

# LAND USE ELEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose

101. Los Altos Hills is a residential community nestled in the scenic foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Once a rural agricultural area, the community has become one of the premier residential areas in Silicon Valley. Over the years, the population has grown and land use patterns have changed. The farmhouses, cattle ranches and orchards of the past have become today's private homes, riding stables and vineyards. The community has gradually urbanized over time but still retains a semi-rural atmosphere, with large lots and expanses of open space as envisioned by the Town's founders.

*We want the sun and air and quiet of a community which has given itself enough space to breathe in; the relaxed pace of country life and rural pursuits.*

From the Green Sheets published in 1956 prior to the Town's incorporation.

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102. Like their forefathers, today's residents value the semi-rural character of the community. Although it is nearly fully developed, the community is still evolving. The guiding principle of the Land Use Element, as with other parts of the General Plan, is to address long-term needs while preserving the semi-rural character of the community and the overall quality of life for residents of Los Altos Hills.

### Scope

103. This element addresses the factors that contribute to preserving community character including the protection of its natural setting, the maintenance and improvement of its residential neighborhoods, and the provision of quality public services and facilities. This element also helps define the desired balance among the social, environmental and economic costs and benefits associated with development.

### Relationship to Other Elements

104. The Land Use Element is the keystone of the General Plan. It unifies the other elements by providing an overall policy context. Many subjects reviewed here are discussed in greater detail in other elements such as the Circulation & Scenic Roadways Element, the Pathways Element, Housing Element, Conservation Element, and Open Space & Recreation Element.

### State Requirements

105. This element meets the State-mandated requirements for a Land Use Element. It defines the Town's land use categories and includes a Land Use Diagram that designates the land use category of each parcel in the planning area. It also includes standards of population density and building intensity for various land use categories. The Land Use Diagram and the goals, policies and programs in this element will determine the location, intensity and design of new development and ensure that the community's semi-rural character is maintained.

## LAND USE PATTERNS

### History of Development

106. After World War II, the pressures of a growing population and increasing urbanization were felt throughout the San Francisco Peninsula. Many members of the unincorporated Los Altos Hills community viewed local commercialism as undesirable and felt threatened by possible annexation by neighboring cities. When adjacent Los Altos incorporated in 1952 with a one-quarter-acre minimum lot size, residents of the Hills knew they had to take action to defend and preserve the amenities of their rural life, such as one-acre lots and the right to keep horses on private property.

107. The compelling reasons for the incorporation of Los Altos Hills were printed on green paper and distributed to residents in the fall of 1955. As stated in this document (referred to as the “Green Sheets”) one of the primary reasons the founders of the Town originally decided to incorporate in 1956 was to maintain the rural character of the community. This desire continues today.

From the Green Sheets – 1956

### **What Kind of Community Do We Want?**

*... a wide and not over-populated  
community of homes in the country. . .*

*... the space and right to keep  
animals—rabbits, chickens, dogs,  
sheep, cattle and horses. . .*

*... roads that are content to remain  
country lanes as long as they are  
suitable for the residential traffic of  
our area. . .*

*... at least one acre of land. . .*

### 108. Existing Land Use

The Town is unique in that it consists mainly of low-density single-family residential development, with a minimum lot size of at least one acre. There are no commercial or industrial uses within the city limits. As the Town has developed over the past 50

years, residents have continued to support the preservation of low-density residential development and the semi-rural character of the community through one-acre zoning and the protection of open space, creek corridors, wildlife habitat and heritage oak trees.

109. The only non-residential uses within the Town are open space, parks and recreation facilities, a unique pathways system including miles of well-maintained roadside and off-road paths, and public and private institutions such as schools, religious facilities and governmental buildings.

### Current Trends

110. With limited land available for additional housing and only slight possibility of change on non-residential parcels, Los Altos Hills is almost fully developed. However, in addition to infill development on vacant lots, redevelopment is occurring as existing residences are torn down and replaced with new homes. The current trend is to develop residences that maximize the square footage allowed under floor area and development area regulations established by the Town’s Zoning Ordinance.

Population Projections

111. In *Projections 2007*, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) forecasts that the Town's population within its corporate limits will increase from 8,500 in 2005 to 9,400 in 2035. The number of households is predicted to increase from 2,960 in 2005 to 3,300 in 2035 based on an average household size of 2.8 persons.

