



DISCUSSION ITEMS

Agenda Item # 10

AGENDA REPORT SUMMARY

Meeting Date: May 22, 2018

Subject: Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan

Prepared by: Jon Biggs, Community Development Director

Approved by: Chris Jordan, City Manager

Attachment(s):

1. Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan

Initiated by:

City Council

Previous Council Consideration:

September 13, 2016; November 15, 2016; March 14, 2017; and August 22, 2017

Fiscal Impact:

Undetermined

Environmental Review:

The proposed vision plan is exempt from CEQA review (1) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because it does not authorize any direct or indirect changes to the physical environment and there is no possibility of a significant effect on the environment; (2) because it is not intended to apply to specifically identified development projects and as such it is speculative to evaluate any such future project now and, moreover, they will be subject to appropriate environmental review at such time as approvals for those projects are considered; and/or (3) because it is not intended to, nor does it, provide CEQA clearance for future development-related projects by mere establishment of the ordinance's requirements. Each of the foregoing provides a separate and independent basis for CEQA compliance and, when viewed collectively, provides an overall basis for CEQA compliance

Policy Question(s) for Council Consideration:

- Shall the City Council adopt the Downtown Vision Plan or refer the document to other City Commissions, such as the Planning Commission and Complete Streets Commission, and make it available for further public review.

Summary:

- The City Council is considering the Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan. Once implemented, this plan will guide the public, decision makers, and staff on future change in the Downtown. The Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan will serve as the community's long-range vision for the Downtown and provide a road map for future public projects and guidance for private development.



Subject: Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan

Staff Recommendation:

Review the Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan and provide direction on changes to the Plan the City Council would like to see incorporated and next steps in this process.

Purpose

In order to provide the Community an extensive and comprehensive opportunity to evaluate and participate in discussions on appropriate guidance for the Downtown's future, the City Council adopted a goal of developing and implementing a vision for Downtown Los Altos.

The Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan (Plan), while not a regulatory document, will guide change over the long term for Downtown Los Altos and it sets the stage for future regulatory documents the City elects to implement or change. This plan will be one of the many tools available to the community, decision makers and staff.

Staff will continue to review specific development applications in the Downtown for consistency with adopted regulatory documents, while using the Plan to guide its review and recommendations on these projects. As a visionary document, the City will encourage consistency with the Plan and it will provide the community and decision makers with information on how each project can best implement the plans concepts.

In addition to its recommendations are a set if short-term, mid-term, and long-term actions intended to implement the vision for the Downtown.

Background

The Downtown Vision consultant team and staff have been engaged in an extensive community outreach effort intended to obtain community input on the Downtown's future. Outreach efforts to date have included over 25 meetings and pop-up workshops, including one-on-one interviews with stakeholders and decision makers. A Kick-Off event was held in the Downtown in early April 2016 and followed up by pop-up workshops at events like the Farmers Market and Junior Olympics, and meetings and presentations with community groups and organizations.

The outreach effort also included event notification mailers, a questionnaire, and postcard reminders (for both the workshops and questionnaire) that were mailed to every mailbox in Los Altos and Los Altos Hills. As a result, there were over 1,500 questionnaire responses from all segments of the community that were submitted. Once compiled, the information gathered was then put on the Downtown Visioning Webpage that allowed the community to follow the Visioning effort's progress and see the information that was being shared.



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The information and community input that was gathered during all these efforts have formed this Plan. It represents the Community's Vision for Downtown Los Altos and is guided by good planning principals and techniques intended to help further this Plan.

Discussion/Analysis

Plan Format

The Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan contains ten chapters and an appendix, which includes the economic analysis.

1. Introduction & Purpose
2. The Changing Nature of Downtown and Economics
3. The Community's Vision
4. Land Use
5. Building Environment
6. Public Spaces
7. Parking and Circulation
8. Sustainability
9. Implementation
10. Vision Poster
11. Appendix

An element of the Plan is a vision poster that provides an overview of the Downtown Districts and the key future improvements that can take place in the Downtown. There are also a number of images and diagrams spread through the document that provide a visual reference and help highlight the various recommendations and concepts contained in the plan.

This body of work is intended to support the Downtown Statement of the Plan, which reads:

Looking into the future, Downtown Los Altos continues to embody the village character long enjoyed by the community while the economic vitality of its businesses has flourished. As the center of the City, Downtown has evolved into a greater focal point of activity, providing new living, working, and entertainment options for all age and income segments of the community. The centrally-located public plaza between Main and State Streets is the new anchor of Downtown, providing a venue for accommodating events, outdoor dining, and other community activities. Whether traveling to Downtown by walking, bicycling, or a range of future vehicles, visibility and access has been improved through enhanced signage, wider sidewalks, landscape improvements, and bicycle connectivity on 2nd and 3rd Streets. In essence, Downtown Los Altos has become a community destination, while at the same time maintaining its roots as a nostalgic village nestled at the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains.



Subject: Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan

Plan Highlights

Following are highlights of the Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan. These are intended to provide a feel for some of the key themes of the plan, but one should refer to the Downtown Vision Plan itself, (Attachment 1) to see and appreciate the full complement of the plan.

Starting with the introduction and purpose chapter, the language here sets the stage for the plan and includes background information, such as some information on the history of the area covered by the plan and efforts taken to engage the community in the development of the plan.

A key component of this Plan was the economic analysis. The economic analysis for the Downtown is included with this Plan as an attachment. The analysis includes findings that identify the strengths of the Downtown along with challenges/constraints and provides policy recommendations. Two of these recommendations are a proposed height limit and proposed parking ratios, which are two development standards that can influence how the Downtown will change over time.

The following are a summary of the economic policy recommendations that were used in the outreach effort and utilized as part of the Vision Plan process. These have been carried forward within the Plan based on feedback provided by the community. The recommendations are intended to encourage smaller scale incremental change that allows Downtown Los Altos to modernize while keeping the essence of its village character to address future change. The recommendations include:

- Allowing contemporary service uses (e.g., fitness studios and day spas, yoga and tai chi studios, martial arts and kinder gyms, wine bars, and beer gardens);
- Updating parking requirements;
- Providing Specific Use Exemptions from parking requirements;
- Establishing an in-lieu parking fee;
- Enhancing parking management; and
- Modifying building heights.

As noted earlier, the plan has a compliment of figures and diagrams that depict how it has looked in the past, how it appears now, and how it can look in the future. Figure 3 demonstrates the key components and concepts contained in the Plan, like the Downtown Plaza, shared streets, and streetscape enhancements. This figure also identifies four “Downtown Districts”, which do not follow the designations applied by the zoning map and zoning code, but rather gather the areas of the downtown that share the characteristics and uses that help define them. These districts include:

- First Street District,
- Edith Avenue District,
- Main and State Street District, &



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- San Antonio Road District

The First Street District acts as an extension of the Main and State Street District, integrating a variety and mix of uses that are focused on service, office, and residential. Additional building setbacks along First Street assist in balancing the narrow street section along First Street.

The Edith Avenue District continues to focus on residential uses with some mixed-uses elements that transition from the adjacent Main and State Street District.

The Main and State Street District continues to be the focal point of Downtown activity with a balanced mix of service, office, retail, restaurant, and residential uses.

The San Antonio Avenue District is focused on office uses with some mixed-uses that both support and act as transitional areas to the Main and State Street District.

Early in the visioning process, the parking plazas were identified as opportunity sites that could accommodate new development in the Downtown. These opportunity sites have the potential to be the catalysts for enhancing the overall economic vitality and vibrancy of Downtown. Future land uses identified as appropriate for the parking plazas include, a hotel, live theater, office space, and mixed-use parking structures with above or below grade parking.

To continue enhancing the built environment in the Downtown, the Plan calls for clearly-defined, individual, and unique architecture styles for new development. Boxy architecture, blank walls, minimal articulation, lack of color, and fake detailing are all elements of concern that were heard from the community. New development within the Downtown should also respect its existing character and scale. New development proposals should provide a strong pedestrian scale, utilizing quality materials, fenestration, color, and other elements that clearly define and are clearly linked to their architectural style. Moreover, massing of buildings needs to be articulated horizontally to maintain the pattern of 25 – 50-foot building widths that are historically found downtown. For multiple-story structures, buildings should be designed and massed to minimize the appearance of upper stories by incorporation of techniques that are identified in the Plan.

Community feedback on appropriate height for buildings was the most divided, especially for buildings along Main and State Street. There was however, ample support to limit the building height in the First Street District, Edith District, and San Antonio District to a maximum of three stories. Along First Street, the third story would be required to step back from the second story. The Vision Plan recommends adjusting the height requirements in these districts to reflect current industry height standards for office, hotel, residential and mixed-use buildings.

A key element of a successful downtown is its ability to exhibit a sense of place, and this is vital to how the downtowns of today function. If Downtown Los Altos is to be a more vibrant place there



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needs to be opportunities for people to interact and socialize with their neighbors, to recreate, and dine, as well as shop. The Plan incorporates concepts for achieving these “gathering or public” spaces in a variety of ways

The “Downtown Dining Hub” was envisioned as a central activity and dining hub within Downtown located between 2nd and 3rd Streets and on Main and State Streets. The Plan encourages the City to work with interested local businesses to integrate outdoor dining parklets along the street frontage of a business within these areas. In select locations, parklets would expand the sidewalk into the adjacent parking spaces. Outdoor dining could also be provided on the adjacent central plaza. Restaurants and cafés could provide outdoor seating and dining in the parklets or on the plaza without having to provide additional parking. This would incentivize restaurants to locate to this area of town and help attract the additional dining options that are desired by the community.

Past planning efforts for the Downtown noted the benefits of a centralized network of paseos intended to foster an integrated pedestrian network through the Main and State Street District while also helping to create a greater sense of place. The locations of these paseos are generally indicated on the vision plan, but could actually be located anywhere along the block where there are interested property owners.

Activity nodes are recommended and help support unique day and night-time activities within the Downtown to help enhance vibrancy and the sense of place. Instead of being scattered about the Downtown, the activity nodes should be focused on the Main and State Street area. The nodes can provide small event spaces for live music, art exhibition, fire pits, or other spaces for interactive activities.

