2 Land Use and Community Design

Vision Statement

Palo Alto will be a vital, attractive place to live, work, and visit. The elements that make Palo Alto a great community—its neighborhoods, shopping and employment centers, civic uses, open spaces, and natural resources—will be strengthened and enhanced. The diverse range of housing and work environments will be sustained and expanded to create more choices for all income levels. All Palo Alto neighborhoods will be improved, each to have public gathering spaces, essential services and pedestrian amenities, to encourage less reliance on the automobile.

Introduction

The relationship between land use, urban design, transportation, and economics are emphasized in the Land Use and Community Design Element. While the 1980-1995 Comprehensive Plan addressed urban design as a separate Plan Element, this Plan recognizes that the design of buildings and surrounding spaces cannot be separated from land use decisions. Urban design considerations appear throughout the Element. The Element also recognizes that land use decisions must be closely integrated with transportation and economic decisions. This is reflected in the Element's focus on the physical linkages between different parts of the City and the future role of the City's business centers.

The Land Use and Community Design Element provides a "constitution" for the development of public and private property. It begins by describing the context in which local planning decisions are made, and proceeds with goals, policies, and programs covering a broad range of growth and development topics. The goals, policies and programs are organized into three major sections. The first section—Local Land Use and Growth Management—establishes the limits to urban growth and sets the direction for maintaining the City's scale and character. The second section—City Structure—presents a new conceptual structure for Palo Alto, organizing the City into Residential Neighborhoods, Centers, and Employment Districts. This section focuses on the way these areas are connected to each other and includes policies and programs for specific geographic areas of the City. The third section—Design of Buildings and Public Spaces—addresses citywide urban design issues, including historic preservation and the design of buildings, civic uses, public ways, public art, and infrastructure.

This Element meets the State-mandated requirements for a Land Use Element. It defines the City's land use categories and includes the proposed Land Use and Circulation Map guiding the development of each property in the City. Four new land use categories—Mixed Use, Transit-Oriented Residential, Village Residential, and Commercial Hotel—have been added since the previous Comprehensive Plan.

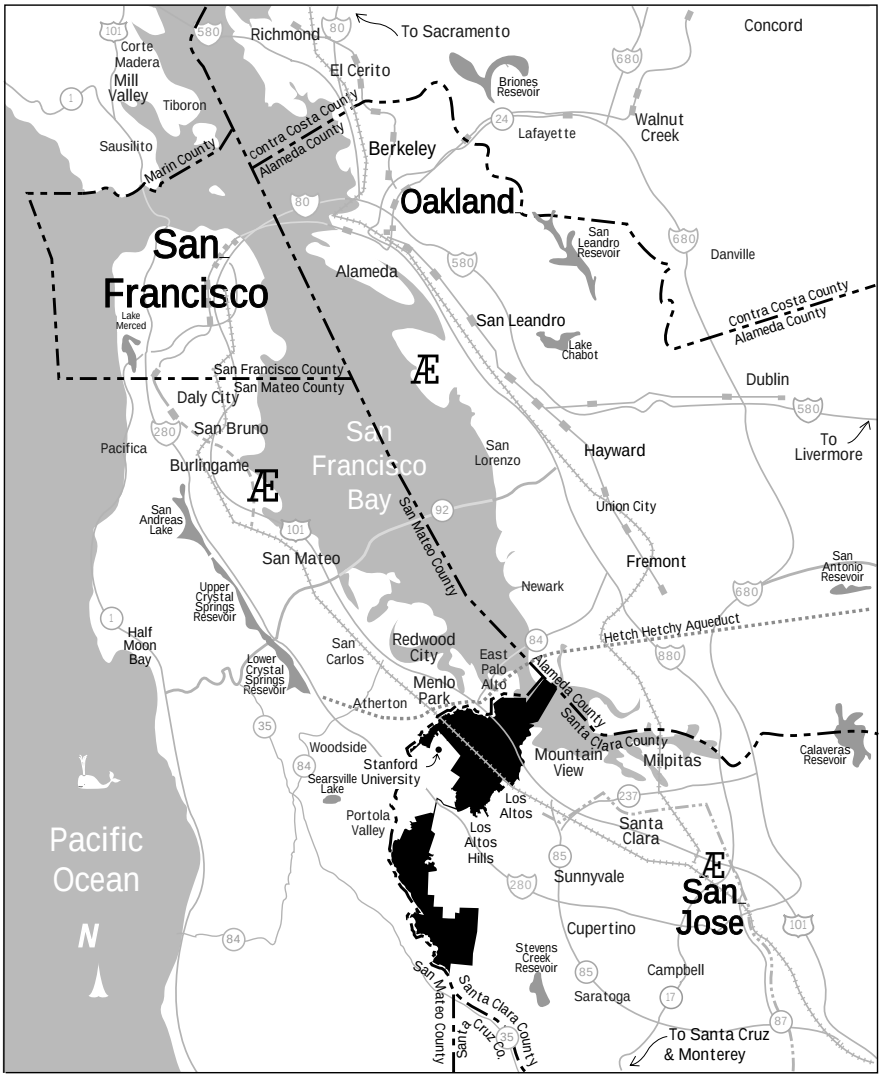
See Map L-1 for an aerial view of Palo Alto and its environs

Planning Context

Palo Alto's Role Within the Region

See Map L-2 showing Palo Alto's Sphere of Influence and Urban Service Area

Palo Alto is located in the northern part of Santa Clara County, in the portion of the Bay Area known as the Mid-Peninsula. The City shares a boundary with San Mateo County and six cities. Through time, Palo Alto has maintained close and collaborative relationships with adjoining counties and cities. Its officials and citizens have maintained a tradition of leadership in land use, transportation, and environmental planning efforts, both at the local and regional level. These efforts have yielded policies for controlling and managing the region's growth, protecting open space, and conserving natural resources.



Palo Alto, shown in black, has a tradition of collaborating with neighboring cities and counties in the Bay Area. The City has taken an active role in addressing regional planning issues.

Santa Clara County is projected to add more than 233,000 new residents by the year 2010. San Mateo County will add approximately 50,000 residents by the same year. Although only a small portion of this growth will be in Palo Alto, the City is not insulated from the challenges of an increasing population. These challenges can only be faced through cooperative regional planning. Palo Alto will continue to be a partner in this process. The City has long supported Santa Clara County's General Plan provisions for an "Urban Service Area" to manage urban growth and limit sprawl, as well as the County's concept of "compact development." The City's Plan will help realize the broader County goal of directing growth to appropriate locations within the urban area, particularly along transit corridors and near employment centers.

In the 1990s, Palo Alto has worked with neighboring East Palo Alto and Menlo Park on common issues and matters of mutual interest. The three cities participate in a variety of shared economic development, social service, education, public safety, and housing programs. Palo Alto participates with Mountain View, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills in many ways, including fire protection and operation of the Regional Water Quality Control Plant. The City also is an active player in the County's Congestion Management Program.

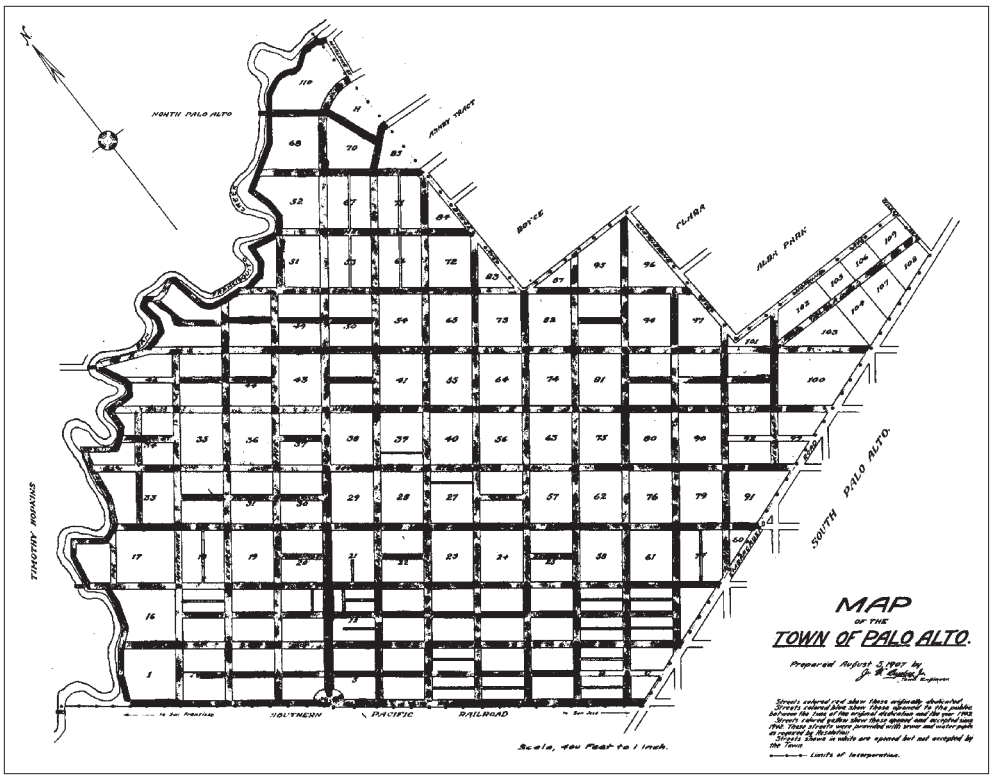
Some of the most significant opportunities for growth and change in the Palo Alto area are on Stanford University lands. Although the campus itself lies outside the City limits, most of the University's income-producing lands are within Palo Alto. Stanford owns land outside of Palo Alto as well, extending into unincorporated Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. The community values the open space amenities afforded by this land but also recognizes the right of the University in using its properties for academic purposes. Agreements about development on unincorporated Stanford lands are captured in an inter-jurisdictional agreement between Stanford, Palo Alto and Santa Clara County. In general, the University supports the concept of compact development and prefers that its future expansion be contained within the current limits of development on the Stanford Campus.

See Map L-3 showing Stanford University lands within Palo Alto and other jurisdictions

The relationship between the City and the University has always been complex and even tense at times. However, there have always been mutual benefits. In recent land use and transportation planning efforts, Palo Alto and Stanford have worked together to plan for the University Avenue Multi-modal Transit Station Area and explore options for expanding the University's Marguerite Shuttle Bus within the City. These ventures hold promise for the future and will continue to be pursued.

Evolution of the City

A university town from the beginning, Palo Alto was incorporated in 1894 on lands purchased and subdivided by Timothy Hopkins. Hopkins, a friend of Leland Stanford, planned the town to serve the newly established Stanford University. The City grew to many times its original size

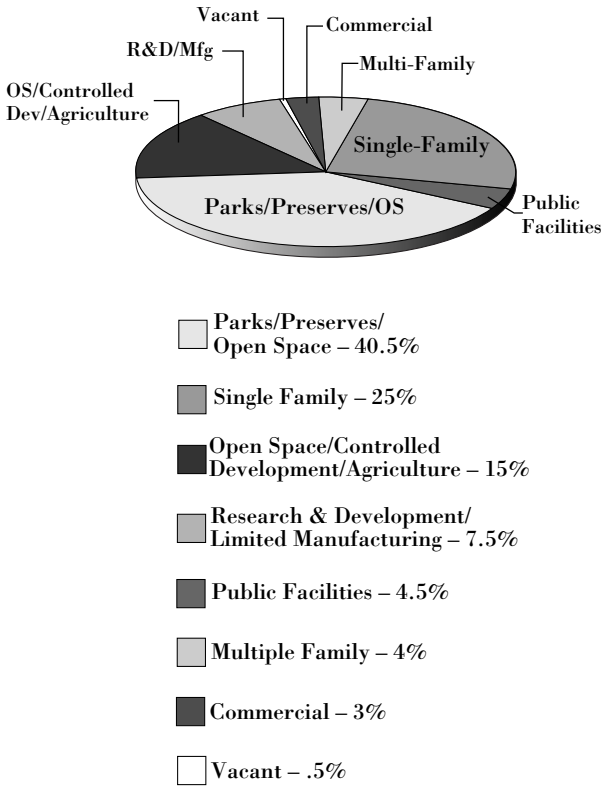


The original Hopkins Tract, also known as University Park, was proclaimed a local Heritage District during Palo Alto's 1994 Centennial.

over the next century as land to the south and east was annexed. The town was originally centered around the commercial district along University Avenue. Although this area remains Palo Alto's central business district, the geographic center of the City has shifted several miles south.

The town of Mayfield, about 1-1/2 miles southeast of University Avenue, predated the founding of Palo Alto by 40 years. Mayfield continued to develop as a separate town until its annexation to Palo Alto in 1925. Its main commercial street, California Avenue, became a second business district for the City as the land between Mayfield and University Avenue was developed. Today, California Avenue is an active retail and commercial center that retains its small town ambience. Its role as a transit hub and its close proximity to Stanford Research Park give the area citywide significance and will continue to influence its character in the future.

Land Use Distribution



Source: The Palo Alto Planning Division (1996)

Palo Alto saw its greatest expansion during the decade following World War II. The City boundary was expanded south to Mountain View and the City's residential land area virtually doubled. New neighborhood shopping centers like Alma Plaza and Midtown were developed to serve the growing population. This period of expansion coincided with the transformation of the City from a "college town" to a world leader in high technology. Most of the City's office, research, and light industrial areas were annexed during the 1950s, including Stanford Research Park, Embarcadero Road northeast of Bayshore, and the West Bayshore/San Antonio Road area. The Stanford Shopping Center was incorporated into the City in 1953.

A major portion of Palo Alto—most of it undeveloped—lies west of Foothill Expressway. This area was annexed between 1959 and 1968 and is mostly zoned for open space. Elsewhere, small pockets of residential development were gradually annexed into the City during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, closing the borders with Mountain View and Los Altos. The City's last significant expansions were annexation of the Barron Park neighborhood in 1975 and a large tract of marshland open space in the baylands in 1979. With adoption of the Baylands Master Plan in 1978, urban uses were limited to approximately 200 acres of existing development along Embarcadero Road and East Bayshore Road. The remaining 1,700 acres were dedicated for recreation and restoration of marshland wildlife habitat.

