

## 4 COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

### *A. Introduction*

The Community Design Element is an optional element of the General Plan. This Element is intended to address the small town character of Los Gatos through its physical design elements.

This Element is divided into the following sections. With the exception of the first section, each of the remaining sections has its own set of goals, policies, and actions:

- ◆ Key Features of the Los Gatos Community
- ◆ Town-Wide Design Principles
- ◆ Residential Neighborhoods
- ◆ Non-Residential Neighborhoods
- ◆ Downtown
- ◆ Historic Preservation
- ◆ Hillside Development
- ◆ Scenic Resources
- ◆ Design Review Process

### *B. Key Features of the Los Gatos Community*

The Town's history forms its existing character. Los Gatos was founded around the Forbes Mill, a flour mill built in 1854. Located in a heavily wooded area, the Town centered around the logging industry in the late 1800s and later became an agricultural town in the early 1900s. In the 1950s, the Town grew primarily as a suburb of the City of San Jose.

Today, Los Gatos maintains its small town residential character and suburban roots. The remains of Forbes Mill and its 1880 annex have been converted into the History Museum of Los Gatos, a landmark now located in the Main Street and Civic Center neighborhood. Los Gatos is also defined by its beautiful natural setting in the Santa Cruz Mountains, which is integrated into the Town's fabric through its views of forested hillsides, mature trees,

and creekside trails. Los Gatos is one of 152 communities in California to be designated a “Tree City USA” and has been in the Tree City USA Program since 1980. This program provides national recognition and technical assistance to towns and cities for preserving and maintaining trees in their jurisdictions.

The majority of Los Gatos is divided into single-family residential lots. Mature trees cover much of the landscape, particularly in the hillside neighborhoods. The small, urban area of Los Gatos is more densely knit, particularly in the southwestern corner of the Town around Highway 17. This area contains neighborhood and regional commercial corridors, as well as civic and cultural uses, and is generally referred to by residents as Downtown Los Gatos. Town-designated historic districts that include structures dating back to the early 1900s are also located within and around this Core Area. Development becomes less dense as it spreads south and east into the hillside areas.

Today, the Town is situated within one of the largest metropolitan areas of northern California and is closely tied to the fast-paced economy of Silicon Valley. Nevertheless, the Town of Los Gatos still retains its small town character and offers a rich community fabric composed of a varied mix of residential, commercial, and light industrial uses that serve the residents and attract visitors.

### *C. Town-Wide Design Principles*

#### **1. Background Information**

In order to preserve Los Gatos’s unique character and high quality of life, new development must meet very high standards, not only in its appearance but also in its contributions to the social and economic life of the Town. The Town has created and maintained an attractively built environment through careful attention to the design of buildings, landscaping, public improvements, and the preservation of the natural environment.

## 2. Goals, Policies, and Actions

This section describes overarching design principles that apply to the character of the Town.

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| <b>Goal CD-1</b> | <b>Preserve and enhance Los Gatos's character through exceptional community design.</b> |
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### Policies

- Policy CD-1.1 Building elements shall be in proportion with those traditionally in the neighborhood.
- Policy CD-1.2 New structures, remodels, landscapes, and hardscapes shall be designed to harmonize and blend with the scale and rhythm of the neighborhood and natural features in the area.
- Policy CD-1.3 Buildings, landscapes, and hardscapes shall follow the natural contours of the property.
- Policy CD-1.4 Development on all elevations shall be of high quality design and construction, a positive addition to and compatible with the Town's ambiance. Development shall enhance the character and unique identity of existing commercial and/or residential neighborhoods.
- Policy CD-1.5 Town staff shall evaluate projects to assess how built characteristics, including scale, materials, hardscape, lights, and landscape, blend into the surrounding neighborhood.
- Policy CD-1.6 Town staff shall review properties next to community entry points when they are developed or redeveloped to reflect the gateway concept.

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| <b>Goal CD-2</b> | <b>To limit the intensity of new development to a level that is consistent with surrounding development and with the Town at large.</b> |
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**Policies**

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| Policy CD-2.1 | Building setbacks shall increase as mass and height increase.                                                                              |
| Policy CD-2.2 | Limit the amount of increase in the floor area of a project when the number of units is reduced as part of the development review process. |
| Policy CD-2.3 | A maximum total floor area for new subdivisions and planned developments shall be set as part of the approval process.                     |

**Actions**

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| Action CD-2.1 | Conduct a study to consider amending the Below Market Price (BMP) program to set the required number of below-market-rate units based on the total square footage of a project, in addition to setting the requirement based on a percentage of the number of market-rate units. |
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| <b>Goal CD-3</b> | <b>To require utilities, landscaping and streetscapes to contribute to Los Gatos's high-quality character.</b> |
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**Policies**