A variety of other enhancements and improvements to the Downtown are noted in the Plan. These include seeking opportunities for public art to help enhance the experience of visitors to the Downtown and they also provide the Community with unique ways to express itself in a variety of mediums.

A roundabout at the Edith Avenue, Main Street, and San Antonio Road intersection had been previously discussed by the community as part of past planning efforts. This concept continues to be supported by the community and has been included in the Plan. The Plan also calls for shared streets – the infamous “woonerfs”, which are prominent feature in the Cities of Europe. A shared street is a pedestrian-focused street that is flexible, allowing for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation. The street design appears more like a plaza, with pavers on drive lanes and sidewalks, and sidewalk delineated with bollards, colored pavers, and street furniture instead of traditional curbs. Their flexibility allows them to be converted to car-free streets for events. There was strong community support for a pedestrian bridge and connecting existing Public Parking Plaza 3 across San Antonio Road to the library at the Civic Center. The plan calls for the future design of a pedestrian bridge to



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be in keeping with the overall village character of Downtown in terms of design and features, and should be designed to accommodate ADA access.

The Downtown has long benefitted from the proximity and availability of public parking serving the area. However, even with this ready supply, there have been efforts to evaluate, enhance, and manage the supply of parking of late. The plan calls for continued efforts to enhance and manage the parking supply and includes recommendations, based on the economic analysis and community input, for new off-street parking standards that are more suited to parking situations that are more appropriate for a Downtown. In addition, recent trends of decreasing private automobile use coupled with rideshare services such as Lyft and Uber, and ongoing development of autonomous vehicles share in the justification of modified parking requirements.

Implementation

The Downtown Vision Plan will be implemented over the long-term. The plan will be implemented through both public and private investment. To assist and focus implementation efforts, the plan components have been categorized into three phases in response to community priorities, costs, and the goal of adding vitality to downtown. If phase 2 or 3 items can be funded and parking provided, they could be moved to an earlier phase. The implementation Phases are as follows:

Phase 1: Short-Term (1-5 Years)

- Land use and parking policy recommendations
- Height recommendations
- Primary entry features and elements
- “Downtown Dining Hub”
- Bicycle enhancements
- Parking management recommendations
- Neighborhood connections – Lower cost improvements such as signage and crossing enhancements.

Phase 2: Mid-Term (5-10 Years)

- Parking facilities (above or below ground facilities)
- Downtown Central Plaza Interim Vision (Parking Plaza 5)
- Façade improvements and renovations along San Antonio Road
- Activity nodes
- Shared streets (2nd and 3rd Street)
- Affordable housing



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Phase 3: Long-Term (10-20 Years)

- Parking facilities
- Downtown Plaza Long-Term Vision
- Roundabout
- Pedestrian bridge connection to Civic Center
- Paseos
- Live theater (Parking Plaza 2)
- Hotel (Parking Plaza 2)
- Office (Parking Plaza 3)

The City Council's adoption of the Downtown Vision Plan will be the final step in this process.

As noted near the beginning of this reports, the Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan, while not a regulatory document, will guide change over the long term for Downtown Los Altos and sets the stage for future regulatory documents the City elects to implement or change. This plan will add to the other tools available to the community, decision makers, and staff as it manages future change in the Downtown. Those Cities that have planned for change are best able to address it and with the adoption of the Plan, Los Altos will be in a position manage future change as it comes to the Downtown.

Options

- 1) Adopt the Los Altos Downtown Vision Plan

Advantages: Completes process and starts the implementation plan

Disadvantages: Does not allow for additional public input on the plan document itself

- 2) Direct that one joint meeting among the Commissions and one additional Community Meeting be held before bringing the Plan back for adoption

Advantages: Allows for further input from the Community on the Plan

Disadvantages: Delays adoption and implementation of the Plan for a couple of months

Recommendation

The staff recommends Option 2.



City of Los Altos
DOWNTOWN VISION

DOWNTOWN
VISION PLAN

MAY 2018





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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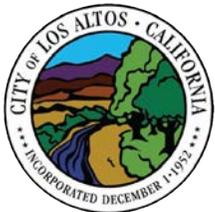
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ECONOMIC AND FISCAL EVALUATION

COMMUNITY OUTREACH SUMMARIES



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1 - INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The City of Los Altos initiated the preparation of a Downtown Vision Plan (Vision Plan) to help shape the future of Downtown Los Altos. The Vision Plan effort is a community based, visioning and guidance tool that was developed through a robust community engagement process.

The purpose of the Vision Plan is to provide the Los Altos community with a vision for the future of the Downtown triangle to guide future growth and development over the next 20 years. This Vision Plan acts as the guiding document for development of the Downtown, maintaining the community's history, values, and desired intensity of development into a unique, vibrant village that exemplifies the exceptional character and qualities of Los Altos.



Main Street today, looking east.

DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN AREA

The Vision Plan Area, commonly known as the Downtown Triangle, encompasses nearly 70 acres and is bound on the north by Edith Avenue, to the east by San Antonio Road, to the west by the Foothill Expressway, and on the south where San Antonio Road and the Foothill Expressway meet. Figures 1 and 2 shows the location of the Vision Plan area and its location within the City of Los Altos in proximity to adjacent cities.



Figure 1: Vision Plan Area, Regional Location

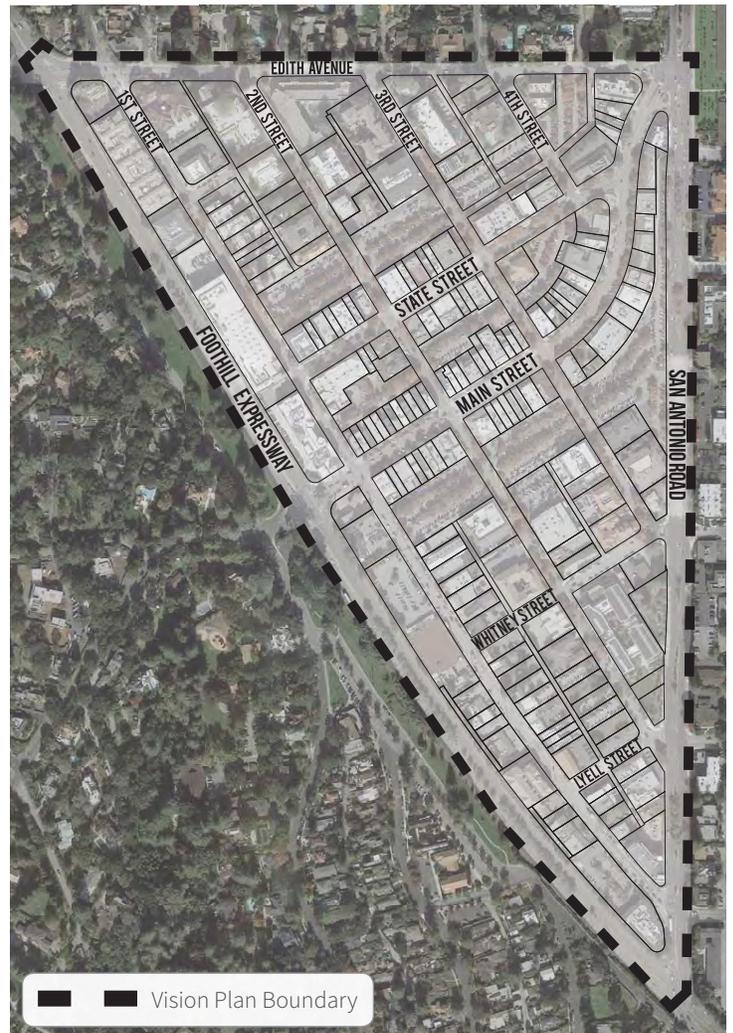


Figure 2: Downtown Vision Plan Area

HISTORY OF THE DOWNTOWN

The history of Downtown Los Altos is one that is closely tied to the extension of the Southern Pacific Railroad down the San Francisco Peninsula at the turn of the 20th Century. Located in close proximity to the City of San Jose and Stanford University and coupled with the area's natural beauty, the Downtown area soon became a desirable place to live and, by 1911, contained a number of homes and offices. The first business on Main Street was Eschenbruechers Hardware Store located at 316 Main Street, which later housed the town's Post office. In 1909, the two-story Shoup Building was completed at the corner of Main and Second Streets. One of the most significant buildings in Downtown is the Los Altos Railroad Station, located at 288 First Street. Built in 1913 for the Southern Pacific, the railroad was the driving force for development of the City of Los

Altos. By the 1950's through 1960's, Downtown Los Altos continued to evolve and became a full service Downtown, providing for the needs of the community and surrounding areas.

Many of these original buildings are still in existence today, some identified on the City's Historic Resources Inventory, and other eligible for the National Register. These buildings help to accentuate the unique character of Downtown Los Altos and should be an inspiration to inform future development in Downtown.



The Los Altos Railroad Station built in 1913, a Designated City Landmark.

OTHER PLANNING DOCUMENTS

A number of other planning efforts and documents contribute to the ongoing evolution and development of Downtown Los Altos.

- General Plan;
- Zoning Ordinance;
- Affordable Housing Ordinance;
- Climate Action Plan;
- Downtown Design Plan;
- Downtown Design Guidelines;
- Downtown Land Use and Economic Revitalization Plans;
- Downtown Opportunity Study; and
- Downtown Parking Management Plan.



Two-story Shoup Building completed in 1909, with the old Eschenbruecher Hardware Store building to the left (green awning).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

This Vision Plan reflects the community’s preferred vision for the future of Downtown. The community’s preferred plan evolved after an extensive outreach process that included a broad spectrum of community engagement opportunities including stakeholder meetings, community group meetings, community workshops, pop-up workshops at community functions, committee meetings, and City Council meetings. In addition to in-person meetings, the community was contacted through mailed and emailed postcards, a project website was prepared and two online questionnaires were conducted at key stages of the community engagement process to provide residents with alternative methods of providing input on their vision for the future of Downtown and ensure that all who wanted to engage in the process were given the opportunity. In total, over 25 events and 2 online questionnaires were undertaken during the community engagement process.



Timeline graphic displaying outreach process.

