

June 19, 2017

City of Los Altos  
1 N. San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA 94022

RE: FIRST STREET GREEN  
Commercial Design Review Application

City of Los Altos Planning Department:

On behalf of Los Altos Community Investments (LACI) and First Street Green Park Foundation, (Foundation) we are pleased to present the application for commercial design review for the First Street Green project. The application follows three (3) study sessions (two joint sessions with the City Council and Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) and one PTC-only pre-application study session). In addition, we look forward to the study session scheduled with the City Council on June 27 to discuss the proposed public plaza. The design incorporates much of the feedback and input from PTC and City Council, and also reflects input from the larger Los Altos community. To date, LACI has received feedback from nearly 900 community members through surveys, small group events and one-on-one dialogue.

On behalf of LACI and the project team we would like to thank the City Councilmembers and City staff as well as the Planning and Transportation and Parks and Recreation Commissioners and others who have provided helpful and insightful feedback, guidance and assistance throughout the process.

Please find the attached plans for First Street Green that propose a new Class A office building of approximately 77,000 square feet and a public plaza, which will bring more community events downtown, on the Plaza 7 parking lot, with the parking spaces relocated underground. It also includes a three-level underground parking garage which extends under the adjacent proposed plaza as well as the building. In addition to replacing the existing surface public parking spaces at a one-to-one ratio, it will create up to 40 additional new public parking spaces, a 50% increase over the current amount. It should be noted that while the plans are presented as a single project, the office building and public plaza are separate projects that are being considered in parallel. As discussed further below, LACI and the Foundation are not proposing the public plaza as a community benefit in exchange for approval of the office building; however to take advantage of synergies, efficiencies in construction and creating a coherent design, we are requesting that the City consider both projects together.

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The architectural design plans have been prepared in accordance with the requirements outlined in the City of Los Altos submittal requirements for commercial or multi-family design review application form.<sup>1</sup> We note that at the request of the PTC, the color renderings are shown in both wide-angle and 50 mm camera views.

The project proposal is in compliance with all applicable City requirements and plans, with the exception of the 30-foot commercial height limit. The Los Altos Municipal Code allows for exceptions to the code in cases where “the project will result in a public benefit to the downtown.”<sup>2</sup> Consequently, LACI is proposing many generous community benefits for the exception to the height limit and the partial third story to be discussed further below.

Finally alongside Sares Regis, LACI has hired *EHDD* and *Joni L. Janecki & Associates* for the building project. They are the architect and landscape architect team who designed the beloved Packard Foundation building at 343 Second Street.

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/Community%20Development/page/431/commercial\\_multi-family\\_design\\_review\\_submittal\\_requirements.pdf](http://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/Community%20Development/page/431/commercial_multi-family_design_review_submittal_requirements.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Los Altos Municipal Code § 14.52.160

<sup>3</sup> Los Altos Municipal Code § 14.78.060

<sup>4</sup> [Los Altos Downtown Design Plan](#) (DDP) rev. 2009 (formerly the Downtown Urban Design Plan)

<sup>5</sup> Los Altos Municipal Code § 14.52.110

## I. Project Overview

### **More Parking Downtown with a Free Public Plaza and Vibrant Office Building**

#### **Free Public Plaza at No Cost to Taxpayers**

First Street Green will feature a **free public plaza that will be built at no cost to taxpayers** on a half-acre public plaza on the western portion of Parking Plaza 7 (Plaza 7). The First Street Green Park Foundation—a program of the New Venture Fund, a 501(c)(3) public charity, which has a third party grant agreement with the Anne Wojcicki Family Charitable Fund (Foundation) – will donate the cost of creating the plaza on the asphalt lot that is now Plaza 7. Additionally, under the ENA, the Foundation is committed to reimbursing the City for the time spent planning, designing, and negotiating the plaza. To date, LACI has reimbursed the City for meetings and time spent on the initial discussions of the ENA that were incurred prior to the creation of the Foundation and as early as October 2016.

Further as a community benefit for the building, **LACI will grant public access on approximately 7,400 square feet of its private land to increase the functional size of the public plaza by approximately one third.**

The plaza, along with streetscape, has been designed to create a multi-use, flexible and engaging outdoor space that provides a valuable resource for downtown residents of the City of Los Altos and the neighboring residents. The outdoor space will accommodate a wide range of experiences for all ages within a small footprint; from active play space for hop-scotch or ping-pong to more quiet, contemplative and meditative green spaces (i.e., seniors oriented activities such as chess and bocce ball). An interactive art piece will be an integral part of the space allowing the community to engage in a variety of ways throughout the year.

The design and approval of the public plaza is part of an ongoing process and discussion around a public-private partnership with the City outlined in an exclusive negotiating agreement (ENA) approved in January 10, 2017.

#### **More Downtown Parking**

The design proposes a three-level subterranean parking garage from Shasta Street to the edge of the proposed park on Plaza 7 with ingress and egress ramp entrances on Shasta Street and Plaza 7 to access the garage. The Foundation will relocate all the existing parking spaces on Plaza 7 to the first level of the garage as part of the development of the park. The garage will provide the zoning code requirement of one space per every 300 net square feet of building.

