CITY OF PALO ALTO
DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN

Draft 10/93

CITY COUNCIL:
Ron Andersen
Mike Cobb
Gary Fazzino
Joseph Huber
Liz Kniss
Jean McCown
Dick Rosenbaum
Joe Simitian
Lanie Wheeler

URBAN DESIGN COMMITTEE:
Shirley Wilson, Chair
Ken Alsman*
Tony Carrasco
Bob Evans*
Robert Frank
Bruce Fukuji
Jane Goldstein*
Joseph Huber*
Betty Meltzer
John Montgomery
Roxy Rapp
Linda Scott
Aino Vieira-Da-Rosa*
David Zink-Brody

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING:
Ken Schreiber
Sarah Cheney
Jim Gilliland
Gloria Humble
Carol Jansen
Toby Kramer*
Nancy Lytle
Lori Topley

CONSULTANTS:
David Gates and Associates

* Past Committee Members and former staff

The Urban Design Committee would like to thank the City Council of 1987, whose authorization made this plan possible: Betsy Bechtel, Mike Cobb, Ellen Fletcher, Larry Klein, Leland Levy, Frank Patitucci, Emily Renzel, Jack Sutorius, Gail Wooley. Credit for illustrations to Bob Frank, David Gates, and Terry Beaubois. Special thanks to Susan Wexler and Sandy Eakins for their contributions to the final plan.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement of Intent</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How This Plan Was Developed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How This Plan Is Organized</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Should Use This Plan</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking Ahead</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Basic Plan</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Retail Core</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Downtown Entries</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Civic and Commercial Centers</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Alma Street Boulevard</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commercial and Residential Edges</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pedestrian Ways</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Districts</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Guideline Concepts</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Avenue</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Cross Axis</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowper Center</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Street</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lytton Avenue</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton Avenue</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South of Forest (SOFA) Commercial District</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture Guidelines</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Improvement Guidelines</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>A-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food for Thought</td>
<td>A-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical and Environmental Context</td>
<td>A-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Parking Lots</td>
<td>A-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P District Zoning Regulations</td>
<td>A-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved Sidewalk Treatments</td>
<td>A-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Downtown Zoning Map</td>
<td>A-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STATEMENT OF INTENT

The concepts presented in this plan have the potential to enhance the quality of downtown and ensure that it retains its appeal and attraction. However, it is important to emphasize that this plan is intended to guide downtown development and amenities, and is not intended to be binding or regulatory in nature. Implementation of this plan is expected to occur over the long-term rather than the short-term. Some of the public improvements could take many years to complete. In the interim, any actions that are taken should take the general direction outlined in the plan into account. The Urban Design Committee hopes that it can be inspiring and help to create unique, vibrant, visually and intellectually nourishing spaces.
INTRODUCTION

What is it about Palo Alto that allows it to be selected repeatedly by the San Francisco Chronicle as the Bay Area's best city? Why do people from up and down the Peninsula come to the Downtown to browse at a bookstore, see a foreign film, meet friends for dinner, or find that special gift? What makes Palo Alto's Downtown the envy of and model for other cities attempting to revitalize and strengthen their own downtowns? How can the Downtown retain that special status with increased competition from surrounding peninsula cities? Can the wonderful qualities that make Downtown Palo Alto special be enhanced and improved through urban design?

These were just a few of the questions raised by the City Council in 1987, when the Temporary Committee on Downtown Amenities presented their recommendation that the City prepare an Urban Design Plan. The Amenities Committee was an outgrowth of the 1984-1986 Downtown Study, which generally resulted in stricter development regulations, such as more restrictive floor area allowances, and an overall development cap, for the downtown. The Amenities committee was charged with developing information and incentives to encourage private developments to provide a variety of public amenities in the downtown area. One of the recommendations presented to the Council was that an Urban Design Plan be prepared for the Downtown. While architectural control through the Architectural Review Board had long been in effect, the Amenities Committee strongly believed, and the City Council concurred, that opportunities for the downtown area could not be maximized without the guidance of such a plan.

PURPOSE

Palo Alto's downtown boundaries are not easily recognizable today. This plan strives to better define the downtown area to ensure a downtown that provides memorable experiences for the user. Downtown should be an exciting and desirable place not only for the pedestrian, but for the retailer as well. In light of these goals, countless individual architectural decisions, without awareness of their context and urban design consequences, are apt to shortchange the public areas of Downtown. Architecture in Palo Alto should be innovative and varied, but the cumulative effect might be disappointing if the exterior spaces and building forms are weak and fragmented. Having individual buildings that are exciting and attractive is not enough to create the strong organizing patterns that are essential to all outstanding urban cities and towns. The spaces around those buildings must also be strong and eventful, with form and character. Public spaces must be transformed from remote and impersonal spaces to the traditional commons where people gather, connect and build community. Artists and public art can also be uniquely helpful in achieving these goals. Architects and urban designers are urged to consider the use of art and artists in projects from their inception rather than as "add-ons" in the design process. The Public Art Commission can function as a helpful facilitator in bringing new vitality and a sense of place to Palo Alto. Urban Planners use the idea of creating outdoor rooms and connections between them, whether a small courtyard or the visual enclosure of a large open space, to make public spaces more attractive. These are the spaces which provide people using the Downtown with the positive experience that planners and architects strive earnestly to define and create - the "sense of place".
The Plaza Ramona Development at 250 University Avenue contributed to the improvement of a sense of place for downtown.

**HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED**

In September 1987, the City Council appointed a ten member Urban Design Committee to prepare this plan. Initial direction provided by the Council was to produce a comprehensive document of policies and guidelines describing the physical form of Downtown Palo Alto. The plan was to be in a form that could be used to help developers and designers in understanding the objectives for downtown development, with reference to public amenities and facilities.

Additionally, the plan was intended to serve as a master plan to guide public improvements and art in public places.

The Committee met on numerous occasions over a four year period, initially gathering information and observing downtown, and then developing the recommendations and graphics presentations to be included in the Plan. The sketches, drawings and ideas that resulted from the Committee’s many creative sessions, including walking tours and detailed inventories of existing downtown features, eventually formed the basis of the plan.

[A paragraph explaining the public review and outreach for this Draft Plan will be inserted here.]
HOW THIS PLAN IS ORGANIZED

This plan is organized into three major parts:

• **INTRODUCTION.** The Introduction describes the need for an Urban Design Plan and the issues which it addresses.

• **THE PLAN.** This section presents the plan itself and consists of four elements:
  
  • The *Guiding Principles* are the conceptual foundation upon which the remainder of the plan is based.
  
  • The *Basic Plan* provides an overview and geographic framework for improving the major functional areas of the downtown, such as the retail core and the entries.
  
  • *Districts*, as distinct and recognizable parts of a downtown, are important elements lending vitality and identity. For each district in downtown Palo Alto, a summary of its strengths and weaknesses, and a statement of goals to be considered, is identified.
  
  • *Architecture and Public Improvement Guidelines* that apply to all districts identified by the plan are contained in these two sections.
  
• **IMPLEMENTATION.** The implementation section provides direction and suggestions as to how the concepts and public improvements identified by this plan can be carried out. The specific ways in which the City, and downtown property owners and merchants, can be active in implementation of the plan are outlined in the "Implementation" section beginning on page 73.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS PLAN

This plan is intended to be used as a resource reference in conjunction with existing zoning regulations and Comprehensive Plan policies.

• *Project Sponsors* such as architects, interior designers, contractors and developers should first review the plan for those areas and guidelines that are applicable to their project, then they should interpret the guidelines in the design of the proposed project.

• *Planning Staff* should use this as a reference when reviewing proposed projects, and make appropriate suggestions to project sponsors to improve their projects. In addition, city staff should use this document developing public capital improvement projects.

• The *Architectural Review Board, Planning Commission* and *City Council* should use this resource reference in reviewing proposed projects and in formulating future city projects and capital improvements.

• *Civic groups* and *downtown merchant groups* may use the document to help protect the characteristics that are currently valued in downtown Palo Alto and to effect needed change to make the downtown area better. *Property owners and tenants* in specific areas may wish to work together to fund some of the civic improvements identified in these resource references to create a strong district image. As the first improvements are completed, other property owners and tenants will likely be inspired to follow suit.
LOOKING AHEAD:

The desirability of the downtown and confidence of property owners to reinvest is evidenced in the significant and recent redevelopment efforts which have occurred, including the new Thoits Building at 156 University Avenue, Whole Foods Market at 774 Emerson Street, Plaza Ramona at 250 University Avenue, the remodeled PacTel Building at 529 Bryant Street and the renovation of the historic Stanford Theater at 221 University Avenue.

Some of these developments were the result of Planned Community (PC) zoning actions, an approval process that allows some project flexibility in exchange for a significant community benefit resulting from the project. One development, Plaza Ramona at 250 University Avenue, was also the result of a joint public/private venture involving the addition of a public parking lot. City Council directed policy and action to ensure such creative actions in the future will be needed to facilitate and implement the changes and improvements envisioned by this document.

It is hoped that the ideas shown in this plan will improve future design decisions. The plans and drawings as presented are conceptual and are not intended to be considered as the only solution. Such things as district boundaries, transitional edges and other map lines are somewhat indefinite. Drawings and photographs of buildings and improvements are intended only to serve as representative samples of desirable qualities found in each district. Moreover, changes and modifications in sites, regulations and environmental conditions may well necessitate further change and modification to the Urban Design Plan. In any case, if this document opens the imagination to possibilities that will foster the character of the marvelous area that is downtown Palo Alto, then it will have been a success.

It is important to note that the term "pedestrian" in this document includes those individuals that may need mobility assistance through the use of wheel chairs or other devices. It is further notable that landscaping proposals, both public and private must conform to the City of Palo Alto Low Water Use Landscape Guidelines.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Guiding Principles are the values inherent to this document. Taken together, they represent the foundation upon which the committee based its decisions for determining goals desirable for the future of downtown. The resource references and recommendations discussed in this plan are derived from these Guiding Principles.

AN ACTIVE PLACE

Downtown Palo Alto will be an exciting, active and friendly place both during the day and night.

A PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK

Downtown will be an inviting, clean and safe place for people to live, shop, work and recreate.
A GOOD NEIGHBOR

The residential character of neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown will be protected from encroachment by commercial downtown uses.

A SENSE OF LOCAL HISTORY

Preservation of historical structures and places will be emphasized. Future projects can draw from historic buildings and social characteristics of Palo Alto for inspiration.

THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

The existing building pattern of storefronts or structural bays create the human scale of Downtown. Attractive and easily recognizable pedestrian and auto entries welcome people. Creatively designed, clean and functional alleys, sidewalks and streets further enhance the pedestrian scale and experience.
AN OUTDOOR PLACE

Advantage will be taken of the temperate climate by providing outdoor amenities, such as attractive street furniture, newsracks, benches, lighting, restrooms, for beautiful, useful open spaces, preferably designed by artists, architects, and landscape architects. These design elements encourage a stronger sense of community. Abundant and well maintained landscaping will provide Downtown with rich, urban greenscape and outdoor spaces.

EASY ACCESS AND ORIENTATION

A clearly defined and developed "city center," downtown "edges" and landmarks will provide a sense of orientation for the Downtown. Varied transportation methods including automobiles, bicycles, buses and trains will increase ease of access. Adequate and useable parking will be available where it is most needed.

CULTURAL AMENITIES

Downtown will celebrate and emphasize cultural amenities which contribute to the richness and diversity of Palo Alto. We will also recognize and nurture the cultural relationship and influence of Stanford University by reestablishing and promoting the historic physical connection of Downtown to the University.
The Basic Plan presents the comprehensive framework for improving the use and character of Downtown Palo Alto. The Basic Plan is organized by six overall elements:

- The Retail Core
- The Downtown Entries
- The Civic and Commercial Centers
- The Alma Street Boulevard
- The Commercial and Residential Edges
- The Pedestrian Ways

These six elements emerge from Palo Alto's historic past and have produced a rich and attractive urban form. With the framework defined, it is possible to set out fundamental directions for increasing the attractiveness of all parts of the Downtown.

**Legend**

- Major Auto Route
- Pedestrian Way
- Anchor Destination
- Pedestrian Crossing
- Landscape Entry
- Improve Pedestrian Link Between Train / Bus Station and Downtown
- Improve Sense of Entry
- Create Landscaped Boulevard on Alma Street
- Develop Pedestrian Way Along Alleys
- Encourage Multi-Family Housing on Periphery of Downtown
- Create Pedestrian Link Between Civic Center & Cogswell Plaza
- Improve Sense of Entry
The Retail Core

The Urban Design Plan strives to reinforce University Avenue as the retail core of the Downtown. Concentrating ground floor retail uses along University Avenue will help keep the area active and economically stable. A concentrated core also results in a pleasant pedestrian environment, and protects surrounding residential areas from intrusion by traffic and incompatible development.

The Plan reaffirms the University Avenue District as the Retail Core by:

- improving the sense of entry at both Alma Street and Middlefield Road;
- enhancing the historic connection to Stanford University;
- improving pedestrian access to the transit depot;
- creating and improving linkages to landmarks and public facilities; and
- maintaining the diversity of architecture and tree-lined ambience that contribute to downtown's pedestrian friendliness.