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| Policy CD-3.1 | Encourage the undergrounding of utilities on substantial remodels.                                                                                                                                                     |
| Policy CD-3.2 | Street and structural lighting shall be required to minimize its visual impacts by preventing glare, limiting the amount of light that falls on neighboring properties, and avoiding light pollution of the night sky. |

CD-4

- Policy CD-3.3 Consider new street lighting only when required for safety.
- Policy CD-3.4  Encourage the use of landscaping such as trees, large shrubs, and trellised vines to mitigate the effects of building mass, lower noise, and reduce heat generation.
- Policy CD-3.5  All landscaping shall be carefully reviewed to ensure that it is aesthetically pleasing, compatible with its neighborhood and natural environment, and water conserving.
- Policy CD-3.6 Utility connections and meters shall be visually unobtrusive from the street.
- Policy CD-3.7 Roof mounted mechanical equipment shall be screened and such screening shall be considered as part of the structure for height limitations.
- Policy CD-3.8 Solid fencing over 3 feet high shall be designed such that it does not isolate the structures from the street, or shall be set back and landscaped.
- Policy CD-3.9 Parking structures and facilities shall have a low profile, be screened from view, and be aesthetically pleasing.

#### Actions

- Action CD-3.1  Prepare and adopt environmentally sensitive landscape design standards using the Bay-Friendly Landscape Guidelines. Encourage well-planned planting schemes that include appropriately-sized plant material, avoid the use of invasive and non-native plants, and require landscaping of a sufficient density to add to the beauty of the Town.

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| <p><b>Goal CD-4</b></p>  | <p><b>To preserve existing trees, natural vegetation, natural topography, riparian corridors and wildlife habitats, and promote high quality, well designed, environmentally sensitive, and diverse landscaping in new and existing developments.</b></p> |
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**Policies**

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| <p>Policy CD-4.1</p>    | <p>Preserve the Town's distinctive and unique environment by preserving and maintaining the natural topography, wildlife, and native vegetation, and by mitigating and reversing the harmful effects of traffic congestion, pollution, and environmental degradation on the Town's urban landscape.</p> |
| <p>Policy CD-4.2</p>  | <p>Maintain street trees, plant additional street trees, and encourage preservation and planting of trees on public and private property.</p>                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p>Policy CD-4.3</p>  | <p>Trees that are protected under the Town's Tree Preservation Ordinance, as well as existing native, heritage, and specimen trees should be preserved and protected as a part of any development proposal.</p>                                                                                         |
| <p>Policy CD-4.4</p>  | <p>Street trees shall be required in new developments.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>Policy CD-4.5</p>  | <p>New development shall promote visual continuity through tree planting, consistent use of low shrubs, and ground cover.</p>                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p>Policy CD-4.6</p>  | <p>Encourage mixtures of tree species, both deciduous and evergreen, to screen projects, add variety, create a more natural environment, and avoid future problems of insect infestation or other blights that might destroy the desired tree cover.</p>                                                |

Policy CD-4.7  Landscaping plans should maximize the use of trees for energy efficiency, climate control, screening, shading (especially of parking lots), and aesthetics.

Policy CD-4.8  Landscaping plans shall maximize the use of local native plants and/or drought resistant plants.

**Action**

Action CD-4.1  Review and enforce any ordinances necessary to preserve trees on public and private property.

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| <b>Goal CD-5</b> | <b>To design a built environment that keeps Los Gatos safe.</b> |
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**Policy**

Policy CD-5.1 Street standards shall recognize the existing character of the neighborhood, safety, and maintenance.

**Action**

Action CD-5.1 Adopt an ordinance that establishes design parameters for buildings, streetscapes, and lighting which help prevent crime.

***D. Residential Neighborhoods***

**1. Background Information**

Los Gatos is a primarily residential community. The majority of Los Gatos is divided into single-family residential lots of varying densities from the Downtown area to the hillside neighborhoods.

In addition to the goals, policies, and actions listed below, Los Gatos has Residential Design Guidelines that promote safe, compatible, and well-designed housing in Los Gatos.

## 2. Goals, Policies, and Actions

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| <b>Goal CD-6</b> | <b>To promote and protect the physical and other distinctive qualities of residential neighborhoods.</b> |
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### Policies

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| Policy CD-6.1 | Reduce the visual impact of new construction and/or remodels on the Town and its neighborhoods.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Policy CD-6.2 | Balance the size and number of units to achieve appropriate intensity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Policy CD-6.3 | Encourage basements and cellars to provide “hidden” square footage in lieu of visible mass.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Policy CD-6.4 | New homes shall be sited to maximize privacy, livability, protection of natural plant and wildlife habitats and migration corridors, and adequate solar access and wind conditions. Siting should take advantage of scenic views but should not create significant ecological or visual impacts affecting open spaces, public places, or other properties. |

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| <b>Goal CD-7</b> | <b>To preserve the quality of the private open space throughout Los Gatos.</b> |
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### Policies

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| Policy CD-7.1 | Maximize quality usable open space in all new developments.                                         |
| Policy CD-7.2 | Multi-family residential developments shall include common open space suitable for group gathering. |
| Policy CD-7.3 | All residential developments shall include private open space in proportion to the building size.   |

CD-8

**Action**

Action CD-7.1 Conduct a study to research increasing yard setback regulations to include considerations for building height, and update the Town Code as necessary.