Many key themes were identified by the community that are represented in the preferred vision plan and the four alternative scenarios leading to the preferred plan. The following highlights the attributes that the community was collectively most supportive of:

Supported Key Attributes:

- Preserve the existing unique character of Downtown Los Altos.
- Increase the activity and vitality of downtown during the day and evening hours.
- Encourage a variety of local dining opportunities including a greater variety of restaurants and outdoor dining.
- Include plazas that provide a central area for the community to congregate, places and activities for youth, and outdoor dining.
- Strengthen the pedestrian friendly and walkability of downtown with wider sidewalks, shared streets, activity nodes and paseos and encourages foot traffic that can support local business.
- Incorporate opportunities for a live theater, hotel, office, affordable housing, and mixed use with residential.
- Enhance bicycle safety and access to and through the Downtown area.
- Highlight entry features into the Downtown area with public art.
- Strengthen pedestrian connection to the Civic Center and possibly at Lincoln Park with a pedestrian overcrossing.
- Increase parking access and efficiency in Downtown through signage and conveniently placed parking areas, above ground and below ground parking structures.



Los Altos Community Center workshop.



Los Altos farmers market pop-up workshop.

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2 - CHANGING NATURE OF DOWNTOWN AND ECONOMICS

CHANGING NATURE OF DOWNTOWNS AND ECONOMICS

Downtowns at their very essence are the heart of any community. In years past, downtowns have provided a centralized location for meeting a variety of community needs and services, such as working, shopping, dining, entertainment and, in some cases, living. Downtown Los Altos has served as the centralized location for meeting the needs of the Los Altos community and that of the nearby Town of Los Altos Hills since as early as the 1950s. However, in more recent years, the nature of downtowns across the state have been evolving due in part to ongoing macroeconomic challenges as well as development policy restrictions at the local level. Some of these challenges and restrictions include:

- Growing competition between municipalities to attract businesses;
- Rise of e-commerce sales reducing the need for brick and mortar stores;
- Lack of building flexibility in older building stock desired by contemporary retail tenants; and
- More prescriptive zoning and parking regulations inhibiting incremental change.



A centralized location in Downtown Los Altos, at the Main and Second Street intersection.

ECONOMICS

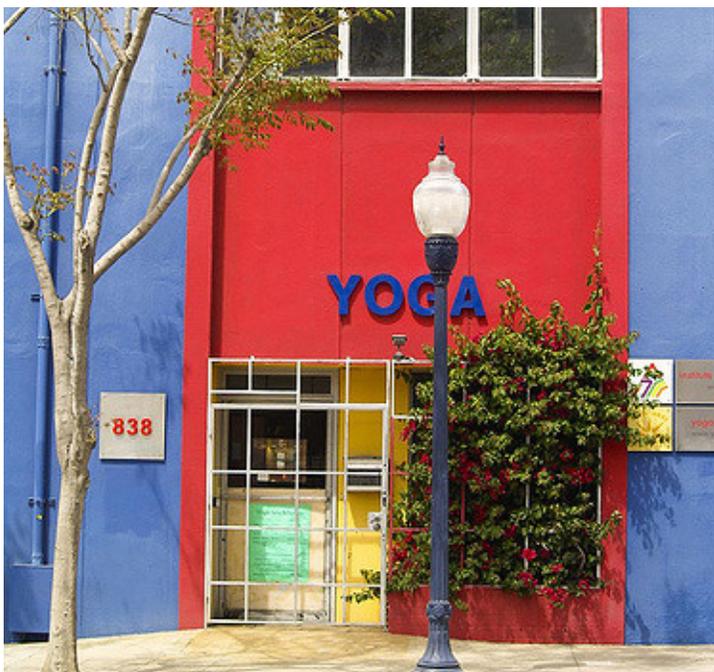
As part of the Vision Plan effort, an economic and fiscal evaluation was conducted to determine an Economic Vitality Strategy appropriate for Downtown Los Altos into the future. This strategy provided the underlying foundation for the Vision Scenario Alternatives that were developed, shared with the community, and ultimately resulted in this Vision Plan.

The following summarized policy recommendations were utilized as part of the Vision Plan process and carried forward within this document based on feedback received from the community. These recommendations are intended to encourage smaller scale incremental change that allows Downtown Los Altos to modernize while keeping the essence of its village character as it continues to evolve.

These include:

- Allowing contemporary service uses (e.g., fitness studios and day spas, yoga and tai chi studios, martial arts and kinder gyms, wine bars, and beer gardens) in the Downtown core;
- Updating parking requirements;
- Incentivizing Specific Uses with reduced parking requirements;
- Establishing an in-lieu parking fee;
- Enhancing parking management; and
- Modifying building heights.

These policy recommendations are further detailed and explained within Chapter 5, Land Use, and Chapter 6, Circulation and Parking. The full version of the Economic and Fiscal Evaluation can be found within the Appendix of this document.



Studios and gyms are favorable for downtowns and contribute to an active, healthy community.



The Funk Zone in Santa Barbara, CA allows more contemporary uses, like the wine bar shown above, and beer gardens.

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3 - THE COMMUNITY'S VISION

THE COMMUNITY'S VISION

DOWNTOWN VISION STATEMENT

Looking into the future, Downtown Los Altos continues to embody the village character long enjoyed by the community while the economic vitality of its businesses has flourished. As the center of the City, Downtown has evolved into a greater focal point of activity, providing new living, working, and entertainment options for all age and income segments of the community. The centrally-located public plaza between Main and State Streets is the new anchor of Downtown, providing a venue for accommodating events, outdoor dining, and other community activities. Whether traveling to Downtown by walking, bicycling, or a range of future vehicles, visibility and access has been improved through enhanced signage, wider sidewalks, landscape improvements, and bicycle connectivity on 2nd and 3rd Streets. In essence, Downtown Los Altos has become a community destination, while at the same time maintaining its roots as a nostalgic village nestled at the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

VISION ELEMENTS

The City of Los Altos is committed to a community-focused, economically viable, and village-scaled Downtown through:

- **Maintaining the village character** unique to Los Altos while also allowing small, incremental change through implementation of complementary land use and parking policies
- **Enhancing economic vitality** through expanded dining, shopping, service, office, hospitality, and residential uses accessible to the entire community
- **Developing adequate parking facilities** and implementing parking strategies that continue to meet the current and future parking needs of businesses, residents, and visitors
- **Utilizing existing parking plazas** in a manner that enhances the village character while also meeting the working, living, entertainment, and hospitality desires of the community
- **Enhancing safety and connectivity** to the adjacent Civic Center, Lincoln Park, and surrounding neighborhoods through targeted multi-modal transportation forms for pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles
- **Enlivening the streetscape character** by providing new opportunities for wider sidewalks, outdoor dining, seating, landscaping, public art, paseos, and activity nodes
- **Creating a new, centrally-located public plaza(s)** to enhance the sense of place and create a hub of activity for community events, informal activities, and outdoor dining
- **Expanding the variety of residential housing types** to meet the current and future needs of all residents of Los Altos

Figure 3: Downtown Vision Plan



LEGEND

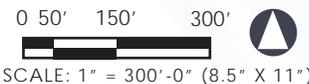
- ① AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- ② UNDERGROUND PARKING STRUCTURE WITH OFFICE
- ③ DOWNTOWN CENTRAL PLAZA (SHORT-TERM)
- ④ DOWNTOWN PLAZA (LONG-TERM)
- ⑤ PRIMARY ENTRY FEATURES
- ⑥ ABOVE GROUND PARKING STRUCTURE WRAPPED WITH OFFICE/COMMERCIAL ON GROUND FLOOR
- ⑦ OFFICE USES
- ⑧ ROUNDABOUT
- ⑨ FACADE IMPROVEMENTS AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
- ⑩ PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
- ⑪ SHARED STREETS
- ⑫ LIVE THEATER
- ⑬ BOUTIQUE HOTEL

DISTRICT LEGEND

- FIRST STREET DISTRICT
- EDITH AVENUE RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
- MAIN AND STATE STREET DISTRICT (DOWNTOWN CORE)
- SAN ANTONIO ROAD DISTRICT (LOWER TRIANGLE)

DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN

Figure 3 demonstrates the intent of the Downtown Vision Statement and illustrates key concepts, such as the Downtown Plaza, shared streets, streetscape enhancements, and an improved multimodal circulation network. Refer to Chapter 10 for the complete Vision Poster.



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4 - LAND USE

LAND USE

DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS

This Vision Plan views the Downtown area as a unified whole. However, during the due diligence and community outreach process, a number of separate areas within the Downtown area began to emerge based on similar land use characteristics and the feedback received. These separate areas, or districts, include Main and State Streets, First Street, San Antonio Road, and Edith Avenue. Figure 4 identifies the location of the districts within the Vision Plan Area.



Figure 4: Vision Plan Area



Main Street looking northwest.

MAIN AND STATE STREET DISTRICT

The Main and State Street District continues to be the focal point of Downtown activity with a balanced mix of service, office, retail, restaurant, and boutique hotel uses.

Envisioned attributes include:

- Primary retail, restaurant, and entertainment destination;
- Opportunity for residential and office above retail;
- New Downtown Plaza(s) act as a focal point;
- Enhanced pedestrian-oriented streetscapes with street trees, landscaping, benches, streetlights, bicycle racks, and activity nodes;
- Outdoor dining opportunities within “Downtown Dining Hub”, Downtown Plaza(s), and paseos; and
- Parking provided on-street or in lots or structures directly adjacent to District.



First Street looking north.

FIRST STREET DISTRICT

The First Street District acts an extension of the Main and State Street District, integrating a variety and mix of uses more focused on service, office, and residential. Additional building setbacks and streetscape improvements along First Street help balance the narrower street section of First Street.

Envisioned attributes include:

- Variety of uses – service, office, and residential-focused with a few retail shops and restaurants;
- Enhanced intersections with accent paving, crosswalks, and landscaping;
- Signage that welcomes visitors to Downtown Los Altos and directs people to Downtown plazas and parking areas;
- Parking provided on-street or in lots or structures;
- Tree-lined streets; and
- Enhanced gateway entry elements.