The Downtown Entries

The document recognizes the importance of downtown entries and suggests improvements to the primary entries at both ends of University Avenue. The Alma street entrance improvements should give particular emphasis to the creation of a pleasant pedestrian walk from the Palo Alto Train Station to the Downtown, and a more attractive connection to Stanford University. A stronger Middlefield Road entrance should have a more defined landscape statement than the subtle transition from residential which now occurs. These entry improvements will address both motorists and pedestrians. Secondary vehicular entrances are also marked for improvement, primarily at the El Camino Park entry (Palo Alto Avenue and El Camino Real) and on Alma Street near Embarcadero Road.

Figure 1 on the next page details one example suggested improvements to enhance the entry at Alma Street. These improvements are also illustrated in the drawings on page 12. Significant improvements include a safer pedestrian access from the Palo Alto Train station, enhancement of the sense of pedestrian entry by improving the pedestrian spaces at High Street and University Avenue and beautification of the vehicular underpass. While the pedestrian crossings of Alma Street to the train station are in need of further study, three possible scenarios are outlined in the diagram. See also "Dreams to Vision, A Summary of the Stanford/Palo Alto Interface Urban Design Charrette," March 26-28, 1993.
Pedestrian crossings from Alma Street across railroad tracks are in need of further study. Ideas include:

**ONE**
- Channel pedestrians to existing lights at Lytton and Hamilton Avenues
- Install landscaped or architectural barriers to discourage pedestrian crossing where there are no crosswalks

**TWO**
- Install wide sidewalks of decorative paving at University Circle

**THREE**
- Install sidewalks and traffic lights at University Circle
- Time traffic lights with simultaneous red lights to allow Alma Street crossing with no auto traffic

Alma Entry Improvements
- New landscaping in cloverleaves
- New decorative guardrail
- Increase building volumes on south side of entry

- Reduce cloverleaf traffic lanes from two to one
- Add pedestrian amenities

- Double row of street trees
- New street lighting
- Decorative paving
The Civic and Commercial Centers

The document suggests the creation or completion of two main downtown activity centers, one civic in nature and the other commercial.

The Civic Cross Axis, anchored by the Civic Center Plaza and City Hall at the South end and Cogswell Plaza and the Senior Center at the North end, encompasses Bryant Street and the nationally recognized Historic Ramona Street Architectural District. The creation of a cross axis in this location is important to creating a major focus of activity downtown, but will be challenging since there is not now a public right of way directly connecting the two anchors. Significant progress toward this goal was achieved in 1990, when the acclaimed Plaza Ramona opened with a publicly dedicated pedestrian system linking University Avenue to the Civic Center Plaza. The completion of the linkage will depend on capturing the remaining pedestrian corridor between University and Lytton Avenues in future public/private cooperative efforts. This would require private cooperation for the removal of some building frontage on University Avenue opposite the Ramona Plaza alley. Lost square footage could be moved to upper stories to allow new shops and offices to open onto the alley. This may require FAR incentives to the property owners since ground floor retails is significantly more valuable than second story space in the Retail Core. We recommend that the Comprehensive Plan Committee may want to consider this possibility, thereby the alley itself could accommodate a number of pedestrian oriented services, such as information kiosks, newspaper and flower vendors and theater ticket sales. Both the overall conceptualization and the creation of the amenities could well benefit from the input of artists. The activity center and pedestrian concepts are illustrated on the following page.

The Cowper Center is an area which encompasses the Palo Alto Office Center at 525 University Avenue, and the Cowper/Webster public parking garage. A strong Cowper Center is important because it would fulfill the need for an eastern focus and anchor to the downtown retail. Improvements to the plaza both in front of and behind the Palo Alto Office Center could create a destination point and ultimately an activity center that will help anchor the east end of downtown and provide opportunity for additional retail activity.

The encouragement of private or public/private reinvestment in the Varsity Theater, a historic landmark, to transform it into an entertainment center, could do for this end of downtown what the Stanford Theater renovation has done for the other end. While competition with the Stanford Theater would not be desirable, creation of a performing arts center would provide Palo Alto with a downtown civic amenity it now lacks.

The Cowper/Webster garage serves as an auto destination point. Improvements to the Cowper Street entry to the garage would enhance the appeal, visibility and safety of the garage. As redevelopment occurs, attention should be paid to increased and attractively designed pedestrian access to the garage.
• Architectural elements and narrowing of street indicate pedestrian way entries

FUTURE INTERSECTION OF UNIVERSITY AVENUE AND PEDESTRIAN WAY

• Shops and storefronts open onto alley

• Exciting pedestrian environment created with special paving, lighting and seating

• Provide architectural features appropriate to scale of space

• Include civic-type amenities such as kiosks, theater ticket sale booth, public event podium and vendor sales

CONTINUATION OF CIVIC CROSS AXIS PEDESTRIAN WAY, LOOKING TOWARD CITY HALL FROM LYTON
The Alma Street Boulevard

The document calls for the City to improve the appearance of Alma Street and capitalize on the residential and mixed-use development opportunities which exist there. The primary means for accomplishing this include:

• transforming Alma Street into an attractive, tree-lined boulevard;

• providing an inviting and safe pedestrian path to the Train Station and Transit Depot;

• creating a pedestrian and bicycle parkway parallel to Alma Street;

• beautifying and enhancing El Palo Alto Park and making it accessible to Downtown pedestrians; and

• creating pedestrian links between Downtown and the Stanford Shopping Center and between Downtown and the Urban Lane areas.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

• Center street median with trees

• Vary building heights

• Modulate building walls

• Transition scale of buildings to the residential areas

ALMA BOULEVARD
The Commercial and Residential Edges

Running parallel to University Avenue are Hamilton Avenue and Lytton Avenue. These parallel streets, lying north and south of the University Avenue Retail core, each have a distinctive character. Together with University Avenue, they comprise the Central Business District. From Lytton and Hamilton Avenues, the downtown transitions into residential areas. The definition of this commercial/residential edge is very critical north of Lytton Avenue since little room exists to buffer the downtown north neighborhood from the commercial downtown. South of Hamilton Avenue, the edge is softer due to the mix of residential uses with the transitional South of Forest Commercial area and the Palo Alto Medical Foundation.

The gradual change from downtown to the residential neighborhoods is partly recognizable by the increased landscaping and tree cover of the residential areas. These transitions can be further distinguished through the use of appropriate sidewalk and landscaping treatments, as shown in figure 2 on the next page, and the use of special street signs and lighting (see the Conceptual Lighting Plan on page 65).

The Pedestrian Ways

In general, the pedestrian travel route in the Downtown synchronizes with that of the motorist, but it is a pleasant relief when a retreat can be discovered allowing those on foot to withdraw and separate from the vehicles. Many of those familiar with the Downtown know the short-cuts behind buildings, through public parking lots and along the system of alleys.

Figure 7 on page 25 outlines the overall pedestrian way plan envisioned for downtown. As detailed in the figures 3, 4 and 5 beginning on page 18, service alleys are intended to primarily service the buildings which front onto them, but sufficiently cleaned up and reorganized, to be made more hospitable to pedestrians and to encourage occasional pedestrian passage. Shortcut alleys should be comfortable for use by pedestrians on a regular basis, while maintaining their service functions. They are primarily to allow "shortcutting" from one location to another. Place alleys are intended as true gathering places for pedestrians. They should be designed in such a way to allow and encourage pedestrian use, with service functions mostly not apparent. Here again, the involvement of artists and public art could prove most beneficial.

The Plan envisions improvements to the existing alleys in order to provide a continuous and apparent pedestrian corridor, running parallel to and the entire length of University Avenue. Such improvements would include the conversion of some service alleys to place alleys, the most significant being the linkage between the Civic Center Plaza and Cogswell Plaza, completing the Civic Center Cross Axis.
DESIRABLE STREETSCAPE EXAMPLES

Downtown

Transition to Downtown

Transition to Residential

Residential

FIGURE 2
Transitions from Downtown Commercial to Residential
FIGURE 3
Service Alley Criteria

FIGURE 4
Shortcut Alley Criteria
Typical Place Alley

FIGURE 5
Place Alley Criteria
THE DISTRICTS

The Districts are areas of the Downtown which have distinct characteristics. For example, the individual storefront retail uses along University Avenue help define the University Avenue District. The districts are important because individual projects within a district should enhance the identity of the district as a whole. Each district is introduced in the text by describing general observations about the area and is illustrated in detail on an accompanying district plan. Concepts specific to each district are also presented.

Although specific to each district, these concepts are the result of some general observations about downtown Palo Alto. In comparing Palo Alto to other cities with exceptional urban form and design, it is apparent that improvement is possible. Landscaping in the downtown is spotty with the only exceptionally good street tree system being present on University and Lytton Avenues. Additional street tree design and street furniture can create recognizable visual areas for other sections of the Downtown such as now exist with the University Avenue Sycamore trees. The city has a noticeable lack of street amenities such as benches, phones and restrooms and there has been a random expansion of newspaper racks on sidewalks throughout the downtown. In almost all cases, the use of artists in collaboration with design teams, combined with the city’s encouragement of public art, can help to create interesting spaces. It is always preferable to use every opportunity to achieve a sense of community, a feeling of excitement, and even an element of surprise than to merely use decoration to mitigate problem areas. The needs of the districts most appropriately addressed by a public art approach are:

- Design of common areas and open spaces to help define their positive character;
- The enhancement of entry points where they exist, to provide definition and impact;
- At activity nodes to create a recognizable and effective character and public involvement;
- For public amenities such as lighting, seating, newsracks, sidewalk treatment, bus shelters, and signage.

The presence of art and water features beyond the good system of building murals which currently exists are also desirable. Special paving treatments to identify important places would help provide design excitement. Street lighting also needs improvement. Replacement of the existing dated light fixtures with special or artistically designed fixtures which would help identify and set off different sections of downtown is desirable. Other improvements that would help to make downtown Palo-
Alto a special place, and which are discussed in more detail in both the basic plan and the districts, are included in the following district guideline concepts:

DISTRICT GUIDELINE CONCEPTS

Urban design is concerned with creating outdoor spaces between buildings which enhance our experience of the urban setting. This resource reference goes beyond simply addressing such elements as street furniture and street trees. It also addresses the elements which significantly contribute to the creation of desirable places. The architectural characteristics of a building's facade, the placement of building volumes along a street or corner, and the transformation of remote and impersonal civic or private plazas into traditional commons all contribute to building a sense of community. Several urban design concepts are defined and explained below. This resource is organized based on the following concepts.

ENTRIES are the point at which an individual feels that they have entered into a separate and distinct physical area. The entrance to any place sets the first impression and tone for the experience. It needs to say, "Welcome! You have arrived at an interesting place. Start looking." Entries can be grand, as those to a city, or small, as an entry to a store. Entries can be for vehicles or for pedestrians. Pedestrian entries are perceived differently than vehicular entries, and should have a different character.

EDGES provide boundaries to an area. They may be hard edges, such as at Alma Street and the railroad tracks, or they may be transitional, such as those that occur as the downtown uses change from commercial to residential. The form of buildings located on the transitional edges can smoothly transition to the adjacent residential uses. Also, sidewalks, setbacks and landscaping can be used to create a transition or edge between areas or districts.

OPEN SPACES are outdoor areas such as parks, courtyards, plazas, streets and sidewalks. A successful outdoor space has a distinct character and definite shape. The term negative space is used to define that space left over from the placement of buildings. Outdoor spaces with the right combination of uses tend to attract people walking through them and encourage the urban pastime of people watching. The best of well-used outdoor spaces have a "sense of place".

ACTIVITY NODES are the areas where people and activity concentrate. Usually a node evolves, but it can be formed, where important paths meet or cross. A successful node will be surrounded by mutually supporting uses which tend to attract people passing through or lingering at similar times.

ARCHITECTURE includes the architectural elements that make up a building, such as window proportions, entryways, and building bases. Building decoration, although seemingly frivolous to some, can also be very functional if used properly. Decoration such as eaves, cornices, balconies and the like can define and enrich the space around a building, contributing to the way the passerby experiences the area.

BUILDING VOLUMES are the building mass as defined by the height, width and depth of the structure. Building volumes, along with architectural characteristics, can help define the enclosure of public space. Without this enclosure, it is difficult to achieve comfortable and well used open space areas. In terms of urban form, increased building volumes are not necessarily "bad", as they are sometimes thought to be. In many cases, building square footage can be designed to provide volume where it positively contributes to the district, without increasing the size of the building. This
document suggests that street corners and open spaces are best defined by higher building volumes. At midblock locations, lower building volumes whose upper floors are stepped back from the street are often more appropriate. In both corner and midblock locations, solar access for the public spaces and streets at ground level should always be considered.

The plan on page 23, as well as each individual district plan, indicates areas where buildings of increased height and mass can be used to anchor corners, provide landmarks, help create outdoor spaces, complete a streetscape or provide buffers.

CIRCULATION patterns within downtown Palo Alto are on a grid. The standard grid pattern and open streets allow traffic to disperse in all directions. Downtown circulation should provide pedestrians and motorists every opportunity to find themselves within a reasonable and rational system. The system should not, however, be so rigid as to prevent pedestrians from occasionally "getting lost" in a private courtyard or other similarly adventurous places.

ALLEYS provide for vehicular and/or pedestrian access on a more limited basis than streets. In downtown Palo Alto, alleys have traditionally been used for service. However, where the service and pedestrian conflicts can be overcome, alleys can be much more than the stereotypical, dark and dirty service way. Pedestrians can be encouraged to use alleys by opening the rear of stores onto the alley, and providing amenities such as lighting, decorative paving and planters, where feasible. Pedestrian alleys can be used to create a pedestrian network allowing shoppers and workers to occasionally escape the automobile dominated street.