Over half of Palo Alto's land area is designated as parks or open space. About one-fourth of the City consists of single family residences.

Today, Palo Alto comprises 16,627 acres, or about 26 square miles. Approximately 40 percent of this area is in parks and preserves and another 15 percent consists of agriculture and other open space uses. The remaining area is nearly completely developed, with single family uses predominating. Less than one percent of the City's land area consists of vacant, developable land.

Goals, Policies, and Programs

LOCAL LAND USE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

GOAL L-1: A Well-designed, Compact City, Providing Residents and Visitors with Attractive Neighborhoods, Work Places, Shopping Districts, Public Facilities, and Open Spaces.

The amount of urban land in Palo Alto in 2010 will remain essentially the same as it is today, with growth occurring through infill and redevelopment. In a community survey conducted during the Comprehensive Plan process, the community overwhelmingly reaffirmed its commitment to the protection of the baylands and foothills. The emphasis on infill brings opportunities for positive change but also the need to protect the qualities that are important to Palo Alto.

Extent of Urban Development

POLICY L-1:

Continue current City policy limiting future urban development to currently developed lands within the urban service area. The boundary of the urban service area is otherwise known as the urban growth boundary. Retain undeveloped land west of Foothill Expressway and Junipero Serra as open space, with allowances made for very low-intensity development consistent with the open space character of the area. Retain undeveloped Baylands northeast of Highway 101 as open space.

This is a continuation of existing City policy. Any future expansion of the Stanford Research Park will be in the form of infill development rather than expansion. The City's Urban Service Area boundary identifies areas that may be developed during the term of this Plan.

POLICY L-2:

Maintain an active cooperative working relationship with Santa Clara County and Stanford University regarding land use issues.

PROGRAM L-1:

Maintain and update as appropriate the 1985 Land Use Policies Agreement that sets forth the land use policies of the City, Santa Clara County and Stanford University with regard to Stanford unincorporated lands.

PROGRAM L-2A:

City staff will monitor Stanford development proposals and traffic conditions within the Sand Hill Road Corridor and annually report to the Planning Commission and City Council.

PROGRAM L-2B:

City staff will review development proposals within the Airport Influence Area to ensure consistency with the guidelines of the Palo Alto Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan, and when appropriate, will refer development proposals to the Santa Clara County Airport Land Use Commission for review and comment.

See also Goal N-1 and associated policies and programs

See Map L-2 for the Urban Service Area boundary and the Urban Growth boundary

See Land Use Map L-3: Stanford Lands

See Santa Clara County General Plan Policies U-ST1 through U-ST 10 regarding county regulation of Stanford lands

See Land Use Map L-2: for the Airport Influence Area

See Santa Clara County General Plan Policies R-LU68 and R-LU69 regarding Academic Reserve and Open Space designation

See Santa Clara County General Plan Policies C-GD1, C-GD2, R-GD2 and R-GD6 regarding development in rural unincorporated areas

Development Limitations on Unincorporated Stanford Lands

A 1985, three-party interjurisdictional agreement with the City, Santa Clara County and Stanford University, identifies the land use polices for lands owned by Stanford and located within unincorporated Santa Clara County. Stanford's General Use Permit, issued by Santa Clara County, establishes building area, population limits and some mitigation measures for development of the unincorporated lands; and, identifies four sub-areas with special land use controls (See Map L-3). The special area limitations are:

Area A (Campus frontage along El Camino Real): No development.

Area B (South of Sand Hill Road between Pasteur Drive and Junipero Serra Boulevard): Until 2021 limited to academic and recreation fields and related support facilities. Fac-ulty, staff or student housing may be proposed in a portion along Campus Drive West.

Area C (West of Junipero Serra between Alpine Road and Deer Creek): Low-intensity academic uses that are compatible with the open space qualities of the area. Development of any structure over 5,000 square feet requires a use permit from the County. Development for income producing purposes, or sale or lease for nonacademic purposes, would require annexation to the City.

Area D (Arboretum area along Palm Drive and the Oval): No development.

Development Limitations on Lands Within the Airport Influence Area (AIA)

The Santa Clara County *Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the Palo Alto Airport (PAO CLUP)* provides guidelines to ensure compatible non-airport land use and development within the Airport Influence Area (AIA). These guidelines limit concentrations of people in areas susceptible to aircraft accidents and restrict new structures and activities that would interfere with navigable space. They were adopted into the City's Comprehensive Plan in 2009.

Applicability

- The *PAO CLUP* guidelines do not apply to existing development.
- All new development must be consistent with the *PAO CLUP* guidelines for land use and development.

See Program L-2B

Consistency Review

Key *PAO CLUP* maps and tables provide guidance for project review:

- For determining if a proposed use is compatible with regard to safety, refer to:
    1. The "Airport Safety Zone Map" which divides the AIA into zones based on the level of danger from airport activities. (Page 3-12)
    2. The "Safety Zone Compatibility Guidelines" table, which shows what land uses are allowed in the each safety zone. (Page 4-8)
- For determining if a proposed use is compatible with regard to noise, refer to:
    1. The "2022 Aircraft Noise Contours" map, which divides the AIA into zones based on the level of noise from airport activities. (Page 3-7)
    2. The "Noise Compatibility Guidelines" table, which shows what land uses are allowed in each noise zone. (Page 4-6)
- For determining if a proposed building meets the height limits, refer to:
    1. The "FAR Part 77 Surfaces" map, which shows graduated contours radiating from the runway. Each contour indicates the maximum allowable structure height within the contour area. (Page 3-9)

See Land Use Map L-2: for the Airport Influence Area

See Santa Clara County *Comprehensive Land Use Plan* for the Palo Alto Airport

ALUC Review

- The City may refer any proposal to the Santa Clara County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) for review and recommendation.
- Certain types of proposals must be referred to the Santa Clara County ALUC for review.
- The Santa Clara County ALUC may recommend that the City require the subject property owner to grant an avigation easement (to the City of Palo Alto) as a condition for obtaining an entitlement or building permit.
- The Santa Clara County ALUC comments are advisory.

CLUP Criteria for referring proposals (within the AIA) to the ALUC for review:

Mandatory referrals include:

1. Airport Master Plans or amendments
2. Comprehensive Plans or amendments
3. Specific Plans or amendments
4. Zoning /Building Codes or amendments
5. Non-airport development projects that require a change to the Zoning Code or the Comprehensive Plan

Voluntary referrals include:

1. Major infrastructure improvements that would promote urban development.
2. Non-airport development projects that do not require a change to the Zoning Code or the Comprehensive Plan but involve: five or more dwelling units, high-density uses, or low-mobility uses, a structure over 200 feet high, or an increase to the existing square footage of 50% or more.

Maintain and Strengthen City Character

POLICY L-3:

Guide development to respect views of the foothills and East Bay hills from public streets in the developed portions of the City.

See Map L-4 for locations of major view corridors and viewsheds

Palo Alto's backdrop of forested hills to the southwest and San Francisco Bay to the northeast is a character-defining element of the City. Views of the hills can be seen from many City streets. They provide a sense of enclosure and a reminder of the City's proximity to open space and the natural environment. Views from the baylands are equally striking, taking in the Bay, the East Bay hills, and the Santa Cruz Mountains. These visual connections are part of what makes Palo Alto attractive. The design and siting of new buildings should take into account impact on views, and should frame existing views of the hills, where possible.

POLICY L-4:

Maintain Palo Alto's varied residential neighborhoods while sustaining the vitality of its commercial areas and public facilities. Use the Zoning Ordinance as a tool to enhance Palo Alto's desirable qualities.

The City's neighborhoods are varied in character and architectural style, reflecting the stages of the City's development as well as the range of incomes and tastes of its residents.

POLICY L-5:

Maintain the scale and character of the City. Avoid land uses that are overwhelming and unacceptable due to their size and scale.

Scale is the relationship of various parts of the environment to each other, to people, and to the limits of perception. It is what establishes some neighborhoods or streets as pedestrian-oriented and others as automobile-oriented. In older portions of Palo Alto, the grid of City terns and building placement are oriented primarily to the automobile user. In the newer commercial areas, buildings are usually set behind parking lots located along the street, and landscaping sometimes provides a visual buffer for the motorist.

The traditional form and scale in much of Palo Alto contributes to the City's reputation as a desirable place to live and work.

PROGRAM L-3:

Maintain and periodically review height and density limits to discourage single uses that are inappropriate in size and scale to the surrounding uses.

The Citywide fifty foot height limit has been respected in all new development since it was adopted in the 1970's. Only a few exceptions have been granted for architectural enhancements or seismic safety retrofits to noncomplying buildings.

Program L-3 was amended on 06/06/2011. See **amendment.**

POLICY L-6:

Where possible, avoid abrupt changes in scale and density between residential and non-residential areas and between residential areas of different densities. To promote compatibility and gradual transitions between land uses, place zoning district boundaries at mid-block locations rather than along streets wherever possible.

PROGRAM L-4:

Review and change zoning regulations to promote gradual transitions in the scale of development where residential districts abut more intense uses.

PROGRAM L-5:

Establish new performance and architectural standards that minimize negative impacts where land use transitions occur.

PROGRAM L-6:

Revise the City's Neighborhood Commercial (CN) and Service Commercial (CS) zoning requirements to better address land use transitions.

Since CN and CS zones are frequently located next to residential areas, development standards are particularly important to ensure compatibility and reduce negative impacts on adjacent land uses.

POLICY L-7:

Evaluate changes in land use in the context of regional needs, overall City welfare and objectives, as well as the desires of surrounding neighborhoods.

Commercial Growth Limits

POLICY L-8:

Maintain a limit of 3,257,900 square feet of new non-residential development for the nine planning areas evaluated in the 1989 Citywide Land Use and Transportation Study, with the understanding that the City Council may make modifications for specific properties that allow modest additional growth. Such additional growth will count towards the 3,257,900 maximum.

Policy L-8 and Map L-6 was amended on 06/06/2011. See **amendment.**

See Map L-6 showing commercial growth monitoring areas.

Not only will the area devoted to urban development remain constant, but new non-residential growth from 1989 forward will be limited to just over 3.25 million square feet. The total non-residential development in the city in 1996 is in the range of 25 million square feet. This amount of growth was determined by the Citywide 1989 Land Use and Transportation Study and was largely implemented through commercial downzoning. This growth limit will be observed citywide for the term of this Plan. Traffic will be monitored to ensure that the intent of the limit is being achieved, though it is recognized that traffic counts are affected by both residential and non-residential growth and also by auto use behavior.

PROGRAM L-7:

Establish a system to monitor the rate of non-residential development and traffic conditions related to both residential and non-residential development at key intersections including those identified in the 1989 Citywide Study and additional intersections identified in the Comprehensive Plan EIR. If the rate of growth reaches the point where the citywide development maximum might be reached, the City will reevaluate development policies and regulations.

PROGRAM L-8:

Limit new non-residential development in the Downtown area to 350,000 square feet, or 10 percent above the amount of development existing or approved as of May 1986. Reevaluate this limit when non-residential development approvals reach 235,000 square feet of floor area.

PROGRAM L-9:

Continue to monitor development, including the effectiveness of the ground floor retail requirement, in the University Avenue/Downtown area. Keep the Planning Commission and City Council advised of the findings on an annual basis.

Mixed Use Areas

See Goal L- 7 and related Policies and Programs on Historic Character

POLICY L-9:

Enhance desirable characteristics in mixed use areas. Use the planning and zoning process to create opportunities for new mixed use development.

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that mixed use environments can be interesting and dynamic. A new mixed use land use classification has been created to encourage this type of development in the future. This represents a change from past attitudes that sought to separate different uses from each other as a means of protecting property values, public safety, and the quality of life. With proper guidance such concerns can be addressed, allowing a more vital urban environment to be created.

Parts of the South of Forest Area (SOFA) and the California Avenue/Ventura Area (Cal-Ventura) have an established pattern of mixed use, with service commercial, light industrial, and housing in both areas. Continued mixing of land uses is encouraged. These areas are among the few in the City that are well-suited for light industrial, automotive, and business support services. Many of these uses should be allowed to continue in the future, augmented by new development including multifamily housing. The proximity of these areas to transit and services makes them excellent locations for both housing and commercial uses.

PROGRAM L-10:

- *Create and apply the following four new Mixed Use zoning standards: A "Live/Work" designation that permits individuals to live on the same site where they work by allowing housing and other uses such as office, retail, and light industrial to co-exist in the same building space; and "Retail/Office," "Residential/Retail," and "Residential/Office" designations that permit a mix of uses on the same site or nearby sites.*

"Mixed use" conditions exist now in the South of Forest Avenue (SOFA) area.

- ***Develop design standards for all mixed use designations providing for buildings with one to three stories, rear parking or underground parking, street-facing windows and entries, and zero setback along the street, except that front gardens may be provided for ground floor residential uses.***

These zoning designations and their accompanying design standards and performance requirements are proposed to provide a new form of mixed use development that results in a high quality environment with a strong pedestrian-oriented streetscape and minimal adverse impacts. All mixed use development must be an appropriate size and scale for the area and designed to enliven the street. Certain conditions and performance standards will be applied concerning such issues as noise, glare, air quality, traffic, parking and hazardous materials.

See also Policies L-25, L-29, and L-31 encouraging mixed use development

Land Use and Circulation Map

The Land Use and Circulation Map (included by reference as a part of this Plan) shows the intent of the Comprehensive Plan with regard to development, redevelopment, and preservation of public and private properties in the Palo Alto Planning Area. It expresses the Plan's goals, policies, and programs in map format. The "Planning Area" covered by the map includes all land within the City limits as well as some adjacent areas of Santa Clara County (including Stanford University and several parcels in the foothills) and two City-owned parcels in San Mateo County.

