown area. They should be reviewed by applicants for projects in all zones.

Downtown Core District

This district is the primary pedestrian retail area of downtown focused on Main Street and State Street. Its structures are closely related one to the next with a great deal of retail continuity, and a small scale village character. Most of the Downtown Core District is within the Downtown Parking District.

Mixed Commercial District

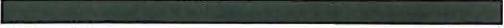
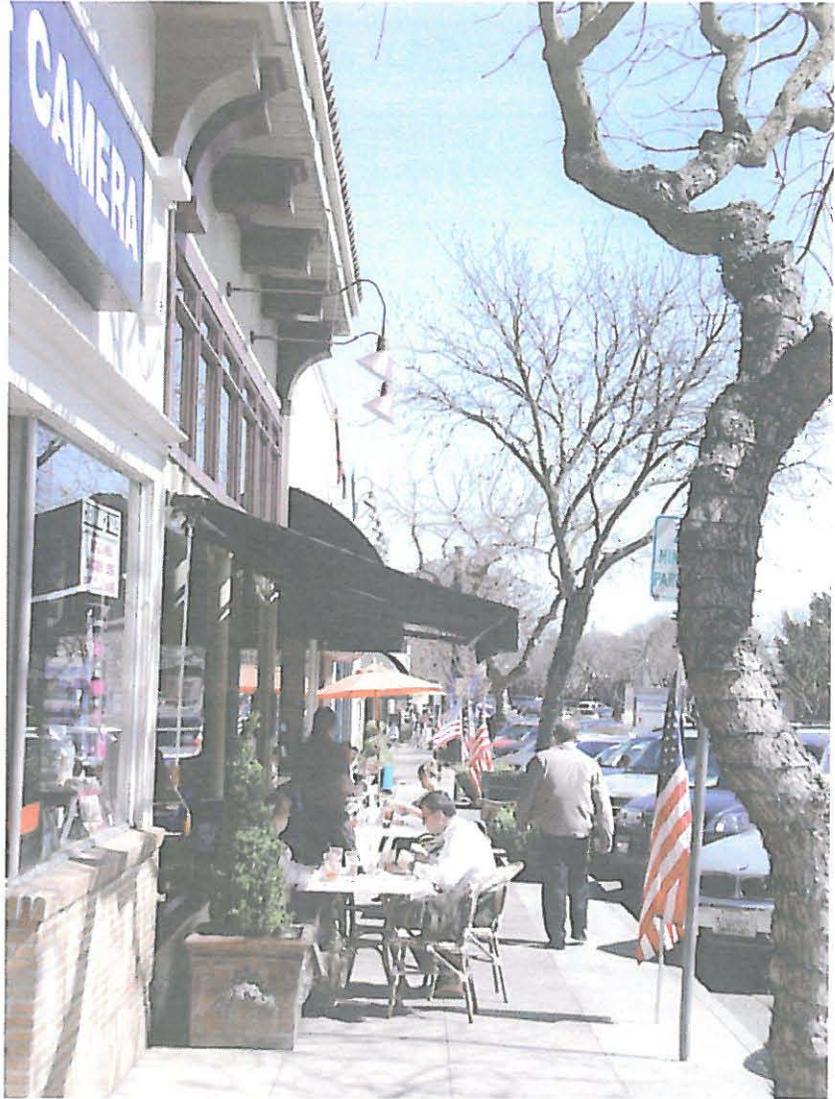
Located adjacent to San Antonio Road, this district, while still heavily pedestrian oriented, has a looser physical texture, somewhat larger scale buildings, and more stand alone structures. Supplemental design guidelines are provided to recognize the district's different physical conditions and uses. The intent is to accommodate larger uses while maintaining a scale and character that is supportive of downtown's village character.

First Street District

This area fronting on First Street contains a wide variety of uses, and is more strongly vehicle-oriented than the retail core area. The intent is to accommodate a wide mix of uses in a manner sensitive to the village character of downtown.

**DOWNTOWN VILLAGE
CHARACTER**

2



DOWNTOWN VILLAGE CHARACTER

Downtown Los Altos has grown and changed over a span of decades through incremental changes and the efforts of many property and business owners. The area serves as the heart of the community through a mix of retail, office, residential, institutional, civic and service uses as well as social gathering spaces. Today, it is a closely knit series of subdistricts with slightly differing use emphases and design characteristics, held together by an overall village scale and character. That unique scale and character has been nurtured over the years, and has become even more of a community asset as many other downtowns in the Bay Area have grown ever larger and lost much of their earlier charm.

Village Character is often hard to define, and harder to preserve as retailing and office development trends in downtown areas have tended to favor national retail chains and prototypical designs. Yet, there are communities determined to preserve the uniqueness of their village scale and character downtowns. In the development of these design guidelines, existing features of Downtown Los Altos have been used as models, and lessons learned from other downtowns have been integrated as examples of effective ways to preserve and enhance village scale and character.

Some of the major features of village character are listed in the sidebar to the right, and illustrated by the annotated photographs of Downtown Los Altos below and on the following pages.



Individual tenant identities with wide diversity in parapet shapes, building heights and awnings

VILLAGE CHARACTER FEATURES

- Traditional Village and Main Street architectural styles.
- Wide diversity of building forms.
- Larger buildings broken up into smaller segments.
- Courtyards and paseos with secondary uses.
- Mixture of continuous storefronts and stand alone buildings.
- Varied building top profiles and details.
- Wide variety of interesting architectural and storefront detail.
- Diverse mix of pedestrian scaled storefronts and signage.
- Individual store personalities.
- Variety of storefront profiles with entry vestibules, facade recesses and landscaping.
- Landscaping integrated with the storefronts
- Limited blank walls.
- Wide variety of natural building materials.
- Abundant landscaping and pedestrian amenities.
- Wide variety of pedestrian paving.
- Preserved historic resources.
- Pleasant and interesting parking-to-shopping paths.
- Second floors strongly related to the street front.
- Attractive parking areas.
- Residential units included in the downtown mix of uses.
- Public social gathering places.
- Integrated art and whimsical details.
- Use of natural materials.
- Subtle lighting.

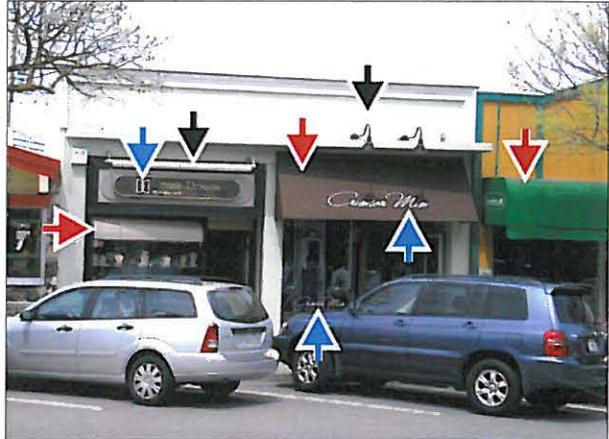
VILLAGE CHARACTER

2



Landscaping and amenity buffers between pedestrians and parked cars

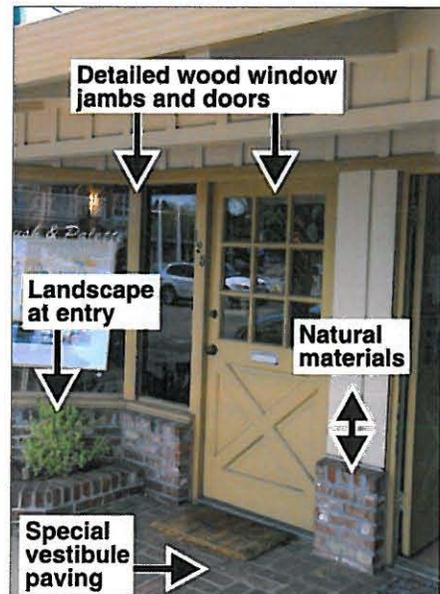
VILLAGE CHARACTER FEATURES



Great diversity in awnings, signage and sign lighting



Facade setbacks and outside seating

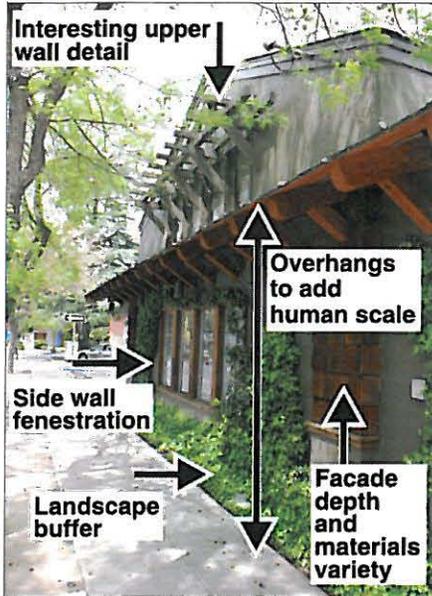


Visually interesting entries with natural materials

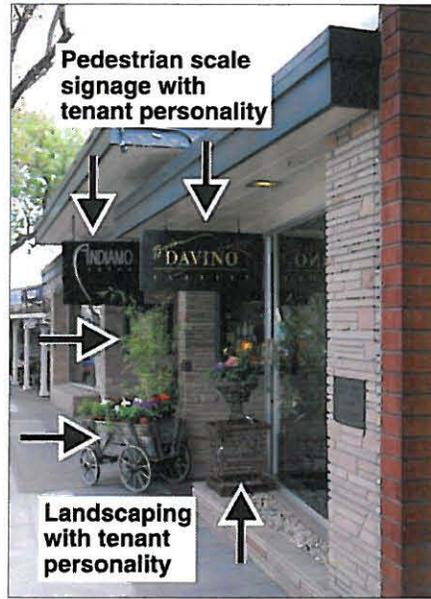


Variety of building forms

VILLAGE CHARACTER FEATURES



Side wall breakup and visual interest



Pedestrian scale signage and landscaping with personality



Public social spaces



Strong presence of second floor uses on the street



Intimate courtyards and paseos



Residential units included in the downtown mix of uses

VILLAGE CHARACTER

2



Small offices with personality and human scale

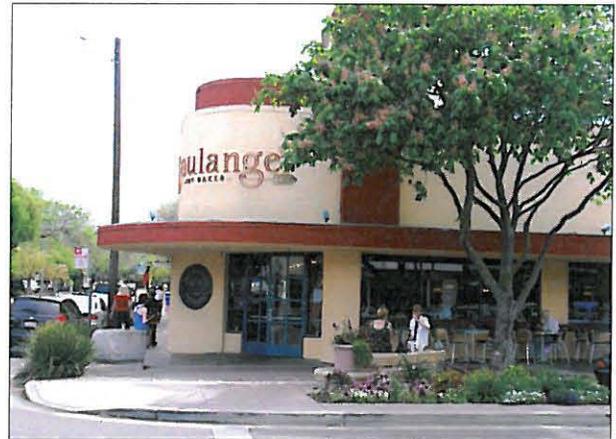
VILLAGE CHARACTER FEATURES



Larger offices with interesting human scale details and sensitive materials selection



Entry vestibules and friendly entry doors



Reminders of the downtown's architectural history



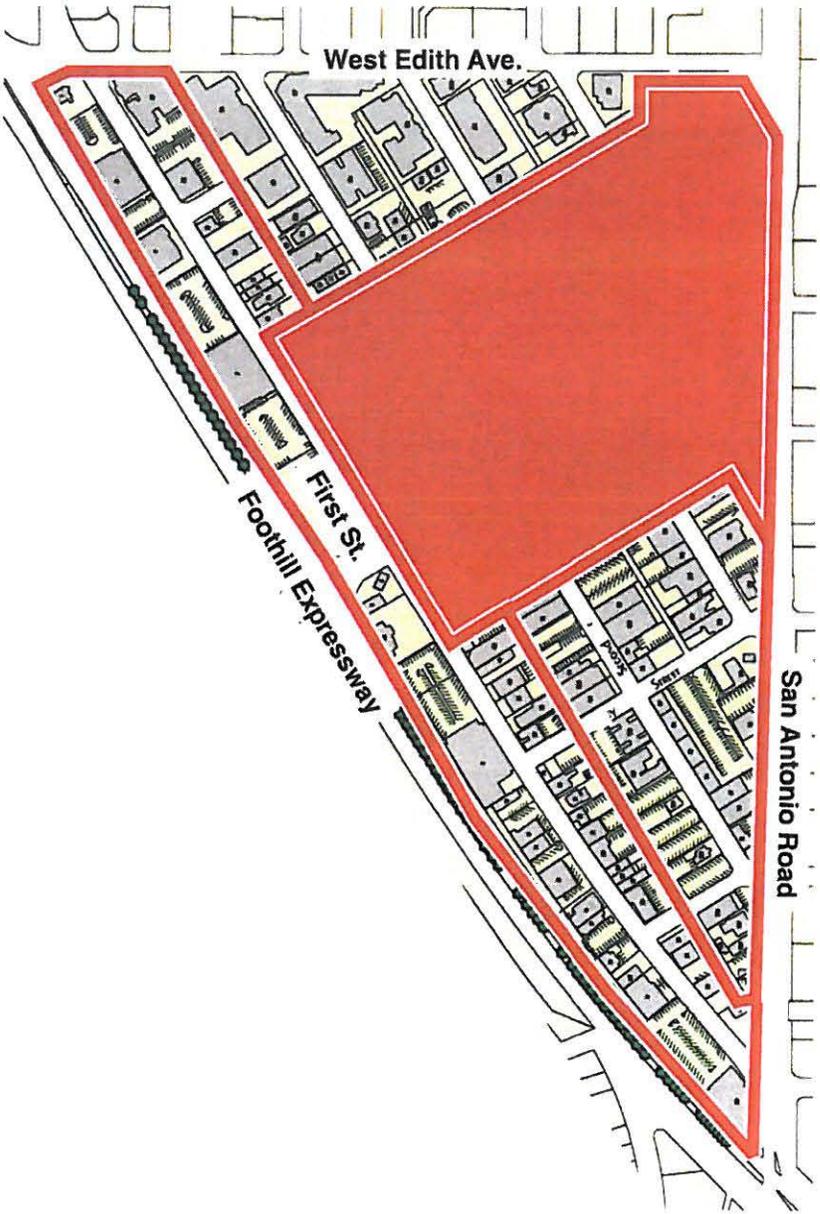
Large offices broken up into village scale buildings



Pedestrian scaled storefronts

**DOWNTOWN CORE
DISTRICT**

3



DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

The Downtown Core District is the very heart of the downtown. It contains a wide diversity of retail and other uses, all contained within a strongly pedestrian-oriented environment. The size of the area makes parking once and visiting multiple stores relatively easy. And, street frontages are visually interesting. Individual buildings and shops have unique personalities, and a great deal of attention has been given to landscaping within both the public and private realms.

The goal of these design guidelines is to retain and enhance the uniqueness of the district, and to integrate changes to individual parcels into the fabric of the area – including parcels and buildings, which by historic standards, may be somewhat larger than the current pattern.

3.1 PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

The compactness of the Downtown Core is such that it lends itself well to parking once, and walking to multiple destinations. For that to be successful, the pedestrian experience at every point from getting out of one's car to moving throughout the downtown must be a pleasant one with clarity of organization and delight to the eye and senses.

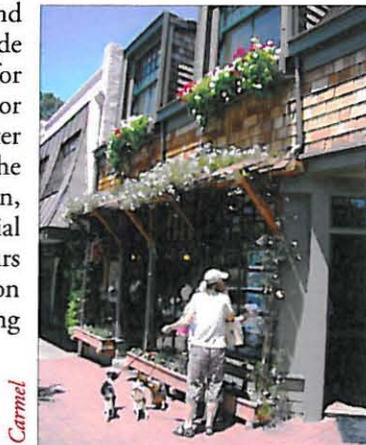
The creation of a successful pedestrian environment is a joint public-private effort. The guidelines below address the major contributors to the creation of a village scale and character.

3.1.1 Provide uses and activities to enhance and complement the Downtown environment

Uses and activities do not normally fall within the purview of design guidelines. However, they are often critical to the success of individual projects and the downtown as a whole. The following are guidelines for the early planning stages of projects within the Downtown Core District.

a) Explore opportunities for office and residential uses on the second floor.

Second floor office and residential uses provide valuable support for downtown ground floor uses as well as a greater sense of place for the downtown. In addition, they have the potential for extending the hours of downtown utilization beyond normal retailing hours.



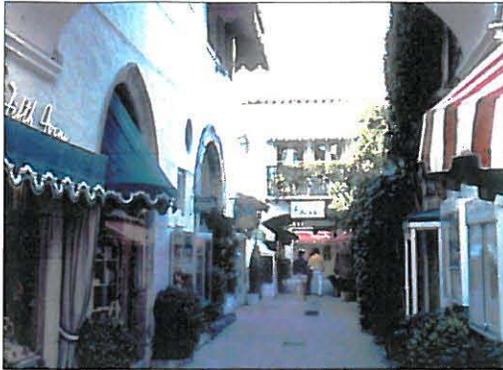
REQUIRED FINDINGS

For any commercial project in the city to receive design review approval, the Planning Commission must be able to make the following findings:

1. The proposal meets the goals, policies and objectives of the General Plan and any specific plan, design guidelines, and ordinance design criteria adopted for the specific district or area.
2. The proposal has architectural integrity, and has an appropriate relationship with other structures in the immediate area in terms of height, bulk and design.
3. Building mass is articulated to relate to the human scale, both horizontally and vertically. Building elevations have variation and depth, and avoid large blank wall surfaces. Residential or mixed-use residential projects incorporate elements that signal habitation, such as identifiable entrances, stairs, porches, bays and balconies.
4. Exterior materials and finishes convey quality, integrity, permanence and durability, and materials are used effectively to define building elements such as base, body, parapets, bays, arcades and structural elements.
5. Landscaping is generous and inviting, and landscape and hardscape features are designed to complement the building and parking areas and to be integrated with the building architecture and the surrounding streetscape. Landscaping includes substantial street canopy, either in the public right-of-way or within the project frontage.
6. Signage is designed to complement the building architecture in terms of style, materials, colors and proportions.
7. Mechanical equipment is screened from public view, and the screening is designed to be consistent with the building architecture in form, material, and detailing.
8. Service, trash and utility areas are screened from public view, or are enclosed in structures that are consistent with the building architecture in materials and detailing.

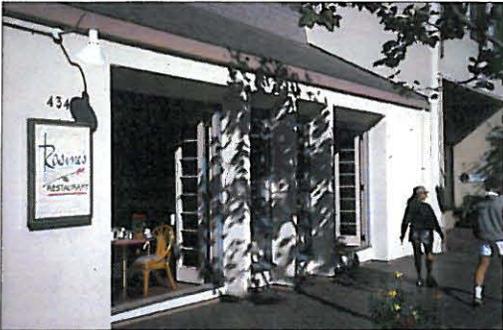
DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

3



Santa Barbara

Courtyards and paseos can increase downtown vitality and economic success through development intensity and tenant variety.



Santa Barbara



Valencia

Clusters of varied dining opportunities can create a distinctive sense of place and an enhanced street environment after normal working hours.



Valencia

Outdoor dining is strongly encouraged.

b) Explore opportunities for additional tenants through the use of courtyards and paseos.

Current uses are largely contained within one-story structures, often containing only a single tenant. Opportunities for additional retail, service commercial and office tenants, in courtyards or along paseos, abound. They can be especially useful for deep parcels where primary tenants do not need the full depth of the lot. Their use could enhance individual property utilization while supplying additional foot traffic to support other downtown uses. Existing paseos and courtyards should be preserved. Arbors and trellises are encouraged in paseos and courtyards (see example below).



Irvine

Guidelines for Courtyards:

- Enclose on at least two sides by buildings.
- Remain open to the sky.
(Arbors and trellises are allowed.)
- Minimum width: 20 feet.
- Minimum area: 400 square feet.

Guidelines for Paseos:

- Minimum width: 10 feet for through-block paseos.
4 feet for entries to courtyards or individual single businesses.
- Courtyards along the paseo are encouraged.

c) Explore opportunities for active evening uses.

Consider nearby uses when planning for property design changes. There may be opportunities for adding to an existing cluster of after-hours uses with outdoor dining or complementary uses (e.g., bookstore for browsing near restaurants or coffee houses).

3.1.2 Design landscaping and open space to enhance the Downtown Village Character

Downtown open spaces and landscaping are as much responsible for the area's uniqueness as are the buildings. They provide the framework to unify an otherwise potentially chaotic collection of eclectic building designs into a strong sense of place. Some of the main features of Downtown's open space and landscape system include:

- Continuous pedestrian links between uses and between parking and storefront clusters

- Separations between pedestrians and automobiles
- Quiet and intimate open spaces off of main walkway areas
- Varied paving colors and textures
- Multiple and varied pedestrian amenities
- Sheltering Chinese Pistache trees along pedestrian paths
- Individualized landscaping at storefronts and shop entries
- Landscaping with seasonal blooms
- An overall sense of informality and variety

a) **Design storefronts and building walls along pedestrian frontages to accommodate special paving and landscaping.**



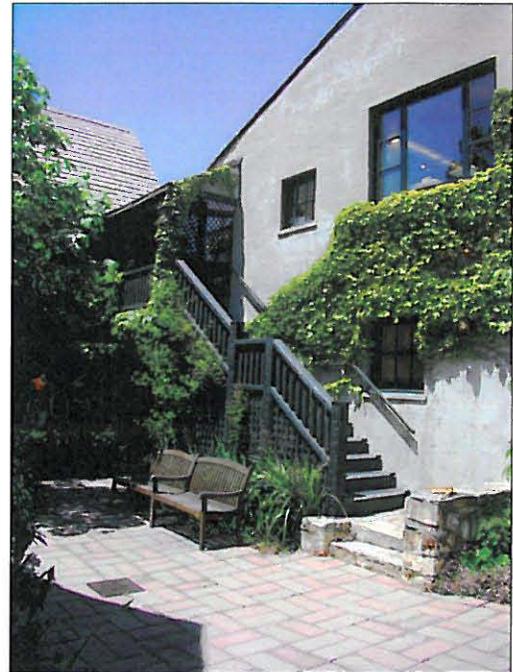
Carmel

Use abundant landscaping to emphasize storefront entries.



Los Altos

Use landscaping to soften side walls along pedestrian walks.



Carmel

Use special textured paving in open space areas to separate them from high traffic sidewalks and to provide a human scale.

b) **Utilize textured paving in all paving areas adjacent to the public sidewalks.**

Brick pavers and other modular units are ideal in providing a color and scale change to open space areas that are linked to or adjacent to sidewalk areas. They complement the smaller scale size of the areas, and assist in reinforcing the village scale of the downtown. One example is shown in the photograph to the upper right. Exposed aggregate concrete with brick or wood dividers, or permeable paving, are other acceptable alternatives. Avoid plain or colored concrete paving with scored joints. While less expensive than hand-placed pavers, it lacks the necessary visual quality to enhance the village character.

c) **Enhance tree wells with landscaping.**

Planting strips and pockets are effective in adding visual interest to sidewalks and open spaces, and serve well in separating pedestrians from adjacent traffic and parked cars. They also provide infiltration areas for stormwater runoff. Flowering plants or ones with distinctive forms and colors, as shown in the examples to the right, are especially appropriate.



Carmel



Los Altos

Landscaped tree wells and planter strips are the desired approach to separating pedestrians and cars.

DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

3



Carmel

Courtyard and paseo treatment should be equal in quality and detail to the primary street frontages.



Santa Barbara



Santa Barbara

Incorporate fountains and other forms of public art into courtyards, paseos and other open spaces.

d) Design courtyards and paseos to invite pedestrian use and enhance adjacent uses.

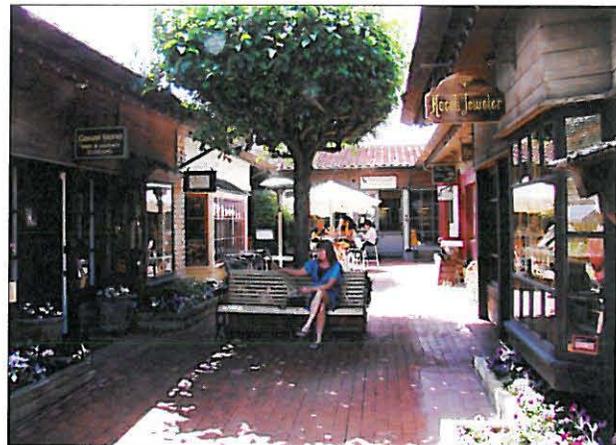
Landscaping, pedestrian amenities, storefront treatments and signage in courtyards and paseos should be equal in quality and detail to the primary street frontages. One example is shown to the left.

e) Seek opportunities to incorporate fountains and public art into open spaces.

Fountains and other forms of public art add uniqueness to the downtown pedestrian environment, increase the attractiveness of the area to a wide range of tenants, and encourage longer shopping stays.

f) Provide abundant pedestrian amenities.

Benches and other places to sit, shade from the sun, and other amenities also encourage shoppers to linger and extend their time downtown. These amenities should be supportive of the desired village character and scale. Selection of natural materials, like wood, and high quality metal of a traditional design, rather than concrete, are most likely to be successful. Planter edges can also serve to provide convenient seating near shop fronts.



Carmel

g) Integrate pedestrian scale lighting into the landscape of open spaces.



Pasadena

3.1.3 Design pedestrian and vehicle crossing points with attention to pedestrian safety

Ingress and egress points for parking lots and parking structures as well as pedestrian crosswalks are potential areas of pedestrian and vehicular movement conflicts.

a) Provide visual clues to alert drivers that pedestrians have the right of way.

- Provide special paving textures and/or colors for pedestrian crossings at intersections and parking areas.
- Provide special signage where driver visibility of crossing pedestrians might be limited.

b) Avoid landscaping and other obstructions that could limit views of traffic and pedestrians at crossing points.

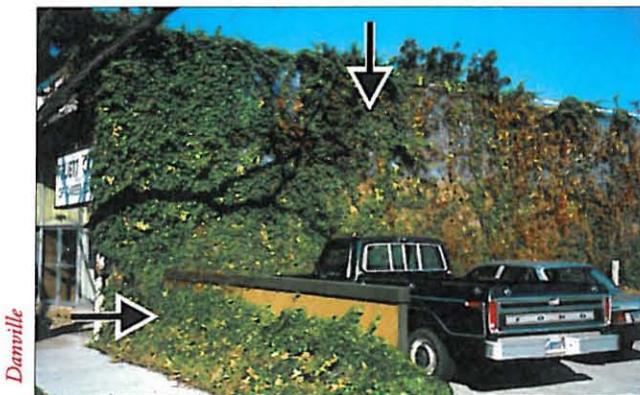
- Keep landscaping below driver eye height.
- Avoid trees and signs that might block drivers' views of pedestrians about to cross their path.

3.1.4 Locate and design trash enclosures and private parking areas to be inconspicuous and enhance the visual environment

Adequate parking and trash disposal areas are essential to the success of the downtown. However, accommodating them must be accomplished in a manner that is inconspicuous and enhances the area's village scale and character.

a) Improve existing private parking lots when conversion to usable commercial space is not possible.

- Provide low walls and landscaping for parking spaces adjacent to streets and pedestrian ways.
- Soften walls with vine and/or tree landscaping. Two examples are shown below.



Use low walls to screen the view of cars from adjacent sidewalks and landscaping to soften blank walls.



Use trees and architectural features to buffer walls at parking and service areas.

DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

3



Pleasanton

- b) **Integrate trash enclosures into the building.**
- Provide interior trash rooms whenever possible.
 - Where trash enclosures are adjacent to buildings, match the trash enclosure building materials, details and colors to those of the building (See examples on page 36).
 - Where integration into the building is not possible, provide upgraded trash enclosures with finished and durable materials as well as buffering landscaping. Avoid exposed concrete block unless enhanced split face block textures and colors are utilized, block joints are visually minimized with colored mortar, and extensive vine landscaping is provided to soften the walls' appearance. Three examples are shown below and to the left.



Mountain View



Valencia

3.2 ARCHITECTURE

Downtown Los Altos contains an eclectic mix of architectural styles and forms, indicative of its growth over many decades. While there are individual buildings of architectural merit, the character of downtown owes more to the wide stylistic variety, small scale, and visual richness of its structures than to their architectural distinction. In the future, the emphasis will be on combining individual architectural excellence with building forms and details that reinforce the small scale village character of the Downtown Core District. A diversity of design styles will be encouraged and expected.

Over time, the downtown retail core has evolved as an area with substantial pedestrian/retail continuity and an emphasis upon an expression of the unique personalities of its individual businesses. The following design guidelines are intended to reinforce that existing framework, scale and character.

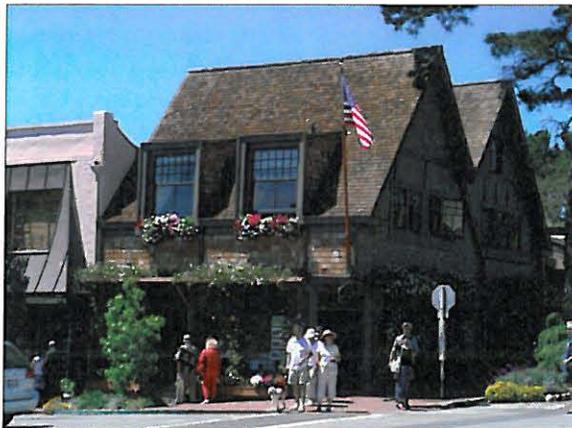
3.2.1 Continue the pattern and scale established by existing buildings

- a) **Maintain and reinforce the underlying downtown 25-foot module along all street frontages. Some techniques for this emphasis include the following:**



Los Altos

Changing roof parapet height and/or shape.



Carmel

Utilizing different building heights, architectural styles, and forms.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

These guidelines are not intended to establish or dictate a specific style beyond the desire to maintain Downtown Los Altos' small town character and attention to human scale and detail. In general, diverse and traditional architectural styles that have stood the test of time are preferred.

Designs merely repeated from other cities or without thought to the special qualities of Los Altos are strongly discouraged, and unlikely to be accepted.

CORPORATE ARCHITECTURE

The City will work with applicants to adapt critical functional features of prototype plans to their Los Altos sites, but will not accept standard plans, building forms, elevations, materials, or colors that do not relate to the site, adjacent development, or Los Altos' community character.

Applicants are encouraged to meet early in the process with the City's Planning Services Department staff to discuss their plans and building prototypes.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

The City of Los Altos supports sustainable design in the construction of new facilities and the remodeling of existing buildings. Applicants are expected to utilize creativity in adapting sustainable design elements to the unique qualities of Downtown Los Altos' visual environment. City staff will work closely with applicants to achieve this goal.

Special attention will be expected of all applicants in the following areas:

- Use of energy efficient HVAC systems
- Use of solar energy
- Reduction of energy demands through simple techniques such as operable windows and sun control methods
- Minimization of storm water runoff
- Use of recycled materials
- Maximization of insulation and energy efficient lighting

DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

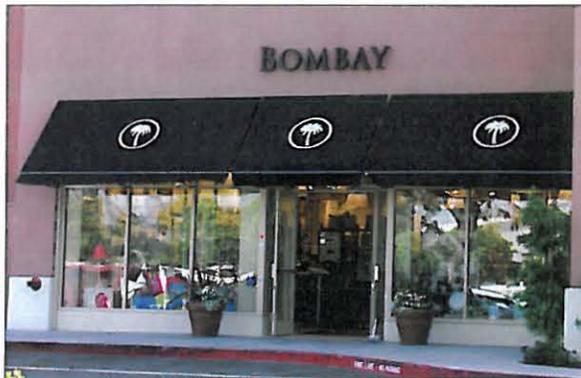
3

Laguna Beach



Utilizing different awning forms and/or materials, as shown above and below, matching the predominant building module.

Corre Madera



Santa Barbara



Defining storefronts with projecting piers and emphasizing tenants' unique store personalities.

Santa Barbara



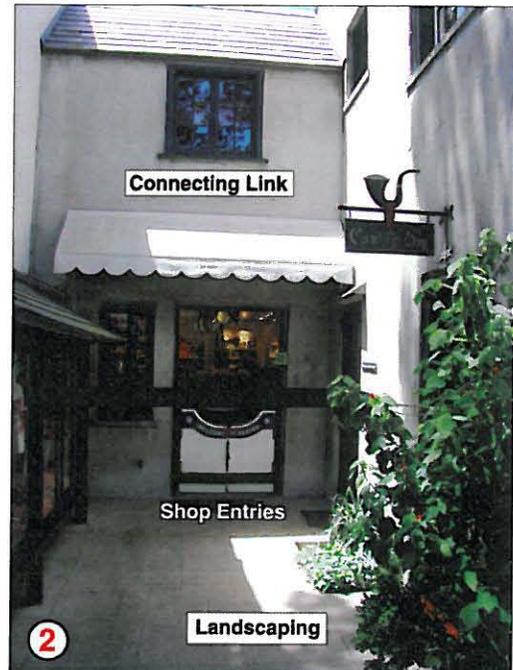
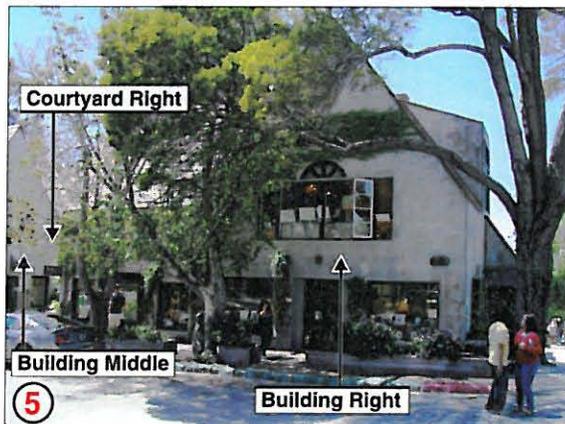
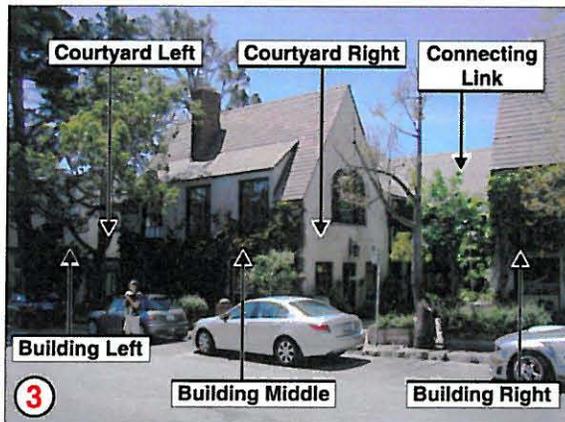
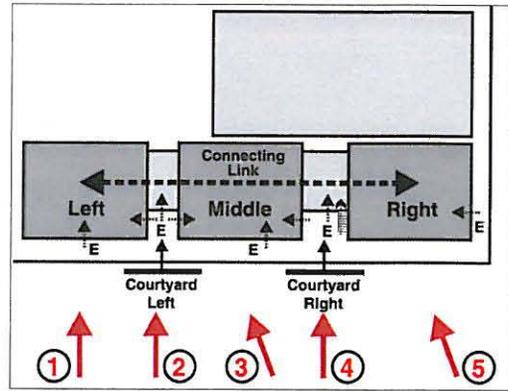
Changing storefront type and details.

Santa Barbara

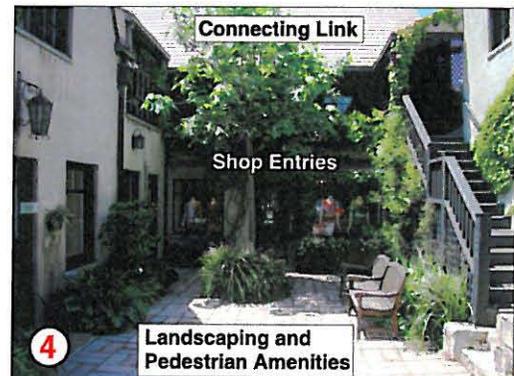


Reinforcing the module with second floor projections and details.

- b) **Break larger buildings up into smaller components.**
- Divide longer facades into individual smaller segments with individual design forms and architectural styles. One option is shown on this page. Development incentives may be available.
 - Provide recessed courtyard entries between individualized building segments. These courtyards should be at least 20 feet wide and 20 feet deep with substantial landscaping and pedestrian amenities. These are excellent locations for entries to shops and/or to second floor uses. The example of a larger structure in Carmel which utilized these techniques is shown in the diagram and photos on this page. See also the photo example from Los Gatos at the bottom of page 31.



Left courtyard features shop entries, display windows, special paving and landscaping.



Right courtyard features shop entries, stairs to second floor uses, special paving and landscaping.

Differing architectural forms and styles separated by courtyards assist in fitting this large building complex into a village scale.

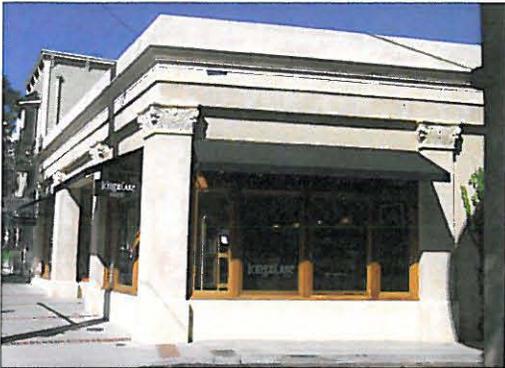
DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

3



Los Altos

Front facades are predominantly display windows and entries.



Los Altos

Sidewall display window provides a transition between the primary and secondary frontages.



Los Altos

Sidewall piers relate the sidewall facade to the shop fronts, and landscaping softens the wall.



Beverly Hills

These contemporary facades fit into this streetscape due to their small scale, and the use of high quality materials and crisp detailing.

c) Create continuous building frontages.

- Avoid blank walls along sidewalks and paseos. Display windows and entries should occupy at least 60% of the wall areas on primary frontages. Walls along side streets and paseos may have a lesser amount of glazing, but should have display windows – especially near the primary facade. Other non-glazed wall areas should be enhanced with wall plane changes, landscaping (e.g., landscaped trellises and lattices), and/or special architectural detailing (see example to the left).
- Minimize pedestrian/vehicle conflicts by locating any driveway or loading areas away from main pedestrian routes.

3.2.2 Design for diversity with sensitivity to adjacent development

a) Select traditional architectural styles.

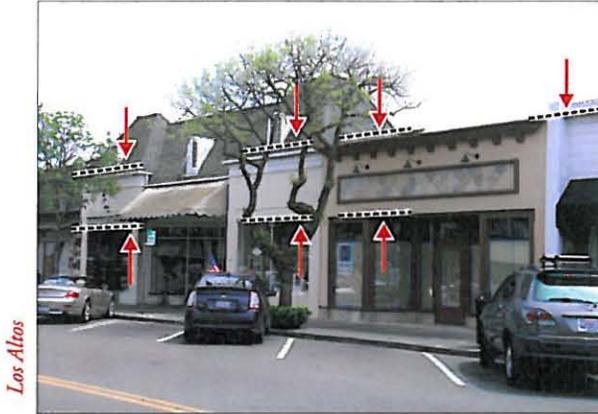
- Traditional architectural styles have been developed over an extended period of time, and generally fit comfortably with other traditional styles in a downtown commercial environment. Within the traditional styles of building form and facade organization, however, design creativity is encouraged to adapt the style to current needs and a fresh look. Examples of traditional commercial styles may be found in the resources identified in the sidebar on page 27. Adaptations of traditional residential styles may also be appropriate to the village character of Downtown Los Altos.
- The depth and authenticity of detailing found in traditional architectural styles will best harmonize well with current buildings in Downtown Los Altos. However, well designed modern facade designs may be acceptable, depending on location, materials, and the quality of the details. They will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Examples are shown below and to the bottom left.



Pasadena

The warmth of the materials and the variety of smaller scale detailing help this modern facade to fit into a streetscape of diverse architecture.

- b) **Relate the facade designs to adjacent structures.**
- Respect the scale of adjacent buildings.
 - Relate the placement of defining elements and details to those on adjacent structures. One example from Downtown Los Altos is shown below.



Matching parapet and window heights help relate these adjacent buildings.

- c) **Design with architectural integrity and continuity.**
- Exterior details should be authentic to the style. Sources of assistance in understanding traditional architectural design principles and details may be found in the reference sources noted in the sidebar to the right.
 - Design buildings as whole units. The design of upper floors and ground level walls, piers and other supporting elements should be designed as a unified whole.
 - Preserve historically significant structures, whenever possible. Refer to Appendix B for a list of downtown historic resources.
 - Preserve worthy elements of the existing buildings. Recycle and reuse distinctive design elements.
 - Where buildings were once architecturally distinctive but have been altered over time, restore the lost integrity of form and details, if possible.



The upper and lower facades of this building work as one unified structure.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES AND DETAILS RESOURCES

- **The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture**
Richard Longstreth
Rowman Atimira 2000
- **Traditional Construction Patterns: Design & Detail Rules of Thumb**
Stephen A. Mouzon
McGraw-Hill 2004

DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

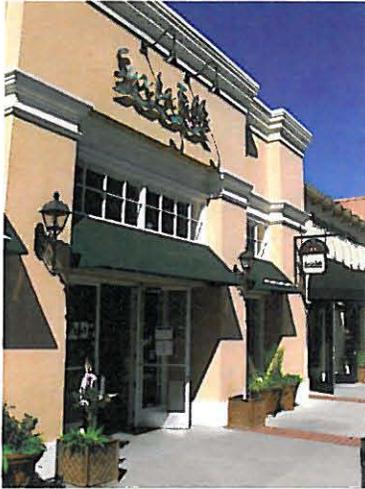
3

Beverly Hills



Avoid tall entries like the one above in favor of pedestrian scaled entries like the one shown below.

Los Gatos



3.2.3 Design to enhance Downtown’s Village Character and pedestrian scale

a) Vary storefront treatments.

A strong feature of Downtown Los Altos’ village character is the variety and individuality of the storefronts.

- Provide significant variations between adjacent storefronts occupied by different businesses, including those within the same building structure. These variations should include display windows, entry doors, awnings and signage. For frontages over twenty-five feet in width with the same tenant, variations should also be provided to avoid long facades of the same storefront design.
- Size store entries to the human figure and normal entry door heights. Avoid over scaled, tall entries such as the one to the above left.
- A wide variety of storefront treatments is desirable. Some may have bulkheads below display windows while others may have larger areas of glass extending to the floor.
- Outdoor dining and operable windows are strongly encouraged for restaurants and cafes. Two examples of operable windows are shown below to the left.

b) Design storefronts to allow landscaping and special paving.

- Landscaping may occur in a variety of forms as shown in the examples below and on the following page. Flowers are strongly encouraged to add color and interest.
- See also Guidelines 3.1.2 a) on page 19.

Carmel



Permanent brick planters.



Carmel

Operable windows are encouraged for restaurants, cafes and coffee shops.

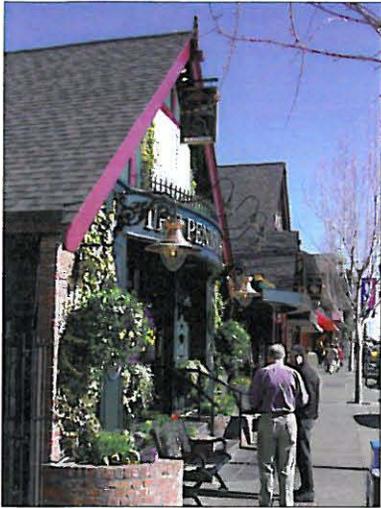
San Anselmo



Planters and climbing vines.



Carmel



Victoria, BC

Built-in planters and hanging pots.



Pasadena

Trellises and lattices with climbing vines.



Los Gatos

Recessed window boxes.



Carmel

Window box planters, paving pockets and climbing vines.



Los Gatos

Mixed treatment in larger setbacks.



Pasadena

Landscaped setbacks and potted plants.



Los Gatos

Planter pots.



Carmel

Wall-mounted pots.

DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

3



Carmel

Vestibules need not be rectangular in shape.



Santa Barbara

Vestibules with more facets can be used to increase the exposure of goods in storefront windows.



Carmel

A simple, narrow vestibule with a well detailed door may work best for narrow store frontages.

c) Provide entry vestibules.

Vestibules emphasize shop entries, and allow ingress and egress to businesses without impeding pedestrian movement on adjacent sidewalks. They also allow for increasing display window exposure.

- Vestibules may have a wide variety of shapes, from simple rectangular indentations to larger and more complex shapes. Some examples are shown in photos to the left.
- Use special paving materials and colors to clearly define the vestibule areas and separate them from the adjacent public sidewalk.
- The use of wood doors with glazing and raised panel details, rather than metal and glass doors, is strongly encouraged to add warmth to the shop entries.
- Dutch doors and doors with divided light windows are encouraged to link the shop interior to passing pedestrian traffic and add visual interest to the entry.



Los Altos

A wood door and brick paving contribute to this inviting shop entry.



Oakland

Dutch doors offer an inviting, friendly entry to passing shoppers.

d) Utilize awnings and canopies at windows and entries.

- A variety of awning types is encouraged. They may be traditional, as shown to the right, or unique (see the wood shutter awnings below). They should also be distinct to the store's tenant. For multiple tenant buildings, avoid making all of the awnings the same.
- Keep the mounting height at a human scale - with the valence height not more than 8 feet above the sidewalk level.



San Jose



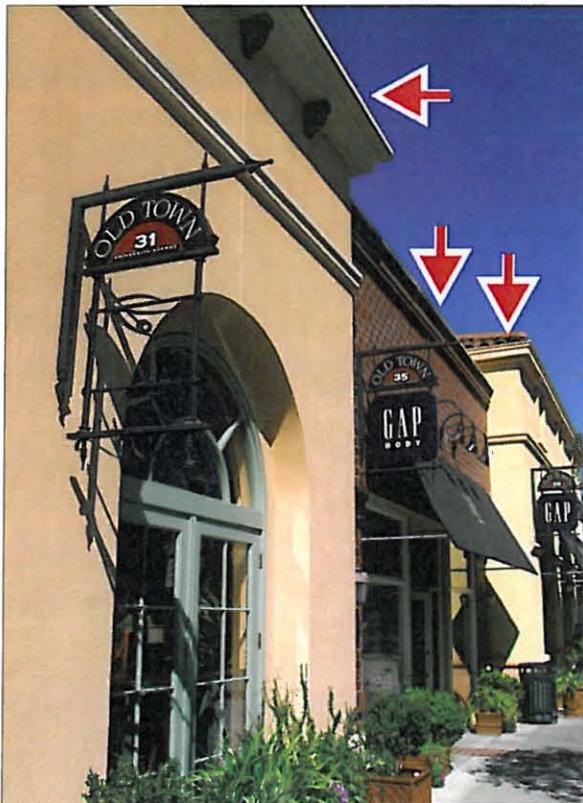
Beverly Hills

e) Provide cornices and building tops consistent with the architectural style.