PARKING is a crucial element to the ongoing success of a downtown commercial area. In downtown Palo Alto, there is the general feeling that there is not enough parking. In addition, some parking areas are difficult to find due to poor signing. Creative public/private efforts could be used as one way to encourage increased downtown parking. Figure 7 on page 25 identifies two sites appropriate for new above and/or below grade parking structures. However, many lots in downtown could potentially be retained for surface parking, while providing additional below grade parking. To further increase the availability of parking to downtown shoppers, surface lots should eventually be used only for short-term public parking, with all long-term permit parking located in underground or above grade structures. Downtown community and citizen input into parking issues would help improve the usefulness of available parking. Many surface lots are in need of aesthetic improvements. Increased landscaping and improved signs can be helpful to anchor open corners and provide a more appealing street frontage, as illustrated in the photos below. Downtown parking opportunities are currently being studied in further detail to determine how the number of parking spaces can be increased.
FIGURE 6
Building Volumes
GOOD LANDSCAPING

LANDMARKS are points of reference and can help orient downtown users to their surroundings. They are generally important historic buildings or significant open spaces. Some of Downtown Palo Alto's landmarks are City Hall and the Civic Center Plaza, the Palo Alto Office Center at 525 University Avenue, the President Hotel, Lytton Plaza, the Stanford Theater and the Post Office.

VISUAL TERMINUS are such things as trees, sculpture, towers, or signs. Generally they are located such that they terminate a view, whether at the end of street, in a plaza or at the end of an alley.

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS, as discussed in this Plan, are the elements provided within the public right-of-way, or on publicly owned land, for the public's use and benefit. Public improvements may include such amenities as street furniture, parks, plazas, landscaping, lighting and art, as well as traditional infrastructure.

POOR LANDSCAPING
FIGURE 7
Pedestrian Ways, Parking and Circulation
UNIVERSITY AVENUE DISTRICT

URBAN DESIGN OBSERVATIONS

University Avenue is the identifiable center of the downtown area, carrying more than 20,000 vehicles per day, there is a strong mix and sometimes conflict between pedestrian and vehicular circulation. However, this heightened activity adds a certain liveliness to the street. It is the primary reference to visitors and a regional attraction for people and activities. Once it crosses three significant transportation obstacles, Alma Street, the railroad tracks and El Camino Real, it links the community physically and symbolically with Stanford University.

University Avenue is also the vehicular and pedestrian corridor to the Palo Alto train station, the single regional mass transit terminal for downtown train and bus commuters. This transit facility is the western anchor of the downtown core, but is hampered from functioning as such since it is located on the opposite side of the railroad tracks.

The vehicular entries to the University Avenue District are located at Alma Street and at Middlefield Road. Pedestrian entries occur at High Street and Cowper Street. The center and predominant land use is the retail core between High Street and Cowper Street.

Edges

Medium to high density residential uses between Middlefield Road and Webster Street, with the building volumes that match Lytton Gardens placed toward University Avenue, provide an existing transition to the mixed multi- and single-family areas which begin on the north side of Middlefield Road. This existing pattern should be reinforced through future development.

Architecture

University Avenue contains a general 25-50 foot wide pattern of storefronts, and similar sized structural bays at larger buildings. This pattern creates a pleasing rhythm and allows a variety of building facades within a single block face. Generally buildings are two, three or four stories with a few exceptions. Most buildings have no setback to the street and rise to a parapet wall without a distinct roof. The architectural style of the retail storefronts is mixed. Many corner stores front only to University Avenue while ignoring the side streets. This limits the opportunity to continue retail vitality onto the side streets. Landmarks within the district include the Palo Alto Office Center at 525 University, the Varsity Theater and the Stanford Theater.

GOALS

✓ Reinforce University Avenue as the retail core of Downtown Palo Alto by maintaining the strong concentration of ground floor retail uses between Alma and Cowper Streets.

✓ Create a focal point for the center of the district at the intersection of University Avenue and the Civic Cross Ax pedestrian way, and a destination terminus near the east end of University Avenue at Cowper Street.

✓ Develop and enhance the qualities of University Avenue which make it an exciting outdoor and pedestrian environment, including vibrant and eclectic architecture, outdoor food service and entertainment, and improved public amenities such as lighting and street furniture.

✓ Create downtown entries at both ends of University Avenue, with a dominant urban entry at Alma and High Streets and a subordinate entry at Middlefield Road.
UNIVERSITY AVENUE DISTRICT

DISTRICT GOALS

• Reinforce University Avenue as the retail core of Downtown Palo Alto by maintaining the strong concentration of ground floor retail uses between Alma and Cowper Streets.

• Create a focal point for the center of the district at the intersection of University Avenue and the Civic Cross Axis pedestrian way, and a destination terminus near the east end of University Avenue at Cowper Street.

• Develop and enhance the qualities of University Avenue which make it an exciting outdoor and pedestrian environment, including vibrant and eclectic architecture, outdoor food service and entertainment, and improved public amenities such as lighting and street furniture.

• Create Downtown entries at both ends of University Avenue, with a dominant urban entry at University Circle and a subordinated entry at Middlefield Road.

LEGEND

Axis Entry
Pedestrian Entry
Activity Node
Center of Activity
Develop Pedestrian Way
Strong Building Volumes
(District or Subdistrict)
Street Trees
Destination/Landmark
Visual Terminals
Historic Building
Parking
Opportunity For Pedestrian Priority Use
Building design issues to be addressed in future development include:

- Corner buildings should generate interest on the side streets as well as the main street frontage, to foster linkage with the rest of the commercial core. They should allow pedestrians to see or walk through the corner in order to strengthen the pedestrian experience and continue the retail to the side street (see examples below).

OPTIONS FOR CORNERS OF GROUND FLOOR BUILDINGS

- Design buildings with attention to all facades visible from streets and pedestrian ways.
- Incorporate ground floor treatments of buildings that allow for easier pedestrian view of displays and merchandise. Avoid the use of curtains, shades, blinds or other screening devices which limit pedestrian views into the building.
- Maintain zero setback lines but encourage open air dining, courtyards or other active pedestrian areas.
- Limit the use of arcades to special design situations, such as the Ramona Street historic district or locations where the arcade will complement and not hinder pedestrian flow.

Secondary Districts

Two secondary districts overlap and are related to the University Avenue District, Florence Street and Kipling Street. These areas are singled out as secondary districts because they have their own distinct characteristics making them worthy of a special note. Efforts should be made to unify and complement each of the secondary districts through the use of appropriate building design, landscaping and public amenities. The existence of these districts provides a unique opportunity to establish interesting links between University Avenue retail and Lytton Avenue commercial area.

Both districts contain significant historic architecture and development patterns, and the Palo Alto Historic Resources Board is an important resource in consulting for future development of these areas. The positive attributes of these districts are described as follows:

Kipling Street

Promote the development of Kipling Street between Lytton Avenue and University Avenue as a secondary district by retaining the older single family structures that have been converted to businesses and the architectural character they provide. Redevelopment of city parking lot T on the southwest corner of Lytton Avenue and Kipling Street with compatible structures should be encouraged. The terminus at University Avenue should be enhanced through tie-ins
to the Varsity Theater and mid-block access to Lot H behind the Theater.

Florence Street

A terminus should be created at Lytton Avenue through a landscape pocket, a building element or other significant visual element. The Florence Street secondary district is illustrated below.

![Diagram of Florence Street Secondary District]

PUBLIC AREA GUIDELINES

The mature Sycamore trees and, to a lesser extent, the 1970's street improvements, define the character of University Avenue and provide a shady and pleasant atmosphere. Public restrooms, water fountains, public telephones and information kiosks are lacking. Free-standing newspaper racks clutter the sidewalks, and in many locations reduce the available pedestrian pathway. Imaginative solutions can help improve both pedestrian circulation and visual aesthetics.

Entries
Pursue major redevelopment of the Alma Street entry as suggested by the entry plans illustrated in the Basic Plan on pages 11 and 12.

Create visually and functionally effective entries and enhance the pedestrian entries at University Avenue/High Street and University Avenue/Webster Street to make them more apparent and attractive to pedestrians.

The major entries to the University Avenue retail core occur at High Street, Webster Street, Middlefield Road, and Alma Street.

Maintain an open entry corner at Middlefield Road and University Avenue to create an entry statement, primarily through landscaping improvements.

Open Spaces

Provide for additional improvements to increase the aesthetics and use of Lytton Plaza.

- Improve organization of plaza and seating to encourage pedestrian use

- New trees define edge of Plaza

- A total design concept for the plaza should transform the space into a visually interesting, inviting urban center

LYTTON PLAZA

Activity Nodes

Punctuate the identity of major activity nodes along University Avenue by such things as distinctive plantings, banners and architectural features at identified intersections.

Circulation

Create direct pedestrian access from University Avenue to the adjacent parking lots off Hamilton Avenue and Lytton Avenue.
Improve and enhance the direct pedestrian access to the Palo Alto Train Station into a safe, well-lit and desirable means of access, to encourage increased rail and bus commuting.

Parking

Develop a master sign program which improves City directional signage to public parking in order to increase the public's ability to easily locate and use public parking lots.

Review hourly restrictions with input from downtown merchants and users.

Alleys

Develop a system of pedestrian ways in the alleys to the south of University Avenue and allow for additional use as appropriate in the alleys north of University Avenue, as described in the "Pedestrian Ways" section of the Basic Plan (page 16).

Public Improvements

Replace the existing street lights with a fixture more compatible with the overall downtown architecture and history and to provide additional light. (See also the Conceptual Lighting Plan on page 66).

Encourage public use amenities such as benches, restrooms, telephones, information centers, drinking fountains, and trash receptacles in appropriate projects.

Consider improvement or replacement of existing seating/trellis improvements, as detailed in the Public Improvements Guidelines on page 70.

Consider commissioning artists, architects, and landscape architects in the design of public amenities, seating, trellises and various other site improvements.
FIGURE 8
Desirable Storefront Scale

[Diagram of storefront scale with dimensions]
CIVIC CROSS AXIS DISTRICT

URBAN DESIGN OBSERVATIONS

This district crosses University from Lytton to Hamilton Avenue, joining two major public open spaces - Civic Center Plaza and Cogswell Plaza - that are underused and need improvements. This link is very important to the physical framework of downtown because it encourages the flow of people and activity across the downtown's primary activity spine. The Civic Cross Axis provides an opportunity to create a "City Center", as illustrated in figure 10 below.

Edges

Neighborhoods adjacent to the district should be protected. This goal can be accomplished by not allowing the edges of the district to extend past the buildings fronting on Lytton Avenue to the north or the downtown library to the south. Development which respects this existing zoning pattern will not only protect adjacent residential areas, but will also strengthen the identity of the Civic Cross Axis.

Architecture

The district contains several large scale buildings; however the street frontage elevations of most buildings retain the rhythm of the 25-50 foot wide structural bays and/or storefronts, which provides a street rhythm of good human scale and appealing pedestrian character. Height of buildings vary from single story to the eight story City Hall.

For new development, building heights at street corners can rise to three to four stories to help anchor street corners identified as nodes, and create visual activity centers. Upper levels of buildings away from street corners should be stepped back from the street, allowing light and air penetration to the street.

The Ramona Street Historic District has a strong Spanish Colonial Revival architectural character and intimate pedestrian scale. Several other buildings within the district echo the mediterranean style of light colored buildings with red tile roofs. City Hall, 300 Hamilton Avenue and University National Bank are modern buildings that give the district variety. They also serve the important purpose of providing a sense of enclosure to the major open spaces of Cogswell Plaza and Civic Center Plaza. Such enclosure is essential to creating an "outdoor room".

Important landmarks within the district include City Hall, Plaza Ramona and the Senior Center. The mediterranean architectural style of many existing buildings is a positive and unifying element for the district, which future development should support but not necessarily mimic.
CIVIC CROSS AXIS DISTRICT

DISTRICT GOALS

- Create a City Center for Palo Alto which encompasses two major public plazas, and which functions as the primary activity center of the Downtown.
- Emphasize the pedestrian and visual connections between the Lytton and Hamilton Districts by creating pedestrian linkages across University Avenue.
- Transform Civic Center Plaza and Cogswell Plaza into beautiful and active public spaces.

LEGEND

This style often incorporates the following attributes:

* Courtyards, deep shadows and interesting sidewalk design and paving.
* Define the edges of both Civic Center Plaza and Cogswell Plaza by encouraging two to three story buildings on Bryant and Ramona facing the plazas, to help create the feeling of an outdoor room. This will help people feel comfortable in the plazas and encourage their use.

PUBLIC AREA GUIDELINES

Open Spaces

Enhance the design of Cogswell Plaza and improve the current seating amenities. A visible and physical link between Cogswell Plaza, the Senior Center, parking lot C behind the Senior Center and University Avenue needs to be created. Improvements should include nighttime lighting in the plazas, artist-designed amenities, and the inclusion of art. In general, a comprehensive, unifying concept must underlie the development of this major component of the Civic Cross Axis.
Promote Civic Center Plaza as a central gathering space through physical improvements, such as new steps, and promotional activities. Seasonal with emphasis on drought tolerant planting, that adds color and variety should be reinstated and additional and more intimate seating areas should be provided. Food vendors should be permitted on the plaza and informational kiosks/walls should be incorporated into the plaza. Consideration should be given to creating interactive outdoor sculpture gardens, or other passive use, on the currently underutilized side portions of the plaza. Permanent nighttime lighting should be added to the Plaza.