We have heard clearly from our outreach that the community wants more parking downtown. Therefore, as a community benefit for the office building, **LACI proposes creating up to forty (40) additional underground public parking spaces to support the downtown community and the new plaza. This will increase the amount of public spaces currently on the western half**

**of Plaza 7 by over 50%**, (a total of 107 public parking spaces). All the public spaces will be clearly marked “Public” on the first level and accessible from both ramps.

Community members may park underground in an easily accessible, safe and secure parking garage that is fully integrated into the structure and activated. Further, LACI and the Foundation will consider working with the City and community stakeholders to engage with an artist to create and implement, at a reasonable cost, a pleasing design for portions of the interior of Level 1 of the underground garage to further enrich a visit to the new downtown public plaza.

<b>Building and Plaza</b>					
	Community Benefit	Park Replacement	Retail	Private Office	Total Spaces
Level 1 spaces	<b>40</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>116</b>
Level 2 spaces			<b>8</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>135</b>
Level 3 spaces				<b>109</b>	<b>109</b>
					<b>360<sup>6</sup></b>

Moreover, LACI and the Foundation have proposed to open an additional dialogue with the City around a public-private financial partnership that could increase the size of the proposed underground garage under the plaza **creating up to an additional thirty-nine (39) public parking spaces, thereby increasing the current amount of parking on the western half of Plaza 7 by approximately 79 spaces, a 118% increase.**

**More Community Events Downtown**

The proposed plaza is envisioned to include open space with trees and plantings for strolling and play, an outdoor meeting space and an area for farmer’s markets and arts and crafts shows. The plaza will help promote more community and family-oriented events downtown such as concerts, games and picnics. The public plaza is also proposed to include a community stage for presentations, music, artists, theater, and outdoor movies in the public plaza.

To activate and enliven the space, the office building will include a retail café with outdoor seating and **publicly accessible restrooms that will be provided and maintained as a community benefit.** For events and meetings that need to be held inside, **LACI is offering a large 1,000**

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<sup>6</sup> Note that the total number of spaces have shifted since the pre-application study session. The design shows a net decrease of one (1) space. There are two (2) additional retail spaces and a decrease of three (3) spaces as the square footage shifted due to requested design changes.

**square foot,<sup>7</sup> indoor, furnished meeting space on the first floor, that may be reserved by the public** as an additional and valuable community benefit.

As the ENA progresses, the Foundation will consider discussions around the idea of financially participating in **the ongoing programming for the plaza (e.g., concerts, farmer’s markets etc.)**.

Furthermore, building on the success and popularity of the LACI-sponsored Helix program, the Foundation is continuing to engage with the **Exploratorium** on a program to further enliven the open space within First Street Green. Accordingly, the two have entered into an agreement to perform a feasibility study around the possibility of creating a program that would create an inquiry-based, intergenerational outdoor learning experiences immediately adjacent to the building and plaza.

### **A Vibrant Downtown**

The recent *Downtown Los Altos Economic Vitality Strategy Options*<sup>8</sup> report, prepared for the City as part of the visioning process, estimates that the **office building at First Street Green can generate \$1.2 Million in annual retail sales for businesses located in downtown Los Altos.**<sup>9</sup>

First Street Green’s new state-of-the art and environmentally friendly building and plaza will help modernize the block and encourage more Los Altos residents to come downtown for shopping, entertainment, and dining instead of going to other locations. Los Altos merchants will better thrive, with more patrons thanks to community events in the park, customers from the new commercial building, and more bicycle-, pedestrian- and age-friendly improvements. **As a result of a more vibrant downtown, we believe more appealing shops and restaurants will be attracted to Los Altos.**

### **Preserving Los Altos Village Charm**

With deeper set-backs, more open space and a **third story that steps-back on all sides in order to not impact the pedestrian experience and the residents of the back alley**, the building is pedestrian friendly and will allow for a significant increase in the public plaza layout.

The variation in the plane of the façade will buffer the mass of the other buildings along First Street that are built up to the lot line. This along with landscaping, more generous public outdoor space and a smaller footprint will avoid a boxy building and help preserve Los Altos’ small-town charm. This will alleviate the “canyon effect,” often lamented in conjunction with First Street and

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<sup>7</sup> The pre-application submission proposed a 1,700 s.f. meeting space which included storage, bathrooms, and corridors. However, we had to reduce the size to accommodate the requested building architectural changes from the PTC, but are still providing a state-of-the-art facility. The 1000 s.f. is actual available meeting space.

<sup>8</sup> Land Economic Group. (2017). *Land Economic Group. Administrative Draft*. Retrieved from: [http://los-altos.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=4&event\\_id=293&meta\\_id=49605](http://los-altos.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=4&event_id=293&meta_id=49605).

<sup>9</sup> (Land Economic Group 2017, p. 38)

embodies many of the goals outlined in the Downtown Design Plan.<sup>10</sup> **When combined, the public plaza, the publicly accessible private land, and the deep set-backs will create over half an acre<sup>11</sup> of new landscaped open space along First Street without giving up parking– as a matter of fact, it will gain 50% more parking.**

Great attention was given to the pedestrian experience as one walks down First Street reinforcing Los Altos’ small-town charm. The inherently warm natural qualities of limestone and redwood along with the variation in the façade interact with the plantings to create a great pedestrian experience. Continuing down First Street one will observe how the building is broken down into smaller components to reflect the scale of downtown. The high quality, natural materials with integral finishes reflect a long-term commitment to this community. These are materials that communicate the commercial use but with palette warmth and approachability that supports the character and charm of downtown.