***E. Non-Residential Areas***

**1. Background Information**

Los Gatos has several commercial and industrial areas that are important to the community. Downtown's Santa Cruz Avenue corridor is pedestrian-oriented with one- and two-story buildings housing various retail and restaurants. It is a local destination for Los Gatos residents and residents of neighboring communities in Silicon Valley. Los Gatos Boulevard is also a major commercial corridor with several older shopping centers. These older shopping centers are primarily commercial strip malls set back from Los Gatos Boulevard with ample front parking spaces. The malls are typically long, single-story structures with sidewalks and awnings. Near Blossom Hill Road, Los Gatos Boulevard has higher density shopping centers with major grocery anchor tenants.

In addition to the goals, policies, and actions listed below, Los Gatos has Commercial Design Guidelines that provide guidance for commercial property owners, promote well-designed commercial buildings, and encourage a cohesive sense of place.

**2. Goals, Policies, and Actions**

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| <b>Goal CD-8</b> | <b>Promote, enhance and protect the appearance of the Los Gatos's commercial areas.</b> |
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### **Policies**

Policy CD-8.1      Encourage the preservation of the appearance and function of the industrial areas and the visible labor and products of labor that are evident there.

### **Actions**

Action CD-8.1      Periodically inspect all commercial landscaping to ensure that approved landscaping is maintained.

## ***F. Downtown***

### **1. Background Information**

The Downtown is the historic heart of Los Gatos. It encompasses the southwest section of Town and is generally bounded by Blossom Hill Road and Pine Avenue to the north; Glen Ridge Avenue to the west; Wood Road, College Avenue, and Cleland Avenue to the south; and Los Gatos Boulevard to the east. Downtown includes the Central Business District General Plan land use designation, shown on the General Plan land use map. Main Street includes a bridge that accommodates pedestrians and cars and connects West Main Street with East Main Street. Buildings along West Main Street near North Santa Cruz and University Avenues exhibit a range of styles, from Queen Anne and Richardson Romanesque to Art Deco. These buildings contribute to the Town-designated Historic Commercial District. Town Plaza Park—Los Gatos’s civic green space—and the History Museum of Los Gatos, housed in the Forbes Mill Annex, are both located in Downtown. For many years, Downtown Los Gatos has been voted “the Best Downtown of Silicon Valley” by readers of local newspapers.

### **2. Goals, Policies, and Actions**

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| <b>Goal CD-9</b> | <b>To preserve the character of Downtown Los Gatos and the quality of life for its citizens through high-quality building design.</b> |
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**Policies**

- Policy CD-9.1      Exterior building materials in the Central Business District should be consistent with those used in existing, tastefully executed surrounding buildings.

**Actions**

- Action CD-9.1      Adopt controls to ensure that new buildings built on existing vacant parcels strengthen the form and image of the Central Business District.
- Action CD-9.2      Adopt architectural design controls related to the rehabilitation of buildings within the Central Business District through consistency and compatibility of scale, massing, materials, color, texture, reflectivity, openings, and other details.

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| <b>Goal CD-10</b> | <b>To maintain the historic character of the Downtown.</b> |
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**Policies**

- Policy CD-10.1      Encourage the preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, reuse, and maintenance of existing buildings Downtown.
- Policy CD-10.2      Encourage outdoor seating for restaurants/coffee shops when the historic character and quality of the Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods can be maintained.

**Actions**

- Action CD-10.1      Conduct an historic resources survey to identify valuable and historical architectural styles and features within the Central Business District.
- Action CD-10.2      Adopt strengthened architectural design controls related to the rehabilitation of buildings within the Central Business District.