Improve the City Hall building to increase the visibility of the entry to the public. Such an entry statement could be achieved by modifying the entry door, adding a marquee or protective cover, banners, awnings or other similar features. Three possibilities are illustrated on page 35.

**Activity Nodes**

Improve the University Avenue crossing with such things as distinctive paving and plantings to create a "City Center", once the pedestrian way begun by the Plaza Ramona alley is continued through to Lytton Avenue.

![Diagram of City Center](image)
FIGURE 11
Ideas for Improved City Hall Entry
Alleys

Extend and improve the alley system to provide a direct visual and pedestrian link to University Avenue from Hamilton and Lytton Avenues. In order to continue the Plaza Ramona alley through to Lytton Avenue from University Avenue, some existing building frontage on University Avenue must be removed. The pattern of storefront openings and outdoor seating areas begun in the Plaza Ramona alley should be continued.

Public Improvements

Encourage public use amenities such as benches, telephones, restrooms, drinking fountains and trash receptacles in appropriate projects.
COWPER CENTER DISTRICT

URBAN DESIGN OBSERVATIONS

This district is centered around the intersection of Cowper Street and University Avenue. The highly visible Palo Alto Office Center at 525 University Avenue and the less visually intrusive Cowper/Webster public parking garage anchor the district on either side of University Avenue. The garage is located in the heart of the block, but serves as a destination point and a people generator for the area. From the parking garage, the district extends to the office uses located along Hamilton Avenue. Although recent changes have improved the front plaza areas of the Palo Alto Office Center, the rear plaza is a significant and underutilized resource.

The Cowper Center District is important because it provides a secondary activity center (the primary center being at University Avenue and the Civic Cross Axis intersection) for the downtown retail core. The district can be further strengthened by enhancing active use of the Varsity Theater, such as a public/private ownership creating a performing arts center.

This area is dominated by buildings of large area and mass. The President Hotel at street level maintains the approximately 25 foot wide structural bay, creating a street rhythm and enhances the pedestrian experience. In contrast, the Palo Alto Office Building is not pedestrian friendly at the ground floor and does not enhance the pedestrian experience. Redevelopment of the ground floor of this property with active retail or restaurant uses would greatly improve the life and identity of this area.

Landmarks within this district include the Palo Alto Office Center building, the Webster/Cowper parking garage, and the Varsity Theater.

Edges

Existing zoning should be respected to protect residential neighborhoods to north, east, and south. Limit any further intrusion of commercial and office uses into the residential areas on the north, east and south edges.

Architecture

The existing Palo Alto Office Center lacks pedestrian vitality at the ground floor plaza. This major open space is a great opportunity for a future pedestrian activity node. Redesign of the ground floor of the Palo Alto Office Center can improve the pedestrian scale of the building. A sample illustration is presented on the following page. Consider screening for the antenna farm on the top of the Palo Alto Office Center to improve the appearance of this landmark building.

GOALS

✓ Create a viable district that helps to define the eastern end of the downtown area and creates a secondary major activity center at the Cowper/University intersection.

✓ Promote lively and active destination points utilizing the Palo Alto Office Center Plaza open space and the Varsity Theater, and encourage improvements to the Cowper/Webster parking garage entry on Cowper Street.

Urban Design Plan - 38 - Cowper Center District
COWPER CENTER DISTRICT

DISTRICT GOALS

• Create a viable district that helps to define the eastern end of the downtown area and creates a secondary major activity center at the Cowper/University intersection.

• Promote lively and active destination points by utilizing the Palo Alto Office Center Plaza open space and the Varsity Theatre, and encouraging improvements to the Cowper/Webster Parking Garage entry on Cowper Street.

Future district development is encouraged to follow the existing pattern two to four story buildings on the southeast corner of Cowper Street and University Avenue in order to complete the visible form of the district.

Secondary Districts

One secondary district is related to the Cowper Avenue District, the Varsity Theater Parking Lot H. Efforts should be made to unify and complement this secondary district through the use of appropriate building design, landscaping and public amenities. General guidelines for the district are discussed below:

Varsity Theater Parking Lot H

The area around parking lot H, which is located behind the Varsity Theater, is a secondary district that should be developed and will become more prominent as the proposed alley/pedestrian way on the south side, and parallel to, University Avenue is established. The development of the Garden Court Hotel has signaled the beginning development of this district. Redevelopment of the theater with a rear entrance and redevelopment of the 1950’s buildings on the south side of the parking lot could be designed to complete this secondary district. As part of the overall vision for this district, the overall vision of this entertainment center, this area can be developed in to a positive, exciting addition to the urban environment through the use of architecture, landscape design, public amenities, and works of art.
PUBLIC AREA GUIDELINES

Entries

Increase the perception of safety and improve the visibility and pedestrian access points to the Webster/Cowper Garage from both Cowper Street and University Avenue in order to increase use of the garage by the public.

Open spaces

Improve the plazas at the Palo Alto Office Center, particularly the rear plaza, to provide wind and weather protection in order to enhance this area as a destination point and make this a more active and viable district. This would allow and encourage a ground floor retail, outdoor or nighttime use, such as a restaurant. If the microclimate on the rear plaza can not be controlled, consider allowing development on the plaza as part of an overall program to bring life and activity to this area.

Activity Nodes

Allow for improvements, such as a pleasant pedestrian access between University Avenue and the parking garage, to increase the pedestrian use and entry visibility characteristics of the Cowper Street/University Avenue intersection.

Circulation

Enhance pedestrian circulation between the landmarks in the district.

Alleys

Connect the Cowper/Webster garage to the proposed alley/pedestrian way parallel to University Avenue on the south side. Building design and improvements should encourage and allow for this extension.
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- Change ground floor uses to be more compatible with active public use of plaza

- Provide wind and weather protection

PALO ALTO OFFICE CENTER PLAZA

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- Humanize the scale of building through use of awnings and canopies

- Improve the pedestrian character of the plaza by opening ground floor spaces to the street

- Add color, vendors, kiosks and other pedestrian activities and uses to plaza

PALO ALTO OFFICE CENTER
Alma Street forms the western edge of downtown Palo Alto. It is a critical district in that it serves as an edge and a major entry. From Alma Street, the downtown grid may be entered at several intersections, the most prominent, but not the most used, is at University Avenue. The pedestrian crossing to the Palo Alto train station occurs at several locations, however, they are circuitous and encourage pedestrians to make unsafe crossings of Alma Street.

On the north, Alma Street flanks tiny El Palo Alto Park, site of El Palo Alto, a 110 foot tall redwood tree for which the city is named. On the south, Alma Street becomes Central Expressway, a regional arterial running parallel to El Camino Real through the communities of Mountain View, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara. The expressway terminates and traffic slows as Alma enters residential south Palo Alto, but it continues to carry high volumes of traffic as it approaches downtown.

North of the Embarcadero Road overpass, Alma Street is generally unattractive, and an uncomfortable circulation corridor due to the on-street parking and narrow width. The street, which is difficult for retail frontages and residential uses must, be carefully designed to reduce noise and traffic impacts. However, excellent development opportunities exist in that the street can support additional building masses, and in fact would be improved by them, particularly in the area south of University Avenue.

We suggest that the Comprehensive Plan Committee allow the development of mixed-use projects that can incorporate ground floor uses with second and third floor residential uses.

**Edges**

The hard edge the CalTrain corridor can be greatly improved through landscaping and pedestrian oriented improvements.

**Architecture**

Blank walls which currently exist occasionally along this corridor are typically found at party wall or alley situations and detract from the visual environment and should be avoided in the future. Design all buildings as four sided, because along Alma Street they will tend to be taller than other buildings and will be visible from many elevated locations, including trains. Encourage variations in building setbacks to allow for landscaping, courtyards, and other pedestrian spaces. This will minimize the potential for a solid building wall along Alma Street which could appear massive and overbearing.

**GOALS**

- Create a tree lined boulevard with enhanced vehicular and pedestrian entries.
- Encourage varied building mass and height to create a mini-skyline along western edge to anchor the downtown.
- Provide for circulation connections for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles to the areas of El Camino Park, Stanford Shopping Center, the Palo Alto Train Station, the Urban Lane area, and the Town and Country Shopping Center.
ALMA STREET DISTRICT

DISTRICT GOALS

• Create a tree-lined boulevard with enhanced vehicular and pedestrian entries.

• Encourage varied building mass and height to create a mini-skyline along the western edge to anchor the downtown.

• Provide for circulation connections for pedestrian, bicyclists, and vehicles to the areas of El Camino Park, Stanford Shopping Center, the Palo Alto CalTrain Station, the Urban Lane area, and the Town and Country Shopping Center.

LEGEND

Auto Entry
Pedestrian Entry
Activity Node
Center of Activity
Develop Pedestrian Way
Strong Building Volumes (Billing or Envelopment)
Street Trees
Destination/Landmark
Visual Terminus
Historic Building
Parking
Opportunity For Pedestrians Friendly Use

Improve and landscape entry from El Camino Real.

Provide direct pedestrian and visual connection to El Camino Park and Stanford Shopping Center.

Re-configure and landscape train parking lots.

Improve pedestrian crossings to CalTrain Station.

Create sense of entry.

Encourage enclosure of Alma Street facade by allowing development over existing parking lot.

Develop a consistent tree-lined boulevard and sidewalks, possibly with street median.

Develop pathway system for pedestrian use, with seating and special lighting.

Retain Historic Gas Station.

Develop pedestrian connections to Urban Lane area and Town and Country Shopping Center.

Enhance the vehicular entry at Embarcadero Road through landscaping and design improvements.
The south side of University Circle is smaller scaled in building volume as compared to the opposite half. Future building should match the building volumes on the north side, thus creating a symmetrical entry statement and visual backdrop to the downtown.

Future development can improve the existing appearance and development patterns as follows:

* Create a mini-skyline with views towards the town and the foothills.

* The need to humanize Alma can be achieved by limiting apparent building frontage to 100 feet and encouraging store fronts, structural bays, or entries every 25 feet to 50 feet.

* Ensure adequate transition to the adjacent lower density commercial and residential areas along Alma by stepping down building heights between Lytton and Hawthorne Avenues on the north and between Forest and Addison Avenues to the south.

PUBLIC AREA GUIDELINES

Entries

Improve the vehicular entry through the University Avenue underpass to increase light and air and make it a more pleasant space likely to be used by pedestrians.

Create an attractive and easily traversed pedestrian path from the Palo Alto Train Station to the downtown area that avoids pedestrian/vehicular conflicts.

Beautify and enhance the vehicular entry on Alma Street from El Camino Real in conjunction with improvements to the park area around El Palo Alto to clarify this area as an entrance to the City.

Beautify and enhance the vehicular entry on Alma Street at the Embarcadero Road underpass to identify this as an entry portal to the downtown area. This entry acts a natural traffic flow control where it "necks down". This occurrence thereby changes the perception by the traveler entering Downtown from being on a throughway to being on a city street.

Open spaces

Create a path and walk with benches, landscaping and art parallel to Alma Street by redesigning and improving the Peninsula Corridor Railroad parking lots and Alma Street right-of-way.

Encourage buildings and developments to incorporate setbacks and courtyards to create additional open space and green areas.

Circulation

Create direct visual and pedestrian connections to the South of Forest Area, Urban Lane and the rest of the downtown area.

Limit the number of driveway and curb cuts and close existing curb cuts wherever possible to allow for more tree planting areas, increased safety and better traffic flow.
Parking

Several possible solutions could improve parking and safety along Alma street. Tree planting potential could be enhanced, while additional parking to offset the on-street spaces lost can be recaptured through better organization of the Peninsula Corridor Railroad lots. Eventually, the realization of the pedestrian path and walk ways and revised parking lot concept could be created on the west side of Alma Street. On-street parking could be maintained by eliminating the proposed median or re-striping to three lanes with a continuous left turn and right lane turnouts.

Alleys

Utilize alleys for access to buildings fronting on Alma Street.

Public Improvements

Improve the visual appearance of the streetscape by under grounding electrical service lines and constructing a decorative fence or screen for the electric substation such as in figure 12 below, which was suggested by Cal Poly students in a May 1992 Design Charrette. Establish "stops" or visual terminus to Lytton and Hamilton Avenues by creating terminus landmarks, such as art, sculpture, landscaping, or entrances to tunnels to Palo Alto Train Station. These improvements could be done in conjunction with improvements to the Peninsula Corridor Railroad parking lot or required accessibility improvements.

Design and construct a tree-lined boulevard along Alma Street from Hawthorne to the Embarcadero Road overpass, as described in the Basic Plan on page 15 and illustrated in figures 13 and 14 on the following page.

The current deterioration of the bridge should be reversed and improved aesthetically.

![Screen for Electric Substation](image-url)
FIGURE 13
Alma Street Boulevard Concept (Plan View)

FIGURE 14
Alma Street Boulevard Concept (Section)
LYTTON AVENUE DISTRICT

URBAN DESIGN OBSERVATIONS

Lytton Avenue is a mix of office, commercial and residential uses. It defines the northern edge of downtown and acts as a transition area between the more intense uses in the downtown core and the residential areas to the north.