The design also shows respect for the residential quality of the neighborhood alley with building setbacks and careful concealment of service uses and mechanical equipment. The resulting green alley will improve the quality of the shared-use corridor.

We truly believe that this project will be of significant long-term value to the City and its community.

## **II. Proposed Community Benefits**

The project proposal is in compliance with all applicable City requirements and plans, with the exception of the 30-foot commercial height limit. The Los Altos Municipal Code allows for exceptions to the code in cases where “the project will result in a public benefit to the downtown.”<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, LACI is proposing the following generous community benefits for the exception to the height limit and the partial third story. We understand there is an ongoing discussion of the size and nature of community benefits contemplated in the Los Altos Municipal Code.<sup>13</sup> We believe the benefits outlined above and summarized below greatly meet and exceed what has been or could reasonably be contemplated as a community benefit for the proposed third story:

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<sup>10</sup> DDP pg.1

<sup>11</sup> Approx. 26,200 square feet

<sup>12</sup> Los Altos Municipal Code §14.52.160

<sup>13</sup> Los Altos Municipal Code §14.52.160

- **Additional public parking** – Forty (40) additional underground public parking spaces located on the first level of the garage for an over 50% increase in the amount of public spaces currently on the western half of Plaza 7.
- **Public access to approximately 7,400 square feet of privately held land** to increase the functional size of the public plaza. The open space will help reduce the existing “canyon” effect as referenced in the Downtown Buildings Committee Recommendations.<sup>14</sup>
- **Publicly accessible and maintained restrooms.**
- **Improvements to Alley** – The current alley will be transformed into a green, pedestrian friendly alley with new landscape and hardscape improvements, new trees and undergrounded utilities.
- **Increased setbacks** allowing for publicly accessible landscaped space along First Street<sup>15</sup> in addition to what is being provided for the plaza. The setbacks will allow for a more pleasant pedestrian experience,<sup>16</sup> and provide an enhanced sense of welcome for those entering downtown from the northwest along First Street.
- **Indoor, furnished meeting space;** over 1,000 s.f. of state-of-the-art meeting room available for reservation by community groups.
- **Maintenance** of publicly available spaces on the private property.
- **Exploratorium** partnership for outdoor learning space.

LACI and the Foundation have been very deliberate in separating the funding, creation, and approval of the proposed plaza so that it is independent from the private office building.

Accordingly, we have not put forward the plaza as a community benefit for an exception to the 30’ foot height limit. This is because the possibility of separate approval timelines would create too much uncertainty for the private office development. Additionally, we are mindful of not setting an unreachable precedent for future downtown development because the creation of a plaza for the small size and scale of this private development would be too financially generous to achieve for future developers.

While not a precondition of approval for the office building, if approval and construction of the plaza move in parallel with the building, LACI would be able to offer significantly more parking as a community benefit while minimizing the construction duration and neighborhood impact. Additionally, due to the synergies, inherent in constructing an underground parking garage for

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<sup>14</sup> *Los Altos Downtown Building Committee Final Report 5-4-16* (Rep.). (2016). Los Altos , CA

<sup>15</sup> *DDP* pg. 4

<sup>16</sup> *DDP* pg. 1

both the building and plaza, dividing the timelines would significantly increase the overall cost, logistics, and business disruption, thereby limiting the ability to support replacement and additional parking and future maintenance and programing.

### **III. Project design evolution based on Study Sessions and Community Feedback**

As mentioned above, the application follows three (3) study sessions (two joint sessions with the City Council and PTC and one PTC-only pre-application study session). The design incorporates much of the feedback and input from PTC and City Council. It also reflects input from the larger Los Altos community. To date, LACI has received feedback from nearly 900 community members through surveys, small group events and one-on-one dialogue. Accordingly, several large design changes have been made that should be highlighted.

#### **Moving entrance to Shasta**

The PTC recommended in September 2016 to acquire the last remaining parcel on the block<sup>17</sup>. LACI has done so at a significant expense and incorporated it into the design. This allows us the primary parking garage entrance to be placed on Shasta Street, along with a ridesharing drop-off location. Furthermore, it creates an opportunity for more landscape that gradually opens from the building entrance along First Street to the plaza. With the addition of the last parcel, the building is now 76,285 square feet.

#### **Significant changes to the building along the alley to respect the residential neighbors**

Currently the Alley experience is dominated by unsightly overhead power lines, visible trash enclosures, and surface parking lots at variously sloped grades. The project will underground all the utilities and conceal parking, trash, and building equipment behind closed doors in the building proper as well as improving the drainage issues identified. The proposed design pays great respect to the residential neighbors who share this alley.

It is designed to be a living alley that is green and safe for pedestrians. Several landscape elements will work to humanize the scale and experience. A pattern of textured pavers and enhancements will create a human scale for pedestrians and to slow down cars to discourage motorists from using the alley from being a cut through to Plaza 7. Trees are selected and placed to compliment the quiet and canopied nature of the Alley. A trash room behind closed doors conceals all trash containers from view. Utilities are placed underground. A variety of evergreen species and a thick planting buffer (mixed understory plantings) are used to relate to the residential buildings. Species are chosen that will thrive in the northeast exposure similar to the plantings that are thriving at the Packard Foundation building on the same exposure facing San Antonio.

