



City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: February 25, 2025

Prepared By: Steven Son

Approved By: Gabe Engeland

Subject: Parking Restrictions around Los Altos High School

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- Business Communities
- Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing
- Neighborhood Safety Infrastructure
- General Government

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt the following parking policy around Los Altos High School:

1. All existing parking restrictions around Los Altos High School will be modified to 2-hour parking from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Almond Avenue is to remain as no parking at all times.
2. The existing no-parking restriction from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm will remain north of Jardin Drive to 500 feet north of Jardin Drive along Panchita Way, Los Ninos Way, Distel Drive, Casita Way and Alicia Way.
3. Staff is granted permission to install a 2-hour parking restriction from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm, Monday through Friday at other locations deemed necessary to address parking issue around Los Altos High School.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommended changes.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The agreement amendment is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3) (Common Sense Exemption), 15273 (Rates, Tolls, Fares, and Charges), and 15306 (Information Collection).

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

On August 27, 2024, the City Council directed staff to implement parking restrictions north of Los Altos High School and return with several parking options. The parking restriction is from 8 am to 12 pm between Jardin Drive and Alvarado Avenue along Panchita Way, Los Ninos Way, Distel Drive,

Casita Way, and Alicia Way. The signs necessary to implement parking restrictions were installed in December 2024 and are currently being enforced by the Los Altos Police Department.

BACKGROUND

Based on research on the Public-School Review web page, in 1995, the number of students enrolled at Los Altos High School was approximately 1,600, with approximately 60 teachers and an unknown number of support staff. According to the latest demographic information from the California Department of Education Data Quest, as of the 2023-2024 academic school year, Los Altos High School has 2,141 students enrolled, with 114 teachers and an unknown number of support staff. Based on the research, the impact on the school represents a 30% increase in population, while the school's footprint has remained constant.

In fiscal year 2017-18, Mountain View Los Altos High School District (MVLA) completed a comprehensive Facilities Master Plan to address future facility needs and sustain growth. For this reason, on June 5, 2018, MVLA placed on the ballot for Measure E to fund additional classrooms; provide facilities to expand programs in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math; update aging classrooms and replace old roofs, plumbing, and electronics; expanding libraries, cafeterias, and other student support facilities to accommodate growing student enrollments. Based on the Master Plan layout for Los Altos High School (LAHS), the improvement will occur within the existing building footprint. By utilizing the existing building footprint and adding a second story, the school can significantly increase the number of classrooms to accommodate increased enrollment. The Master Plan layout does not show the number of parking stalls being reduced within the school property after the construction.

Shortly after the passing of the Measure E bond, the MVLA proceeded with multiple-phase construction at Los Altos High School. According to the Measure E construction update, Phase I consisted of constructing new classrooms and a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) laboratory to accommodate additional enrollment and making necessary repairs to existing facilities. This project was completed in the Summer of 2021. Phase II consisted of constructing a student services building (completed) and auxiliary gymnasium (completed), as well as replacing existing grass fields with synthetic turf (completed). Phase III of the project consists of modernizing the existing library (to be determined), upgrading the existing cafeteria (estimated completion of fall 2025), improving the existing gymnasium (to be determined, currently in discussion), and increasing capacity for music and arts programs to support a well-rounded education (estimated completion, Fall 2025)

To support ongoing construction at Los Altos High School, given limited space on campus, the contractor and sub-contractors are currently utilizing four (4) of the existing 12 tennis courts for construction and material staging. The contractor and sub-contractors are presently utilizing all of the existing parking stalls along the softball field. The drive aisle along the eastern portion of the school property that used to provide connectivity between Jardin Drive and Almond Avenue is currently blocked because of construction activities. Since the drive aisle located along the eastern portion of the school property is blocked, all construction materials and access to the construction site must be done off Jardin Drive.

The construction activity at Los Altos High School significantly impacts on the school and the community around it, both in terms of traffic circulation and how the school can utilize its current

property. The school dedicated parking stalls along the softball field for the contractors to use while working on site. Once the construction is completed, the school can use these parking stalls to help alleviate street parking. At the conclusion of all construction activity, the parking stalls along the softball field can be utilized to address long-term parking issues.

DISCUSSION

Based on the information that is available by MVLA High School District, it does not appear the conclusion of the construction activity at Los Altos High School will address long-term parking. In 1995, Los Altos High School had 1,600 students enrolled, with 60 teachers and an unknown number of support staff. By the 2023-24 academic school year, the school had 2,141 students with 114 teachers and an unknown number of support staff. The number of people utilizing the school represents a 30% increase over 29 years without the ability to increase the size of the school property or the number of available parking spaces. Also, with the school expansion in anticipation of an increased number of students attending Los Altos High School, it is safe to assume the school cannot address additional demand for parking permits. Since the request for parking permits has exceeded the number of parking stalls available on campus, the residents around the high school will be directly impacted well into the future.