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| <b>Goal CD-11</b> | <b>Preserve and enhance the appearance of the Central Business District through design improvements to streetscapes and landscapes.</b> |
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**Policies**

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| Policy CD-11.1 | Street, walkway, and building lighting should be designed to strengthen and reinforce Downtown's character.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Policy CD-11.2 | Downtown signs and graphics should maintain the Town's small scale appearance and be consistent with the Commercial Design Guidelines.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Policy CD-11.3 | Public signs, directional signs, informational signs, and other signs within the Central Business District should be designed so as to easily communicate their message, and be distinctive enough in their form and color that the observer will identify them with the Central Business District.                                                       |
| Policy CD-11.4 | Street furniture and equipment, such as lamp standards, traffic signals, fire hydrants, street signs, telephones, mail boxes, refuse receptacles, bus shelters, drinking fountains, planters, kiosks, flag poles, and other elements of the street environment, should be designed and selected so as to strengthen and reinforce the Downtown character. |
| Policy CD-11.5 | Trees and plants shall be approved by the Superintendent of Parks and Forestry for the purpose of meeting criteria, including climatic conditions, maintenance, year-round versus seasonal color change (i.e. blossoms, summer foliage, autumn color), special branching effects, and other considerations.                                               |
| Policy CD-11.6 | The area along Santa Cruz and University Avenues between Saratoga Avenue and West Main Street should                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

receive special treatment to accent it as the Town's commercial core or Central Business District and to enhance user familiarity and enjoyment.

### **Actions**

- Action CD-11.1    Install treatments, including:
- a. Continuation of the Town's Downtown paving and tree planting system within the Central Business District.
  - b. Specialized lighting and sign systems to distinguish this area, including orientation signs to guide those seeking access to the Town's parking areas and other destinations.
  - c. Modifications and improvements to the Town Plaza to heighten its role as the southern visual anchor and gateway to the Downtown area.
- Action CD-11.2    Maintain design controls on private signage to enhance the commercial core area.
- Action CD-11.3    Develop and adopt a landscaping plan that heightens user understanding of Downtown.

## ***G. Historic Preservation***

### **1. Background Information**

This section provides an historical overview that illustrates land use and development patterns in Los Gatos from the historic period to the present.

Prior to California's era of United States governance, Spanish and then Mexican authorities granted large tracts of land to those who rendered services to the government. These tracts, called ranchos, were extensive and contained vast natural resources. Rancho Rinconada de los Gatos was granted

to Jose Hernandez and Sebastian Peralta by the Governor of Alta California in May 1840. Because of the Mexican-American War in January 1853, Hernandez and Peralta were forced to petition the United States Federal Court in San Francisco to recognize their claim. In March 1860, the United States government issued both men a patent to their 6,631-acre rancho. The Peralta and Hernandez Adobe, originally constructed for Claude Simond, was built in 1853 on Quito Road in the present Town of Los Gatos.

In 1850, Alexander Forbes, former Vice-Counsel in San Francisco for the British Government, purchased 3,000 acres in the vicinity of Los Gatos Creek on the Rancho Rinconada de Los Gatos, adjacent to the old Mission Trail between Santa Clara and Santa Cruz. Forbes constructed a flour mill on the east bank of Los Gatos Creek, which opened in 1854. The Town that grew around this building was initially called Forbes Mill, then Forbestown, and finally Los Gatos after the large wild cats that were so prevalent in the surrounding mountains.

In the mid-1850s, Old Santa Cruz Highway opened along with the Southern Pacific Coast Railroad (SPCRR), making Los Gatos an important Town for the logging industry in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

The completion of the SPCRR in 1878 set the framework for Los Gatos's future prosperity. The rail line, which connected San Francisco to Santa Cruz, passed through the Town and allowed passengers to transit the fertile Santa Clara Valley. Many American and European families were drawn to Los Gatos's mild climate and began purchasing property and planting orchards. In 1873, oil was discovered south of Los Gatos in an area known as Moody Gulch. Oil was produced there until 1922 and, although no longer in use, some oil rigs still remain. In 1958, the gulch was filled to make room for State Route 17.

During the mid-1870s, the Town expanded to the west side of Los Gatos Creek and land prices increased significantly. In 1877, Los Gatos was incorporated and census records list 1,500 inhabitants within the Town's

