



Minor Development Application

in a Historic District

Voluntary Removal
of Unpermitted Addition

50 University Ave, Suite B240
Old Town Shopping Center

Town of Los Gatos Historic Preservation Committee
University-Edelen District



Project Location Historic Name

University Avenue Grammar
School / Auditorium

Reviewing Body

Historic Preservation Committee
(HPC)

Zoning

C-2:LHP:PD (Commercial, Landmark and Historic Preservation
Overlay, Planned Development)

Original Construction Date

1923 (site educational use dates back to 1875 / 1881)

Adaptive Reuse / Major Alterations:

Converted to Old Town Shopping Center in 1966–1968 (designed by
architect Frank Laulainen); subsequent Planned Development updates
under Ordinance 2025 (1996–2001).

Architectural Style:

Spanish Colonial Revival / Mission Revival (modeled with inspiration from
Mission San Juan Capistrano; stucco exterior, red clay mission tile roof,
arches, and decorative medallions).

Minor development
applications require
thorough historic
research and
architectural review.

Los Gatos Public Library archives establish the property's structural timeline.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (1884-1944)

Findings: The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (1884, 1888, 1891, 1895, 1904, 1928, 1944). Early maps (1884–1904) document the original wood-frame school buildings and bell towers along School Street (now University Avenue). The 1928 and 1944 maps clearly show the Mission Revival concrete/hollow-tile grammar school and auditorium footprint, which forms the core of today's Old Town complex.

1941 Tax Assessment Survey

Findings: Recorded under University Avenue. Because this property was owned and operated by the public school district (Los Gatos Union Elementary School District) in 1941, it was classified as tax-exempt public school property (University Avenue School).

Anne Bloomfield Survey (1989/1991)

Findings: Anne Bloomfield surveyed the University-Edelen district in 1989/1991. The survey explicitly identifies 50 University Avenue (Old Town / University Avenue School site) as a landmark commercial contributing property anchoring the southern end of the historic district.

Historical directories trace the occupancy and use of 50 University Ave.

Polk's Directories (1924-1974)

Findings: 1920s–1950s: Listed as *Los Gatos Grammar School / University Avenue School* (and associated district offices). Notable long-time educators included first-grade teacher Louise Van Meter.

Late 1960s–1970s: Re-indexed as *Old Town Los Gatos*, listing initial commercial tenants, artisan craft shops, the Old Town Theatre, and original cornerstone tenants such as The Wine Cellar.

Telephone Directories

Findings: Pre-1960 listings under Los Gatos School District / University Avenue School; post-1966 listings under commercial entries for Old Town shops and theater.

Vertical Files

Findings: *Residences & Buildings Vertical File* (History Room): Clippings on the 1961 closure due to Field Act (structural seismic) standards, the 1966 civic debate and redevelopment by developer/architect team into Northern California's first major adaptive-reuse suburban marketplace. George Bruntz, *History of Los Gatos*; Alistair Dallas, *Los Gatos Observed*.

County resources provide broader jurisdictional history.

Santa Clara County Planning Department

Findings: Pre-incorporation and early school boundary records confirm the school lot subdivision along Old Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way and Los Gatos Creek. County records defer to municipal jurisdiction following incorporation.



San Jose Public Library (California Room)

Findings: Historical photographs from the 1920s through 1960s showing the University Avenue School facade, arcaded walkways, auditorium, and subsequent conversion to Old Town.



Sanborn Maps

Findings: Matches library archival series; verified against Town Geographic Information System (GIS) and historic overlay layer confirming APN 529-02-044 is within the designated district boundary.

1989 Anne Bloomfield Historic Resource Survey Forms

Findings: Filed with the Town's Historic Resources Inventory under the University-Edelen Historic District (HD-86-1 / Ordinance 1844, amended by Ord. 1920). Notes Spanish/Mission Revival characteristics, arcade columns, cast decorative plaster medallions, and tile rooflines.

Community Development Department Property Files (Permit History)

Findings: 1966: Building permits for the structural retrofit and conversion from school classrooms/auditorium to specialty retail/restaurant space (Old Town).
1996: Town Council approval of Planned Development Ordinance 2025 (rezoning from C-2:LHP to C-2:LHP:PD) authorizing comprehensive modernization while requiring preservation of key historic architectural envelopes.
2019 / Recent HPC reviews: HPC Minor Development permits approving facade updates, window/door modifications, and requiring preservation/re-casting of historic medallions and columns.

Archive & Records

Permit & Alteration Details

Architectural Character & Defining Features

Style:

Spanish Colonial / Mission Revival.

Character-Defining Elements:

Stucco wall surfaces with smooth or lightly textured plaster finish.

Barrel Spanish clay tile roofs and parapet capstones.

Arched openings, loggias, and exterior arcades.

Decorative plaster wall medallions and classical column elements.

Multi-lite or period-compatible windows set within framed wall recesses.

Exterior lantern-style light fixtures flanking building entrances.

Brickwork preservation along established pedestrian route

Consistency Standard:

Please note that our minor modification to Building B preserves or restores original building proportions, avoids altering original structural wall planes, matches approved stucco textures/colors, and respects the 1920s Mission aesthetic that defines the University-Edelen commercial facades.

Focus

Minor Development keen to
Maintenance of Elements

Historic Preservation Committee Timeline

01

Submission Deadline

20 days prior to the meeting
(by 11:00 AM)

**Online submittal on
Wednesday (10/7/2026)**

02

HPC Meeting Schedule

4th Wednesday of every month

**Wednesday:
October 28th (2026)**

03

Post-Approval

10-day appeal period before
any building permits are issued

**Monday:
November 9th (2026)**