Because Palo Alto is a built out city, proposed land uses are generally consistent with existing uses and land use boundaries usually follow property lines. However, it is important to keep in mind that the Land Use and Circulation Map is not the same as the Zoning Map. For each land use category shown on the Diagram, there will be at least one zoning designation and usually more. For example, areas shown on the Diagram as "Single Family Residential" may be zoned RE (Residential Estate), R-1 (Single Family), or R-2 (Two-Family Residence). The Land Use and Circulation Map also depicts conditions envisioned in the Plan's horizon year of 2010, while the Zoning Map depicts the uses that are permitted today.

See Land Use Map

LAND USE DEFINITIONS

The following definitions correspond to the categories on the Land Use and Circulation Map. Each definition includes standards for density or intensity of use. For residential categories, densities are expressed in terms of persons per acre as well as housing units per acre. The number of persons per acre is based on the number of units multiplied by the 1990 average household size of 2.24 persons. The standards for population density are intended to be a planning guideline and are not intended to establish an absolute limit. In non-residential areas, intensity is expressed using "floor area ratios" or FAR. FAR is the ratio of building area to lot area on a site. The FAR standards are consistent with those contained in the City's Zoning Ordinance. They were initially established to estimate daytime population and employment in different parts of the City. In the definitions below, FARs represent an expectation of the overall intensity of future development. Actual FARs on individual sites will vary.

Open Space

Publicly Owned Conservation Land: Open lands whose primary purpose is the preservation and enhancement of the natural state of the land and its plants and animals. Only compatible resource management, recreation, and educational activities are allowed.

Public Park: Open lands whose primary purpose is active recreation and whose character is essentially urban. These areas have been planted with non-indigenous landscaping and require a concerted effort to maintain recreational facilities and landscaping.

Streamside Open Space: The corridor of riparian vegetation along a natural stream. Hiking, biking, and riding trails may be developed in the streamside open space. The corridor will generally vary in width up to 200 feet either side of the center line of the creek. However, along San Francisquito Creek between El Camino Real and the Sand Hill Road bridge over the creek, the open space corridor varies in width between approximately 80 and 310 feet from the center line of the creek. The aerial delineation of the open space in this segment of the corridor, as opposed to other segments of the corridor, is shown to approximate scale on the Proposed Land Use and Circulation Map.

Open Space/Controlled Development: Land having all the characteristics of open space but upon which some development may be allowed. Open space amenities must be retained in these areas. Residential densities range from 0.1 to 1 dwelling unit per acre but may rise to a maximum of 2 units per acre where second units are allowed, and population densities range from 1 to 4 persons per acre.

Residential

Single Family Residential: Includes one dwelling unit on each lot as well as conditional uses requiring permits such as churches and schools. Specific areas may be zoned to allow second units or duplexes where they would be compatible with neighborhood character and not create traffic and parking problems. The net density in single family areas will range from 1 to 7 units per acre, but may rise to a maximum of 14 units in areas where second units or duplexes are allowed. Population densities will range from 1 to 30 persons per acre.

Multiple Family Residential: The permitted number of housing units will vary by area, depending on existing land use, proximity to major streets and public transit, distance to shopping, and environmental problems. Net densities will range from 8 to 40 units and 8

to 90 persons per acre. Density should be on the lower end of the scale next to single family residential areas. Densities higher than what is permitted by zoning may be allowed where measurable community benefits will be derived, services and facilities are available, and the net effect will be compatible with the overall Comprehensive Plan.

Village Residential: Allows residential dwellings that are designed to contribute to the harmony and pedestrian orientation of a street or neighborhood. Housing types include single family houses on small lots, second units, cottage clusters, courtyard housing, duplexes, fourplexes, and small apartment buildings. Design standards will be prepared for each housing type to ensure that development successfully contributes to the street and neighborhood and minimizes potential negative impacts. Net densities will range up to 20 units per acre.

Transit-oriented Residential: Allows higher density residential dwellings in the University Avenue/Downtown and California Avenue commercial centers within a walkable distance, approximately 2,000 feet, of the City's two multi-modal transit stations. The land use category is intended to generate residential densities that support substantial use of public transportation and especially the use of Caltrain. Design standards will be prepared to ensure that development successfully contributes to the street and minimizes potential negative impacts. Individual project performance standards will be developed, including parking, to ensure that a significant portion of the residents will use alternative modes of transportation. Net density will range up to 50 units per acre, with minimum densities to be considered during development of new City zoning regulations.

Commercial

Neighborhood Commercial: Includes shopping centers with off-street parking or a cluster of streetfront stores that serve the immediate neighborhood. Examples include Alma Plaza, Charleston Center, Edgewood Center, and Midtown. Typical uses include supermarkets, bakeries, drugstores, variety stores, barber shops, restaurants, self-service laundries, dry cleaners, and hardware stores. In some locations, residential and mixed use projects may also locate in this category. Non-residential floor area ratios will range up to 0.4.

Regional/Community Commercial: Larger shopping centers and districts that have wider variety goods and services than the neighborhood shopping areas. They rely on larger trade areas and include such uses as department stores, bookstores, furniture stores, toy stores, apparel shops, restaurants, theaters, and non-retail services such as offices and banks. Examples include Stanford Shopping Center, Town and Country Village, and University Avenue/Downtown. Non-residential floor area ratios range from 0.35 to 2.

Service Commercial: Facilities providing citywide and regional services and relying on customers arriving by car. These uses do not necessarily benefit from being in high volume pedestrian areas such as shopping centers or Downtown. Typical uses include auto services and dealerships, motels, lumberyards, appliance stores, and restaurants, including fast service types. In almost all cases, these uses require good automobile and service access so that customers can safely load and unload without impeding traffic. In some locations, residential and mixed use projects may be appropriate in this land use category. Examples of Service Commercial areas include San Antonio Road, El Camino Real, and Embarcadero Road northeast of the Bayshore Freeway. Non-residential floor area ratios will range up to 0.4.

Mixed Use: This category includes Live/Work, Retail/Office, Residential/Retail and Residential/Office development. Its purpose is to increase the types of spaces available for living and working to encourage a mix of compatible uses in certain areas, and to encourage the upgrading of certain areas with buildings designed to provide a high quality pedestrian-oriented street environment. Mixed Use may include permitted activities mixed within the same building or within separate buildings on the same site or on nearby sites. Live/Work refers to one or more individuals living in the same building where they earn their livelihood, usually in professional or light industrial activities. Retail/Office, Residential/Retail, and Residential/Office provide other variations to Mixed Use with Retail typically on the ground floor and Residential on upper floors. Design standards will be developed to ensure that development is compatible and contributes to the character of the street and neighborhood. Floor area ratios will range up to 1.15, although Residential/Retail and Residential/Office development located along transit corridors or near multi-modal centers will range up to 2.0 FAR with up to 3.0 FAR possible in areas resistant to revitalization. The FAR above 1.15 will be used for residential purposes.

Commercial Hotel: This category allows facilities for use by temporary overnight occupants on a transient basis, such as hotels and motels, with associated conference centers and similar uses. Restaurants and other eating facilities, meeting rooms, small retail shops, personal services, and other services ancillary to the hotel are also allowed. This category can be applied in combination with another land use category. Floor area ratio will range up to 1.5 for the hotel portion of the site.

Research/Office Park: Office, research, and manufacturing establishments whose operations are buffered from adjacent residential uses. Stanford Research Park is an example. Other uses that may be included are educational institutions and child care facilities. Compatible commercial service uses such as banks and restaurants, and residential or mixed uses that would benefit from the proximity to employment centers, will also be allowed. Additional uses, including retail services, restaurants, commercial recreation, churches, and private clubs may also be located in Research/Office Park areas, but only if they are found to be compatible with the surrounding area through the conditional use permit process. Maximum allowable floor area ratio ranges from 0.3 to 0.5, depending on site conditions.

Light Industrial: Wholesale and storage warehouses and the manufacturing, processing, repairing, and packaging of goods. Emission of fumes, noise, smoke, or other pollutants is strictly controlled. Examples include portions of the area south of Oregon Avenue between El Camino Real and Alma Street that historically have included these land uses, and the San Antonio Road industrial area. Compatible residential and mixed use projects may also be located in this category. Floor area ratio will range up to 0.5.

Institutional

School District Lands: Properties owned or leased by public school districts and used for educational, recreational, or other non-commercial, non-industrial purposes. Floor area ratio may not exceed 1.0.

Major Institution/Special Facilities: Institutional, academic, governmental, and community service uses and lands that are either publicly owned or operated as non-profit organizations. Examples are hospitals and City facilities.

Major Institution/University Lands: Academic and academic reserve areas of Stanford University. Population density and building intensity limits are established by conditional use permit with Santa Clara County. These lands are further designated by the following sub-categories of land use:

- **Major Institution/University Lands/Campus Single Family Residential**: Single family areas where the occupancy of the units is significantly or totally limited to individuals or families affiliated with the institution.
- **Major Institution/University Lands/Campus Multiple Family Residential**: Multiple family areas where the occupancy of the units is significantly or totally limited to individuals or families affiliated with the institution.
- **Major Institution/University Lands/Campus Educational Facilities**: Academic lands with a full complement of activities and densities that give them an urban character. Allowable uses are academic institutions and research facilities, student and faculty housing, and support services. Increases in student enrollment and faculty/staff size must be accompanied by measures that mitigate traffic and housing impacts.
- **Major Institution/University Lands/Academic Reserve and Open Space**: Academic lands having all the characteristics of open space but upon which some academic development may be allowed provided that open space amenities are retained. These lands are important for their aesthetic and ecological value as well as their potential for new academic uses.

CITY STRUCTURE

Fostering a Sense of Community

GOAL L-2: An Enhanced Sense of "Community" with Development Designed to Foster Public Life and Meet Citywide Needs.

One of the first steps towards achieving this goal will be to recognize the physical elements that create "community" in Palo Alto. The traditional land use diagram is supplemented by a conceptual diagram (Map L-5) that defines how different parts of the community function and relate to one another. In essence, the diagram describes the "structure" of the City. Areas are classified as Residential Neighborhoods, Centers, or Employment Districts. Understanding the linkages and connections between these areas and within the region is critical to integrating land use and transportation planning. By recognizing and building on this structure, Palo Alto will remain a community where social contact and public life are encouraged and quality urban design is maintained.

See Map L-5 showing City Structure, including Residential Neighborhoods, Centers, and Employment Districts

POLICY L-10:
Maintain a citywide structure of Residential Neighborhoods, Centers, and Employment Districts. Integrate these areas with the City's and the region's transit and street system.

Goals and policies in the Transportation and Business and Economics Element reinforce the City structure described here

POLICY L-11:
Promote increased compatibility, interdependence, and support between commercial and mixed use centers and the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Palo Alto City Structure

- **Residential Neighborhoods** are areas of the City characterized by housing, parks and public facilities. Their boundaries are based on patterns of land subdivision and public perceptions about where one neighborhood stops and another begins. There are some 35 identifiable Residential Neighborhoods in Palo Alto. Most Residential Neighborhoods have land use classifications of Single Family Residential with some Multiple Family Residential.
- **Centers** are the commercial and mixed use areas of the City and may serve the region, the City, several neighborhoods, or a single neighborhood. They serve as the focus for community life and may include public facilities like schools and civic buildings. Centers are distributed throughout the City and are within walking or bicycling distance of virtually all Palo Alto residents. Keeping Palo Alto's Centers strong and healthy requires coordinated land use and community services planning. Most Centers have land use classifications of "Regional/Community Commercial," "Service Commercial," or "Neighborhood Commercial," or "Mixed Use." Centers, or parts of Centers that are public or civic spaces, are classified as "Public Parks," "School District Lands," or "Major Institutional/Special Facilities."
- **Employment Districts** are relatively large areas of the City dominated by low-rise office, high technology, light industrial and other job-generating land uses but containing relatively few retail and service uses. The broad land use goal for these areas is to impart a stronger sense of community to those who work or live here and to strengthen the connections between these areas and the rest of the City. Other goals are to improve bicycle and pedestrian circulation, expand the provision of services, and improve visual quality. Employment Districts have land use classifications of "Research/Office Park" and "Light Industrial."

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

GOAL L-3: Safe, Attractive Residential Neighborhoods, Each With Its Own Distinct Character and Within Walking Distance of Shopping, Services, Schools, and/or other Public Gathering Places.

The smallest organizing unit of the City structure is the Residential Neighborhood. In Palo Alto, there are at least 35 identifiable neighborhoods. Because the City's neighborhoods were developed over more than a century's time, each has a distinct character. Each neighborhood provides a living reminder of the architectural styles, building materials, scale, and street patterns that were typical at the time of its development. These characteristics are more intact in some neighborhoods than in others. Neighborhood integrity can be conserved, and in some cases even enhanced, if the construction of new homes, additions, and remodeling responds to the prevailing scale, form, and materials.

Palo Alto's residential areas can be generally characterized as historical and traditional or modern. Those built prior to the mid 1940s have a traditional pattern of development with relatively narrow streets, curbside parking, vertical curbs, and street trees between the curb and sidewalk. Homes are oriented to the street and parking is often located to the rear of the lot. An exception is the Barron Park neighborhood, which still retains a semi-rural character and has special street standards that forego curbs and sidewalks for a more informal roadside design.