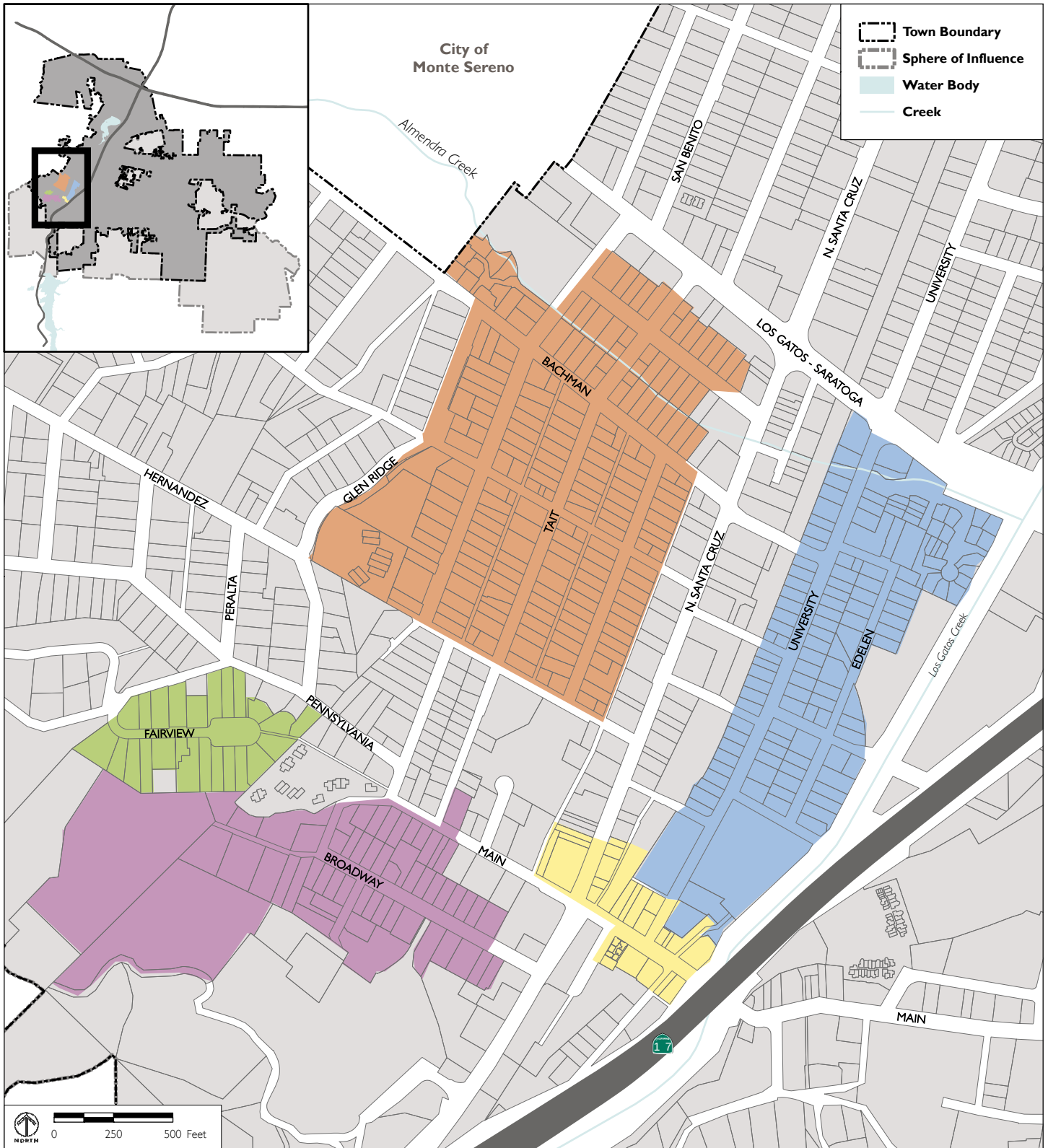
limits. During this period of expansion, the Downtown area of Los Gatos began to develop. The Los Gatos Hotel, originally built in the mid-1860s, was enlarged in 1878. The Los Gatos Gas Company was organized in 1885, at about the same time as the Los Gatos Ice Works, the Bank of Los Gatos, and the Los Gatos and Saratoga Wine Company. In 1886, the Los Gatos school-house was built, and by 1881 the Town had at least two churches.

The railroad made it possible for Los Gatos farmers to ship their produce all over the country. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Los Gatos became a major agricultural area known for its apricots, prunes, grapes, and peaches.

Fruit orchards and logging, Los Gatos's main industries through World War I, began to weaken during the Depression and through World War II. During the period after World War II, however, the Town experienced strong residential and commercial growth, which continues to the present day.

Today, the Town of Los Gatos has an Historic Preservation Code dedicated to preserving historic and architectural resources in Los Gatos. The Code establishes a Historic Preservation Committee and a Historic Preservation Program that includes a comprehensive series of standards and guidelines concerning the preservation and demolition of historic structures, design guidelines for rehabilitation and new construction, and guidance in the application of historic preservation standards. The Town recognizes an historic resource as follows: any structure/site that is located within an historic district; any structure/site that is historically designated; or any primary structure constructed prior to 1941, unless the Town has determined that the structure has no historic significance or architectural merit. The Town Council designates landmark sites and districts by ordinance. Los Gatos has five historic districts, described below and illustrated on Figure CD-1.

- ◆ **Downtown Commercial Historic District.** This district is bounded by Elm Street to the north, Main Street to the south, Los Gatos Creek to the east, and North Santa Cruz Avenue to the west. It is Los Gatos's only surviving concentration of intact historic commercial buildings and



Source: Town of Los Gatos, 2008.