The increased street width as compared to University Avenue and the cross streets allows for larger scale of individual buildings and lessens the dependence on 25-50 foot storefronts. Buildings generally have some setback from the street and provide courtyard and open space areas. The one to two foot wide landscape strip fronting the Gatehouse and other buildings is a characteristic feature in the district, which provides areas for planting and greenery that soften the buildings and surrounding paving. These green areas, setbacks and courtyards help the transition to the lower mass and density of the residential neighborhood. Buildings are a mixture of architectural styles with a predominate building height of two stories and recent office construction reaching three stories. Lytton Avenue has many corner lots without structures, which create undesirable gaps in the urban form. This is particularly true along the south edge of the street, where strong buildings, art and improved landscaping could help to anchor the open corners.

Lytton Avenue is a primary circulation street that provides access to public parking and allows for through traffic between Alma Street and Middlefield Road. The street is used extensively by transit buses and contains on-street bicycle lanes. The open space area around Cogswell Plaza, which is also discussed under the Civic Center Cross Axis District, is the major activity center for the Lytton Avenue District. Improvement of the plaza through direct ties to the Senior Center and parking lot C, and the creation of an outdoor room by completing enclosure of the open space with appropriately scaled buildings, introduction of art, landscaping and other amenities would further enhance the center of activity and better link the two districts.

Important landmarks within the district include the Senior Center and the Gate House Restaurant block face.

Edges

The northern edge of Lytton Avenue contains a strong edge of commercial uses no deeper than one lot. This development pattern should be maintained in the future, to not allow further commercial intrusion into the adjacent residential neighborhoods.
LYTTON AVENUE DISTRICT

DISTRICT GOALS

• Promote Lytton Avenue as an enlivened mixed commercial and residential district.

• Ensure that development respects the quick transition into the immediately adjacent Downtown North neighborhood, and protect these residential areas from incompatible encroachments of commercial buildings.

• Maintain and enhance the pleasing, tree-lined pedestrian qualities of Lytton Avenue.

LEGEND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auto Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pedestrian Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity Node</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Center of Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop Pedestrian Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong Building Volumes (Reinforced or Recommended)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Street Trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Destination/Landmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visual Terminus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historic Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity For Pedestrian Friendly Use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further define residential edge by accessing parking lots and buildings from Lytton Avenue

Encourage redevelopment of parking lot with structures compatible in scale with existing Kipling Street development

Develop ground floor retail facing Lytton, Multi-family to rear and sides

Emphasize pedestrian connection to Johnson Park

Transition building heights smoothly to residential areas

COSWELL PLAZA
- Tie to Senior Center
- Improve adjacent parking lot
- Spatially define parking lot with strong building volumes

Resin surface parking and provide landscaping to define Coswell Plaza and street edge

Maintain building setback and planting strip at street edge

Create activity and vibrancy on side streets towards University

Create sense of entry
Architecture

An existing building rhythm pattern of structures broken into segments providing pockets of open space, courtyards, and visual depth is now considered a major strength of the district. This pleasant pattern should be continued in future development. In addition, the existing mixture of style, materials, colors, and lighting apparent in existing storefronts positively contributes to the street character. Pursuing these varying design amenities can provide many opportunities for the development and restoration of buildings and open space.

The existing pattern of commercial, office and retail uses fronting only to Lytton Avenue helps protect adjacent residential uses, to prevent intrusion into the neighborhoods on the north side of Lytton Avenue. Continued access and egress from these commercial uses on to Lytton Avenue are also important in the separation from and protection of adjacent neighborhoods.

on the south side of Lytton Avenue, side streets connecting to University Avenue are underdeveloped at this time. Future development should continue commercial, office and retail uses to the side streets to create vibrancy and activity on the streets linking to University Avenue.

Future development should also respect the scale and detail of historic side street "subdistricts" found on Kipling and Florence Streets. Historic open space should also be respected and improved through future development on Lytton Avenue and along its side streets to the south — see Civic Cross Axis District. A minimum height of two to three story buildings for the Bryant Street and Ramona Avenue block faces opposite Cogswell Plaza are encouraged, to create a backdrop and outdoor room for Cogswell Plaza. Stepping down building heights toward the north side of structures along Lytton Avenue can help foster a transition to the residential areas.

Lytton Avenue is weakened by some unsightly parking lots at street corners. Allowing buildings or landscaping to better define these street corners will serve to anchor the open corners at parking lots and vacant lots, thus strengthening the visual impression of the streetscape.

PUBLIC AREA GUIDELINES

Entries

Create a sense of entry at the Alma Street/Lytton Avenue intersection by improvements such as landscaping, building corner setbacks, special lighting, public art and other design amenities.

Open spaces

Encourage continuation of the building setbacks and planting strips to provide areas for planting and greenery that soften the buildings and surrounding paving and reflect the low density residential land pattern north of Lytton.

Encourage the development of occasional courtyards and green spaces that provide visual and spatial relief to the street. Design amenities could additionally include art, sculptures, fountains and other uses.

Activity Nodes

Enhance and improve the use of Cogswell Plaza as outlined in the Civic Cross Axis District (page 35).
Circulation

Direct access from parking lots and buildings to Lytton Avenue to discourage additional traffic in the residential neighborhood.

Create a pedestrian link to University Avenue and the Civic Center, as detailed in previous discussions of Cogswell Plaza and Senior Center improvements.

Parking

Encourage large-scale parking lots on the south side of Lytton Avenue, closer to the downtown core and away from residential downtown north, in order to keep traffic from spilling onto residential streets adjacent to this district.

Alleys

Encourage pedestrian interaction between the Lytton Avenue and University Avenue Districts by allowing for improvements to alleys, pedestrian ways, and sidewalks. However, these alleys are primarily intended to be used for service purposes.

Public Improvements

Continue the strong street tree presence to create a wide tree canopy to shade Lytton Avenue and the cross streets.
HAMilton Avenue District

Urban Design Observations

The Hamilton Avenue District is a mixed office/commercial/retail district with some residential uses. It has several landmarks including Civic Center Plaza, the City Hall Building, the Post Office, the Downey Building, the Cardinal Hotel, All Saints Episcopal Church and First Methodist Church. The area transitions from primarily office with some retail on the west end, to office use toward the east and transitioning to residential.

The street has a strong building edge that is characterized by grander buildings on larger parcels than found on Lytton Avenue, with typical lot widths of 100 feet. However, as on Lytton Avenue, the increased street width allows for larger scale buildings and less dependence on a small scale storefront rhythm. Building heights vary from one to three stories with setbacks, green areas and open parcels apparent east from Civic Center Plaza.

However, west of Civic Center Plaza the block between Emerson and Ramona Streets contains a unified street frontage of attractive storefronts. These buildings are historic in nature, should be preserved for the future, and are currently being considered as a potential historic block.

Vegetation and trees are spotty with a lack of significant street trees as compared to Lytton or University Avenues. Telephones, water fountains, benches and other street furniture are limited. The only public restrooms are in the City Hall building, which is closed nights and weekends.

Edges

Existing zoning provides appropriate building volumes and height which afford a positive transition to adjacent residential uses. A soft, landscape transition edge exists between the commercial/office area and the residential area; this pattern should be continued in future development.

Architecture

The existing pattern of storefronts and/or structural bays is typically 25 to 50 foot widths. These patterns are encouraged in future development, to enhance the pedestrian scale of buildings exceeding 100 feet in width, and will thereby maintain the building rhythm of the street frontage. Two to four story buildings are characteristic from Waverley Street west to Alma Street in order to complement the existing streetscape and enhance the building wall of Hamilton Avenue. Buildings east of Webster Street should step down in height toward Middlefield Road to transition to the residential areas, in compliance with existing zoning. The development of three or more story buildings surrounding Civic Center Plaza are encouraged, to create an outdoor room at the plaza and define the plaza boundaries.

Goals

☑ Promote Hamilton Avenue as an active mixed use district which comfortably accommodates larger scale commercial office, civic, and institutional buildings.

☑ Maintain Hamilton Avenue as a pleasing, tree-lined pedestrian environment, with complimentary outdoor amenities to offset the urban intensity which naturally results from the provision of transit service and convenient surface parking.

Urban Design Plan

- 51 -

Hamilton Avenue District
HAMILTON AVENUE DISTRICT

DISTRICT GOALS

- Promote Hamilton Avenue as an active mixed-use district which comfortably accommodates larger scale commercial office, civic and institutional buildings.

- Maintain Hamilton Avenue as a pleasing, tree-lined pedestrian environment with complimentary outdoor amenities to offset the urban intensity which naturally results from the provision of transit service and convenient surface parking.

LEGEND

- Auto Entry
- Pedestrian Entry
- Activity Node
- Center of Activity
- Develop Pedestrian Way
- Strong Building Volumes (Ranking or Reconstructed)
- Street Trees
- Destinations/Landmarks
- Visual Terminals
- Historic Building
- Parking
- Opportunity For Pedestrian Friendly Use

Create visual open space by heavily landscaping parking lots

CIVIC CENTER PLAZA
- Provide public amenities and activities
- Define space with strong building volumes

Enhance pedestrian link to Palo Alto Medical Foundation

Retain architectural character of Ramona Street Historic District

Enhance pedestrian link to South of Forest Area

Create vibrancy and Activity on side streets

Create sense of entry
PUBLIC AREA GUIDELINES

Entries

Create a sense of entry at the Alma Street/Hamilton Avenue intersection by considering improvements such as landscaping, building corner setbacks, special lighting, public art and other design amenities.

Open spaces

Civic Center Plaza provides the best, most important site for a fuller-developed concept of a public space - see design suggestions in the Civic Cross Axis District Public Area Guidelines. Continuing to upgrade Civic Center Plaza to provide public amenities, will secure this space as a meeting place and a focal point for the district.

Existing open spaces of Civic Center Plaza, 300 Hamilton Avenue parking lot and All Saints Episcopal Church at 555 Waverley Street provide excellent relief from the mass of adjacent structures.

Activity Nodes

Enhance and improve Civic Center Plaza as defined in the Civic Cross Axis District discussion.

Circulation

Consider the development of a pedestrian link from University Avenue through the Liddicoat building at 340 University Avenue (as illustrated in the Florence Street secondary district discussion on page 31).

Enhance the Emerson Street linkage to the South of Forest Area and the Bryant Street linkage to the Palo Alto Medical Foundation area through such things as special paving, landscaping, lighting, street trees and other street amenities.

Alleys

Provide pedestrian links from Hamilton Avenue to University Avenue in conjunction with development of the alleys and parking lots.
SOUTH OF FOREST COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

URBAN DESIGN OBSERVATIONS

The South of Forest Area (SOFA) is an emerging area of retail, office and general business service uses south of the downtown area. The predominate building type is a single story automotive repair facility with adjacent parking. Problems include spill over parking to the residential areas, traffic created by the automotive services, and associated automotive storage, and the general unsightliness of the commercial service uses. The area is perceived by some as blighted and unkempt.

The area was originally the home of many manufacturing and industrial uses and recently has been the location for automotive service uses. The district’s southern edge is a loose transition to single-family residences and the health service facilities of the Palo Alto Medical Foundation. Should this foundation relocate, future infill development should be extremely sensitive to adjacent residential concerns including but not limited to traffic, building scale, and related architectural development.

The internal streets are narrow and on-street parking has further reduced the apparent width. Landscaping, street trees and public amenities are minimal in the area, due to the physical facilities required by manufacturing, industrial and automotive uses. The narrow width of the streets and the location of utility services will hamper upgrade of the public amenities.

The frontage along Alma Street allows for additional building opportunities as discussed in the Alma Street District. The area also offers opportunities for projects that can incorporate ground floor commercial uses with upper floor residential uses, particularly adjacent to Alma Street and Hamilton Avenue. However, any new housing in the area should be developed with reduced densities and mass as you near the existing residential areas. Adoption of a Townhouse Ordinance, Planned Unit Development (PUD) or some other mechanism for allowing reduced size lots and opening the opportunities for residential uses on top of ground-floor retail or office spaces. This approach would help to achieve transition housing that would fit between the high-density downtown projects and the single family neighborhoods.

Edges

The appearance of Alma Street could be improved by creating a tree-lined boulevard along Alma Street, as discussed under the Alma Street District.
At the southern edge of the district, the transition from single-family residential area to the commercial areas could be buffered by the creation of medium density housing and appropriate landscaping - refer to the Comprehensive Plan.

**Architecture**

The district contains unique architecture and land uses which merit future in-depth study and evaluation. Participation of designers, neighborhood interests, property owners, and historic preservationists should all work toward a planning vision for the strengthening of the district's identity and commercial viability.

**Secondary District - Emerson Street**

The Emerson Street secondary district is related to the South of Forest Commercial District. This area is singled out as a secondary district because it has its own distinct architectural characteristics. The vibrant pedestrian quality of this street is contained in its excellent human scale and strong historic character of large, open storefronts, often with high ceilings and transom windows protected by front awnings. Buildings are also individualistic, while conforming to some or most of these historic patterns. Recent development has supported this historic architectural expression and has proven both commercially and architecturally successful.

Emerson Street further acts as a vital pedestrian connector between the retail core and SOFA. Efforts should be made to unify and complement this secondary district through the use of building design, landscaping and public amenities. General guidelines for the district are discussed below:
Promote the development of Emerson Street between Lytton Avenue to Channing Avenue. This is an active secondary district, particularly at night. It has its terminus in the South of Forest Area (SOFA) and should be designed to prevent further intrusion to the residential areas further south. Buildings along Emerson should have continuous retail storefronts with zero setbacks as established by historic precedent and supported by current zoning. A street lighting program that provides a consistent lighting style, such as four foot bollards, should be instituted.