3rd Street looking south.

SAN ANTONIO ROAD DISTRICT

The San Antonio Road District is focused on office uses with some mixed-uses and restaurants that both support and act as transitional areas to the Main and State Street District.

Envisioned attributes include:

- Primary focus on office uses, with new opportunities for small tech start-up spaces with sufficient off-street parking;
- Restaurant and neighborhood-supporting uses enhance the District and act as transitional areas to Main and State Street;
- Performing arts theater, a central entertainment venue for the community;
- Additional small, boutique hotel serving local businesses and visitors;
- Plaza spaces anchor new uses and support the Main and State Street District;
- Tree-lined streets; and
- Gateway entry element.



Existing three-story, standalone residential on 2nd Street.

EDITH AVENUE DISTRICT

The Edith Avenue District continues to be focused on residential uses with some small office uses transitioning elements from the adjacent Main and State Street District.

Envisioned attributes include:

- Both market-rate and affordable residential uses that support Downtown vitality;
- Neighborhood-serving uses as transitional areas to Main and State Street; and
- Tree-lined streets.

COMMERCIAL LAND USES IN A DOWNTOWN – MAINTAINING MARKET FLEXIBILITY

As Downtown Los Altos continues to evolve, the City should be mindful of the construction and land use flexibility needed to address ongoing market trends and evolution of commercial land uses. Ensuring greater flexibility will allow for the adaptability of existing buildings, allowing new uses or tenants to occupy spaces, and will ultimately allow for the continued, long-term success of Downtown. Below are some more recent examples of building characteristics that contemporary commercial land uses demand:

- Building widths of 25 to 50 feet;
- Building depths of 40 to 50 feet; and
- Ground level plate heights of 16 to 18 feet.

The current retail storefront needs of shorter building depths create an opportunity and a challenge for some of the older buildings in Downtown that are closer to 100 feet deep. In some locations, this provides the opportunity to have two business in one building with one business fronting on Main or State Street and one business fronting a plaza. These existing longer buildings can also be divided to provide multiple business along paseos. The extra depth can also be used to access residential or office uses located above the commercial building.

Older buildings in downtown typically have lower ground-level plate heights or ceiling heights. This is a deterrent to attracting retail and restaurants to these buildings. As older buildings redevelop and remodel, raising these ceiling heights will give the downtown more flexibility to adapt to the changing market demands.



Building design should ensure flexibility to be able to adapt to changing market demands.

HOUSING – MARKET RATE AND AFFORDABLE

The inclusion of additional market rate, workforce, and affordable housing units within the Downtown was supported by the broader community in order to provide a wider variety of housing options, enhance vitality, and add day and nighttime activity. Workforce housing, while not recognized by the State Affordability Law requirements, is generally targeted at those households making 160% of median area income. Parking Plaza 8 is identified as a potential affordable housing site. While there are additional housing opportunities above retail in the Main and State Street District, emphasis on new housing is likely to be focused on on private properties within the First Street District. It should be acknowledged that in certain portions of the Downtown area, particularly the Main and State Street District, the construction of affordable housing units is unlikely due to the fragmented ownership pattern, small lots, and lack of ability to provide on-site parking for a project. If housing units were developed within the First Street District, it is likely they would be market rate units due to the high cost of construction and would be built to conform with the Zoning Ordinance requirements in place at that time. To encourage construction of a greater variety of housing options within the Downtown, the City should consider encouraging alternative design strategies, such as workforce housing (affordable by design) and/or minimum unit sizing.



Example of affordable housing in a Downtown setting in Santa Barbara, CA.

OPPORTUNITY SITES

Early on in the visioning process, the existing parking plazas were identified as opportunity sites that could accommodate new development within Downtown. These opportunity sites have the potential to be the catalysts for enhancing the overall economic vitality and vibrancy of Downtown. The City is well-positioned to help spur reinvestment and attract key uses to the Downtown by utilizing these city owned parking plazas. Figure 5 identifies those parking plazas envisioned as opportunity sites.

- *Affordable Housing:* Parking Plaza 8 is identified as an ideal site to introduce new affordable housing within Downtown. Through a public-private partnership, this new housing would infuse the Downtown with additional residents to add to and enhance vitality and day/nighttime activity.
- *Hospitality:* A new hotel use is identified for Parking Plaza 2. In addition to the existing hotel Downtown, this new hotel could provide a wide range of benefits to the community including enhanced vitality, increased nighttime activity, and provide additional revenue to the City.
- *Entertainment:* A live theater is identified on Parking Plaza 2. This use would be both a daytime and evening draw from the community and elsewhere that would support complementary businesses, such as pre-event dining.
- *Office:* New office uses are identified for Parking Plazas 1, 3, and 7. Offices would enhance and increase local jobs, enhance the daytime activity downtown, and further support other local businesses in the area. Office could also help to fund fair share portions of new parking facilities.

- *Parking Consolidation:* New parking facilities were identified on Parking Plaza 1-3 and 7-8. Consolidating surface parking into above and below ground structures is a key component to balancing the current and future parking needs of Downtown.
- *Parking Plaza 9:* Partial City ownership of Parking Plaza 9 could provide an opportunity for a public-private partnership for new development in support of this Vision Plan.

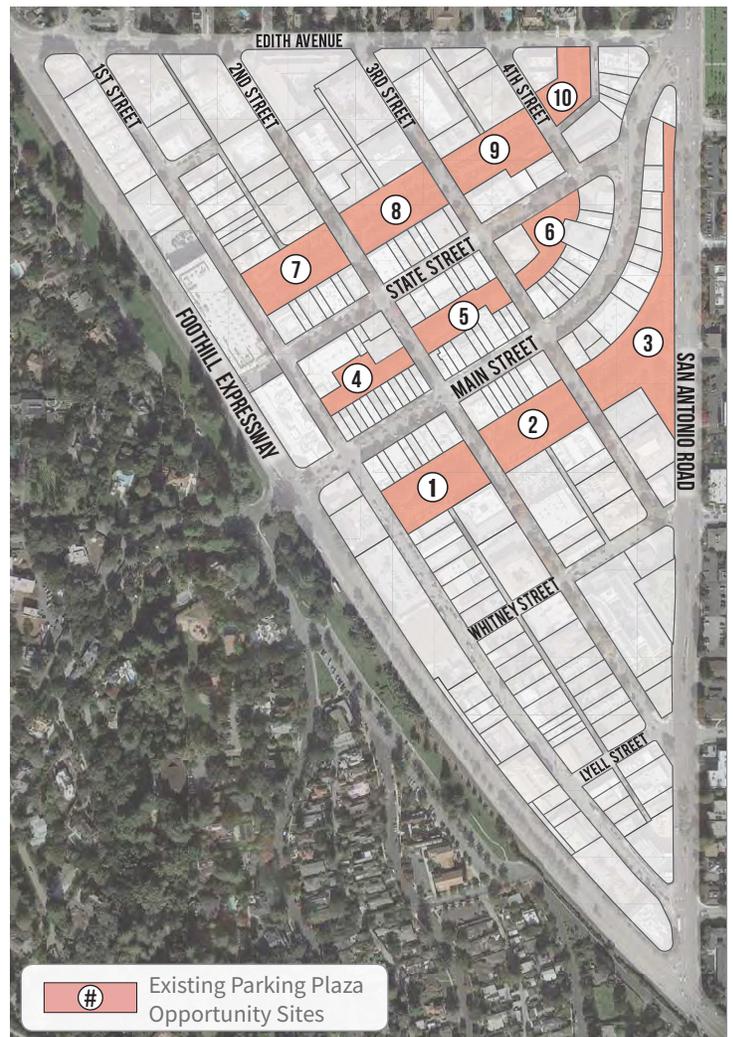


Figure 5: Existing Parking Plaza Opportunity Sites

LAND USE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following Land Use Policy Recommendations support the enhancement of vitality within the Downtown area. Amendments to the City’s existing Zoning Ordinance and the General Plan, or the creation of a detailed plan, like a Comprehensive or Specific Plan, would be required to implement these Land Use Policy Recommendations.

1. Allowing Contemporary Service Uses on Main and State Streets such as:

- Fitness studios and day spas;
- Yoga and Tai Chi studios;
- Martial arts and kinder gyms;
- Wine bars and beer gardens;
- Allow office and/or residential lobby space on the ground floor with the exception of the first 40 feet in depth for the current retail/restaurant spaces with frontage on Main and State Streets; and
- Prohibit office uses for frontage on the Downtown Central Plaza(s).

2. Modify/Maintain Building Height Allowances

- Allow up to three (3) stories, or 40- to 45-feet, with setback at 3rd Floor along San Antonio Road and First Street Districts (see Chapter 5); and
- Maintain current height allowances within the Main and State Streets and Edith Avenue Districts.



5 - BUILT ENVIRONMENT

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

DESIGN

The community of Los Altos values clearly-defined and individual architectural styles for new development within the Downtown area. Boxy architecture, blank walls, minimal articulation, lack of color, and low-quality materials are all elements of concern heard from the community. The City should ensure that, as new development or remodels are proposed within the Downtown area, a mix of architectural styles with quality detailing and articulation are provided. The existing, robust Design Review process based on the City’s Downtown Design Guidelines, provides guidance and direction to projects, focusing on architectural integrity, pedestrian scale, high quality materials, and generous landscaping. To ensure new development and remodels are consistent with the desired level of design quality, the City should continue to utilize the existing Design Review process, but should ensure that both the existing Downtown Design Guidelines and Design Review process are adequately capturing the quality of development desired by the community. In instances where larger projects or projects on prominent sites are proposed, the City could consider utilizing a design firm tasked specifically to make recommendations on a development proposal in support of the Design Review process.



Downtown building facades, with windows and architectural details create pedestrian scale.



Existing residential development incorporates setbacks, articulation, and features that enhance the overall design.