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<sup>17</sup> 101 First Street, Los Altos; APN:167-39-127



### New deep setback and changes to the building façade along the Alley

In the December 2016 design, portions of the building were set back ten (10) feet from the property line at the Alley and the building rose three stories along those building faces. However, in response to the study sessions in December 2016 and March 2017 and in direct response to comments about further respecting the residential neighbors, the building as it meets the Alley, is now only two (2) stories at the most with a setback distance of 11'-4", with additional articulations and setbacks along the building length. The third floor has been set back an additional 12'-6" for a total setback of the third floor of 23'-10" from the Alley.

Additionally, following the last PTC study session, a large 30' wide by 23'-10" deep setback was added to break up the mass along the Alley in two discrete segments and to increase the area dedicated to trees and landscape.

### Privacy – removing balconies and adding window blinds

More recently, following the PTC session, all balconies facing east towards the Alley neighbors have been removed. All windows in the project will be provided with either internal or exterior blinds, depending on the solar orientation. At the Alley to respect the privacy of the adjacent neighbors, all windows will be provided with interior blinds that will be sufficiently opaque to obscure views but still let in some daylight when they are in the down position.

### Residential Fencing

In response to comments about respecting the residential character of the neighbors, a crafted, wood fence is proposed to scale down the Alley, provide visual interest, and relate to the residential landscape.

### **Significant Changes to the Architectural Character on First Street.**

Some members of the PTC requested a softening of the architectural character, particularly along First Street. In response, additional angled bays and deep recesses have been added to increase the façade's depth and visual interest, and to support the effort to break down the building in keeping with the traditional lot dimensions. More ground floor arcades were added along First Street with increased redwood cladding to enrich the material palette and meld better with the mixed residential and commercial character of this downtown.

### **Improved the sense of welcome at the corner of Shasta and First Streets**

The Shasta façade and the corner at First Street were redesigned to improve proportions and add a feature window at the second floor. The arcade along First Street softens the pedestrian experience and creates a better buffer for the office occupants working at the interior. The corner of Shasta and First Street has been enhanced to serve as welcoming entry point for downtown and a drop-off and pick-up point for building visitors and users. A bulb-out is proposed, as well as low plantings and planting buffers (rain gardens). The setback at the corner provides space for larger planting

areas, a secondary pathway composed of special paving and a low wall for signage. These elements provide visual anchoring of the corner without obstructing driver and pedestrian sight lines. Passengers can wait under a simple, protective overhead trellis that is scaled to enhance the pedestrian streetscape. Built-in benches will provide riders seating opportunities.

### **Design changes and signage to prevent cars from stopping on First Street**

In response to the PTC and to prevent cars from stopping on First Street, low walls and planting buffers are placed in front of the main lobby and café areas following a similar design that is used elsewhere along First Street. Clear and thoughtful signage will guide visitors to the garage entry and pedestrians from the car drop off location along Shasta to the lobby on First Street.

Additionally, the entry canopy was pulled back to the property line and the sidewalk canopy was removed to ensure safety of sight lines and to accommodate the large, existing tree in the public right-of-way.

### **Shade and Shadow Study**

At the request of the PTC, City Staff, and adjacent neighbors, the design team conducted a shade and shadow study. Contained within the plans are shadow studies of the proposed building and context at key points of the day and year. The times are shown are 9 a.m., Noon, and 3 p.m. at the key dates of Fall and Spring Equinox, Winter Solstice, and Summer Solstice.

The studies show that the building only begins to cast any shadow on neighboring buildings across the alley at 3 p.m. from October through early March. The rest of the year the building does not cast any shadows on neighboring buildings before 3 p.m. The third floor setback limits any additional shading impact of the top floor to the late afternoon in the winter months.

Safeway does not cast any shadow on the Plaza before 3 p.m. between March and September. At the worst shadow time of year – 12/21 – Safeway only casts a shadow across half of the Plaza at 3 p.m.

### **Maintaining surface parking stalls along Plaza 7 drive aisle next to retailers**

Following outreach to the retail neighbors at the corner of First Street and Plaza 7, the proposed public plaza was moved back to keep the existing parking stalls adjacent to the businesses. This change to the size of the plaza prompted LACI to grant public access on approximately 7,400 square feet of its private land to maintain an increase its functional size.

### **The café and increased size of public restrooms**

The two public restrooms were enlarged at PTC's request to ensure adequate space for family use (i.e., space for changing tables). Since the meeting room is now located at the main lobby, the occupant load on these bathrooms is reduced, giving more service to the café and plaza users.

LACI will maintain the restrooms moving forward as part of the proposed community benefit for the partial third story.

At the request of many community members, the café space will provide the key food and drink amenity that activates public spaces and acts as a draw to diverse segments of the Los Altos community. The café is 1,999 s.f. total, and includes a separate food preparation area so that the public space can be fully opened to the Plaza through operable glass walls. On the abundant pleasant weather days this will extend the effective size of the café.