- Avoid unfinished wall tops in favor of projecting cornice features or roof overhangs. Examples are shown below and to the right.



Los Gatos



Los Gatos

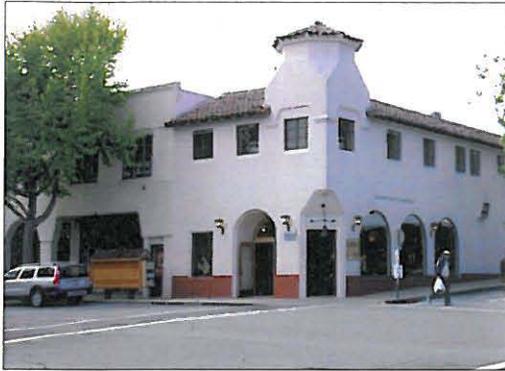


Santa Barbara

Designing larger buildings to resemble a collection of smaller individual buildings, as shown to the left, is preferred in the Downtown Core. Larger structures with varied store fronts, as shown above, may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

3



Carmel

Architectural features and shop entries are encouraged on corner parcels.



Carmel

f) Provide special features for buildings located at street corners (See examples to the left).

g) **Emphasize entries and display windows.**

- Make shop entries as open and inviting as possible.
- Consider landscaping and special paving to add visual interest.
- Keep all window glazing transparent. Avoid tinted glass in favor of awnings and other shading devices for sun control.

h) **Utilize natural materials.**

Wood, stone, and brick can provide warmth at storefronts, and enhance the feeling of village scale and character.

- Wood doors and window frames are strongly encouraged.
- Avoid synthetic stone.
- Tile is discouraged except for bulkheads below display windows and for decorative accents. One good example is shown below.



Ojai



Santa Barbara

Landscaping and open doors can add great appeal to both individual shops and the street as a whole



Carmel

Providing large display windows and inviting entries enliven the street frontage, and encourage shoppers to enter the store.

i) Enhance the pedestrian experience with interesting architectural details.

- Consider bay window displays where walls might otherwise be blank, as shown in the example below.

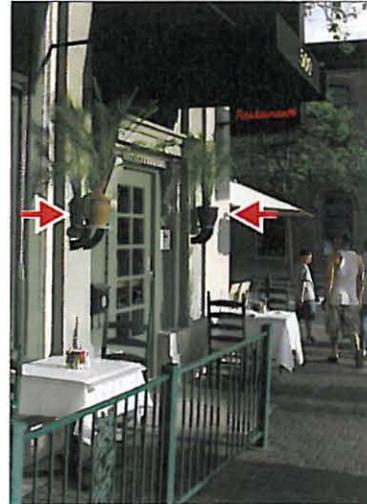


- Architectural details should be high quality and appropriate to the architectural style.
- Individual trim elements should be scaled to be or resemble proportions that could be handled and installed by hand. Elements on any portion of the structure should not be inflated in size to respond strictly to building scale, but should also have a relationship with human scale.

j) Provide special storefront and facade lighting.

Nighttime lighting of the building and display windows can add greatly to the downtown's sense of vitality and safety, and can encourage window shopping by those who may be dining in downtown restaurants.

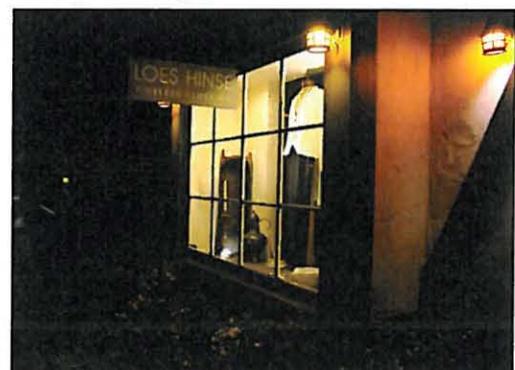
- Lighting should be subtle.
- The use of decorative lighting, concealed fixtures, or pin lights are all possibilities.
- Decorative lighting fixtures should be appropriate to the architectural style of the building and storefront.



Small details like these pots on shelves at the restaurant entry can add greatly to the village scale and character.



True or simulated divided light windows, decorative lights, and landscaping can add special visual interest to a storefront.



These small decorative wall-mounted fixtures and the concealed lighting of the display window provide subtle lighting for the building, merchandise and signage.

3



Carmel

Tile stairs and business directory sign



Pasadena

Awnings and window boxes at the second level help relate those uses to the street level



Carmel

Second floor overhang and wrought iron gate at second floor entry

3.2.4 Design second floor facades to complement the streetscape and Village Character

a) Provide second floor entries that are equal in quality and detail to storefront entries.

Some techniques to accomplish this emphasis include:

See example to the left and below.

- Special awning or roof element.
- Wrought iron gate.
- Decorative tile stair treads and risers.
- Special lights.
- Decorative street address numbers or tiles.
- Plaque signs for upper floor business tenants.



Carmel

Second floor entry awning

b) Relate second floor uses to the pedestrian environment on the street level.

Some methods of achieving this include the following:

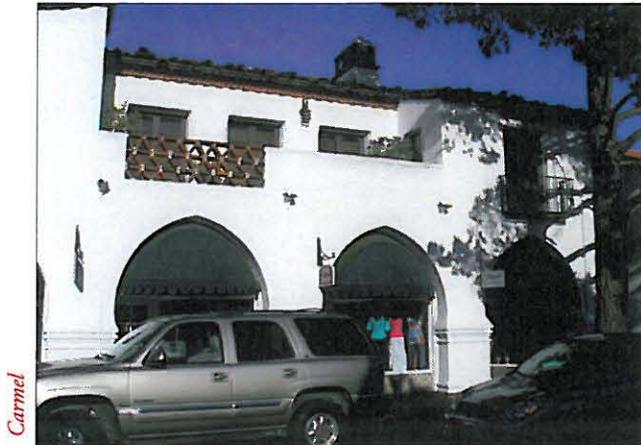
See examples on this and the following page,

- Second floor overhangs
- Bay windows
- Decks
- Balconies
- Planters.



Carmel

Projecting bay windows



Carmel

Upper floor deck



St. Helena

Small balcony with landscaping



Montecito

Wide balcony

- c) **Utilize operable windows in traditional styles.**
- Recess windows at least 3 inches from the face of the wall.
 - Use vertical proportions for individual windows.
 - Separate individual or groups of windows by solid wall masses, and treat windows as punched openings.
 - Avoid ribbon windows and curtain wall treatments.



Carmel

Colorful flower pots

DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

3



Los Altos

Building facades facing parking lots may be treated the same as street-facing facades, as above, or may be treated in a more simple manner, as below.



Los Altos

3.2.5 Design compatible parking plaza oriented entries and facades

Facades facing parking lots may be treated similarly to street-facing facades if they serve as a second entry, or they may be treated more simply, but will be expected to receive consistent design attention and landscaping. Two current examples in the Downtown Core District are shown below.

3.2.6 Integrate utilities and building services into the overall building design

a) Integrate mechanical and trash rooms into the building whenever possible.

- Where not feasible, use screen walls to match the design, materials and finish of those of the main building (See examples below).

b) Add trellises, lattices, and landscaping to screen and soften exterior mechanical equipment and trash enclosures.

Two examples are shown below.



Ojai



Los Gatos

c) Rooftop mechanical equipment shall be concealed from public view (street or adjacent buildings).

- Existing rooftop mechanical equipment shall be concealed or relocated out of view whenever a roof is replaced and when equipment is upgraded or replaced to any extent that requires a building permit.
- Locate on a portion of the rooftop that is not visible to the public or locate behind roof forms, parapets or screens that are compatible with the architectural character of the structure.

3.2.7 Design larger structures to be sensitive to the unique scale and character of Downtown Los Altos

a) Adapt corporate prototype designs to relate both in form and scale to the adjacent downtown fabric.

- An Apple store prototype example in Walnut Creek and its modification for Downtown Los Gatos, shown to the right, illustrates one way in which a corporate prototype design can be modified to fit into a small scale downtown environment.
- The GAP store in Los Gatos, shown below, has been designed to appear as two structures to better fit into the existing downtown fabric.

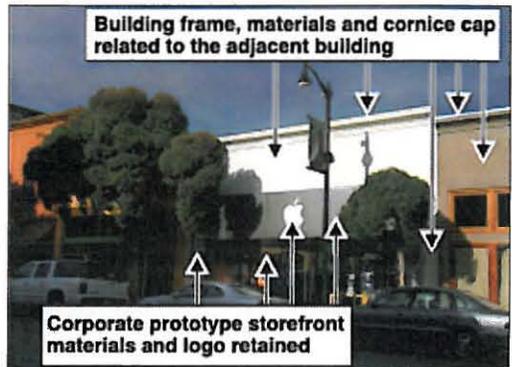


Walnut Creek

This store in Walnut Creek illustrates the standard Apple prototype.



Los Gatos



Los Gatos

The standard Apple prototype was modified in the Town of Los Gatos to better fit with the existing downtown scale and character.

b) Avoid architectural styles and monumental building elements that do not relate to the small human scale of Downtown Los Altos.

- The structures shown below and to the right are well designed, but would be out of place in Downtown Los Altos. These are all examples of what should not be done.



Walnut Creek

Don't use exaggerated tall doors



Walnut Creek

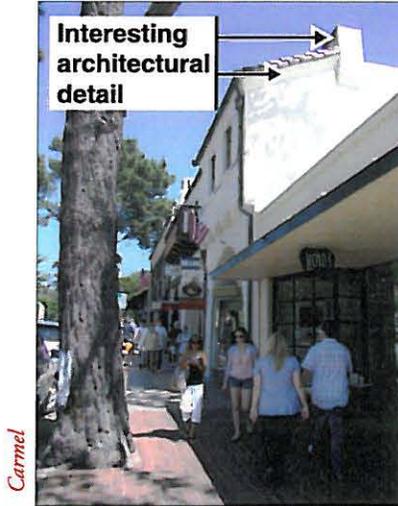
Don't use over-size building elements



Walnut Creek

Don't use large arches

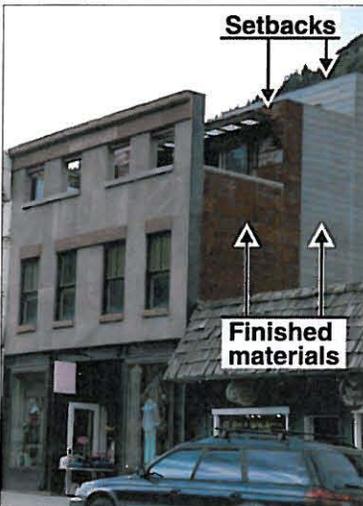
3



Carmel



Telluride



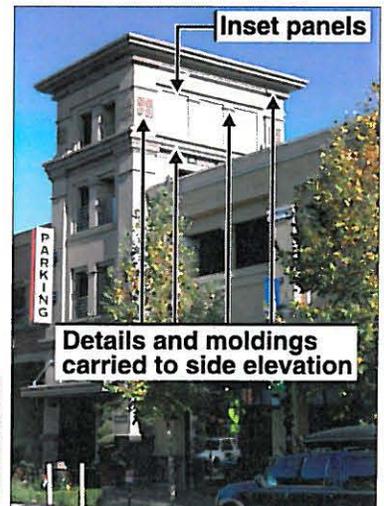
Telluride

c) Provide special design treatment for visible sidewalls of structures that are taller than their immediate neighbors.

- Sidewall windows are encouraged where codes allow and adequate fire protection can be provided.
- Employ design techniques to relate the visible sidewalls to front facades. Some common techniques include the following:
 - * Repeating front facade finished materials, decorative details and mouldings.
 - * Carrying front facade cornices and wall top projections around all sides of the upper floor.
 - * Providing varied parapet heights to avoid a box-like appearance.
 - * Utilizing gable and hip roofs to vary the height and appearance of side walls.
 - * Treating side walls with inset panels.
 - * Integrating interesting architectural details.
 - * Stepping back the front facade of upper floors to vary the side wall profile.



Valencia



Walnut Creek

3.2.8 Design and detail parking structures to complement Downtown's Village Scale and Character

- a) Locate vehicular entries to allow ingress and egress from streets other than Main Street and State Street.
- b) Place as much of the parking below grade as possible.
- c) Provide commercial uses on ground floors facing pedestrian-oriented streets and walkways.
- d) Provide a minimum 5-foot wide landscape strip to accommodate low shrubs, flowering plants, and vertical trees along all edges that do not have active commercial frontages.
- e) Integrate extensive landscaping into the parking structure edges and entries.
- f) Integrate pedestrian entries with adjacent commercial uses.
- g) Provide secondary ground floor pedestrian entries when the structure is adjacent to commercial core service alleys containing rear shop entries or paseo entries.
- h) Design parking structures to be visually compatible with other Downtown Core District commercial buildings.

Some techniques include:

- Breaking up the building mass and height to match the predominant 25-foot wide module of the core area.
- Designing the structure as a downtown building, rather than as a parking structure.



Walnut Creek

Ground floor commercial uses in the parking structure example shown above assist in maintaining retail and pedestrian continuity.



Walnut Creek

This parking structure has been designed with pilasters, and with varied facade depths, and details to relate to the module and style of nearby retail shops.



Walnut Creek

Minimize parking garage entries, and integrate parking structures with adjacent commercial uses, as shown above.

DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

3

Sacramento



Facade materials and opening proportions help relate this parking structure to its surrounding neighbors.

San Mateo



Ground level commercial uses and upper floor set-backs are techniques that relate parking structures to adjacent smaller scale development.

- Utilizing finished exterior wall materials (e.g., brick and/or stucco), and decorative trim elements.
- Providing natural light and ventilation with openings that are similar to the proportions of commercial building windows.
- Screening cars from street view.
- Visually screening interior light fixtures from street and adjacent buildings view.
- Incorporating medallions and/or decorative lighting fixtures into exterior ground floor facades.

i) **Step back street-facing facades, if feasible, where they are adjacent to lower buildings (See example to the left).**

j) **Design facades facing the service drives for Downtown Core District commercial buildings as visually attractive neighbors that will be compatible with those adjacent secondary entries and outdoor use spaces. Two multi-use service alley examples are shown below.**

k) **Special attention should be given to landscaping, window fenestration, lighting, variations in alley paving materials and textures, and other elements that add human scale and visual interest.**

Pasadena



Pasadena



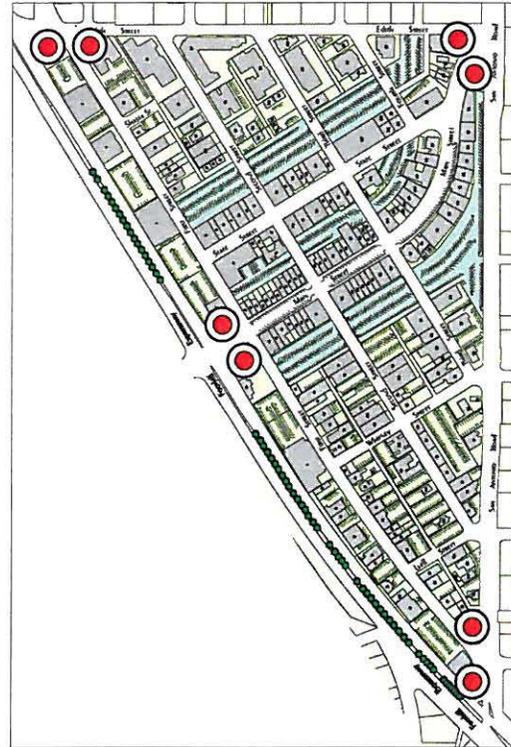
3.2.9 Reinforce a sense of entry at Downtown Gateways

a) Provide special design treatments on sites that mark entries to the Downtown Core District.

- Sites for special treatment are identified on the adjacent map.
- Relate the improvements to any special public entry improvements at these entry intersections. Broader concepts for these intersections are outlined in the *Los Altos Downtown Design Plan*.

b) Select design treatments that are appropriate for the site, the architectural style of the structure, and the uses accommodated. Some elements that may be considered include:

- Tower elements
- Sloped roof structures
- Special uses with outdoor plazas
- Fountains
- Special landscape features
- Special lighting
- Increased architectural details
- City identity signing



Downtown Gateways

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3.3 SIGNAGE

Signage is critical to the economic viability of individual businesses as well as to the downtown as a whole. This importance must be balanced with the goals of providing a strong sense of community, and using the design of signage to reinforce the village character and ambiance of Downtown Los Altos.

Applicants should refer to Chapter 11.04 Signs of the Los Altos Zoning Ordinance which contains relevant definitions and the basic standards which will be applied to commercial signage. The guidelines in this chapter supplement the Sign Ordinance, and are intended to provide more detail in regard to good signage design principles and community expectations that signage will be consistent with downtown's village scale and character.

The sign examples shown may not be appropriate for all locations. Each sign will be reviewed in the context of the proposed project architecture and site.

3.3.1 Select signs appropriate to the pedestrian scale environment of the Downtown Core District

a) **Select and scale signs that are oriented to pedestrians rather than to passing motorists. Sign types that are most likely to be successful and approved are the following:**

- Wall Signs
- Awning Signs
- Window Signs
- Projecting Signs
- Hanging Signs
- Plaque Signs

GOOD SIGN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Design easily readable signs.

- Avoid excessive wording and advertising messages. Signs are most effective when their messages can be grasped quickly. Too many words or images compete for attention and reduce the readability of the sign.
- Use no more than two letter font types per sign. The primary purpose of a sign is to quickly convey information to passing pedestrians and motorists. More than two letter styles make readability more difficult. A simple logo with an additional type style may be considered.
- Keep the size of letters and graphics in proportion to overall sign area. Text and graphics are difficult to read if they crowd the borders of the sign. Smaller letters with space around them will have more impact than larger letters with limited space around them. Generally limit the width and height of lettering and graphics to 85% of the overall sign width and height. A good rule of thumb is to limit the amount of sign information to no more than 50 to 55% of the overall sign area.

Use high quality materials

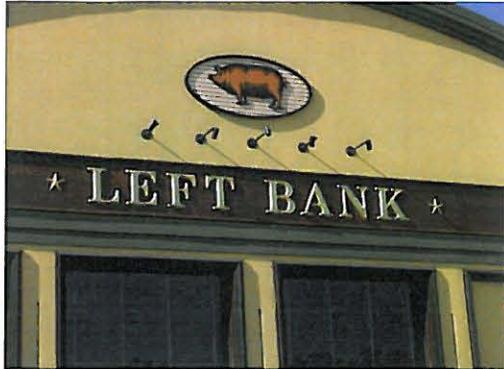
- Appropriate materials include finished wood, metal and, for projecting banner signs, woven fabric. Plastic sign materials and signs painted directly onto building surfaces are strongly discouraged.
- The sign materials and design should be related to those of the building on which it is mounted, and all sign edges should be cleanly finished.

Use simple sign shapes

- Geometrical shapes such as rectangles, squares, circles, ovals and triangles are visually stable shapes which help focus attention on the sign message. These should be used in almost all cases. Combinations of geometric shapes will also generally produce a good sign shape.

DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

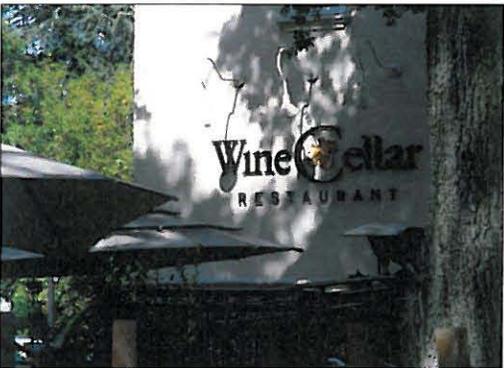
3



Pleasant Hill



Piedmont



Los Gatos



Monterey

3.3.2 WALL SIGNS

Wall signs are panels or individual letters mounted on and parallel to a building wall or a roof fascia.

- a) **Limit sign information.**
 - Generally, limit sign information to the business name. Graphic logos, date of building construction, address, and other elements may be allowed at the discretion of the City.
- b) **Place signs within a clean *Signable Area*.**
 - The *Signable Area* should:
 - 1) Be relatively flat.
 - 2) Not contain doors or windows.
 - 3) Not include projecting molding or trim.
 - 4) Be in reasonable proportion to the overall facade.
 - 5) Generally not exceed 15% of the building facade.
 - If a building does not have a good location for a wall sign, use other allowed types such as awning, window, or projecting signs.
- c) **Use sign materials which project slightly from the face of the building.**
 - Signs painted directly onto wall surfaces are strongly discouraged since a change in tenant could require a major facade repainting.
 - Use either individually applied letters to the face of the wall, or apply sign letters to a board or panel mounted on the wall face. Sign copy and graphics applied to a board or panel may consist of any of the following:
 - * Individual letters and graphics of wood, metal or similar materials
 - * Individual letters and graphics carved into the surface of a wood panel
 - * Letters and graphics painted directly onto the surface of the panel
- d) **Night lighting is encouraged.**
 - Direct exterior illumination with well designed and shielded spotlights is the preferred lighting method.
 - Interior illuminated individual letters are strongly discouraged.
 - Interior illuminated *can signs* which include multiple letters on a translucent background within a single sign enclosure are not allowed.
 - Neon signs are discouraged, but may be allowed and evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- e) **Conceal all sign and sign lighting raceways and other connections.**

f) **Maximum letter height.**

Sign height and width should be appropriate to the building on which it is placed and the distance of the sign from fronting streets. Generally, wall sign letter heights should not exceed 12 inches in height except along San Antonio Road where 18 inch high letters may be considered.

g) **Relate sign colors to building colors.**

- Select wall sign colors to complement the building and storefront colors. For colors other than black, select from color ranges which are analogous and complementary to storefront and/or building colors.
- Corporate branding colors will be considered, but will not be automatically approved if they are considered out of place with the building or the surrounding environment. A change of color or the use of toned down colors in the same hue family may be required in place of brighter standard corporate colors.



Santa Rosa

3.3.3 **AWNING SIGNS**

Awning signs consist of letters and graphics applied directly to the face or valence of awnings. Awning signs are often used effectively in combination with window signs.

a) **Place signs for easy visibility.**

- Apply signs to awning front valences (i.e., the flat vertical surface of awnings) or to sloped awning faces with a slope of at least 2 to 1.

b) **Limit the signage information on awnings.**

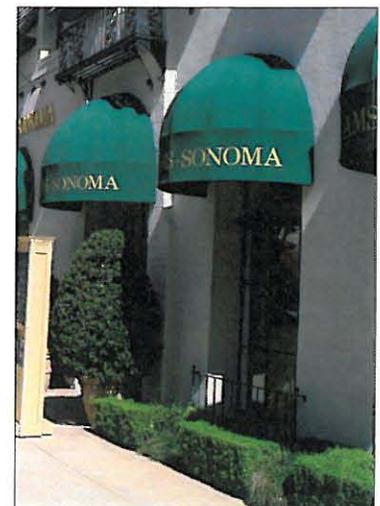
- Since awning signs will often be viewed from passing vehicles, the amount of information which can be effectively conveyed is limited. Keeping sign text short will allow viewers to better comprehend and remember the message.
- Generally, limit awning signs to the business name, business logo, services or type of business (e.g., French Cuisine), and/or the business address number.
- Limit the size of logos or text placed on awning sloped faces to a maximum of 15% of the sloped surface areas.
- Limit sign width on awning valences to a maximum of 85% of the awning width. Limit the letter height to a maximum of 85% of the valence height.



Healdsburg

c) **Avoid interior illuminated awnings.**

Backlit awnings that make the entire awning a large sign are not allowed. Signage on the awning's sloped face may be illuminated by shielded and attractive directional spot lights.



Pasadena

DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

3



Burlingame

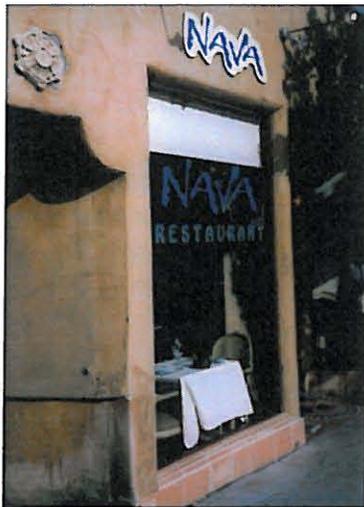


Los Gatos

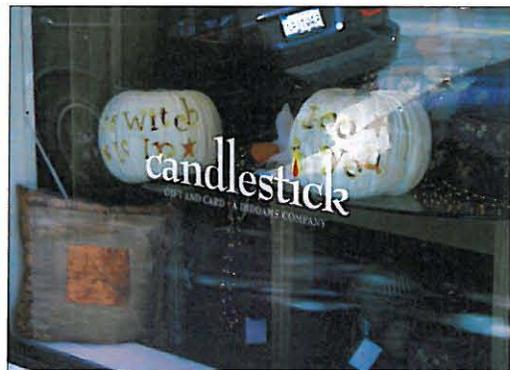
3.3.4 WINDOW SIGNS

Window signs are primarily oriented to passing pedestrians, and are generally applied to the inside of display windows.

- a) **Limit the amount of signage used.**
Window signs should be limited to a maximum of 25% of any individual window, and an aggregate area of no more than 10% of all ground floor windows on any building face.
- b) **Limit the size of lettering.**
The maximum height of letters should be 10 inches.
- c) **Consider the use of logos and creative sign type.**
Graphic logos and images along with special text formats can add personality and interest to window signs.
- d) **Use high quality materials and application methods.**
Limit window sign materials to the following:
 - Paint or vinyl film applied directly to the face of the window.
 - Wood or metal panels with applied lettering.



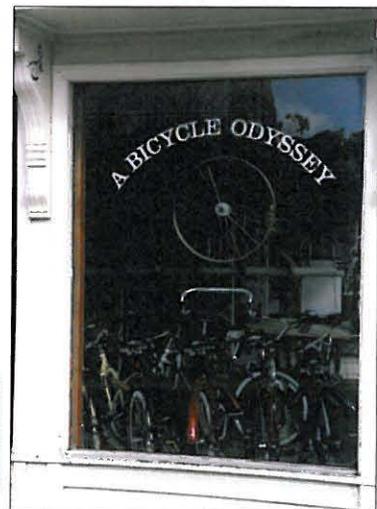
Oakland



Los Gatos



Mill Valley



San Francisco

3.3.5 PROJECTING SIGNS

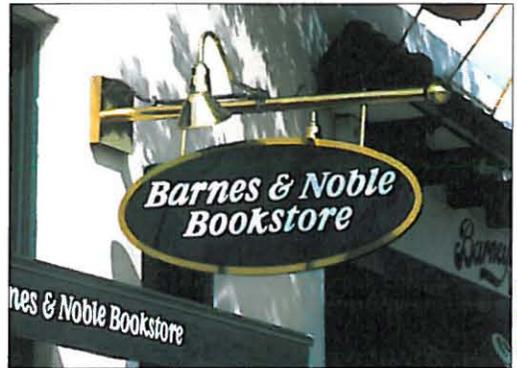
Projecting signs are relatively flat, two-sided solid panels attached to brackets which are mounted on and perpendicular to the face of buildings and storefronts. In addition to text, they may include graphic images that express the unique personality of an individual business.

- a) **Use high quality materials.**
 - Use wood, metal or non-glossy fabrics. Avoid plastics.
- b) **Limit the number and size of projecting signs.**
 - Use no more than one projecting sign per business frontage.
 - Limit the size of any projecting sign to five square feet.
 - Project signs no more than 36 inches from the building face, and provide at least 6 inches between the inside edge of the sign and the building.
- c) **Relate the design of projecting signs and supports to the character of the building.**
 - Simple round or square horizontal supports with capped ends, painted black or white, are generally acceptable.
 - More decorative approaches may be desirable when appropriate to the sign and/or architectural character of the building.
- d) **Position projecting signs to complement the building's architectural details.**

Locate solid panel signs below the first floor ceiling line, or no more than 14 feet above the sidewalk, whichever is less. Provide at least 8 feet from the bottom of projecting signs to the ground in pedestrian areas.
- e) **Provide sign lighting only with shielded spotlights.**
 - Utilize high quality fixtures such as cylinder spots or decorative fixtures. Avoid exposed standard spot and flood light bulbs.
 - Design light supports to complement the design of the sign and building facade.



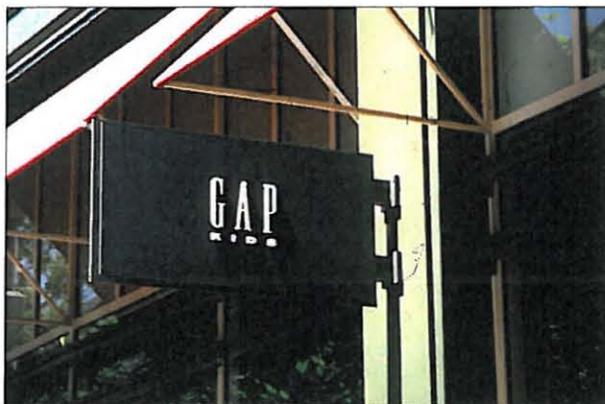
Pleasant Hill



Oakland



Santa Barbara



San Francisco

Blade signs are a smaller form of projecting sign.



Los Gatos

DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT

3



Laguna Beach



Laguna Beach



Mountain View

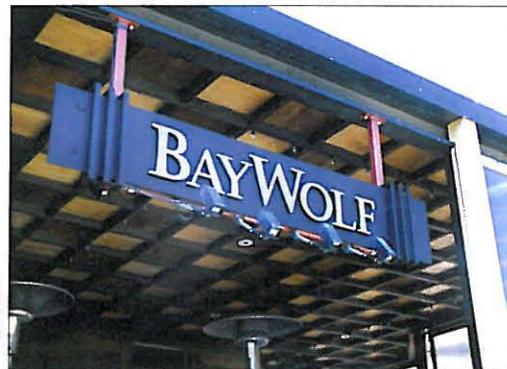
3.3.6 HANGING SIGNS

Hanging signs are relatively flat panels, generally two-sided, which are similar to projecting signs, but are smaller and suspended below awnings, bay windows, balconies, and similar projections. They are intended primarily for business identification to pedestrians passing on the sidewalk.

- a) **Use high quality materials.**
Use wood or metal and avoid shiny plastic or fabric. Finish all exposed edges. Suspend signs with metal rods, small scale chain, cable, or hooks.
- b) **Limit the number and size of hanging signs.**
Use no more than one hanging sign per business. Limit the maximum sign size to 3 square feet. Mount signs to provide a minimum of 8 feet clearance between the sign and the sidewalk.
- c) **Orient hanging signs to pedestrian traffic.**
Mount signs under awnings, bay windows or other projections with their orientation perpendicular to the building face so that they will be visible to pedestrians passing on the sidewalk. If hanging signs for multiple businesses are placed along a building frontage, they should all be mounted with their bottom edge the same distance above the sidewalk.



Carmel



Oakland

3.3.7 PLAQUE SIGNS

Plaque signs are pedestrian-oriented flat panels mounted to wall surfaces near business entries, upper floor entries, and courtyards. They include signs that identify a specific business, directory signs for multiple businesses, and menu display boxes for restaurants.

- a) **Limit the location and size of plaque signs.**
Locate signs only on wall surfaces adjacent to tenant entries or entry passageways to off-street courtyards. Plaque signs may identify a single business or multiple businesses occupying an upper floor or courtyard.



Santa Barbara

Los Gatos



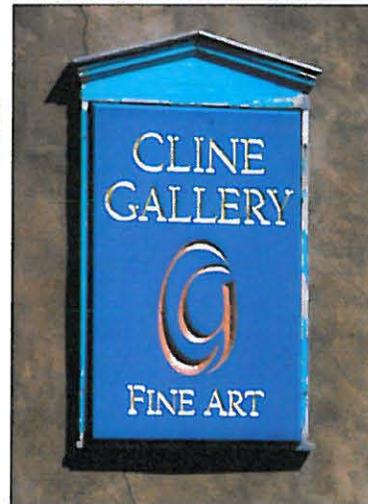
Santa Barbara

- b) **Use plaque signs for the display of restaurant menus.**

A restaurant district is enhanced when a variety of restaurants share the area and customers are able to walk from one to the next to compare menus and prices. Attractive menu boxes with lighting assist in this process. Menu signs or boxes should have internal indirect lighting (e.g., bulbs located in the frame to cast direct light over the menu surface) or direct lighting using decorative fixtures.



Sausalito



Santa Fe

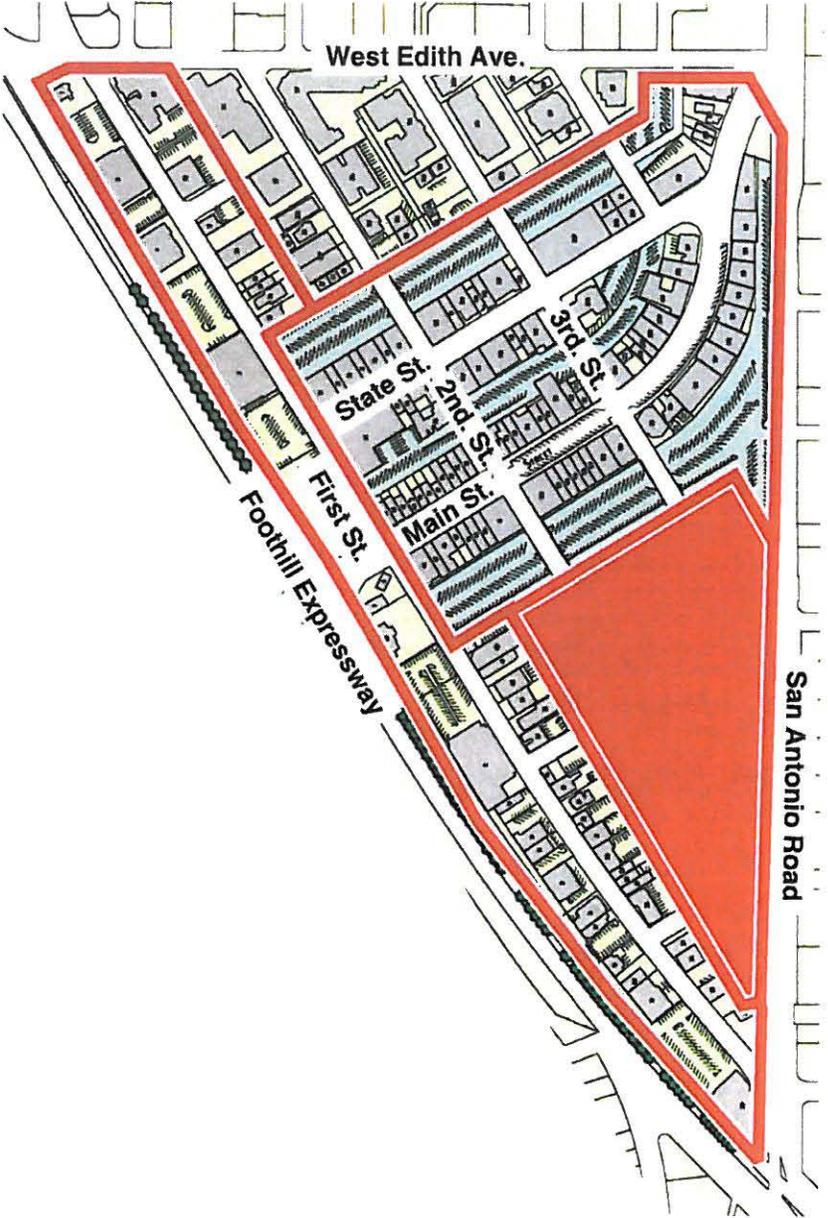


San Francisco

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**MIXED COMMERCIAL
DISTRICT**

4



MIXED COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Owners of properties and businesses in this district should review the guidelines for the Downtown Core District. While projects in this district may be somewhat larger and less retail-oriented than those in the downtown core, they are still very much a part of the downtown village, and the village character and scale emphasis underlying those guidelines will be expected of new buildings and changes to existing properties in this district. The intent of these guidelines and the zoning standards established for this district are summarized in the sidebar to the right.

The primary differences between development in this district and the downtown core include:

- A wider range of uses is allowed.
- Required parking must be provided on-site rather than in common parking district lots or structures.
- Setbacks are required along all street fronts, and in many cases at the rear of parcels.
- A 50-foot building module applies, rather than the 25-foot module in the downtown core.
- Three-story buildings are allowed up to forty-five feet in height.*

** Pending a Zoning Code change approval by the City Council to increase the height limit in this zone from its current maximum of forty feet.*

4

INTENT

- A. Promote the implementation of the Los Altos Downtown Design Plan.
- B. Support and enhance the downtown Los Altos village atmosphere.
- C. Allow latitude for creative design and architectural variety.
- D. Respect the scale and character of the area immediately surrounding the existing downtown pedestrian district.
- E. Provide pedestrian amenities such as paseos, outdoor public spaces and outdoor seating.
- F. Establish a sense of entry into the downtown.
- G. Encourage historic preservation for those buildings listed on the city's historic resources inventory.
- H. Encourage the upgrading of building exteriors, signs, passageways and rear entries.
- I. Provide for a full range of retail, office, and service uses appropriate to downtown.
- J. Improve the visual appeal and pedestrian orientation of the downtown.
- K. Encourage the use of solar, photo voltaic, and other energy conserving devices.

MIXED COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

4



Los Altos

This low wall separates the parking lot from the sidewalk/driveway at this Los Altos office building.



Palo Alto

A low box hedge is used here to buffer the pedestrian from the adjacent parking lot.



Palo Alto

Special paving and landscaping give this parking lot a village character.

4.1 PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

A strong pedestrian orientation is expected. In addition to the guidelines below, the Downtown Core District Pedestrian Environment guidelines on pages 17-22 will also apply to this district.

4.1.1 Minimize the impact of parking on pedestrian circulation and the pedestrian environment

- a) Underground parking is strongly encouraged.
- b) Locate parking at the rear of parcels.
- c) Limit the exposure of surface parking lots along street frontages as much as possible.
- d) Provide access to parking from passages and less traveled pedestrian routes whenever possible.
- e) Limit the width of parking access drives as much as possible.
- f) Limit access and parking lot paving to those areas that are functionally required, and provide landscaping in all other areas.
- g) Where parking lots must abut a public street or a pedestrian walkway, provide a minimum landscaped setback of 5 feet, and provide low walls or box hedges to screen parked cars from direct view. Two examples of screening are shown to the left.
- h) Special textured paving that is porous and minimizes water run-off in surface parking lots is strongly encouraged. Examples are shown to the left and below.



Palo Alto

Another example of porous paving

4.2 ARCHITECTURE

The Mixed Commercial District includes office and service uses as well as retail uses. And, since many of the parcels are larger than those in the Downtown Core District, buildings are also often larger. The architecture guidelines below are intended to recognize these differences while maintaining a scale and character that is compatible with that of the downtown core.

4.2.1 Mixed use buildings are encouraged

a) **Buildings not planning for a mixed use at the current time still must allow for future mixed use by:**

- Providing a minimum ground floor ceiling height of 12 feet.
- Locating the ground floor no more than 12 inches above the sidewalk level.
- Designing the ground floor facade with a minimum of 60 percent transparent glazing.

b) **Ground floor retail uses should generally follow the relevant storefront design guidelines for the Downtown Core District. If in doubt, applicant should consult with city planning staff.**

4.2.2 Break long facades into smaller modules

a) **Buildings that are longer than 75 feet in length must be broken up into segments that are no longer than 50 feet.**

b) **The development of smaller building segments may be accomplished in several different ways. They include combinations of the following techniques:**

- Separate structures surrounding a courtyard.
- Indented courtyards (See Guideline 3.2.1.b).
- A change in horizontal or vertical plane.
- A projection or recess.
- Varying cornice or roof lines.
- Distinctive entries.

4.2.3 Provide primary building entries on the street frontage

a) **Building entries may also be provided from the parking lot, but this should not be designed as the only or the major entry.**



Los Altos



Danville

The photos above show two examples of breaking larger buildings into smaller segments that are compatible with the Los Altos downtown village scale and character.

4

BUILDING HEIGHT VARIATION
EXAMPLES

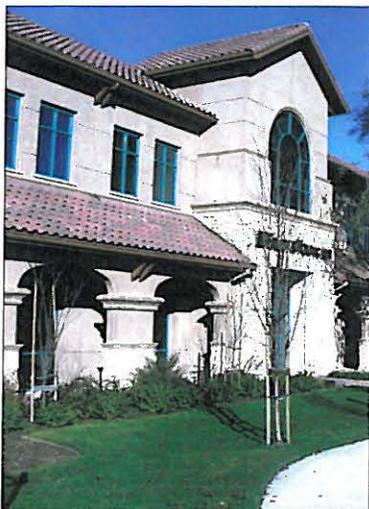


Los Gatos



Santa Monica

Exterior stairs to upper floor uses are one way to provide variation in building height.



Capertino

Projecting ground floor arcades are another way to provide variation in building height.

4.2.4 A variation in building heights is encouraged

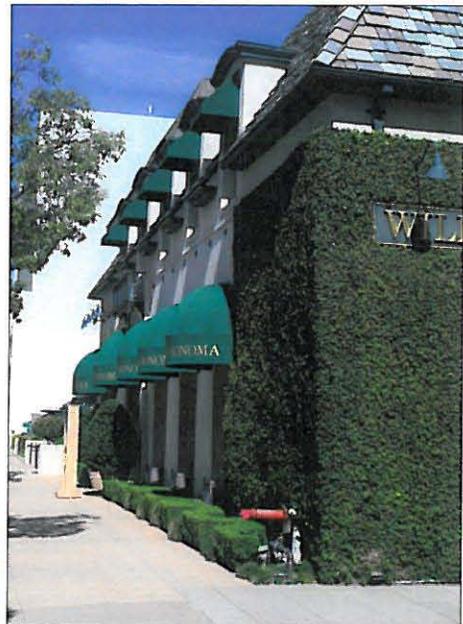
- a) Variations may be provided by different heights for major building elements or by lowering segments of the facade such as exterior stairs (See photos to the left).

4.2.5 Sloped roof forms are encouraged

- a) Flat roofs may be considered on First Street parcels where they would be more compatible to adjacent development.

- b) Upper floors embedded in the sloped roof form may be needed to conform to the height limits for the district.

One example is shown below.



Pasadena

4.2.6 Design buildings to screen surface parking lots whenever possible

- a) Provide as much building frontage along the streets as possible.

- b) Second floor space is encouraged along street frontages with parking lot entries. See the example below.



Santa Monica

4.2.7 Provide design consistency

- a) The architectural style and details should continue around all sides of the structure.

4.2.8 Emphasize individual windows or small window groups on upper levels

- a) Use vertical window proportions.
- b) Avoid horizontal ribbon windows.
- c) Recess window a minimum of 3 inches from the face of all exterior walls.

4.2.9 Upper floor balconies and decks are encouraged



Los Gatos

Another example of second floor balcony and deck space providing facade depth and visual interest.

See the guidelines and examples on pages 34-35.

4.2.10 Include substantial architectural detail

- a) Detail elements should be consistent with the architectural style of the building.
- b) Detail elements, similar to those in the Downtown Core, may include:
 - Roof cornices and overhangs
 - Wall mouldings
 - Trellises and lattices with landscaping
 - Decorative lights
 - Awnings
 - Balconies

See examples to the right.



Sunnyvale

Avoid continuous ribbon windows like those above in favor of individual windows with substantial jambs separating them, as shown below.



Los Altos



Los Gatos



Pasadena

4

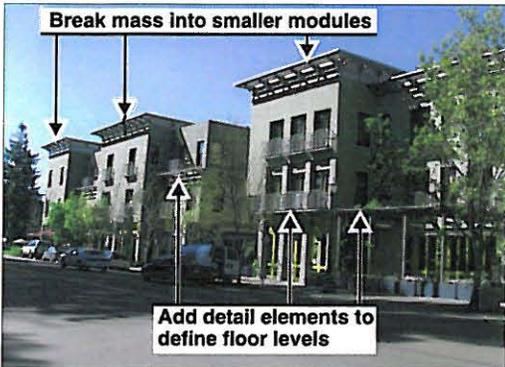
4.2.11 Design taller buildings to relate to smaller nearby buildings in the downtown

Some techniques are shown in the examples on this page.

Danville



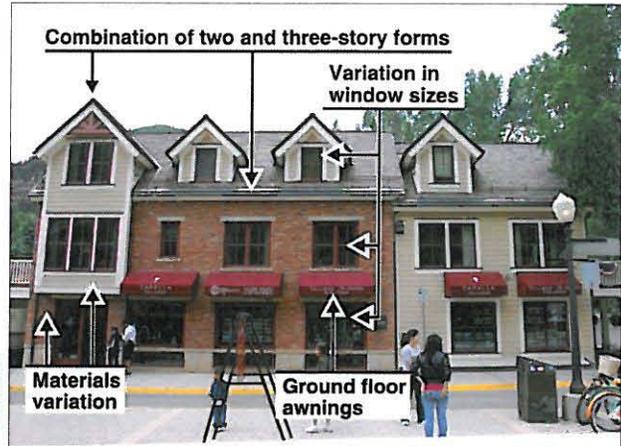
Healdsburg



Birkdale Village



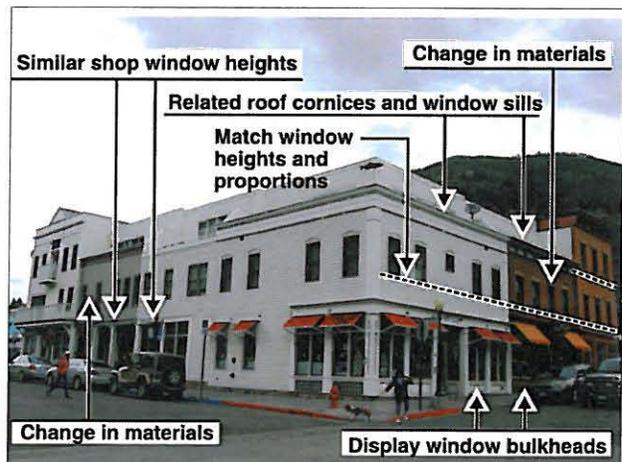
Telluride



Santa Barbara



Telluride



4.3 LANDSCAPE

Extensive landscaping is expected in the Mixed Commercial District because of the increased setback requirements, substantial surface parking, and the increased size of the buildings.