BUILDING SCALE AND HEIGHT

SCALE

Future development within Downtown should respect its existing character and scale. As new development occurs within Downtown, the ground level of a building should provide a strong pedestrian scale, utilizing quality materials, fenestration, color, and other elements of a clearly-defined architectural style. Moreover, massing of buildings needs to be articulated horizontally to maintain the pattern of 25 – 50-foot building widths historically found Downtown. Where new development occurs on wider lots, the street facing façade should be articulated and massed to reflect this historical pattern. In instances where a multi-story building is proposed, buildings should be designed and massed to minimize the appearance of upper stories. This can be accomplished with building articulation or setbacks/massing, balconies, architectural elements, and use of materials and

colors. The existing Downtown Design Guidelines and design findings require these elements to approve any project proposed within the Downtown.

In other areas of Downtown, use of a Floor Area Ratio (FAR), in conjunction with height, may be appropriate to ensure Downtown appropriate massing and scale in new developments.



(Before) Existing development at Main Street and Second Street.



(After) Conceptual development that occur on Main Street, maintaining Downtown character and scale.

HEIGHT

The community was most divided on the topic of building heights along Main and State Street. There was however, ample support to limit the building height in the First Street District, Edith District, and San Antonio District to a maximum of three stories. In both the First Street and San Antonio Districts, the third story would be required to step back from the second story. The Vision Plan recommends adjusting the height requirements in these districts to reflect current industry height standards for office, hotel, residential, and mixed-use buildings for a three-story structure:

First Street District and San Antonio District

- Standalone Residential: Maximum of 40 feet
- Standalone Office or Hotel: Maximum of 45 feet
- Mixed-Use: Maximum of 45 feet

Edith District

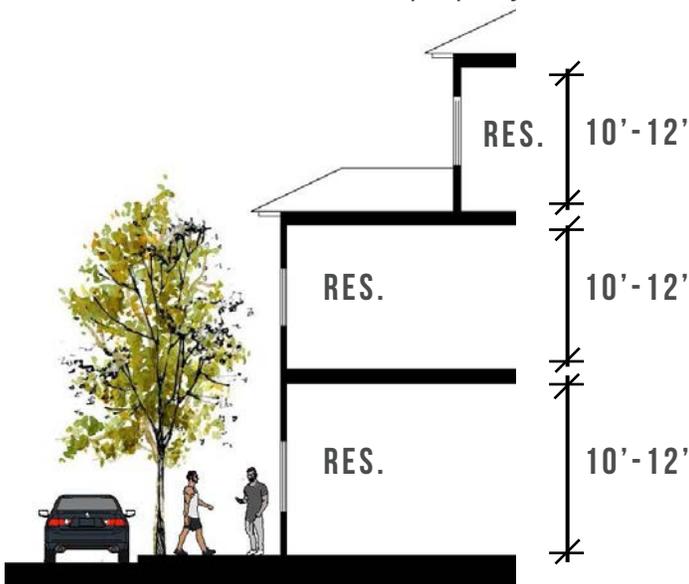
- Standalone Residential: Maximum of 40 feet

On Main and State Streets the community preferences were split primarily between 2-story and 3-story building height maximums. There were also a few community members wanting to allow higher 4-story buildings. The Vision Plan recommends limiting the building height on Main and State Street to a maximum of two stories and that height requirements be adjusted to reflect the current industry standards for two story buildings:

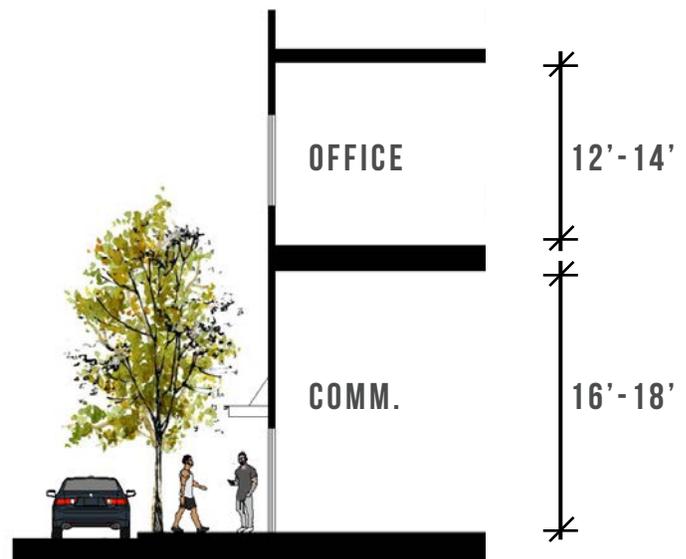
Main and State Street District

- Mixed-Use: Maximum of 35 feet

The City may want to consider allowing for increased building height within the Main and State Street District in the future in instances where a property owner chooses to consolidate multiple parcels.



Example of standalone residential building that could occur on First Street or Edith Avenue.



Example of mixed-use building that could occur on State or Main Street.

QUALITY PLACEMAKING

Placemaking is vital to how today’s downtowns function. Attracting people to Downtown Los Altos needs to include opportunities to interact and socialize with neighbors, to recreate and dine, as well as shop. The following elements will help create a sense of place and community destination in Downtown.

ENTRY FEATURES

Primary and secondary entries were identified at the following intersections within Downtown:

Primary Entries

- Main Street/Foothill Expressway
- Main Street/San Antonio Road

Secondary Entries

- 1st Street/Edith Avenue
- 1st Street/San Antonio Road
- Parking Plaza 3/San Antonio Road

Both primary and secondary entries should be enhanced through the use of intersection treatments, such as paving materials and signage, as well as unique accent landscaping to denote these entry points into the Downtown. For the primary entries, use of public art should also be integrated to clearly define and identify these prominent Downtown entries.



Existing Primary Entry to Downtown at Main Street, San Antonio Road, and Edith Avenue intersection.



Existing Primary Entry to Downtown at Main Street and the Foothill Expressway intersection.

“DOWNTOWN DINING HUB”

The “Downtown Dining Hub” was envisioned as a central activity and dining hub within the Downtown located between 2nd and 3rd Streets and on Main and State Streets as seen in Figure 6. This would include properties facing the streets and facing the central plaza space. To this end, the City should work with interested local businesses to integrate outdoor dining parklets along the street frontage of a business within these areas. In select locations, parklets would expand the sidewalk into the adjacent parking spaces. Outdoor dining could also be provided on the adjacent central plaza. Restaurants and cafés could provide outdoor seating and dining in the parklets or on the plaza without having to provide additional parking. This would incentivize restaurants to locate to this area of town and help attract the additional dining options that are desired by the community.

To ensure ongoing delivery and service to these businesses, the City should consider providing rideshare (Uber/Lyft) drop-off points and identify key areas within the “Downtown Dining Hub” that would continue to allow for these vehicular functions to occur, as discussed further in Chapter 7.

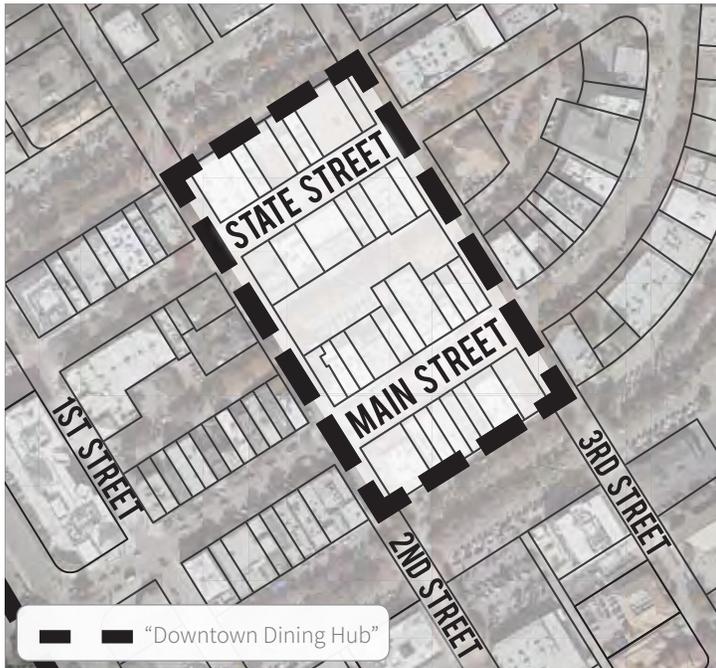


Figure 6: “Downtown Dining Hub” Area



Outdoor dining and seating areas create a vibrant street character.

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS AND RENOVATION

Existing buildings located on the south/southeast side of Main Street, currently backing onto San Antonio Road, were identified as having the potential to be enhanced through facade improvements to the existing buildings fronting San Antonio Road. This concept was supported to provide a greater Downtown presence along San Antonio Road in conjunction with the public plaza and pedestrian overcrossing connecting to the Civic Center area. Where feasible, the City should support the ongoing enhancement of these existing buildings facing San Antonio Road, allowing for current businesses to have two-sided building entries, or allow for the creation of two separate business spaces that would be more in keeping with contemporary tenant demands.



Existing facades along San Antonio Road should be improved to enhance Downtown’s visibility.

PASEO NETWORK

Carried forward from past planning efforts, a centralized network of paseos is intended to foster an integrated pedestrian network through the Main and State Street District while also helping to create a greater sense of place. Paseos could include unique paving, landscaping, lighting, and public art to enhance the Downtown character. The locations of these paseos are generally indicated on the vision plan, but could be located anywhere along the block where there are interested property owners. Paseos would give properties the opportunity to have business frontage along the paseo, as well as street frontage and would strengthen connections between parking facilities and activity areas, to Main and State Streets.



Pedestrian paseo with business frontage, outdoor dining, and accent paving.

ACTIVITY NODES

Activity nodes are included to support unique day and night-time activities within the Downtown area and enhance vibrancy and sense of place. Rather than be located throughout Downtown, placement of activity nodes should be focused on the Main and State Street area. Activity nodes could include small event spaces for live music, art exhibition, fire pits, or other spaces for interactive activities.

PUBLIC ART

Public art located at primary downtown entries and throughout Downtown was strongly supported by the community. As consideration of public art occurs in the future, the City should consider art that is representative of the history and character of the community. Public art within Downtown could be expressed in the form of mosaics, sculptures, bicycle racks, interactive pieces, murals, or other art forms. Interactive public art is a great way to provide opportunities for children and adults alike to play and engage in the downtown experience.



Activity node with fire pit and event space.