Many of the neighborhoods built after World War II were shaped by Modernist design ideas popularized by the builder Joseph Eichler. The houses were intentionally designed with austere facades and were oriented towards private backyards and interior courtyards, where expansive glass walls "brought the outside in." Referred to as "Eichlers," these houses were quickly copied by other builders. Curving streets and cul-de-sacs were designed to further the sense of the house as a private enclave. Curbs were flattened and joined to the sidewalk and planting strips were eliminated to create an uninterrupted plane on which to display the house. Palo Alto has some neighborhoods built by Eichler or his imitators that are essentially intact and are now considered classics. Some neighborhoods built during this period have modern street designs but contain more traditional home styles such as the California ranch. Design issues in Palo Alto's more contemporary neighborhoods include sympathetic restoration and renovation of these homes, protection of privacy if second stories are added, and efforts to make the streets more inviting to pedestrians. In some single-story neighborhoods, second stories are not desirable. In these instances, a single-story overlay zone may be considered by the City if requested by a substantial majority of the property owners.

Tucked away in Palo Alto's neighborhoods are attractive examples of higher density housing units that are compatible with the City's single family character. Dwellings like these, which occupy a single site, can serve as a prototype for new housing.

POLICY L-12:

Preserve the character of residential neighborhoods by encouraging new or remodeled structures to be compatible with the neighborhood and adjacent structures.

Guidelines that encourage certain design patterns and components are provided to all interested builders, contractors, and residents. These guidelines are used in approving Home Improvement Exceptions. In 1996, the Council adopted interim measures which require design compatibility for alterations or demolitions of residences constructed prior to 1940, and found to have historic merit. The community has also initiated discussions about design compatibility in neighborhoods throughout the City.

PROGRAM L-11:

Establish pedestrian-oriented design guidelines for residences that encourage features that enliven the street.

PROGRAM L-12:

Where compatible with neighborhood character, use Zoning and the Home Improvement Exception process to create incentives or eliminate obstacles to remodel houses with features that add street life and vitality.

POLICY L-13:

Evaluate alternative types of housing that increase density and provide more diverse housing opportunities.

Palo Alto has some fine examples of multi-unit housing that are very compatible with the surrounding single family residential neighborhoods, primarily because they are designed with entrances and gardens that face the street rather than entrances facing the interior of the development and parking next to the street. Examples include duplexes and small apartment buildings near Downtown and second units and cottage courts in single family neighborhoods.

Photo courtesy of Sandy Eakins

Multi-unit buildings like these become a part of the neighborhood when entries and front gardens face the street.

PROGRAM L-13:

Create and apply zoning standards for Village Residential housing prototypes. Develop design guidelines for duplexes, townhouses, courtyard housing, second units, and small lot single family homes that ensure that such housing is compatible with single family neighborhoods and other areas where it may be permitted.

PROGRAM L-14:

Create and apply zoning standards for Transit-Oriented Residential housing prototypes, including consideration of minimum density standards. Develop design guidelines that ensure that such housing is compatible with the University Avenue/Downtown and California Avenue centers where it may be permitted.

See also Policy L-48 on building design

POLICY L-14:

Design and arrange new multifamily buildings, including entries and outdoor spaces, so that each unit has a clear relationship to a public

street.

See also Policy L-18 on the connections between Centers and residential neighborhoods and Policy L-21 on public spaces in Centers

POLICY L-15:

Preserve and enhance the public gathering spaces within walking distance of residential neighborhoods. Ensure that each residential neighborhood has such spaces.

Many of Palo Alto's older residential neighborhoods developed within walking distance of the commercial districts along University or California Avenues. Some of the post-World War II neighborhoods are within walking distance of neighborhood shopping centers but others are not. In such cases, a park, school, private community center, or small neighborhood retail facility could provide the closest public gathering space.

Former Ventura School provides community services such as the Palo Alto Community Child Care (PACCC) and a public gathering place for the Ventura neighborhood.

Photo courtesy of Sandy Eakins

POLICY L-16:

Consider siting small neighborhood-serving retail facilities in existing or new residential areas.

Carefully sited and designed "mom and pop" retail outlets can enhance the quality of life in the neighborhood by providing conveniences to residents who can meet neighbors and avoid car trips by walking to pick up a quart of milk, a writing pad or a magazine. These facilities also create public gathering spaces, which help to foster a sense of community.

See also Policies T-22, 23, 25, and 30 addressing the character of streets

POLICY L-17:

Treat residential streets as both public ways and neighborhood amenities. Provide continuous sidewalks, healthy street trees, benches, and other amenities that favor pedestrians.

See also Goal L-9 and related Policies and Programs addressing Public Ways

Some of the features of modern street design have turned out to be undesirable for pedestrians. Wide streets and large curb radii at intersections encourage speeding and cars are often parked on the sidewalk in areas with rolled curbs. Where street trees are missing, the sidewalks are not as inviting or comfortable to pedestrians. The quality of a street environment helps define the character of a neighborhood and should be an important consideration in the design of infra-

structure.

CENTERS

GOAL L-4: Inviting, Pedestrian-scale Centers That Offer a Variety of Retail and Commercial Services and Provide Focal Points and Community Gathering Places for the City's Residential Neighborhoods and Employment Districts.

Palo Alto has three different types of commercial Centers. Each type differs in form, intensity, and function. They are:

See Map L-5 for locations of Palo Alto's Centers

- **Regional Centers** are commercial activity centers of citywide and regional significance, with a mix of shopping, offices, and some housing. They are characterized by two- and three-story buildings with ground floor shops. Trees, benches, outdoor seating areas, sidewalks, plazas, and other amenities make the streets pedestrian-friendly. Transit is highly accessible and frequent. Regional Centers include University Avenue/Downtown and Stanford Shopping Center.
- **Multi-neighborhood Centers** are retail shopping centers or districts that serve more than one neighborhood with a diverse mix of uses including retail, service, office, and residential. One- and two-story buildings with storefront windows, entries, and outdoor seating areas create a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Plazas and parks provide public gathering spaces around which retail uses are clustered. Future plans for these areas include local transit or jitney service that links them to other Centers in the City. Multi-neighborhood Centers include California Avenue, Town and Country Village, and South El Camino Real.
- **Neighborhood Centers** are small retail centers with a primary trade area limited to the immediately surrounding area; often anchored by a grocery or drug store and may include a variety of smaller retail shops and offices oriented toward the everyday needs of surrounding residents. Selected streets provide walking and biking connections from adjacent neighborhoods. As with the Multi-neighborhood Centers, future plans include local transit or jitney service and new public gathering places around which new retail uses may be clustered. Palo Alto's four Neighborhood Centers are Midtown, Alma Plaza, Charleston Center, and Edgewood Plaza.

All Centers

POLICY L-18 :

Encourage the upgrading and revitalization of selected Centers in a manner that is compatible with the character of surrounding neighborhoods.

See also Program C-25

PROGRAM L-15 :

Establish a planning process for Centers that identifies the desired character of the area, its role within the City, the locations of public gathering spaces, appropriate land uses and building forms, and important street and pedestrian connections to surrounding Residential Neighborhoods.

POLICY L-19:

Encourage a mix of land uses in all Centers, including housing and an appropriate mix of small-scale local businesses.

POLICY L-20:

Encourage street frontages that contribute to retail vitality in all Centers. Reinforce street corners with buildings that come up to the sidewalk or that

form corner plazas.

Well-designed storefronts with attractive display windows and building entries at frequent intervals are inviting to shoppers. They help support retail vitality by encouraging people to stay in the area and move from store to store. These features are particularly important at corners because they draw shoppers across streets to continue shopping. They also provide opportunities to convey the image and character of the center to motorists.

POLICY L-21:

Provide all Centers with centrally located gathering spaces that create a sense of identity and encourage economic revitalization. Encourage public amenities such as benches, street trees, kiosks, restrooms and public art.

PROGRAM L-16:

Study the feasibility of using public and private funds to provide and maintain landscaping and public spaces such as parks, plazas, and sidewalks within commercial areas.

PROGRAM L-17:

Through public/private cooperation, provide obvious, clean, and accessible restrooms available for use during normal business hours.

See also Policy T-14 and associated programs

POLICY L-22:

Enhance the appearance of streets and sidewalks within all Centers through an aggressive maintenance, repair and cleaning program; street improvements; and the use of a variety of paving materials and landscaping.

PROGRAM L-18:

Identify priority street improvements that could make a substantial contribution to the character of Centers, including widening sidewalks, narrowing travel lanes, creating medians, restriping to allow diagonal parking, and planting street trees.

Regional Centers

University Avenue / Downtown

POLICY L-23:

Maintain and enhance the University Avenue/Downtown area as the central business district of the City, with a mix of commercial, civic, cultural, recreational and residential uses. Promote quality design that recognizes the regional and historical importance of the area and reinforces its pedestrian character.

See Programs L-8, L-9, N-70, and N-71; also Policies B-20, L-56, T-21 and T-45, and associated programs

University Avenue/Downtown has been the symbolic center of Palo Alto since the City was founded in 1894, and it has become a thriving regional hub of commercial and retail activity with an associated increase in employment. The area has retained a pedestrian-scale ambience, even in the face of enormous development pressures. A combination of project size limits, height limits, and floor area restrictions has encouraged preservation of the area's historic buildings and retention of the original street grid. To further shape and encourage publicly contributing redevelopment, the City adopted The Downtown Urban Design Guide in 1994.

PROGRAM L-19:

Support implementation of the Downtown Urban Design Guide.

The Downtown Urban Design Guide is not mandatory but provides useful ideas and direction

for private development and public improvement in the Downtown area.

PROGRAM L-20:
Facilitate reuse of existing buildings.

POLICY L-24:
Ensure that University Avenue/Downtown is pedestrian-friendly and supports bicycle use. Use public art and other amenities to create an environment that is inviting to pedestrians.

PROGRAM L-21:
Improve the University Avenue/Downtown area by adding landscaping and bicycle parking and encouraging large development projects to benefit the public by incorporating public art.

Photo courtesy of Palo Alto Historical Society and Steve Steiger

The terminus of University Avenue at Alma Street was a graceful plaza, shown in this historic photo, until 1940 when it was displaced by a railroad underpass. The City and Stanford University are jointly exploring the possibility of reconstructing a civic plaza at this location.

South of Forest Mixed Use Area

POLICY L-25:
Enhance the character of the South of Forest Area (SOFA) as a mixed use area.

The South of Forest Area (SOFA) is a sub-area of University Avenue/Downtown and provides a good example of a successful mixed use development pattern. It is home to such diverse uses as automotive services, markets and cafes, industrial design and architectural firms, and dry cleaning businesses. The Downtown Urban Design Guide acknowledges the need to integrate this sub-area with University Avenue while retaining its traditional identity and eclectic character.

See Goal G-5, Policy G-11 and Program G-14 for more information on Coordinated Area Plans

PROGRAM L-22:
Prepare a Coordinated Area Plan for the SOFA and the Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF) site.

Relocation of the Palo Alto Medical Foundation will create an opportunity to plan for redevelopment of the former campus site.

Stanford Shopping Center

POLICY L-26:

Maintain Stanford Shopping Center as one of the Bay Area's premiere regional shopping centers. Encourage any new development at the Center to occur through infill, including development on existing surface parking lots.

Stanford Shopping Center is a major regional retail center, encompassing 70 acres and containing 1,330,000 square feet of floor space. The Center has been expanded and remodeled several times since its opening in 1956. While the Center has had many positive economic benefits, it is primarily auto-oriented and is not as well integrated into the fabric of the community as it might be. The Shopping Center's parking lot redevelopment and building expansion plans approved in 1997 incorporate improved pedestrian and transit connections to University Avenue/Downtown, the University Avenue Multi-modal Transit Station, and nearby housing.

PROGRAM L-23:

Identify strategies to reuse surface parking lots and improve pedestrian and transit connections at Stanford Shopping Center.

PROGRAM L-24:

Maintain a Stanford Shopping Center development cap of 80,000 square feet of additional development beyond that existing on June 14, 1996.

See also Program T-14

University Avenue Multi-modal Transit Station Area

POLICY L-27:

Pursue redevelopment of the University Avenue Multi-modal Transit Station area to establish a link between University Avenue/Downtown and the Stanford Shopping Center.

The University Avenue Multi-modal Transit Station Area is bounded by the west end of University Avenue, the Palm Drive entrance to Stanford University, El Camino Park, and Town and Country Village. Stanford University and the City of Palo Alto initiated a joint planning effort in 1993 to redesign this important area. During the coming decades, the area will be transformed from a generally inhospitable interface between the University and the central business district to an attractive regional center oriented around the Peninsula's busiest transit station. The train depot was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places and will be restored to serve as a gracious centerpiece for the area. Redevelopment of the area will provide linkages and pedestrian connections between University Avenue/Downtown, Stanford Shopping Center, Stanford University, and nearby Residential Neighborhoods. This area's reuse should optimize the effectiveness of the multi-modal transit center, protect nearby residential areas from potential adverse development impacts, improve both the City and University gateways, and enhance parkland and natural resources.

See plan view of this area near Program T-14

See also Goal G-5, Policy G-11 and Program G-14 on coordinated area plans

PROGRAM L-25:

Prepare a Coordinated Area Plan for the University Avenue Multi-modal Transit Station Area.