4.3.1 Provide a landscaping buffer between parking lots and building facades

- a) Include shrub and tree landscaping to give tenants a sense of separation between themselves and the parking lot.
- b) When parking is tucked under the building, landscaped planters, with trees, should be provided to break up the parking lot paving at the building. One example is shown below to the right.

4.3.2 Provide special landscaping and paving at building entries

See pages 28 and 29.

4.3.3 Provide on-site amenities for tenants and pedestrians

- a) Locate amenities adjacent to sidewalks, building entries, paseos, and courtyards. Amenities may include:
 - Benches
 - Fountains
 - Planted areas
 - Rain gardens and other rainwater infiltration features
 - Special decorative paving
 - Potted flowers and plants
 - Public art
 - Waste receptacles



Danville

Landscaping to separate buildings from parking lots is expected. The type and height of landscaping will be dependant on the size, height, and form of the building.



Laguna Beach

Example of landscaped planters at tuck-under parking.



Los Altos

Los Altos example of landscaping used to enhance an office building's setting.

4

GROUND SIGN EXAMPLES



Los Altos



Sonoma



Sonoma

4.4 SIGNAGE

The Downtown Core District signage guidelines apply to all signs in the Mixed Commercial District. Ground signs and free-standing signs may also be allowed at the discretion of the city.

4.4.1 GROUND SIGNS

a) Location limitations.

Ground signs may be considered on a case-by-case basis mainly along San Antonio Road in recognition of its greater vehicle orientation, width, and traffic speeds. They may also be considered along other streets where wide landscaped setbacks are provided, as in the downtown Los Altos example to the upper left.

b) Limit the information on each sign.

• Ground signs should generally be limited to the following information:

- 1) Project or primary business identification name and/or logo
- 2) Address number

• Multi-tenant ground signs are strongly discouraged. However, the display of multiple tenants may be considered for small ground signs so long as the sign and background color is common throughout, and the type style and logo colors of each tenant are the same.

• The inclusion of services and products offered should not be included on ground signs.

c) Locate signs for easy visibility from passing vehicles.

- Locate signs within 10 feet of the front property line.
- Avoid blocking any vehicular or pedestrian sight lines which might result in safety problems.

d) Signs including bases should fit within a rectangle no larger than 5 feet high and 5 feet wide.

e) Lighting.

• Lighting for ground signs must be by direct spotlight illumination from fixtures mounted either at the top of the sign or on the ground below the sign. Fixtures must be shielded to avoid direct view of the bulbs. Interior illuminated ground signs are not allowed.

f) Materials.

• All ground signs, including price signs for service stations, shall be constructed of matte finish nonreflective materials.

4.4.2 FREESTANDING SIGNS

- a) Limit freestanding signs to single tenants.
- b) Signs including bases, vertical supports, and crossbars should fit within a rectangle no larger than 6 feet high and 3 feet wide.
- c) All sign materials should be matte finish.
- d) Letters and logos may be applied or painted onto the sign.
- e) Signs may be externally lit with shielded spot lights.

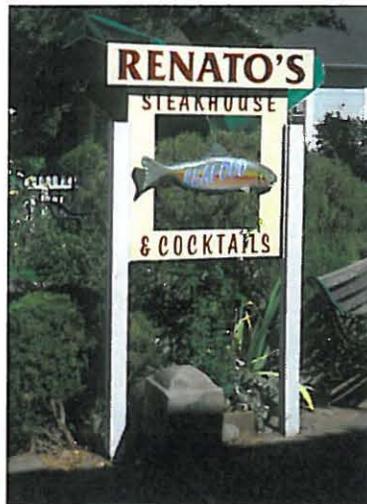
FREESTANDING SIGN EXAMPLES



Leguna Beach



Benicia

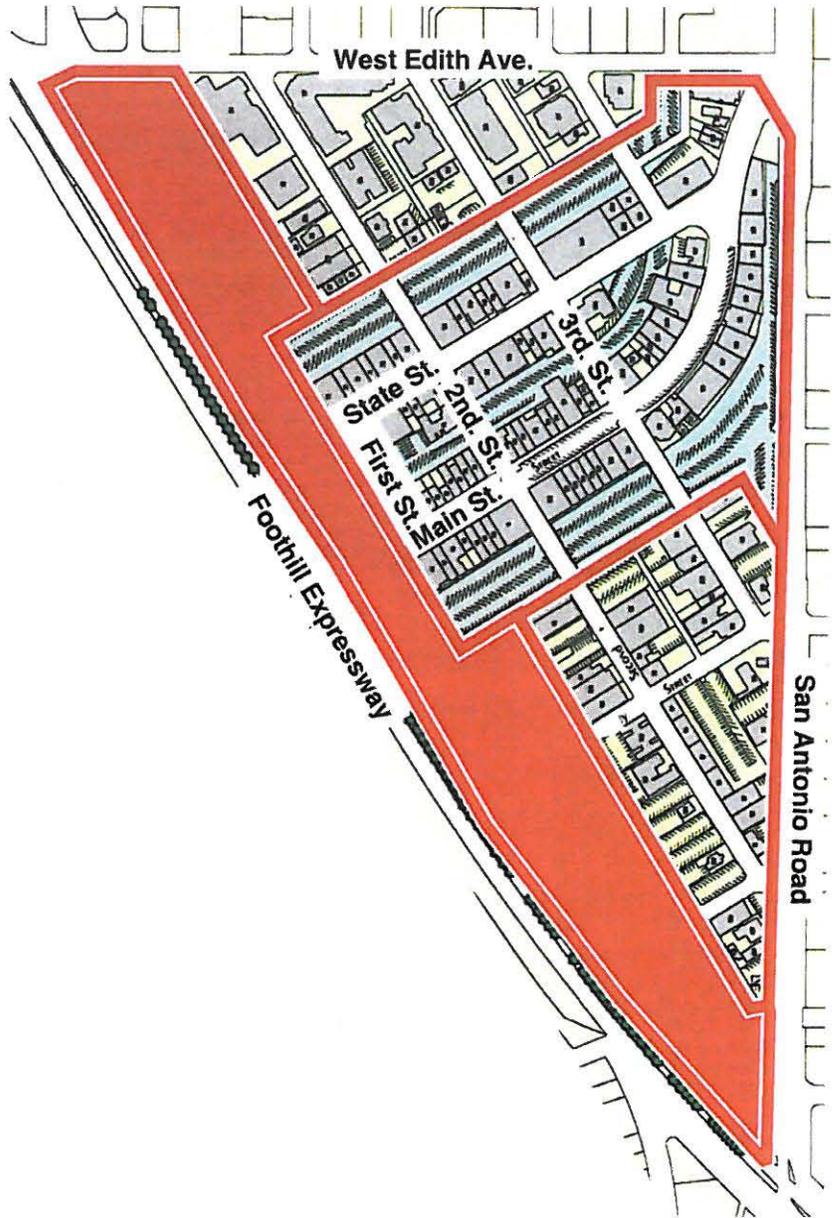


Sonoma

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**FIRST STREET
DISTRICT**

5



FIRST STREET DISTRICT

Owners of properties and businesses in this district should review the guidelines for the Downtown Core District. While projects in this district may be somewhat larger and less retail-oriented than those in the downtown core, they are still very much a part of the downtown village, and the village character and scale emphasis underlying those guidelines will be expected of new buildings and changes to existing properties in this district. The intent of these guidelines and the zoning standards established for this district are summarized in the sidebar to the right.

The primary differences between development in this district and the downtown core include:

- A wider range of uses is allowed.
- Required parking must be provided on-site rather than in common parking district lots or structures.
- Setbacks are required along all street fronts, and in many cases at the rear of parcels.
- A 50-foot building module applies, rather than the 25-foot module in the downtown core, except for lots located within the CRS Zoning District.*

** Pending a Zoning Code change approval by the City Council to extend the CRS zoning into the First Street District..*

INTENT

A. Promote the implementation of the Los Altos Downtown Design Plan.

B. Support and enhance the downtown Los Altos village atmosphere.

C. Allow latitude for creative design and architectural variety.

D. Respect the scale and character of the area immediately surrounding the existing downtown pedestrian district.

E. Establish a sense of entry into the downtown.

F. Encourage historic preservation for those buildings listed on the city's historic resources inventory.

G. Encourage the upgrading of building exteriors, signs, and parking lots.

H. Provide for a full range of retail, office, and service uses appropriate to downtown.

I. Develop a landscaped strip along the back of properties that abut Foothill Expressway between West Edith Avenue and San Antonio Road.

J. Improve the visual appeal and pedestrian orientation of the downtown.

K. Encourage the use of solar, photo voltaic, and other energy conserving devices.

Applicants should carefully review the Los Altos Zoning Ordinance provisions appropriate to their properties. Parcels covered by the design guidelines for the First Street District are located within three zoning districts with slightly different limitations and requirements.

FIRST STREET DISTRICT

5



Santa Rosa

A visual and physical separation between street front sidewalks and adjacent parking lots is expected.

5.1 PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

The First Street District is spread along First Street which is more vehicle-oriented than the remainder of Downtown Los Altos, and has more surface parking with limited landscaping than most other areas. Nevertheless, this district is very much a part of the downtown village. These guidelines are intended to allow larger buildings and on-site parking while doing so in a manner that reinforces Downtown Los Altos' village scale and character.

5.1.1 Minimize the visual impact of parking

- a) Underground or screened roof parking is encouraged on larger parcels.
- b) Provide a landscape buffer between street front sidewalks and any adjacent parking lot. Per the zoning code, the minimum width of this buffer must be 5 feet, unless less is allowed by a variance. When lesser widths are allowed for existing parking lot improvements, some buffering is still required. One approach to adding visual buffering by a low wall is shown below.



Benicia

5.1.2 Provide pedestrian linkages between street front sidewalks and building entries

- a) Building entries facing First Street are strongly encouraged. For larger buildings where entries are set back on a facade facing a parking lot, provide a strong sidewalk connection with landscaping on both sides from the street front to the entry.

5.1.3 Provide landscape buffers between parking lots and pedestrian areas at buildings

- a) Building fronts are expected to be as active and attractive as those in the Downtown Core District, and to be buffered from parked cars. Landscaping and, where appropriate, trees should be used to buffer pedestrian areas. Alternatively, arcades and planters at the building may be used for this purpose. Examples of these two approaches are shown to the left.



Danville

Separate parking lots from pedestrian areas at buildings by landscaping (above) or by pedestrian arcades (below).



Los Gatos

5.1.4 Provide special paving for parking lots immediately accessible from the street

a) Parking areas which are adjacent to street front sidewalks and with perpendicular parking spaces directly accessible from the street drive lane are strongly discouraged. For existing parking areas like this that are being upgraded, provide a distinction on the paving color and texture between the parking surface and the adjacent sidewalk and street paving.

5.1.5 Provide pedestrian walkways through large parking lots

a) Dedicated walks through parking lots will improve pedestrian safety and enhance the shopping and business patronage experience. Walkways should be reinforced with edge landscaping and with textured and/or permeable paving where they cross parking drive aisles. One example is shown in the upper right of this page.

5.1.6 Provide pedestrian amenities.

Amenities may include:

- Benches
- Fountains
- Planted areas
- Rain gardens and other rainwater infiltration features
- Special decorative paving
- Potted flowers and plants
- Public art
- Waste receptacles

5.1.7 Integrate ground floor residential uses with the streetscape

a) Set structures back a minimum of 10 feet from the street property line. Stairs and entry porches may encroach into this setback up to the property line.

B) Soft landscaping is required for a minimum of 60% of the front setback area.

See examples below and to the right.



Sunnyvale

Example of a well designed pedestrian walkway through a parking lot. Note: The building entry in the background would be out of scale for downtown Los Altos.



Sunnyvale

Provide pedestrian amenities.



Mountain View



Mountain View

Provide ground floor residential setback landscaping.

FIRST STREET DISTRICT

5



Tustin

This shopping complex has a village scale and character by virtue of treating adjacent uses as individual buildings.



Los Gatos

The scale, details and natural materials used for this tower create an attractive focal point for the building without losing human scale.

5.2 ARCHITECTURE

Building uses and sizes will vary more in the First Street District than elsewhere in the downtown. The goal of these guidelines is to accommodate this wide diversity of size and use while maintaining a village scale and character that is complementary to the downtown core. The photographs shown on this and the following page are examples of more vehicle-oriented buildings that include forms and details that are sensitive to village scale and character.

5.2.1 Design to a village scale and character

- a) Avoid large box-like structures.
- b) Break larger buildings into smaller scale elements.
- c) Provide special design articulation and detail for building facades located adjacent to street frontages.
- d) Keep focal point elements small in scale.
- e) Utilize materials that are common in the downtown core.
- f) Avoid designs that appear to seek to be prominently seen from Foothill Expressway and/or San Antonio Road in favor of designs that focus on First Street, and are a part of the village environment.
- g) Provide substantial small scale details.
- h) Integrate landscaping into building facades in a manner similar to the Downtown Core District (See pages 28-29).

Examples of larger parcel buildings that are designed to be consistent with a village character are shown on this and the adjacent page.



Mill Valley

Traditional building forms, architectural details, and integrated landscaping assist in relating the parking lot frontage to an overall village scale and character.

5.2.2 Design structures to be compatible with adjacent existing buildings

- a) Buildings adjacent to the Downtown Core District should be designed in form, material, and details similar to those nearby along Main and State Streets.
- b) Projects adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods should draw upon residential forms and details to create a smaller grain design fabric that is compatible with the residential buildings.

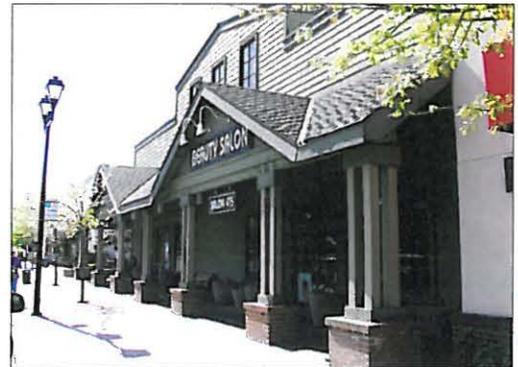
Examples are shown below and to the right.



Ojai



Danville



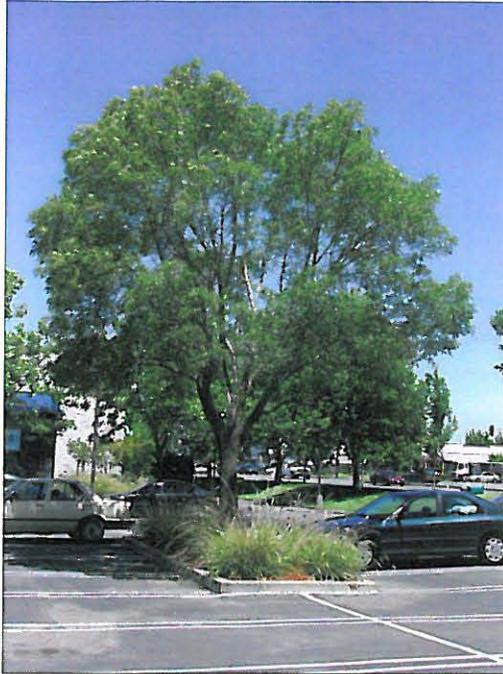
Danville



Mill Valley

FIRST STREET DISTRICT

5



Santa Rosa

Landscaping between facing parking rows is desirable to break up large expanses of paving.

5.3 LANDSCAPE

Substantial landscaping is expected in the First Street District to ensure that the area becomes a visual part of the larger downtown village.

5.3.1 Provide substantial landscaping adjacent to residential neighborhoods
5.3.2 Landscape Foothill Expressway edges with shrubbery and trees
5.3.3 Add substantial landscaping in all parking lots

- a) Provide landscaping equal to or greater than the requirements set forth in the Los Altos Zoning Code.
- b) Tree landscaping should be provided to create an orchard canopy effect in surface parking lots with more than one drive aisle. Utilize landscape fingers placed parallel to the parking spaces to break up expanses of parking lot paving. Space the islands with intervals not exceeding 6 parking spaces in length.
- c) Utilize hedges, trees, and other landscaping between facing parking spaces as shown in the example to the left.

5.3.4 Add street trees along all parcel street frontages

5.4 SIGNAGE

The Downtown Core District signage guidelines apply to all signs in the First Street District. Ground signs and freestanding signs may also be allowed at the discretion of the city (See the guidelines on pages 60-61 for these two sign types).



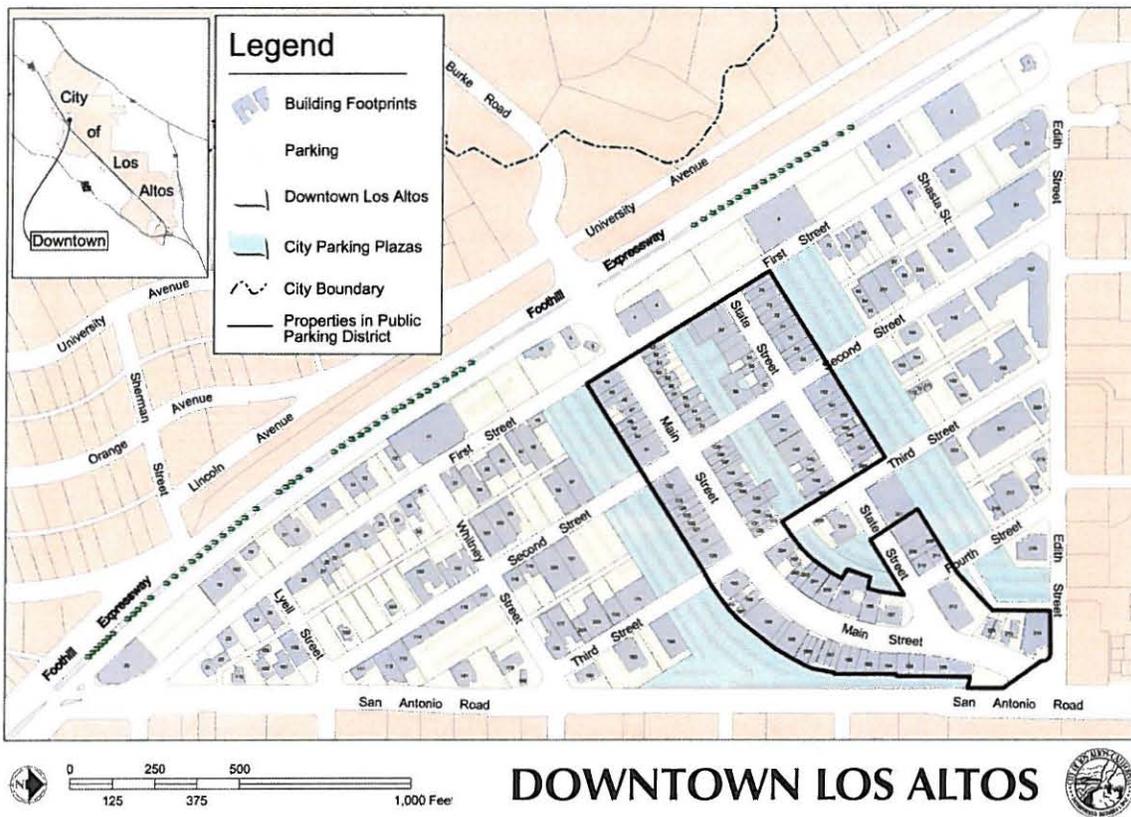
APPENDICES



DOWNTOWN PARKING DISTRICT

In conjunction with downtown property owners in 1956 the City of Los Altos formed a public parking assessment district. As a result this district formed the 10 public parking plazas in the downtown core area. A majority of the properties in the downtown core are within the public parking district as shown on the map below. These properties in the public parking district are subject to unique parking regulations that exempt the properties from providing on-site parking for gross square footage that does not exceed 100 percent of their lot area.

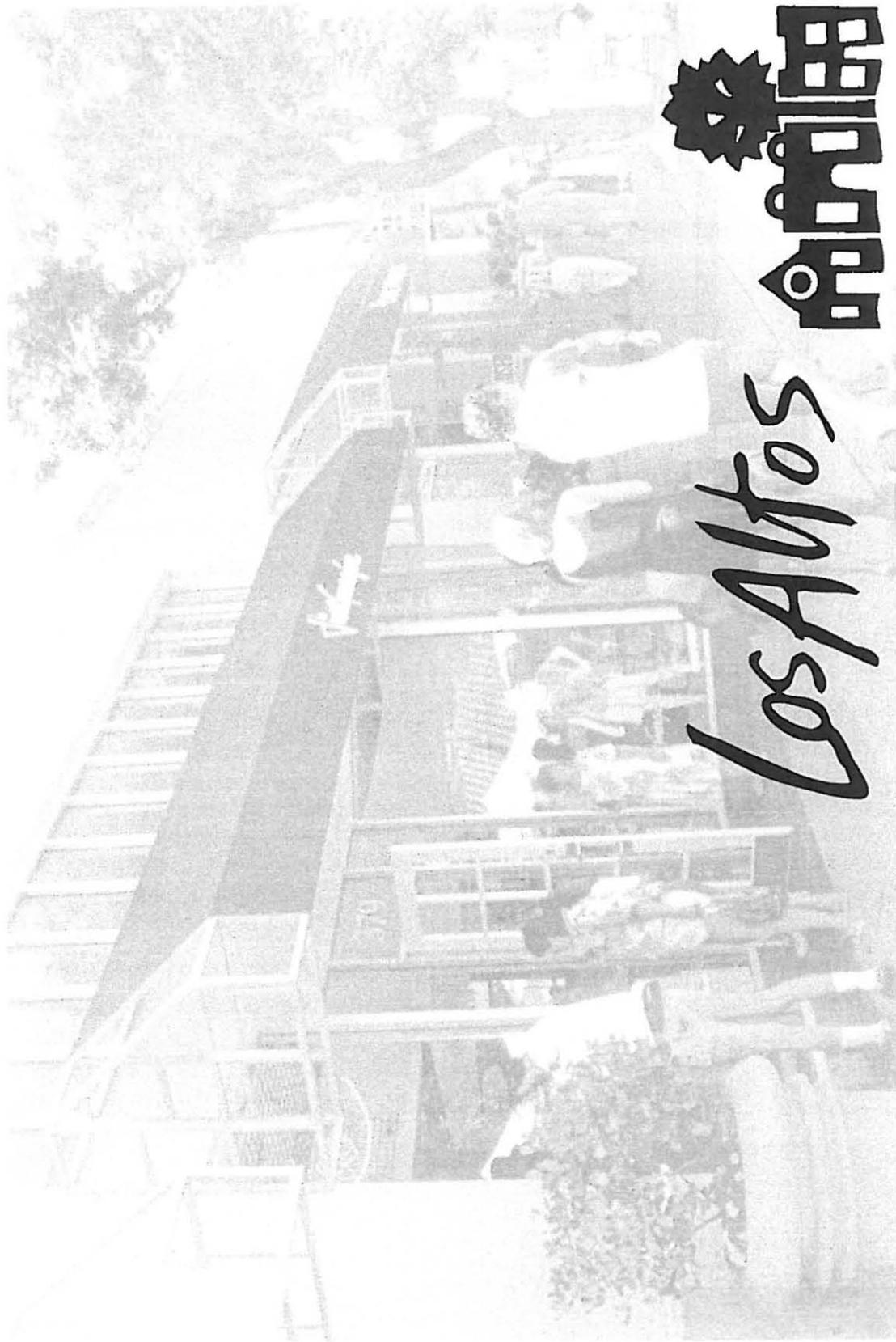
Properties in Public Parking District



DOWNTOWN HISTORIC RESOURCES

Downtown Los Altos has nine properties listed in the City’s Historic Resources Inventory, including five buildings that are designated as landmarks. The most prominent historic building downtown is the old Southern Pacific Railroad Station at 288 First Street, which was designated as a landmark in 1984 and may be eligible for listing on the State and National Historic Registers. All nine properties and their historic ranking is listed below. More detailed historic evaluations for each property are available in the City’s Historic Resources Inventory.

| Address | Historic Ranking |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 288 First Street | Landmark |
| 300 Main Street | Landmark |
| 301 Main Street | Historically Significant |
| 316 Main Street | Landmark |
| 350 Main Street | Historically Important |
| 368 Main Street | Historically Significant |
| 388-398 Main Street | Landmark |
| 395-399 Main Street | Landmark |
| 188 Second Street | Historically Significant |



Los Altos

Downtown Design Plan

C i t y o f L o s A l t o s

Downtown Design Plan

Revised 1993

Revised 2005

Specific policies for the State and Main
City-Owned Property

Revised 2009

Further refinements to the document, including
changing the title from "Downtown Urban Design Plan"
to "Downtown Design Plan"



DAVID GATES & ASSOCIATES
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE • URBAN DESIGN • LAND PLANNERS

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The Design Plan has been prepared under the direction of the Downtown Committee. Members of this Committee include:

| | |
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1.

Updating the Village

It is a paradox that, while the wonderful, vital Downtown Los Altos has evolved without the benefit of a master plan and design guidelines, these tools have become essential to manage and protect its future quality. Many small towns realize too late that the marketplace is failing to ensure the continued vitality of their downtown. It was in recognition of this possibility that a group of concerned Los Altos citizens, merchants, and decision-makers came together to develop this strategy to update, and protect the "village" qualities of the Downtown.

Goals

A common goal of many small towns is to enrich and preserve the character of their downtowns. This involves more than improving the quality of downtown buildings. It is the quality of life downtown - the place where people can meet, see others, and be seen - that is in need of improvement. These opportunities for social interaction in a public setting are rare in the suburban environment that is dominated by mini marts, gas stations, shopping malls, and wide, efficient roadways. The goals of this plan are to reinforce the identity of downtown as a retail center, to improve the visual quality of the area, and to create an attractive pedestrian environment. It is important to avoid losing the unique and distinctive qualities that make the Downtown a successful public, memorable place, while also accommodating development and the changing economics of the area.

Process

Over the years, the City of Los Altos has been in the position of reacting to various development proposals in Downtown, rather than leading the development process. Recognizing the importance of the downtown to the community, the City formed a committee, made up of downtown

merchants, decision-makers, and residents, to formulate ideas and concepts for improving the area.

The locations for the special areas studied in this plan came out of Downtown Committee discussion and their understanding of the priorities and possibilities for the area. Plans such as this will probably be carried out over a period of time as economic conditions allow, rather than all at once. It should be interpreted as explorations of the latent potential hidden in the Downtown to become a more special and meaningful place.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish a vision of Downtown to implement over time. It will assist Downtown merchants, property owners, and designers in creating projects and improvements that are consistent with the essential character of Los Altos. City Planning Staff and Planning Commission will also use this Plan as a conceptual basis for evaluating the merits of new projects and proposed rehabilitation projects. The Plan is further intended as a beginning point for City sponsored streetscape and landscaping improvements.



2.

Understanding the Special Character

The *Los Altos General Plan 1987-2005*, discusses the relationship of Downtown to the rest of the City:

"From the standpoint of community identity, the most important of the commercial areas is the 'Downtown triangle' or 'Downtown village.' "

The General Plan also recognizes the special distinctive qualities of the Downtown:

"It is well-defined, with retail uses focused on State and Main Streets. Tree-lined Main Street curves, and is thus even more distinctive - as Downtown streets go. One- and two-story buildings predominate, and combined with the large parking plazas (with many mature trees) at the rear of the stores, they give the Downtown a low density atmosphere."

The General Plan Review Committee concluded that:

"The Downtown 'village' is an important part of the Los Altos identity/image. Downtown is perceived as the center and the heart of the community. It owes its unique appearance to the combination of:

- Small parcels laid out before World War I along streets perpendicular to the Southern Pacific Railroad (now Foothill Expressway);
- Some 15-20 sixty and seventy-year-old buildings remaining from that period;
- Newer stores constructed to cater to the suburban market that developed primarily in the 1950's and 60's;

- Confinement of the commercial area to the triangle bounded by Foothill Expressway, Edith Avenue, and San Antonio Road;
- Parking plazas; and
- Trees."

One of the greatest problems in suburban communities is that opportunities for public life are spread so thin that successful places that attract groups of people are rarely created. Studies of pedestrian behavior show that people tend to seek out concentrations of other people when they can. This may explain why today's teenagers now go to the shopping mall to hang out. The Downtown has enjoyed the benefits of a concentration of people for years. The rules about walking distances and concentration of uses that are being applied to shopping malls were really pioneered by small downtowns like Los Altos. Besides this important people concentration, Downtown has several other assets:



- the unique, small town "village" character, a character that cannot be duplicated in a modern shopping mall,
- a number of architecturally and historically interesting buildings that contribute greatly to the sense of Downtown as a unique place,
- a number of restaurants, cafés, and grocery stores that draw people to the area,
- the presence of the Civic Center and Post Office contribute to both downtown usage and activity,
- the presence of a diverse mixture of land uses in proximity to the downtown retail core, ranging from single-family residential to hardware stores, to office buildings, to retail stores.

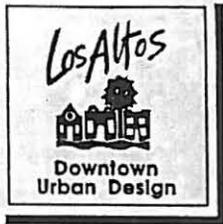
Downtown also faces some problems:

- the potential loss of the pedestrian concentration at the core of Downtown, with pressure for retail commercial to spread to the southern service commercial oriented end of the Downtown triangle,
- the lack of impression and visibility from San Antonio Road, Edith Avenue, and Foothill Expressway,
- the lack of a central focus or open space downtown,
- the lack of regional awareness from Interstate 280 and El Camino Real,
- a parking availability problem during peak shopping periods,
- a lack of awareness of public parking resources and low visibility of these resources from Main and State,

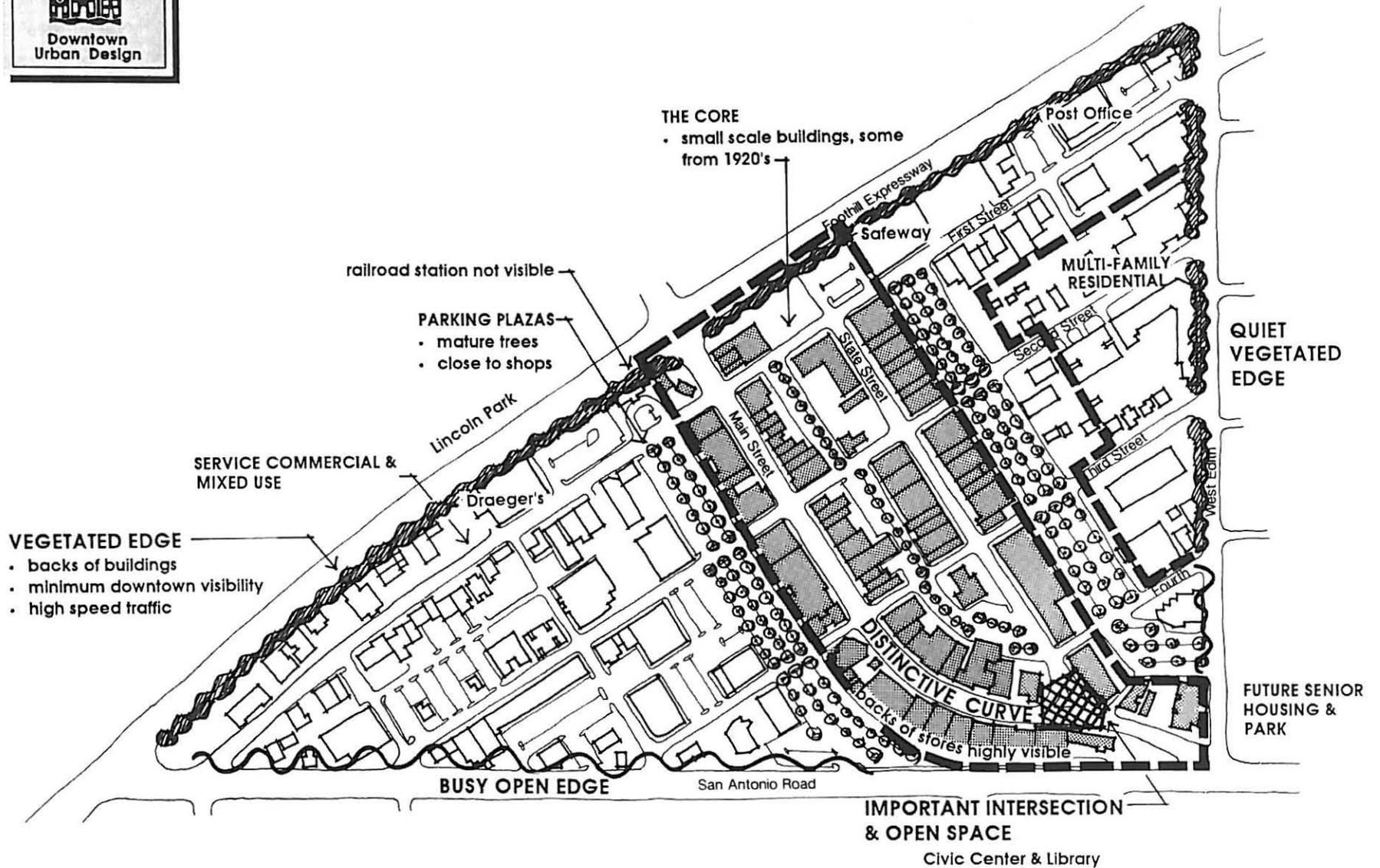
- rear building facades facing parking lots do not project an inviting image,
- building facades need updating to become more contemporary,
- commercial signing needs modernization,
- public streetscape and parking lot improvements need to be enhanced and updated.

These assets and problems are summarized in the following diagram.





Existing Downtown Features



3.

Design Concepts

This Plan proposes to achieve the goals by carrying out a series of design concepts. These concepts have provided a frame for evaluating the existing environment and should provide a guide to the design of new development. An important note regarding the overall approach to Downtown should be emphasized - an attempt to compete with commercial development elsewhere in the City by creating a marketing "theme" is not desired. The problem with establishing such a theme is that it leads to the tendency to create vanilla architecture and a controlled "shopping mall" environment that does not reflect the varied character and history of the community.

Instead, this plan focuses on the actions and physical design concepts that are most important to the continued vitality of Downtown, including increasing the visibility of downtown, maintaining the pedestrian vitality of the area. The concept plan establishes the goals for a particular area, and sets the general tone and character. The following design concepts are the main ideas that guide all subsequent recommendations for design and implementation. These concepts were shaped by Downtown Committee discussions, as well as the policy framework established by the General Plan.

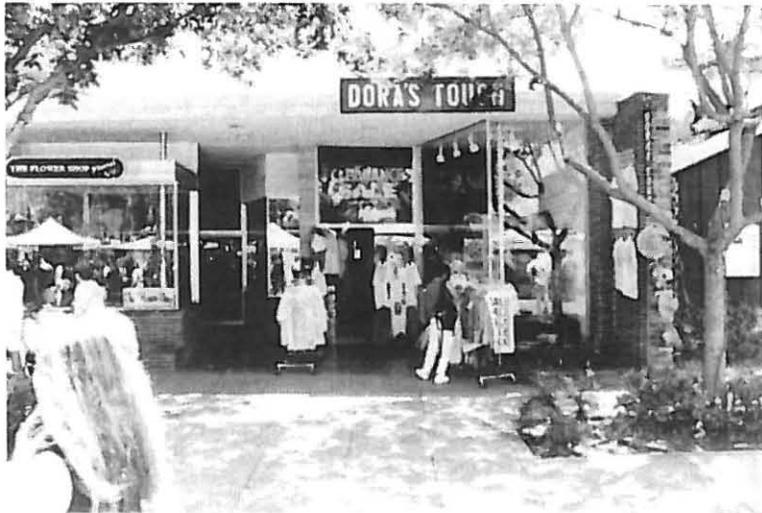
- Improve Downtown Los Altos' first impression at its edges.
- Create legible, recognizable entry points into the Downtown Area.
- Externalize the character of the Village to increase awareness of Downtown character and resources.
- Create strong pedestrian linkages to the Civic and residential areas adjacent the Downtown.

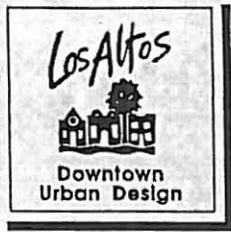
- Develop pedestrian walkways, or "paseo" system, to better link rear parking plazas to the stores along State and Main Streets.
- Promote pedestrian oriented activities and the ability to walk, rather than drive, from one place to another.
- Provide additional public outdoor plazas and eating areas, visible from the street, to enhance the ambiance of the downtown.
- Ensure the continued concentration of pedestrian retail in the downtown core area, and the continued provision of community-serving uses such as grocery stores, hardware stores and the Post Office at the perimeter of the core.
- Preserve the historic character of Downtown Los Altos by renovating and restoring existing historic buildings.
- Enhance the character of storefronts and service uses such as the Post Office, to add life to the overall streetscape as well as portray

the store's image and character to the auto and pedestrian traffic.

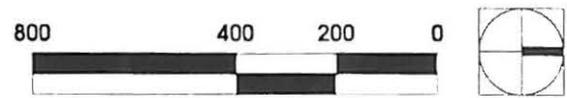
- Enhance existing retail development and promote highly visible, vital activities within the downtown core area.
- Plan for additional parking facilities.
- Decrease the visual prominence of parking lots.
- Improve the appearance of signage.
- Increase the identification of businesses and buildings.

The following diagram illustrates these concepts.





Design Concept Diagram



LEGEND

- Sense of Entry
- Arrival Zone
- Plaza Open Space
- Parking Plaza
- Pedestrian Link
- Node
- Special Study Area

Mixed Use / Parking Garage Site

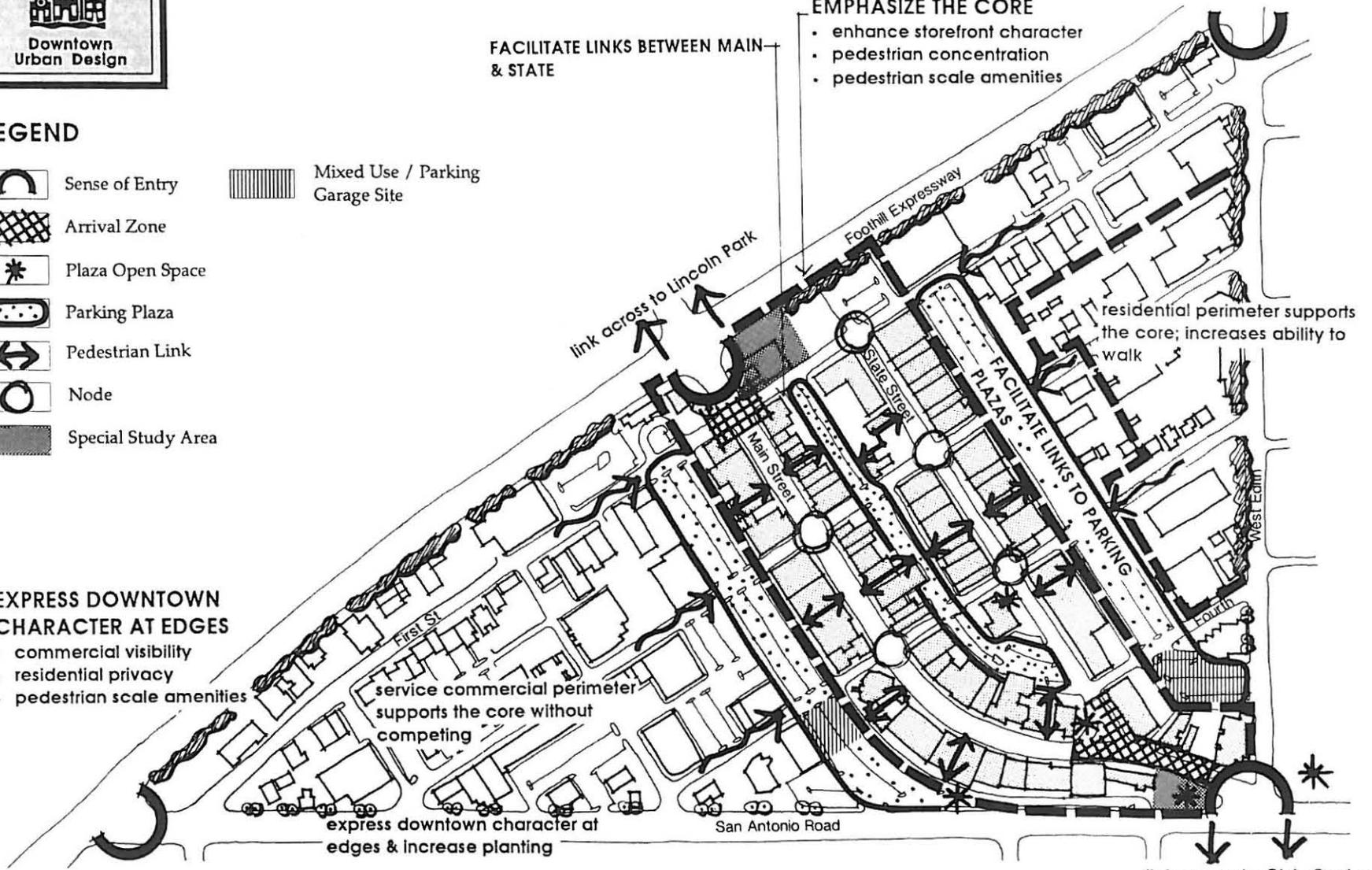
FACILITATE LINKS BETWEEN MAIN & STATE

EMPHASIZE THE CORE

- enhance storefront character
- pedestrian concentration
- pedestrian scale amenities

EXPRESS DOWNTOWN CHARACTER AT EDGES

- commercial visibility
- residential privacy
- pedestrian scale amenities



service commercial perimeter supports the core without competing

residential perimeter supports the core; increases ability to walk

express downtown character at edges & increase planting

link across to Lincoln Park

link across to Civic Center

4.

The First Steps

The first steps toward carrying out the design concepts and strategies presented in the previous section will be critical to the overall success of the Downtown enhancement effort. As a result of Committee priority directions, the focus of this Plan has become the following "building blocks":

Downtown Entries: Entries give an important first impression for visitors, as well as becoming a symbol of "home" for residents on a daily basis. Thus, they are significant symbols that reflect the character of the City. Major entries to the Village triangle from San Antonio and Foothill could be denoted with a series of entry statements, using special planting, monoliths, walls, and signing. Although buildings and traffic patterns already exist at each entry, future development should be designed so as to enhance the entry intersections, and give a distinct identity to the Village.

Downtown Edges: The edges of the Downtown triangle, Foothill Boulevard, Edith Avenue, and San Antonio Road, define the overall character of the area for those that pass by. Although these streets are dominated by automobile movement, they can increase awareness of Downtown resources and present an outward appearance consistent with the small-scale, pedestrian core.

The Core: The Core of Downtown, the area along Main and State Streets between First and San Antonio, is the destination for most Downtown visitors. This area has the greatest pedestrian density, as well as a concentration of retail stores and restaurants. Efforts to improve the distinctive physical appearance and small scale pedestrian qualities of the core can help to improve the quality of life in Los Altos.

Public Open Space: A number of plazas and open spaces have been identified as important to the image and character of the Village area.

These include the Rotary Tree Plaza, the Costume Bank plaza, Edith / San Antonio Plaza, the San Antonio Plaza and Walk, and the street corner extensions on Main and State Streets.

Pedestrian Friendly Environment: A system of pedestrian pathways, or "paseos," is intended to provide a connection between the parking plazas and Main Street in a pedestrian-friendly, small scaled manner. The scale of these pedestrian paseos is seen as a contrast with the character of both the commercial areas along Main Street, and the auto-dominated Foothill Expressway and San Antonio Road. Other pedestrian-friendly elements include colorful planting, pots, tree grates, banners, and other site amenities.

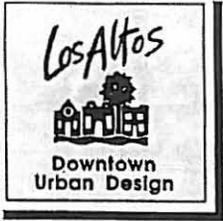
Commercial Infill and Rehabilitation: The Plan explores several ways to improve the character of the area through infill and rehabilitation. As rehabilitation becomes an economically viable option, several methods will become feasible, including creating a greater architectural presence with towers, enhancing store entry plazas, and improving the outdoor pedestrian environment with walkways and activities. Buildings facade rehabilitation might include further articulation and detailing with display windows, and awnings, as well as signage improvements.

Parking: Adequate and accessible parking is an imperative element in downtown development without transit services. This Plan envisions the addition of several parking garages in the parking plazas to handle long-term parking and peak parking demands. These garages would be conveniently located, but set away from Main Street to avoid the visual problems of massive parking facilities within a low-rise streetscape. Potential locations for these structures include the parking plaza at State and Fourth, and a portion of the parking plaza at Third and San Antonio.

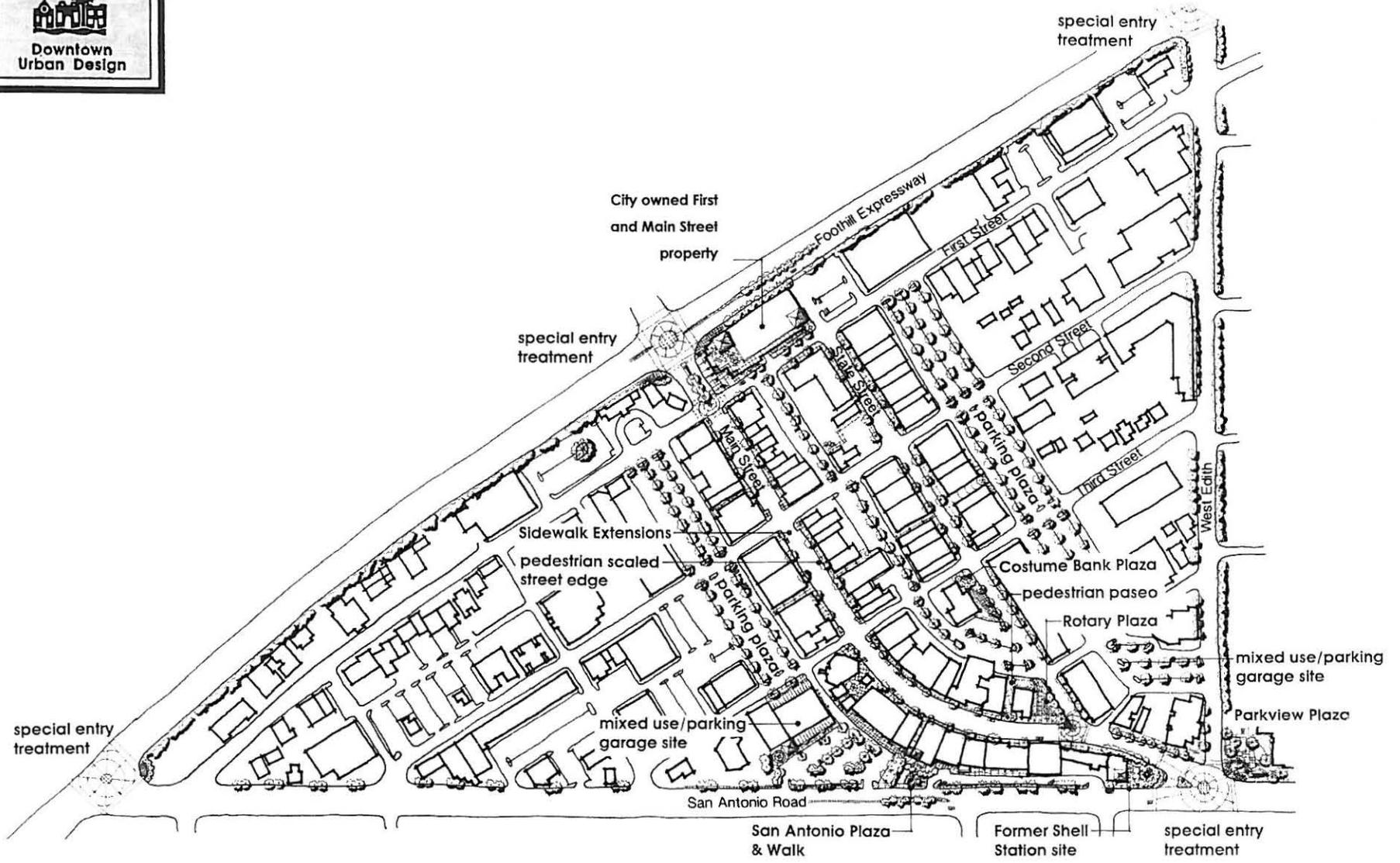
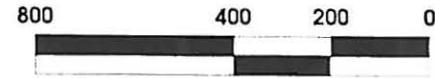
Most of the existing parking plazas would remain as they are, providing the easily accessed parking lots that are so convenient for shoppers.