Murals contribute to the history and character of the Downtown.



Downtown bicycle racks as forms of public art.



6 - PUBLIC SPACES

PUBLIC SPACES

DOWNTOWN CENTRAL PLAZA SHORT-TERM VISION

The Downtown Central Plaza Short-Term Vision recognizes the Long-Term Plaza Vision as a multi-part undertaking and seeks to address the community’s more immediate vision for a centrally-located, public outdoor space in Downtown Los Altos. As shown in Figure 7, the Short-Term Vision maintains Parking Plazas 4 and 6 for public parking while focusing initial plaza enhancement efforts on Parking Plaza 5. Enhancements for Parking Plaza 5 would create a “community living room” type environment that would include outdoor dining, public seating, pockets of landscaping, play structure(s), and event space(s) that would be flexible to allow for both informal and formal events to occur on an ongoing basis. In conjunction with the Downtown Central Plaza Short-Term Vision, additional parking opportunities would need to be provided elsewhere in the immediate vicinity to offset the loss of parking, such as a parking structure on Parking Plaza 2 or 3, between San Antonio Road and 2nd Street, and/or parking restriping in existing lots. This is further discussed in Chapter 7, Circulation and Parking.



Figure 7: Birdseye Rendering of Downtown Central Plaza Short-Term Vision - Between 2nd and 3rd Street on Parking Plaza 5



(Before) Existing Parking Plaza 5, looking east.



(After) Conceptual Downtown Central Plaza Short-Term Vision at ground level.

DOWNTOWN PLAZA LONG-TERM VISION

The long-term vision for the Downtown Plaza is to extend the “community living room” to also include existing Parking Plazas 4 and 6. The central public outdoor space would extend from First Street to State Street creating a spine of open space and activity areas through the Downtown, as shown in Figure 8.

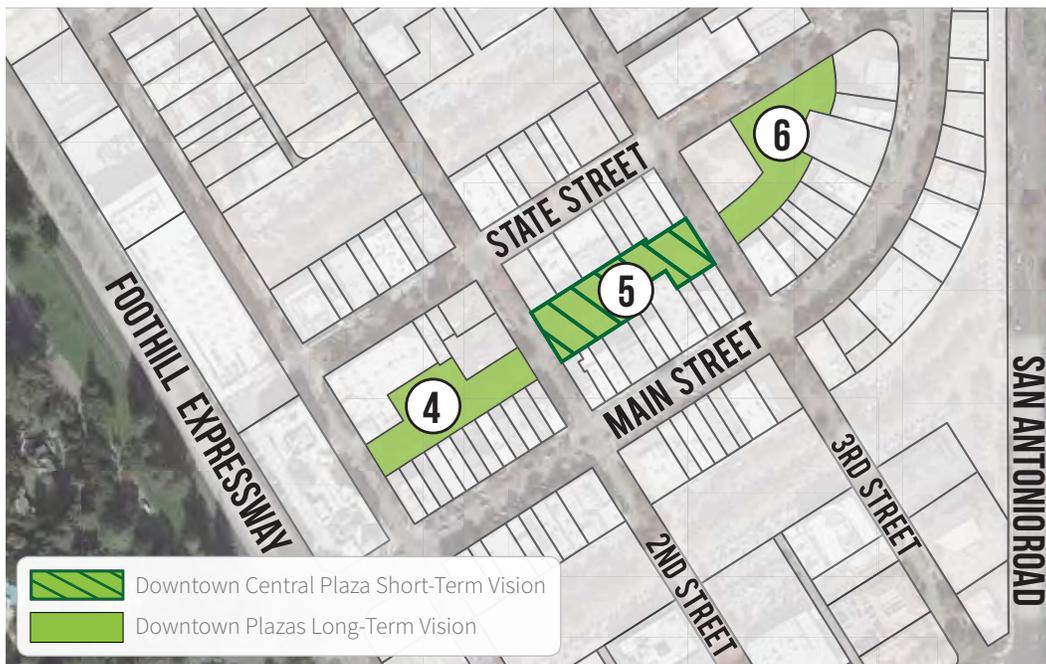


Figure 8: Downtown Plaza Locations for Long-Term Vision

PLAZA FEATURES

Many members of the community expressed interest in specific features they would like to see integrated into the Downtown Plaza(s). These are expressed below as key elements that should be incorporated into the Downtown Plaza Short-Term Vision and/or the Downtown Plaza Long-Term Vision.

PROGRAMMED PLAZAS

As the Downtown plazas are developed over the long-term, individual programs or themes are envisioned for each public plaza that would provide elements for all age groups. For example, Parking Plaza 5 could be programmed to focus on families and outdoor dining, a playground, and a flexible event space; Parking Plaza 4 could be programmed for adults with a beer garden, bocce ball courts, and fire pits; and Parking Plaza 6 could be programmed for teens with ample seating and benches, concrete ping pong tables, and phone-charging stations. Programming for the plazas should also include flexible space to accommodate seasonal and holiday events, such as a concerts or movies in the plaza, farmer's markets, or more specialized events such as holiday-related events.

OUTDOOR DINING

Under existing conditions, outdoor dining is generally limited to a few restaurants and cafés along Main and State Streets. The overall vision for the Downtown plazas provides opportunities to expand outdoor dining into these new public spaces. Outdoor dining is envisioned to be provided by private business or property owners whose buildings back onto the parking plazas. The concept of outdoor dining opening onto the Downtown plazas would allow for families to enjoy a meal at adjacent restaurants while maintaining eyes on children playing nearby within the plaza.



Flexible spaces within a plaza allow for formal and informal events, such as concerts to occur.



Outdoor dining opening onto a plaza.



Example of an activity node in the form of a fire pit, providing a central gathering space within the public realm.



Play structures can attract a wide range of age groups while bringing additional activity to the Downtown.

PLAZA ACTIVITY NODES

A minimum of one activity node should be integrated into the design of the Downtown Central Plazas (Parking Plazas 4-6)h. The vision imagines flexible spaces that can serve a variety of purposes, such as a small event space for live music, art exhibitions, a fire pit, or other interactive activities.

PLAY STRUCTURE

To facilitate accessibility of the Downtown Central Plaza Short-Term Vision by all ages, a play structure should be integrated into the design of the Downtown Plaza. Selection and siting of the play structure should consider ease of accessibility, visibility from nearby restaurants, and accommodating of a range of children's ages and abilities.

SEATING

Ample seating should be provided for public use throughout the plazas. Frequently placed and easily accessible seating is envisioned as separate from outdoor dining seating discussed above.

RESTROOMS

Public restrooms should be provided for the comfort and convenience of Downtown visitors. While no specific location has been identified within this plan, the public restrooms should be conveniently located while not obstructing activities, views, or circulation patterns within the plazas. Public restrooms can also be provided through a public private partnership with adjacent businesses.

TRASH AND RECYCLING

Trash and recycling for businesses backing onto the current parking plazas are currently located throughout the parking plazas. As each Downtown plaza is developed, centralized locations for accommodating the trash and recycling needs of the adjacent businesses should be identified and developed to minimize visual clutter and provide for ease of servicing.



Use of materials and colors helps minimize appearance of a centralized trash enclosure.

TREES AND LANDSCAPING

Trees and landscaping are located throughout the existing parking plazas. Where feasible, trees and landscaping should be integrated with the design of each Downtown Plaza. In instances where new trees and landscaping are to be incorporated, their selection should focus on native, low-water using, and low-maintenance plantings that aid in accentuating the sense of place within Downtown and that of each of the plazas. Small areas of landscaping allowing for informal activities to occur should also be considered when developing the plazas. Plazas should include a balance of green space and paved plaza space.



Pockets of native, low-water using landscaping help inform and frame areas of a plaza.

OTHER PUBLIC PLAZAS

In addition to the central Downtown plaza(s), the integration of two additional public plazas within Downtown were supported by the community. These include a public plaza associated with the future construction of a live theater fronting onto 3rd Street, as well as a linear public plaza connecting the proposed pedestrian overcrossing on San Antonio Road to 2nd Street (see Figure 9). As these plazas are designed and installed, they should include a variety of public amenities such as outdoor dining, seating, landscaping, activity nodes, interactive structures, public art, and/or other amenities that enliven the public realm of Downtown.



Figure 9: Locations of Other Downtown Public Plazas

OTHER DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS

In conjunction with public improvements discussed within this Vision Plan, such as the Downtown Plaza(s), other Downtown improvements are outlined below to support the community's vision.

LIGHTING

Portions of Downtown contain existing street lights that are scaled to the pedestrian. As the Downtown Plaza(s) and other public improvements are implemented, integrating appropriately-scaled lighting will be necessary to ensure safe and well-lit pedestrian spaces. Lighting could include a continuation of the existing street lights, bollard lights, overhead string lights and/or lights wrapped around street trees.

BOLLARDS

Bollards, whether temporary or permanent, may be needed to ensure public safety from vehicular traffic within the Downtown Plaza(s), shared streets, and other public spaces. The need for vehicular access will likely continue to be needed to allow for trash collection, building maintenance, or community events. The installation of temporary bollard infrastructure could also be extended beyond the Downtown Plaza(s) to allow for the closing a greater portion of the Downtown for larger community events.



String lights help frame space and enliven night time events.



Bollards and planters provide a sense of safety and security along Main Street.

PUBLIC WI-FI

Public Wi-Fi networks have become increasingly popular in recent years, particularly in public spaces such as parks and plazas. The City could consider implementing a public Wi-Fi network within the Downtown Plaza(s) to further support the desired community vision and potentially increase the desirability and frequency of visits to Downtown.

ELECTRICITY

Access to electrical outlets continues to be a desirable feature in our daily lives, whether at an airport or local community coffee shop. The City could consider integrating electrical outlets within the Downtown Plaza(s) and/or activity nodes to allow for live music and other events to occur or to potentially increase the desirability and frequency of visits to Downtown.

UTILITIES

Overhead powerlines are currently located throughout the existing parking plazas and other areas of Downtown. It is anticipated that the existing overhead powerlines be relocated or placed underground in certain areas where they may conflict with public improvements or other enhancements outlined within this Vision Plan.



