

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

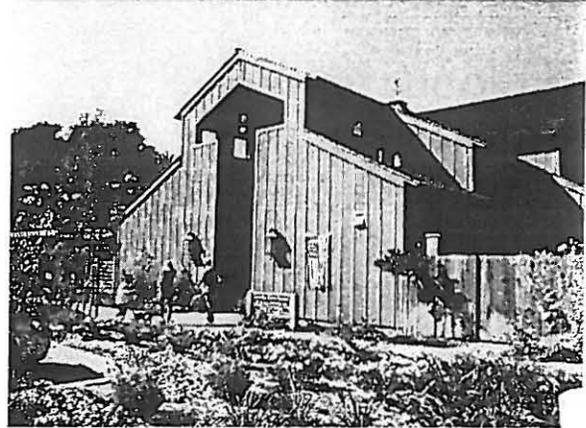
The State Office of Historic Preservation implements preservation laws regarding historic resources, and is responsible for the California Historic Resources Inventory (CHRI), which uses the National Criteria for listing resources significant at the national, state, and local level.

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



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

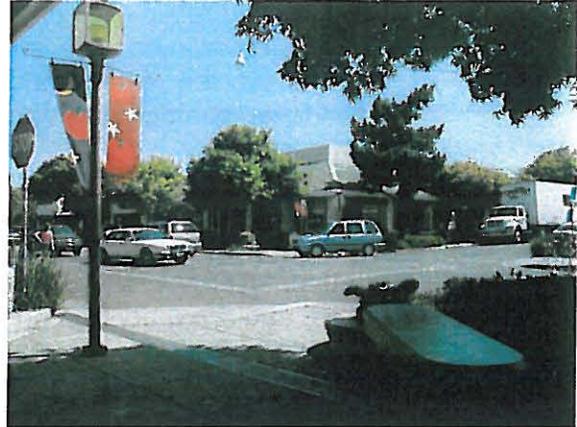
and whenever the City's General Plan is amended or updated to ensure continued consistency and usefulness.

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

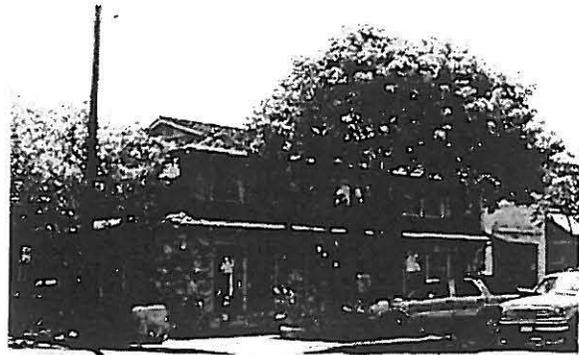
The City adopted Design Guidelines for single-family residential development in 1991 to guide the homeowner, architect, developer and builder in the planning and execution of successful single-family residential design. The primary purpose is to maintain the physical attributes of existing residential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