Downtown Landscaping: Landscaping in the Village would generally be more urban and public in appearance, with a greater proportion of paved surfaces than other areas. Colorful perennial planting could become a feature at entry areas and in street medians. New and replacement trees could be located in tree grates, thus providing a walkable surface while still allowing ample air and water to reach the soil.

The following illustrative plan presents a vision of how the village could look after taking these first steps.



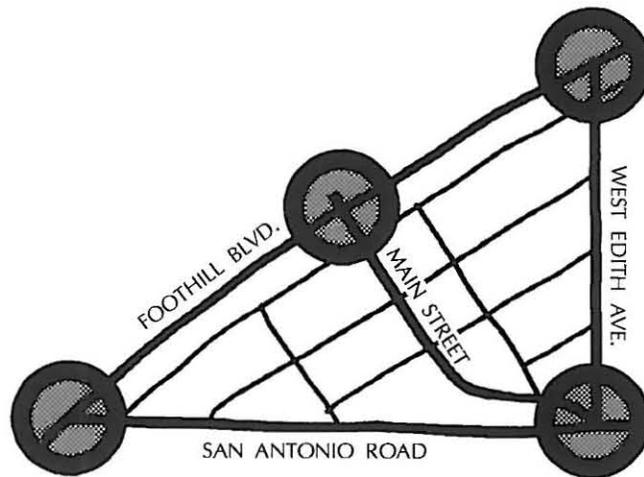
Illustrative Plan



Downtown Entries

As the initial points of visibility and access, the entries to the Downtown Village strongly influence its image. Like the front door of a house, entries can dramatically announce the character of what is beyond, and effect a meaningful transition from "outside" to inside. Entry locations include:

- San Antonio Road and Main Street
- Foothill Boulevard and Main Street
- Foothill Boulevard and West Edith Avenue
- Foothill Boulevard and San Antonio Road
- El Monte Road and I-280



key map, entry locations

Recommendations

The design of entries into the Downtown will be most unifying if all are a variation of a strong concept and theme. Common elements such as monoliths, signing, special intersection paving, and special planting can be combined in varying ways to produce a pleasing sense of entry.

San Antonio and Main Entry

The San Antonio and Main Street intersection acts as one of two entries to the core of Downtown. It has the potential to become a memorable point along San Antonio Road, and link the Downtown with the Civic Center. Edith / San Antonio Plaza and the rehabilitated Shell station site will introduce an active Downtown atmosphere.

Design features might include:

- small flowering accent trees
- flowering perennial plants at corners and in medians
- improved Downtown signing
- special street paving
- an overhead banner system for holidays and special events
- outdoor corner plazas
- a fountain or other focal element

Foothill and Main Entry

The Foothill and Main Street intersection serves as the other of the two entries to the core of Downtown. It has the potential to become a focal point along Foothill Boulevard, introducing urbane elements that contrast strongly with the green, park-like street edge.

Design features might include:

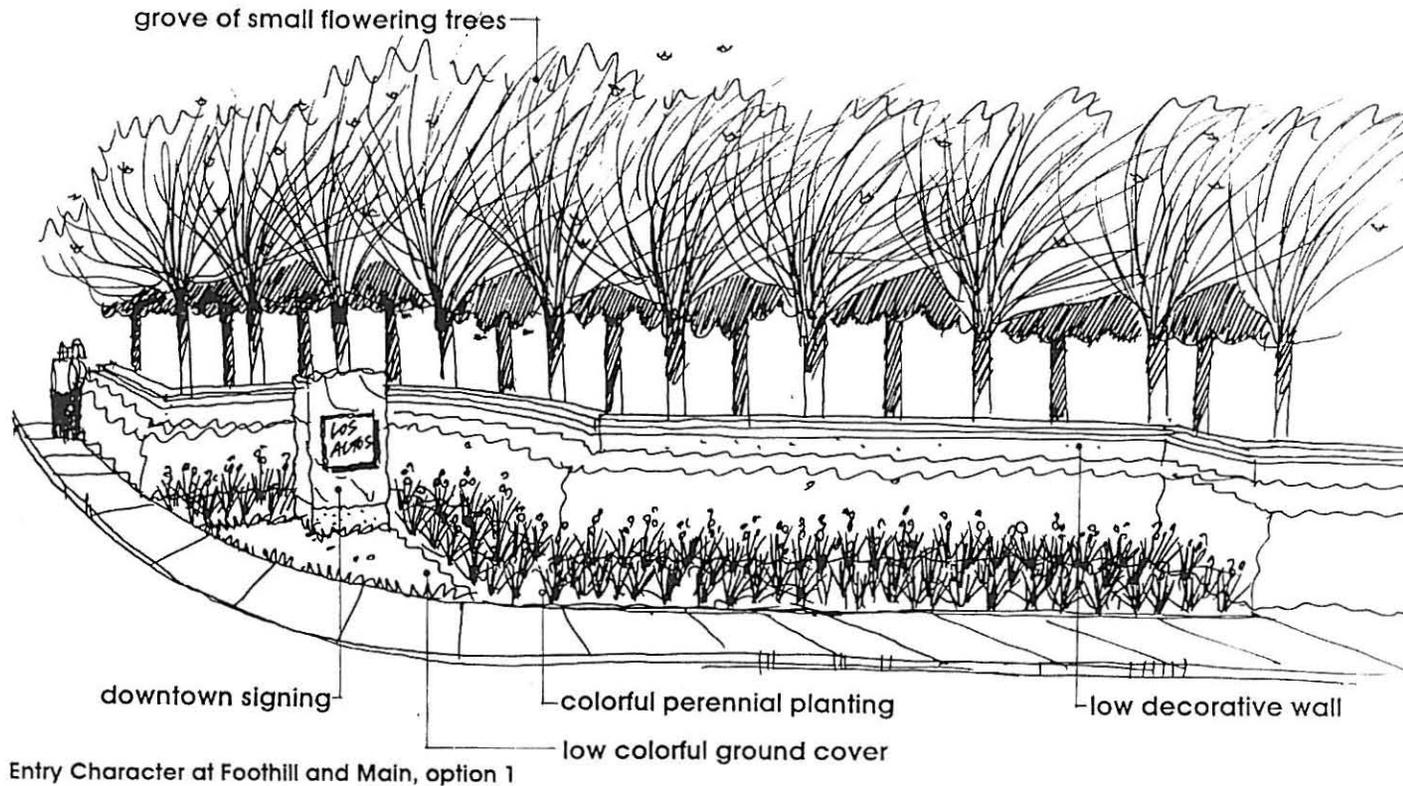
- small accent flowering trees
- flowering perennial plants
- improved public entry signage that reflects the urbane, small scale qualities of the Downtown
- monoliths, walls, or other architectonic elements that define the entry space
- views of active, vital Downtown uses, such as cafés or retail estab-

lishments

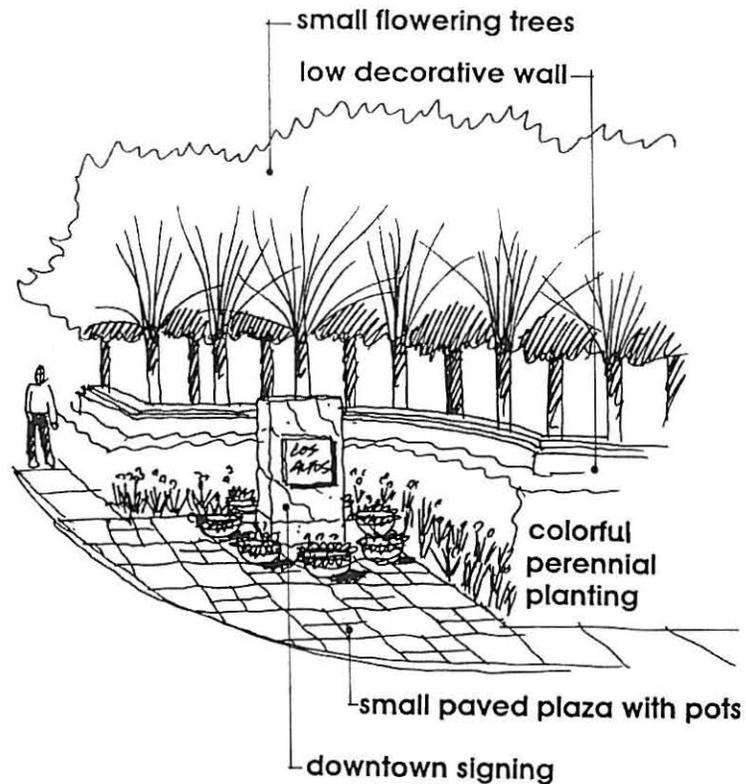
- special street paving

Foothill and Edith Entry

The Foothill and Edith intersection is an entry to the residential portion of Downtown. As such, privacy should be a primary design determinant. The character proposed for other Downtown entries should be modified to suit the less formal, quieter nature of this entry.



Entry Character at Foothill and Main, option 1

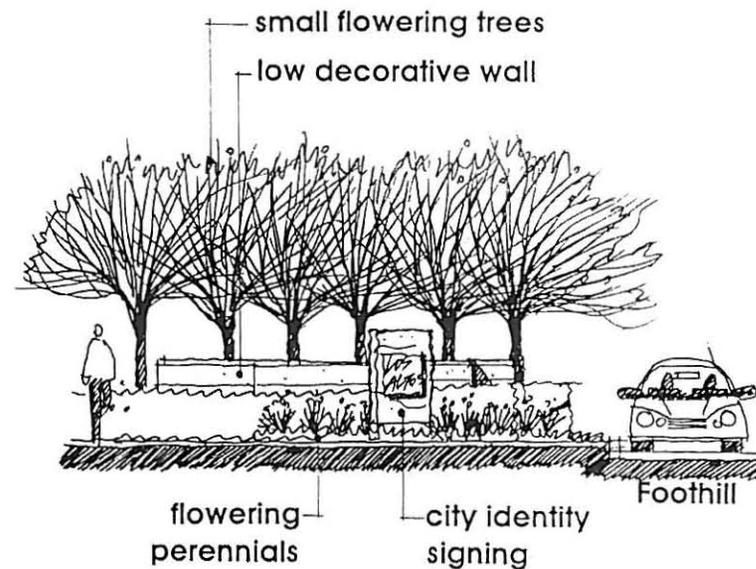


Entry Character at Foothill and Main, option 2

As with the Foothill/San Antonio entry, limited space is currently available; efforts to secure additional space for the entry feature will be needed.

Design features might include:

- small flowering accent trees
- Downtown identity signing
- flowering perennial plants



Entry Character at Foothill and Main, section

- a low hedge of evergreen plants
- special street paving

Foothill and San Antonio Entry

McElroy's lumberyard dominates the Foothill and San Antonio intersection. This service commercial use is a visible reminder that Downtown Los Altos is a working downtown, with a diverse mixture of uses. For this reason, the Downtown Committee wished to create an entry that filters views rather than blocking views of the lumberyard.

The entry design should be consistent with the elements established for the Main Street entries, but less formal in character. Efforts to obtain a

corner easement or acquire land for the entry will be necessary, since only limited space is currently available.

Design features might include:

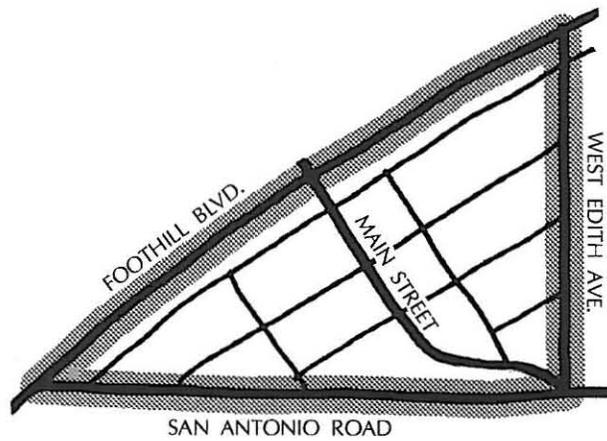
- small flowering accent trees
- special street paving
- an evergreen hedge
- Downtown identity signing
- flowering perennial plants

I-280 and El Monte Road Entry

While not entirely under City control, the ease of finding Downtown Los Altos is influenced by the appearance of signing and planting at the Freeway and along El Monte Road. While the Downtown Committee developed no specific recommendations for this entry, the issue was raised as an area of concern. Future efforts should be undertaken to address the legibility and ease of finding the Downtown from a city-wide and regional perspective.

Downtown Edges

Edges are another important component of the first impression that passers by and visitors perceive. Much of the pleasant character of the Downtown is currently restricted to internal streets, and is thus never seen by those that stay outside. Externalizing the elements that make the Village special by introducing them along Foothill Boulevard, San Antonio Road, and Edith Avenue would help to increase awareness and appreciation of Downtown resources. All streets surrounding the Downtown are the major automobile circulation routes, and are appropriate for an urban "boulevard" streetscape treatment including continuous tree planting and street amenities.



key map, edge locations

West Edith Avenue

West Edith Avenue, while not specifically discussed by the Downtown Committee, could also benefit from a higher degree of visual consistency with the Downtown. Because of the residential character of the street, plant materials are the most appropriate way to achieve this consistency. Introduction of the parking plaza tree, the Chinese Pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*) would indicate to passing motorists that they have entered the Downtown.

San Antonio Road

The perimeter of the Downtown is highly visible from San Antonio Road. Urban design goals for this street edge include maintaining the commercial visibility, increasing the continuity of the street edge, and expressing the unique elements of the core.

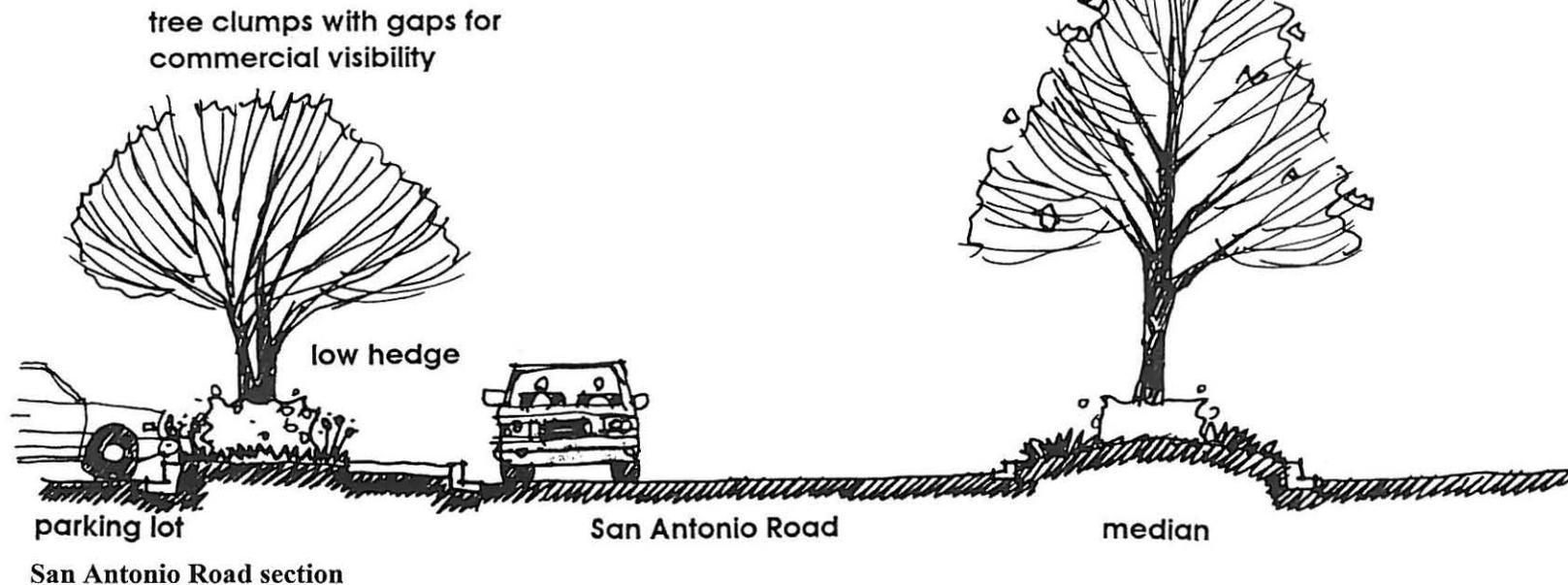
Street tree plantings are an effective means of creating a sense of continuity. Group street trees in close clumps of two trees, with a break between each clump. This treatment would help to break up the large amount of paved surface, while also allowing a continuous commercial visibility. Several elements could be borrowed from Main and State Streets to help to externalize the character of the core.

Among these elements are:

- the parking plaza tree, Chinese Pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*);
- special holiday decorations, such as the "twinkle" lights;
- repetition of selected pedestrian amenities, such as pots, fountains, colorful planting, and special paving;
- repetition of Downtown banners and light fixtures.

Foothill Expressway

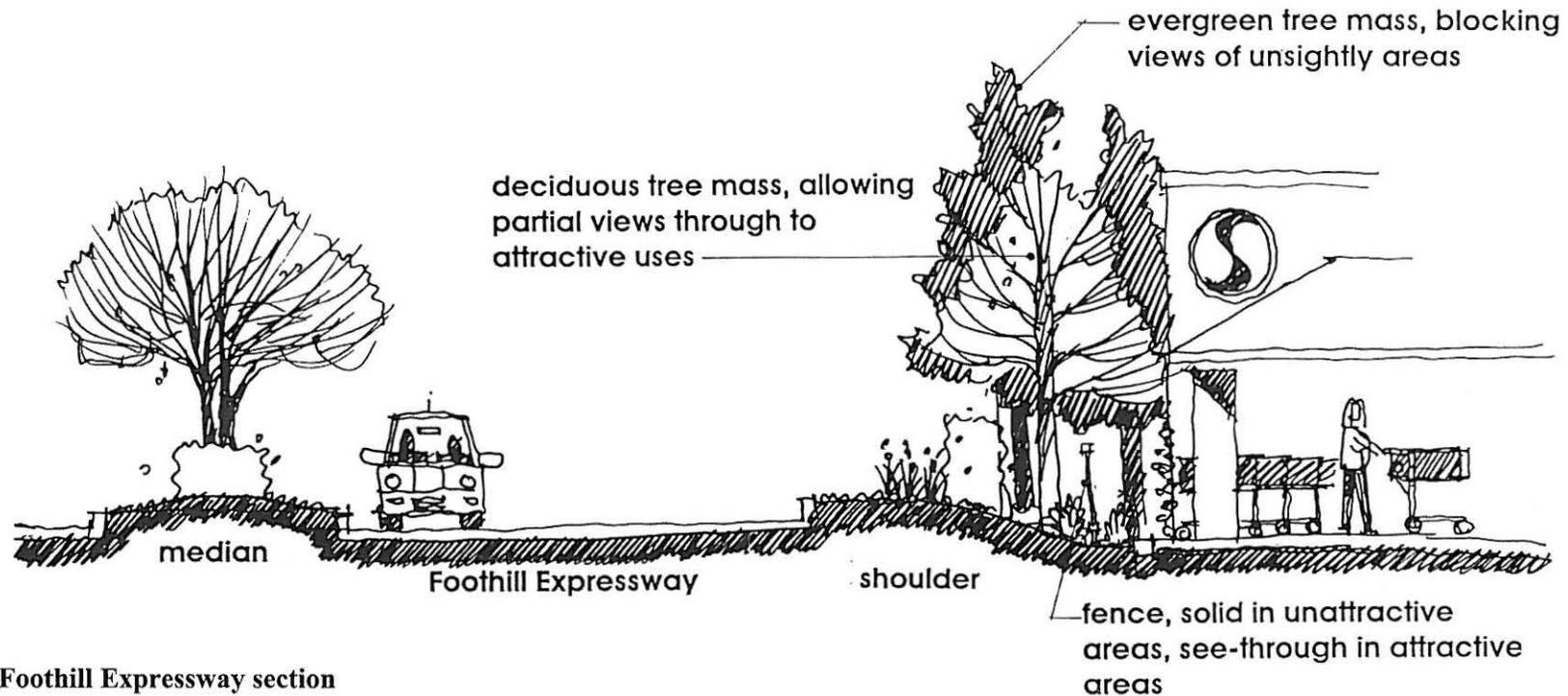
Foothill Expressway, once the railroad right-of-way, is a major north-south link lined with large mature trees and residential uses. The street currently turns its back on Downtown.



The frost of December 1990 severely damaged the tree planting along Foothill. The City has made replacing these trees a high priority. Rather than completely blocking motorist views of Downtown, the current replanting plans have selectively allowed filtered views to commercial uses with the goal of increasing awareness of the Downtown from this important street.

Future phases of replanting along Foothill will focus on improving the median appearance. Plant materials appropriate to this section of Foothill are those with a large, loose, informal character and seasonal interest.

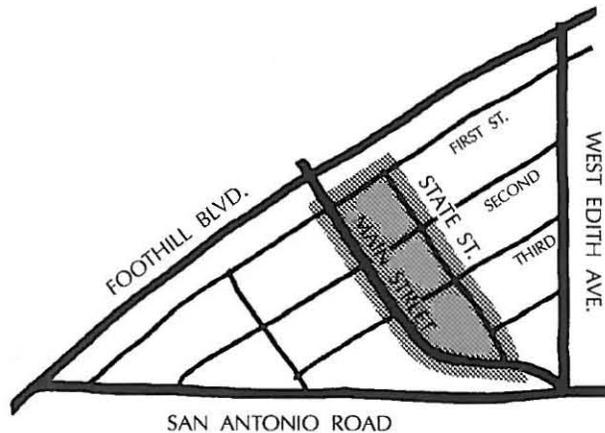
The existing dilapidated chain link fencing is under the jurisdiction of Santa Clara County. The City should initiate discussions with County Staff to explore replacing the chain link fence with a more attractive fence reflective of the Downtown's importance as a business location.



Foothill Expressway section

The Core

Centering on Main and State Streets, the Core is the activity hub that attracts people and sustains the Downtown. An important challenge for the future will be to reinforce the importance of the Core in a way that will ensure the continuing economic vitality, while preserving its intrinsic, valuable urban design qualities.



key map, the core

Many of the special characteristics of the overall Downtown can be attributed to the Core, including the historic, intimate scale of buildings, the pedestrian friendliness of the street environment, and the concentration of pedestrians. The following recommendations explore ways to strengthen these special characteristics.

Recommendations

Several strategies can be used to unify the core and emphasize it as an important pedestrian destination, including:

- reinforcing physical links between Main and State Streets
- drawing people to the area with anchor stores
- concentrating active land uses within the core
- heightening the pedestrian scale of the streetscape
- creating memorable landmarks

Physical Links

Main and State Streets, the two major linear circulation paths, define the core of Downtown Los Altos. Right now, these streets are separate entities, with little sense of interconnection. The experience of walking or driving between these two streets could be a unifying element of the core, if the side streets (First, Second and Third) and pedestrian walkways present a level of intensity and amenity consistent with Main and State.

The desired consistency along First, Second, and Third Streets, as well as the pedestrian walkways (also called paseos), can be achieved in a number of ways. These include:

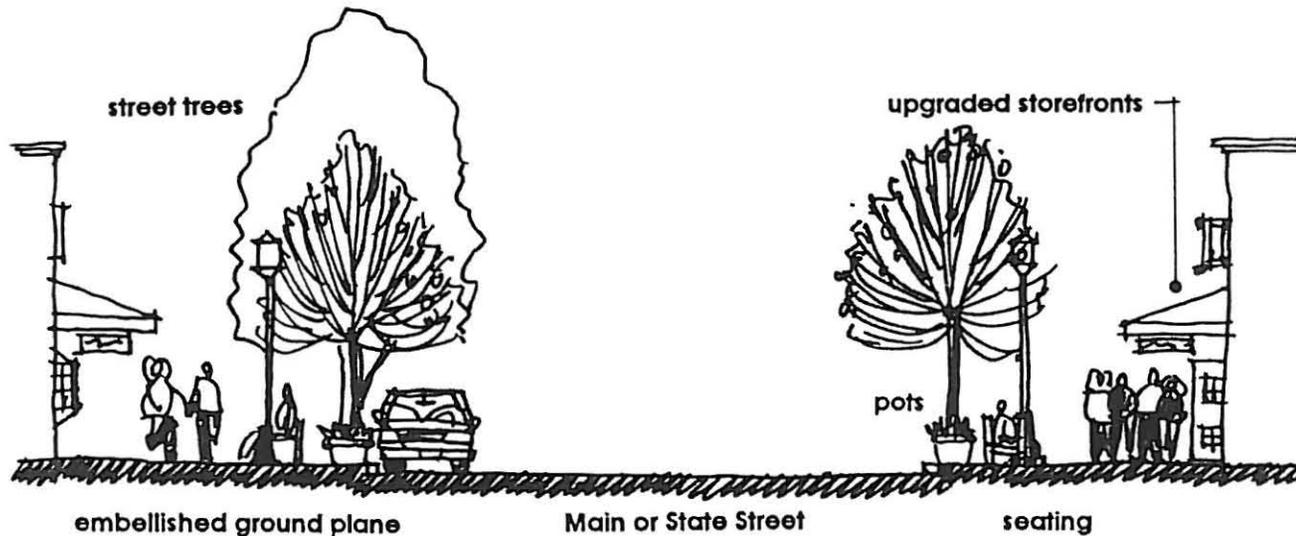
- initiating facade improvements to remove blank walls and enhance displays, awnings and signing
- providing a higher level of streetscape amenity in the form of benches, banners and landscaping

These methods are discussed further in the sections on *Pedestrian Friendly Environment* and *Commercial Infill and Rehabilitation*.

Anchor Stores

An anchor, in the language of the shopping mall developer, is a store that has a strong customer attraction and good marketing, thus drawing people to a location. Anchors are valuable in that these people may potentially stay and finish their shopping in the area, rather than traveling to another location. This concept can be applied to the Downtown, as well as the shopping mall.

Anchors can be of a variety of land uses and sizes, including restaurants, grocery, or drug stores. Anchors are not necessarily large square-footage chain stores, but can also be small high-profile, high-interest establishments that cater to local needs. From an urban design point of view, the best location for an anchor would be one that supports the vitality and image of the Core and promotes the village atmosphere. Such locations include street corners on Main or State, on the curved portion of Main along San Antonio, or other visually prominent places in the Core. Creating additional anchors outside the Core may dilute the pedestrian concentration, and fragment the environment, rather than unifying it.



Pedestrian scaled streetscape along Main and State Streets

Pedestrian-scaled Streetscape

Part of what defines the core is an increased level of pedestrian intensity. As such, the scale and level of detail in the street environment should be appropriate for pedestrian usage. In the core, it is appropriate for building interior uses to spill out onto exterior sidewalk and plaza areas with cafes and displays. These pedestrian scaled amenities are discussed further in the section on *Pedestrian Friendly Environment*.

Active Land Uses

Another way to emphasize the importance of the core is to concentrate active vital land uses within the area. Successful downtowns almost always involve uses that generate nighttime activity. These uses can populate the streets, create excitement, increase safety, and reinforce the core as an important destination. Among the uses that can contribute to nighttime activity are retail shops, drug stores, restaurants, video stores, bars, record shops, and cultural facilities.

In addition to active nighttime uses, the importance of the Core can also

be reinforced by emphasizing the mixture and intensity of uses that occur there, including retail, housing, office uses, and especially those uses that attract many pedestrians, such as small storefront shops and restaurants. The Core is particularly appropriate for a vertical mixture of uses, for example, a situation where office space is located on the second floor above a retail store.

The perimeter of the Downtown to the north and south of the Core is best suited to service commercial support land uses, such as banks and hardware stores.

Landmarks

Many commercial buildings in Downtown Los Altos have distinctive architectural qualities that make important contributions to the "village character" of the core. In many cases, these qualities could be further improved upon or emphasized to the benefit of the Downtown image.



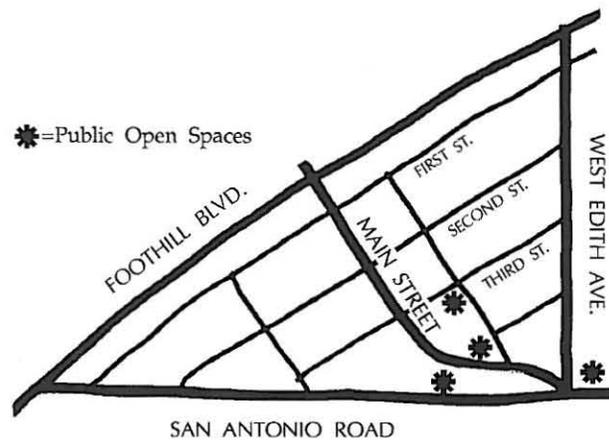
The historic Railroad Station near the intersection of Foothill and Main is an example of an existing landmark in need of emphasis. Opening up views from Foothill Expressway and highlighting the building from First Street would draw attention to the importance of the core.

The addition of new landmarks in the process of infilling the Downtown should also support the importance of the core. The best location for taller building elements and towers would be on street corners on Main or State. Non-buildings can also be landmarks. Prominently located decorative fountains can also be memorable pieces in the fabric of the core.

Public Open Space

Public outdoor use spaces such as plazas, corner extensions, and courtyards provide opportunities for gatherings and public events to occur in the Downtown. These open spaces can provide areas for a variety of activities, including resting, waiting, meeting, or eating. They can convey both the festive and urban qualities of the Downtown. To encourage usage, each open space should be comfortable, in terms of solar exposure and wind protection. Locate outdoor use areas on the sunny exposure of buildings. The design of these spaces should offer choices to the visitor; with places to sit in both sun and shade. Shade can be provided by trees, umbrellas and awnings.

The open space should provide physical form, scale and design that accommodates pedestrians. Each should be a multi-purpose space with a potential location for many diverse public activities. Seating flexibility is



key map, public open space

important. Arrange seating to accommodate various numbers of individuals, from a person sitting alone to four friends chatting.

The open space should seem to be spatially defined, with clear boundaries, what designers call "creating an outdoor room." Ways to accomplish this definition include a change in paving materials, walls, overhead structures, level changes and planting.

Views seen while using the open space are also significant. Use planting or attractive screening to block undesirable views and provide privacy or separation where required.

Potential uses to consider when designing a public open space include:

- eating
- sitting
- lunch time & evening use
- gatherings of large groups of people
- holiday events and ceremonies
- starting point for parades, races, and civic events
- outdoor street entertainers, for example, a juggler
- location for concerts

Design features might include:

- seating
- public art
- "Welcome to Los Altos" signing, planting, and structures
- a decorative fountain
- a mixture of planted and paved areas
- a tree bosque for shade
- colorful planting in pots
- an outdoor vendor cart
- paved space for 20 to 30 people to gather
- colorful banners for special events
- special lighting, including colored lanterns and tree uplights

- a stage or amphitheater
- a covered structure, such as a gazebo or trellis
- a public toilet
- newspaper and bicycle racks
- night time lighting

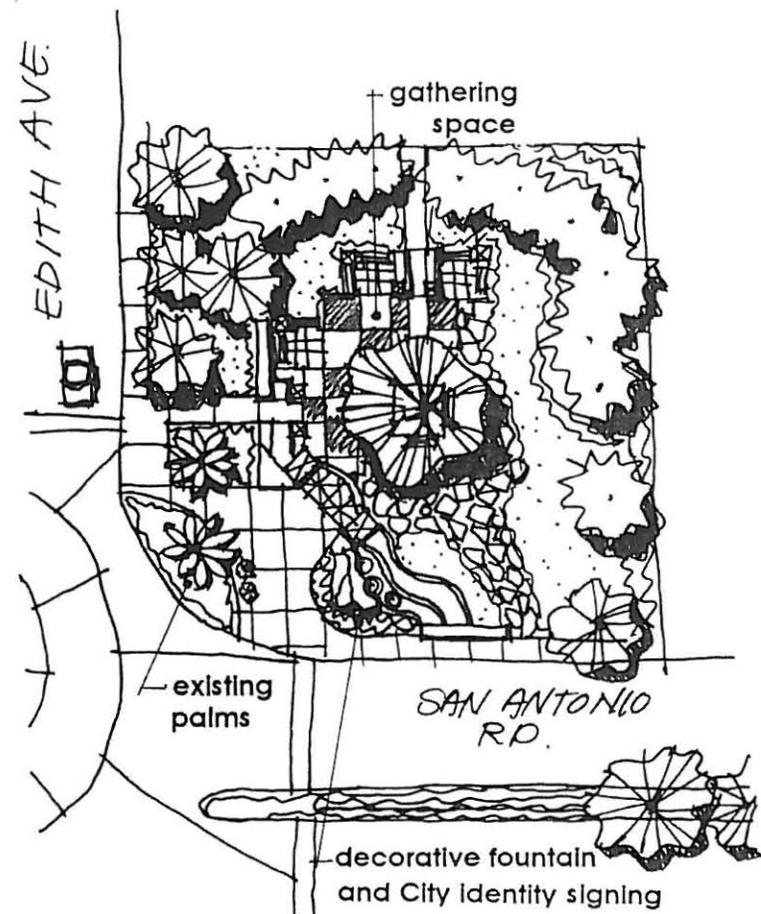
Several important public open spaces have been identified through the process of preparing this plan, including:

- Edith / San Antonio Plaza
- Rotary Tree Plaza
- San Antonio Plaza and Walk
- Costume Bank Plaza
- Main/San Antonio Plaza, on the old Shell station site
- Street corner extensions at the corners of Main, and State, at First, Second, and Third Streets

Recommendations

Edith / San Antonio Plaza

Set at the corner of Edith Avenue and San Antonio Road, Edith / San Antonio Plaza has the potential to become a Downtown entry symbol, as well as a link between the Downtown and the Civic center complex across San Antonio Road. It can also provide a gathering space for residents of the future senior housing complex.

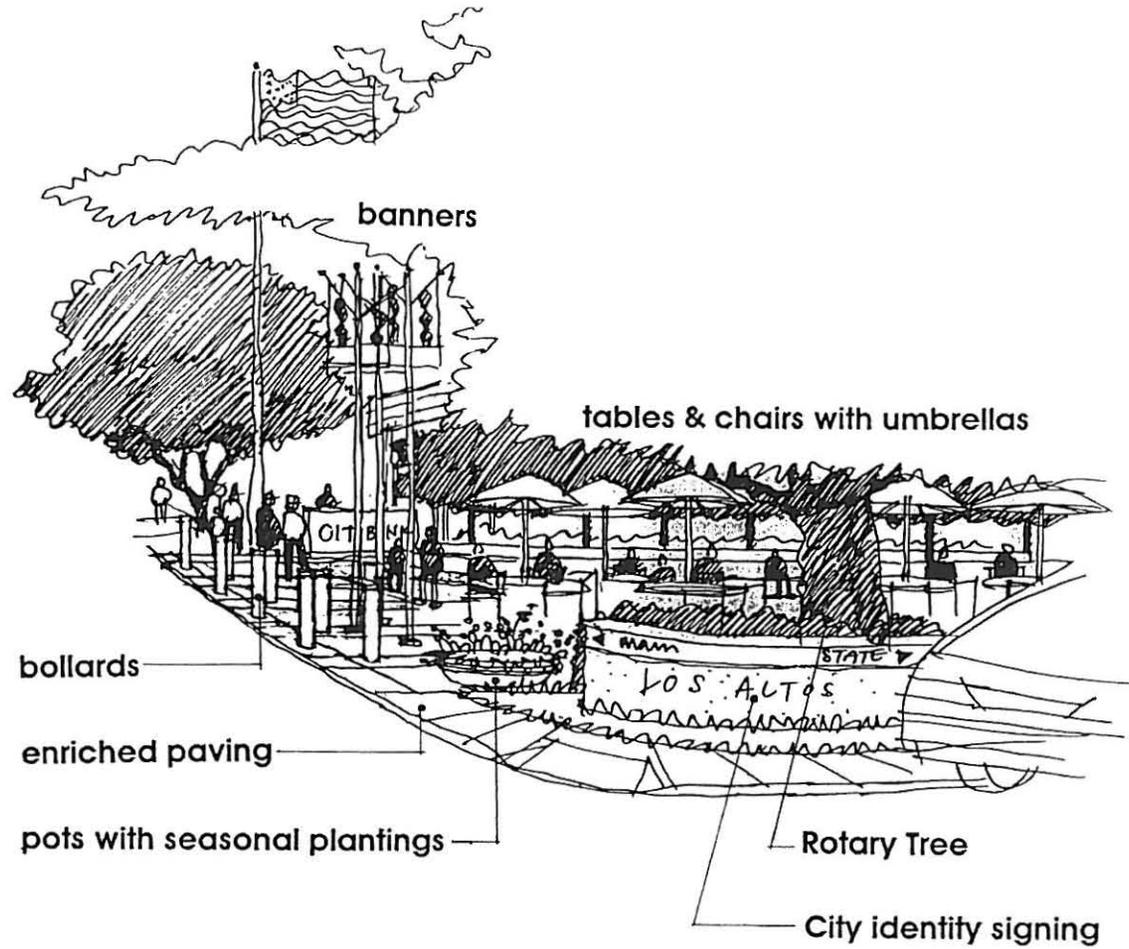


Plan of Edith / San Antonio Plaza

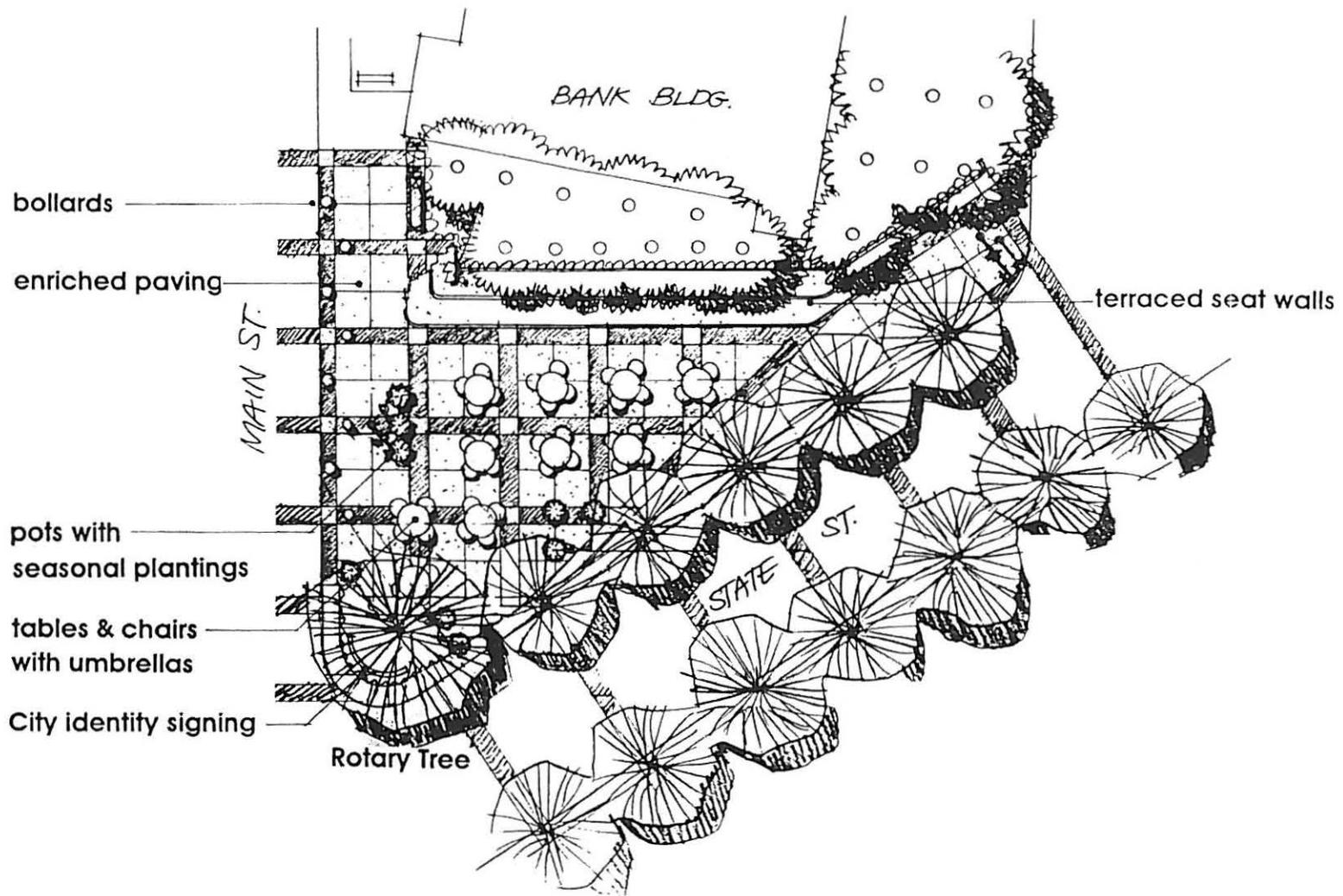
Rotary Tree Plaza

The Rotary Tree Plaza area has the potential to become the gateway to the pedestrian core from San Antonio Road. Located at the split of Main and State Streets, the existing space is often used as a focus for Downtown special events, such as the existing right t

larged to create a significant Downtown amenity.



Rotary Tree Plaza

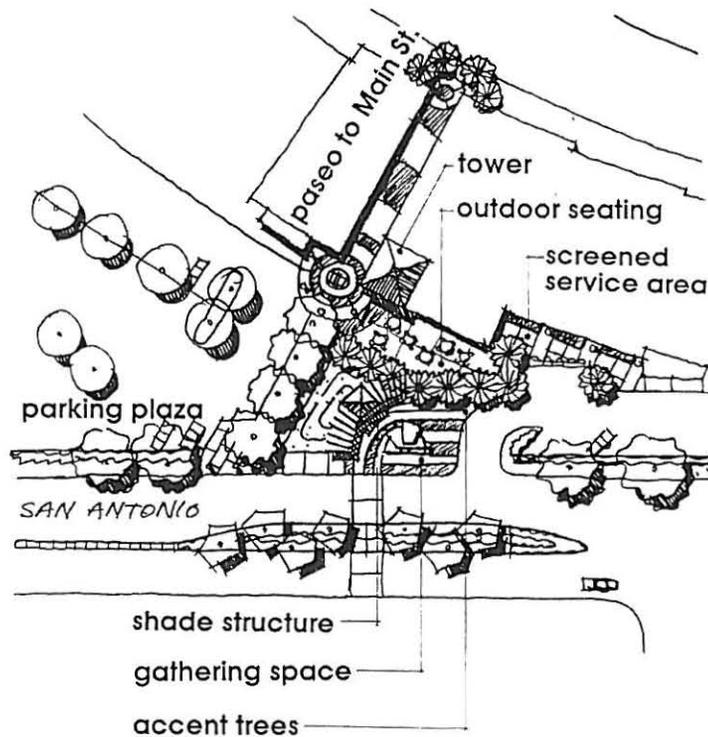


Rotary Tree Plaza Plan

San Antonio Plaza and Walk

San Antonio Plaza and Walk is located at the east end of the parking plaza behind Main Street, where the curved rear building facades of Main Street are visible from San Antonio Road. The space for this open space would be carved out of the existing parking lot, where the curve reduces the circulation efficiency. The parking spaces lost would be easily made up with the creation of a parking garage in the vicinity.

The development of a public plaza space at this location can help to externalize the Village character, as discussed in the preceding section on



San Antonio Plaza & Walk, plan

Edges. The image of the rear building facades will need improvement with the addition of displays, awnings and signing. Garbage and service areas will also need enhancement.

Costume Bank Plaza

Located at the corner of Third Street and State Street in front of the Costume Bank, this plaza could be a focus for activity along State Street.