Public Wi-Fi availability is an attractor of people to public spaces.



Recent undergrounding of utilities along First Street has improved the visual aesthetic of this portion of Downtown.



7 - CIRCULATION AND PARKING

CIRCULATION AND PARKING

CIRCULATION CONCEPTS

A number of refinements to the existing circulation within and directly adjacent to Downtown have been included as part of this Vision Plan. These include a roundabout and shared streets as discussed further below.

ROUNDBABOUT

A roundabout at the Edith Avenue, Main Street, and San Antonio Road intersection has been previously discussed by the community as part of previous planning efforts. This concept continues to be supported by the community and has been carried forward. Future design and configuration of the roundabout should ensure efficient access for automobiles while also providing clearly defined, safe, and accessible crossing areas for pedestrians and bicyclists. This asymmetrical, 4-leg intersection is an appropriate candidate for a roundabout. Also, this intersection should be augmented and treated as a primary entrance into Downtown.



Example of a roundabout with native landscaping and accent paving at center.

SHARED STREETS

Shared streets (“woonerfs”) are prominent in Europe and have become increasingly popular within the United States in recent years. A shared street is a pedestrian-focused street that is flexible, allowing for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation. The street design appears more like a plaza, with pavers on drive lanes and sidewalks, and sidewalk delineated with bollards, colored pavers, and street furniture instead of traditional curbs. These streets are flexible in nature, as they can easily be converted to car-free streets for events.

To provide a greater multimodal balance within Downtown and to provide flexible space for community events to occur, shared streets have been included on 2nd Street and 3rd Street (see Figure 10). On 2nd Street, the shared street concept would connect the proposed parking structure and affordable housing on Parking Plaza 7 and 8 to Main Street. On 3rd Street, the shared street concept would connect the live theater on Parking Plaza 2 to State Street. Shared streets should include features such as bollards, benches, planters, unique paving, landscaping, lighting, and/or other features to delineate pedestrian areas, ensure safe and efficient multimodal access for automobiles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

Once shared streets are implemented as described above, the City should consider expanding the shared streets concept onto Main and State Streets or other streets in Downtown to further create a pedestrian-focused core, while still allowing for slowed vehicular and bicycle access. Due to the recent investments on the Main and State, along with the cost of shared streets, this is categorized as a long-term implementation improvement.



Figure 10: Shared Street Locations



Example of a Shared Street.

PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLES

The current configurations and alignments of many Downtown streets enable a comfortable and inviting pedestrian environment. Short block lengths, wide sidewalks, and pedestrian scale encourage walking within the Main and State Street District. As other areas of Downtown are redeveloped or remodeled, extension of wide sidewalks and continuation of pedestrian amenities should be continued to encourage pedestrian circulation.

The community expressed concerns with the bicycle friendliness of Downtown, particularly among the traffic along 1st Street. To this end, 2nd and 3rd Streets provide more intimate, less auto-traveled streets than 1st Street. Bicycle-focused enhancements should be made to 2nd Street and/or 3rd Street, such as signage, pavement markings (sharrows), or, if space allows, separated bicycle lane(s) to facilitate bicycle use to and through Downtown.



Wide, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks on Main Street should be continued elsewhere in Downtown..



Bicycle enhancements should be pursued along 2nd and 3rd Streets to enhance bicycle safety through Downtown.

CIVIC CENTER/NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

Many community members expressed ongoing concerns with easily and safely accessing Downtown from the Civic Center, Lincoln Park, and surrounding neighborhood areas. Community members felt that enhanced pedestrian connections would incentivize them to patronize Downtown more often without needing to get in their car and drive. While the City has begun to implement pedestrian connection improvements from Downtown, such as those across San Antonio Road, additional enhancements should be incorporated at primary pedestrian routes. Improvements could include a pedestrian bridge, flashing pedestrian crossing signs, priority pedestrian signal timing, in-road flashing lights, and colored or otherwise enhanced crosswalks, among others.

Of particular note, there was strong community support for a pedestrian bridge and connecting existing Parking Plaza 3 across San Antonio Road, to the library at the Civic Center. Future design of the pedestrian bridge should be in keeping with the overall village character of Downtown in terms of scale and aesthetics, and should be designed to accommodate ADA access.

Though less of a community priority, a second pedestrian bridge connecting Downtown with Lincoln Park would strengthen the connection to the neighborhoods near Lincoln Park.



Enhanced paving provides clear definition of pedestrian crossings.



Enhanced bicycle and pedestrian safety crossing.

STREETSCAPE

The Downtown streetscapes are a great opportunity to unify the Downtown character with benches, light fixtures, landscaping, paving and wall materials and public art. They also add to creating a desirable and walkable Downtown district.

Main and State Streets were recently improved to include corner bulb-outs at intersections, accent paving, stacked stone walls, increased area for outdoor dining, benches, and public art. The Vision Plan suggests a “Dining Hub” with additional parklets between 2nd and 3rd Streets and incorporating drop off/loading areas for deliveries and car share (Lyft and Uber) access. Activity nodes are also to be introduced in areas where the sidewalk can be expanded like the intersection bulb out areas.

First Street is narrower than Main and State Streets and would benefit from buildings setting back from the sidewalk and introducing planting between buildings and the sidewalk where there is not an active storefront. Wider sidewalks and street furniture should be introduced where feasible. The City should pursue a unified streetscape plan for First Street, given its varying right-of-way widths and inconsistent sidewalk treatments.

LEGEND

- ① RECENT IMPROVEMENTS
- ② SHARED STREET
- ③ FLUSH CURB WITH SAFETY BOLLARDS
- ④ ENLARGED PLANTER WITH SEATWALL
- ⑤ OUTDOOR SEATING
- ⑥ CONTAINER PLANTS
- ⑦ FIRETABLE WITH BAR SEATING
- ⑧ BICYCLE RACKS
- ⑨ PARKLET WITH OUTDOOR DINING & SEATWALL
- ⑩ DROP OFF/LOADING AREA

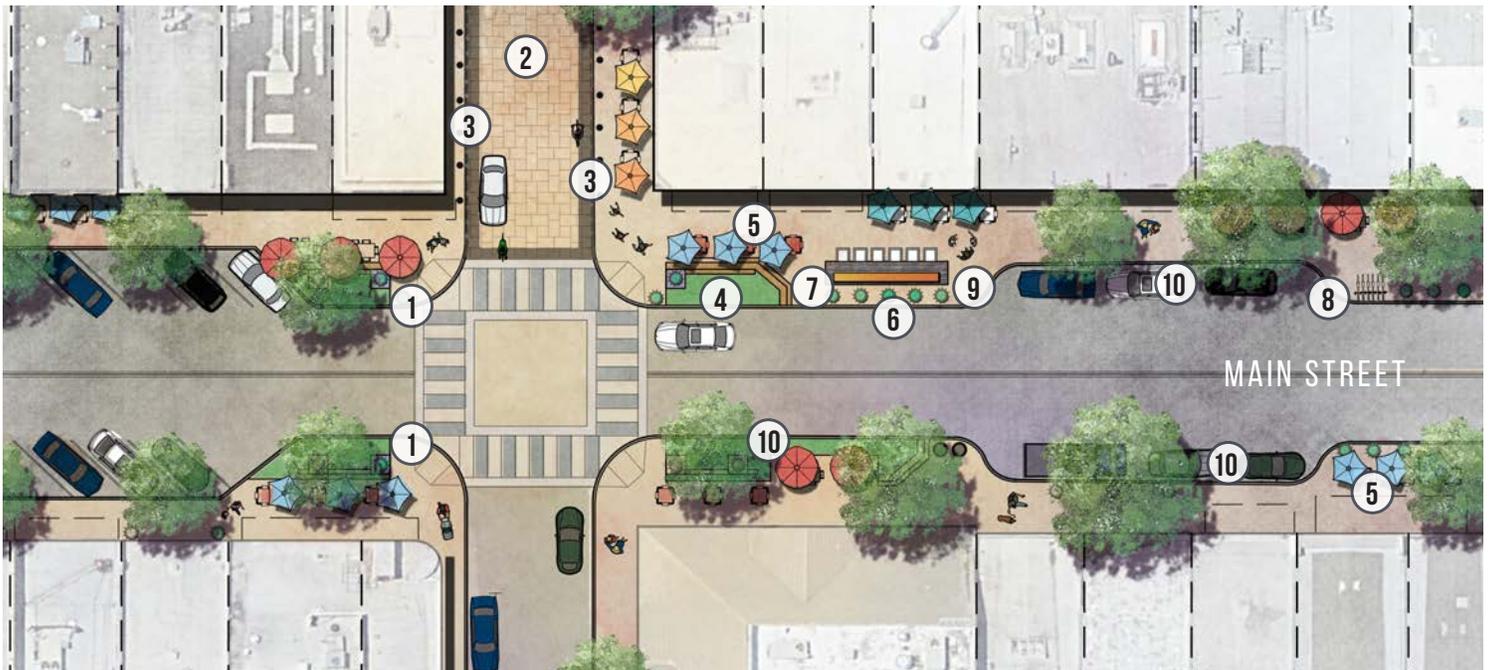


Figure 11: Downtown streetscape character with shared streets, activity nodes, dropoff area, furnishings, and accent paving.

PARKING FACILITIES

The proximity and availability of centralized public parking serving the Downtown area has been advantageous to past growth and development. However, given the small lot sizes, older buildings, and high and inflexible parking requirements, development in Downtown has been limited. The City's currently high parking requirements and high land costs forces any new development to be of a size and bulk that many residents feel erode the Downtown's village character. In addition, larger macro trends of decreasing private automobile use, indicating less need for parking, coupled with rideshare services such as Lyft and Uber, and ongoing development of autonomous vehicles all share in the need for modified parking requirements. While automobile use and parking demands continue to evolve, the City should ensure the ongoing availability of parking Downtown in the interim in a manner more consistent with other comparable cities. The Downtown Parking Management Plan, adopted in 2013, identified several priorities for parking management in Downtown. These priorities align with this Vision Plan and should continue to be implemented going forward.



Existing Parking Plaza 7, looking east.

