

# COMMUNITY DESIGN & HISTORIC RESOURCES ELEMENT

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Community Design & Historic Resources Element	1
Scope and Content of the Community Design & Historic Resources Element	1
Related Laws, Plans and Programs	1
Relationship to Other General Plan Elements	3

### COMMUNITY DESIGN & HISTORIC RESOURCES PLAN

Community Image and Identity	4
Historic Resources	8

### ISSUES, GOALS AND POLICIES

Community Design	10
Historic Resources	13

### IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS APPENDIX

### LIST OF FIGURES

CDHR-1 Important Entryways	6
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# 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 character 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.



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



## 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

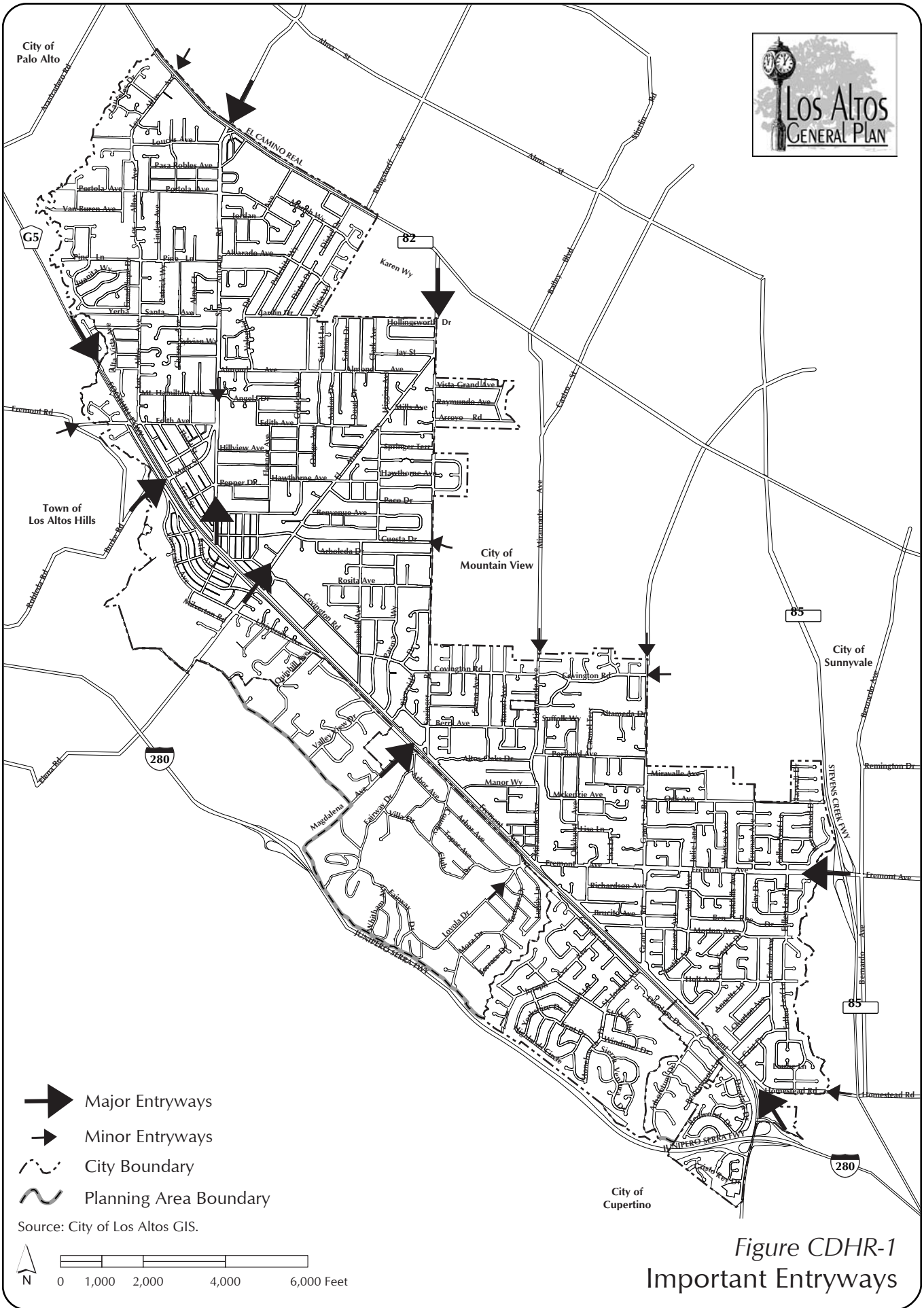


Figure CDHR-1  
Important Entryways



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 Muwékma 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 existing 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 Altos.

**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 applicable design, building, and fire codes.

**Policy 6.2:** The City shall regard demolition of Landmark structures, and historically significant resources, which have HRI rankings of 60 to 100 as a last resort. Demolition would be permitted only after the

City determines that the resource 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

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





## 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 potentially significant historic properties. Review the current list and determine if historic structures are significant for local or state designation as historic 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 with an evaluated point total of 60 or more as determined in the current Historic Resource Inventory using established guidelines for selecting and ranking significant buildings. 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: Ongoing  
Related Policies: 6.4, 6.5