Street Corner Extensions

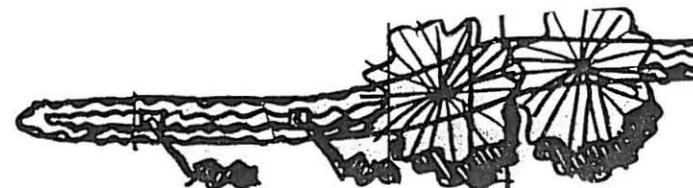
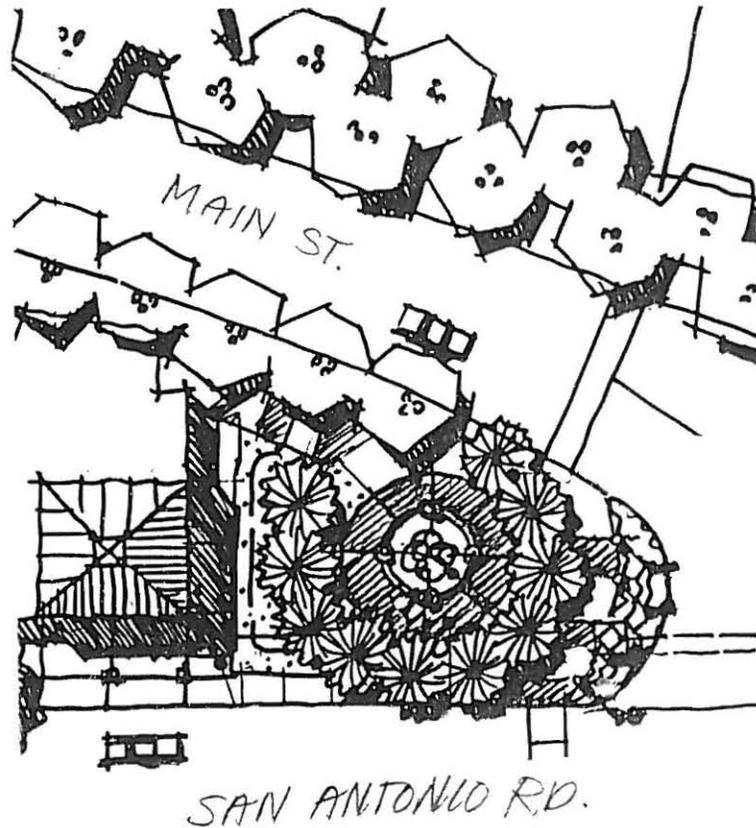
Street corners within the Downtown core, specifically Main and State Streets at First, Second, and Third, act as important nodes, or points of concentrated activity. Creating small plaza extensions by widening the sidewalk at these points can add needed pedestrian-friendly open space to the Downtown.

Street corner extensions have many safety benefits as well. They provide a shortened pedestrian path and increased visibility for both pedestrians and drivers on side streets, without constricting the actual traffic flow.



Main/San Antonio Plaza

The street corner of the old Shell Station site has been identified as another desirable location for a public open space. This site is a prominent part of the Downtown entry at the end of Main Street. The character of this plaza might draw upon the proximity to City Hall as well as the entry, creating a civic, public landmark along San Antonio Road. The *Special Study Areas* section shows a sketch of a possible plaza design at this location.



Plan, Main/San Antonio Plaza

Pedestrian Friendly Environment

Much of the special character of Downtown Los Altos comes from its pedestrian-friendly environment. This environment, where people can walk from place to place, can be strengthened with the addition of an improved pedestrian paseo system, as well as a heightened level of visual richness and amenity.

Visual richness can be created through the use of special plantings, flowering trees, and a variety of furniture elements such as bollards, benches, pots and trash receptacles. Other small-scale street furniture that can create visual richness includes:

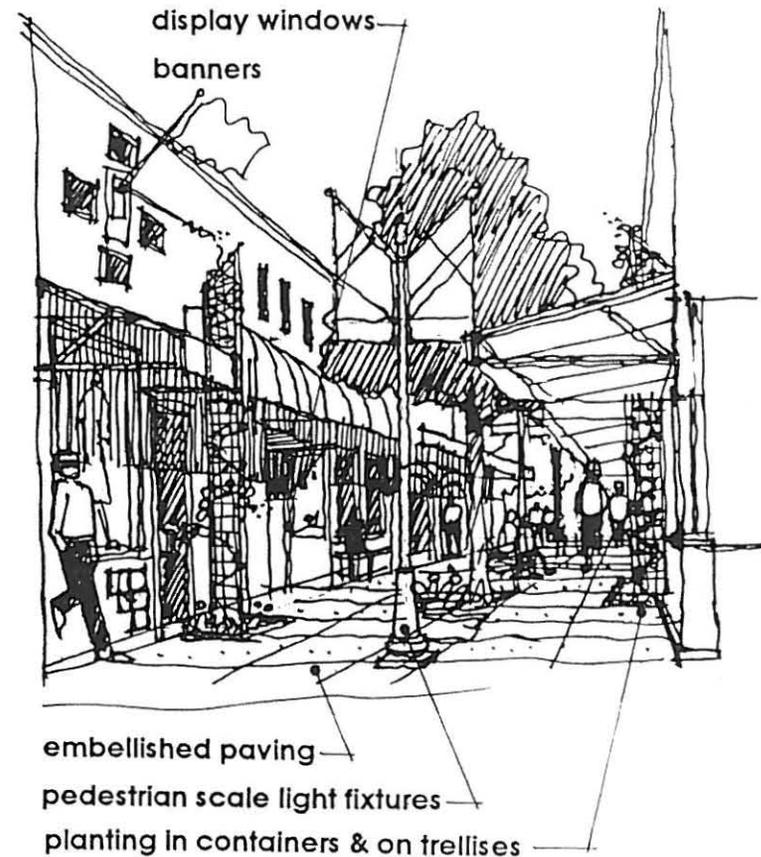
- tree grates and guards
- lighting
- sculpture
- decorative fountains
- detailed paving

Recommendations

Pedestrian Paseo and Circulation System

Pedestrian paseos can be a vital part of a pedestrian environment. These narrow walkways are intended to provide a sense of mystery and discovery away from the automobile. A common occurrence in European cities, the paseo is designed as a retail-lined walkway with small scale colorful planting, pots, seating, lighting and signing. The design of these walkways should encourage activities typical to a

small town, village environment: people-watching, resting, waiting, meeting, etc.



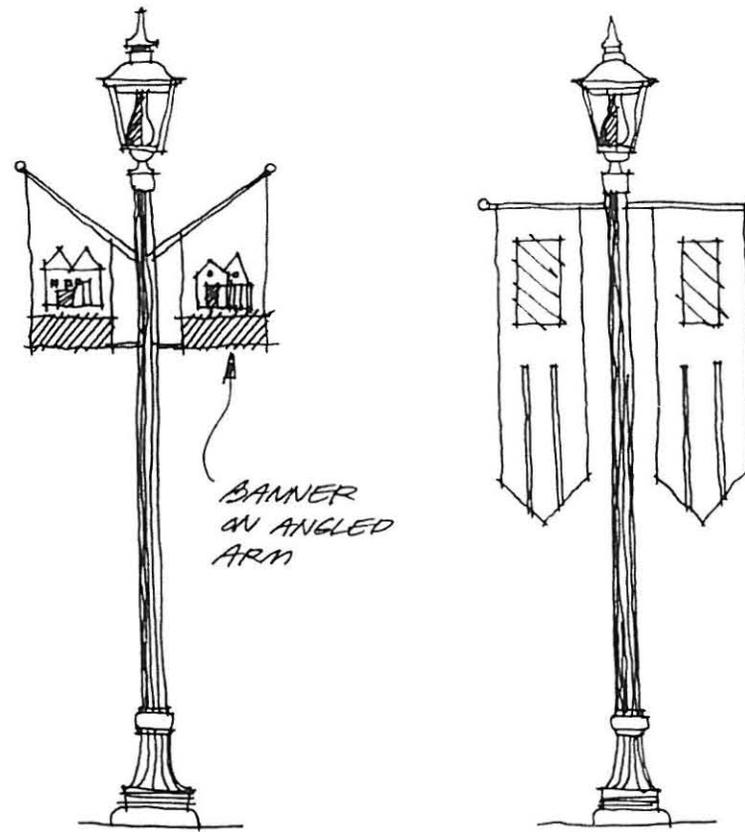
Pedestrian Paseo

Paseos can supplement the street circulation system providing another connection to the parking plazas behind the street-front commercial establishments. The following items should be considered when designing the pedestrian pathways:

- Convert existing unused outdoor spaces located between buildings or adjacent to parking areas into pedestrian ways. Add new walkways in conjunction with new development in locations that will improve circulation links to the parking plazas and San Antonio Road.
- Locate window displays, signage, and secondary entries to businesses along these pathways to add interest and reinforce the retail environment.
- Provide pedestrian-scale lighting, decorative paving, colorful planting and planters to create pleasant walkways. Each pedestrian way should be designed to have its own unique identity. Incorporate Downtown streetscape elements such as paving pattern or light fixtures into the pedestrian way design, visually linking them to the overall circulation system.
- Where feasible, create entries to the rear of the building, adjacent to the parking lots, to facilitate pedestrian accessibility.
- Where feasible, align paseos with each other as they cross streets.

Street Furniture

Street furniture also strengthens the pedestrian scale of outdoor spaces and further defines and enhances special use areas, entries and circulation patterns. Select street furniture and site furnishings to harmonize with the public streetscape components. This might include benches, tables and chairs, trash receptacles, lighting fixtures, bicycle racks, pots, planters, tree grates, banners, awnings, privacy fences and screens.



Pedestrian Friendly Lighting Poles

Special Paving

Special paving can strengthen the pedestrian scale of outdoor spaces and further define and enhance special use areas, entries and circulation patterns. The pedestrian circulation system throughout the downtown core should be unified by the use of similar paving materials, as can crosswalks. Interesting color and score line patterns should be used in the design of pedestrian walkways and plazas. Subtle earth tones should be selected for the overall color for pedestrian ways to create a contrast to the asphalt in the roadways and parking areas. Possible materials include color-toned concrete paving, accent tiles, brick and interlocking pavers.

Except for plaza areas notes, a study should be initiated to further explore potential locations, material options, and cost implications of a variety of special paving types.



Commercial Infill and Rehabilitation

Changes to the commercial environment will most likely take place in the form of remodeling and restoration. As uses change and remodeling projects are proposed, owners are encouraged to upgrade their property in a manner consistent with the scale and character of the Downtown. Minor improvements, such as exterior painting, landscaping additions, street tree planting, mechanical equipment screening, sign upgrading, and display window improvements, are also encouraged. These minor steps can have a positive visual and marketing impact.

As redevelopment projects occur, improvements recommended in this plan, such as designing buildings with outdoor spaces, providing street furniture, implementing paseos and other measures, can occur.

Facade Improvements

Storefronts, window displays, and awnings can all be improved to increase the image of the Downtown streetscape as well as the retail environment. One of the most effective ways to attract attention and encourage shopping is to create an attractive, well-designed storefront and building entry. The image projected from the building becomes, in effect, a sign in itself. Storefronts can be emphasized by the use of recessed entries, window displays, awnings, signage, color and by highlighting architectural details. Walls facing pedestrian ways and parking lots are encouraged to have elements of interest, such as fenestration, displays, signage or landscaping. These elements help to identify the store as well as enrich the streetscape character for the pedestrians.

When considering such improvements, the following criteria should be used as a guide:

- Exterior building surfaces should be cleaned and repainted as necessary;
- Color schemes should be harmonious with surrounding structures and consistent with the original time period of the building;
- Deteriorated siding, trim, doors, windows, awnings and roof materials should be repaired or replaced;
- Interesting architectural features, fixtures and hardware should be retained or replaced with compatible elements;
- Highly visible, non-original attachments to the building should be removed (e.g., antennas, unused air conditioners, electrical conduit, etc.);
- Applied trim and accents, such as siding or awnings, should be consistent with the basic design of the building style and period of construction, as well as being compatible with other buildings in the vicinity. Proposed changes from the original design of the building should be carried out consistently throughout the project in a manner that complements the original design.



Signing

Well-designed signs enhance the streetscape environment as well as the retailer's business message. Few outward features of a business display the owner's confidence and quality as well as signage. Replacement of inappropriate signs is one significant way to improve the image of the downtown and storefronts. Inappropriate signs are those that are out of scale, unsuitably located, in deteriorated condition, outdated, or that do not sufficiently convey a quality business image. Imaginative and creative designs that emphasize the unique features of Downtown Los Altos are encouraged. Various types of small scaled signs are appropriate for storefronts in Los Altos, including wall signs, projecting blade signs, window signs, and awning signs.

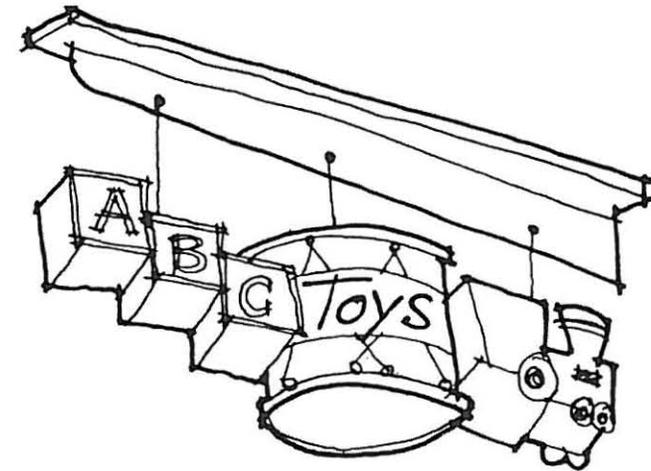
When considering signage improvements, the following criteria should be considered:

- The primary goal of the project sign system is to provide informa-



tion and identification. Simple graphic logos for identity are appropriate.

- Each sign should take into consideration visual compatibility with the Downtown Area.
- Each sign should emphasize, promote and complement the store's image in a creative, legible fashion as well as be compatible with the architectural style of the building and storefront facade.
- The scale of signs, letters, and symbols should be appropriate to their use, whether to catch the eye of a passing motorist or strolling window shopper.
- Color should be used carefully. Limited use of several colors with strong contrast between background and signage is recommended to make the signs easily readable.
- Lighting should be used to tastefully highlight signage and identify buildings during evening hours.



Projecting Blade Sign

- Temporary signs applied to announce sales or special events are to be avoided unless tastefully designed specifically for the occasion.

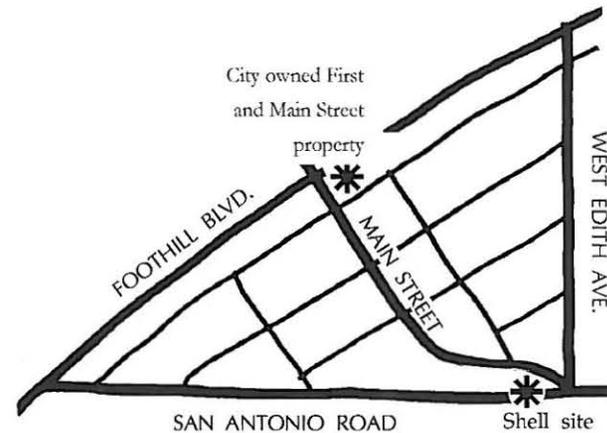
Service Areas

The image area of back and side yards and service areas, included in or viewed from pedestrian walkways, can add to the image of the area if well designed.

All property owners are encouraged to share curb cuts into parking and service areas and to consolidate trash receptacles. All trash receptacles, and utility structures should be enclosed in a structure or screened from view. Design of new or rehabilitated buildings should include interior collection areas. All screening devices should relate to the architectural design of the surrounding buildings. All exposed air conditioner wall units should be screened from view or relocated to less visible areas. Utilize plant materials to screen down spouts, utilities and other unsightly elements on the buildings that can not be relocated.

Special Study Areas

Several key sites have been discussed by the Downtown Committee as possibilities for commercial rehabilitation, including the Shell Station site at Main Street and San Antonio Road, and the City owned First and Main Street property site. Both of these sites are located at highly visible points adjacent to Downtown entries.



key map, special study areas

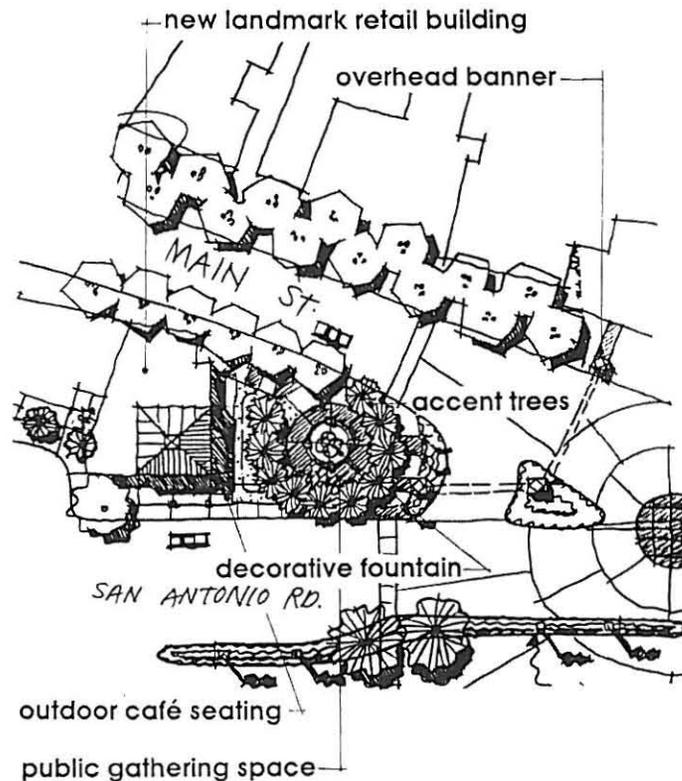
Shell Station Site

The former Shell Station site is located adjacent to the Downtown entry at Main Street and San Antonio Road. In this highly visible location, future commercial rehabilitation would be expected to support the sense of entry and act as a landmark for motorists along San Antonio Road. The development would be expected to respond to the presence of the City Hall across the street. Lastly, the development would be expected to continue the established Main Street development patterns.

Elements that might be incorporated into the site plan to meet these expectations include:

- a clock tower, fountain, or other civic public landmark;
- a public plaza at the street corner;
- an outdoor café, vendor, or other active, visible, pedestrian oriented outdoor use;
- a well articulated, well designed building facade, with an equal level of design treatment on all sides;

- a provision for location a City gateway element and City identity signing at the street corner;
- a street edge setback and character consistent with other sections of Main Street. This character should be continuous on all sides of the site.



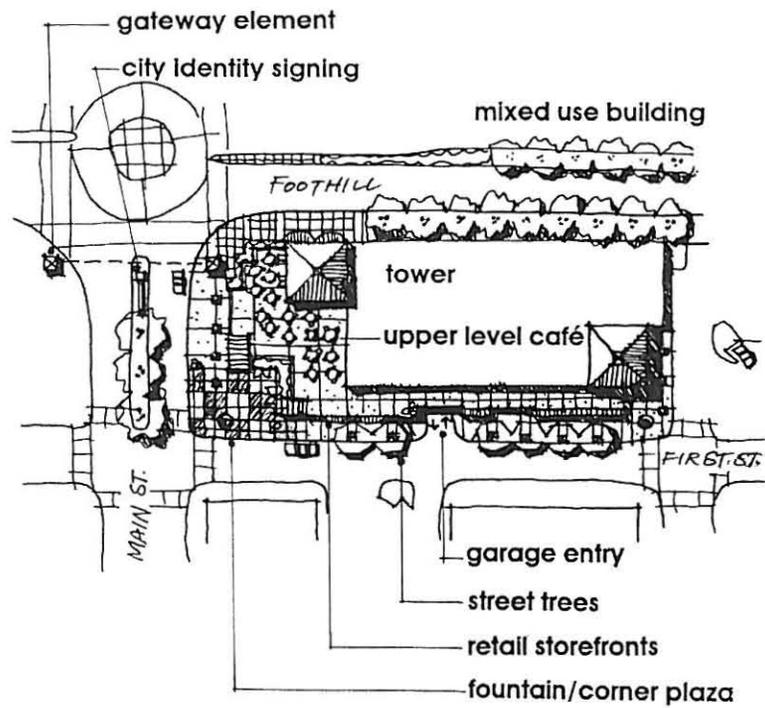
Site Plan, Former Shell Station Site

City Owned First and Main Street Property Site

The City owned First and Main Street property site, located at Main Street and Foothill Expressway, has also been identified as an important location. When commercial rehabilitation becomes feasible, the resulting development would be expected to support the sense of entry and act as a landmark for motorists along Foothill Boulevard and Main Street. The development would also be expected to continue the established Main Street development patterns.

Elements that might be incorporated into the site plan to meet these expectations include:

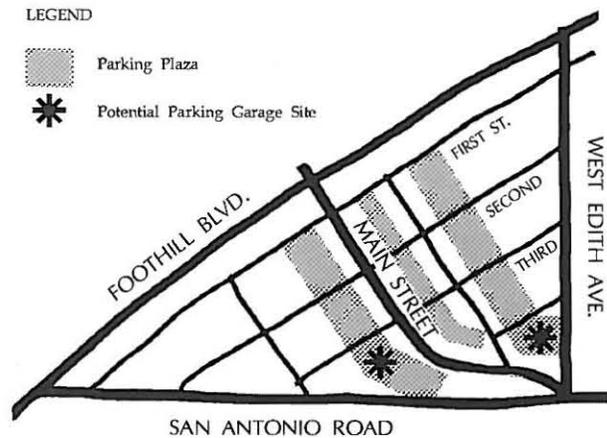
- a mixture of land uses, with retail on the ground floor;
- a tower or other highly visible building component that acts as a public landmark;
- a public plaza at the corner of First and Main Streets;
- an outdoor café, vendor, or other active, visible, pedestrian oriented outdoor use located adjacent the street corner;
- a well articulated, well designed building facade, with an equal level of design treatment on all sides;
- a provision for location a City gateway element and City identity signing on the site;
- a street edge setback and character consistent with adjacent streets. Along Main and First Streets, the character should be consistent with that of Main Street, with its buildings close to the street, awnings, and display windows. Along Foothill, the character should be consistent with other sections of Foothill, with its wide planted setbacks and numerous large street trees.



Possible Rehabilitation at City Owned First and Main Street Property Site

Parking

Parking is a necessary feature of the Downtown area. It should be safe and easily accessible, but not allowed to dominate the entire Downtown fabric. Main and State Streets provide diagonal and parallel parking spaces for the Downtown shoppers. Additional parking areas are located in the parking plazas, to the rear of the buildings.



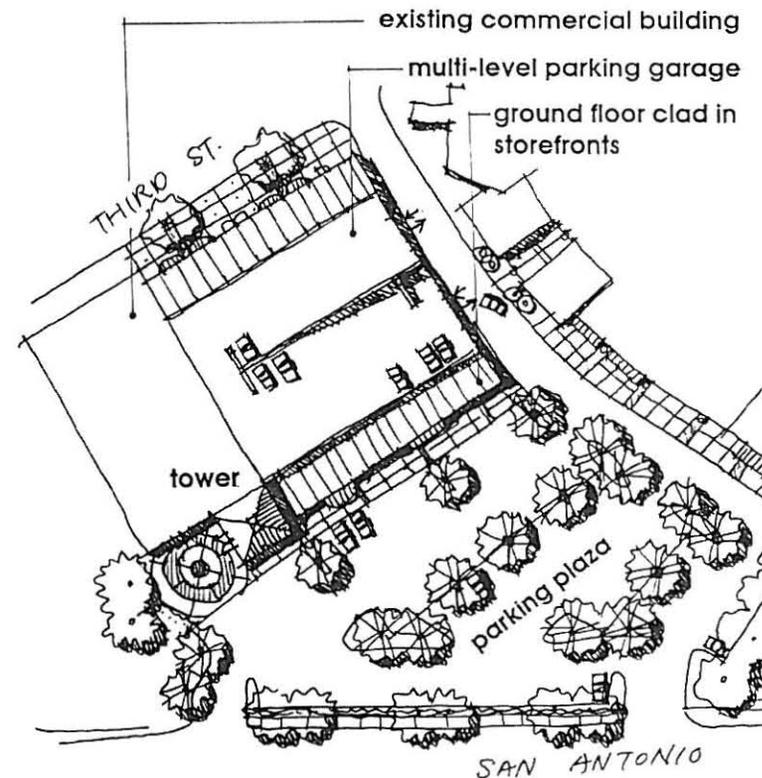
key map, parking facilities

Parking Plazas

- Continue to use the Chinese Pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*) as the parking plaza shade tree.
- Study parking stall striping patterns and reconfigure as necessary to achieve maximum efficiency.
- Clearly define pedestrian movement through parking areas. At pedestrian crossings, changes in paving, use of overhead structures,

and narrowing of roadways can alert drivers to pedestrian traffic and allow safe crossing.

- Provide access from parking areas to the shopping streets via sidewalks and paseos that allow access at mid-block.
- Create windows and displays opening onto the parking plazas to enliven the building facades.
- Screen and buffer service use areas facing the parking plazas with



Prototypical Parking Garage Plan

planting or architecturally attractive materials.

- Establish a street edge treatment at parking plazas that uses an "urban" material, such as a wall. Such a device will reduce the visibility of the "sea" of cars, as well as defining an edge to the street where there would otherwise be a gap. Integrate public informational signing into the edge treatment.

On-street parking will also continue to be provided throughout Downtown, which will enhance the street energy and retail visibility so necessary to successful retailing.

Parking Garages

Adequate and accessible parking is an imperative element in mixed-use development without transit services. To avoid the inherent problems of massive parking facilities within low-rise streetscape, the parking is best disguised with stores and clad in buildings, so that the only evidence of parking visible is the vehicular and pedestrian entrances to the facility. While they can be a valuable solution in situations with limited space, parking garages can often become a foreign element in small town settings, especially in terms of scale and massing. They should be carefully designed to be compatible with the detailed, pedestrian-friendly environment that typifies downtown Los Altos. Two locations have been discussed as suitable for future parking garage construction, as shown on the key map.



- Garage elevations at the street should be harmonious with the pedestrian street environment. Consider fronting garages with ground floor retail uses or cladding with mixed uses. At the South Parking Plaza location, consider cladding the structure in ground floor retail uses, with a mixture of office and commercial uses on the upper floors. At the State and Fourth Street location consider cladding the parking structure in residential uses, fitting the quieter character of this part of Downtown.
- Design garage facades to respond to the small scale of the context, in terms of structural bay size, materials, and window details. Reduce the scale of the cave-like vehicle entrance by setting back from the street, and treating with planting or architectonic elements.
- Signing within garages should be carefully examined, as motorists and pedestrians are not always accustomed to finding their way through a garage environment.

Downtown Landscaping

Planting materials should be used to support and enhance the overall design and sequences of spaces, from the active public streets to the quiet pedestrian paseos. Use plants to keynote entries, contrast with or reinforce building lines and volumes, and soften the hard lines of architecture. Most appropriate are plants that are in scale with the Village character.

Streetscape Recommendations

Main St. and State St.

Landscaping along Main and State Streets should be designed to convey an urbane, small-scale image suited to the core of the Village. As such, Downtown landscape maintenance resources should be focused on this area. Regularly maintain street trees and shrubs. Small-scale, high maintenance plantings, such as colorful annual and perennial flowers, are also



appropriate.

Replacement of the boxwood hedges around trees along Main Street was discussed by the Committee. It was felt that the hedges block the flow of pedestrian traffic and create an unnecessary maintenance load. Possible replacements for the hedges would be tree grates or other water-permeable, walkable surfacing.

Foothill Expressway

Foothill Expressway, one of the important edges of the Downtown, was originally landscaped twenty-five years ago. This street is mainly experienced by motorists at a fast speed of travel, in this case 40-45 mph. This higher speed means that landscaping and other streetscape elements will need to be of a larger and bolder scale to make the desired impression.

The landscaping along Foothill Expressway should be designed to reflect the soft, residential, park-like character, while making the Downtown edge special and distinctive from other sections of the street. Landscaping objectives include opening up filtered views into retail uses and the train station, and replacing frost damaged street trees.

San Antonio Road

San Antonio Road, another of the important edges, is the location of many commercial and community services near the Downtown. As with Foothill Expressway, this street is mainly experienced by motorists at a fast speed of travel, in this case 35-40 mph.

The landscaping along San Antonio should be designed to communicate this civic and commercial image. Trees and shrubs should be placed in formal massings, with view openings for motorists to see through to commercial uses.

Improving Private Landscaping

When considering private landscape improvements, the following criteria should be considered:

- Where landscaping exists, dead and obsolete plant materials, irrigation equipment and planter boxes should be repaired or replaced.
- Unnecessary or inappropriate pavement in landscaped areas should be replaced with plant material.
- Deteriorated fencing, retaining walls, and trash screens should be repaired where necessary.
- Landscaping should be integrated with parking wherever possible. A more efficient circulation and parking layout along with the addition of compact spaces can increase parking spaces and generate usable areas for landscaping to help screen and beautify parking.

5.

Conclusion

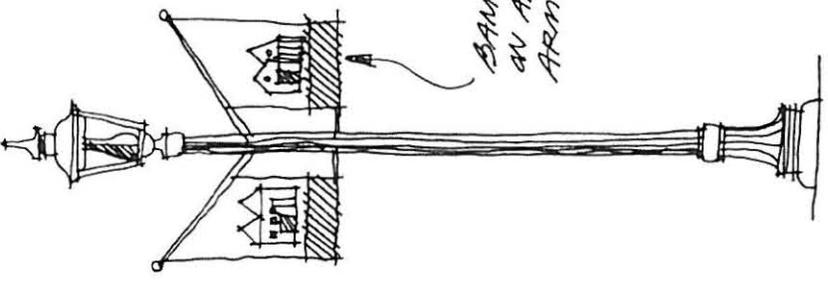
Downtown Los Altos enjoys a small-scale, historic character that no mall or shopping center can match. This plan capitalizes on this advantage by providing for, and the installation of selected streetscape improvements, including paseo access points, street trees, special intersection paving, and pedestrian scale amenities, as well as the sensitive rehabilitation of existing buildings, and properly designed infill buildings.

The concepts presented in this Plan provide a framework for updating the Village. Success will require a focused effort on the part of City decision-makers, Downtown merchants, as well as continued support by the community.

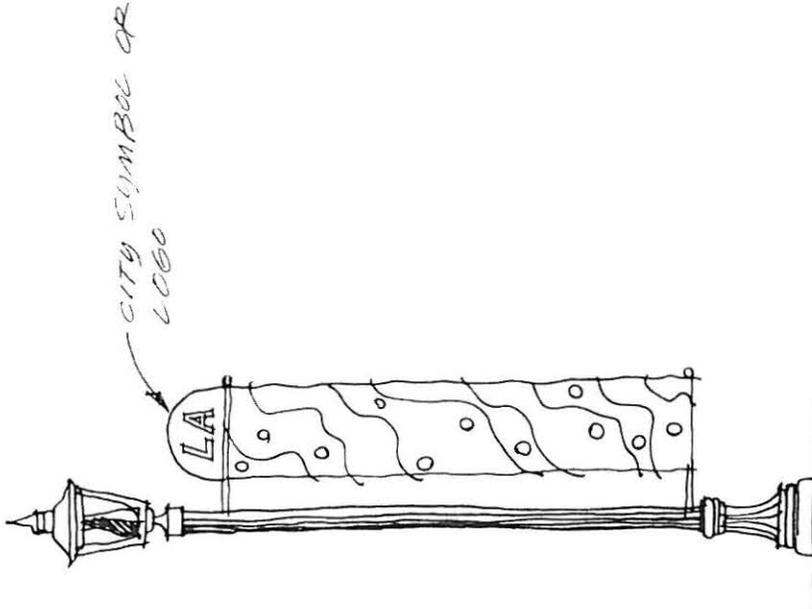
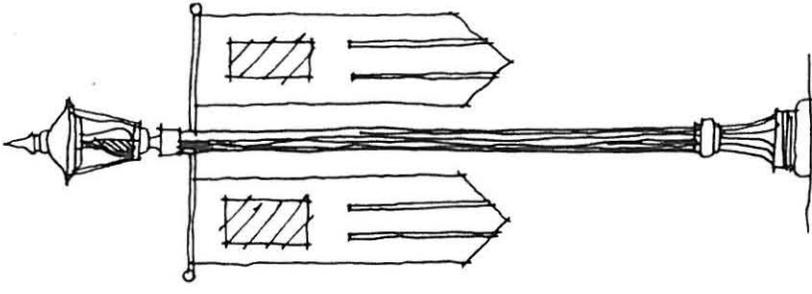
6.

Appendix

Pot & Banner Study



BANNER ON ANGLED ARM



CITY SYMBOL OR LOGO

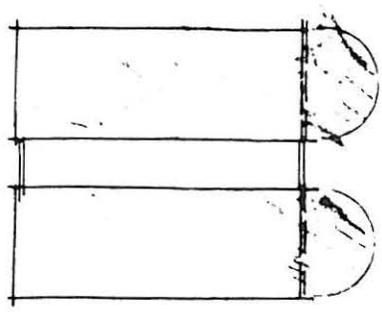
EXISTING LIGHT POLES WITH BANNERS

PRICE: APPROX \$7500 - \$10000 FOR (2) BANNERS IN QUANTITY OF 30 OR MORE

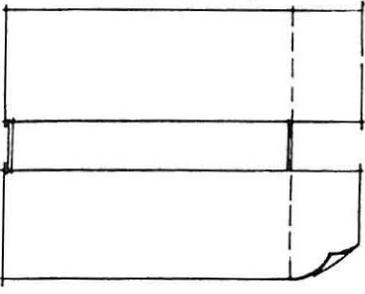
LOS ALTOS DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN



DAVID GATES & ASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS - URBAN DESIGN - LAND PLANNING

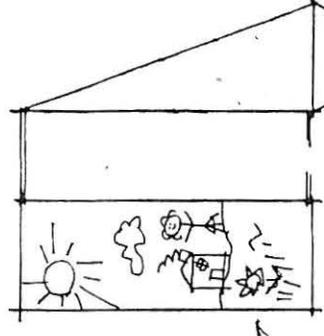
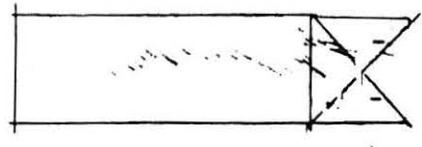
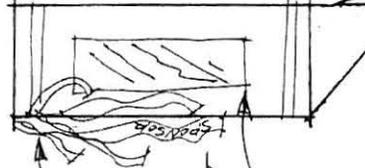


FUNDING IDEAS

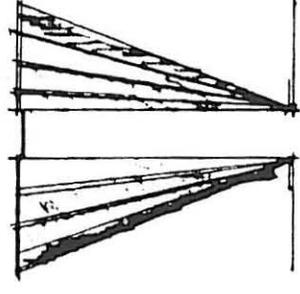
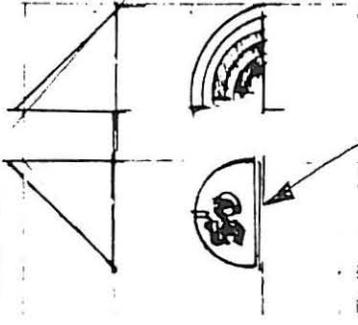
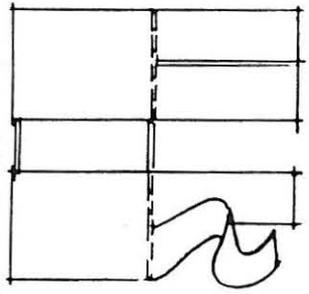
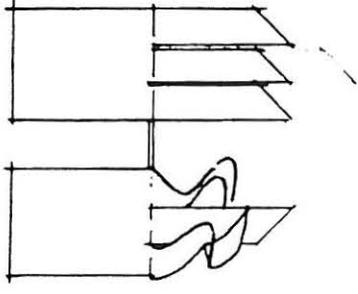


RIBBON

PERMANENT BANNER



SCHOOL CHILDREN AND MERCHANTS CAN PAINT THEIR OWN FOR ART FAIRS, SPECIAL EVENTS, ETC.



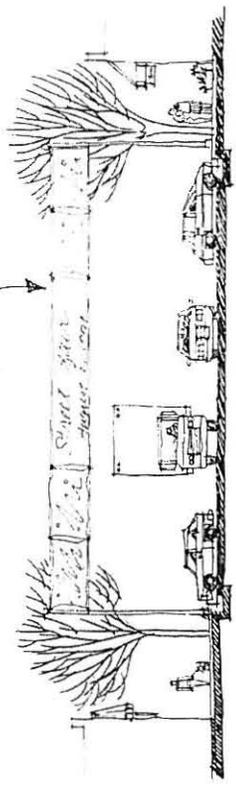
METAL PANEL TOPS WITH ENAMEL FINISH APPROX. \$50.00 EACH

BANNER OPTIONS FOR STREET LIGHT POLES

- LOS ALTOS DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN



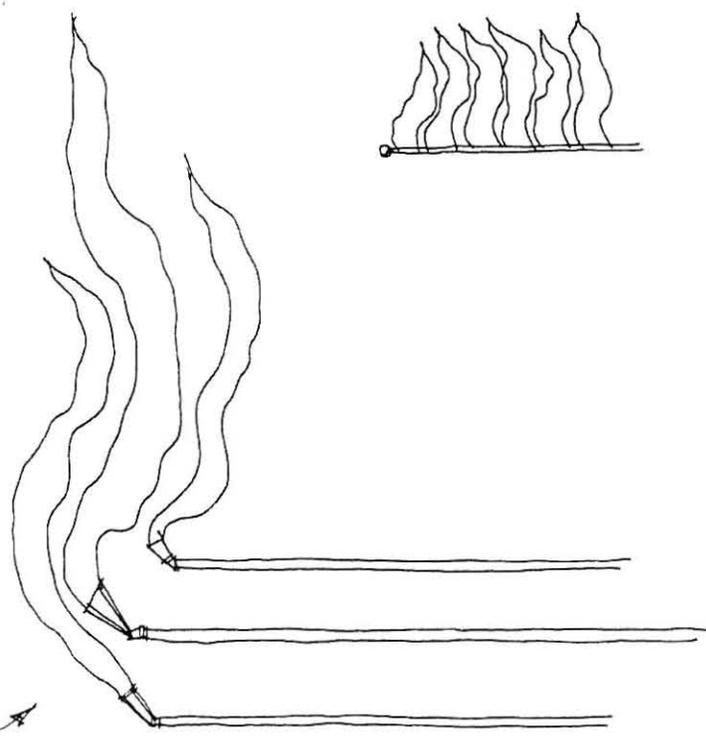
BANNERS ACROSS STREET
TO ANNOUNCE SPECIAL
EVENTS



MAIN STREET

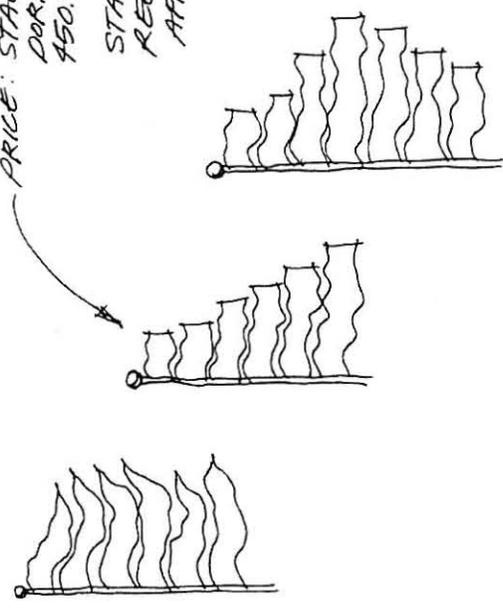
PRICE: APPROX. \$7,000.00
NOT INCLUDING INSTALLATION

PRICE: SEMI-PERMANENT DORI POLE
WITH HINGED BASE APPROX. \$150.00 EA.
PERMANENT DORI POLE, LARGER WITH
TAPERED END APPROX. \$1,000.00 EA.



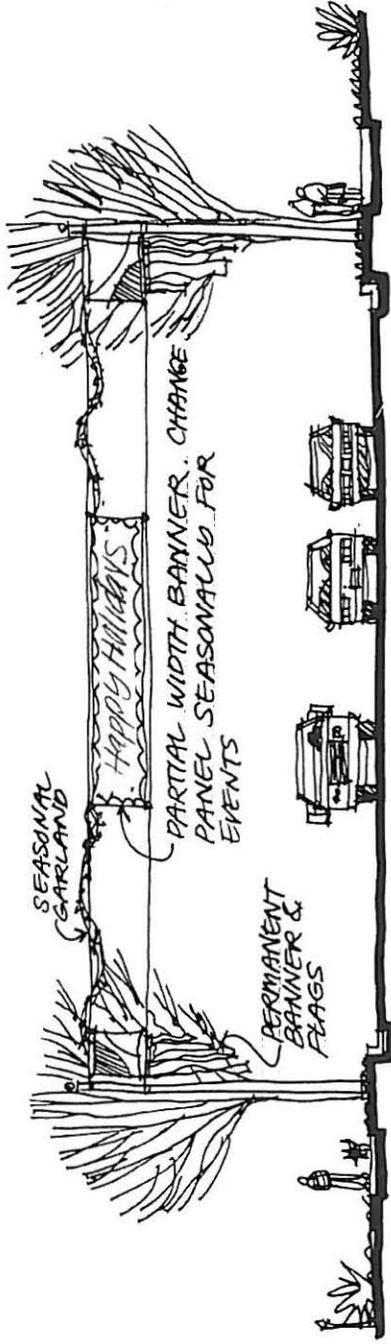
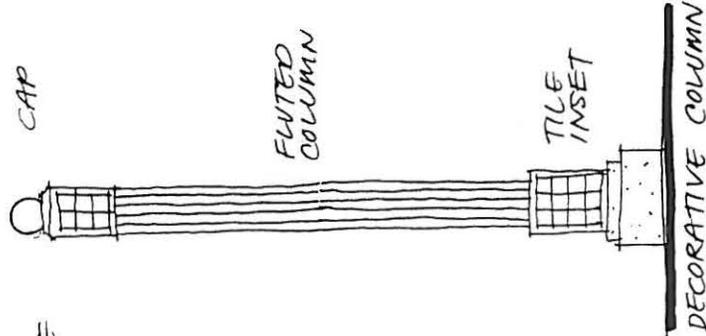
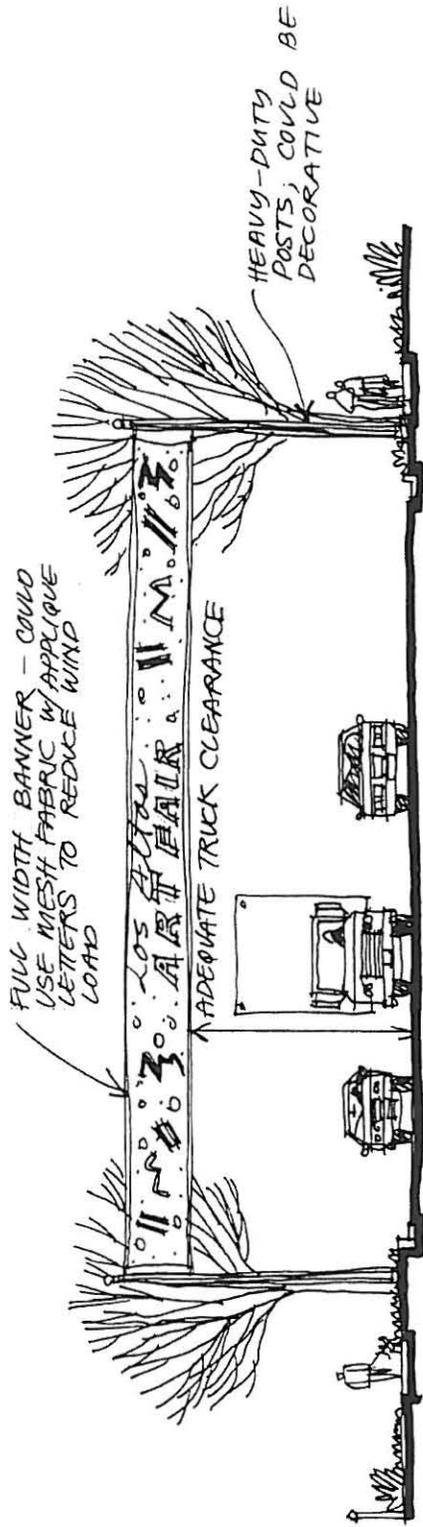
DORI POLES

PRICE: STACKED FLAGS ON
DORI POLE APPROX.
450.00 EA.
STACKED FLAGS ON
REGULAR FLAGPOLE
APPROX. \$2,000.00 EA.



LOS ALTOS DOWNTOWN
URBAN DESIGN PLAN

FULL WIDTH BANNER - COULD USE MESH FABRIC W/ APPLIQUE LETTERS TO REDUCE WIND LOAD



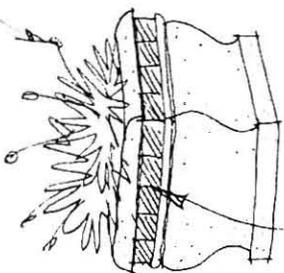
LOS ALTOS DOWNTOWN
URBAN DESIGN PLAN

1-2-92

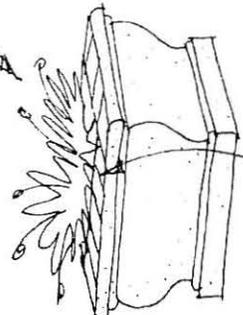


DAVID GATES & ASSOCIATES
COMMUNITY ARCHITECTURE, URBAN DESIGN, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

CUSTOM POTS - NEW MOLD REQUIRED @ APPROX \$2,000. FOR LARGE QUANTITIES OF POTS DOES NOT ADD TOO MUCH TO UNIT COST



TILE ON RIM



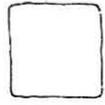
TILE ON TOP

STANDARD CONCRETE POTS BY DURA ART-STONE PRICE: \$250 @ - \$500 @ EA. PLACE ON FIELD OF CUSTOM TILE - SEE BELOW.

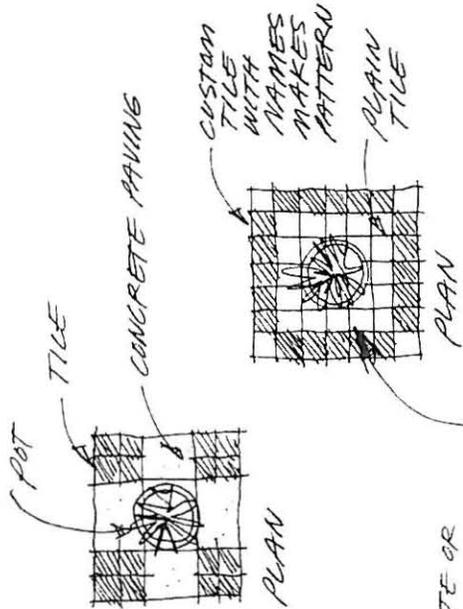


TILE CRITERIA:

- CERAMIC
- HIGH-FIRED
- GLAZED
- LETTERING/INSCRIPTION PRIOR TO FIRING
- STONE / SLATE / GRANITE
- ETCH NAME INTO GRANITE OR OTHER
- SEAL FOR EASE OF CLEANING



STANDARD CONCRETE POT WITH RECESSED TILE APPROX \$600 @ - \$900 NOT INCLUDING TILE



PERMANENT POTS WITH IRRIGATION AND DRAINAGE - REMOVE AND REPLACE EXISTING PAVING WITH TILE, ADD IRRIGATION, ETC. TILE MUST BE SKID RESISTANT.