7 CIRCULATION AND PARKING

As shown in Figure 12, the existing parking plazas are the focal point of integrating new structured parking within Downtown, with a few existing at-grade parking lots also maintained. As above ground parking structures are developed, they should be designed with flexibility in mind to allow for adaptive reuse in the future if parking demands change. Additionally, electric vehicle charging stations should be integrated into parking facilities. They should also be designed with commercial or office on the ground floor to minimize the aesthetic impacts of the structure and continue to activate the adjacent sidewalks with retail and office activity.

The Vision Plan has strategically located the parking facilities to be conveniently accessed from San Antonio Road and First Street, minimizing traffic through Downtown. In total, the City should anticipate the need to construct a total of 775 new above ground and underground parking spaces to accommodate existing development and future growth as envisioned as part of this Vision Plan. In addition to parking within the Downtown area, the City should consider the Civic Center as an option to develop employee designated parking that would free up additional parking spaces for business customers.



Example of parking structure wrapped with commercial at ground-level.

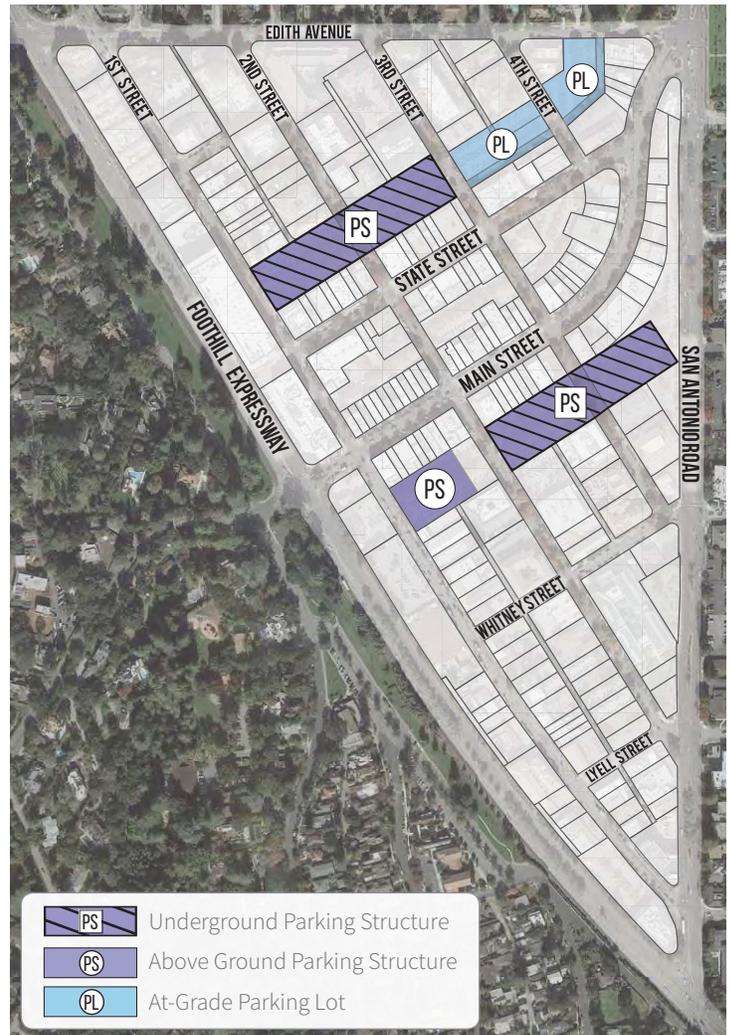


Figure 12: Location of Future Parking Facilities

PARKING MANAGEMENT

To better manage the existing and future parking facilities within Downtown, the City should continue to implement the recommendations of the Downtown Parking Management Plan. This Vision Plan strives to manage and direct employee parking to free up parking spaces for customers, create revenue for future facilities, and reduce one of the primary barriers to attract redevelopment in Downtown. Recommendations include:

- Incrementally increase “white dot” permits from \$36 per year to \$72 per month in two or three steps;
- Adopt an in-lieu fee option of \$25,000 per required space;
- Incorporate short-term, drop off spaces for rideshare services (Uber/Lyft); and
- Implement multimodal policies that discourage single-use automobile trips.

Fees collected as part of parking management should be used to fund the construction of new above and below ground parking structures as well as other parking facilities within the Downtown area.

PARKING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following parking policy recommendations support the enhancement of vitality within the Downtown. Amendments to the City’s existing Zoning Ordinance would be required to implement these parking policy recommendations. Action items related to these Parking Policy Recommendations can be found within the Implementation Chapter of this document.

1) Update Parking Requirements for Downtown Uses (retail, office, and service uses).

Inside Existing Parking District

- Up to FAR 1.0: No parking requirement (no change)
- In excess of FAR 1.0: Two (2) spaces per 1,000 sf for all commercial and office uses
- Consider reduction of parking requirements for the residential portion of mixed-use projects, particularly those constructing workforce housing units

Outside Existing Parking District

- 2.5 spaces per 1,000 sf for all commercial and office uses
- Consider reduction of parking requirements for the workforce residential portion of mixed-use project or for standalone workforce housing projects

2) Exempt new restaurants within “Downtown Dining Hub” from all parking requirements to attract more dining and outdoor dining Downtown.

3) Consider reduction in parking requirement for outdoor dining located elsewhere in the Downtown Core.

4) Reduce required parking for hotel uses to 0.8 per guest room. Hotel location is suggested on top of the underground parking structure. Hotel parking demand will be higher in the evening, complementing the daytime parking use of nearby commercial and office.

5) Exempt live theater from all parking requirements. The location of the live theater is adjacent to and over a proposed parking structure. The theater parking demand will be higher in the evening, complementing the daytime parking use of the commercial and office.



8 - SUSTAINABILITY

SUSTAINABILITY

Los Altos adopted a Climate Action Plan in December 2013 that outlines strategies to reduce citywide emissions for both new and existing development to ensure the long-term sustainability of the City. This Vision Plan document includes and intends to further the implementation of many of these strategies to align with the City’s overarching goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Some of the Climate Action Plan and sustainable strategies integrated within the Vision Plan include:

- Providing safe and convenient alternatives to driving;
- Maximizing energy efficiency and leveraging opportunities to generate energy from renewable resources;
- Eliminating unnecessary resource consumption; and
- Valuing and supporting community projects that conserve natural resources and contribute to increased quality of life in Los Altos.



Alternative forms of transportation, such as bicycling, reduce the need for single trip automobile use.



9 - IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION

The Downtown Vision Plan will be implemented over a 20-year time frame as feasible. The plan will be implemented through both public and private investment. Many components could be grant funded due to their pedestrian and bike friendly nature. The plan components have been categorized into three phases in response to community priorities, costs, and the goal of adding vitality to downtown. If phase 2 or 3 items can be funded and parking provided, they could be moved to an earlier phase.

ACTION PLAN/PHASING

The following action items discussed elsewhere in this Vision Plan document have been organized below in three phases to allow for the short, mid, and long-term implementation of the Downtown Vision.

PHASE 1: SHORT-TERM (1-5 YEARS)

- Implement and use and parking policy recommendations;
- Implement height recommendations;
- Design/plan for primary entry features and elements;
- “Downtown Dining Hub”;
- Design/install bicycle enhancements;
- Implement parking management recommendations; and
- Install neighborhood connections – *Lower cost improvements such as signage and crossing enhancements.*

PHASE 2: MID-TERM (5-10 YEARS)

- Construct parking facilities (*above or below ground facilities*);
- Install Downtown Central Plaza Short-Term Vision (*Parking Plaza 5*);
- Design/install façade improvements and renovations along San Antonio Road;
- Design/plan for activity nodes;
- Prepare First Street streetscape plan;
- Install shared streets (*2nd and 3rd Street*); and
- Construct affordable housing.

PHASE 3: LONG-TERM (10+ YEARS)

- Construct parking facilities;
- Install Downtown Plaza Long-Term Vision;
- Construct roundabout (this will require a circulation study);
- Install pedestrian bridge connection to Civic Center;
- Design/plan for paseos;
- Implement First Street streetscape plan;
- Construct live theater (*Parking Plaza 2*);
- Construct hotel (*Parking Plaza 2*); and
- Construct office (*Parking Plaza 3*).

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

It is recommended that the City create a comprehensive or specific plan for Downtown to more precisely capture the Vision Plan recommendations and fine tune land uses, standards, and guidelines for the Downtown. Implementation of the short-term action can be accomplished through Zoning Ordinance amendments. This Vision Plan becomes the primary guidance document to guide change in Downtown, replacing the Downtown Design Plan.

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CITY OF LOS ALTOS
DOWNTOWN VISION



ICE-
ETBACKS



10 - VISION POSTER



A FIRST STREET SECTION | STREETSCAPE ENHANCEMENTS & BUILDING SETBACKS



B MAIN STREET SECTION | DINING HUB BLOCK



C ACTIVITY NODE EXAMPLE | FIREPIT, OUTDOOR DINING, DROPOFF SPACES, & ENTERTAINMENT NODE



DISTRICT LEGEND

- FIRST STREET
- EDITH AVENUE RESIDENTIAL
- MAIN AND STATE STREET (DOWNTOWN CORE)
- SAN ANTONIO ROAD (LOWER TRIANGLE)



D DOWNTOWN CENTRAL PLAZA SHORT-TERM VISION | OUTDOOR DINING, EVENT SPACE, & PLAY STRUCTURES



SITE PLAN LEGEND

- 1 AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- 2 UNDERGROUND PARKING STRUCTURE WITH OFFICE
- 3 DOWNTOWN CENTRAL PLAZA (SHORT-TERM)
- 4 DOWNTOWN PLAZA (LONG-TERM)
- 5 PRIMARY ENTRY FEATURES
- 6 ABOVEGROUND PARKING STRUCTURE WRAPPED WITH OFFICE OR COMMERCIAL ON GROUND FLOOR
- 7 OFFICE USES
- 8 ROUNDABOUT
- 9 FACADE IMPROVEMENTS & PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION
- 10 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
- 11 SHARED STREETS
- 12 LIVE-THEATER
- 13 BOUTIQUE HOTEL

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