PUBLIC AREA GUIDELINES

Entries

Develop the perception of Entry from Alma Street into the South of Forest District (SOFA) at Forest and Channing Avenues. Public and private improvements of landscaping, building form, and public art can all work in concert to improve these entries.

Open spaces

The district is in need of more open space and greatly improved design of the streetscape.

Activity Nodes

Recognize the area near the Emerson Street and Homer Avenue intersection as a new center of activity. This node should be enhanced and incorporate the historic buildings on Homer Avenue and the Whole Foods Market. It should be designed to help create a terminus for the southern end of the commercial district.

Parking

Study the possibility of providing additional parking spaces by constructing a public parking lot in a location which will offer convenience to the SOFA businesses, preferably designed with the idea of adding interest and visual vitality to the area.

Circulation

Consider reduction in length of one way section of High Street.

Alleys

Develop the alley between Alma Street and High Street as an access to buildings fronting on Alma Street.

Public Improvements

Continue the program to place all utilities in the area underground.

Encourage and plant street trees throughout the area.

Construct a decorative fence or screen for the electric substation fronting on Alma Street (See Figure 12).
The variety and quality of architectural elements create the charm and character of many buildings in downtown Palo Alto. These guidelines are intended to help preserve and enhance the desirable qualities of downtown architecture. They have been written to encourage preservation of historic buildings or building elements, and also to encourage buildings to fit into the context of, and support the visual unity of the area in which a building is located.

It is crucial that the project sponsor look for ways to ensure their designs consider the character of the surrounding environment. The architectural elements that make up a building, such as window proportions, entryway placements, building bases, decorative elements and materials, are the elements which define architectural character and style. The guidelines address many different architectural elements in some detail.

It is important to note that mimicking context is not always appropriate, and that in some circumstances, contrast is what is needed. These guidelines are not intended to stifle such development where it is appropriate, such as in an uninteresting area in need of a visual focus or to announce the importance of a socially significant use (as in a park or civic center), but where contrast is used, it should be done so with caution and should avoid being abrasive. These guidelines applied appropriately to each individual situation, will ensure positive and visually exciting projects in the downtown.

Shirley has rewrite from historic/renovation section to go here.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Provide recessed doors, window displays, courtyards, outdoor seating and other pedestrian amenities that visually and physically enhance the streetscape, as appropriate to the district.

Complement the design of surrounding buildings in scale, proportion, materials and alignment of horizontal elements.

Attention should be paid to the back and sides of building when exposed to view to ensure that the architecture and visual quality of all visible parts of the building will be compatible with the front of the building.

Avoid blank walls.

Trash and recycling receptacles should be located within buildings, screened, or grouped together in out of sight locations.

Design buildings with attention to providing solar access to the adjacent public spaces.

Improve multi-tenant buildings as a whole, with a consistent architectural style on the upper and ground floor levels as well as across the facade.
BUILDING MASSING

HEIGHT

Respect the visual continuity of the building facades along the street.

Commercial buildings adjacent to residential areas should respect the scale of the adjacent residential structures.

STREET FRONTAGE

Design large buildings so that the street level facade provides a human scale and respects the smaller storefront patterns of adjacent buildings.

STREET SETBACKS

Allow variations to the predominate building wall for pedestrian amenities such as outdoor eating and seating, recessed doors and display windows, courtyards and planters (as required by the "P" District guidelines, see Appendix, page A-8).

ROOFS/PARAPETS

Maintain the eclectic mix of traditional building caps in the Downtown such as distinctive parapet walls or gable, hip, mansard or other distinct roof forms.

Encourage roof gardens and use of roof space, where feasible, so that they are attractive when viewed from above and below, and provide added outdoor use opportunities and amenities.

Screen or integrate roof-top mechanical equipment into the form of the building.

Locate antennas and microwave dishes towards the center of the structure, away from edges, so they are not visible to the pedestrian.

ARCHITECTURE

MATERIAL

Rich, permanent materials such as tile, masonry, brick, adobe, glass, metal, painted or sealed wood, concrete, stucco, marble, or stone are encouraged.

ENTRIES/DOORS

Recess doors and displays to provide protected pedestrian standing areas out of the sidewalk flow, as consistent with individual district character.

Improve rear entries whenever possible to increase the pedestrian friendliness of the alleys.
BUILDING BASES

Provide a building base design which will provide interest and durability and is appropriate to the architectural style of the building.

FENESTRATION/WINDOWS

Design, replace or repair windows to be architecturally compatible with the building, in terms of size, details and glazing material.

Generally, ground floor windows should be designed to be larger than windows on upper floors in order to create a hierarchy of uses and reflect the difference in ceiling heights between upper and lower floors.

Discourage the use of heavily tinted or reflective glass on upper stories. Instead, use architecture and building design to control sun, temperature and weather exposure.

Use clear glass glazing in storefront windows at the ground floor to permit pedestrian visibility to interior displays.

On the ground floor of retail areas, avoid the use of curtains, shades, blinds or other screening devices, which limit pedestrian views in to the building and user views to the outside.

AWNINGS AND CANOPIES

Where they do not conflict with street trees, encourage the use of awnings, canopies or overhangs on building facades to add color, weather protection and opportunities for signing.

Encourage the use of awnings and building canopies to unify the building facade.

LANDSCAPING AND LIGHTING

Use landscaping, including trees, shrubs and colorful plantings, to provide shade, beauty, perspective, massing and color and to add to the identity of an area. Design for drought tolerance and minimal water use.

Provide for nighttime building and window illumination to help light the streets, creating a safe environment and adding visual interest. Avoid the use of harsh or direct light.

SIGNS

Encourage distinctive, finely crafted signs which are oriented to pedestrians.

Standard cabinet signs should be avoided.
FIGURE 15
Retail Storefront Concepts
ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RENOVATIONS AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Improve existing buildings by eliminating visual clutter such as inappropriate signage, old sign supports, unused brackets, faded paint and extraneous materials such as aluminum siding, plywood false fronts, or wood siding.

Complement the architectural style, patterns, materials composition, colors and characteristic details of the original building when adding, renovating or remodeling.

Modify existing blank walls to incorporate windows and display areas or decorate with artwork, landscape or architectural detail.

Retain recessed doors, window displays and courtyards that add interest and dimension to the streetscape and provide additional pedestrian space.

Limit the addition of new materials so that the total number of facade materials does not become confusing.

The City Council adopted the U.S. Department of Interior's "Standards of Rehabilitation" (1990) as the basis of evaluating changes to historic structures. These standards — which are summarized below — provide guidance towards the preservation of significant architectural, cultural and historic values. The Secretary of Interior's complete Standards of Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings is available for your review at the library, or at the Planning Department counter on the fifth floor of the Civic Center.

1) A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

2) The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

3) Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

4) Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

5) Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

6) Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7) Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

8) Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

9) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10) New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.
PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT GUIDELINES

Public improvements are provided within the public right-of-way or on publicly owned land for the public's use and benefit. This includes but is not limited to parks, plazas, signs, street furniture, landscaping, lighting, art and parking.

In general, public improvements and amenities in Palo Alto are good but could be enhanced. The City has a long term commitment to the under grounding of utilities and the downtown area is almost complete. Other public amenities need improvement such as the street lights on University Avenue, additional street trees, public signs and street furniture. The following guidelines are intended to direct and provide ideas for improvement of downtown public facilities.

ART

Art needs to be understood as a necessary component in the collaborative process of creating a successful and unique city environment, and should be encouraged in all private and public projects. Recognize that "art" ought not be limited to specific traditional works, although these are also encouraged. Nor should the role of public art be seen as limited to one of decoration, beautification and "mitigation" of visual ills. "The current consensus about public art proposed a collaboration between artist and architect in projects from their inception. In some instances, traditional sculpture or painting might be the solution, but in others, projects resembling architecture, engineering or landscape design might result. In most case, something between the two poles of discrete art and architectural intervention would come about." David Bonetti, SF Examiner).

A public art approach should be seen as one component of any design plan for public spaces. Whenever possible, consideration should be given to including an artist or artists as part of the design team, particularly with regard to amenities such as lights, benches, parking garages, etc. Artists see the creative potential in ordinary items such as trash containers, manhole covers, drinking fountains, kiosks, fences, pocket parks, etc. They can be most helpful in conceptualizing approaches to organizing and bringing character to spaces, and are an important, underused resource to any city which is attempting to create a sense of place in its environment.

Give a high priority to art in all private and public projects downtown. Art need not be limited to specific works but can be murals, fountains, architectural details, lighting, gates, sculptures, signs and others.

Encourage art which is interactive, such as the development of an interactive public sculpture garden on the unused side portions of the Civic Center Plaza and Cogswell Plaza.

Encourage art in Cogswell Plaza, at the train station, along a reconstructed Alma Boulevard and in other public spaces where the art can be viewed and appreciated.
LIGHTING

Continue development and implementation of a street lighting plan with the idea of installing new street lighting downtown which is designed to serve pedestrians. The plan should establish the desired type, style, location and intensity of new street lights. The conceptual lighting plan on the next page illustrates some ideas for such a detailed plan.

Replace light standards and luminaries with fixtures that are more consistent with the character of downtown.

Use street lighting to establish distinctions between districts, with University Avenue having the highest intensity lighting and Lytton and Hamilton having lower intensity with the side streets even less intense or of a different character.

Use a distinct lighting treatment such as privately maintained bollard lighting for the secondary districts of Emerson Street, Florence Street and Kipling Street.

Install special lighting for Bryant and Ramona Streets to identify the Civic Cross Axis district and help define the historic character of Ramona Street.

Develop lighting guidelines to be applied to exterior lighting on new developments.
PAVING

Encourage distinctive and special pavings to add style and character, as well as help define certain areas. Paving is broadly defined to include a wide variety of outdoor ground treatments, including brick, colored concrete, tile, stone and wood.

Design and use materials in the public right of way that will facilitate easy maintenance and replacement by city crews, such as those shown on the Public Works "Approved Sidewalk Treatments" (Appendix E). Materials used that are not approved by Public Works will require private maintenance agreements.

Use paving details at special points, such as from Civic Center Plaza across Hamilton Avenue to the alley and connecting across University Avenue to the area behind the Senior Center. Other appropriate places for such paving details are identified in the individual district guidelines.

Encourage creative paving using a variety of materials such as the Harp in front of Swains Music Store, or the plaza "earthquake fault" at 156 University Avenue.
PUBLIC RESTROOMS

Encourage the provision of public restrooms to be maintained by the property owner as a part of major Planned Community zone project.

SIDEWALK ENCROACHMENTS

Encourage desirable encroachments which enhance the pedestrian walking experience or provide pedestrian activity or seating areas.

Encourage the allowance of at grade sidewalk encroachments for eating and outdoor spaces, such as tables, chairs and planters, provided that regulations for clear areas are maintained.

Encourage overhang encroachments such as decorative awnings and marquees that define entries, provide protection from the weather and provide protected dining areas. The overhangs should not significantly conflict with street trees.

SIGNS

Develop a consistent public sign program for non-regulatory signs that will allow the casual user to quickly determine the signs they should be looking for and will allow them to more quickly orient themselves to a new area. The sign program shall be consistent within sign groups including directional, traffic signs, street signs, and public parking lot signs. Signs should be grouped to reduce visual clutter.

Use the selected sign program consistently throughout the main circulation pattern in the Downtown area including along University Avenue, Lytton Avenue, Hamilton Avenue, Middlefield Road and Alma Street.
FIGURE 17
Street Amenities
Replace the public parking lot entry signs, many of which are unsightly and physically deteriorated.

Signs of each type should be made of the same material, size, color, style and type.

Use symbols instead of text as much as possible, particularly for traffic signs.

Develop a signage program for the interior of all public parking structures.

Provide store directory signs or maps located near parking and transit facilities such as are maintained at shopping centers.

Provide for posting walls, kiosks or other areas to post notices.

Create an identity of downtown through consistent signage at the primary and secondary entrances to the downtown area.

Provide major building locators and directional signs for the Civic Center, Senior Center, Police Department, Post Office, Palo Alto Train Station and others.

Consider attaching street signs to building corners.

Reduce sign clutter by consolidating signs into fewer, centralized, highly visible locations.

STREET FURNITURE

Create a street furniture program for the core of the Downtown area, including seating, bicycle parking, trash containers, newspaper racks, and lighting standards. Establish new locations for each type of street furniture, remove undesired items and enforce newly established locations. Artistic street furniture designs are encouraged.

SEATING

Utilize a standard bench in the Downtown core area, with custom seating as needed in distinctive open spaces.

Add seating near the Post Office and Senior Center, as well as encouraging seating near restaurants.

Movable seating is needed at Lytton Plaza and Cogswell Plaza.

Improve the appearance of the seating areas and the walls bordering the seating along University Avenue. Through such improvements as adding tiles and repairing lights, these seating areas can act to unify and organize the clutter on the street. Vines can be encouraged to grow up and cover the walls (as illustrated on the next page).

Consideration should be given to removing the trellises over the seating areas along University Avenue. This might be done on a selected basis to assess the effect. If the trellises remain the light fixtures within should be repaired or replaced and turned on to provide additional lighting at night (as illustrated on the next page).
STREET CORNER MODIFICATION

TRASH AND RECYCLING CONTAINERS

Through private sources, develop a program for maintenance and replacement of trash and recycling containers.