LOS ALTOS DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN

COMMUNITY DESIGN & HISTORIC RESOURCES ELEMENT



INTRODUCTION

The identity of Los Altos is predicated upon its small-town atmosphere as a mature residential community with a historic Downtown and neighborhood commercial centers. Defining physical attributes include relatively flat terrain, mature landscape, low-density residential neighborhoods, predominantly single-story structures, historic architecture, and the pedestrian-oriented village setting of the Downtown core. The Community Design & Historic Resources Element focuses on the protection and enhancement of these important attributes to maintain the City's distinct character.

PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNITY DESIGN & HISTORIC RESOURCES ELEMENT

The Community Design & Historic Resources Element is an optional element under California law, rather than a mandatory element of the General Plan. The purpose of this Element is to define the urban form and character of the community, and to preserve and enhance its desirable visual qualities.

SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE COMMUNITY DESIGN & HISTORIC RESOURCES ELEMENT

The Community Design & Historic Resources Element is comprised of four sections: 1) Introduction; 2) the Community Design & Historic Resources Plan; 3) Issues, Goals and Policies; and 4) Implementation Programs Appendix. The Plan provides background data and explains how the subsequent goals and policies will be achieved and implemented. In the Issues, Goals and Policies section, major issues related to the City's charac-

ter and history are identified and related goals and policies are established to address these issues. The goals, which are overall statements of community desires, are comprised of broad statements of purpose and direction. The policies serve as guides for working with local and regional agencies to preserve and enhance the identity and history of the community. The Implementation Programs Appendix identifies specific implementation programs for this Element.

RELATED LAWS, PLANS AND PROGRAMS

A number of existing plans and programs exist which directly relate to the goals of the Community Design & Historic Resources Element. Enacted through state and local action, these plans and programs are administered by agencies with responsibility for their enforcement.

California Environmental Quality Act

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was adopted by the state legislature in response to a public mandate for a thorough environmental analysis of projects that might adversely affect the environment. The provisions of the law, review procedure and any subsequent analysis are described in the CEQA Statutes and Guidelines as amended in 1998. Aesthetics (visual character) and historic resources are recognized as environmental impacts under CEQA.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

Establishes laws for historic resources to preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and to maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and a variety of individual choice. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 established national policy to preserve historic



sites, buildings, and objects of national, state and local significance.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is maintained by the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Offices. Structures and sites are eligible for listing on the National Register when they are a minimum of 50-years-old.

State Office of Historic Preservation

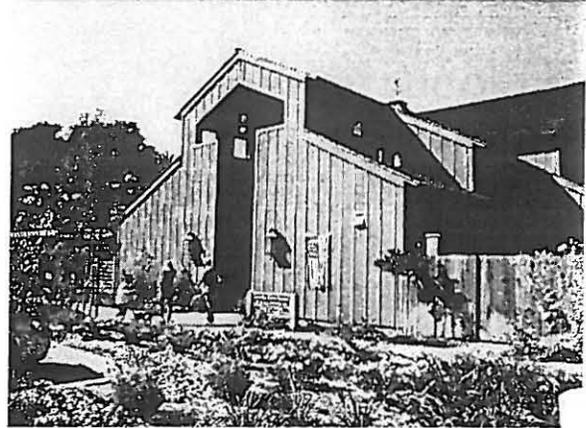
The State Office of Historic Preservation implements preservation laws regarding historic resources, and is responsible for the California Historic Resources Inventory (CHRI), which uses the National Criteria for listing resources significant at the national, state, and local level.

Tree Protection Regulations Ordinance

The City adopted an Ordinance for the protection of trees that are designated by City Council resolution, designated heritage tree by the Historical Commission, located on undeveloped or non-single-family residential property, or required to be saved by an entitlement. Removal of protected trees requires approval of a tree removal permit.

Historical Preservation Ordinance

Los Altos adopted a Historical Preservation Ordinance for the primary purposes of ensuring protection of irreplaceable historic resources, enhancing visual character through architectural compatibility, and encouraging appreciation of the City's past. The ordinance identifies the process and qualifications for the designation of a historic landmark or historic district.



Historical Commission

The purpose of the Historical Commission is to conduct the historic resources inventory and to advise the City Council and coordinate with other agencies on historic issues.

Downtown Urban Design Plan

In 1992, the City adopted the Downtown Urban Design Plan to reinforce the identity of downtown, to improve the visual quality of the area, and to create an attractive pedestrian environment.

Certified Local Government

As a certified local government (CLG), Los Altos can participate with State and federal governments in the historic preservation process. Through this status, the City gains access to technical training and assistance, and also qualifies to apply for federal grants.

State Historic Building Code

The State Historic Building Code provides alternative regulations for the rehabilitation, preservation, restoration, or relocation of structures designated as qualified historic buildings.



California Mills Act

The Mills Act permits local governments in California to provide for a reduction in property taxes on historic properties when certain conditions are met.

Historic Resources Element is most directly related to the Land Use, Housing, Circulation, and Open Space, Conservation & Community Facilities Elements.

Commercial Retail Sales (CRS) Ordinance

In 2000, a City Council-appointed committee conducted a series of study sessions and developed provisions for the Commercial Retail Sales (CRS) zoning district, applicable to property located in the commercial core of Downtown. The City subsequently adopted provisions for the CRS zoning district intended to retain and enhance the village atmosphere and pedestrian-oriented environment of the Downtown.

Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines

The City adopted Design Guidelines for single-family residential development in 1991 to guide the homeowner, architect, developer and builder in the planning and execution of successful single-family residential design. The primary purpose is to maintain the physical attributes of existing residential neighborhoods in Los Altos.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

According to state planning law, the Community Design & Historic Resources Element must be consistent with the other General Plan elements. While all of the elements are interdependent, they are also interrelated to a degree. Certain goals and policies of one element may also address issues that are primary subjects of other elements. This integration of issues throughout the General Plan creates a strong basis for the implementation of plans and programs and achievement of community goals. The Community Design &



COMMUNITY DESIGN & HISTORIC RESOURCES PLAN

Los Altos contains many natural and man-made features that form the City's unique physical character. By addressing these features in its General Plan, the community has the opportunity to conserve and develop a series of interrelated environments that enhance the traditional character of the City. The Community Design & Historic Resources Plan develops a design framework to guide future development and redevelopment to ensure continuity of the community's character and identity.

COMMUNITY IMAGE AND IDENTITY

This section of the Plan describes the City's character, as defined by its residents, and predominant community design features.

Community Compass

The City conducted a community visioning process in the Fall of 1996 called the Community Compass. The goal of the visioning process was to help the community determine what it wants to be in the future (2020) and what is needed to achieve its vision.

The process involved over 60 participants selected as a representative cross section of the City. The group was presented with quality of life community characteristics, then facilitators worked with small groups to evaluate the implementation level, quality and priority for identified community-building strategies. The top-ranked strategies were categorized, refined and prioritized. Each participant then voted for their top three short- and long-term priorities. The five highest ranked community characteristics were as follows:

- 1) Safety in the Downtown area.
- 2) Safety in neighborhoods.
- 3) Safety in families.
- 4) Quality of life for senior residents.
- 5) Sense of community identity among residents.

Participants also identified re-occurring themes in the community-building strategies. Re-occurring themes included balanced development (village atmosphere vs. new development), community involvement, neighborhood preservation, public safety, quality education, and youth development.

In terms of relevance to the Community Design & Historic Resources Plan, the Community Compass demonstrated the need to better define/describe the village atmosphere that distinguishes Los Altos from other communities and the desire to preserve neighborhoods. These same concepts were identified in the community survey for the 1987 General Plan, which was used to gauge desirable community qualities at that time. Survey results highlighted the small town village atmosphere and low-density neighborhoods as the community's most important attributes and concluded that the residents did not want to see significant changes over the subsequent ten-year period.

Community Design

As a developed community with a well-established land use pattern, Los Altos is unlikely to change in any significant way. The City is predominantly residential, with limited commercial, park, and public lands. See the Land Use Element for land use acreages and designations throughout the planning area.

Los Altans describe their City as an established small-town, single-family residential community with mature landscaping, a charming Downtown, and neighborhood commercial services. The residents cherish their quality of life and want to preserve and enhance the City's unique identity.

Distinctive community design features are listed below, along with existing and planned efforts to reinforce these unique qualities.

Landscape. Los Altos has a relatively flat terrain with mature trees and landscape. Significant groves of trees are located in open space areas, and along the creek corridors. Tree-lined collector and arterial streets are characteristic throughout the community. The City even has a few remnants of orchards. Tree protection regulations have been adopted to increase the level of City review for removal of trees, particularly those that have been granted special designation or approved for preservation.

Entryways/Gateways. Los Altos is surrounded by other developed communities in Santa Clara County, including Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Cupertino, Los Altos Hills, and Palo Alto. In an effort to emphasize the unique characteristics of Los Altos that distinguish it from surrounding cities, the City will continue to develop attractive gateway features at the primary entrances to the City. Gateway features will be characteristic of the City and include enhanced landscape. See Figure CDHR-1 for the locations of primary and secondary entryways.

Property Design and Consistency. Because the majority of the City was developed between 1950 and 1970, there is consistency in the development patterns and architectural appearance throughout the residential community.

This development embodied a rural atmosphere with quarter- and half-acre lots, one- and two-structures, and extensive landscaping. While most of the land has been developed for some time, the City adopted regulations and guidelines throughout the 1990s to ensure that new development and modifications to existing development are compatible with surrounding neighborhoods and integrate well within the fabric of the community. Development and design review does not mandate the duplication of elements or styles. Rather, the processes encourage design integrity and respect for the physical qualities and character of residential neighborhoods and commercial developments.



Residential Design. Over 82 percent of the City's land is designated for housing, the majority of which are low-density single-family lots with 10,000 square foot minimum lot sizes. Most neighborhoods were developed in the 1950s with single-story "California Ranch" style homes on spacious lots fronting streets exclusive of curb, gutter and sidewalks.

As the population of the Bay Area swelled, housing demand pushed up housing prices and land values. Building lots became considerably more expensive and by the 1970s, buyers/builders maximized the use of their high-cost land by building larger, two-story



Source: City of Los Altos GIS.

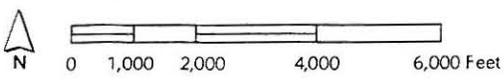


Figure CDHR-1
Important Entryways



homes and subdividing larger property. In an effort to address the concerns that this change would negatively alter the character of the community, the City adopted Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines. Continued enforcement and refinement of these criteria and design review processes will ensure the compatibility of new development and modifications to existing development.

Commercial Design. Commercial design characteristics are distinct for the three types of commercial developments in the City: Downtown; El Camino Real corridor; and neighborhood commercial centers. Figure ED-1 in the Economic Development Element shows the location of each identified commercial area.

Downtown. The Downtown area was planned in 1907 as the center of commerce for Los Altos along the Southern Pacific railroad right-of-way that is now Foothill Expressway. Several commercial and civic buildings were developed along First, Second, Main, and State Streets in the 1910s and 1920s. Without significant historic preservation efforts, the Downtown area has maintained its historic buildings and continued to develop in a pattern reflective of the City's past. Significant development and design characteristics of Downtown are as follows:

- ❖ Walkable, triangular area with a distinct small lot pattern and edges created by its boundaries along San Antonio Road, Foothill Expressway, and Edith Avenue;
- ❖ Almost 20 historic buildings originally developed prior to 1940;
- ❖ Commercial core with small-town village atmosphere created by one- and two-story buildings that have contiguous 25-foot-wide storefronts with large display windows, streetscape furniture on wide sidewalks with a variety of overhangs, awnings, and tree canopies;

- ❖ Pedestrian-friendly development with street furniture and outdoor seating along sidewalks, enhanced pavement at crosswalks, tree-lined streets, landscaped intersections, and pedestrian walkways/plazas;
- ❖ Mix of uses emphasizing retail businesses and services which meets the needs of both residents and visitors;
- ❖ Parking plazas; and
- ❖ Additional commercial and cultural activities that create a community gathering and meeting place.

In 1992, the City adopted the Downtown Urban Design Plan to reinforce the identity of downtown as a retail center, to improve the visual quality of the area, and to create an attractive pedestrian environment. In 2001, City Council adopted special use provisions and specific design criteria for the Commercial Retail Sales (CRS) Zoning District to retain and enhance the village atmosphere and pedestrian-oriented environment of Downtown's commercial core. Implementation of these plans and regulations will ensure the preservation and enhancement of this community treasure.





El Camino Real Corridor. The El Camino Real commercial corridor is located along the City's northern edge, shared with the Cities of Mountain View and Palo Alto. Commercial property abutting this six-lane arterial road has been identified in the Land Use Element as one of the few areas with underutilized land and potential to redevelop or intensify existing development without jeopardizing the small-town residential character of the City.

Most of the existing development along the corridor is diverse in mass and scale, type of development, and architectural style. Development intensity in the City sharply contrasts with the large-scale, multiple-story buildings on the north side of El Camino Real in Mountain View. New land use policies for this corridor discourage exclusive office use, but encourage retail use on the ground floor and residential components with development incentives. Future development consistent with these policies should create more uniformity in the physical development pattern along the corridor. However, to improve the aesthetics and create a more pedestrian-friendly environment in the corridor, the City should work with surrounding communities to develop an improvement plan for El Camino Real streetscape including sidewalks, streetlights, street furniture, landscape, and signs.

El Camino Real serves as a gateway to Los Altos from the north at San Antonio Road. At this intersection, there are two commercial centers on either side of San Antonio Road: Sherwood Gateway and Village Court. The City has long identified a desire to improve the aesthetics at this important intersection. In 1998, the City adopted the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan to revitalize this area. The Specific Plan comprehensively addresses land use, circulation and parking, site planning, and design guidelines for the 26-acres east of the intersection of El Camino Real and San Antonio Road. Future development in compliance with this Specific Plan will ensure greater

harmony in site development and architectural style at the City's northern gateway.

Neighborhood Commercial Centers. In addition to the Downtown and El Camino Real commercial areas, there are five other neighborhood commercial centers in Los Altos as follows:

- ❖ Loyola Corners
- ❖ Rancho Shopping Center
- ❖ Woodland Plaza
- ❖ Foothill Plaza

These projects are all smaller pedestrian-oriented developments, which provide services to the surrounding neighborhoods. Most of the centers are located along Foothill Expressway. From a design perspective, the City wants to ensure that these projects are visually and functionally compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. A Specific Plan was adopted for Loyola Corners in 1990 to address these issues. Future development in compliance with adopted criteria will ensure the compatibility and vitality of these neighborhood commercial centers.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Los Altos has an archaeological heritage as well as historic resources from the early twentieth century. The Ohlone and Muwekma Indian tribes made their homes at several creekside locations in the area. Past construction has unearthed some significant archaeological findings with evidence of prehistoric habitation and burial sites.

In 1906, the Southern Pacific railway sought a new shipping and passenger depot along the hills west of Mountain View. An associated company, the Interurban Electric, purchased the Winchester Rifle family farm which today is the Los Altos Downtown Triangle. In 1907, the Los Altos Land Company laid out the town in the midst of ranches and orchards. By 1920, the community was well established and centered



around the Southern Pacific Railway Station. A number of historic buildings remain from that era and contribute to the character and identity of Los Altos.



As previously mentioned, there are almost 20 historic buildings in Downtown that were originally developed prior to 1940. There are also several historic residential structures located west of Downtown between Foothill Expressway and Adobe Creek. These buildings are an important component of the “Los Altos look.” To maintain the present feel and appearance of the community requires protecting and preserving these buildings, as well as protecting their flanks from encroachment by out-of-scale and out-of-character buildings.

Current regulations protect designated landmarks. There are approximately 10 officially designated historic landmarks, located mostly in Downtown. To identify resources for potential preservation, the Los Altos Historical Commission completed a Historic Resources Inventory in 1997. The City’s desire is to respect historic structures and to identify significant structures for preservation, while respecting private property rights, including reasonable economic use.



ISSUES, GOALS AND POLICIES

The visual character of Los Altos, an established low-density residential community with mature landscape and small neighborhood commercial areas, distinguishes it from surrounding communities in Silicon Valley. This character is also established through predominantly low profile, single-story structures and historic Downtown development.

Five major issues addressed by the plan, goals and policies of the Community Design & Historic Resources Element are as follows:

- 1) Community identity;
- 2) Downtown;
- 3) El Camino Real;
- 4) Neighborhood commercial centers; and
- 5) Historic resources.

Each issue and the related goals and policies are included in this section of the Element.

COMMUNITY DESIGN

Los Altos enjoys a small town character with low-density residential neighborhoods, a charming Downtown, and several neighborhood commercial centers. Distinctive design features are as follows:

- ❖ Relatively flat terrain with mature trees and landscape;
- ❖ Established low-density residential neighborhoods, many having streets without sidewalks;

- ❖ Predominantly low profile, single-story structures throughout the community;
- ❖ Tree-lined collector and arterial streets leading to commercial and public activities;
- ❖ Vital Downtown core with village atmosphere created by contiguous storefronts, wide sidewalks, and pedestrian plazas reflective of traditional historic commercial development; and
- ❖ Smaller neighborhood commercial centers developed at a human scale that is pedestrian-friendly.

Collectively, these features create a unique character and identity that is cherished by its residents. While the City has successfully developed land use, development, and design regulations, continued preservation and enhancement of the City's unique features is critical to the quality of life for Los Altos residents.

Goal 1: Preserve and enhance the identity and unique character of Los Altos.

Policy 1.1: Preserve trees, especially heritage and landmark trees, and trees that protect privacy in residential neighborhoods.

Policy 1.2: Encourage the addition of a variety of trees and landscaping to enhance streetscape and slow traffic.

Policy 1.3: Require owners to maintain unpaved public rights-of-way and walkways clear of vegetation overhang that impedes movement or causes a safety hazard.

Policy 1.4: Promote pride in community and excellence in design in conjunction with attention to and compatibility with exist-



ing residential and commercial environments.

Policy 1.5: Continue to protect the privacy of neighbors and minimize the appearance of bulk in new homes and additions to existing homes.

Policy 1.6: Continue to provide for site planning and architectural design review within the City, with a focus on mass, scale, character, and materials.

Policy 1.7: Enhance neighborhood character by promoting architectural design of new homes, additions to existing homes, and residential developments that is compatible in the context of surrounding neighborhoods.

Policy 1.8: Consider neighborhood desires regarding the character of future development through the establishment of development or design regulations.

Policy 1.9: Promote diverse opportunities for public gathering and celebrations that foster a feeling of community.

Policy 1.10: Continue to develop opportunities for public engagement in civic events and encourage greater community involvement by all Los Altosans.

Policy 1.11: Develop attractive gateways to the City that emphasize the unique characteristics of Los Altos that distinguish it from surrounding cities, including enhanced landscape.

Goal 2: Provide adequate street lighting where appropriate within the community.

Policy 2.1: Continue to encourage streetlights at all major intersections and around public places, such as schools and parks.

Policy 2.2: Allow neighborhood-by-neighborhood determination of street lighting needs.

Downtown

The Downtown area is the traditional heart of the community. Residents enjoy the small town, village character of the Downtown, where the scale and pattern of development creates a pedestrian-friendly environment. Community events help to promote the village character of the area, attracting residents to participate and know each other. By attracting businesses that provide needed services to residents, as well as encouraging additional restaurants and entertainment venues, the Downtown area will continue to thrive.

Goal 3: Increase the appeal of Downtown to pedestrians and shoppers.

Policy 3.1: Retain and enhance the small-town village atmosphere throughout the Downtown.

Policy 3.2: Encourage the maintenance, upgrading, and new design of building exteriors, signs, passageways, and streetscape elements that enhance the pedestrian experience, reflect quality design, present a diversity of appearances, and contribute to the architectural and historical interest of the village.

Policy 3.3: Encourage pedestrian and bicycle-oriented design in the Downtown.



- Policy 3.4:** Encourage the use of open space in the Downtown for community events and public gatherings.
- Policy 3.5:** Continue to encourage the creative and safe incorporation of street furniture and hardscape into the design of public rights-of-way.
- Policy 3.6:** Evaluate the public benefit of City-owned parking plazas and the best use thereof, while preserving or increasing public parking Downtown.
- Policy 3.7:** Continue the existing contiguous building pattern within the Downtown core (Main and State Streets) by discouraging the merging of lots, preserving the contiguous 25-foot-wide storefronts, and encouraging two-story mixed use development.
- Policy 3.8:** Encourage the development of affordable housing above the ground floor throughout the Downtown.

El Camino Real Commercial Corridor

The El Camino Real commercial corridor is located along the northern edge of the City, functioning as a gateway to Los Altos from Palo Alto and Mountain View. Existing development includes freestanding offices, restaurants, and lodging facilities, along with commercial retail and service centers of various scale and mass. As identified in the Land Use and Economic Development Elements, this six-lane arterial corridor is one of the few areas in the City with underutilized land and existing development that is prime for redevelopment. Thus, the El Camino Real corridor is one of the few areas in the

City with the potential for land use intensification.

The visual character of the corridor is disjointed and architecturally diverse. Development along the north side of El Camino Real in Mountain View includes more intense commercial development with larger properties and taller structures. Goals and policies in the Land Use Element encourage mixed-use development throughout the corridor and allow consideration of an increase from two- to three-stories for projects including residential development. New development and redevelopment in the corridor will create a more pedestrian environment that can be visually and functionally more inviting to residents and visitors.

Goal 4: Improve the visual character of El Camino Real commercial area.

- Policy 4.1:** Develop a streetscape improvement plan for consistent development of the El Camino Real right-of-way.
- Policy 4.2:** Evaluate site development and design to ensure consistency in site design.
- Policy 4.3:** Evaluate development applications to ensure compatibility with residential neighborhoods south of the corridor.

Neighborhood Commercial Centers

Smaller commercial centers are located throughout the community, providing important commercial services to residents in the surrounding neighborhoods. As important features within the community, these neighborhood commercial centers are part of the visual appearance of the community. Maintaining and improving their appearance helps maintain the overall character of the community and is beneficial for those local neighborhood businesses.



Goal 5: Maintain and enhance the attractiveness of neighborhood shopping centers and businesses throughout the community.

Policy 5.1: Promote and retain individual design themes in each center that reflect the established small-town character of the community.

Policy 5.2: Promote pedestrian-friendly site design, circulation, building orientation, parking, landscape, and site amenities (including pedestrian plazas, where feasible).

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Los Altos is a community that celebrates its agricultural history, as is demonstrated through its support of the Los Altos History Museum. This rich past has been incorporated into the fabric of the City and provides a link to the community's heritage and history. The remaining sites and structures of architectural and/or historic significance enhance the community's unique character and contribute to a sense of place. Areas within the City having historic resources and buildings should be protected since they can never be recovered once lost. In addition, while few archaeological resources remain because of the mature nature of the community, those that are encountered should be protected.

Goal 6: Preserve and enhance selected historic and cultural structures and resources within the community.

Policy 6.1: Ensure that the integrity of historic structures and the parcels on which they are located are preserved through the implementation of appli-

cable design, building, and fire codes.

Policy 6.2: The City shall regard demolition of landmark and historic resources, listed in the Historic Resources Inventory as a last resort. Demolition would be permitted only after the City determines that the resource has lost its physical integrity, retains no reasonable economic use, that demolition is necessary to protect health, safety and welfare or that demolition is necessary to proceed with a new project where the benefits of the new project outweigh the loss of the historic resource.

Policy 6.3: Work with property owners to preserve historic resources within the community, including the orchard, or representative portion thereof, on the civic center site.

Policy 6.4: Preserve archaeological artifacts and sites found in Los Altos or mitigate disturbances to them, consistent with their intrinsic value.

Policy 6.5: Require an archaeological survey prior to the approval of significant development projects near creeksides or identified archaeological sites.



IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS APPENDIX

and whenever the City's General Plan is amended or updated to ensure continued consistency and usefulness.

The Implementation Programs Appendix provides a guide to implement adopted General Plan policies and plans for City elected officials, staff and the public. The purpose of the Implementation Programs are to ensure the overall direction provided in the General Plan for City growth and development is translated from general terms to specific actions.

Each implementation program is a measure, procedure, or technique that requires additional City action. This action may either occur on a City-wide basis or in specific areas within the City. The City Council, by relating the Implementation Programs to the General Plan, recognizes the importance of long-range planning considerations in day-to-day decision making and budgeting. Implementation of the specific programs will be subject to funding constraints.

Use of the General Plan Implementation Program

The Implementation Programs are intended for use in preparing the Annual Report to the City Council on the status of the City's progress in implementing the General Plan, as described in Section 65400 of the California Government Code. Because some of the individual actions and programs described in the Implementation Programs Appendix act as mitigation for significant environmental impacts resulting from planned development identified in the General Plan, the annual report can also provide a means of monitoring the application of the mitigation measures as required by Section 15097 of the State CEQA Guidelines. This Implementation Programs Appendix may be updated annually with the budget process





COMMUNITY DESIGN & HISTORIC RESOURCES

This Implementation Program provides actions to implement the adopted policies and plans identified in the Community Design & Historic Resources Element. The Community Design & Historic Resources Implementation Program is a series of actions, procedures and techniques which includes a description of the responsible agency/department, funding source, time frame and related policies in the Community Design & Historic Resources Element.

COMMUNITY DESIGN

CDHR 1: Community Identity and Character

Enhance the City's unique identity and character by:

- 1) Maintaining the low density, low profile residential character of the community through zoning regulations and design guidelines;
- 2) Adopting and updating street design standards;
- 3) Preserving trees, especially those designated as heritage and landmark trees;
- 4) Implementing the street tree planting and management program with City approval for tree planting in street right-of-ways.
- 5) Encouraging the installation of planting medians along major arterial roadways as appropriate;
- 6) Continuing to require the undergrounding of utilities;
- 7) Promoting site planning and project design with an emphasis on small town scale and pedestrian friendly development;
- 8) Ensuring compatibility between residential and non-residential development through zoning regulations and design review;
- 9) Continuing to require a landscape strip along the back of properties abutting Foothill Expressway between Edith Avenue and San Antonio Road;
- 10) Developing distinguishing gateways to the City representative of its unique characteristics;
- 11) Encouraging community events throughout the City; and
- 12) Supporting public art through the Parks, Art, and Recreation Commission.

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Responsible Agency/Department: | Community Development, Public Works |
| Funding Source: | General Fund, Development Fees |
| Time Frame: | Ongoing |
| Related Policies: | 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 3.1 |

CDHR 2: DESIGN REVIEW

Continue to conduct design review of residential and non-residential development to ensure compliance with applicable standards and guidelines, sound planning and good design practices, and compatibility with surrounding uses and development.



Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development, Architecture and Site Control Committee
Funding Source: Development fees
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 4.2, 4.3

CDHR 3: TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE

Implement the City's Tree Protection Ordinance, which establishes a process for designation of heritage and landmark trees and requires approval of tree removal permits for protected trees. Continue to recognize the protected status of trees designated by City Council resolution as heritage and/or landmark trees.

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development, City Council
Funding Source: General Fund
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 1.1, 1.2

CDHR 4: DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN

Implement the Downtown Urban Design Plan to preserve the unique character and pedestrian appeal of the Downtown by ensuring that future development and redevelopment in the Downtown is consistent with the plan.

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development, Public Works
Funding Source: General Fund, Development Fees
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7

CDHR 5: ENHANCE EL CAMINO REAL CORRIDOR

Establish standards for streetscape improvements along the El Camino Real Corridor to improve the pedestrian appeal and establish visual continuity throughout the corridor (e.g., street trees, sidewalk improvements).

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development, Public Works
Funding Source: General Fund
Time Frame: 2002 and Ongoing
Related Policies: 4.1, 4.2

CDHR 6: IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL CENTERS

Enhance the City's neighborhood commercial centers by ensuring design consistency with established design themes, encouraging unifying design plans and improvements (e.g., signs, hardscape and landscape improvements), and promoting pedestrian-friendly site improvements (e.g., pedestrian plazas and walkways). Additionally, ensure that new development and redevelopment is consistent with any adopted Specific Plans or design plans for the commercial center.



Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development, Public Works
Funding Source: General Fund, Assessment Districts, private funds,
Development Fees
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 5.1, 5.2

CDHR 7: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Continue to involve the community in setting priorities and inform the community of opportunities to participate in activities, programs, and public hearings:

- 1) Promote activities that bring members of the community together for cultural and social events;
- 2) Establish ad hoc committees as necessary and appropriate to further community goals;
- 3) Use multiple venues for communication including newsletters, brochures, public notices, surveys, and the City's website; and
- 4) Recognize Los Altos citizens who have distinguished themselves and reflect pride in the City.

Responsible Agency/Department: City Manager, City Clerk
Funding Source: General Fund, Development Fees
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 1.9, 1.10, 3.4

CDHR 8: STREET LIGHTING

Continue to encourage street lighting at major intersections and public places and to consider additional lighting needs on a case-by-case basis.

Responsible Agency/Department: Public Works
Funding Source: General Fund, Assessment District, Impact Fees
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 2.1, 2.2

HISTORIC RESOURCES

CDHR 9: HISTORICAL PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

Implement the City's Historical Preservation Ordinance, which establishes criteria for the designation of historic landmarks and historic districts.

Responsible Agency/Department: Historical Commission, Community Development
Funding Source: General Fund
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3



CDHR 10: HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY

Continue to update the City's Historic Resource Inventory of significant historic properties. Review the current list and determine if significant historic resources are eligible for landmark designation or listing in the California Register of Historical Resources.

Responsible Agency/Department: Historical Commission, Community Development
Funding Source: General Fund
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 6.2

CDHR 11: HISTORICAL COMMISSION REVIEW

Continue to require Historical Commission review of projects involving properties listed in the Historic Resource Inventory. Historic Commission review shall be integrated into the design review process prior to building permit issuance or design review approval.

Responsible Agency/Department: Historical Commission, Community Development
Funding Source: General Fund
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 6.2

CDHR 12: PRESERVE SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC RESOURCES

Assess development proposals for potential impacts to significant historic resources pursuant to Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines. For structures that potentially have historic significance, require a study conducted by a professional archaeologist or historian to determine the actual significance of the structure and potential impacts of the proposed development. Require modification of projects to avoid significant impacts, or require mitigation measures. Protect historical buildings and sites to the extent possible, including modifications to Uniform Code requirements for historic structures.

Responsible Agency/Department: Historical Commission, Community Development
Funding Source: Development fees
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3

CDHR 13: PROTECT SIGNIFICANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Assess development proposals for potential impacts to significant archaeological resources pursuant to Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines. Require a study conducted by a professional archaeologist for projects located near creeks or identified archaeological sites to determine if significant archaeological resources are potentially present and if the project will significantly impact the resources. If significant impacts are identified, either require the project to be modified to avoid the impacts, or require measures to mitigate the impacts. Mitigation may involve archeological investigation or recovery.

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development
Funding Source: Development fees



Time Frame:
Related Policies:

Ongoing
6.4, 6.5

LAND USE ELEMENT



INTRODUCTION

The Land Use Element is a guide to land use planning within the City of Los Altos and affects many of the issues addressed in all other General Plan elements. This Element serves as the central framework for the entire General Plan and functions as a guide to planners, the general public, and decision makers as to the desired pattern of development for Los Altos.

PURPOSE OF THE LAND USE ELEMENT

The purpose of the Land Use Element is to describe existing and future land use activity, which has been designed to achieve the City's long-range goals for physical development. The Land Use Element identifies the distribution, location, and intensity of residential, commercial, public/institutional, and open space land uses. Text, maps, and diagrams herein outline the future land uses within the City and how these uses are integrated with the other General Plan elements and policies. This Element also addresses the relationship between development and environmental quality, potential hazards, and social and economic objectives.

The current Element and its policies connect with previous planning for the community to create a future in which the traditional character of the City is preserved and enhanced by new development. Goals and policies contained in this Element establish the constitutional framework for future land use planning and decision-making in Los Altos.

SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE LAND USE ELEMENT

The Land Use Element complies with the requirements mandated in California Government Code Section 65302(a). The Element is comprised of four sections: 1) Introduction; 2) the Land Use Plan; 3) Issues, Goals, and Policies; and 4) Implementation Programs Appendix.

The Land Use Plan establishes a logical, organized land use pattern with standards for future development. The Land Use Policy Map graphically identifies the planned uses within Los Altos. Land use designations are described in the Plan section, including the type and density of allowed uses, along with a statistical summary of the future land use composition. The Plan section also identifies special planning areas in the City with unique characteristics and/or opportunities.

In the Issues, Goals and Policies section, major land use issues are identified and related goals and policies are established to address these issues. The goals, which are overall statements of community desires, are comprised of broad statements of purpose and direction. The policies serve as guides for reviewing development proposals, planning facilities to accommodate anticipated growth, and accomplishing community development strategies.

The Implementation Programs Appendix identifies specific implementation programs for the Land Use Element.



RELATED LAWS, PLANS AND PROGRAMS

There are a number of related laws, plans and programs that are considered in the formulation, adoption and implementation of local land use policy. Related laws, plans and programs are both local and regional in nature. Regional planning agencies recognize that planning issues extend beyond the boundaries of individual cities. The form and distribution of development in Los Altos are affected by both local and regional plans. Relevant plans are summarized below.

California Environmental Quality Act

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was adopted by the state legislature in response to a public mandate for a thorough environmental analysis of projects that might adversely affect the environment. The provisions of the law, review procedures and any subsequent analysis are described in the CEQA Statutes and Guidelines as amended in 1998. Land use impacts are recognized as environmental impacts under CEQA.

Association of Bay Area Governments

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) is the comprehensive regional planning agency for the 100 cities and nine counties of the San Francisco Bay Area. ABAG works to establish solutions to land use, housing, environmental quality, economic development, recreation, and health and safety issues affecting the region. ABAG has conducted numerous studies and adopted goals and policies relative to land use in the region including Bay Area Futures, Silicon Valley Projections, Regional Housing Needs Assessment, Adopted Platform on Growth Management, Land Use Policy Framework, and Subregional Land Use Goals and Policies. ABAG is the source of most of the population, employment, and housing projections used in the Land Use, Housing, and Economic Development Elements.

Los Altos Zoning Ordinance

As the primary implementation tool for the General Plan Land Use Element, the Zoning Ordinance establishes specific regulations for the use and development of land within the designated zoning districts of the City.

Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan

The Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan was adopted in 1999 for the 26-acre commercial area southeast of El Camino Real and San Antonio Road. The Specific Plan is intended to revitalize the aesthetics and economics of this area at the City's northern gateway.

Loyola Corners Specific Plan

The Loyola Corners Specific Plan was adopted in 1990 for the 17-acre commercial area near the intersection along Foothill Expressway at Miramonte Avenue. The primary goal of the Specific Plan is to create an attractive and functional commercial area to ensure the long-term viability of the area.

Downtown Urban Design Plan

In 1992, the City adopted the Downtown Urban Design Plan to reinforce the identity of Downtown as a retail center, to improve the visual quality of the area, and to create an attractive pedestrian environment.

Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines

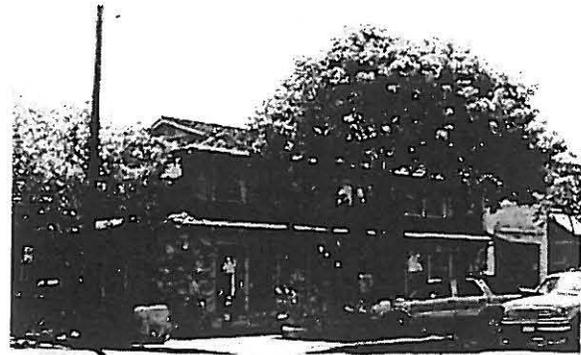
The City adopted Design Guidelines for single-family residential development in 1991 to guide the homeowner, architect, developer and builder in the planning and execution of successful single-family residential design. The primary purpose is to maintain the physical attributes of existing residential neighborhoods in Los Altos.



RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

According to state planning law, the Land Use Element must be consistent with the other General Plan elements. Each element is distinct and all the elements together comprise the General Plan. All elements of the General Plan are interrelated to a degree, and certain goals and policies of each element may also address issues that are the primary subjects of other elements. The integration of overlapping issues throughout the General Plan elements provides a strong basis for implementation of plans and programs, and achievement of community goals.

More so than any other element, the Land Use Element relates directly to all other elements of the General Plan. This Element establishes the planned land use pattern for Los Altos based on historic development and the community's vision for the future. Land use planning takes into consideration housing needs identified in the Housing Element, natural and manmade hazards and development constraints identified in the Natural Environment & Hazards Element, and the open space and conservation policies outlined in the Open Space, Conservation & Community Facilities Element. Alternatively, the other General Plan elements ensure that infrastructure, utilities, and public facilities are available to accommodate planned land uses, and that the unique qualities of Los Altos are safeguarded and enhanced. Finally, a circulation plan is established in the Circulation Element to accommodate increased traffic from planned development in accordance with the Land Use Element.





LAND USE PLAN

Land use decisions in Los Altos are shaped by the community's desire to preserve and protect its unique character and existing land use patterns. The nature and character of existing development, the desire for greater economic development, and planned infrastructure capacity all has an influence on the development of land use policy and planning for future land use.

The Land Use Plan provides background information and describes the approach that will be used to build upon the community's sound planning base. The subsequent Issues, Goals, and Policies Section summarizes key issues and provides the basis for the Plan. The City's land use approach is to maintain a favorable balance of land uses, ensure land use compatibility, and direct growth and redevelopment in a manner that is economically viable and in keeping with the existing character of the community.

LAND USE BALANCE

The variety of land uses within Los Altos affects the important balance between the generation of public revenues and the provision of public facilities and services. Achieving and maintaining a balance of land uses can ensure fiscal stability and also create a desirable community in which people can reside, work, shop, and recreate.

Los Altos is a developed community with little opportunity for additional growth or major land use changes. Future growth will occur with the development of the few remaining vacant parcels and the redevelopment of currently developed parcels. The Land Use Plan identifies the land use composition throughout the City to achieve the desired balance between public revenues and services.

Land Use Classification System

The Land Use Policy Map (LU-1) illustrates the various types and distribution of land uses planned for Los Altos. The land use classification system includes 15 General Plan land use designations, which are listed in Table LU-1. These land use designations serve to provide a rational and ordered approach to land use development and maintenance of public uses and open space by identifying the types and nature of development allowed in particular locations throughout the planning area.

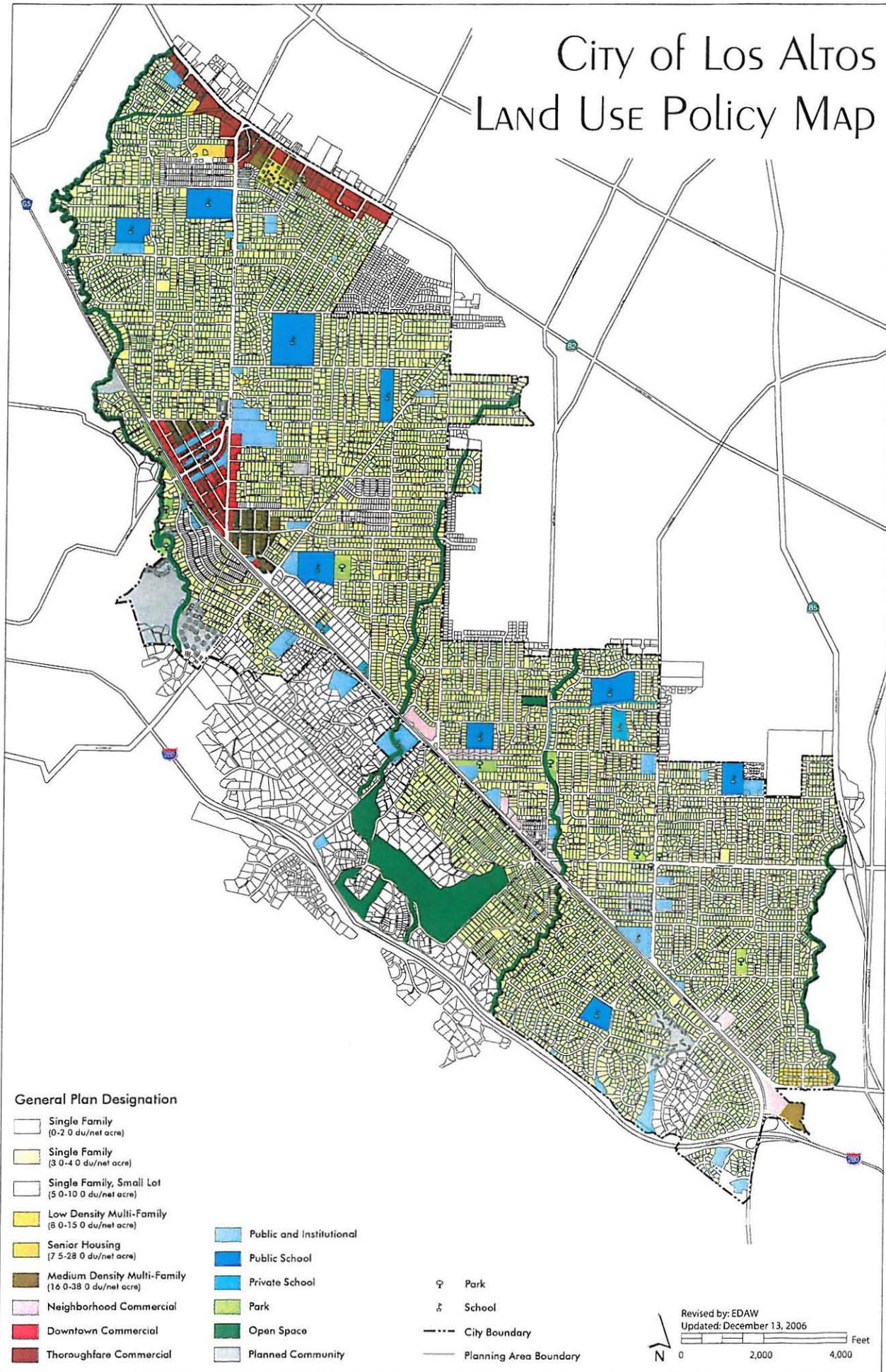
The land use classification system in Los Altos includes five general land use categories: Residential, Commercial, Public and Quasi-Public Facilities, Open Space, and Planned Community. Descriptions of each general land use category and corresponding land use designations are provided in the subsequent Land Use Designations section of the Plan.

Land Use Density and Intensity

This Element uses certain terminology to describe the 15 land use designations. The term *density* is used for residential uses and refers to the population and development capacity of residential land. Density is described in terms of dwelling units per net acre of land (du/acre).

The term *intensity* refers to the extent of development on a parcel of land or lot (i.e., the total building floor area square footage, building height, the floor area ratio, and/or the percent of lot coverage). Intensity is often used to describe non-residential development levels; but in a broader sense, intensity is also used to describe overall levels of both residential and non-residential development types. In this Plan, building floor area square footage and floor area ratio are used as measures of non-residential development intensity.

City of Los Altos LAND USE POLICY MAP



General Plan Designation

- Single Family (0-2.0 du/net acre)
- Single Family (3.0-4.0 du/net acre)
- Single Family, Small Lot (5.0-10.0 du/net acre)
- Low Density Multi-Family (8.0-15.0 du/net acre)
- Senior Housing (7.5-28.0 du/net acre)
- Medium Density Multi-Family (16.0-38.0 du/net acre)
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Downtown Commercial
- Thoroughfare Commercial

- Public and Institutional
- Public School
- Private School
- Park
- Open Space
- Planned Community

- Park
- School
- City Boundary
- Planning Area Boundary

Revised by: EDAA
Updated: December 13, 2006

0 2,000 4,000 Feet



**Table LU-1
Land Use Classification System**

| Land Use | DUs or FAR/Net Acre | | Summary Description of Land Use Designation |
|---|---|--------------------------|---|
| | Maximum | Anticipated | |
| Residential Land Uses | | | |
| Single Family Large Lot | 2.0 | 1.8 | Detached single-family homes on large lots. |
| Single Family Med. Lot | 4.0 | 3.5 | Detached single-family homes. |
| Single Family Small Lot | 10.0 | 5.6 | Detached single-family homes on smaller lots. |
| Low Density Multi-Family | 15.0 | 11.0–15.0 ⁽¹⁾ | Detached and attached single-family homes, condominiums, duplexes, and apartments. |
| Senior Housing | 28.0 | 21.0–28.0 ⁽¹⁾ | Detached and attached single-family homes, condominiums, duplexes, and apartments for seniors. |
| Medium density Multi-Family | 38.0 | 28.0–38.0 ⁽¹⁾ | Detached and attached single-family homes, condominiums, and apartments. |
| Commercial Land Uses | | | |
| Neighborhood Commercial <i>Foothill Plaza</i> | 1.5:1 (2.0:1 w/ residential) ⁽²⁾ | 0.35:1 | Retail uses serving the needs of nearby neighborhoods. Specified areas may also include general business, medical, or professional office uses. Residential development is allowed by right at Foothill Plaza. |
| <i>All other locations</i> | 0.5:1 | 0.35:1 | |
| Downtown Commercial <i>Downtown Core</i> | 1.0:1 (2.0:1 w/ residential) ⁽²⁾ | 1.0:1 | General retail uses and service, commercial recreational, cultural, and office uses that serve local residents. Higher density residential uses that enhance the village character of the Downtown are also allowed by right in the Core and Periphery areas. Such uses may be allowed elsewhere, subject to Use Permit approval. |
| <i>Downtown Periphery</i> | 1.0:1 (2.0:1 w/ residential) ⁽²⁾ | 0.8:1 | |
| Thoroughfare Commercial <i>El Camino Real Corridor</i> | 0.5:1 office (1.5:1 w/ mixed use) ⁽²⁾ | 0.8:1 | Retail, service, and small office uses that typically rely on vehicle traffic and serve the city and/or regional market. Permits mixed use development and affordable residential opportunities along El Camino Real Corridor. |
| Public/Quasi-Public Facilities Land Uses | | | |
| Public School Land | 0.6:1 | 0.3:1 | Land owned by public school districts and used for education, recreation, administration, or other non-commercial, non-residential, or non-industrial purposes. |
| Private School Land | 1.0:1 | 0.3:1 | Land owned by private or parochial schools and used for education, recreation, administration, or other non-commercial, non-commercial, non-residential, or non-industrial purposes. |
| Public and Institutional | 0.6:1 | 0.35:1 | Governmental, institutional, academic, group residence, church, community service uses, easements, rights-of-way, facilities of public and private utilities, and parking. |
| Open Space Land Uses | | | |
| Parks | 0.4:1 | 0.1:1 | Publicly owned and dedicated parkland. |
| Other Open Space | 0.6:1 | NA | Open space for the preservation of natural resources, managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, and protection of health and public safety. |
| Planned Community Uses | | | |
| Planned Community | varies | varies | Various single-family and senior residential densities and housing types, as well as community facilities, private schools, recreational areas, religious facilities, educational or philanthropic institutions, public utilities and services, hospitals, and open space areas. |
| (1) The average density for multi-family categories is 75% to 100% of the maximum density since projects are required to construct between 75% and 100% of the maximum density unless the project will negatively impact the community. | | | |
| (2) See qualifications and special provisions in the Special Planning Areas section of the Land Use Plan. | | | |

Floor area ratio (FAR) expresses the intensity of use on a lot. The FAR represents the ratio between the total gross floor area of all buildings on a lot and the total land area of that lot. For example, a 20,000 square foot building on a 40,000 square foot lot yields a FAR of 0.50:1. A 0.50:1 FAR describes a single-story building that covers half of the lot, or a two-story building covering approximately one-quarter of the lot. Figure LU-2 depicts the calculation of FAR.