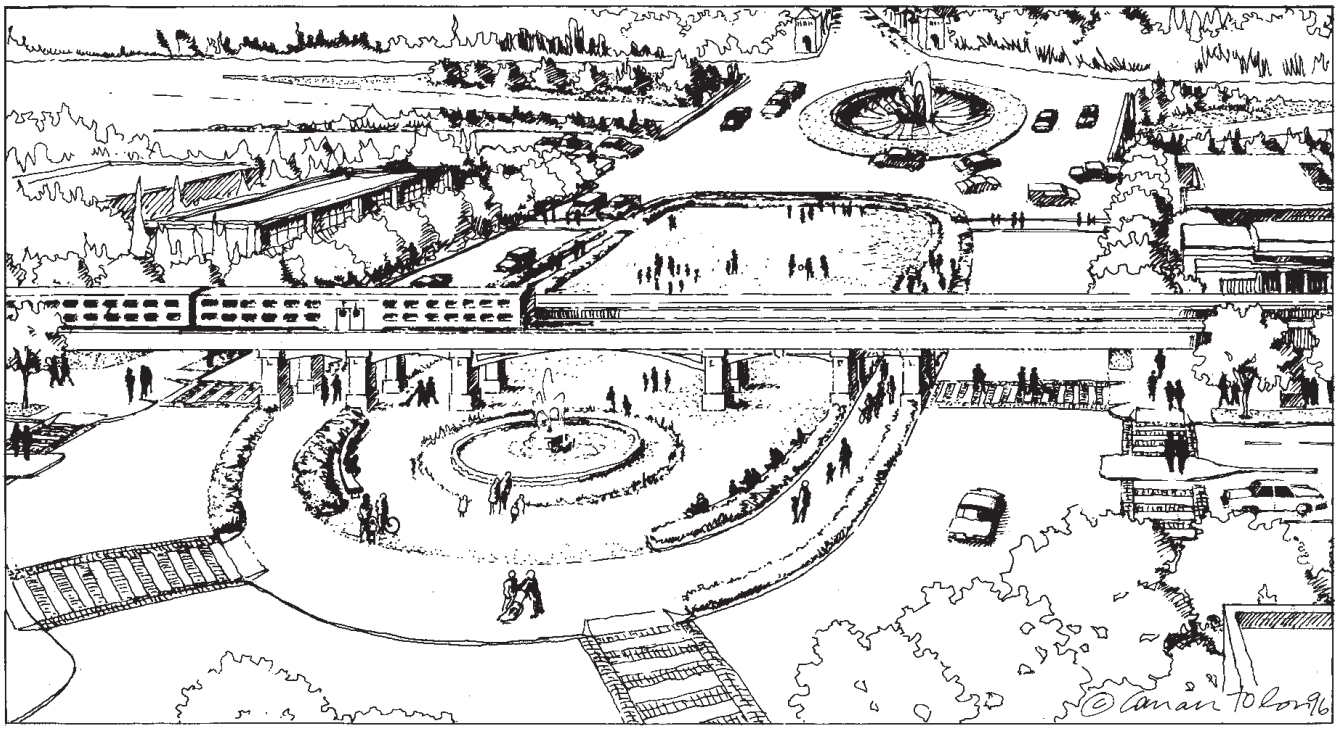


Illustration by Canan Tolon

The University Avenue Multi-modal Transit Station Area is the interface between Stanford University and the City's central business district. It includes the Peninsula's busiest transit station and the historic Southern Pacific Depot. This illustration shows what the intersection could become if the current road interchange were replaced with a civic space and roundabout circulation.

Coordinated area plans, like specific plans, provide a method and process to prepare a more detailed plan for development of an identified area, in this case the Transit Station Area.

PROGRAM L-26:

Establish the following unranked community design priorities for the University Avenue Multi-modal Transit Station Area:

- ***Improving pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and auto connections to create an urban link between University Avenue/Downtown and Stanford Shopping Center.***
- ***Creating a major civic space at the Caltrain Station that links University Avenue/Downtown and Palm Drive.***
- ***Infilling underutilized parcels with a mix of uses such as shopping, housing, office, hotel, and medical facilities.***
- ***Improving public park space.***
- ***Protecting views of the foothills by guiding building heights and massing.***

See also Policies B-23 and B-24 regarding California Avenue

Multi-neighborhood Centers

California Avenue

POLICY L-28:

Maintain the existing scale, character, and function of the California Avenue business district as a shopping, service, and office center intermediate in function and scale between Downtown and the smaller neighborhood business areas.

PROGRAM L-27:

Create regulations for the California Avenue area that allow for the replacement or rehabilitation of smaller buildings while preventing buildings that are out of scale with existing buildings.

PROGRAM L-28:

Work with merchants, property owners, and City representatives to create an urban design guide for the California Avenue business district.

California Avenue is the closest business district to the Stanford Research Park and parts of Stanford University. The community values its friendly, casual ambiance.

California Avenue is a smaller second "main street" in the City and is also served by a multi-modal transit station. It is more local-serving than University Avenue/Downtown but is the closest business district to employees and visitors to Stanford Research Park and portions of Stanford University. It is the oldest part of the City, with origins dating back to the 1850s when it was the main commercial street for the town of Mayfield. This connection to the past is valued by the community and is an important part of what makes the area unique.

Although only fragments of the early commercial architecture are visible, it is possible that there are remnants of original facades behind storefronts erected in the 1950s and 60s. The original street pattern is intact and there has been little combining of lots. Buildings are mostly two stories tall, and parking is located off rear alleys. The scale of development provides an environment that is comfortable for pedestrians, albeit one that has dated architecture and signage. New businesses have located on the street and there is interest in improving the appearance of the street while preserving its "home town" character.

POLICY L-29:

Encourage residential and mixed use residential development in the California Avenue area.

PROGRAM L-29:

Revise zoning of the California Avenue business district to reduce the non-residential development potential to levels comparable to other commercial areas in the City while retaining substantial residential development potential.

POLICY L-30:

Improve the transition between the California-Cambridge area and the single family residential neighborhood of Evergreen Park. Avoid abrupt changes in scale and density between the two areas.

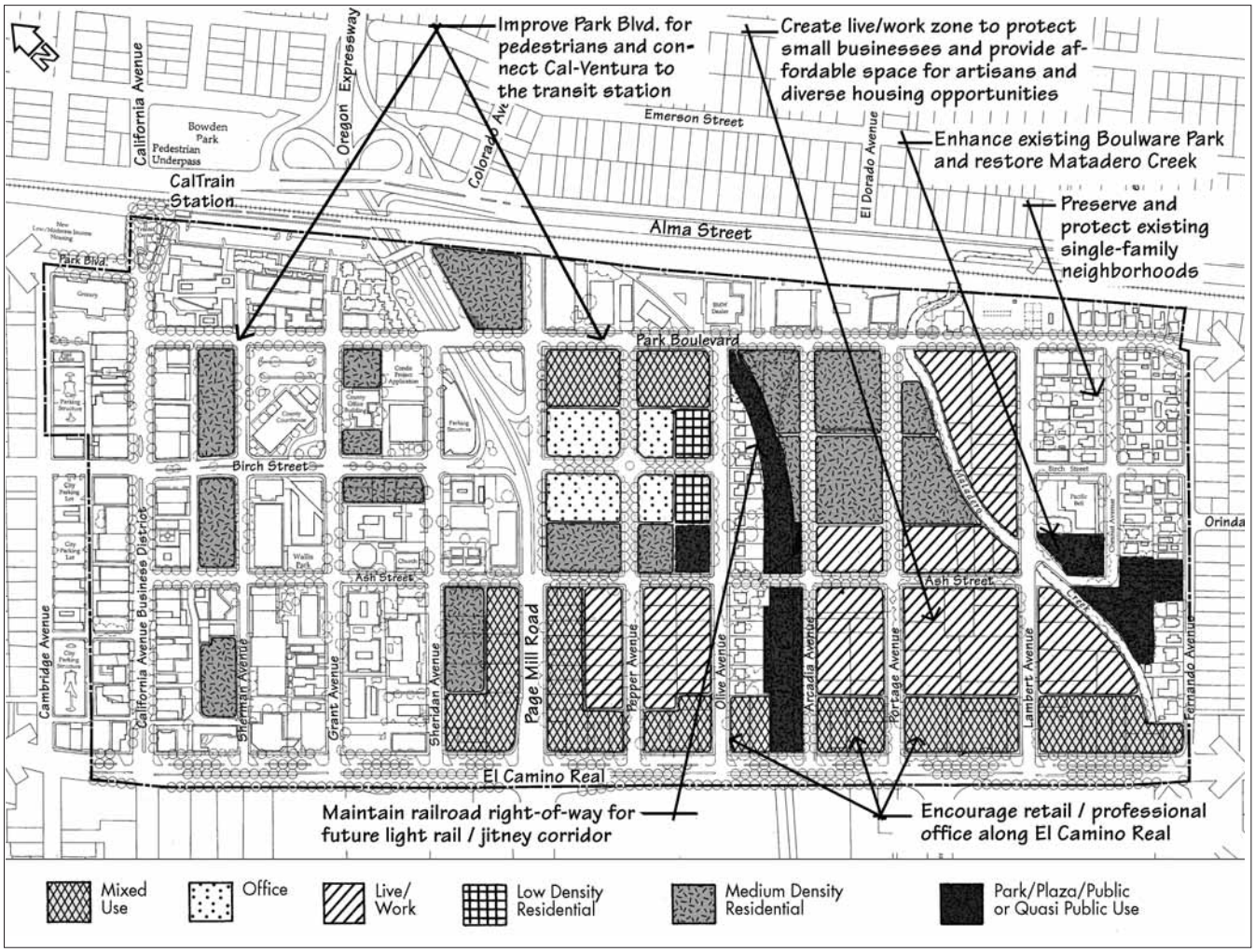
Cal-Ventura Mixed Use Area

POLICY L-31:

Develop the Cal-Ventura area as a well-designed mixed use district with diverse land uses, two- to three-story buildings, and a network of pedestrian-oriented streets providing links to California Avenue.

Cal-Ventura is a mixed use area adjacent to the California Avenue business district. It is also served by the California Avenue Multi-modal Transit Station. Cal-Ventura offers exceptional opportunities for new transit-oriented development, as it includes several underutilized properties likely to redevelop in the near future. New housing in this area could provide the momentum for new pedestrian amenities and shuttle bus connections to nearby Stanford Research Park.

This diagram resulted from a one-day community workshop and is only a conceptual "starting point" for future planning efforts. The Cal-Ventura area offers opportunities for housing and transit-oriented mixed use development with connections to the California Ave. commercial center and the multi-modal transit station.



PROGRAM L-30:

Prepare a Coordinated Area Plan for the Cal-Ventura area. Use the land use diagram from the Community Design Workshop as the starting point for preparing this Plan.

A land use diagram for the Cal-Ventura area was prepared at one of the workshops conducted during the preparation of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan. The diagram contains useful recommendations and should be consulted as more specific design concepts for Cal-Ventura are prepared.

PROGRAM L-31:

Establish the following unranked priorities for redevelopment within the Cal-Ventura area:

- ***Connect the Cal-Ventura area with the Multi-modal Transit Station and California Avenue. Provide new streets and pedestrian connections that complete the street grid and create a walkable neighborhood.***
- ***Fry's Electronics site (300 Portage): Continued retail activity is anticipated for this site until 2019. A program should be developed for the future use of the site for mixed density multi- family housing and a park or other open space.***
- ***Hewlett-Packard: Uses that are compatible with the surrounding area and a site plan that facilitates pedestrian use of Park Boulevard.***
- ***North of Sheridan Avenue: Development of one or more of the City-owned parking lots with primarily residential uses, provided that public parking spaces are replaced.***
- ***Park Boulevard: Streetscape improvements.***

See also Policy B-26

Town and Country Village

POLICY L-32:

Maintain Town and Country Village as an attractive community-serving retail center. Future development at this site should preserve its existing amenities, pedestrian scale, and architectural character.

The design of Town and Country Village is an idealized version of the Hacienda architecture of Spanish California. Built during a period of rapid growth in the 1960s, it epitomized the culture

Native oaks and hacienda-style architecture create a distinct character at Town and Country Shopping Center. The conveniences of the local-serving businesses and grocery store are valued by the community.

and climate of California to a generation of newcomers. Clusters of low buildings with authentic random-colored barrel tile roofs, outdoor walkways, bougainvillea and ivy-draped porticos, and large native oaks give the Village a distinctive character. In the years since its construction, many of the native oaks have been lost. The remaining oaks should be maintained and protected and new oaks should be planted to restore the site's original charm. The street edge should be strengthened with wider sidewalks, street trees, and a low hedge to screen the pavement and parked cars.

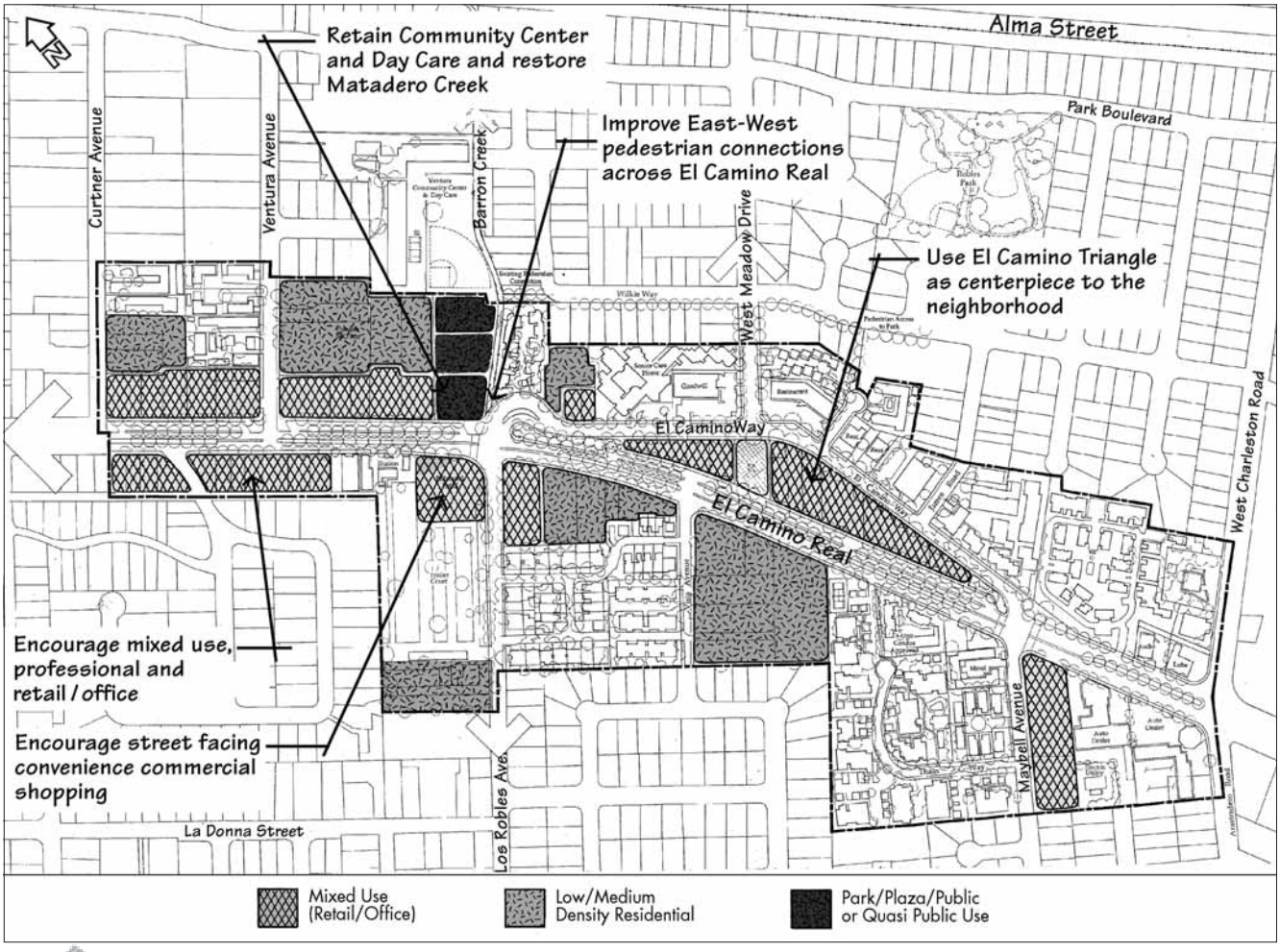
The Village is appreciated not only for its design amenities but also for the convenience of its community-serving retail shops and grocery store. These uses as well as the design character should be preserved in any future site redevelopment.