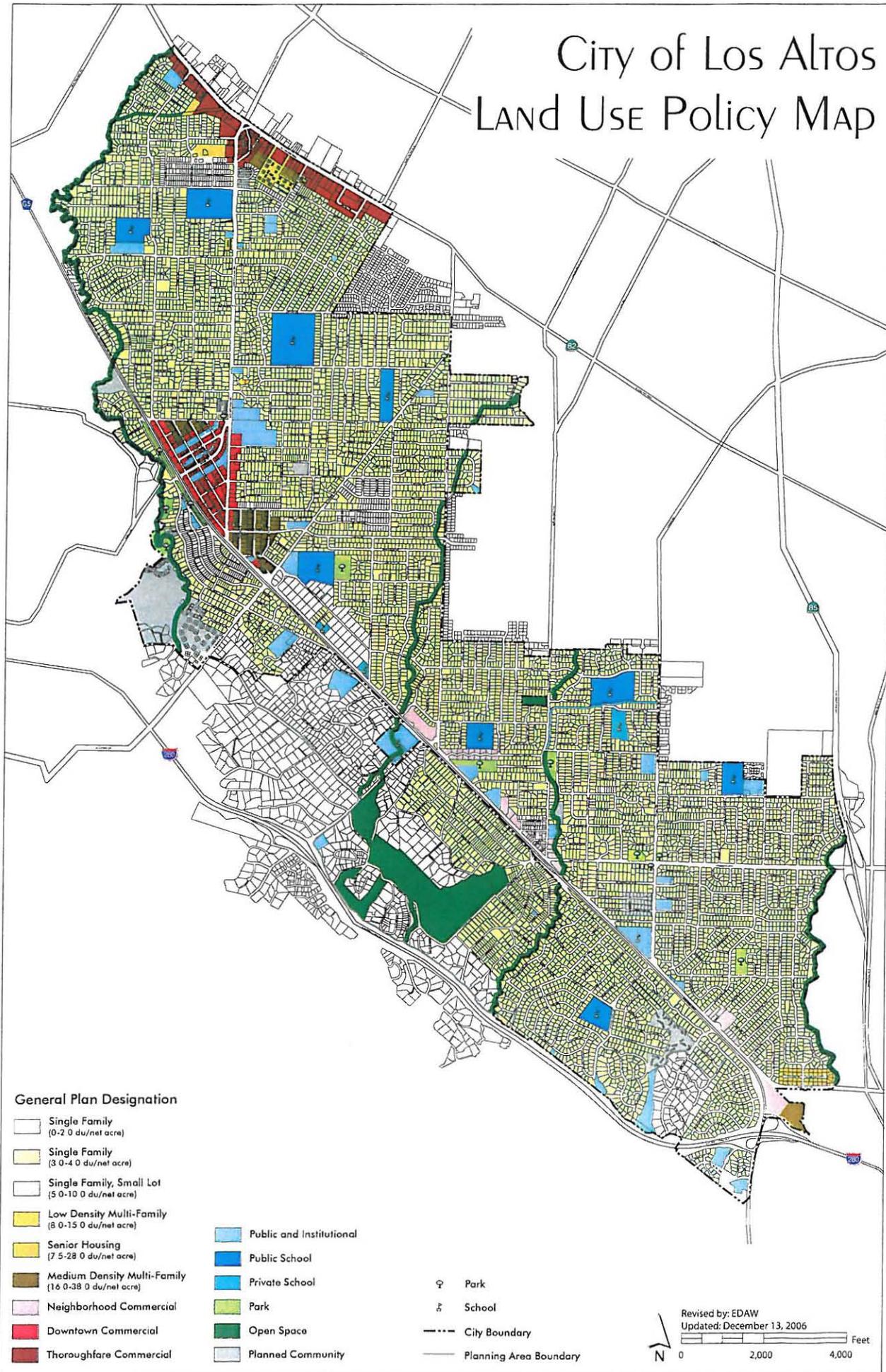
The land use classification system in Los Altos includes five general land use categories: Residential, Commercial, Public and Quasi-Public Facilities, Open Space, and Planned Community. Descriptions of each general land use category and corresponding land use designations are provided in the subsequent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