Currently, the parking restrictions around Los Altos High School have been inconsistent. The inconsistent parking restrictions have made it a challenge for staff to apply a uniform parking policy and provide parking enforcement, and it has been an inconvenience for the residents. To ensure uniformity, all existing parking restrictions around the high school should be modified to be a maximum three (3) hours. The purpose of parking restrictions is to change public behavior rather than being punitive. Based on field observations, it appears that most street parking occurs at the beginning of the day when the high school is starting. By restricting street parking between 8:00 am – 12:00 am, the students must find alternative means of coming to school. Even though the school has an open campus policy, the school schedule would not provide adequate time for students to go home and drive their vehicles back to school. Based on a new parking restriction north of Jardin Drive, the restriction has deterred approximately 85% of the students from parking in the surrounding neighborhood. Since the installation of the parking restriction in December 2024, based on field observations, the benefit of parking restriction has created safer traffic circulation on Jardin Drive and adjoining streets. Since students are no longer racing to park as close to the school as possible, it reduced the number of vehicles speeding through the neighborhood. The parking restriction works as intended, improving public safety and alleviating traffic congestion.

Hybrid Parking Restriction

The current parking restriction north of Jardin Drive is from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The feedback from the residents regarding the parking restriction has been mixed. The residents' comments depend on where their property is located. The residents close to the high school would like to keep the new parking restriction. These residents have stated that the new parking restriction finally addressed the “nightmare they have been living for years” and the resident finally feel like they have been heard by the Council.

The residents furthest from Jardin Drive stated that the new parking restriction has been inconvenient and unnecessary since they had never experienced parking issues like those who lived close to the high school. These residents also stated that the parking restriction is too restrictive and that it does not allow relatives to visit, in-home healthcare providers or another domestic service from conducting business on the property without receiving a parking ticket. The residents also stated that when they

have more than two (2) vehicles, they must juggle and preplan how the cars will be parked in the driveway. For this reason, they would like all parking restrictions to be removed immediately.

The new parking restriction north of Jardin Drive has been very effective in improving public safety and reducing the number of speeding vehicles. The new parking restriction meets the Council's objective of providing circulation safety and efficiency and neighborhood safety infrastructure. To remove existing parking restrictions would be contrary to the goals set by the Council. Based on the comments received, staff can modify the existing parking restrictions as shown below.

1. The existing no-parking restriction from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm within 500 feet of Jardin Drive will remain.
2. The restriction for properties that are 500 feet or greater from Jardin Drive will be modified to allow 2-hour parking Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. The timed parking would be in line with other parts of the city.

Advantage/Disadvantage of timed parking

The advantage of the hybrid parking restriction provides flexibility to address the concerns of the residents who rely on home healthcare or other domestic services. This option also allows residents flexibility if they have multiple vehicles without the need to remove their vehicle(s) off the street by 8:00 am. This option also provides the strict parking restriction that is being requested by the residents closest to Jardin Drive.

The disadvantage of this option may be confusion for the general public without very clear signage. Timed parking may not address all of the residents' concerns about parking in the public right-of-way. The timed parking restriction would require the residents to move their vehicles at a minimum of 15 feet every 2 hours.

Resident Parking Permit

Staff researched other alternatives to the current parking regulations and researched how other cities administer exemptions to parking restrictions. Staff researched jurisdictions that surround the City of Los Altos to determine if a resident parking permit program is a viable option. Based on the research, the City of Mountain View, Palo Alto, Sunnyvale, Cupertino, San Jose, San Mateo, and the County of Santa Clara has a resident parking permit program. The purpose of the residential parking permit program is for residents to be exempt from parking restrictions whose parking is impacted by traffic generators such as hospitals, businesses, and schools. The parking permit is to discourage overflow parking onto residential streets and enhance the quality of life of the residential neighborhoods. To obtain a residential parking permit for vehicles, each city requires proof of residency. The standard method of showing proof of residency is to provide a valid DMV license or vehicle registration, and proof of residency, such as a utility bill, lease agreement, car insurance policy, or printed personal check with the applicant's name and address. The number of residential parking permits issued varies depending on the city.

CITY	RESIDENTIAL	DURATION	Zone/District Specific	GUEST
Cupertino	Each vehicle is registered to an address	1 year	No	1 permit, max 24 hours
Sunnyvale	Limit of 3 parking permits	1 year	No	1 permit, max 24 hours
Mountain View	Each vehicle is registered to an address	1 year	Yes	Can purchase a day permit at the parking vending machine
Palo Alto	Each vehicle is registered to an address	1 year	No	Can purchase a day parking permit at the parking permit vending machine
Santa Clara County	Each vehicle is registered to an address	1 year	No	No guest parking permit
San Jose	Varies from 1 to unlimited based on Zone/District	1 year	Yes	Max 2 permits depending on Zone/District
San Mateo	1 permit for each licensed driver	2 year	No	1 permit good for 2 years

All cities provide parking restriction exemptions for clearly identified commercial and delivery vehicles within the parking restriction area. For home services such as gardeners, active gardening activity must be visible within the property. For the City of Sunnyvale, a parking permit is issued specifically for caregivers. The resident must show proof that a caregiver needs to be at the residence. Caregivers are defined as individuals providing medical-related care. Proof that a caregiver needs to be at a residence can be a contract for care or a doctor’s note stating medical care is required.

The city will face challenges in implementing a resident parking permit program. Currently, the city lacks the necessary resources and staffing to implement and maintain a residential parking permit. Also, by implementing a residential parking permit program, the Council is providing an opportunity for residents at other parts of the city to request a residential parking permit around other schools, park and close to shopping center.

The City Council may elect to implement a resident parking permit that allows exemption from the parking restriction and establish a neighborhood parking program. The implementation of the parking permit would be a challenge as previously outlined.

Should the City Council direct staff to create a neighborhood permit program, staff will develop an annual fee for administration and establish regulations consistent with Council direction.

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ATTACHMENT

1. Presentation slides