Policy Map and provides a corresponding indication of maximum density or intensity of development. Maximum allowable development on individual parcels of land is governed by these measures of density or intensity. The table also includes an anticipated overall level of development within each land use designation within the planning area. Measures of anticipated future development intensity and density are based upon estimates of existing levels of development and are, therefore, less than the absolute maximum allowed for an individual parcel of land. For various reasons, many parcels in the community have not been developed to their maximum density or intensity and, in the future, maximum development as described in this Element can be expected to occur only on a limited number of parcels.

State General Plan law requires that the Land Use Element specify the maximum densities and intensities permitted within the Land Use Plan. The land use designations shown on the Land Use Policy Map are described in detail in this Element. Table LU-1 lists each of the land use designations shown on the Land Use

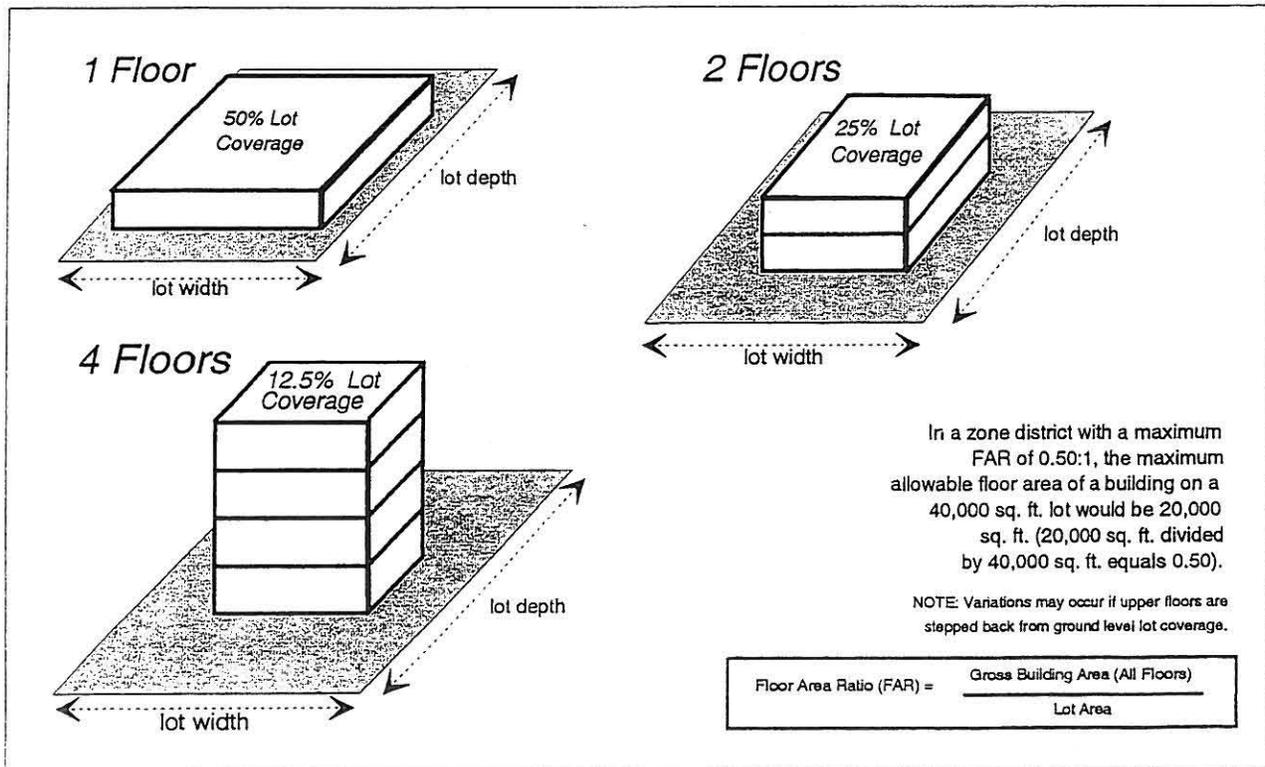


Figure LU-2
Floor Area Ratio



Land Use Designations

All land in the Los Altos planning area is assigned to one of the 15 land use designations described below:

Residential Land Use Designations: There are six residential land use designations that allow for a variety of housing types. The maximum density listed for each residential land use designation may be exceeded with General Plan Housing Element policy in accordance with the density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of the California Government Code. Development projects within the Low and Medium Density Multi-Family and Senior Housing designations shall be developed at 75 to 100 percent of the maximum density permitted by the associated zoning unless the City Council determines that a less dense project is in the best interest of the community. Mobile and modular homes are allowed in all residential land use categories, subject to design approval.

- 1) **Single Family Large Lot.** The Single Family Large Lot land use designation provides for single-family detached homes on large lots. The designation allows a maximum density of 2.0 units per net acre. The anticipated density of this type of development is approximately 1.8 units per net acre. Uses such as second dwelling units, guest houses, community facilities, parks and open space, day cares, churches, agricultural uses, and others that are compatible with the low density single-family neighborhood may also be considered as conditional uses.
- 2) **Single Family Medium Lot.** The Single Family Medium Lot land use designation provides for single-family detached homes. The designation allows a maximum density of 4.0 units per net acre. The anticipated density of future Single Family Medium Lot development is approximately 3.5 units per net acre. Uses

such as second dwelling units, guest houses, community facilities, parks and open space, day cares, churches, agricultural uses, and others that are compatible with the low density single-family neighborhood may also be considered as conditional uses.

- 3) **Single Family Small Lot.** The Single Family Small Lot land use designation provides for single-family detached homes on smaller lots. The designation allows a maximum density of 10.0 units per net acre where already subdivided. Future small lot development is anticipated at a density of approximately 5.6 units per net acre. The City recognizes that areas that were developed with higher density single-family homes comprise an important part of the community character and affordable housing stock. The City intends to conserve this community resource by discouraging consolidation of smaller lots into larger lots. Parcels of 10,000 square feet or more that are designated as Single Family Small Lot will not be permitted to subdivide into parcels smaller than 10,000 square feet.
- 4) **Low Density Multi-Family.** The Low Density Multi-Family designation provides for detached and attached single-family homes, condominiums, duplexes, and apartments. The maximum density for this land use designation is 15.0 units per net acre. Unless the City Council determines that a less dense project is in the best interest of the community, projects in this land use designation shall be developed at 75 to 100 percent of the maximum allowed density (11 to 15 units per acre).
- 5) **Senior Housing.** The Senior Housing designation is designed to meet a variety of the City's senior housing needs. To serve these needs, this designation provides for detached and attached single-family



homes, condominiums, duplexes, and apartments. The maximum density for this land use designation is 28.0 units per net acre. Projects with this designation shall be developed at 75 to 100 percent of the maximum allowed density (21 to 28 units per acre), unless the City Council determines that a less dense project is in the best interest of the community.

- 6) **Medium Density Multi-Family.** The Medium Density Multi-Family residential designation provides for detached and attached single-family homes, condominiums, and apartments. The maximum density for this land use designation is 38.0 units per net acre. Unless the City Council determines that a less dense project is in the best interest of the community, projects with this designation shall be developed at 75 to 100 percent of the maximum allowed density (28 to 38 units per acre).

Commercial Land Use Designations: There are three commercial land use designations (Neighborhood Commercial, Downtown Commercial, and Thoroughfare Commercial) to promote a range of revenue- and employment-generating businesses in the City.

- 7) **Neighborhood Commercial.** The Neighborhood Commercial land use designation provides for a variety of retail uses that serve the needs of nearby neighborhoods, but do not supplant commercial uses in Downtown Los Altos. In addition to retail uses, areas designated for Neighborhood Commercial may also include space for general business, medical, or professional offices in specified areas as allowed by the Zoning Ordinance. Potential traffic impacts to surrounding neighborhoods and the Foothill Expressway will be considered when determining the allowable development intensity for each center. The Special Planning Areas section of the Land Use Element estab-

lishes the potential to increase the allowed density and intensity for the inclusion of residential development. Otherwise, the maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.5:1. The anticipated intensity of development in this designation is a floor area ratio of 0.35:1.

- 8) **Downtown Commercial.** The Downtown Commercial land use designation provides for a wider range of general retail than the Neighborhood Commercial and also provides for service, commercial recreational, cultural, and office uses that serve local residents. Higher density residential uses are also allowed to enhance the village character of the area. As identified in the Special Planning Areas section of the Land Use Plan, the City will consider increasing the maximum density and intensity of development in the Downtown Core and Periphery to enhance retail activities and encourage housing, especially affordable housing. Without these incentives, the maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 1.0:1 and the anticipated intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 1.0:1 for the Downtown Core and 0.8:1 for the Downtown Periphery.
- 9) **Thoroughfare Commercial.** The Thoroughfare Commercial land use designation provides for both retail, service, and office uses that typically rely on automobile traffic and attract customers from a citywide and/or regional trade area. As identified in the Special Planning Areas section of this Land Use Plan, floor area ratios are established based on the type of use(s) proposed. The City will consider other incentives in an effort to encourage mixed-use development and affordable housing. The anticipated intensity of development in this land use designation is a floor area ratio of 0.8:1.



Public/Quasi Public Land Use Designations:

There are five public and quasi-public land use designations to accommodate land owned and/or operated by or for the community of Los Altos for the public good. Uses allowed in these land use designations are also permitted uses in several other general plan land use designations and corresponding zoning districts.

- 10) **Public School Land.** The Public School Land designation applies to land owned by public school districts and used or proposed for education, recreation, administration, or other non-commercial, non-residential, or non-industrial purposes. The maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.6:1. The anticipated development intensity for this land use designation is a floor area ratio of 0.3:1.
- 11) **Private School Land.** The Private School Land designation applies to land owned by private or parochial schools and used or proposed for education, recreation, administration, or other non-commercial, non-residential, or non-industrial purposes. The maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 1.0:1. The anticipated development intensity for this land use designation is a floor area ratio of 0.3:1.
- 12) **Public and Institutional.** The Public and Institutional land use designation provides for governmental, institutional, academic, group residence, church, community service uses and lands, utilities, easements, rights-of-way, and City-owned parking facilities. Public and Institutional facilities are intended to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Where applicable, the maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.6:1. The anticipated development intensity for this land use designation is a floor area ratio of 0.35:1.

Open Space Designations: There are two land use designations (Parks and Other Open Space), which provide for open space and recreational uses.

- 13) **Parks.** The Parks designation provides for publicly owned and dedicated parkland. Activities that may be developed include areas for active sports play, large multipurpose fields for community events and informal recreation, tot lots, picnic areas, multipurpose sports fields and courts, concessions, community event space, outdoor amphitheaters, maintenance/support facilities and caretaker facilities. The maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.4:1. The anticipated development intensity for this land use designation is a floor area ratio of 0.1:1.
- 14) **Other Open Space.** The Other Open Space designation provides open space for the preservation of natural resources, managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, and protection of health and public safety. Areas designated for Other Open Space include: waterways, open space easements, private and public open space, as well as golf courses and other private recreational uses.

Planned Community Land Use Designation:

The Planned Community designation allows for detailed analysis and flexibility of land uses for larger areas, or areas with special needs.

- 15) **Planned Community.** The Planned Community designation provides for the long-term development of large areas of land under single or common ownership or control. The Planned Community designation ensures compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods; protects the public health, safety, and welfare; provides for the long-term development of large properties; protects and preserves open space as a limited and valuable re-

source; and permits reasonable use of land. The Planned Community designation also preserves and protects land for recreation, scenic value, conservation or natural resources, agriculture, senior housing, residential, and low intensity public/quasi public facilities. Allowable uses include a variety of residential single family and senior housing types, as well as community facilities, private schools, recreational areas, religious facilities, educational or philanthropic institutions, public utilities and services, hospitals, and open space areas. The maximum intensity of development will be determined based on the zoning of the area prior to rezoning to Planned Community. Senior housing projects may be approved up to a maximum density of 50 units per acre.

Specific Plans

Specific Plans are master plans for particular areas in the City. Specific Plans are not land use designations like the others discussed above; rather, the underlying General Plan designation identifies the allowable land uses and the Specific Plan addresses implementation for the development of the target area. The scope of the Specific Plan requires a detailed level of examination and planning not practical at a General Plan level. There are two areas within the City subject to specific plans as follows (See Figure LU-3):

- ❖ ***Loyola Corners Specific Plan.*** The Loyola Corners Specific Plan was adopted in 1990 creating use, development, and design regulations for the 17-acre commercial area along Foothill Expressway.
- ❖ ***Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan.*** Adopted in 1998, the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan establishes use provisions and development and design standards for the 26-acre commercial area southeast of El Camino Real and San Antonio Road.

- ❖ ***Downtown Urban Design Plan.*** In 1992, the City adopted the Downtown Urban Design Plan to reinforce the identity of Downtown as a retail center, to improve the visual quality of the area, and to create an attractive pedestrian environment.

Zoning Consistency

The Zoning Ordinance serves as the primary tool for implementing the City's land use policy. State planning law requires the Zoning Ordinance to be consistent with the General Plan. Each General Plan land use category must have one or more corresponding zone district, and the development standards and land use regulations contained in the Zoning Ordinance must reflect the policy statements in the Land Use Element. While the General Plan may be somewhat broad in its discussion of permitted land uses and development intensities, zoning provisions must identify specific regulations so that property owners and developers can determine how particular properties can be used and developed. Table LU-2 identifies the relationships between land use categories and zone districts.



City of Palo Alto

Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan



Town of Los Altos Hills

Downtown Core Specific Plan

City of Mountain View

Loyola Corners Specific Plan

City of Sunnyvale

City of Cupertino

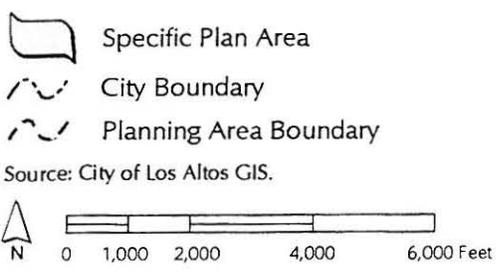


Figure LU-3
Downtown
Urban Design Plan



**Table LU-2
General Plan and Zoning Consistency**

| General Plan Land Use Category | Corresponding Zoning Districts |
|--|--|
| Single Family Large Lot | R1-40, R1-20, R1-H, R1-10, PC, PCF, PCF/R1-10, PUD |
| Single Family Medium Lot | R1-H, R1-10, PC, PCF, PCF/R1-10, PUD |
| Single Family Small Lot | R1-10, LC/SPZ, PC, PCF/R1-10, PUD |
| Low Density Multi-Family | R3-4.5, R3-5, R3-3, PC, PUD |
| Senior Housing | R3-4.5, R3-5, R3-3, R3-1.8, PC, PUD |
| Medium Density Multi-Family | R3-1.8, R3-1, OAD/R3-1, PC, PUD |
| Neighborhood Commercial | OA-1, CN, LC/SPZ, |
| Downtown Commercial | R3-1.8, R3-1, OAD, OA, OA-4.5, OAD/R3-1, CD, CS, CRS, CRS/OAD, PUD |
| Thoroughfare Commercial | OA-1, CN, CT, PUD |
| Public School Land | R1-40, R1-20, R1-H, R1-10, PC, PCF, PCF-R1-10, PUD |
| Private School Land | R1-40, R1-20, R1-H, R1-10, PC, PCF, PCF-R1-10, PUD |
| Public and Institutional | R1-40, R1-20, R1-H, R1-10, PC, PCF, PCF-R1-10, PUD ⁽¹⁾ |
| Parks | R1-40, R1-20, R1-H, R1-10, PC, PCF, PCF/R1-10, PUD |
| Other Open Space | R1-40, R1-20, R1-H, R1-10, R3-4.5, R3-5, R3-3, R3-1, PC, PCF, PCF/R1-10, PUD |
| Planned Community | R1-40, R1-20, R1-H, R1-10, PC, PCF/R1-10, PUD |
| (1) In addition to the listed zoning districts, utilities are permitted in all multi-family residential and commercial zoning districts. City-owned parking facilities are only permitted in non-residential zoning districts. | |



Land Use Composition

Figure LU-1 is the Land Use Policy Map for the City, which illustrates planned land uses within the planning area. The map serves as a guide for future land use decisions made by City staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council.

Because Los Altos is an established and largely developed community, the majority of planned land uses shown in Figure LU-1 correspond to existing development. A desirable balance of land uses currently exists, and will be maintained in the future under the proposed land use plan. Table LU-3 lists acreage figures for each land use category in accordance with the Land Use Policy Map.

**Table LU-3
General Plan Land Use in the Los Altos Planning Area**

| Land Use | Net Acres in Planning Area | Percentage of Land in Planning Area |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Single-Family Large Lot | 429 | 11% |
| Single-Family Medium Lot | 2,598 | 67% |
| Single-Family Small Lot | 83 | 2% |
| Low Density Multi-Family | 34 | 1% |
| Medium Density Multi-Family | 45 | 1% |
| Neighborhood Commercial | 37 | 1% |
| Downtown Commercial | 42 | 1% |
| Thoroughfare Commercial | 59 | 2% |
| Public School Land | 120 | 3% |
| Private School Land | 34 | 1% |
| Public and Institutional | 113 | 3% |
| Utilities | | |
| Parking | | |
| Parks | 32 | 1% |
| Other Open Space | 127 | 3% |
| Planned Community | 93 | 3% |
| Total | 3,846 | 100% |



Annexations

Since 1974, Los Altos has annexed approximately 382 acres of residential land. Lands possibly subject to future annexation are also in residential use or designated for open space. Therefore, any future annexation will further reinforce the City's residential orientation.

Figure LU-1 shows current City boundaries and areas subject to annexation within the City's planning area. The Sphere of Influence, as defined by the Santa Clara County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and planning area boundaries are one in the same. Annexation requires an affirmative, majority vote of the residents of an area requesting to annex to a city, a majority vote of the City Council, and approval of a majority of the LAFCO Board.

Prior to the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, residential property generated sufficient taxes to cover City expenses associated with those properties. This has not necessarily been the case since Proposition 13. In order to make an informed decision on the desirability of annexing an area, the City evaluates the costs and benefits of a proposed annexation. The City may require the petitioners to conduct a fiscal impact analysis to assist in this evaluation.

Pre-Zoning

Land outside the City limits, but within the Los Altos planning area, is pre-zoned with the approval of Santa Clara County. Pre-zoning shows a city's intended zoning for an area in the event the area annexes to the city, and becomes the city's zoning for the area upon annexation. Pre-zoning also serves as a guide to the County in its land use decision-making.

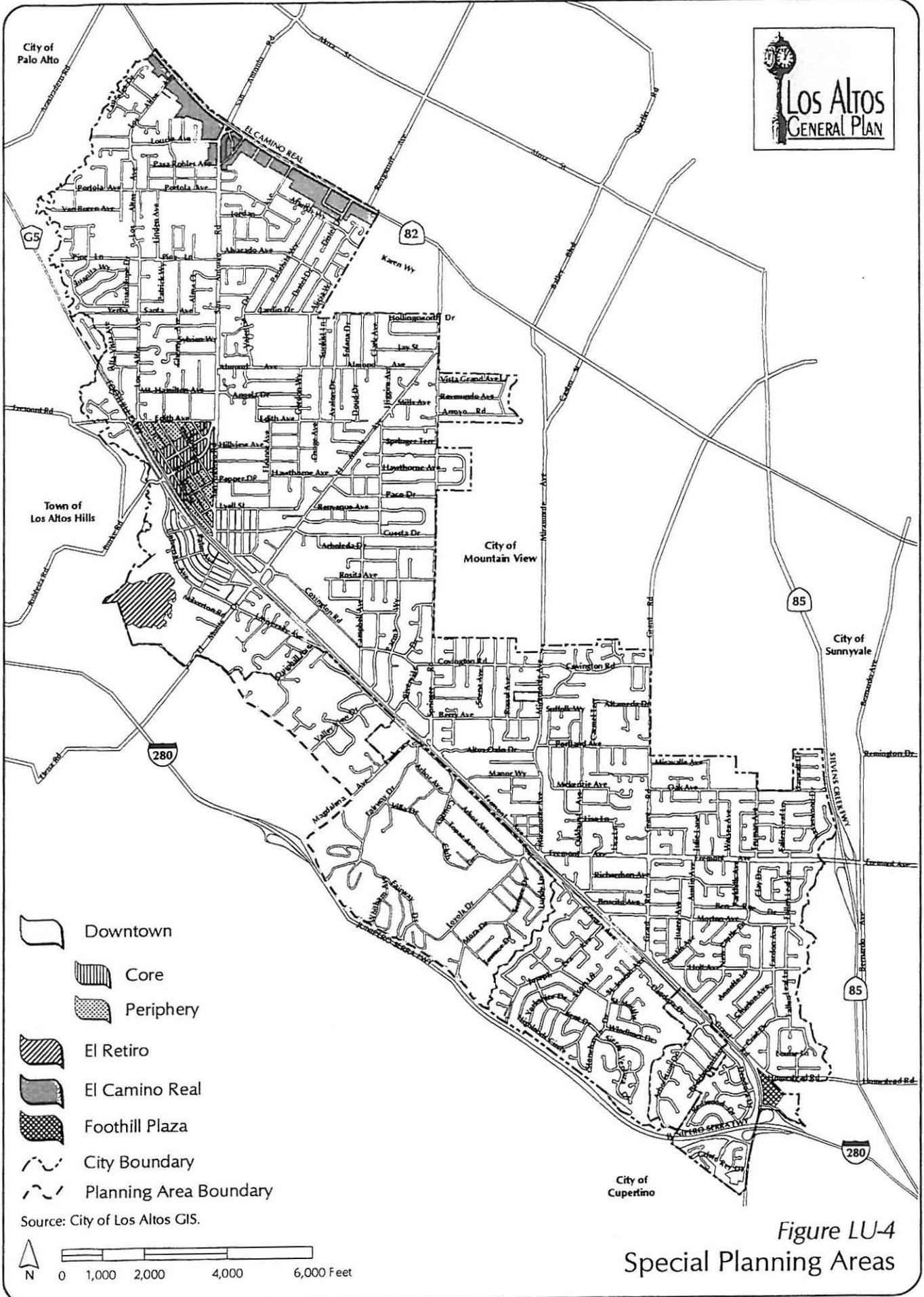
Pre-zoning is subject to the same requirements applicable to zoning in a city, including the requirement for consistency with the general plan. Zone changes can be granted in compliance with prescribed procedures. Los Altos, with the approval of Santa Clara County, has pre-zoned land with annexation potential for varying densities of single-family use.

SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS

Los Altos' land use patterns are well established. However, shifts in retailing and office trends, combined with a strong need for affordable housing in the Bay Area affect how property is used and reused, developed and redeveloped over time. The Land Use Policy Map responds both to the City's highly developed character and anticipated long-term land use changes that will further City objectives. Land use patterns generally will remain unchanged, particularly with regard to the City's residential neighborhoods. However, public and private investment will be applied to Special Planning Areas to achieve land use changes and associated economic development and housing goals. Figure LU-4 identifies the following Special Planning Areas:

- ❖ Downtown
- ❖ El Camino Real Corridor
- ❖ Foothill Plaza
- ❖ El Retiro

Within each of these Special Planning Areas, the City is introducing the concepts and opportunities for increasing land use density and intensity to better achieve specific objectives for these areas. Some provisions will supplement the requirements associated with each base land use designation, and others will be analyzed further for implementation using the City's Zoning Ordinance.



-  Downtown
-  Core
-  Periphery
-  El Retiro
-  El Camino Real
-  Foothill Plaza
-  City Boundary
-  Planning Area Boundary

Source: City of Los Altos GIS.

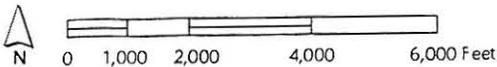


Figure LU-4
Special Planning Areas



Downtown

Downtown Los Altos represents the heart of the City. It includes all properties located between Edith Avenue, Foothill Expressway, and San Antonio Road. One- and two-story pedestrian-oriented retail development, some professional offices and service uses, and two-lane roadways with both diagonal and parallel on-street parking characterize the Downtown Core area.

Development consists of one, two and three story buildings on small lots. Although some on-street parking is available, most parking in the area is contained within City-owned and operated parking plazas, which are crowded mid-week days. The Downtown area offers opportunities for broader use, coordinated development, and a mix of commercial and residential uses that have the potential to create a more vibrant and economically productive district.

For planning purposes, the area has been split into two planning districts: Downtown Core and Downtown Periphery. The Downtown Core area includes all properties within the Downtown area located along State Street and Main Street, northeast of Foothill Expressway, and west of San Antonio Road. The Downtown Periphery area includes all properties north and south of the Downtown Core area, but still within the Downtown triangle.

Intensifying uses within the Downtown Core offers potential to enhance retail activities, increase evening activities with a hotel and theater, and supplement the City's affordable housing stock. To achieve these objectives, the City will consider amending the Downtown zoning regulations to provide development incentives for the inclusion of a residential component that includes affordable housing as follows:

- ❖ Increase the allowable FAR up to a maximum 2.0:1; and/or
- ❖ Increase the height limit to a maximum of three stories.

Otherwise, the maximum FAR for the Downtown is 1.0:1 and the maximum building height is 30 feet and two stories.

Residential development is allowed on second floors of structures within both the Core and Periphery. A significant number of future residential units developed in the area shall be affordable to very low- and low-income households. Some market rate units are permitted to provide an incentive for residential development. In lieu of requiring that additional parking be provided, the City will consider implementing a parking fee for use of City-owned parking plazas by Downtown Core residents living in below market rate units.

El Camino Real Corridor

El Camino Real forms the northern boundary of the City, supporting a mix of low- to medium-scale offices, retail stores, personal services, restaurants, and lodging. The corridor borders the adjacent Cities of Mountain View and Palo Alto, which have encouraged intensive retail, office, lodging, and residential development on their sections of the roadway.

The lower-intensity nature of uses found on the Los Altos side of the road works well to ensure compatibility with adjacent residential neighborhoods, to minimize additional traffic flow from and onto El Camino Real, and provide a suitable location for small office-based businesses. However, the corridor as currently configured does not provide much in the way of affordable housing, and is gradually becoming more of an office district and less of a retail area. Moderate intensification of uses fronting the corridor offers an opportunity to create additional affordable housing,



sustain diversity within the City's commercial centers, and control the amount of office space developed on the Corridor to ensure that sales tax revenue is maximized.

To achieve these objectives, the City will consider amending the Thoroughfare Commercial zoning regulations for the El Camino Real corridor. Allowable uses may include any combination of residential, office, retail, lodging, and personal services. The ground floor of all new mixed-use development may be limited to retail, hotel, motel, or restaurant uses only.

In terms of floor area ratio, projects that are entirely office use could be limited to a maximum FAR of 0.5:1 to discourage this type of development exclusively. All other uses could be allowed a maximum FAR of 1.5:1. However, the amount of floor area that exceeds a 0.5:1 ratio should be for retail, housing, or lodging use. The height limit for this area is 30 feet and two stories. However, projects with residential components could be allowed up to a maximum height of three stories as a further incentive to encourage mixed-use projects and obtain affordable housing.

Foothill Plaza

In the southeast corner of the City, a potentially underdeveloped commercial center offers new opportunities for mixed-use development. Foothill Plaza is located at the northeast corner of the junction of Foothill Expressway and I-280. A portion of the Plaza is located within the adjacent City of Cupertino. Within this area, the City will consider encouraging development of affordable housing opportunities in conjunction with current retail and service uses.

Residential development may be allowed and residential projects could include affordable (below market rate) housing with either ten percent of the total housing units affordable to very low-income households, 20 percent of

the total units affordable to very low- and low-income households, or 50 percent of the total units affordable to very low-, low-, and moderate income households.

In order to achieve affordable housing objectives, the City will consider amending the Neighborhood Commercial zoning regulations for this area for development of affordable housing as follows:

- ❖ Increase the allowable FAR up to a maximum 2.0:1; and/or
- ❖ Increase the height limit to a maximum of three stories.

Otherwise, the maximum FAR for the Foothill Plaza is 1.5:1 and the maximum building height is 30 feet and two stories.

El Retiro

The El Retiro site, which consists of approximately 51.5 acres, is located west of University Avenue and north of O'Keefe Lane. The site is recognized as an important property because of its sensitive environment, large open spaces, and use over the years as a private retreat. The City conducted a planning study to determine and ensure proper use of the site into the future.

In 1984, the City amended the land use designation of the property to Planned Community and adopted special goals and policies regarding phasing and development of the site. The City also adopted a Master Plan for El Retiro, which established a baseline number of units for each residential area and identified areas of public and private open space and areas not suitable for development. A portion of the property has been dedicated to the City as an open space conservation area. Based on the existing and surrounding land use, the allowed development on the site was established at 40 units, with a potential density bonus of up to ten additional units, in ex-

change for dedicated public open space on the site.

DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

Table LU-4 provides a statistical description of the 15 General Plan land use designations within the City and a corresponding indication of maximum density or intensity of development. The maximum allowable development on individual parcels is governed by these measures of density or intensity.

For various reasons, many parcels in the community have not been developed to their maximum density or intensity. In the future, development is anticipated to occur in a similar manner with only a limited number of parcels being developed at the maximum density or intensity. Thus, for much of the community, the projected (anticipated) future development intensity and density listed in Table LU-4 is based upon the intensity/density of existing development.

Anticipated density and intensity is for planning purposes only and exceeding them on individual parcels of land does not require a General Plan Amendment. Development can occur up to the maximum allowed density or intensity with required site and/or design review. Additionally, a density bonus of at least 25 percent is required by state law to be offered for certain projects affordable to low or very low income households.

Table LU-4 includes the planned land use and/or development intensities in the identified Special Planning Areas. Most significant are the potential changes to the El Camino Real corridor.

Population estimates are for the entire Los Altos planning area, including the City of Los Altos and small adjacent unincorporated areas in the County.



**Table LU-4
Land Use Potential and Population Estimates**

| Land Use | Anticipated Development Density/Intensity | | Net Acres | Estimated Dwelling Units | Estimated Non-Residential Square Feet (Thousands) | Estimated Population |
|--|---|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|---|----------------------|
| | DU/Net Acre | FAR/Net Acre | | | | |
| Residential Land Use Designations | | | | | | |
| Single Family Large Lot | 1.8 | - | 429 | 9,653 | - | 25,817 |
| Single-Family Medium Lot | 3.5 | - | 2,598 | | | |
| Single-Family Small Lot | 5.6 | - | 83 | | | |
| Low Density Multi-Family | 11.0 - 15.0 | - | 34 | 841 | - | 2,249 |
| Senior Housing | 21.0 - 28.0 | - | - | | | |
| Medium Density Multi-Family | 28.0 - 38.0 | - | 45 | | | |
| Commercial Land Use Designations | | | | | | |
| Neighborhood Commercial | | | | | | |
| <i>Foothill Plaza</i> | 10 | 0.35 | 6 | 60 | 91 | 160 |
| <i>All other locations</i> | - | 0.35 | 31 | - | 472 | - |
| Downtown Commercial | | | | | | |
| <i>Downtown Core*</i> | 6 | 1.0 | 24 | 35 | 653 | 93 |
| <i>Downtown Periphery*</i> | 6 | 0.8 | 18 | 42 | 487 | 112 |
| Thoroughfare Commercial | | | | | | |
| <i>El Camino Real Corridor*</i> | 6 | 0.8 | 59 | 234 | 3,056 | 310 |
| Public/Quasi-Public Land Use Designations | | | | | | |
| Public School Land | | 0.3 | 120 | - | 1,574 | - |
| Private School Land | | 0.3 | 34 | - | 449 | - |
| Public and Institutional | | 0.35 | 113 | - | 1,717 | - |
| Open Space Land Use Designations | | | | | | |
| Parks | - | 0.1 | 32 | - | 137 | - |
| Other Open Space | - | - | 127 | - | - | - |
| Other Land Uses | | | | | | |
| Planned Community | - | varies | 93 | included above | | included above |
| Total | | | 3,846 | 10,865 | 8,636 | 28,741 |
| <p><i>Note: Estimated dwelling units for residential land use designations use 2001 DOF data. Population estimates assume 2.67 Persons per occupied housing unit (per DOF, 2001)</i></p> <p><i>* Projected dwelling units, non-residential square feet, and population for the Downtown Core, Downtown Periphery, and El Camino Real Corridor are based upon development potential of underutilized sites within each Special Planning Area.</i></p> | | | | | | |



ISSUES, GOALS AND POLICIES

The Land Use Element describes long-range goals for the physical development of the community, both in terms of land use type and intensity, as well as urban character and form. Five major issues are addressed by the goals, policies, and plan in the Land Use Element. These major issues are:

- 1) Balancing land uses;
- 2) Land use compatibility;
- 3) Special planning areas;
- 4) Cooperative planning efforts; and
- 5) Annexation.

Each issue and the related goals and policies are included in this section of the Element.

BALANCE OF LAND USES

A balance of land uses is important to ensure fiscal stability with sufficient public revenues to pay for necessary and desired public facilities and services. The land use composition in the Los Altos planning area includes 82 percent residential, four percent commercial, seven percent public and quasi-public, four percent parks and open space, and three percent planned community. As a developed community, the focus of community efforts regarding the balance of land uses is on preserving existing uses and character while ensuring that new development and redevelopment are compatible with existing development.

Goal 1: Balance the desirability of public/quasi-public and commercial uses with their impacts upon adjoining residential land uses.

Policy 1.1: Maintain flexibility of standards and procedures to accommodate changing trends in retail, housing, and office uses.

Policy 1.2: Recognize the unique contribution of certain non-conforming uses to community identity and the historic and economic value of the Los Altos Nursery, DeMartini Orchard Market and Foodland Market, and the residential value of Holly Village.

Policy 1.3: Ensure that the integrity, residential character, and boundary of the Altos Oaks office area are maintained.

Policy 1.4: Encourage continued efforts to improve the parking, aesthetics, and neighborhood compatibility of Pilgrim Haven.

LAND USE COMPATIBILITY

The majority of Los Altos has been developed, forming the City's unique character with its Downtown village center and low-density residential neighborhoods. As new development and redevelopment occurs, projects are evaluated to ensure that they contribute to the unique community character and do not negatively impact existing development with increased traffic and noise. Areas of special concern include the El Camino Real corridor, the Downtown, Foothill Plaza and other business districts.

Goal 2: Plan for a compatible and harmonious arrangement of land uses by providing a mix of uses consistent with projected future social and economic conditions in Los Altos.



- Policy 2.1:** Continue to apply land use designations which recognize existing development patterns and expected future conditions.

- Policy 2.2:** Encourage a variety of residential housing opportunities by allowing residential uses with adequate parking in appropriate commercial areas, including sections of the Downtown area, Foothill Plaza and along El Camino Real.

- Policy 2.3:** Continue to conduct design review of residential and non-residential development applications to ensure compatibility with surrounding property and neighborhoods.

- Policy 2.4:** Promote the use of planned unit developments (PUDs) to achieve physical development that recognizes the unique qualities of a site and harmonizes with existing and future land uses in the vicinity.

- Policy 2.5:** For planned unit developments (PUDs), review, at a minimum, site plans and building elevations concurrently with tentative maps for future subdivision applications.

SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS

Because Los Altos is an established community with few undeveloped parcels, there is little opportunity for significant change. However, in terms of redeveloping existing areas, the City has identified four areas with special planning needs and/or opportunities. Three areas with potential for land use

changes include Downtown, El Camino Real corridor, and Foothill Plaza. Additionally, the El Retiro site has been master planned for future development. A brief discussion of each area, along with individual goals and policies, is provided below.

Downtown

The Downtown is the pride of the community with a small-town village atmosphere serving the commercial needs of both residents and visitors. In the Downtown Core, one- and two-story contiguous buildings create walkable storefronts with wide sidewalks and an inviting streetscape. The City has identified the opportunity to intensify the land uses in the Downtown Core. In keeping with the use regulations in the Commercial Retail Sales (CRS) Zoning District, use provisions encourage retail and service uses on the ground floor, with development incentives for the inclusion of a residential component on the second and/or third stories.

Goal 3: Allow for intensification of development within the Downtown Core in keeping with the existing character of the area.

- Policy 3.1:** Encourage residential development above the ground floor that includes affordable housing units.

- Policy 3.2:** Consider zoning code incentives to encourage mixed-use development.

- Policy 3.3:** Consider a parking fee for residential use of City-owned parking plazas in lieu of additional parking requirements for below market rate housing residents.

- Policy 3.4:** Consider amending the zoning code to allow development of three-story buildings



in the Downtown Core to encourage construction of below market rate housing units.

Policy 3.5: Continue to review development plans to ensure compliance with the Downtown Urban Design Plan.

El Camino Real

El Camino Real is a six lane arterial road with contiguous commercial development along the City's northern boundary, abutting the cities of Mountain View and Palo Alto. With several underutilized properties and properties primed for redevelopment along this major thoroughfare, there are significant opportunities for land use intensification and revitalization of the corridor without jeopardizing the small town character of the community.

Goal 4: Improve the land use mix along El Camino Real to ensure fiscal stability, encourage affordable housing, and to allow for development intensification along this corridor in a manner that is compatible with the adjacent residential neighborhoods and the local circulation system.

Policy 4.1: Discourage projects which are exclusively office use.

Policy 4.2: Encourage mixed-use projects with retail, housing, and/or lodging in addition to retail and office uses.

Policy 4.3: Encourage residential development on appropriate sites within the El Camino Real corridor.

Policy 4.4: Encourage the development of affordable housing.

Policy 4.5: Consider amending the zoning code to allow a third story

for projects that include a residential component.

Policy 4.6: Continue to review development proposals to ensure a balance between development rights and impact on surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Foothill Plaza

Foothill Plaza is a potentially underdeveloped neighborhood commercial center located at the southern gateway to the City. The City encourages the development of affordable housing in conjunction with existing commercial development at this location.

Goal 5: Encourage additional housing opportunities compatible with existing retail and services uses within the Foothill Plaza development.

Policy 5.1: Consider amending the zoning code to allow increased development density and intensity for the provision of mixed use and affordable housing.

Policy 5.2: Consider amending the zoning code to allow development of three-story buildings to encourage construction of below market rate housing units.

El Retiro

A Master Plan has been adopted for development of the 51.5-acre El Retiro site. Associated policies are listed below.

Goal 6: Ensure that development of the El Retiro site complies with established guidelines for phased development in a manner that is sensitive to environmental constraints, maximizes the preservation of on-



site open space, and prevents intrusion into existing land uses surrounding the site.

- Policy 6.1:** Allow site development at El Retiro to occur within a framework that accommodates a range of phased development possibilities.
- Policy 6.2:** Minimize potential land use conflicts between existing and proposed uses in the vicinity of the El Retiro site.
- Policy 6.3:** Ensure compatibility between the Jesuit Retreat uses and other future land uses on the El Retiro site.
- Policy 6.4:** Encourage and facilitate development of senior housing on the El Retiro site as a desirable land use, if found to be appropriate upon further investigation.

COOPERATIVE PLANNING EFFORTS

The City of Los Altos is surrounded by several other incorporated communities within Santa Clara County. In an effort to maintain its unique identity among Silicon Valley communities and to minimize impacts from the more intense development of surrounding communities, Los Altos will continue to coordinate with other local and regional agencies in land use planning and development review.

Goal 7: Work with surrounding jurisdictions to encourage a cooperative approach for review of development outside the community which impacts Los Altos.

- Policy 7.1:** Continue to monitor and work with surrounding jurisdictions and schools districts to promote new development out-

side the community that will not negatively impact Los Altos.

ANNEXATION

Los Altos has included within its planning area three unincorporated areas west of the Foothill Expressway. Most of the land in these areas is already developed. To ensure orderly and compatible redevelopment or new development within these areas, the City needs to continue to work with Santa Clara County to coordinate review of development and redevelopment proposals to minimize potential impacts on Los Altos.

Goal 8: Promote orderly and compatible development outside the City limits but within the planning area.

- Policy 8.1:** Annex adjacent lands as and when appropriate and fiscally feasible.
- Policy 8.2:** Cooperate with Santa Clara County in their policy to require unincorporated applicants contiguous to the City to be reviewed for potential annexation before proceeding with development.
- Policy 8.3:** Ensure City review and oversight of development occurring in currently unincorporated portions of the planning area.
- Policy 8.4:** Seek to expand the City limits at Foothill Plaza to incorporate the portion of the Plaza currently in Cupertino.



IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS APPENDIX

General Plan is amended or updated to ensure continued consistency and usefulness

The Implementation Programs Appendix provides a guide to implement adopted General Plan policies and plans for City elected officials, staff and the public. The purpose of the Implementation Programs are to ensure the overall direction provided in the General Plan for City growth and development is translated from general terms to specific actions.

Each implementation program is a measure, procedure, or technique that requires additional City action. This action may either occur on a City-wide basis or in specific areas within the City. The City Council, by relating the Implementation Programs to the General Plan, recognizes the importance of long-range planning considerations in day-to-day decision making and budgeting. Implementation of the specific programs will be subject to funding constraints.

Use of the General Plan Implementation Program

The Implementation Programs are intended for use in preparing the Annual Report to the City Council on the status of the City's progress in implementing the General Plan, as described in Section 65400 of the California Government Code. Because some of the individual actions and programs described in the Implementation Programs Appendix act as mitigation for significant environmental impacts resulting from planned development identified in the General Plan, the annual report can also provide a means of monitoring the application of the mitigation measures as required by Section 15097 of the State CEQA Guidelines. This Implementation Programs Appendix may be updated annually with the budget process and whenever the City's



IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS APPENDIX

This Implementation Program provides actions to implement the adopted policies and plans identified in the Land Use Element. The Land Use Implementation Program is a series of actions, procedures and techniques which includes a description of the responsible agency/department, funding source, time frame and related policies in the Land Use Element.

BALANCE OF LAND USES

LU 1: ANNUAL REVIEW OF GP AND LAND USE POLICY MAP IMPLEMENTATION

Review implementation of the General Plan and Land Use Policy Map to identify the effect of land development and use on City revenue and costs of providing public facilities and services.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Responsible Agency/Department: | Community Development |
| Funding Source: | General Fund, Development Fees |
| Time Frame: | Annual |
| Related Policies: | 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 4.4, 6.2 |

LAND USE COMPATIBILITY

LU 2: ZONING ORDINANCE REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

Review and amend (as needed) the Zoning Ordinance to provide consistency with new state legislation and court decisions. Consider Zoning Ordinance amendments that implement the use and development of goals, policies, and plan objectives for the identified special planning areas (e.g., Downtown, El Camino Real Corridor, and Foothill Plaza).

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Responsible Agency/Department: | Community Development |
| Funding Source: | General Fund, Development Fees |
| Time Frame: | 2002/2003 and Ongoing |
| Related Policies: | 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1 |

LU 3: ZONING ORDINANCE ENFORCEMENT

Continue to enforce the Zoning Ordinance and other ordinances to achieve the desired level of regulation.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Responsible Agency/Department: | Community Development, Police |
| Funding Source: | General Fund, Development Fees |
| Time Frame: | Ongoing |
| Related Policies: | 1.1, 2.1 |



LU 4: SITE DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN REVIEW

Utilize the site development and design review process and the California Environmental Quality Act in the review of proposed residential and non-residential projects to promote high quality design, to ensure compliance with applicable regulations, to ensure compatibility with surrounding property and use, and to minimize environmental impacts. Special attention shall be given to ensuring compatibility between residential and non-residential uses (e.g., land use buffering).

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development
Funding Source: General Fund, Development Fees
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 1.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 3.3, 4.6, 6.3

LU 5: PARKING NEEDS AND FINANCING

Study and periodically update information on parking needs in the Downtown Core and methods of financing. Implement the recommendations of parking studies and consider the financing opinions for parking plaza improvements.

Responsible Agency/Department: Public Works, Community Development
Funding Source: Assessment fees, private investment
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 4.1

SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS

LU 6: DOWNTOWN LOS ALTOS

Consider Zoning Ordinance amendments to increase the maximum density and intensity for residential development above the ground floor consistent with the goals, policies, and plan objectives for the Downtown Core. Ensure that new development and redevelopment is consistent with the Downtown Urban Design Plan.

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development
Funding Source: General Fund, development fees
Time Frame: 2002/2003 and Ongoing
Related Policies: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

LU 7: EL CAMINO REAL CORRIDOR

Consider Zoning Ordinance amendments to encourage mixed-use development, provide for affordable housing, and for intensification of development throughout the corridor consistent with the corresponding General Plan goals, policies, and plan objectives. New development and redevelopment in this area shall be consistent with applicable General Plan policies, corresponding Zoning Code regulations, and any special plans subsequently adopted for this corridor. During design review, special consideration shall be given to the projects compatibility with abutting residential property.



Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development
 Funding Source: General Fund, development fees
 Time Frame: 2002/2003 and Ongoing
 Related Policies: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6

LU 8: Foothill Plaza

Consider Zoning Ordinance amendments to increase the maximum density and intensity for additional housing opportunities consistent with the corresponding General Plan goals, policies, and plan objectives. New development and redevelopment in this area shall be consistent with applicable General Plan policies and plan, as well as corresponding Zoning Code regulations. During design review, special consideration shall be given to the projects compatibility with the surrounding residential neighborhood.

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development
 Funding Source: General Fund, Development fees
 Time Frame: 2002/2003 and ongoing
 Related Policies: 5.1, 5.2

LU 9: El Retiro Master Plan

Continue to ensure development within the El Retiro site consistent with the approved Master Plan and compatible with surrounding uses.

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development
 Funding Source: Development fees
 Time Frame: Ongoing
 Related Policies: 6.2, 6.3

COOPERATIVE PLANNING EFFORTS

LU 10: COORDINATION WITH SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS

Continue to review and provide input on development applications in surrounding jurisdictions which may impact Los Altos residents and businesses.

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development, Public Works
 Funding Source: General Fund
 Time Frame: Ongoing
 Related Policies: 7.1, 8.2, 8.3



ANNEXATION

LU 11: PLANNING AREA DEVELOPMENT/ANNEXATION

Promote orderly and compatible development within the Los Altos planning area. Where appropriate and feasible, consider annexation of adjacent lands.