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| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black;"></span> <b>Almond Grove</b>  | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span> <b>Downtown Commercial</b> |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black;"></span> <b>Broadway</b>      | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: blue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> <b>University-Edelen</b>     |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: green; border: 1px solid black;"></span> <b>Fairview Plaza</b> |                                                                                                                                                       |

FIGURE CD-1  
HISTORIC DISTRICTS

includes the Town's earliest commercial roadway intersection and one-half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial center. Architectural styles in this district include Queen Anne, Richardsonian Romanesque, and Art Deco, all in typical commercial styles with large display windows. None of the buildings exceed two and a half stories and the majority front directly on the sidewalk.

- ◆ **Fairview Plaza Historic District.** Fairview Plaza was the original name given to the cul-de-sac termination in the subdivision known as "Fairview Addition." Fairview Plaza retains the same configuration as originally mapped, with houses oriented around a landscaped park. Approximately three quarters of the homes within the subdivision were built prior to 1900 and retain the character of that era. The pedestrian walk labeled "Turnstile Walk" on the original map remains essentially unchanged and is located at the eastern end of the cul-de-sac. Fairview Plaza is a rare and unique neighborhood because of the authentic, well-maintained Victorian and Craftsman houses in proximity to one another.

**Almond Grove Historic District.** This district is bounded by Bean Avenue to the south, Glen Ridge Avenue to the west, the lots facing Saratoga Avenue to the north, and the lots facing Santa Cruz Avenue to the east. The lots facing Saratoga and Santa Cruz Avenues bound, but are not included in, the district. Homes in this district represent the first and largest subdivision developed after the incorporation of Los Gatos. The land was once part of an almond orchard owned by John Mason and Edward Auzerai, two prominent Santa Clara County landowners. Almond Grove was developed by four important figures in Los Gatos history: Alphonse Eli Wilder, Augustine Nicholson, Magnus Tait, and John Bean. Many important contributors to the Town's development lived in this district.

- ◆ **University/Edelen Historic District.** This district is bounded by Saratoga Avenue to the north, Main Street to the south, Los Gatos Creek to the east, and the former SPCRR right-of-way to the west. It was originally part of the Mason Tract. Victorian architecture is predominant in this district, including informal wood frame cottages and

impressive homes, intermixed with Craftsman/Bungalow-style cottages built somewhat later. Also present in smaller numbers are Colonial Revival buildings. Both residential and commercial building types comprise the district.

- ◆ **Broadway Historic District.** This district generally includes properties south of West Main Street and west of Santa Cruz Avenue. A 100-acre tract of land, including what is now the Broadway area, was purchased by Henry McCobb in 1863. McCobb planned to subdivide the land and name the new city Cobbsville, but ultimately sold it to John Lyndon, who subdivided the area into 48 lots in 1881, each selling for \$125 and up. In 1883, Broadway was opened up to provide access to the Lyndon Subdivision. Broadway was the first plotted residential street. The Broadway District was the first residential subdivision in what is now Los Gatos. Scattered houses and businesses, such as Forbes Mill, preceded Broadway, but this subdivision marked the beginnings of a formally laid-out town.

## 2. Goals, Policies, and Actions

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| <b>Goal CD-12</b> | <b>To preserve significant historic and architectural features within the Town.</b> |
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### Policies

- Policy CD-12.1 Avoid demolishing historic buildings, unless the Planning Commission finds, based on substantial evidence, that there is no feasible means to ensure the preservation of the structure.
- Policy CD-12.2  Encourage the preservation, maintenance, and adaptive reuse of existing residential, commercial, or public buildings.

- Policy CD-12.3     Preserve and protect historic structures, including those that have been designated or are contributors to existing historic districts. Use special care in reviewing new buildings or remodels in the vicinity of historic structures to address compatibility issues and potential impacts.
- Policy CD-12.4     Continue the Town's careful and proactive historic preservation programs, tempered with compassion and understanding of property owners' needs, desires, and financial capabilities.
- Policy CD-12.5     Zone changes, planned development applications and zoning approvals that may result in the demolition of historic structures shall be referred to the Historic Preservation Committee for review and recommendation.
- Policy CD-12.6     New structures within historic districts shall be designed to blend and harmonize with the neighborhood.
- Policy CD-12.7     All projects shall consider any adverse effect to historic landmarks and features on or in the vicinity of the proposed project.
- Policy CD-12.8     Require any development having potential adverse impacts on historical sites and/or features on or in the vicinity of historical sites:
- a. Accommodate the historical structure or feature;
  - b. Mitigate potential adverse impacts to a level acceptable to the Town; or
  - c. Relocate the historical feature to an appropriate site.
- Policy CD-12.9     Encourage developers to use historic structures or, if not feasible, encourage their donation to the Town.