#### **IV. Building and Design Overview and Required Findings**

The project is located in the downtown CD/R3 district and is subject to the Los Altos Downtown Design Plan Guidelines<sup>18</sup> as well as the Design Controls for CD/R3<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the PTC and City Council will need to make findings contained in the Commercial Design Review Findings<sup>20</sup>

Following is a discussion of how the project supports the Downtown Design Plan Guidelines and those Commercial Design Review Findings and follows the Design Controls for CD/R3.

##### **Commercial Design Review Findings**

***1. The proposal meets the goals, policies and objectives of the Los Altos General Plan and any specific plan, design guidelines and ordinance design criteria adopted for the specific district or area.***

The project proposal is in compliance with all applicable City requirements and plans, with the exception of the 30-foot commercial height limit. The project vigorously supports many of the goals of the Downtown Design Plan (rev .2009), including:

- “create an attractive pedestrian environment” (p. 1)
- Remediating “the lack of... open space downtown” (p. 4)
- “building facades need updating to become more contemporary” (p. 5)
- “public streetscape... improvements need to be enhanced and updated” (p. 5)
- “provide additional public outdoor plazas and eating areas, visible from the street, to enhance the ambiance of downtown” (p. 8)
- “a series of entry statements, using special planting, monoliths, walls, and signing” (p. 10)
- “landscaping in the Village would generally be more urban and public in appearance, with a greater proportion of paved surfaces” (p. 11)
- “open spaces can provide areas for a variety of activities, including resting, waiting, meeting, or eating” (p. 23)

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<sup>18</sup> DDP pg.1

<sup>19</sup> Los Altos Municipal Code § 14.52.110

<sup>20</sup> Los Altos Municipal Code § 14.78.060

- “shade can be provided by trees, umbrellas and awnings” (p. 23)

In addition, the project proposal is in alignment with the full intent of the “First Street District” guidelines within in the Downtown Design Guidelines.<sup>21</sup> In particular, this project “supports the Los Altos village atmosphere by increasing pedestrian activity;” by establishing “a sense of entry into the downtown;” “provid[ing] for a full range of retail, office, and service uses appropriate to downtown;” “improv[ing] the visual appeal and pedestrian orientation;” and is energy efficient through “the use of solar photovoltaic and other energy conserving devices.”

***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.***

The building responds to diverse conditions and neighbors on First Street, Shasta Street, the Alley, and Plaza while maintaining its architectural integrity and identity. The design relies on the application of a high-quality, context-appropriate palette of materials and a consistent set of architectural principles to provide depth, scale, and variety to the façade and pedestrian experience as you move along its length. Most notable in terms of height, bulk and design is the prioritization of setbacks at all three levels of the building to (1) avoid a boxy building and uniformity of pedestrian experience; (2) mitigate shading impacts; and (3) maximize open space and landscape opportunities.

The approach varies on each frontage as follows:

Plaza

The building is set back dramatically from the property line to provide public access on approximately 7,400 square feet of private land to increase the functional size of the public plaza. The building steps down to one-story with a public, highly transparent retail café space and visible roof decks that step back at both the second and third levels. At the Plaza, the third level is set back 30’ from the two-story building façade and 97’ from the property line.

First Street

Deep landscaped setbacks and variation in the plane of the façade provide relief from the mass of building built up to the lot line across the street. The building is set back further on the ground level to increase shadow and depth on the facades and increase landscaped buffer areas. The third level is set back such that pedestrians walking along the building will not experience this level except as it is revealed at the building entry court.

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<sup>21</sup> DDP pg. 1

## Shasta Street

A more modest landscaped setback and planar massing reflects the larger commercial building across Shasta and the relatively wide street width that can handle more building mass. A 3' deep, 25' wide recess in the second floor wall at the corner (a typical feature used at various locations along the building façade) and an angled cut in the ground floor corner welcomes those entering Los Altos from the north and improves visibility at the ground plane. The primary garage entry is visible closer to the alley and provides depth to the façade.

## Alley

Respect for the residential quality of the Alley is reflected in the deep setbacks and careful concealment of service uses, trash, and mechanical equipment. A “green alley” with abundant landscape and bioswales will improve the quality of the shared use corridor. Utilities are undergrounded, which will significantly enhance the character and charm of the Alley.

***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.***

Building mass and elevations are articulated at both the larger and smaller scales to address the human scale through the following approaches:

### Set backs

The building greatly exceeds required setbacks to achieve the benefits described under #2 above. The third floor is set back from the building edge such that it is barely visible from pedestrian view angles. In addition, the approach to set backs varies along different exposures to vary the character of the building at different locations.

### Height

The incorporation of one, two, and three-story portions of the building creates variety and interest and helps break down the scale of the building into components. Roof terraces animate the tops of roofs above outside second and third floor offices allowing the activity and greenery to be visible from certain ground level locations.

### Angles

Angled sections of wall at the ground and second levels create variety and help to break down the scale of the building, especially from oblique views down the sidewalks and alley. On the ground floor this opens views at the corners to improve safety and visibility and ensure the building does not appear “boxy.”

## Openings

Typical window openings are large, with window heads pushed up to ceiling lines to maximize daylighting inside. The perceived size of openings is increased with the use of stone and/or glass spandrel panels to improve sense of proportions. Facades are accented by twenty-five-foot-wide window groupings that are set back three feet from the plane of wall and accented by natural wood finishes at soffits and side walls.