POLICY L-33:

In Town and Country Village, encourage housing development consistent with a vibrant business environment.

POLICY L-34:

Encourage improvement of pedestrian and auto circulation and landscaping improvements, including maintenance of existing oak trees and planting additional oak trees.



This diagram resulted from a one-day community workhop and is only a conceptual "starting point" for future planning efforts in the South El Camino Real area.

South El Camino Real

See also Policy B-25, Program B-12, and Program T-16

POLICY L-35:

Establish the South El Camino Real area as a well-designed, compact, vital, Multi-neighborhood Center with diverse uses, a mix of one-, two-, and three-story buildings, and a network of pedestrian-oriented streets and ways.

South El Camino Real, extending from Page Mill Road south to the Mountain View City limits, is probably the City's most recalcitrant community design problem. Prior to the 1950s, El Camino Real was a two-lane state highway connecting the towns along the Peninsula. Beginning in the 1960s, the highway was progressively widened and redesigned to prevailing state highway standards. Older buildings and mature trees were removed in the process, resulting in the visually stark and discordant image still evident today.

Automotive and other service commercial uses have been replaced, through City downzoning in 1978 and 1984, by higher density housing along some segments of the highway. A sign amortization program, tree planting program, and design guidelines have improved the appearance somewhat but substantial design challenges remain. Creating a pedestrian-oriented environment is difficult in the face of an established pattern of auto-oriented uses, State highway design standards, and the need to protect housing from the adverse impacts of high volume traffic.

See also Goal G-5, Policy G-11 and Program G-14 on coordinated area plans

PROGRAM L-32:

Prepare a Coordinated Area Plan for the South El Camino Real area. Use the land use map from the Community Design Workshop as a starting point for preparing this Plan.

A land use diagram for a portion of South El Camino Real was prepared at one of the workshops conducted during the preparation of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan. The diagram contains useful recommendations and should be consulted as more specific design concepts for the area are prepared.

Consider the following elements for development within the South El Camino Real area:

The intersection of Ventura Avenue and El Camino Real presents an opportunity for improved pedestrian connections across El Camino Real to link the Ventura and Barron Park neighborhoods.

- Retail and professional office space along El Camino Real, including Mixed Use Retail/Office development.
- Reuse of some of the existing motel sites, including potential Single Room Occupancy hotels.
- Community center and child care uses.
- A publicly-accessible neighborhood focal point at the El Camino Triangle, with new Mixed Use (Retail/Office) buildings and links to the Ventura neighborhood.
- Improve pedestrian connections across El Camino Real.

PROGRAM L-33:

Study ways to make South El Camino Real more pedestrian-friendly, including redesigning the street to provide wider sidewalks, safe pedestrian crossings at key intersections, street trees, and streetscape improvements.

Redesigning South El Camino Real to boulevard standards was considered but ultimately rejected in favor of continuing accommodations for automobile traffic, and reserving space for a future light rail extension from Mountain View. Two design interventions are proposed to give a more coherent image to the street. First, two-story structures with retail-oriented street frontage and rear parking should be encouraged. Second, redesign of the public right-of-way should be encouraged to make it more suitable for pedestrians without reducing the number of travel lanes. These improvements should be focused at retail nodes and along segments of the street where they can benefit from existing positive design features, such as street trees.

PROGRAM L-34:

Provide better connections across El Camino Real to bring the Ventura and Barron Park neighborhoods together and to improve linkages to local schools and parks.

POLICY L-36:

Allow a full range of office and retail uses on shallow parcels along South El Camino Real, subject to adequate buffering from adjacent residential uses.

PROGRAM L-35:

Consider Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) as a tool to encourage re-development and/or community-serving amenities along South El Camino Real.

See also Policy B-27

Neighborhood Centers

Alma Plaza, Charleston Center, Edgewood Plaza, Midtown

POLICY L-37:

Maintain the scale and local-serving focus of Palo Alto's four Neighborhood Centers. Support their continued improvement and vitality.

Neighborhood Centers are smaller than Multi-neighborhood Centers and have more limited service areas. They should be pleasant, attractive places that provide opportunities for shopping as well as social contact with friends and neighbors. These three policies and three programs apply to all Neighborhood Centers. Because Midtown's parcel pattern is more complex and because the Center is bisected by two principal streets, it is the subject of additional, more focused policies and programs.

Charleston Center provides the convenience of neighborhood shopping and opportunities for socializing with friends and neighbors.

PROGRAM L-36:

Evaluate current zoning to determine if it supports the types of uses and scale of buildings considered appropriate in Neighborhood Centers.

PROGRAM L-37:

Encourage property owners within Neighborhood Centers to prepare master plans, with the participation of local businesses, property owners, and nearby residents.

POLICY L-38:

Encourage maximum use of Neighborhood Centers by ensuring that the publicly maintained areas are clean, well-lit, and attractively landscaped.

POLICY L-39:

Facilitate opportunities to improve pedestrian-oriented commercial activity within Neighborhood Centers.

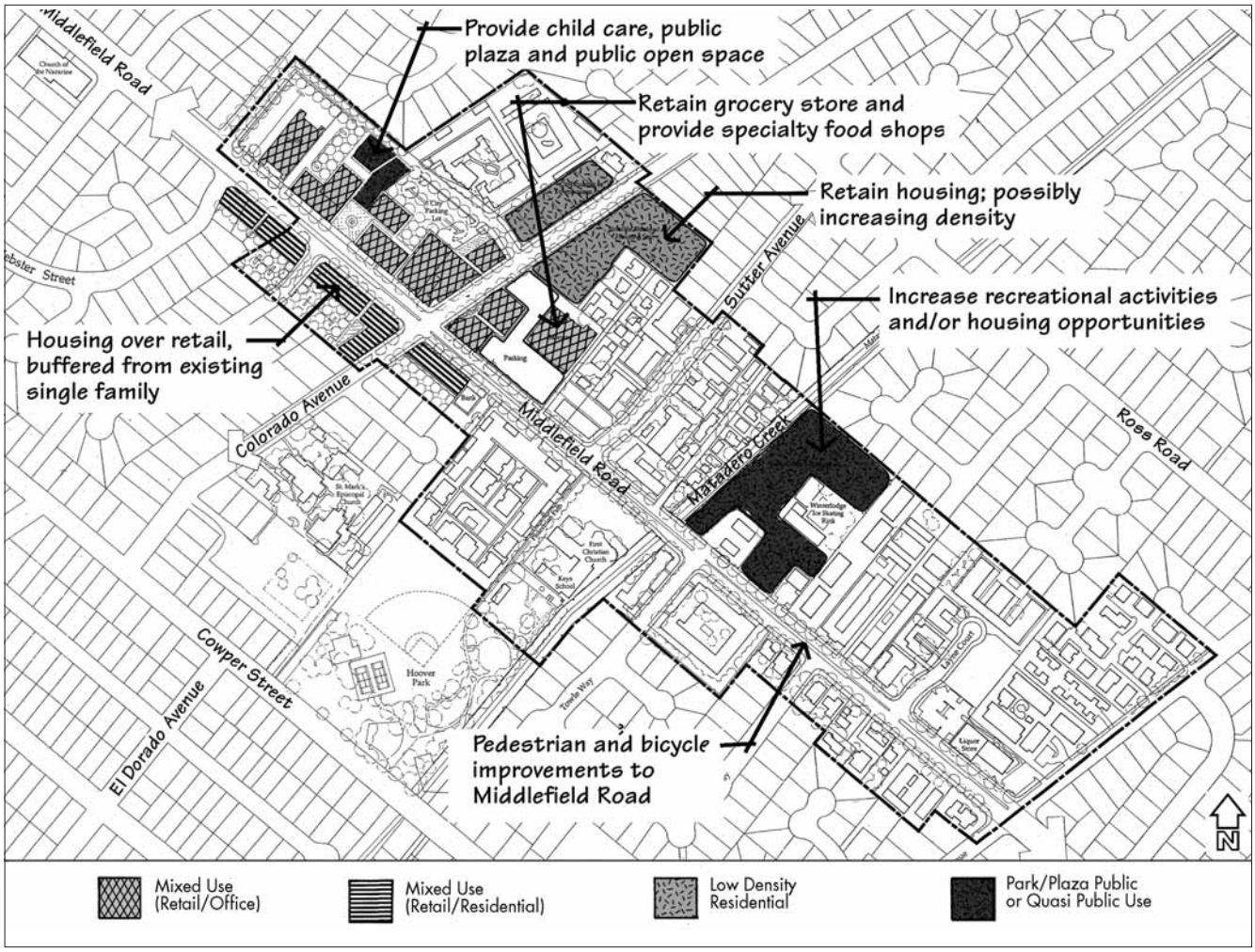
PROGRAM L-38:

Revise land use and zoning designations as needed to encourage medium-density housing (20 to 25 units per acre) within or near Neighborhood Centers served by public transportation to support a more vital mix of commercial activities.

Midtown

POLICY L-40:

Revitalize Midtown as an attractive, compact Neighborhood Center with diverse local-serving uses, a mix of one- and two-story buildings, adequate parking, and a network of pedestrian-oriented streets, ways and gathering places. Encourage retention of Midtown's grocery stores and encourage a variety of neighborhood retail shops and services.



This diagram resulted from a one-day community workshop and is only a conceptual "starting point" for future planning efforts in Midtown.

Midtown is unique among Palo Alto's Neighborhood Centers, as it is comprised of over 25 parcels with nearly as many individual owners. The area serves a number of neighborhoods in the vicinity of its two principal streets—Middlefield Road and Colorado Avenue—making traffic circulation and pedestrian safety important planning issues. Midtown should retain its fabric of small-scale, primarily local-serving commercial uses. Future decisions on public and private improvements should seek to have Midtown be a vibrant center to the surrounding neighborhoods. Owners of commercial property, working with the neighborhoods and the City, need to be active proponents of any needed additional parking.

PROGRAM L-39:

> ***Prepare a plan for Midtown with the participation of property owners, local businesses, and nearby residents. Consider the Midtown Economic Study and the land use concepts identified during the 1994 Community Design Workshop in developing the plan. The plan should have a special emphasis on public improvements, including parking, street furniture and***

Photo courtesy of Sandy Eakins

Changes to Middlefield Road in Midtown could include widened sidewalks and new street trees. The number of travel lanes might be reduced from four to two, with turn lanes, allowing for increased parking, bicycle lanes, and a planted median.

signage.

The Midtown Plan should address the appearance and location of private development, but focus primarily on improvements to the public areas, including parking, street furniture and informational signs, and address the phasing, construction and financing of improvements.

PROGRAM L-40:

Make improvements to Middlefield Road in Midtown that slow traffic, encourage commercial vitality, make the street more pedestrian-friendly, and unify the northeast and southwest sides of the commercial area, with consideration given to traffic impacts on the residential neighborhood.

See also Goal N-2 and associated policies for additional information on creeks and creek access. See also Policies L-68 and T-17 on creeks

The channelized section of Matadero Creek could be restored to a natural condition with bicycle and pedestrian paths connecting nearby neighborhoods to Midtown.

PROGRAM L-41:

Support bicycle and pedestrian trail improvements along a restored [redacted]eek within Hoover Park.

POLICY L-41:

Maintain existing residential uses within the Midtown area and encourage additional residential development.

See Map L-5 for the location of Palo Alto's Employment Districts

PROGRAM L-42:

Retain the existing housing along Colorado Avenue and consider increasing the density to allow townhouses, co-housing, and/or housing for the disabled.

EMPLOYMENT DISTRICTS

High Quality Employment Districts, Each With Their Own Distinctive Character and Each Contributing to the Character of the City as a Whole.

See also Goals T-1, T-2 and T-3 and associated Policies and Programs

Palo Alto's four Employment Districts represent a development pattern not found in other parts of the City. The Districts are characterized by large one- and two-story buildings separated by large parking lots and landscaped areas. They are accessed primarily by automobile and are typically self-contained, with limited connections to other parts of the City. Meeting daily needs such as child care, errands, and even eating usually requires a trip by car. As redevelopment occurs, design changes should shift these areas away from complete reliance on automobiles and promote pedestrian and bicycle connections to the rest of the City. Land use changes should provide a more diverse mix of services and activities.