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Responsible Agency/Department: | City Manager, Community Development |
| Funding Source: | General Fund |
| Time Frame: | Ongoing |
| Related Policies: | 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4 |

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT



INTRODUCTION

Although Los Altos is mostly built out, with relatively few vacant parcels available for large-scale development, many opportunities exist for expanding the existing commercial and employment base. As described in the Land Use Element, development efforts within specified areas will allow new investment and complementary uses to meet local and regional shopping needs, provide expanded job opportunities, and build the City's tax base.

PURPOSE OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The Economic Development Element is an optional element under California law, rather than a mandatory element of the General Plan. The purpose of the Economic Development Element is to maintain and enhance the economic character of the community.

SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The Economic Development Element is comprised of four sections: 1) Introduction; 2) the Economic Plan; 3) Issues, Goals and Policies; and 4) Implementation Programs Appendix. The Plan section provides background information and describes how the Economic Development goals and policies will be achieved. In the Issues, Goals and Policies section, major issues related to the city's economy are identified and related goals and policies are established to address these issues. The goals, which are overall statements of community desires, are comprised of broad statements of purpose and direction. The policies serve as guides for working with local and regional agencies to ensure the economic

viability of the community. The Implementation Programs Appendix identifies specific implementation programs for the Economic Development Element.

RELATED LAWS, PLANS AND PROGRAMS

This Element provides the overall framework for decision making that affects economic development in the City. More detailed plans set forth specific strategies for economic development, and establish regulations and standards for focus areas. As discussed in the Land Use Element, specific plans and area or district plans are regulatory documents which work in concert with the General Plan to accomplish the City's goals and policies. Plans and programs specifically focused on economic development are as follows:

Loyola Corners Specific Plan

The Loyola Corners Specific Plan was adopted in 1990 for the 17-acre commercial area near the intersection of Fremont and Miramonte Avenues with Foothill Expressway. The first goal of the plan is to create attractive and functional shopping and commercial use facilities in order to increase use and provide for long term viability of the area.

Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan

In 1999, the City adopted the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan for the 26-acre commercial area southeast of El Camino Real and San Antonio Road. Economic revitalization of the plan area is one of the primary goals.



Commercial Retail Sales (CRS) Ordinance

The City adopted an Ordinance establishing provisions for the Commercial Retail Sales (CRS) zoning district, which applies to property located in the downtown area. Findings and provisions thereof encourage retail uses for economic and aesthetic purpose.

Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee

The Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee was established for the City of Los Altos and Los Altos Hills to promote local economic development strategies. Two members of the Los Altos City Council sit on the committee.



Downtown Urban Design Plan

In 1992, the City adopted the downtown Urban Design Plan to reinforce the identity of Downtown as a retail center, to improve the visual quality of the area, and to create an attractive pedestrian environment.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

According to State planning law, the Economic Development Element must be consistent with the other General Plan elements. All of the elements are interdependent, as well as being interrelated. Certain goals and policies of each element may also address issues that are primary subjects of other elements. This integration of issues throughout the General Plan creates a strong basis for the implementation of plans and programs and achievement of community goals. The Economic Development Element is most directly related to Land Use, Circulation, Community Design & Historic Resources, and Housing Elements.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In all cities, interdependence exists between local economic issues and the overall quality of life. Los Altos is a mature community with little undeveloped land. With a limited commercial base, Los Altos is considered primarily a residential community.

Economic development efforts will focus on the development, redevelopment and intensification of the El Camino Real corridor, Foot-hill Plaza and the Downtown core as described in the Land Use Element, as well as other business districts suitable for redevelopment. Background information and specific strategies are provided in this section of the Element.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND PROJECTIONS

Demographics

According to the U.S. Census, the population in Los Altos in year 2000 was 27,693 persons. The planning area for Los Altos had a population of 31,900 in 2000. Because the community is nearly built out, the rate of local population growth over the last two decades has been substantially slower than Santa Clara County and the Bay Area region. As identified in the Housing Element, the population in Los Altos is not significantly diverse in terms of ethnicity and the age distribution favors an older population. To the contrary, Santa Clara County and the Bay Area became more ethnically and age diverse throughout the 1990s.

In 2000, there were 10,462 households in Los Altos, primarily in low-density single-family residential units. While the number of households in Los Altos did not change substantially throughout the 1990s, Santa Clara County

and the Bay Area region experienced substantial household growth during the period.

Employment

During the 1990s, the total number of jobs in Los Altos grew by almost ten percent to 11,840 jobs, primarily in the industry sectors of retail and service. In Santa Clara County during this same period, the rate of job growth was over 20 percent and the job base was more diverse. Job opportunities were no longer tied to a handful of high-tech sectors, but expanded to complementary and competitive industry clusters. Companies and jobs began to move from the urban centers, causing cities ringing the edges of the region to grow.

While the Los Altos work force makes up less than half of its population (15,900 employed residents in 2000), the majority of its residents hold higher-paying managerial and professional jobs. Most of the jobs in Los Altos are retail, service, and government-oriented jobs. Therefore, the economic well-being of Los Altos residents is dependent upon the economic vitality of the County and the region.

ABAG projects that between the years 2000 and 2020, jobs in the Bay Area will be more diversified and the technology center in Silicon Valley will be diffused, resulting in a more broad-based regional economy that is less volatile than in recent years. In Santa Clara County, the rate of job growth is expected to slow from recent years as information technology companies disperse. However, the County is still expected to be the regional leader in adding new jobs through 2020.

During the forecast period to 2020, Santa Clara County will add 231,000 new jobs, 30 percent of which are anticipated in the manufacturing sector and 50 percent in the service sector. Los Altos is expected to add 1,050 new jobs by 2020, the majority of which would be in manufacturing/wholesale, retail,



and other job sectors. Projected population and job growth in the City are comparable, while job growth in the County is projected to outpace population growth. See Table ED-1.

The average household income in Los Altos grew 30 percent in the 1990s to \$159,300. During that same period, household income in Santa Clara County grew almost 23 percent to \$86,300. ABAG projects household income in the City and County to grow 27 and 22 percent, respectively by the year 2020.

In Santa Clara County, high paying service sector jobs are closely linked to the manufac-

turing sector. If growth (in terms of sales volume and productivity) does not continue in the electronics industry due to declining market share or maturation of the industry, the demand and/or ability to pay for professional services would level off or decline. The demand for related business service jobs such as engineers, management consultants, and computer programmers could decline, and pay scales may be driven down. Because the City's labor force is concentrated in the high paying end of the service spectrum, it is vulnerable to these potential long-term structural changes.

**Table ED-1
Historic and Projected Economic Data**

| LOS ALTOS PLANNING AREA CHARACTERISTICS | 1990 | 2000 | % Change 1990-2000 | 2020 | % Change 2000-2020 |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Total Population | 29,438 | 31,900 | 8.4 % | 35,000 | 9.7 % |
| Employed Residents | 15,192 | 15,900 | 4.6 % | 18,400 | 15.7 % |
| Total Jobs | 10,800 | 11,840 | 9.6 % | 12,890 | 8.9 % |
| Ag/Mining Jobs | 230 | 250 | 8.5 % | 200 | - 20.0 % |
| Manufacturing/Wholesale Jobs | 670 | 680 | 1.5 % | 790 | 16.2 % |
| Retail Jobs | 2,650 | 3,170 | 19.6 % | 3,610 | 13.9 % |
| Services Jobs | 5,140 | 6,010 | 16.9 % | 6,360 | 5.8 % |
| Other Jobs | 2,110 | 1,730 | - 18.0 % | 1,930 | 11.5 % |
| Household Income | 122,200 | 159,300 | 30.0 % | 202,100 | 26.9 % |
| SANTA CLARA COUNTY CHARACTERISTICS | 1990 | 2000 | % Change 1990-2000 | 2020 | % Change 2000-2020 |
| Total Population | 1,497,577 | 1,755,300 | 17.2% | 2,016,700 | 14.8 % |
| Employed Residents | 812,345 | 928,700 | 14.3 % | 1,137,800 | 22.5 % |
| Total Jobs | 890,930 | 1,077,220 | 20.9 % | 1,308,220 | 21.4 % |
| Ag/Mining Jobs | 7,210 | 7,430 | 3.1 % | 7,010 | -5.6 % |
| Manufacturing/Wholesale Jobs | 339,880 | 348,670 | 2.6 % | 418,800 | 20.1 % |
| Retail Jobs | 129,700 | 149,250 | 15.1 % | 169,270 | 13.4 % |
| Services Jobs | 270,230 | 390,470 | 44.5 % | 504,430 | 29.2 % |
| Other Jobs | 143,910 | 181,400 | 26.1 % | 208,710 | 15.1 % |
| Household Income | 70,300 | 86,300 | 22.8 % | 105,300 | 22.0 % |

Source: Association of Bay Area Governments Projections 2000



FISCAL BALANCE

The City must formally monitor the changing economic indicators and conditions of the subregion to anticipate the impacts of the subregional economy on Los Altos and the City of Los Altos, thereby assuring that the City's fiscal policies are related to their economic context.

Economic Base

The majority of the approximately 11,840 jobs in the Los Altos planning area are in the commercial sector, which is composed of retail and office/service uses. Retail uses are typically small-scale and are dispersed among Downtown and half-a-dozen other commercial areas (shown in Figure ED-1).

During the 1990s, Los Altos experienced growth of retail, office, and personal service uses. Office uses have expanded along San Antonio Road, the El Camino Real corridor, and in the Downtown triangle. Personal services, such as beauty salons that only incidentally involve retailing, have replaced some retail shops resulting in a loss of sales tax revenues to the City and interruption of retail frontage. This change in the mix of commercial uses is not altogether desirable – it reduces sales tax revenue; it can eliminate retail business needed or desired by the community; and it can sap the vitality of a retail area by reducing the synergy that comes from a pattern of retail location that is concentrated, with retail uses adjacent to one another and not interrupted by “dead space.”

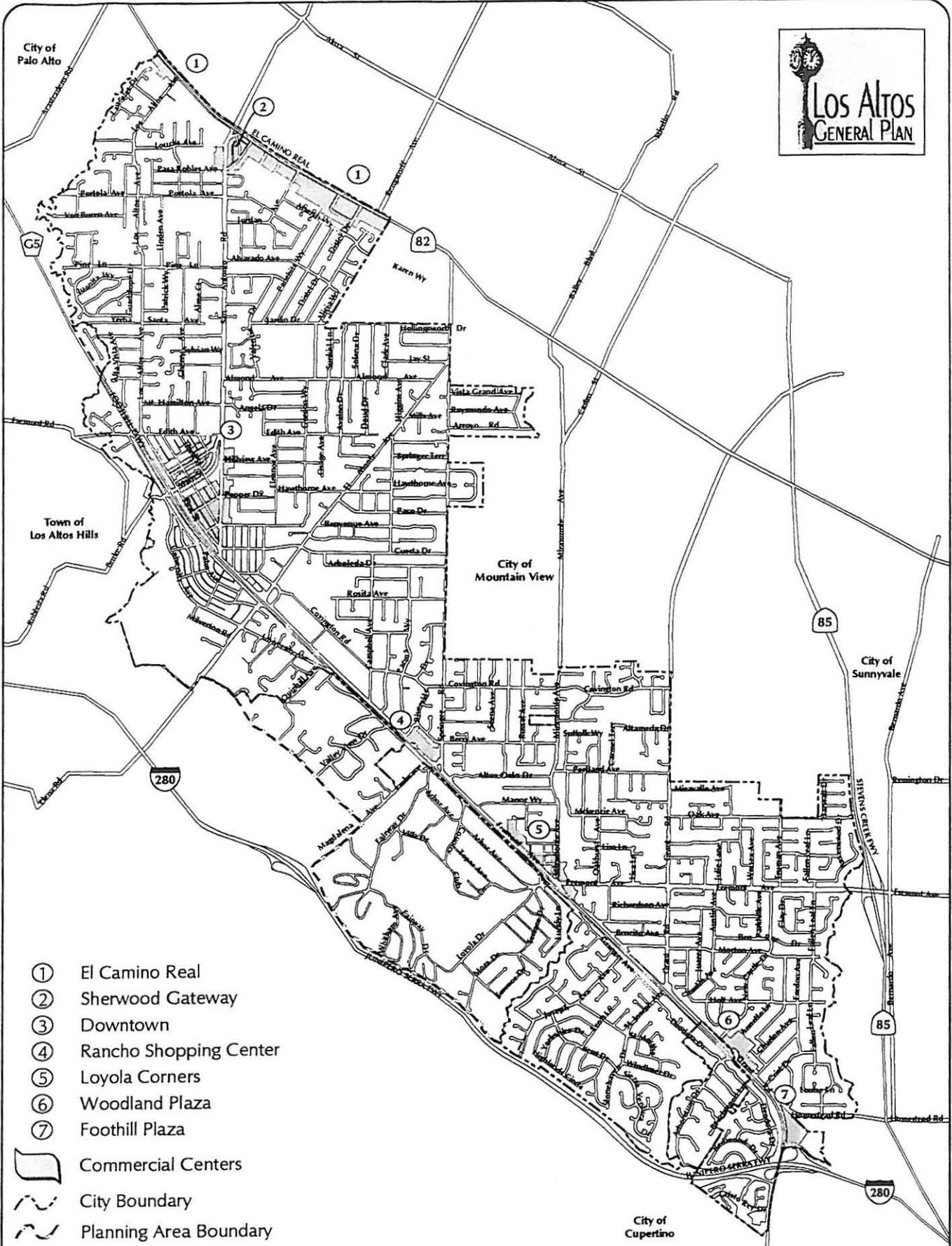
The popularity of large retail centers grew throughout the 1990s. Large retailers require a significant amount of property to accommodate buildings and parking. To better serve a regional customer base, such businesses also prefer freeway visibility and arterial accessibility. Given the limitations in the size of commercial property and lease space in Los Altos, the City is not well positioned to

attract this type of large retail development. Rather, commercial development in Los Altos serves primarily local residents and does not generally compete with the large regional shopping centers.

Looking toward the future, an important dimension of the commercial development picture is the mix of businesses in the City's commercial areas. Whereas shopping centers can select tenants, cities often allow, limit, eliminate, or redirect businesses. Los Altos took this step in 1983 to prevent further displacement of retail uses by banks, savings and loans, and other offices in the Downtown area. More recently (2001), the City refined the allowed use list in the Commercial Retail Sales (CRS) Zoning District to encourage specific uses in particular portions of the Downtown.

Commercial land use policy presents important fiscal issues. The City's fiscal situation is related to the mix of businesses. Since Proposition 13, property tax revenues have not grown at the same rate as the cost of providing city services, largely because of limitations placed on property tax increases unless property is sold (the sale, or “turnover” of property triggers reassessment, and hence a property tax increase). This, coupled with the fact that approximately 80 percent of land use in Los Altos is devoted to residential land use, means that “the Proposition 13 effect” is magnified in Los Altos. Another factor impacting property tax revenue is the fact that property tax is paid to the County and redistributed to the cities in proportion to their contribution to the total assessed value of the county. Without significant non-residential tax base, Los Altos receives a disproportionately smaller tax payout than its neighboring cities with significant industrial and commercial tax bases.

Retail uses contribute significantly to City revenues through sales tax. In most cases, an office use would have to be developed at a



- ① El Camino Real
- ② Sherwood Gateway
- ③ Downtown
- ④ Rancho Shopping Center
- ⑤ Loyola Corners
- ⑥ Woodland Plaza
- ⑦ Foothill Plaza

- Commercial Centers
- City Boundary
- Planning Area Boundary

Source: City of Los Altos GIS.

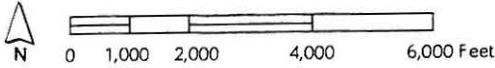


Figure ED-1
Commercial Centers



much greater intensity than a retail use in order to generate, through property tax and business licenses, the same amount of revenue that retail stores generate for the City through sales taxes. Loss of retail uses would diminish the City's tax base.

While retailing has a fiscal edge over other kinds of commercial uses, there appears to be a market for non-retail uses. Some of the pressure for office development stems from the prestige value of a Los Altos address. For that reason, it may be possible to develop office space in Los Altos and achieve acceptable levels of occupancy, even when vacancy rates are high elsewhere. If office development is encouraged, revenue generating vehicles will be needed to assure equitable taxation of commercial areas and that the change will be fiscally positive for the community.

Figures from the Board of Equalization show that taxable sales in Los Altos are low in relation to personal income when compared to most other cities in Santa Clara County. Table ED-2 lists the total and retail taxable sales in Los Altos and Santa Clara County between 1997 and 2000. Retail sales in the City were stagnant during the 1980s, but retail activity and employment potential have grown in recent years. In 2000, retail sales in Los Altos grew 12.4 percent and total sales grew 17.4 percent. Comparatively, retail sales and total sales in Santa Clara County in 2000 grew by 17.8 and 22.9 percent, respectively. While Los Altos sales figures have grown in recent years, it is important to note that retail sales have grown at a rate slower than overall sales and per capita data shows a growth in food stores/restaurant sales and a decline in general merchandise sales.

**Table ED-2
City and County Taxable Sales Data
(in thousands of current dollars)**

| Taxable Year | City of Los Altos | | Santa Clara County | |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Retail Sales | Total Sales | Retail Sales | Total Sales |
| 2000 | \$ 187,406 | \$ 244,839 | \$ 19,773,484 | \$ 37,303,662 |
| 1999 | \$ 166,698 | \$ 208,468 | \$ 16,781,972 | \$ 30,348,644 |
| 1998 | \$ 155,753 | \$ 193,431 | \$ 15,000,747 | \$ 27,488,815 |
| 1997 | \$ 152,163 | \$ 188,841 | \$ 14,363,950 | \$ 26,951,487 |

Source: State Board of Equalization

COMMERCIAL VITALITY

As previously mentioned, commercial development and corresponding sales tax play an important role in the quality of life for Los Altos residents. In year 2000, sales tax comprised approximately 15 percent of the City's total general purpose revenues, which

are used to provide services to the community. While actual sales tax has superceded budgeted expectations in recent years, a significant decline in sales tax would have a negative impact on Los Altans.

There are seven primary commercial areas in Los Altos. The list below identifies each of



the commercial areas described in this section. See Figure ED-1 for locations.

- ❖ Downtown
- ❖ El Camino Real
- ❖ Sherwood Gateway
- ❖ Loyola Corners
- ❖ Rancho Shopping Center
- ❖ Woodland Plaza
- ❖ Foothill Plaza

Downtown

Downtown is the commercial core of the greater Los Altos area and is the historic center of the City. Located in a triangular area, Downtown is bound by Foothill Expressway to the southwest, San Antonio Road to the east, and Edith Avenue to the north. Unlike all other commercial developments in the City, Downtown has a pedestrian-oriented development and design pattern, which creates a unique, small-town atmosphere. The Downtown is treasured by Los Altos as the "heart" of the City.

In a proactive approach to ensure the functional and aesthetic integrity and economic vitality of the Downtown, the City adopted special plans and provisions for the area. These actions are described below.

Downtown Urban Design Plan: In 1992, the City adopted the Downtown Urban Design Plan to reinforce the identity of downtown as a retail center, to improve the visual quality of the area, and to create an attractive pedestrian environment. The plan establishes a use and design review process, along with specific solutions and priorities for implementing the specified urban design concepts.

Commercial Retail Sales (CRS) Zone: In 2001, City Council adopted special use provisions and specific design criteria for the CRS Zoning District to retain and enhance the village atmosphere and pedestrian-oriented environment of the commercial core of Down-

town. The district allows only retail and limited service uses on the first floor with other uses allowed on the second floor.

The Land Use Element identifies the Downtown as one of the few areas of the City for potential land use intensification. New policies introduce a residential land use component and allow the potential for an increased floor area ratio for housing above the ground floor within the commercial core.

El Camino Real

Located at the northern edge of Los Altos, El Camino Real is a commercial corridor shared with both Palo Alto and Mountain View. This corridor presents a unique economic opportunity for the City. Unlike the other smaller commercial developments in Los Altos that are located on two- and four-lane roads surrounded by residential neighborhoods, El Camino Real is a six-lane arterial with contiguous larger scale commercial development and property. Therefore, more intense commercial development throughout this corridor will not jeopardize the small-town residential character of the City.

As specified in the Land Use Element, El Camino Real is identified as one of the few areas in the City with opportunity to redevelop or intensify existing development. Most of the land along the corridor is designated Commercial Thoroughfare, which allows a wide variety of more intense commercial uses. New policies in the Land Use Element allow the potential to encourage retail and residential use throughout the corridor as follows:

- ❖ Retail use may be encouraged on the first floor with the incentive of an increase in the allowable floor area ratio;
- ❖ As a disincentive for exclusive office development, the allowable floor area ratio for such projects may be reduced; and



- ❖ Finally, if housing is included as part of a mixed-use project, the height limit may be increased from two- to three-stories.

To address the diversity in development type and scale between communities, Los Altos and Mountain View should establish improvement standards for a consistent and pedestrian-friendly streetscape. Streetscape improvements should include sidewalk design and dimension, streetlights, street trees and median planting, sidewalk furniture, and signs. As identified in the Land Use Element, special consideration shall be provided to nearby Los Altos residences to address potential impacts from non-residential development along El Camino Real. Where residences adjoin commercial areas, the proposed commercial development should be evaluated with respect to its surroundings. The privacy, solar access, and noise environment of the adjacent residential areas should be preserved or improved.

The El Camino Real corridor serves as a gateway to Los Altos from the north. Two commercial centers are located at this northern gateway, where El Camino Real intersects San Antonio Road: Sherwood Gateway and Village Court.

In an effort to establish a plan for revitalization of this area, the City adopted the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan. The Specific Plan comprehensively addresses land use, circulation and parking, site planning, and design guidelines for the 26-acres on east of the intersection of El Camino Real and San Antonio Road. Implementation of this Specific Plan will ensure greater harmony in the development patterns at the City's northern gateway.

Loyola Corners

Loyola Corners is a 17-acre neighborhood commercial area located just off Foothill Expressway at Fremont and Miramonte Ave-

nues. Most of the commercial buildings are small single-story structures built in the late 1940s to early 1960s. The Loyola Corners Neighborhood Commercial Center Specific Plan was adopted in 1990 to improve the aesthetics, use, and vitality of the area. The Specific Plan also addresses circulation and compatibility with surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Rancho Shopping Center

Rancho Shopping Center is well known for its innovative 1950s architecture with covered walkways, landscape, and store-front parking configuration. This is the largest shopping center in Los Altos with dozens of stores and offices. Retaining the village character of the center and maintaining access to Springer Road are the primary goals for this center.

Woodland Plaza

Woodland Plaza fronts Grant Road (a frontage road along Foothill Expressway) south of Newcastle Drive. This small community shopping center includes a variety of retail and office uses.

Foothill Plaza

Foothill Plaza is located on Homestead Road near the intersection of Foothill Expressway and Interstate 280. This shopping center houses a wide variety of uses and is positioned at the southern gateway to Los Altos.

FUTURE CONDITIONS

The appearance of Los Altos, its location within a particularly affluent area of the region, and its historical role as a local retail center suggest that the community's future economy may focus on retailing. Recent economic conditions and local retail sales data indicate that Los Altos is well positioned for retail growth and revitalization. Through-



out the 1990s, the City focused its efforts on land use regulations and area plans that ensure a successful and appropriate mix of commercial uses and development to meet the needs of Los Altos residents and visitors.

Public and private efforts will be required to ensure the success of future retailing in the City, which in turn, ensures the maintenance and improvement of City services for Los Altos residents. This retail focus is a critical element of the Los Altos General Plan. This focus is important to the City's fiscal vitality and for maintaining the unique small-town character and identity that so many residents value. The goals, policies, and programs set forth in this chapter reflect the philosophy of retaining retail primacy in the local economy, and look toward ways of restoring and reinforcing that primacy for the benefit of the entire community.

The goals, policies, and programs in this Element and the Land Use Element reinforce development strategies of the City's shopping centers and commercial areas. Most of the commercial developments in Los Altos are neighborhood commercial shopping centers. Goals and policies for these neighborhood commercial centers focus on providing retail and service uses to meet the needs of nearby residents and ensuring compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.

The General Plan also recognizes the unique characteristics and opportunities of the City's Downtown and the El Camino Real corridor. In these two commercial areas, goals and policies focus on promoting retail use, incorporating the option for a residential component, and allowing for intensification of development. Given that non-retail commercial development is less fiscally advantageous than retailing, exclusively office uses are discouraged and retail uses are encouraged on the ground floor with the option for office and services uses on the second floor. Potential incentives for mixed-use with a residential

component include an increase in the floor area ratio and/or number of stories.

Overall, the General Plan supports retailing. The intent of the retail-related goals and policies is the restoration and enhancement of retail vitality in the City's shopping areas. The Plan strengthens the retail sector by concentrating retail activities, discouraging non-retail land uses, and providing both physical amenities and program support for retailing in established commercial areas, without physically expanding those areas.





ISSUES, GOALS AND POLICIES

The structure of the City's economy plays an important role in the physical development of the planning area and the stability of the local tax base. The issues, goals, and policies in this section are intended to provide direction as to how the community can focus resources to retain local businesses, attract new commercial enterprises, support the tax base, and continue to provide public services for existing and future residents of Los Altos.

Major issues addressed by the goals, policies, and plan of the Economic Development Element are as follows:

- 1) Existing economic conditions;
- 2) Fiscal balance; and
- 3) Commercial vitality.

Each issue and the related goals and policies are included in this section of the Element.

EXISTING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Los Altos is primarily an affluent residential community with less than four percent of the land area designated for commercial land use. In recent years, property and sales tax comprise approximately 27 and 15 percent of the City's total general purpose revenues, respectively.

As identified in the Housing Element, most of the jobs held by Los Altos residents are managerial and professional positions. However, the majority of jobs available in the City are retail, service, and government-oriented. Therefore, the majority of Los Altos' employed residents commute to jobs in surrounding jurisdictions.

Economic conditions in Los Altos are directly related to the economic conditions of Santa Clara County and the Bay Area region. While the population, development, and total job growth in Los Altos is growing at a rate slower than both the County and region, household income is higher and growing at a faster rate.

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) projects that over the next 20 years, jobs in the region will be more diversified and the technology center in Silicon Valley will be diffused, resulting in a more broad-based regional economy. In Santa Clara County, job growth is expected to slow from recent years as information technology companies disperse. However, the County is still expected to be the regional leader in adding new jobs and households during the 20-year-period from 2000 to 2020. In Los Altos, the projected number of employed residents is expected to outpace local job growth slightly with proportionally significant job growth in the manufacturing/wholesale, retail, and other job sectors.

FISCAL BALANCE

Commercial development is important to Los Altos since it provides the City with the financial resources necessary to meet the community's needs for public services and facilities. While commercial uses provide important benefits to Los Altos, the City needs to balance these benefits with the impacts of commercial activities on surrounding neighborhoods. Targeting a commercial strategy that meets residents' needs within the community, rather than attracting people from outside the City, is one way to minimize traffic and other impacts related to people traveling to the community.

Goal 1: Formulate a commercial strategy that is fiscally sound for the City.



Policy 1.1: Actively seek a desirable mix of businesses that reinforce the unique community identity.

Policy 1.2: Balance community tax revenue needs with the benefits of retaining a business mix that serves community shopping and service needs.

COMMERCIAL VITALITY

There are several commercial areas within Los Altos including: Downtown, El Camino Real, Sherwood Gateway, Loyola Corners, Rancho, Woodland, and Foothill Plaza (See Figure ED-1). The majority of these areas are developed, and future development will focus on upgrading and redeveloping these commercial districts to ensure their continued vitality. Potential impacts to surrounding neighborhoods will be assessed when developing and implementing revitalization plans for each commercial area.

Goal 2: Promote the economic and commercial success of all commercial districts in Los Altos.

Policy 2.1: Promote an optimum mix of commercial uses in existing commercial locations to meet both the shopping needs of residents and fiscal needs of the City.

Policy 2.2: Work to attract businesses that utilize smaller shops and/or smaller storefronts, which are in keeping with the character of the community.

Policy 2.3: Work with property owners and business associations to improve the functioning of commercial areas, including

their viability, appearance, cleanliness and accessibility.

Policy 2.4: Promote City/private cooperation to attract a balanced mix of businesses that emphasize a healthy proportion of retail uses, minimizing service and office uses in retail zones.

Policy 2.5: Work with property owners and business associations to ensure an adequate supply of attractive parking with convenient access, as well as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, to accommodate patron and employee needs in all commercial areas in Los Altos.

Policy 2.6: Consider the impact of traffic on surrounding neighborhoods when considering new commercial development.

Downtown

Downtown is the City's central commercial core, located in a triangular area formed by the boundaries of Foothill Expressway to the southwest, San Antonio Road to the east, and Edith Avenue to the north. This area is characterized by speciality and convenience retail development, some professional office, and both personal and business service uses with two-lane roadways and on-street diagonal parking on Main Street. In 1992, the City adopted the Downtown Urban Design Plan establishing a vision for development and improvements within the area. Downtown is one of the few areas of the City identified for potential intensification in the Land Use Element.

Goal 3: Increase the attractiveness of Downtown area to shoppers and pedestrians to enhance the economic vibrancy of the area.



Policies and programs related to appearance and design are located in the Community Design and Historic Resources section.

Policy 3.1: Improve and seek to eliminate current perceived and real difficulties in finding parking places.

Policy 3.2: Actively work to retain successful existing businesses.

Policy 3.3: Continue to implement the Downtown Urban Design Plan.

Policy 3.4: Seek businesses in the Downtown area with the potential to:

- ❖ attract shoppers,
- ❖ provide additional retail and entertainment opportunities,
- ❖ provide unique businesses that meet the everyday needs of residents, of the greater Los Altos area as well as businesses with regional attraction,
- ❖ directly enhance sales tax revenue and property tax revenues to the City,
- ❖ attract residents and visitors during the night, as well as the day,
- ❖ provide needed services for residents, and
- ❖ be consistent with the existing pedestrian oriented scale of downtown development.

Policy 3.5: Allow mixed-use development with multi-family residential and commercial uses to provide alternative housing op-

portunities within the community.

Policy 3.6: Limit ground floor uses to retail and limited personal services in the Downtown Commercial Retail Sales District, with a special emphasis on retail uses on Main and State Streets.

Policy 3.7: Promote the retention of a post office in the Downtown.

Policy 3.8: Work with the businesses that have their backs to San Antonio Road to create an attractive, friendly presentation.

Policy 3.9: Work to ensure that the Downtown is a clean, attractive and safe area.

El Camino Real

The El Camino Real commercial corridor is located at the northern end of the City, functioning as a gateway to Los Altos from Palo Alto and Mountain View. This area is characterized by a mix of existing land uses, including offices, retail stores, personal services, and lodging. El Camino Real is an area with some underdeveloped land and opportunity to redevelop or intensify existing development as described in the Land Use Element.

Goal 4: Increase the economic potential of the El Camino Real commercial area.

Policy 4.1: Promote retail land use.

Policy 4.2: Look for opportunities to intensify uses while avoiding adverse impacts on surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Policy 4.3: Promote the development of mixed-use commercial and



residential developments within the El Camino Real area to provide housing opportunities within the community.

Policy 4.4: Discourage the division of land and encourage the aggregation of parcels in the El Camino Real commercial area.

Policy 4.5: Designate El Camino Real as the principal area for intensification of commercial and residential development.

Sherwood Gateway

Sherwood Gateway is a commercial shopping center located on 26-acres southeast of El Camino Real and San Antonio Road. A Specific Plan was adopted for this area in 1999 with economic revitalization as a primary goal.

Goal 5: Increase the economic potential of and visually upgrade the Sherwood Gateway.

Policies and programs related to appearance and design are located in the Community Design and Historic Resources section and the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan.

Policy 5.1: Recognize that the accessibility and visibility of the Sherwood Gateway commercial area are important to the overall business environment of Los Altos, and that this area functions as a visual and commercial entrance to Los Altos.

Policy 5.2: Continue to implement the improvements identified in the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan.

Policy 5.3: Encourage a unified architectural approach to commercial development between Sherwood Triangle and Village Court (across San Antonio Road).

Policy 5.4: Encourage high-revenue-generating businesses for the area.

Policy 5.5: Participate with business owners and property owners to implement revitalization of the area.

Policy 5.6: Consider establishing a redevelopment project area for the Sherwood Gateway.

Loyola Corners

Loyola Corners is a commercial shopping center on 17-acres near the intersection of Fremont and Miramonte Avenues with Foothill Expressway. In 1990, the City adopted a Specific Plan for this project for the purpose of improving aesthetics, increasing use, and ensuring long term viability of the area.

Goal 6: Improve the economic viability of Loyola Corners: address the needs of improved traffic, parking, and architectural design.

Policies and programs related to appearance and design are located in the Community Design and Historic Resources section and the Specific Plan for Loyola Corners Neighborhood Commercial Center.

Policy 6.1: Retain the neighborhood/convenience commercial character of the area, supplemented on a limited basis with specialty retail and general professional office uses.



- Policy 6.2:** Retain and promote low intensity retail uses consistent with neighborhood commercial needs.
- Policy 6.3:** Improve compatibility of commercial and adjacent residential land uses.
- Policy 6.4:** Continue to implement the improvements identified in the Loyola Corners Neighborhood Commercial Center Specific Plan.
- Policy 6.5:** Improve circulation in the Loyola Corners/Foothill Expressway area, and ensure adequate on-site parking.

Other Commercial Centers

Other small commercial centers in Los Altos include Rancho, Woodland, and Foothill Plaza, all of which are located along Foothill Expressway.

Goal 7: Maintain healthy neighborhood businesses in Neighborhood Commercial zones along Foothill Expressway.

- Policy 7.1:** Retain emphasis on neighborhood-serving retail use and personal service uses.
- Policy 7.2:** Require beautification of commercial areas.
- Policy 7.3:** Determine the appropriate maximum development for Rancho Shopping Center, Woodland Office Plaza, and Foothill Plaza, ensuring adequate parking is provided on site.
- Policy 7.4:** Evaluate the accessibility, visibility, and potential for intensification of Foothill Plaza for destination-oriented uses.



IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS APPENDIX

General Plan is amended or updated to ensure continued consistency and usefulness

The Implementation Programs Appendix provides a guide to implement adopted General Plan policies and plans for City elected officials, staff and the public. The purpose of the Implementation Programs are to ensure the overall direction provided in the General Plan for City growth and development is translated from general terms to specific actions.

Each implementation program is a measure, procedure, or technique that requires additional City action. This action may either occur on a City-wide basis or in specific areas within the City. The City Council, by relating the Implementation Programs to the General Plan, recognizes the importance of long-range planning considerations in day-to-day decision making and budgeting. Implementation of the specific programs will be subject to funding constraints.

Use of the General Plan Implementation Program

The Implementation Programs are intended for use in preparing the Annual Report to the City Council on the status of the City's progress in implementing the General Plan, as described in Section 65400 of the California Government Code. Because some of the individual actions and programs described in the Implementation Programs Appendix act as mitigation for significant environmental impacts resulting from planned development identified in the General Plan, the annual report can also provide a means of monitoring the application of the mitigation measures as required by Section 15097 of the State CEQA Guidelines. This Implementation Programs Appendix may be updated annually with the budget process and whenever the City's



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This Implementation Program provides actions to implement the adopted policies and plans identified in the Economic Development Element. The Economic Development Implementation Program is a series of actions, procedures and techniques which includes a description of the responsible agency/department, funding source, time frame and related policies in the Economic Development Element.

FISCAL BALANCE

ED 1: COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

Develop a fiscally sound commercial strategy to encourage a mix of uses that meet the City's needs and provide sufficient tax base to maintain adequate community service levels as follows:

- 1) Periodically study typical tax revenues generated by Los Altos business types to determine the kinds of businesses that are advantageous to Los Altos;
- 2) Monitor the impact of City controlled taxes to establish the level of such taxes that will attract desired businesses to and maintain them in Los Altos;
- 3) Continue to evaluate and decide the desirable maximum potential build-out in each of the City's commercial areas;
- 4) Identify methods to retain successful existing businesses;
- 5) Identify and target businesses that will enhance commercial vitality;
- 6) Review the permitted and conditionally permitted uses in the various zoning districts with respect to commercial vitality; and
- 7) Monitor land use in each commercial area with the intention of assuring that departing businesses are replaced by new uses consistent with City goals.

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development, City Manager
Funding Source: General Fund
Time Frame: Annual
Related Policies: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.4, 3.2, 3.4, 4.1, 4.3, 5.4, 7.1

COMMERCIAL VITALITY

ED 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Continue to participate in the Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee for the City of Los Altos.

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development, City Manager
Funding Source: General Fund
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 5.5



ED 3: DOWNTOWN

Facilitate economic development of the Downtown as follows:

- 1) Encourage land use intensification of the Downtown Core for mixed-use development with an emphasis on retail development on the ground floor (especially on Main and State Streets) consistent with the applicable General Plan policies and plan;
- 2) Work to improve both real and perceived parking issues relative to overall numbers and proximity to businesses;
- 3) Implement the Downtown Urban Design Plan and Downtown Commercial Retail Sales (CRS) Zoning District; and
- 4) Work with the Los Altos Village Association and Chamber of Commerce to publicize shopping opportunities Downtown.

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development, City Manager
Funding Source: General Fund, development fees
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.8

ED 4: EL CAMINO REAL COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Increase the economic potential of the El Camino Real Commercial Corridor by:

- 1) Allowing land use intensification throughout the area consistent with the land use and economic development policies outlined in the General Plan;
- 2) Promoting the development of mixed-use commercial and residential and discourage development of exclusively office uses; and
- 3) Implementing the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan and the Thoroughfare Commercial (CT) Zoning District.

Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development, City Manager
Funding Source: General Fund, development fees
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4

ED 5: NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL CENTERS

Improve the economic vitality of the City's neighborhood commercial centers by:

- 1) Promoting a mix of uses that meet the consumer needs of residents and the fiscal needs of the City;
- 2) Working with individual business owners and collective business associations to improve their appearance, marketing, access, and parking;
- 3) Implementing the Loyola Corners Neighborhood Commercial Center Specific Plan; and
- 4) Improving the compatibility of new commercial development and redevelopment with surrounding residential neighborhoods.



Responsible Agency/Department: Community Development, City Manager
Funding Source: General Fund, Development Fees
Time Frame: Ongoing
Related Policies: 2.1, 2.3, 6.3, 6.4, 7.1

History and Documentation of Downtown Parking Needs

A. History of Downtown Parking Plazas

In 1955, the property owners in the core of Downtown Los Altos petitioned the City to form an assessment district to purchase some of the property owners land and to construct parking plazas for the common use of those owners. The City agreed to form the assessment district and, in turn, the property owners agreed to the assessments to fund the purchase and construction project. However, unlike many other cities, Los Altos chose not to form a parking district under provisions of State law in order to build the plazas. The City used a different section of state law and, as a result, neither the City nor the property owners are required to comply with the provisions of a parking district. Thus, no ongoing assessments are collected from the property owners to pay for parking plaza improvements and the City has become the owner of the plazas. The City officially completed the construction of the three Downtown parking plazas in 1957.

The North and South parking plazas along with First Street, San Antonio Road and Edith Street form the boundaries of the parking district. All property owners, except the property owner at 170 State Street, participated in the parking district assessment.

1. How the Assessment Was Levied

Determining the assessment for each property owner was a difficult task for the City in 1956-57. The following excerpt from the February 1956 "Report on Parking Plaza for the City of Los Altos" by the consulting engineer demonstrates how the City determined the assessments.

"Not even Solomon in all his wisdom could possibly devise a method of assessment that would be completely satisfactory to every property owner. Nor would any complex formula accomplish this purpose. In the final analysis, assessments should be spread upon the basis of benefits received. Uses of property change from time to time. The Engineer must therefore consider the land only in relation to the service rendered without consideration of present uses.

Studies were made using commonly accepted methods of spreading of assessments by area and by assessed valuation of land and by a combination of both. All such studies, produced inequities because they did not sufficiently account for the factor of proximity of parking to the properties. Accordingly, it was determined to use the factors of area and assessed valuation, and to adjust these values to reflect the benefits to the property by proximity to the parking. The net assessment also takes into account the appraised value of the property acquired.

Since the factors used in the spread of the assessment vary, the assessments also vary. However, the net assessment for a typical 25-foot lot, where a portion of the land is taken, is approximately \$5,000."

It appears that the parcels were assessed based upon their lot size, not the building size; the perceived value of the property, looking beyond the building's 1957 uses; and the proximity of a property to the proposed parking. The development of the assessment was quite complicated and City staff is not able to reconstruct today exactly how the three methods were reconciled to develop a final assessment value. One thing that is clear is that the assessment was the same

whether an owner was built out to the property line or provided parking on their property. This helps clarify that none of the existing private parking spaces are required as part of the parking district agreements of 1956-57.

2. Parking Ratio

When the original Downtown parking district was developed, the City in cooperation with property owners and merchants developed boundaries for the district and calculated how much square footage would be involved. Using this information, they determined how many parking stalls to build. In the end, they built 1,008 parking spaces for approximately 390,000 square feet of building. At the time, this created a parking ratio of 2.6 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of building. Since 1958, there has been some growth in the square footage of buildings Downtown as well as the available parking in the plazas, but the historical parking ratio has remained close at 2.7 spaces per 1,000 square feet of building.

3. Regulation Changes

Over the years, there have been a few significant changes to the zoning regulations and parking requirements for properties in the Downtown parking district. First, in 1981, the City Council added to the zoning code that all properties in the parking district who built over 100% of their parcel area would need to provide additional parking. Although Downtown had height limits since the early 1960s, it appears that the Council at the time wanted an additional regulation for reducing the density of new building within the Downtown core and addressing some of the parking concerns.

The next significant change came in 1989 when the City Council reduced the allowed Floor Area Ratio (FAR-the percentage of building square footage compared to lot square footage) for all properties in the Downtown parking district. Before 1989, properties in the district had no floor area restrictions and a property owner could build a property up to 200% of its lot size as long as the building stayed within the Downtown height limits. The new limits restricted properties in the district to building up to 100% FAR. It appears that this new regulation was adopted both to curb building densities in the parking district and to address concerns raised about parking given the increased building activity. Around the same time that the City Council adopted this ordinance change, they established a six-month moratorium on new building activity in certain zoning districts Downtown and made changes to the area's parking requirements.

These FAR restrictions were very effective in determining that new buildings were not pursued in the Downtown area for many years. In the interest of economic development, these FAR limits were reversed in 2007 resulting in a renaissance in new Downtown construction.

B. Current Conditions in Downtown Triangle

1. Zoning Designations

Properties within the Downtown Triangle are currently form-based zoned for one of four different designations: Commercial Retail Sales, Commercial Retail Sales/Office, Commercial Downtown and Commercial Downtown/Multiple-Family. Each zoning designation has its own permitted

uses, parking requirements and allowed FAR. In general, each zoning designation Downtown has the same the parking requirements. Although uses within each zone may have different parking requirements, a use in one zone will have the same requirements as that use in a different zone. However, the parking requirements do change within the Downtown parking district. Within the parking district, no additional parking is required unless a property builds above 100% FAR. Currently no property in the Downtown Triangle is allowed to build more than 100% FAR. The table below summarizes the parking requirements for some typical uses inside and outside the parking district.

Downtown Parking Requirements

| | Office | Retail/Service | Restaurant | Hotel |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 100% FAR Inside Parking District | | | | |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Over 100% FAR Inside Parking District or Outside Parking District | | | | |
| | 3.3 per 1,000 sq. ft. | 5 per 1,000 sq. ft. | 1 per 3 seats and 1 per 3 employees | 1 per room and 1 per 3 employees |

2. Parking Inventory

The parking district currently has 1,161 parking spaces available in the public plazas and 256 parking spaces available in on-street parking. The 1,161 spaces in the parking plazas were intended to meet the parking needs of the businesses within the parking district, but for several years it seems that this parking has not been sufficient. In 1996 the City estimated that about 93% of the parking in the plazas was being utilized during the peak parking hours. Most Downtowns aim for a parking utilization rate between 85-90% because customers often perceive that the parking is full at these ratios even though they are not. Thus, Downtown may have been losing customers at this time because they did not perceive that parking was available.

Outside the parking district, all new buildings are supposed to provide their required parking on-site. However, there are many non-conforming properties that do not have enough on-site parking to meet their requirements. This lack of parking on the properties outside the parking district, especially those adjacent to the parking district, has added to the stress put on the public parking plazas. The permit parking program has alleviated some of this stress, but it has also highlighted the lack of employee parking at many of the businesses outside the parking district.

3. Current Inequities Downtown

The Downtown parking plazas were built to provide parking for those businesses that were included in the original parking district. Those businesses that are not in the parking district are required to provide their own parking on site in accordance with the City's zoning code. The City developed the permit parking program to ensure that those businesses that are located in the district had full use of their shared parking lots. Many have argued that the City should simply expand the parking district and allow properties close to the district to use the parking plazas. However, admitting new properties into the parking district without some kind of contribution does not seem fair to parking district property owners.

For example, the property at 233 Third St. was not included in the original parking district. Annexing the property into the parking district without adding any new parking would impact the current parking ratio to the detriment of the existing merchants and property owners. The current ratio of 2.7 spaces per 1,000 square feet is already small for a Downtown like Los Altos and does not allow room for additional property in the district without the addition of new parking stalls.

Even if there were enough space in the parking plazas for additional cars, the City cannot fairly give away this parking since the property owners who paid for the building of the plazas still receive the benefit of their investment. Their property is technically worth more than similar properties outside the parking district because they don't have to meet any parking requirements. They can rent to any tenant, whether they have high or low parking demands. The properties on the periphery of the plazas have fewer options for their tenants and thus should not have as high a value. The uses of their property are limited by the need to meet certain parking requirements. Since the property at 233 Third St. has not had enough parking for many years, the value of the property should be less than similar properties within the parking district. It would be unfair for the City to add to the property value of one owner who did not pay to build parking in the past by annexing that property into the parking district.

4. Downtown Parking Fund

In June 2004, City staff created the Downtown Parking Fund to accurately track revenues derived from the Downtown parking plazas. Parking district participants do not provide any funds for maintenance of the plazas, but the City has received revenues from the renting of stalls in the public plazas. In addition, City staff is using the Downtown Parking Fund to track the revenues and expenses generated by the permit parking program. Although the program is not revenue generating, the fund helps the City track whether the program is generating excess revenues or expenses. This then helps staff set the right price for the parking permits. Downtown Parking Fund revenues can be used to maintain the existing parking plazas or to address the need for more parking.