## Recesses

Recesses and entry courts at the ground level break down the building vertically, provide increased shade and shadow contrast, and allow material transitions to occur from stone to wood.

### ***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.***

All natural materials with integral finishes communicate longevity and commitment to this community. The body material is high-quality limestone in both honed and flamed finishes that conveys the commercial use but with a warmth that reinforces the charm of downtown. Lightly-stained, sustainably harvested redwood provides an accent that reflects the residential character of Los Altos while referencing the Packard Foundation building and other recent contemporary additions to Los Altos. Transparency is achieved with high-performance spectrally-selective glass tuned to keep out unwanted infrared light spectrum while admitting beneficial cool daylight into interiors, without the use of heavy tints to achieve this functionality.

While the overall effect is contemporary in character, the building is broken down into traditional building elements as follows:

Base : large-format porcelain tile at columns and base to accommodate changes in grade around the building.

Body : limestone in 2'-6" wide panels

Parapets : distinctive metal cap providing a crisp edge and definitive end to the wall

Bays : Traditional bays are reinterpreted as recesses to provide shading to 25' wide window openings. Wood provides an accent material at these locations. Angled portions of building at times also overhang with wood soffits underneath to form bays that break down the facades.

Arcades : Arcades along First Street are at times paved for walking and gathering and at other times are landscaped to provide additional buffers for the office uses within

***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 tree canopy, either in the public right-of-way or within the project frontage.***

#### *Pedestrian Amenities*

The landscape is designed according to the City of Los Altos 2009 Downtown Design Guidelines<sup>22</sup> with special considerations to supporting a strong pedestrian environment that is unique to the Los Altos Village character and scale. Landscape amenities are located to create safe, comfortable, and interesting experiences for users.

Landscape buffers along First Street, separating pedestrians from vehicles, consist of wide planters with drought-resistant plantings and trees. Existing tree wells are expanded to include substantial planting buffers and storm water infiltration where possible.

A diversity of tree species and canopies along the project provide comfortable, consistent shaded areas for pedestrians.

Trees provides comfortable, substantially shaded areas along the project frontage for pedestrians through a diversity of tree species and canopies. Landscape elements such as special decorative and textured paving and plantings create inviting entries and emphasize openings. Different pavings lead to different programs that diversify user experiences. Paving and landscape variations provide a sense of wayfinding.

A series of low walls along First Street reinforce the separation of pedestrians and vehicles while providing articulated detail and texture. Low walls are used to reinforce pedestrian flows and discourage unsafe drop-offs along First Street. Pedestrian amenities include generous and varied seating components throughout the site, using durable, quality-crafted, and natural materials such as wood, metal, and stone. Amenities include a variety of elements that encourage pedestrians to linger and take their time - vegetated walkways, overhead trellising, outdoor seating and dining areas, public art and social gathering spaces. Landscape elements are threaded together to provide a continuous connection along First Street and a pedestrian gateway into the Downtown Core.

Landscape elements such as special decorative and textured paving and plantings create inviting entries and emphasize openings. Different paving patterns lead to different programs that diversity user experiences. Together paving and landscape variations provide a sense of wayfinding

The pedestrian and vehicle crossing at First Street is improved with special paving as a visual cue for the pedestrian right of way. The crossing at Shasta is improved with a bulb out. Low plantings (below driver eye height) are used in these areas for safety and to provide a sense of opening and

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<sup>22</sup> DDP pg.1

welcome. Visual obstructions are avoided in these areas; landscape elements are kept at a low height or kept thin so as not to obstruct driver and pedestrian sight lines for safe crossings.

A public art path is proposed along First Street to engage pedestrians with interactive and educational exhibits. Exhibits are placed in opportune areas to provide special interest near building openings and social spaces. Interactive art elements bring a unique and whimsical character that is already present in downtown Los Altos. First Street will include pockets of public social spaces with amenities that connect and open to the public plaza.

### *Types of plants*

The planting design integrates plants adapted to the microclimate of the site and to the Los Altos region. The plants are selected for seasonal color and interest, passive solar benefit to minimize heat island effect, longevity, and habitat value. Additionally, the plant palette includes a combination of native and non-native, non-invasive, and non-toxic plants. Overall, the planting design's goal is to add texture and visual interest, wrapping the Plaza landscape around the building and, ultimately, enveloping the building into the landscape.

Rain gardens are composed of adapted species that are known to thrive in Los Altos, incorporating a diversity of species and flowering plants for visual interest. Wide planting buffers provide visual interest, articulation, and diversity in relation to building setbacks and facades. Plantings are placed to avoid blank walls. Multi-trunk and flowering trees with understory mixed plantings soften side walls to achieve an overall sense of variety and informality.

### *Plans for existing trees*

The design approach towards existing trees focuses on pedestrian utility. Pistache trees in the public right of way are retained and protected. In most cases, their existing tree wells are expanded with plantings. Additional Chinese pistache trees and crape myrtles are proposed along First Street to create a sheltered and shaded environment for pedestrians. When possible, removed trees will be repurposed for building materials, furniture, and art to give them new life. In their place, a variety of planted trees will grow and carry into many future generations.