Trash containers should be consistent in design and materials.

Additional containers should be added to side streets.

Incorporate containers into the building, where possible.

BICYCLE RACKS

To the extent possible, locate bicycle racks on side streets instead of University Avenue.

Use a consistent bicycle rack throughout the Downtown core area.

Provide a mixture of short term bicycle racks and long-term bicycle lockers.
NEWSPAPER RACKS

Develop a plan for the placement of all vendor racks in the downtown area in order not to create an enforcement problem or block storefronts and sidewalks.

Repair and supplement the existing public newspaper racks.

Institute a maintenance program and require all vendors to use the public racks.

DRINKING FOUNTAINS

Encourage drinking fountains for specific public and private projects.

TELEPHONES

Place additional public telephones downtown where space permits.

STREET TREES AND LANDSCAPING

Enhance and upgrade trees and landscaping in the downtown area.

Select landscaping and street trees for their appropriate species and size for the available space.

Establish a street tree scheme that is distinct for each district.

Use tree grates or decorative grills in order for tree pockets to have a consistent surface treatment which is attractive, durable, water permeable, and low maintenance.

Encourage planters located under the trees only where maintenance is assured.

Encourage annual color for planters.

Establish a program for planting and maintaining colorful annuals in downtown planters throughout the year.

Establish a program for installation and/or maintenance of street trees and new tree grates in each downtown district in conformance with the street tree plan.
Lynton Avenue:
- Alms to Middlefield: Maintain and preserve existing camphors and in-fill missing sites with podocarpus.

Copswell Park:
- Establish a sense of enclosure around the park with uniform planting on the cross streets that define the park. (Replace existing trees as needed.)

University Ave:
- Alms to Webster: Maintain and preserve existing Sycamores.
- Webster to Middlefield: 1. Maintain and preserve existing Sycamores. 2. Establish an entry statement by planting a second row of trees with a smaller canopy.

Hamilton Avenue:
- Alms to Ramona: Maintain and preserve existing Pears.
- Bryant to Cowper: Maintain and preserve existing Pears and Oaks. Replace existing magnolias and liquid ambers, as needed, with Oaks on the north side and Pears on the south side.
- Cowper to Middlefield: Maintain and preserve existing Oaks. Replace existing magnolias and liquid ambers, as needed, with Oaks on both sides.

Civic Center Plaza
- Establish a sense of enclosure around the plaza with uniform planting of Sophora japonica trees. (Replace existing trees as needed.)

Alma Street:
- Establish Boulevard planting with Chestnuts or an alternate equally bold and large scale. (Tristania conferta for parking lots).

Cross Streets:
- In general cross streets to have uniform planting on a block face.

FIGURE 18
Conceptual Street Tree Plan for the Primary Districts

UTILITIES

In conformance with City codes and regulations, continue the program to underground all utilities in the downtown area.

The Architectural Review Board should review design and location of utilities placed above ground to assure they are placed in unobtrusive locations.

Review all utility installations in order to reduce clutter and limit safety hazards.

Where feasible, provide for screening and landscaping of utility installations, utility boxes, traffic signal boxes, pad mount transformers, cable t.v. boxes, electric substations and other similar facilities.
IMPLEMENTATION

This Downtown Urban Design Plan outlines the framework and direction for how downtown Palo Alto should develop in the coming years. It is absolutely necessary that implementation of the plan must be a combined public and private venture. The various public agencies, developers, investors and community leaders with a stake in downtown must use the Plan to guide their individual decisions. City government can play an important role in maintaining a lively downtown, but it is essential that the private sector have an expanded role in ensuring the long-term success of this plan and downtown Palo Alto.

Implementation of this Plan is expected to occur over the long-term rather than the short-term. Some of the public improvement projects, such as the downtown entry and Alma Boulevard improvements, could take many years to complete. In the interim, any actions should attempt to further the general direction outlined in the Plan.

Also, it is important to note that many individual improvement projects must be fully funded prior to implementation. For example, a property owner may be willing to fund alley improvements in that portion of an alley adjacent to their property, however, until funding is available to complete the entire alley, or a logical portion of it, the project could not be implemented. This may necessitate the holding of some earmarked monies until adequate funds to complete the improvement are available.

The specific ways in which the City will be active in implementing the Plan are outlined below. Private developers and investors have the greatest opportunity to participate through the Planned Community Development Zone approval process. Most of the public improvements outlined in the Plan could be considered public benefits for Planned Community Zones. Downtown property owners and merchants have the greatest opportunity to participate through the use of assessment districts or business improvement districts specifically set up to fund downtown beautification, improvements and maintenance. Public/private partnerships should be explored in order to expedite, facilitate and economize on projects.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

ASSESSMENT DISTRICT

An Assessment District or Business Improvement District to fund installation and maintenance of Downtown improvements could be established using generally the same borders as the current parking district. The district would be set up by the City (bond issuance, etc.). A committee composed of representatives elected or appointed by the Downtown Merchants Association, or identified in some other way, could serve as an advisory body to select and set priorities for improvement projects which would be appropriate for Assessment District funding. The City would treat the projects similar to private initiated ventures, reviewing them through the normal project review process. Any assessment district would have to be carefully structured to ensure that assessment district funds would be available for long-term maintenance of constructed improvements.
"MATCHING" CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

An innovative way in which the City could contribute to downtown improvements would be to set up a "matching funds" program. Funds generated by an assessment district, from private donations or contributed to the City from a PC Zone Change project, could be "matched" by funds from the City's Capital Improvement Program to implement specific improvement projects.

PLANNED COMMUNITY ZONE CHANGE PROJECTS

Construction and/or maintenance of the following publicly available amenities might be considered by applicants, the Planning Commission and City Council as public benefits in reviewing proposed Planned Community zone change applications:

- Civic Center Plaza/City Hall Entry improvements
- Cogswell Plaza/Senior Center improvements
- Courtyards and Pedestrian plazas
- Donations to a "Downtown Improvements" fund (should such a fund be developed)
- Drinking fountains
- Establish a Performing Arts Center
- Improvements to bus stop waiting areas
- Inclusion of housing
- Lytton Plaza improvements
- Parking provided in excess of the required spaces
- Privately maintained public restrooms
- Provision or improvements to access to public transportation
- Public newspaper racks
- Public landscaping
- Public signage improvements
- Publicly viewable art
- Street trees
- Street furniture, benches, landscaping and tree grates
- Street lights
- Trash containers

This list is intended only as a sample and is not inclusive.

CITY ORDINANCE AND POLICY CHANGES

Adoption of the following types of ordinances or modifications to current City policy should be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council:

Newspaper Rack Regulations - Develop a plan for the placement of all vendor racks on downtown streets.

Zoning Bonuses - An ordinance to allow exceptions to site development regulations (FAR, Height, etc.) for provision of amenities identified by this plan (plazas, excess parking, housing, etc).
Design Enhancement Exception - Institute an exception process to allow minor variations to zoning requirements for commercial and industrial projects which have difficulty meeting the code requirements, and which would otherwise be required to obtain a variance. This process would be similar to the current Home Improvement Exception available for single family homes.

Minor Planned Community Zone Use Changes - Allow minor changes in use for Planned Community Zones to be approved by staff or the Zoning Administrator.

Parking Requirements - Review and possibly revise the parking regulations that allow sites with insufficient required parking to continue the parking deficiency even though the use has changed.

In-Lieu Parking - An ordinance to allow payment of a fee in-lieu of providing parking spaces.

DAY-TO-DAY IMPLEMENTATION

Staff through counter assistance, plan review and annual budgets/city improvements.

The Public Art Commission exists to act as a resource and advisor on projects, to encourage the inclusion of art pieces in both public and private spaces, to involve artists in planning process, and to review art that is being considered for public spaces.

Historic Resources Board through required reviews for any proposal to alter the exterior of a historic structure in the downtown area.

Architectural Review Board through encouraging compliance with plan recommendations and guidelines when appropriate in the design review process.

Planning Commission through site and design reviews, Planned Community zone reviews, land use and zoning ordinance changes, and recommendations on capital improvement programs.

City Council through the following actions:

- Final action on site and design reviews, Planned Community zone reviews and land use and zoning ordinance changes.
- Inclusion of improvement projects in Capital Improvement Program.
- Implementing policy modifications and ordinance modifications identified above.
- Directing preparation of reviews, report or studies of ideas identified in "Food For Thought" section of this plan (Appendix A).
- Directing Further Study of several ideas and projects identified in this plan which need professional direction and guidance and additional public input, such as:

  Alma Entry. The pedestrian crossing from the train station to downtown, improvements to the existing underpasses and conversion of two-way traffic on the University Circle to one-way traffic are all ideas which are in need of further study.
Alma Boulevard. While graphics have been included in this plan outlining the concept for a tree-lined Alma Boulevard, there are many issues relating to the implementation of this plan. These issues include: the possible reduction on-street parking through the creation of parking where feasible along the CalTrain right-of-way, the availability of necessary right-of-way, the relocation of utilities, and the development of an associated bike boulevard. All of these issues would need to be resolved prior to development of a detailed plan.

Downtown Lighting Plan. Working with the ARB, a complete lighting plan which specifies lighting fixtures, types, levels and locations should be prepared based on the guidelines and conceptual lighting plan presented in the Public Improvements Guidelines section of this plan.

Downtown Signage Program. A comprehensive downtown signage program for non-regulatory signs to identify public parking, assist pedestrians and motorists in easily finding their destinations and to orient the unfamiliar visitor is needed.

Downtown Street Tree Plan. A complete street tree planting and management plan which specifies size, species and location should be prepared based on the guidelines and conceptual plan presented in the Public Improvement Guidelines section of this plan.

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

The following is a listing of the primary improvement designated in the plan. They are ranked by groups to reflect the appropriate timing of implementation.

ON-GOING PROJECTS

Projects that are already in progress or require significant private development.

Install new downtown street lighting consistent with an adopted street lighting plan.

Encourage privately maintained public amenities such as restrooms, drinking fountains and telephones.

Promote redevelopment of Liddicoats to allow a more direct pedestrian connection through to Hamilton Avenue.

Complete physical improvements to Civic Center Plaza, including seasonal plantings, new steps, additional seating areas, information kiosks, food vendors, outdoor interactive sculpture and nighttime lighting.

Encourage two to four story buildings facing Cogswell and Civic Center Plazas.

Encourage improvement to the plaza at the Palo Alto Office Center, 525 University, to provide wind and weather protection and enhance this area as a destination point.
Encourage full service retail and a redesign of the ground floor of the Palo Alto Office Center, 525 University Avenue, to increase the pedestrian activity.

Allow increased building volumes on the south side of University Circle at Alma Street to match the building volumes on the north side.

Allow for air rights development over existing Assessment District surface parking lots for retail, commercial, office, residential or mixed use development. Maintain public and/or day-time permit parking underground of these developments, to be paid for through regular permitting fees acquired through the additional air-rights square footage afforded to the property owner and developer.

Identify a major open space for the SOFA District and develop and implement a streetscape improvement plan.

Plant and maintain colorful planters throughout the downtown area utilizing plants and water use guidelines of the City adopted Low Water Use Regulations.

Install and maintain street trees and new tree grates in conformance with an approved downtown street tree plan.

NEAR-TERM PROJECTS (1 TO 5 YEARS)

Improve the Cowper Street entry to the Webster/Cowper garage.

Improve intersections identified as activity nodes with such things as distinctive plantings, pavings and banners.

Develop a consistent public sign program for non-regulatory signs including directional, public parking and downtown entry signs.

Improve or replace the University Avenue seating/trellis structures.

 Beautify the pedestrian entries at University/High and University/Webster.

The current deterioration of the bridge should be reversed and improved aesthetically.

MID-TERM PROJECTS (5 TO 10 YEARS)

Improve the University Avenue entry at Alma Street.

Improve the University Avenue entry at Middlefield Road.

Upgrade sidewalk and landscaping improvements in transition areas.

Provide for additional improvements to increase the aesthetics and use of Lytton Plaza.

Install new street furniture including seating, bicycle parking, trash containers, recycling bins, information centers and newspaper racks.
As part of the formation of a secondary district on Florence Street, create a visual terminus at the end of Florence Street on Lytton Avenue.

Enhance the design of Cogswell Plaza by such items as improving the current seating amenities, adding outdoor sculpture and installing permanent nighttime lighting.

Create an entrance to City Hall by modifying the entry door and adding a marquee, protective cover, banners, awnings or other similar features.

Improve the visual appearance of Parking Lot C behind the Senior Center through such items as landscaping, architectural walls, paving and new signs.

Improve the Cowper/University intersection to increase pedestrian use and provide a visible connection to the Webster/Cowper parking structure.

Enhance the Emerson Street linkage to SOFA and the Bryant Street linkage to PAMF through special paving, landscaping, lighting, and other design amenities.

LONG-TERM PROJECTS (OVER 10 YEARS)

Complete the pedestrian alley linkage from Ramona Plaza to Cogswell Plaza.

Create a tree-lined boulevard along Alma Street.

Create a pedestrian parkway with benches and landscaping within the Alma Street right-of-way and the Peninsula Corridor Railroad parking lots along the west side of Alma.

Beautify and enhance the vehicular entry on Alma Street from El Camino Real in conjunction with improvements to El Palo Alto Park.