All Employment Districts

See Program T-23 regarding sidewalks and paths in the Stanford Research Park

POLICY L-42:

Encourage Employment Districts to develop in a way that encourages transit, pedestrian and bicycle travel and reduces the number of auto trips for daily errands.

PROGRAM L-43:

Modify existing zoning regulations and create incentives for employers to provide employee services in their existing buildings—for example, office support services, restaurants, convenience stores, public gathering places, and child care facilities—to reduce the need for employees to drive to these services.

POLICY L-43:

Provide sidewalks, pedestrian paths, and connections to the citywide bikeway system within Employment Districts. Pursue opportunities to build sidewalks and paths in renovation and expansion projects.

PROGRAM L-44:

Design the paths and sidewalks to be attractive and comfortable and consistent with the character of the area where they are located.

Stanford Research Park

POLICY L-44:

Develop the Stanford Research Park as a compact employment center served by a variety of transportation modes.

The Stanford Research Park contains many research and development (R&D) uses in a campus setting. The park has about 150 companies and is the location of corporate headquarters or R&D facilities for several prominent national and international companies. In the future, the frontage along El Camino Real near California Avenue should be designed to strengthen the connection between the Research Park and the California Avenue Business District, including the California Avenue Multi-modal Transit Station.

PROGRAM L-45:

Create and apply zoning standards and design guidelines for commercial hotels and conference centers.

See also Policies B-32 and T-26

Stanford Medical Center

POLICY L-45:

Develop Stanford Medical Center in a manner that recognizes the citywide goal of compact, pedestrian-oriented development as well as the functional needs of the Medical Center.

See also Policy T-48 on parking at Stanford Medical Center

Stanford Medical Center is a major medical treatment, academic, and research facility encompassing the Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford University Hospital and its clinics, and the Lucile Salter Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford. Expansion of these facilities needs to be evaluated in the context of citywide planning goals and policies, especially related to traffic.

PROGRAM L-46:

Work with Stanford to prepare an area plan for the Stanford Medical Center.

An area plan for the Medical Center should address building locations, floor area ratios, height limits, and parking requirements. It should discuss the preservation of historic and open space resources and the protection of views and view corridors. The plan should describe improvements to the streetscape and circulation pattern that will improve pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and auto connections.

See also Policy B-33 regarding affordable office space

East Bayshore and San Antonio Road / Bayshore Corridor

POLICY L-46:

Maintain the East Bayshore and San Antonio Road/Bayshore Corridor areas as diverse business and light industrial districts.

These areas provide valuable space for small businesses and support services. The design of new or redeveloped buildings and landscaping, particularly northeast of the Bayshore Freeway, should reflect the area's location near the baylands. Connections to the nearby baylands should be strengthened by taking advantage of views and improving bicycle and pedestrian connections to the open space area.

POLICY L-47:

Consider the East Meadow Circle Area as a potential site for higher density housing that provides a transition between existing housing and

nearby industrial development.

The East Meadow Circle Area is adjacent to single family residential neighborhoods on the north and west. If major redevelopment occurs in this area, it could provide a location for [redacted] including a component of neighborhood commercial uses would benefit residents of existing homes in the area as well as the new homes. Presently, the nearest commercial center is Charleston Center, more than a mile away.

PROGRAM L-47:

Undertake a Community Design Workshop for the East Meadow Circle Area.

DESIGN OF BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC SPACES

Buildings

Well-designed Buildings that Create Coherent Development Patterns and Enhance City Streets and Public Spaces.

Palo Alto has many buildings of outstanding architectural merit representing a variety of styles and periods. Among them are neoclassical buildings from the turn of the century, mission revival buildings designed in the 1920s and 30s, California modernist residences of the 1950s and 1960s, and contemporary buildings of recent decades. The buildings that have been most valued by residents over the years are those that are built of quality materials, show evidence of craftsmanship, fit with their surroundings, and help make neighborhoods comfortable and appealing. To help achieve quality design, the Architectural Review Board reviews buildings and site design for commercial and multi-family residential projects. In recent years, both commercial and residential buildings in Palo Alto have received regional and national design recognition.

POLICY L-48:

Promote high quality, creative design and site planning that is compatible with surrounding development and public spaces.

See also Program G-17 regarding an illustrated zoning ordinance

PROGRAM L-48:

Use the Zoning Ordinance, design review process, design guidelines, and Coordinated Area Plans to ensure high quality residential and commercial design.

Building entries, windows, and human-scale design features help to enliven streets and other public spaces, making them safer and more interesting.

PROGRAM L-49:

In areas of the City having a historic or consistent design character, design new development to maintain and support the existing character.

POLICY L-49:

Design buildings to revitalize streets and public spaces and to enhance a sense of community and personal safety. Provide an ordered variety of entries, porches, windows, bays and balconies along public ways where it is consistent with neighborhood character; avoid blank or solid walls at street level; and include human-scale details and massing.

PROGRAM L-50:

Undertake a comprehensive review of residential and commercial zoning requirements to identify additional architectural standards that should be incorporated to implement Policy L-49.

PROGRAM L-51:

Use illustrations and form code methods for simplifying the Zoning Ordinance and to promote well-designed buildings.

PROGRAM L-52:

Discourage the use of fences that obscure the view of houses.

Tall fences along the street make the street both less appealing and less safe. Even the houses and yards behind tall fences are thought by law enforcement officers to be less safe when closed off from view. Being able to see private homes and gardens as you pass down the street conveys a sense that people are nearby and shows the special character of the neighborhood. While tall hedges can sometimes have the same undesirable effects as walls, they usually are more attractive and, in some areas, are an important component of neighborhood character. Both hedges and walls should be used in a way that permits views of the house from the street.

POLICY L-50:

Encourage high quality signage that is attractive, appropriate for the location and balances visibility needs with aesthetic needs.

PROGRAM L-53:

Promote awards programs and other forms of public recognition for projects of architectural merit that contribute positively to the community.

Historic Character

Conservation and Preservation of Palo Alto's Historic Buildings, Sites, and Districts.

Palo Alto has a rich stock of historic buildings, some predating the City's establishment in 1894. The City's Historic Inventory identifies approximately 400 buildings of historical merit. There are 12 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. There are also two National Register historic districts in the City: the Ramona Street District and the Professorville District. The "El Palo Alto" redwood tree, believed to be the site of a 1776 encampment of the Portola Expedition, is one of 19 sites in town that are registered California Points of Historical Interest. Seven sites or structures are listed on the California Register of Historic Landmarks, including the garage at 367 Addison that was the birthplace of Hewlett-Packard. The length of

See also Policy L-14 on the relationships of buildings to the street

See also Program B-9 about revising the sign ordinance

See Map L-7 for the location of historic districts, buildings of historic merit, and other historic resources

Buildings on the National Register of Historic Places

- Downing House
  706 Cowper St.
- Dunkir House
  420 Maple St.
- Fraternal Hall
  140 University Ave.
- Kee House
  2310 Yale Ave.
- Norris House
  1247 Cowper St.
- Pedro de Lemos House
  100-110 Waverley Oaks
- PettigrewHouse
  1336 Cowper St.
- Post Office
  300 Hamilton St.
- Southern Pacific Depot
  95 University Ave.
- Squire House
  900 University Ave.
- YWCA Hostess House
  25 University Ave.
- Wilson House
  860 University Ave.

El Camino Real from San Francisco to San Diego, including the section that passes through Palo Alto, is a State Historic Landmark.

POLICY L-51:

Encourage public and private upkeep and preservation of resources that have historic merit, including residences listed in the Historic Inventory.

PROGRAM L-54:

Review and update the City's Inventory of historic resources including City-owned structures.

PROGRAM L-55:

Reassess the Historic Preservation Ordinance to ensure its effectiveness in the maintenance and preservation of historic resources, particularly in the University Avenue/Downtown area.

Photo courtesy of Sandy Eakins

A subdivision exception was granted in 1996 to preserve the gateway and attached wall, entry to the Pedro de Lemos Hacienda.

PROGRAM L-56:

Maintain and strengthen the design review procedure for exterior remodeling or demolition of historic resources. Discourage demolition of historic resources and severely restrict demolition of Landmark resources.

PROGRAM L-57:

Encourage salvage of discarded historic building materials.

PROGRAM L-58:

For proposed exterior alterations or additions to designated Historic Landmarks, require design review findings that the proposed changes are in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.

POLICY L-52:

Encourage the preservation of significant historic resources owned by

the City of Palo Alto. Allow such resources to be altered to meet contemporary needs, provided that the preservations standards adopted by the City Council are satisfied.

POLICY L-53:

Actively seek state and federal funding for the preservation of buildings of historical merit and consider public/private partnerships for capital and program improvements.

POLICY L-54:

Support the goals and objectives of the Statewide Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan for California.

POLICY L-55:

Relocation may be considered as a preservation strategy when consistent with State and National Standards

Photo courtesy of Sandy Eakins

An exemption from on-site parking requirements helped preserve the historic Byxbee House *(left)* and the early 20th Century garden at the Dr. Thomas M. and Dora Moody Williams Park *(above)*.

regarding the relocation of historic resources.

POLICY L-56:

To reinforce the scale and character of University Avenue/Downtown, promote the preservation of significant historic buildings.

Older buildings may be at a disadvantage because of the expense and specialized skills needed to adapt them for contemporary use. This is particularly true where seismic strengthening is needed or where the site cannot accommodate current parking requirements. In some cases, the use for which the building was designed is not even allowed by current zoning. The following programs are intended to help overcome these obstacles and enable older buildings to be more competitive with new development.

PROGRAM L-59:

See also Policies B-19 and B-20 and Programs N-64 and N-65

Allow parking exceptions for historic buildings to encourage rehabilitation. Require design review findings that the historic integrity of the building exterior will be maintained.

PROGRAM L-60:

Continue to use a TDR Ordinance to allow the transfer of development rights from designated buildings of historic significance in the Commercial Downtown (CD) zone to non-historic receiver sites in the CD zone. Planned Community (PC) zone properties in the Downtown also qualify for this program.

POLICY L-57:

Develop incentives for the retention and rehabilitation of buildings with historic merit in all zones.

PROGRAM L-61:

Allow nonconforming uses for the life of historic buildings.

See also State Health and Safety Code Section 18950 and 18951

PROGRAM L-62:

Promote awards programs and other forms of public recognition for exemplary Historic Preservation projects.

PROGRAM L-63:

Streamline, to the maximum extent feasible, any future processes for design review of historic structures to eliminate unnecessary delay and uncertainty for the applicant and to encourage historic preservation.

PROGRAM L-64:

Encourage and assist owners of historically significant buildings in finding ways to adapt and restore these buildings, including participation in state and federal tax relief programs.

POLICY L-58:

Promote adaptive reuse of old buildings.

Part of what makes Palo Alto's business districts and neighborhoods so interesting is the juxtaposition of buildings from different eras. This richness of character can be preserved by "adaptively reusing" or updating older buildings instead of tearing them down and replacing them. Even when the buildings are not historic, their reuse can help maintain the scale and visual interest of the City or a business district.

POLICY L-59:

Follow the procedures established in the State Public Resources Code for the protection of designated historic buildings damaged by earthquake or other natural disaster.

The State Historical Building Code is found in Part 2.7 of the California Health and Safety Code

The State Public Resources Code establishes a procedure for determining whether structures listed on National, State, or local public registers of historic places that are damaged in an earthquake or other natural disaster may be demolished or significantly altered. The Code prohibits demolition unless the structures present an imminent threat of bodily harm to the public or damage to adjacent property, or unless the State Office of Historic Preservation determines that the structures may be demolished. The State Code provides that local govern-

ments may request a determination about demolition from the State Office of Historic Preservation, which then reviews the buildings with the participation of a team of three local residents. After this team has conducted their review of the buildings, the State Historic Preservation Office may approve demolition of the buildings.

PROGRAM L-65:

Seek additional innovative ways to apply current codes and ordinances to older buildings. Use the State Historical Building Code for designated historic buildings.

The Uniform Building Code, adopted by the City Council, allows flexibility in the way that code requirements for repairs, alterations, and additions are applied to designated historic buildings. Since 1985, the State Historical Building Code has been mandatory for all agencies and jurisdictions in California with designated historic buildings.

PROGRAM L-66:

Revise existing zoning and permit regulations as needed to minimize constraints to adaptive reuse, particularly in retail areas.

POLICY L-60:

Protect Palo Alto's archaeological resources.

The Palo Alto area is known to have been inhabited by indigenous people for many centuries prior to the arrival of the first Europeans. Discoveries of the "Stanford Man" skeletons near San Francisquito Creek at Stanford indicate human presence as early as 7,600 years ago. Over 50 [redacted]ys have been conducted in Palo Alto in association with specific projects but no systematic citywide survey aimed at locating all sites has been undertaken. There may still be undiscovered archaeological resources in many parts of the City. Such resources are most likely to occur near the original locations of streams and springs and northeast of El Camino Real near old tidelands.

PROGRAM L-67:

Using the archaeological sensitivity map in the Comprehensive Plan as a guide, continue to assess the need for archaeological surveys and mitigation plans on a project by

See Map L-8 for known areas of archaeological sensitivity

On Saturday mornings a civic facility is transformed into a public gathering place when people come to the colorful Farmer's Market held in this public parking lot.

project basis, consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

Civic Uses

See also Policy C-4 and associated programs on the use of schools for community purposes

Attractive and Safe Civic and Cultural Facilities Provided in All Neighborhoods and Maintained and Used in Ways that Foster and Enrich Public Life.