### ***6. Signage is designed to complement the building architecture in terms of style, materials, colors and proportions.***

Signage will be integrated with the materials and character of the building. Particular attention is paid to the clarity of signage directing cars dropping off visitors and users of the building to the car drop off location and parking garage entry on Shasta Street; and for pedestrians then finding their way to the building lobby along First Street.

### ***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.***



All mechanical and electrical equipment is screened from public view. A transformer is located room adjacent to the parking garage entry on Shasta Street. Air-source heat pumps are located in a screened roof enclosure in order to limit acoustical impacts on neighbors and building occupants. This enclosure will be designed for noise control in accordance with the City of Los Altos Municipal Code, Chapter 6.16.

***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.***

A trash room, sized per Mission Trail's requirements, is located with double doors at the north end of the Alley façade to handle all building trash and recycling. This room is designed into the building and will not be recognizably different from the rest of the building design in materials and detailing.

**A. Design Control (CD/R3)<sup>23</sup>**

Please note that many of the Design Controls below are addressed in the narrative responses to Commercial Design Review Findings above as well as in within the architectural design plans. Where a specific narrative seems necessary, more detail is provided below.

***A. No structure shall be built or altered including exterior changes in color, materials, and signage in the CD District except upon approval of the city planner or as prescribed in [Chapter 14.78](#) of this title.***

***B. Reduction of apparent size and bulk:***

***1. As a general principle, building surfaces should be relieved with a change of wall plane that provides strong shadow and visual interest.***

***2. Every building over seventy-five (75) feet wide should have its perceived height and bulk reduced by dividing the building mass into smaller-scale components by:***

- i. A change of plane;***
- ii. A projection or recess;***
- iii. Varying cornice or roof lines;***
- iv. Other similar means.***

Discussed above and shown in the architectural design plan.

***3. The proportions of building elements, especially those at ground level, should be kept close to human scale by using recesses, courtyards, entries, or outdoor spaces along the perimeter of the building to define the underlying fifty (50) foot front lot frontage.***

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<sup>23</sup> Los Altos Municipal Code § 14.52.110

The proposed architectural design is significantly guided by the goal of reducing apparent size and bulk. To do so, several strategies are used in varying combinations and subtleties of application as one moves along the facades to create variety from a restrained palette of materials and spatial devices as noted in the architectural plans on drawing 1/A3.010. .

The 30' structural module leads the building towards a natural break down into 30' or 60' components. Within each of these modules a variety of setbacks, recesses, material shifts between stone, glass and wood, angled walls are recombined to relieve a feeling of repetition with shadow and visual interest. At the ground level, small courtyards and arcades and varied setbacks create landscapes open spaces of varying sizes and characters for visual relief as well as use by the public and building occupants.

***4. Rooftop equipment shall be concealed from view and/or integrated within the architecture of the building.***

Discussed above

***5. Windows should be inset generously from the building wall to create shade and shadow detail; the minimum inset shall be three inches.***

Windows are set back a minimum of three inches from wall planes, with additional setbacks of the spandrel and head panels of honed limestone from the main body limestone to lend more depth and detail to the facades.

***6. The primary access for all buildings shall be directly to the street.***

Provided through a generous entry court on First Street.

***D. Consideration should be given to the relationship of the project and its location in the downtown to the implementation of goals and objectives of the downtown urban design plan. Evaluation of design approved shall consider one or more of the following factors:***

- 1. The project location as an entry, edge, or core site;***
- 2. The ability to contribute to the creation of open space on-site or in designated areas;***
- 3. Enhancement of the pedestrian environment through the use of pathways, plantings, trees, paving, benches or other amenities;***
- 4. Building facade improvements including, paint, signage, service areas, windows and other features;***
- 5. On-site or off-site parking improvements;***
- 6. Public or private landscape improvements.***

As demonstrated throughout the narrative, the project supports the goals and objectives of the downtown urban design plan through abundant landscaped open spaces and parking improvements.

***E. Opaque, reflective, or dark tinted glass should not be used on the ground floor elevation. Sixty (60) percent of the ground floor elevation should be transparent window surface.***

The ground floor elevations along First Street and the Plaza – which constitute the true building frontages – achieve 60 percent transparency. At the third level and portions of the second level, a curtain wall system is fully glazed, which helps the higher portions of the building to blend with the sky and reduce height and bulk impacts.

***F. Courtyards should be partially visible from the street or linked to the street by a clear circulation element such as an open passage or covered arcade.***

The entry courtyard is fully visible and open to First Street with an entry canopy marking its importance along the façade.

***G. Rooftop mechanical, venting, and/or exhausting equipment must be within the height limit and screened architecturally from public view, including views from adjacent buildings located at the same level.***

As addressed above, rooftop equipment is fully screened from public view.

## **B. The Climate Action Plan Checklist for New Development**

The project is in compliance with the requirements of the Los Altos Climate Action plan and along with LACI is fully supportive of the intent of addressing climate change through its actions.