Create a pedestrian/bicycle link between downtown and Stanford Shopping Center.

Create a pedestrian/bicycle link between downtown and Town and Country Shopping Center and the Urban Lane area.

Convert existing alleys as identified on the Parking and Circulation to pedestrian ways per "Place" or "Shortcut" alley criteria.

In conjunction with the recognition of a secondary district along Kipling Street, allow redevelopment of City Parking Lot T at the intersection of Lytton Avenue and Kipling Street, with no net loss of spaces.

Encourage a parking structure with shallow ground floor retail frontage on parking lots S and L in the block bounded by Florence and Bryant Streets.

Beautify and enhance the vehicular entry on Alma Street near the Embarcadero Road underpass.

Develop the alley between Alma and High Streets as an access to buildings fronting on Alma Street.
Create a visual terminus to Lytton Avenue and Hamilton Avenue at Alma Street in conjunction with improved railroad lot parking and access to the Palo Alto Train Station.

Improve the Lytton Avenue and Hamilton Avenue entries at Alma Street with landscaping, lighting art or other design amenities.

Build a public parking lot in SOFA district.
APPENDICES

A. FOOD FOR THOUGHT ............................................. A-2
B. HISTORICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT ................ A-4
C. DOWNTOWN PARKING LOTS ..................................... A-7
D. PEDESTRIAN (P) DISTRICT ZONING REGULATIONS .............. A-8
E. APPROVED SIDEWALK TREATMENTS ............................. A-9
F. CURRENT DOWNTOWN ZONING MAP .............................. A-10
APPENDIX A: FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This section is intended to provide "food for thought" to merchants, property owners and elected and appointed officials for additional downtown improvements. These ideas were not included as recommendations in this plan either because they were too far off in the future to warrant a full exploration of their potential at this time, they required more detailed study and analysis than this Committee could provide, or they did not have the full support of the committee. The Urban Design Committee wholeheartedly encourages these ideas to be evaluated and developed by those who may have a strong interest in them.

- **Establish a direct connection to Stanford Shopping Center and the Proposed Stanford West Project.** Such a connection could possibly be developed in conjunction with redevelopment of the El Camino Park, MacArthur Park Restaurant, Red Cross and Cal Train Station area.

- **Actively pursue housing on several downtown sites.** A successful and lively downtown is dependent on a steady supply of users. Office and commercial development provide much of the daytime supply. However, downtown housing would bring more people to the downtown during evenings and weekends. Several sites which may be suitable for housing downtown include the Alma Corridor between University Avenue and Addison Avenue, the Times-Tribune site on Lytton Avenue, air-rights projects over city parking lots, and above existing single and two story buildings. The City should consider adopting incentives such as reduced parking requirements, increased FAR allowances and modified site development regulations in order to encourage housing development downtown.

- **Adopt Townhouse Ordinance or Planned Unit Development (PUD) Ordinance.** The City should consider adoption of an ordinance to allow townhouse-style housing developments or PUDs that would not require findings of public benefit. Density regulations would be similar to the RM-15 multiple-family district, but with more flexibility in regard to other standards, such as required open space and setbacks. A townhouse or PUD ordinance would be particularly applicable to areas transitioning to duplex and single family districts.

- **Establish a direct pedestrian connection to Urban Lane.** This might involve either an underground crossing of the railroad tracks, or an overhead pedestrian crossing.

- **Allow Live/Work developments in transition areas such as the South of Forest Commercial District.** Live/work spaces not only provide work spaces for artisans and activities associated with viewing the work, but also provides added housing.

- **Use the Varsity Theater as a Performing Arts Center.** A performing arts center at the Varsity Theater would add vitality to the Cowper Center area of downtown. Convenient parking is already available at the Webster/Cowper garage.

- **Convert Homer and Channing Streets from one-way to two-way.** Conversion of these one-way streets for two-way traffic would have several benefits. Homer Avenue could function as a logical entry way for the South of Forest Commercial district. Slower traffic would also enhance the retail and small commercial atmosphere of the South of Forest area.
• **Underground the Railroad Tracks.** Undergrounding of the railroad tracks would allow University Avenue to be an at-grade crossing. This would eliminate many of the problems associated with the Alma Street/University Avenue entry, including pedestrian crossing to the train station.
APPENDIX B: HISTORICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

HISTORY OF DOWNTOWN PALO ALTO

The early history of the town is beautifully documented in the book, History of Palo Alto, by Pamela Gullard and Nancy Lund, prepared in honor of the city's centennial celebration. From this account, it is hard to imagine that for 5000 years the Ohlone Indians, dressed in reed skirts and deer skins, gathered acorns in the same area where people now shop for designer clothing and expensive chocolates, and sip espresso from carts at the Stanford Shopping Center.

The period in history which was perhaps most influential on the formation and basic design of the Downtown is the late 1800's, when Leland Stanford directed the purchase and subdivision of 697 acres of wheat fields along the El Camino. The original grid, lot patterns, and many of the street names of that new community survive today. The primary function of University Park, the original name for downtown Palo Alto, was to provide a town to support the ambitious plans of Stanford and his wife, Jane Lathrop, to construct a distinguished University on their farm, in honor of their son, Leland Stanford Jr.

As the little town grew, the early residents found the downtown lacking in many of the amenities they expected. Originally consisting of a post office, a thread and needle shop, a Sunday school, and a train station, in 1891 the first restaurant and bookstore opened and initiated two trends in retail services which have thrived to the present day. The first sidewalks had to be constructed through volunteer efforts of the original property owners. The City was incorporated in 1894, prompted largely by the lobbying efforts of some of the citizens to provide a better quality of life through city-owned versus privately held water, gas, and electrical utilities, a "radical" idea in its day. These concepts of innovation, community involvement, public and private cooperation, and a higher "quality of life" shaped the original downtown and set the stage for the measures identified in this report to implement future Downtown improvements.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Palo Alto is located approximately midway between San Francisco and San Jose. Because the attractive force of a major city diminishes as you get farther away, Palo Alto enjoys a substantial
opportunity for competing with the goods and services offered by these two major metropolitan centers. This spatial relationship improves the chances of economic success for the Downtown.

Another geographic advantage of modern downtown Palo Alto is its relationship to the culturally and technically diverse surrounding areas. For instance, Stanford University provides the area with a tradition of academic pursuit and broad mindedness. It creates the constant influx of multinational and multicultural associates visiting from other areas of the world to study, teach or do research at Stanford. The Downtown reflects this international orientation by offering a relatively diverse community a smorgasbord of restaurants, coffee houses, bookstores, and eclectic retail and personal service establishments. Likewise, East Palo Alto, a community whose leaders and population are predominantly people of color, shares with the Palo Alto community an appreciation of rich cultural heritage and variety. The communities of "Silicon Valley", and in particular the high technology companies based in Palo Alto's Stanford Research Park, also provide a strong link to the international community through the high technology market place.

Palo Alto enjoys one of the finest local climates in the Bay Area. The moderating effects of the Bay are felt in Palo Alto where natural wind currents whisk away smog and oppressive summer heat, otherwise accumulating in the South Bay. On the other hand, the location is just southerly enough to enjoy relief from the high breezes, overcast and fog which can disappoint residents of neighboring North Peninsula communities. This delightful climate allows property owners and merchants to invest in the amenities and improvements which bring life outdoors and onto the streets a minimum of 300 days out of the year. Existing landscaping, street furniture, evening lighting, sidewalk cafes, outdoor dining areas, street vendors and similar amenities help contribute to an outdoor downtown life. However, additional and improved amenities of this type are needed in order to take full advantage of Palo Alto's climate and are encouraged throughout this Plan.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

During the 1950's the downtown area declined partially as a result of the opening of Stanford Shopping Center. In an effort to revitalize the area, the City made public improvements in the late 1960's and early 1970's which restricted University Avenue to two travel lanes, created protected bus stop areas, and provided additional downtown parking and landscaping, particularly the Sycamore trees that now line University Avenue.

In the late 1970's and 80's, the downtown experienced a revitalization. The Downtown area is now considered strong economically and has a vacancy rate of less than 3 percent in the 1,200,000 square feet of retail space, and less than 5 percent for 1,600,000 square feet of offices.

The Downtown is developed in a manner which encourages all forms of transportation, including bicycle, pedestrian, automobile and alternative transit. Direct access to the Peninsula Commute Service trains (previously owned and operated by Southern Pacific, but recently taken over by the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board), and 10 bus routes from both Santa Clara County and San Mateo County transit systems is offered for commuters. Bicyclists enjoy Downtown access to the highly regarded Palo Alto bicycle path and trails system. This system was recently complimented with the City Council approval of improvements to the Downtown link of the Bryant Street Bicycle Boulevard, scheduled for completion in the fall of 1992.

Over 945 public parking spaces are provided on the street and 2278 in 17 public parking lots. Although parking is perceived by the general public as a problem area, the City has actually increased the number of spaces downtown by 478 spaces since 1984. (add information indicating by how many
spaces we have reduced the deficit since 1984 also.)

The 20,000+ vehicles carried by University Avenue are spread throughout the day; however traffic movement on University Avenue is very slow at noon and during the evening rush hour. The slow traffic may be disconcerting to through traffic, but is advantageous to pedestrians and shop owners by creating safer conditions and encouraging drivers to stop and shop.

Architecture is a mixture of styles, designs and materials. Building envelopes and building mass vary due to differing regulations in effect at the time of individual building approvals. Signs are generally well done and subdued, with creative efforts encouraged by the Architectural Review Board in their administration of the sign regulations and the Pedestrian District Regulations (a copy of the Pedestrian regulations are found in Appendix D).
APPENDIX C: DOWNTOWN PARKING LOTS

WEBSTER
TASSO
COWPER
KIPLING
WAVERLEY
FLORENCE
UNIVERSITY
BRYANT
HANSON
EMERSON
HIGH
ALMA

○ NUMBER OF PERMIT PARKING SPACES
○ TOTAL NUMBER OF PARKING SPACES
△ LOT C PARKING SPACES RESERVED
   FOR PALO ALTO SENIOR CENTER

1/13/89
APPENDIX D: P DISTRICT ZONING Regulations

Chapter 18.47

PEDESTRIAN SHOPPING COMBINING
DISTRICT (P) REGULATIONS

Sections:
18.47.010 Specific purposes.
18.47.020 Applicability of regulations.
18.47.030 Zoning map designation.
18.47.040 Use limitations and site development regulations.

18.47.010 Specific Purposes. The pedestrian shopping combining district is intended to modify the regulations of the CN neighborhood commercial district, the CC community commercial district and the CD commercial downtown district in locations where it is deemed essential to foster the continuity of retail stores and display windows and to avoid a monotonous pedestrian environment in order to establish and maintain an economically healthy retail district. (Ord. 3792 § 1, 1988: Ord. 3098 §1, 1978: Ord. 3048 (part), 1978).

18.47.020 Applicability of regulations. The pedestrian shopping combining district may be combined with any CN, CC or CD district, in accord with Chapter 18.08 and Chapter 18.98. Where so combined, the regulations established by this chapter shall apply in lieu of, or in addition to, the provisions established by Chapters 18.41, 18.43, or 18.49. (Ord. 3792 § 2, 1988: Ord. 3048 (part), 1978).

18.47.030 Zoning map designation. The pedestrian shopping combining district shall apply to any site adjacent to designated pedestrian frontage or pedestrian ways shown on the zoning map. (Ord. 3048 (part), 1978).

18.47.040 Use limitations and site development regulations. (a) Pedestrian Design Features Required. On any site, or portion of a site, adjoining a designated pedestrian sidewalk or pedestrian way, new construction and alterations to existing structures shall be required, as determined by the architectural review board, to provide the following design features intended to create pedestrian or shopper interest, to provide weather protection for pedestrians, and to preclude inappropriate or inharmonious building design and siting:

1. Display windows, or retail display areas:
2. Pedestrian arcades, recessed entryways, or covered recessed areas designed for pedestrian use with an area not less than the length of the adjoining frontage times 0.5 meters (1.5 feet);
3. Landscaping or architectural design features intended to preclude blank walls or building faces.

The specific nature and requirements of pedestrian design features shall be determined by the architectural review board, in accord with design guidelines prepared by that board pursuant to Chapter 16.48.

(b) Parking and Vehicular Access Restricted. Vehicular access to sites adjoining designated pedestrian sidewalks or pedestrian ways which requires vehicular movement across such pedestrian sidewalks or pedestrian ways shall be prohibited, except where required by law or as may be authorized by a use permit issued in accord with Chapter 18.90. (Ord. 3792 § 3, 1988: Ord. 3108 §18, 1979: Ord. 3098 §2, 1978: Ord. 3048 (part), 1978).
APPENDIX E: APPROVED SIDEWALK TREATMENTS

APPROVED SIDEWALK TREATMENTS

Sidewalk Detail:
- Full size clay brick (non-slip surface)
- Exposed aggregate concrete with any rock type and uniform rock size of either 1/4", 1/2", or 3/4".
- Black, Gray, Red or Autumn Brown (see color detail) surface treated concrete with the following three optional patterns:

![Diagram of sidewalk treatments]

Color Detail:
- Black (2 pints lampblack per cubic yard), Gray (1 pint lampblack per cubic yard), Tile Red (Davis #117 3 lbs. per sack), Autumn Brown (Bomanite) or equal as approved by the Palo Alto Architectural Review Board.
APPENDIX F: CURRENT DOWNTOWN ZONING MAP