#### Actions

- Action CD-12.1 Establish public information programs designed to make owners of historic structures and the general public aware of the value of historic buildings and to encourage their maintenance.
- Action CD-12.2 Periodically review historic landmark and preservation legislation and update the Town Code as necessary.
- Action CD-12.3 Conduct a study and amend the Town Code to require proposed developments that are otherwise exempt from historic review but that might have an impact on sites of designated or suspected historic significance to be referred to the Historic Preservation Committee for review and recommendation.

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| <b>Goal CD-13</b> | <b>To support and encourage thoughtful rehabilitation or reuse of historic structures.</b> |
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#### Policies

- Policy CD-13.1 Rehabilitation of damaged historic structures shall be consistent with the policies of the Safety Element and the State Historic Building Code.
- Policy CD-13.2 Renovations or remodels of historic structures shall be architecturally consistent with the original structure.
- Policy CD-13.3 Provide applicants and developers with information and staff time to assist in restoration projects.
- Policy CD-13.4 Provide information about tax law benefits for rehabilitation of historic structures.

## *H. Hillside Development*

### **1. Background Information**

The Hillside areas comprise most of the southern portion of Los Gatos. Rural in character, hillside areas boast larger, wooded lots and private access roads. In January 2004, the Town adopted the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines, which apply to all new hillside development and major hillside additions and renovations. The Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines and Hillside Specific Plan, as well as the following goals, policies, and actions, focus on the design and character of hillside development.

### **2. Goals, Policies, and Actions**

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| <b>Goal CD-14</b> | <b>To preserve the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the Santa Cruz Mountains and surrounding hillsides by regulating new homes.</b> |
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#### **Policies**

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| Policy CD-14.1 | Minimize development and preserve and enhance the rural atmosphere and natural plant and wildlife habitats in the hillsides.                                                                                                                                   |
| Policy CD-14.2 | Limit hillside development to that which can be safely accommodated by the Town's rural, two-lane roads.                                                                                                                                                       |
| Policy CD-14.3 | Effective visible mass shall be reduced through such means as stepping structures up and down the hillside, following topographical contours, and limiting the height and mass of wall planes. A maximum of two stories shall be visible from every elevation. |
| Policy CD-14.4 | Projection above the ridge view protection line is prohibited. All building plans shall indicate height in relationship to the ridge view protection line when viewed from specific vantage points and the valley floor.                                       |

- Policy CD-14.5 Staff shall require adequate environmental analysis for projects in the hillside area to ensure appropriate consideration of potential environmental impacts associated with projects.
- Policy CD-14.6 Preserve and protect the natural state of the Santa Cruz Mountains and surrounding hillsides by discouraging inappropriate development on and near the hillsides that significantly impacts viewsheds.
- Policy CD-14.7 The Town shall continue to work with the County in updating the County’s Hillside Development Standards, and shall encourage annexations within the Urban Service Boundary.

#### Actions

- Action CD-14.1 Design and implement programs and procedures to mitigate the effects of past developments, and to review and prevent or mitigate the impacts of future development on community sustainability.
- Action CD-14.2 Conduct a study to determine whether hillside properties should be downzoned to lower densities.
- Action CD-14.3 Update the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines.

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| <b>Goal CD-15</b> | <b>To preserve the natural topography and ecosystems within the hillside area by regulating grading, landscaping, and lighting.</b> |
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#### Policies

- Policy CD-15.1 Protect the natural ridge lines as defined in the Hillside Specific Plan and Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines.

- Policy CD-15.2 Prohibit any grading that would alter the natural ridge line.
- Policy CD-15.3 New construction shall be designed to follow natural land contours and avoid mass grading. When possible, flat pads should be avoided and houses should be designed to conform to or step down the contours rather than be designed for flat pads. Grading large, flat yard areas should be avoided.
- Policy CD-15.4  Hillside landscaping shall be designed with the following goals in mind:
- a. Minimizing formal landscaping and hardscape.
  - b. Siting formal landscaping and hardscape close to the house.
  - c. Following the natural topography.
  - d. Preserving native trees, native plant and wildlife habitats, and migration corridors.
- Policy CD-15.5  Review all development proposals to ensure appropriate grading and landscaping and minimal disruption of existing native plants and wildlife habitat.
- Policy CD-15.6 Fences shall be of open design unless required for privacy. A minimal amount of land shall be enclosed by fences over five feet high.
- Policy CD-15.7 Review all new development proposals to ensure that:
- a. Outdoor lighting shall be limited.
  - b. Permitted lighting shall be of low intensity and for safety purposes.
  - c. Lighted sports courts shall be prohibited.

- d. The effects of indoor lights should be studied and reduced if found to be excessive.