### LEED and sustainability

The proposed project is registered with the USGBC and will seek LEED Gold certification under New Construction – Core and Shell. Some sustainability highlights will include:

- Stormwater will be cleaned and slowed by bioswales and planting to improve water quality being sent to the Bay
- Light pollution will be controlled through the careful selection of site lighting fixtures to protect stargazing opportunities
- Open space afforded through deep setbacks will increase open space and restore habitat from its current condition
- Water efficient landscaping and plumbing fixtures will go beyond California code to reduce our impact on strained water resources

- An energy efficient building skin and abundant daylighting, combined with efficient mechanical systems, will yield a building that is 70% more efficient than a typical existing office building.
- Photovoltaic panels will produce carbon-free electricity on the roof to cover at least 13% of annual energy use and achieve all LEED credits associated with renewable energy
- At least 75% of construction waste and demolition will be recycled and/or reused
- Healthy building materials will achieve all available credits to ensure a healthy indoor environment and high productivity and satisfaction from building occupants
- Exterior materials will be integral finish materials like stone, wood, tile and glass primarily to reduce paints and finishes and improve lifespan. Materials will be sustainably-sourced and locally-sourced whenever possible

## V. Technical Studies

The following technical studies will be submitted shortly following the application.

- Traffic –prepared by Hexagon Transportation Consultants
- Air Quality –LSA Associates
- Historic – LSA Associates
- Noise – LSA Associates
- Biological Resources – LSA Associates
- Arborist – Michael Bench
- Geotechnical – Rockridge Geotechnical
- Environmental – WEST

## VI. Parking

As we outlined above, the design proposes a three-level subterranean parking garage from Shasta Street to the edge of the proposed park on Plaza 7 with ramp entrances on Shasta Street and Plaza 7 to access the garage. The Foundation will relocate all the existing parking spaces on Plaza 7 to the first level of the garage as part of the development of the park. The garage will provide the zoning code requirement of one space per every 300 net square feet of building.

We have heard clearly from our outreach that the community wants more parking downtown. Therefore, as a community benefit, LACI proposes creating up to forty (40) additional underground public parking spaces. This will increase the amount of public spaces currently on the western half of Plaza 7 by over 50%, (a total of 107 public parking spaces). All the public spaces will be clearly marked public on the first level and accessible from both ramps.

Community members can park underground in an easily accessible, safe parking garage that is fully integrated into the structure and activated. . Further, LACI and the Foundation will consider working with the City and community stakeholders to engage with an artist to create and

implement, at a reasonable cost, a pleasing design for portions of the interior of Level 1 of the underground garage which will further enrich a visit to the new downtown public plaza.

<b>Building and Plaza</b>					
	Community Benefit	Park Replacement	Retail	Private Office	Total Spaces
Level 1 spaces	<b>40</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>116</b>
Level 2 spaces			<b>8</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>135</b>
Level 3 spaces				<b>109</b>	<b>109</b>
					<b>360<sup>24</sup></b>

White Dot Program

LACI and the Foundation are prepared to take direction from the City as to the number of employee white dot spaces to include in Level 1 of the garage. However, it seems logical to explore transferring the existing white dots on Plaza 7 to Level 1 as it would be a benefit to both downtown employees because as they could park in a shaded and safe underground garage and to the downtown overall because it would open existing surface parking stalls to enable customers to park more easily.

<b>Employee White Dot Parking on Plaza 7</b>	
Total # of parking stalls on the entirety of Plaza 7	137 <sup>25</sup>
Total # of parking stalls being affected by new public plaza	67
Total # of parking stalls being replaced underground by the Foundation	67
Total # of white dot parking stalls on the entirety of Plaza 7	97 <sup>26</sup>
Total # of white dot parking stalls affected by new public plaza	47
Total # of white dot parking to be included in Level 1 of new garage	TBD
Total # new public parking spaces created by new garage as community benefit	40

<sup>24</sup> Note that the total number of spaces have shifted since the pre-application study session. The design shows a net decrease of one (1) space. There are two (2) additional retail spaces and a decrease of three (3) spaces as the square footage shifted due to requested design changes.

<sup>25</sup> CDM Smith. (2013, September). *Downtown Parking Management Plan for the City of Los Altos*. Pg. 11 Retrieved from [http://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/Community%20Development/page/3730/downtown\\_parking\\_management\\_plan\\_report-appendices.pdf](http://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/Community%20Development/page/3730/downtown_parking_management_plan_report-appendices.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> CDM Smith. Pg. 44

## **VII. The Public Plaza and Exclusive Negotiating Agreement**

The plaza, along with streetscape, has been designed to create a multi-use, flexible and engaging outdoor space that provides a valuable resource for downtown Los Altos and the neighboring residents. The outdoor space is laid out for flexibility to accommodate a wide range of experiences within a small footprint; from active play space for playing hop-scotch or ping-pong to more quiet, contemplative and meditative green spaces. An interactive art piece will be a crucial part of the space and the community will be able to engage in a variety of ways throughout the year. A combination of umbrellas, trellises, and tree canopy will provide much-desired shade and filtered sunlight to the plaza. Additional amenities include items that are outlined in the 2012 Los Altos Parks Plan citywide goals: a play area, picnic area and publicly accessible restrooms.

LACI looks forward to continuing the discussion with the City

### **Submittal Enclosures**

Enclosed in this pre-application submittal you will find:

- City of Los Altos General Application
- First Street Green Architectural Design Plans -five (5) full sets and five (5) half sets and digital copy contained in thumb drive
- Filing Fee
- Technical Studies (forthcoming)
- Public Notification mail notice labels

Thank you again for your review.

Sincerely,  
SRGNC CRES, LLC



Matthew Materkowski  
Assistant Vice-President