**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-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

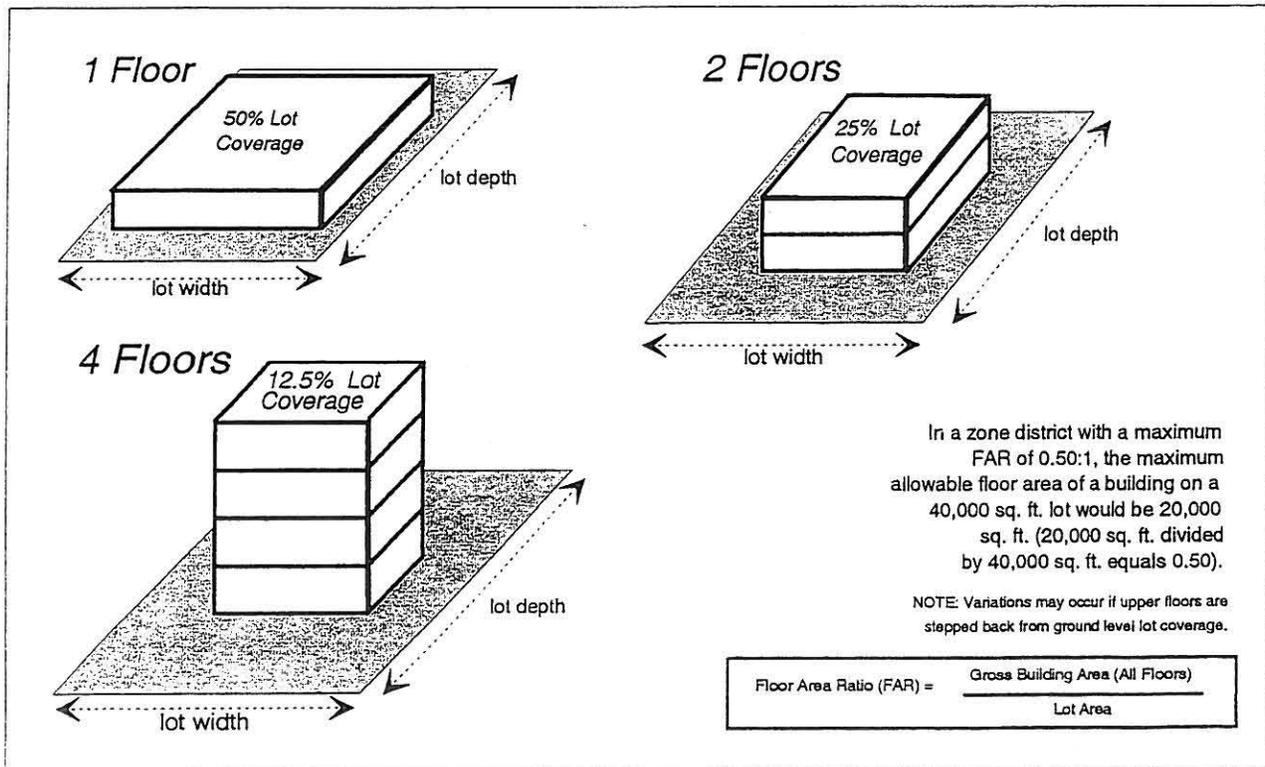


Figure LU-2
Floor Area Ratio



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

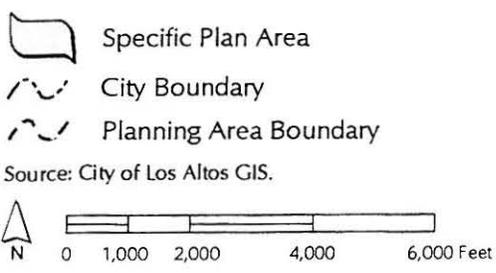


Figure LU-3
Downtown
Urban Design Plan



**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.

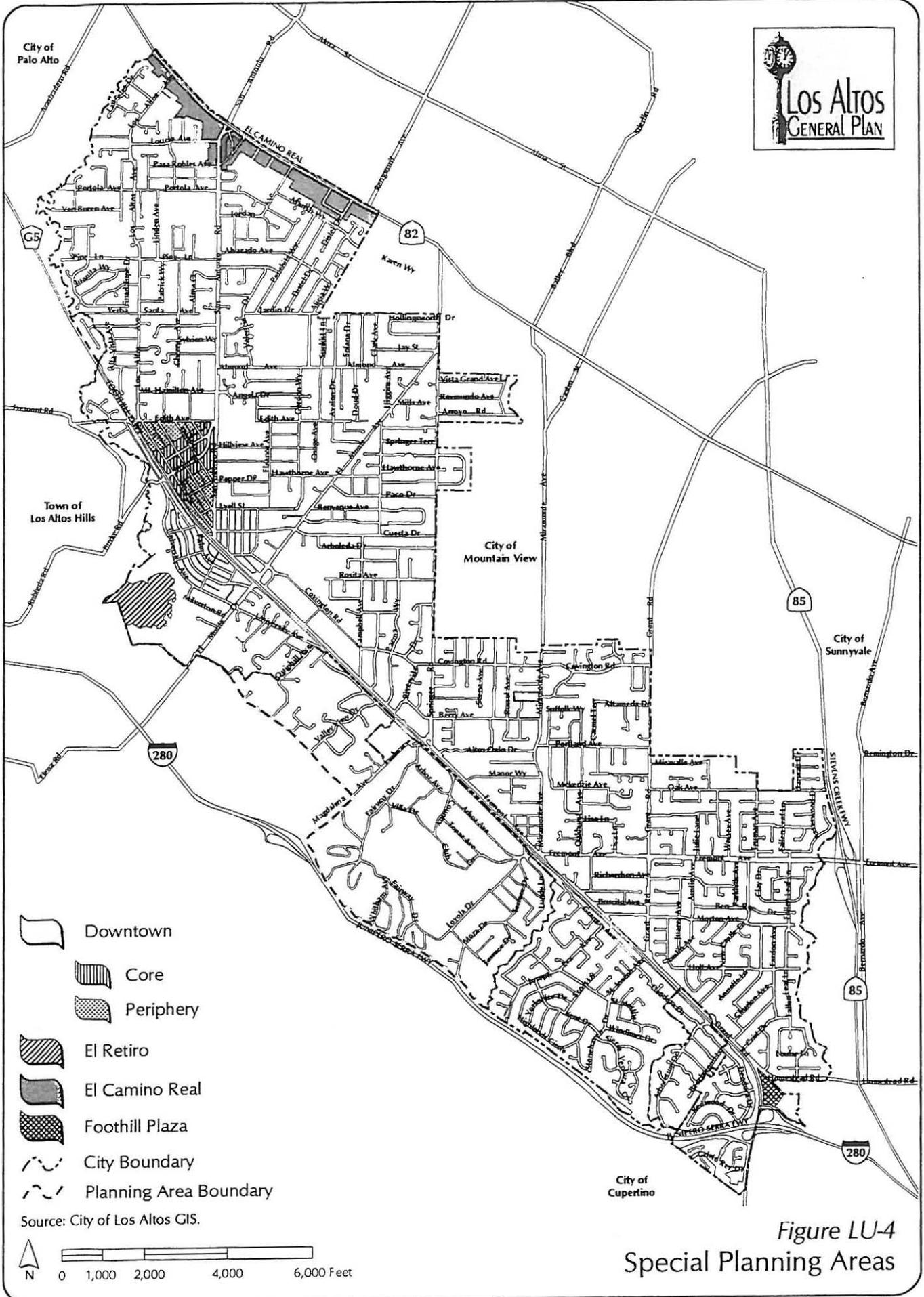


Figure LU-4
Special Planning Areas



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.”