#### **Actions**

- Action CD-15.1 Determine maximum buildable slope and revise the Town Code accordingly.
- Action CD-15.2 Revise the Town's grading policy to be consistent with the General Plan, Hillside Specific Plan, and Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines.

### ***I. Scenic Resources***

#### **1. Background Information**

Los Gatos is located at the base of the Santa Cruz Mountains and is surrounded by views of these mountains, particularly the Sierra Azul ridge. Major streets heading north-south in Los Gatos have views of the ridge to the south. Because of the heavily-wooded nature of the Town, most views are blocked by trees. Some homes in the hillsides have views of the Town and the surrounding area. These views of and from the hillsides help orient residents and visitors within the Town. Because scenic resources are an important part of Los Gatos's identity, the Town sets forth policies that are intended to preserve and protect them.

#### **2. Goals, Policies, and Actions**

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| <b>Goal CD-16</b> | <b>Promote and protect viewsheds and scenic resources.</b> |
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#### **Policies**

- Policy CD-16.1 Prevent development that significantly depletes, damages or alters existing landscape vistas.

Policy CD-16.2 Encourage the use of scenic easements to preserve viewsheds.

Policy CD-16.3 New structures or remodels shall be designed to respect views from surrounding properties while allowing all affected properties reasonable access to views.

**Action**

Action CD-16.1 Study the feasibility of establishing a program to acquire scenic easements through dedication or purchase.

***J. Design Review Process***

**1. Background Information**

Design review is conducted early during the development application process. It ensures adherence to Town design standards, such as the Hillside Specific Plan, Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines, and Residential Design Guidelines.

**2. Goals, Policies, and Actions**

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| <b>Goal CD-17</b> | <b>To conduct careful review of new projects and provide clear direction to property owners, neighbors, and potential developers.</b> |
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**Policies**

Policy CD-17.1 Achieve compliance with Town ordinances and regulations through education, incentives, and other proactive measures in addition to issuing citations, collecting fines, or other punitive measures.

Policy CD-17.2 Maintain the Town's permit streamlining program.

- Policy CD-17.3 Design standards shall be considered for every project. Staff reports shall include a design review section that analyzes the following:
- a. Building architecture (in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood)
  - b. Mass and scale
  - c. Utilities
  - d. Landscaping
  - e. Streets and sidewalks
  - f. Signage
  - g. Lighting
  - h. Historical significance
  - i. Accessibility to the disabled
  - j. Siting/Orientation
  - k. Materials and color
  - l. Functionality
  - m. Energy efficiency
  - n. Ridgeline preservation
  - o. Tree preservation
  - p. Open space preservation
- Policy CD-17.4 Development proposals on parcels greater than 40,000 square feet may be processed as a planned development.
- Policy CD-17.5 Applicants for projects with policy implications or large scale projects may submit applications to the Conceptual Development Advisory Committee prior to a formal development application submittal.
- Policy CD-17.6 Encourage developers to engage as early as possible in discussions regarding the nature and scope of the project and possible impacts and mitigation requirements.

- Policy CD-17.7     Require full public review for new commercial development to ensure compatibility with adjacent neighborhoods and the Town.
- Policy CD-17.8     Require the erection of story poles prior to the approval of new development.
- Policy CD-17.9     When the deciding body's decision on a zoning approval is based on assumptions derived from the applicant's proposal, those assumptions shall become conditions of the approval.

**Actions**

- Action CD-17.1     Establish community design guidelines that promote and protect the natural amenities in the Town.
- Action CD-17.2     Periodically review architectural standards and design guidelines and update as necessary for completeness, clarity, and effectiveness.
- Action CD-17.3     Develop an education and outreach program to inform neighborhoods, realtors, developers, architects, and designers about the Town's design guidelines and standards. Project application packages should include the relevant guidelines and standards.
- Action CD-17.4     Prepare and distribute information describing guidelines for conducting neighborhood meetings and criteria for reporting the results of neighborhood meetings with project applications.
- Action CD-17.5     Review and more clearly define the role of the Conceptual Development Advisory Committee.

- Action CD-17.6  Adopt guidelines for development review that protect:
- a. Rare plants and wildlife and their habitats.
  - b. Natural watersheds.
  - c. Historic sites.
  - d. Aesthetically significant sites.

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| <b>Goal CD-18</b> | <b>To update the Town Code to reflect current conditions in the Town.</b> |
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**Actions**

- Action CD-18.1 Amend the Town Code to include a definition of “Community Benefit” that clearly differentiates it from exactions.
- Action CD-18.2 Perform an audit of the Town Code to eliminate outdated sections and ensure that all regulations are consistent with this General Plan.
- Action CD-18.3 Update the Conditional Use Permit Table to revise the list of uses. Considerations should include factors such as size of building and/or floor space occupied, traffic generation and whether the use would dictate a “trademark” style of building.