Palo Alto has a variety of schools, cultural, and civic facilities located throughout the community. These facilities can take on a more multifaceted role, serving as a center for public life in neighborhoods that do not have a commercial center close by. This role can be encouraged by physical changes that create informal gathering places, bicycle and pedestrian access, lighting for night time use, and in some cases, small-scale retail services such as cafes.

POLICY L-61:
Promote the use of community and cultural centers, libraries, local schools, parks, and other community facilities as gathering places. Ensure that they are inviting and safe places that can deliver a variety of community services during both daytime and evening hours.

PROGRAM L-68:
To help satisfy present and future community use needs, coordinate with the School District to educate the public about and to plan for the future use of school sites, including providing space for public gathering places for neighborhoods lacking space.

PROGRAM L-69:
Enhance all entrances to Mitchell Park Community Center so that they are more inviting and facilitate public gatherings.

PROGRAM L-70:
Study the potential for landscaping or park furniture that would promote neighborhood parks as outdoor gathering places and centers of neighborhood activity.

POLICY L-62:
Provide comfortable seating areas and plazas with places for public art adjacent to library and community center entrances.

POLICY L-63:
[redacted]mall-scale local-serving retail services, such as small cafes, delicatessens, and coffee carts, in Civic Centers.

POLICY L-64:
Seek potential new sites for art and cultural facilities, public spaces, open space, and community gardens that encourage and support pedestrian and bicycle travel and person-to-person contact, particularly in neighborhoods that lack these amenities.

POLICY L-65:
Encourage religious and private institutions to provide facilities that promote a sense of community and are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Attractive, Inviting Public Spaces and Streets that Enhance the Image and Character of the City.

Streets and Paths

POLICY L-66:

Maintain an aesthetically pleasing street network that helps frame and define the community while meeting the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

As a public space, the street is one of the most important design elements that the City can control. Often, the character of the street is even more important than the buildings in forming the image of a particular neighborhood. In fact, Palo Alto's reputation as a gracious residential community is greatly enhanced by the pleasing qualities of its best streets fine street trees, well-kept lawns, ample setbacks, and attractive planting areas. These qualities give many neighborhoods a memorable and distinctive character.

See also Program L-32 on the South El Camino Real area Coordinated Area Plan

POLICY L-67:

Balance traffic circulation needs with the goal of creating walkable neighborhoods that are designed and oriented towards pedestrians.

A number of design components determine whether a street will be more than just a conduit for cars. They include its width; the proportion of areas reserved for pedestrians; the size, texture, and location of street trees and other plantings; provisions for bicycles; the height and setbacks of abutting buildings; changes in the ground plane at curbs; planting areas and crosswalks; the color and texture of paving materials; and the amount and speed of traffic. Many of Palo Alto's streets are exemplary civic spaces. Others, particularly those laid out after World War II, are too wide and encourage fast traffic. Such streets lack the proportions and sense of enclosure that make pedestrians feel comfortable. A few, like El Camino Real, serve only to move traffic and have a negative effect on community design.

See Map L-4 for locations of natural creeks and open space areas. Also see Program L-41 on Matadero Creek restoration

POLICY L-68:

Integrate creeks and green spaces with the street and pedestrian/bicycle path system.

Page Mill Road/Oregon Expressway connects the City to the baylands and foothills, and provides one of several scenic routes in Palo Alto.

See Map L-4 showing community design features and the location of scenic routes

Open spaces ranging from pocket parks to large community parks are interspersed throughout Palo Alto. In addition, portions of four creeks that run through the City remain in a natural condition. The parks and natural areas are an important part of the City's character and also provide habitat for wildlife. They bring the sounds and sights of nature into the urban environment, adding visual interest and enriching daily life in the city. Streets and paths should be located to take advantage of these areas and make them accessible on an everyday basis whenever possible. This has already been done at places like Timothy Hopkins Park and Palo Alto Avenue, located along San Francisquito Creek and providing a favorite location for strolling, jogging, sitting, and cycling. Other bicycle and pedestrian routes to popular destinations could also be designed to pass through parks or natural areas.

Scenic Routes

POLICY L-69:

Preserve the scenic qualities of Palo Alto roads and trails for motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians.

PROGRAM L-71:

Recognize Sand Hill Road, University Avenue, Embarcadero Road, Page Mill Road, Oregon Expressway, Interstate 280, Arastradero Road (west of Foothill Expressway), Junipero Serra Boulevard/Foothill Expressway, and Skyline Boulevard as scenic routes.

The roads described in Program L-71 have particularly high scenic value:

- **Sand Hill Road** provides a linkage between El Camino Real, a State Historic Route, and Interstate 280, a California Scenic Highway. The proposed intersection of Sand Hill Road and El Camino Real is located adjacent to the north gateway into Palo Alto at the San Francisquito Creek Bridge. It is here that the relationship of the scenic corridor to the creek is most obvious, as an approximately 1,500 foot long segment of wooded and riparian vegetation remains open to public views on the northwest side of the scenic route. The Sand Hill Road scenic corridor is designed to modern arterial standards, with development along major segments of its extent. Adjacent land uses include the Stanford Shopping Center, housing, medical, professional, research and development, and administrative office uses, among others. The scenic route is characterized by its broad setbacks and rural, oak-dominated landscaping. Informal groupings of oak trees, California natives, and eucalyptus set in natural grasses and wildflowers are the common landscape elements. Significant portions of the roadway are visually enhanced with planted medians, containing trees and shrubs that either extend the rural landscape theme, or provide a more formal landscape character, as in that portion of the route that adjoins the Stanford Shopping Center. As it approaches the scenic Junipero Serra Boulevard and Interstate 280, the undeveloped foothills are a significant scenic element of the background landscape.
- **University Avenue** extends from the Bayshore Freeway west to El Camino Real. Northeast of Middlefield Road, it is a curving street lined with gracious magnolia trees. Stately residences like the historic Squire House make University Avenue a visually striking and memorable entrance to Palo Alto. West of Middlefield, the street traverses Downtown. For several blocks, it is lined with sycamore trees and attractive historic and

modern buildings. Further west, it leads into Palm Drive, the formal entrance to Stanford University.

- **Embarcadero Road** from Harbor Road to El Camino Real provides the main access to the Palo Alto baylands. West of the Bayshore Freeway, the road is lined with trees and several homes of historic interest and serves as a secondary entrance to Stanford University. Northeast of the Freeway, the road affords expansive views of open space as well as the site of historic Wilson's Landing.
- **Page Mill Road/Oregon Expressway** link the Bayshore Freeway to Interstate 280. Northeast of El Camino Real, a wide right-of-way and ample landscaping make the Oregon Expressway portion of the corridor visually pleasing. Further west, the corridor has wide setbacks within Stanford Research Park. Design requirements imposed by Stanford University have set a high aesthetic standard for this segment. West of Interstate 280, Page Mill Road climbs steeply through native woodlands and grasslands towards Skyline Boulevard. Views are exhilarating as one approaches Skyline Boulevard. Skyline is a State-designated scenic highway.

Regularly spaced street trees provide coherence and help make the street memorable. This is especially important where buildings are not a consistent scale and style.

- **Arastradero Road** winds through the lower foothills and leads to scenic Alpine Road in Portola Valley. To protect views and scenic qualities, Palo Alto has established a 200-foot setback along upper Page Mill Road, Skyline Boulevard, and the portion of Arastradero Road in the lower foothills.
- **Foothill Expressway-Junipero Serra Boulevard** is extensively bordered by undeveloped Stanford lands. Where development exists, large setback requirements maintain a

rural character on the western edge of the City.

See Map L-4 for the location of primary community gateways

Street Trees

POLICY L-70:

Enhance the appearance of streets and other public spaces by expanding and maintaining Palo Alto's street tree system.

Palo Alto is fortunate to have an excellent street tree system with many positive design qualities. Regular spacing of trees that are similar in form and texture provides order and coherence and gives scale to the street. A canopy of branches and leaves provides shade for pedestrians and creates a sense of enclosure and comfort. On the City's most memorable streets, trees of a single species are planted at regular intervals, usually 25 to 30 feet apart. They often continue

Illustration by Canan Tolon

The south gateway to the City on El Camino Real should be strengthened with a variety of improvements, including a new entry sign, landscaping of the median, and new trees.

to the corners of blocks, reducing the apparent width of streets and intersections and defining the street as a continuous space. Protecting, maintaining, and enhancing the street tree system is among the most effective ways to improve the appearance of the City.

Gateways

POLICY L-71:

Strengthen the identity of important community gateways, including the entrances to the City at Highway 101, El Camino Real and Middlefield Road; the Caltrain stations; entries to commercial districts; and Embarcadero Road at El Camino Real.

Community identity is strengthened when the entrances to the City are clear and memorable. One entrance in particular targeted for improvement is the University Avenue Multi-modal Transit Station. A Coordinated Area Plan for this area offers a long-term solution, but there are also short-term measures that should be pursued. Minor changes to sidewalks and planting areas at University and Alma could provide a safer, more inviting pedestrian connection between the Transit Station and University Avenue/Downtown.

PROGRAM L-72:

Develop a strategy to enhance gateway sites with special landscaping, art, public spaces, and/or public buildings. Emphasize the creek bridges and riparian settings at the entrances to the City over Adobe Creek and San Francisquito Creek.

Natural features like creeks make particularly evocative boundaries. The City is fortunate to have portions of both its northern and southern borders formed by creeks. There are opportunities for distinctive gateways that highlight the connection between the City and its natural setting at the bridges across these creeks on El Camino Real, Sand Hill Road, Middlefield Road, University Avenue, and Chaucer Street.

For more about Palo Alto's rich collection of public art, log on to the City of Palo Alto website, arts and culture page: www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/palo/city/artsculture/welcome.html

Photo courtesy of Arts and Culture Division

Public Art

POLICY L-72:

Promote and maintain public art and cultural facilities throughout Palo Alto. Ensure that such projects are compatible with the character and identity of the surrounding neighborhood.

Palo Alto has a tradition of enriching public spaces with works of art, ranging from the subtle inclusion of hand crafted artifacts into building architecture to the more traditional displays of sculpture at civic locations. While the City has no public art

Public art can enrich any environment, whether the setting is urban, suburban or natural.

Photo courtesy of Sandy Eakins

requirement, there is a growing public sentiment to explore new ways to integrate artwork into new development projects.

POLICY L-73:

Consider public art and cultural facilities as a public benefit in connection with new development projects. Consider incentives for including public art in large development projects.

Some private and public development projects now include some form of artwork that enlivens public spaces. A series of amusing trompe l'oeil paintings on Downtown buildings painted by artist Greg Brown was originally done in the 1970s. The paintings are now so popular that private developers have begun adding to the series. The City Utilities Department, in 1993, used a whimsically painted temporary fence rather than a more traditional fence to enclose an electrical substation. The goal is to seize every opportunity to provide art in public places throughout the City.

POLICY L-74:

Use the work of artists, craftspeople, architects, and landscape architects in the design and improvement of public spaces.

Parking Lots

POLICY L-75:

Minimize the negative physical impacts of parking lots. Locate parking behind buildings or underground wherever possible.

Parking lots occupy large amounts of surface area in the City. They should be viewed as opportunities for open space and outdoor amenities rather than just repositories for cars. Consider including public art in parking lots and parking structures.

PROGRAM L-73:

Revise the Zoning Ordinance to require the location of parking lots behind buildings rather than in front of them, under appropriate conditions.

PROGRAM L-74:

Modify zoning standards pertaining to parking lot layout and landscaping for land uses within Employment Districts.

POLICY L-76:

Require trees and other landscaping within parking lots.

Parking lots should be designed to include trees and landscaping. They should be pleasant for pedestrians and designed to encourage travel on foot to other destinations after arrival.

PROGRAM L-75:

Consider Zoning Ordinance amendments for parking lot landscaping, including requiring a variety of drought-tolerant, relatively litter-free tree species capable of forming a 50 percent tree canopy within 10 to 15 years. Consider further amendments that would require existing nonconforming lots to come into compliance wherever possible.

POLICY L-77:

Encourage alternatives to surface parking lots to minimize the amount of land that must be devoted to parking, provided that economic and

traffic safety goals can still be achieved.

PROGRAM L-76:

Evaluate parking requirements and actual parking needs for specific uses. Develop design criteria based on a standard somewhere between average and peak conditions.

See also Program N-34 on permeable paving materials.

PROGRAM L-77:

Revise parking requirements to encourage creative solutions such as valet parking, landscaped parking reserves, satellite parking, and others that minimize the use of open land for parking.

PROGRAM L-78:

Encourage the use of Planned Community (PC) zoning for parking structures Downtown and in the California Avenue area.

POLICY L-78:

Encourage development that creatively integrates parking into the project by providing for shared use of parking areas.

See also Policy L-22 regarding sidewalk repair.

Infrastructure

POLICY L-79:

Design public infrastructure, including paving, signs, utility structures, parking garages and parking lots to meet high quality urban design standards. Look for opportunities to use art and artists in the design of public infrastructure. Remove or mitigate elements of existing infrastructure that are unsightly or visually disruptive.

See also Policy C-24 and Policy N-24 and related Programs on maintenance of City infrastructure.

Capital improvement projects represent substantial public investments. Areas of high pedestrian traffic, especially Centers, should have priority for infrastructure repair. While the purpose of infrastructure is usually utilitarian or functional, attention to design details can add beauty to the City or even remedy an urban design defect. For example, replacing a sidewalk can provide an opportunity to create larger tree wells and provide new street trees.

PROGRAM L-79:

Undertake a coordinated effort by the Public Works, Utilities, and Planning Departments to establish design standards for public infrastructure and examine the effectiveness of City street, sidewalk and street tree maintenance programs.

PROGRAM L-80:

Continue the citywide undergrounding of utility wires. Minimize the impacts of undergrounding on street tree root systems and planting areas.

PROGRAM L-81:

Encourage the use of compact and well-designed utility elements, such as transformers, switching devices, and backflow preventers. Place these elements in locations that will minimize their visual intrusion.