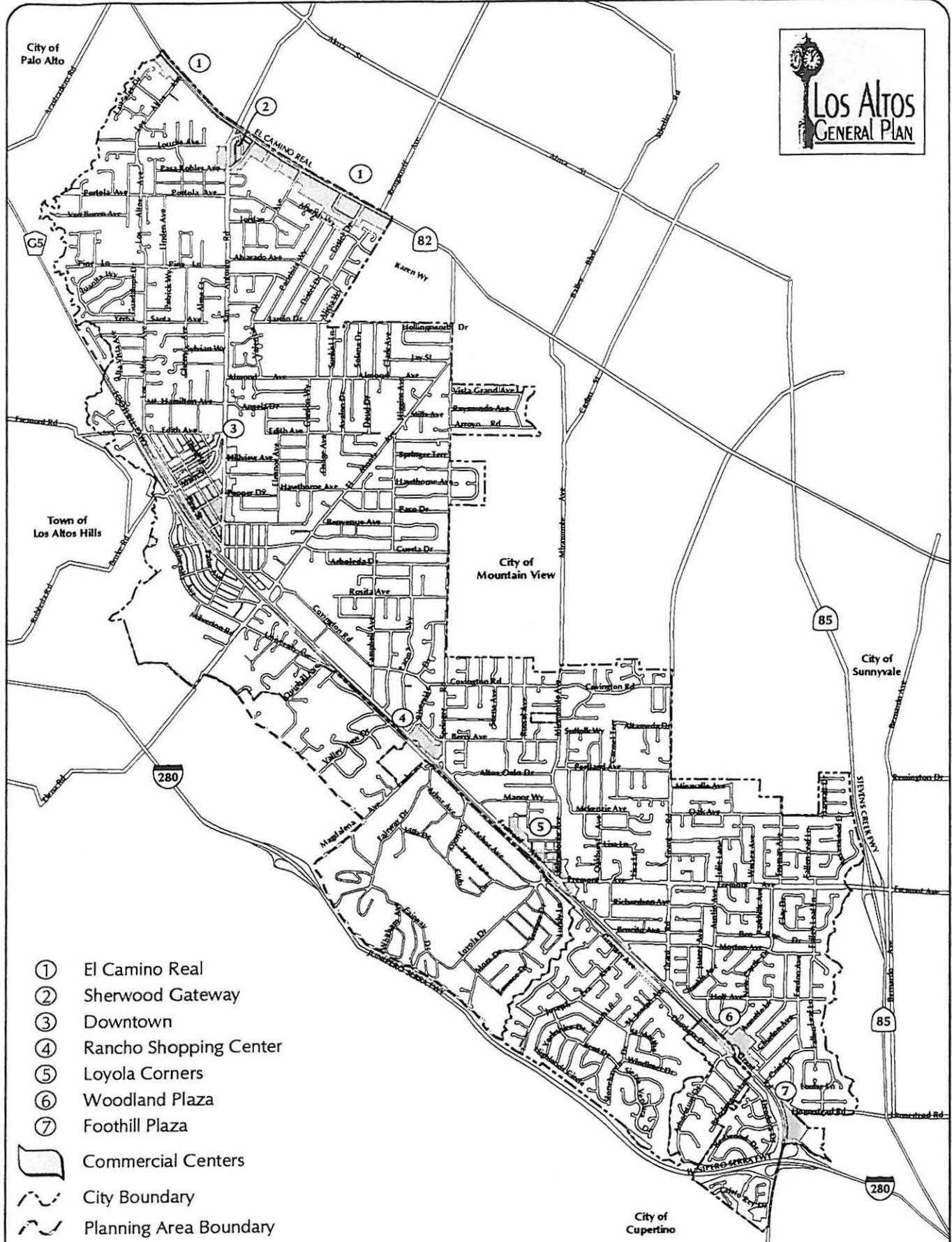
The popularity of large retail centers grew throughout the 1990s. Large retailers require a significant amount of property to accommodate buildings and parking. To better serve a regional customer base, such businesses also prefer freeway visibility and arterial accessibility. Given the limitations in 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.

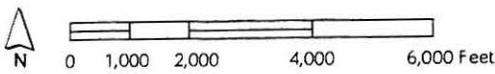


Figure ED-1
Commercial Centers



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