Development Potential

112. A study of vacant and underutilized parcels conducted for the 2002 Housing Element identified a total of 138 vacant parcels with the potential to be subdivided. Based on the size of the lots and known development constraints such as steep slopes and open space designations, it was estimated that approximately 58 to 176 additional units could be developed through subdivision of these parcels. At an average of 2.8 persons per household, development of 176 additional units would result in a maximum population increase of 493, putting the total population at build-out at 9,100 compared to ABAG's projection of 9,400 in 2035. Although additional households could be accommodated through the development of secondary units, it is not realistic to expect the Town's population to increase significantly beyond 9,000.

*The Town's population is not expected to increase significantly due to limited land available for residential development.*

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**Implementing the General Plan**

The Town's Zoning Ordinance, Site Development Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance are the main tools used to implement the General Plan. Supported by administrative policies and procedures, the ordinances establish processes for review and approval of proposed land uses and regulation of site development. The General Plan is also implemented through specific programs that accompany the goals and policies.

## **GOAL 1**

**Maintain the semi-rural character of the community while providing for residential uses, open space, and the minimum public and private facilities and services needed to serve residents on a continuing basis.**

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- Policy 1.1**      **Uses of land shall be consistent with the semi-rural atmosphere of the community, minimize disturbance to natural terrain, minimize removal of the natural vegetation, and create the maximum compatibility of development with the natural environment through site design and landscaping.**
- Policy 1.2**      **In addition to single-family residences, which may include a single secondary unit, uses within the planning area shall include:**
- a. Those uses normally accessory to dwellings in a semi-rural area: vineyards and orchards, the keeping of horses and other domestic animals, and other agricultural pursuits that are compatible with residential uses;**
  - b. Those open space preserves, parks and recreational uses necessary to conveniently serve the residents;**
  - c. Those public and private services and facilities including schools, religious facilities, fire stations, and community centers needed locally to serve Town residents.**
- Policy 1.3**      **Large non-residential structures shall be compatible with the residential character of the community.**
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- Program 1.1**      **Establish and maintain zoning that allows and supports the development of single-family residences and accessory structures, as well as appropriate non-residential uses.**
- Program 1.2**      **Continue to implement the Town's Zoning Ordinance, Site Development Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and related policies and procedures. Review and update these regulations as needed to ensure that development occurs in a manner compatible with the Town's semi-rural character and its natural environment.**

## LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

### Land Use Diagram

113. The Town's Land Use Diagram on the following page illustrates the community's vision for the development, redevelopment, and preservation of public and private properties in the Los Altos Hills. The map designates the distribution and location of land to be used for housing, open space, recreation, public facilities, and other uses. Each of the land use categories designated on the Land Use Diagram is described below. The various land use categories have been applied to geographic land areas within the community to indicate which land uses the Town believes will be the most appropriate at that location.
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### Residential (R)

114. The predominant land use shown on the Land Use Diagram is residential. One single-family dwelling is allowed per parcel. Accessory uses including one secondary dwelling unit may be permitted. Agricultural activities and conditional uses such as religious facilities and schools also may be allowed.

### Open Space Preserve (OSP)

115. This designation is applied to undeveloped, natural areas that provide wildlife habitat, scenic views, and opportunities for nature study and low-impact outdoor recreation such as hiking and horseback riding. The primary purpose of this designation is the preservation and enhancement of the natural state of the land and its plants and animals. Allowable development includes paths and trails, informational signs, restrooms, open fencing, parking for the use of open space and Public Recreation Areas, and other incidental uses that are consistent with the protection of open space and the enjoyment of low-impact outdoor recreation.

### Open Space Conservation Area (OSCA)

116. This is an overlay designation that is superimposed upon the residential land use areas on the Land Use Diagram. The overlay is generally applied to areas of steep slopes, canyons and ravines associated with major creeks or their tributaries, as well as creek corridors and other areas of heavy vegetation that should be protected. Within these areas, special measures should be taken to conserve the natural quality of the area and to avoid environmental degradation. Residences should be placed on the most buildable portions of lands designated OSCA and carefully sited so as to preserve existing trees, vegetation and wildlife habitat.

### Public Recreation Area (RA-PB)

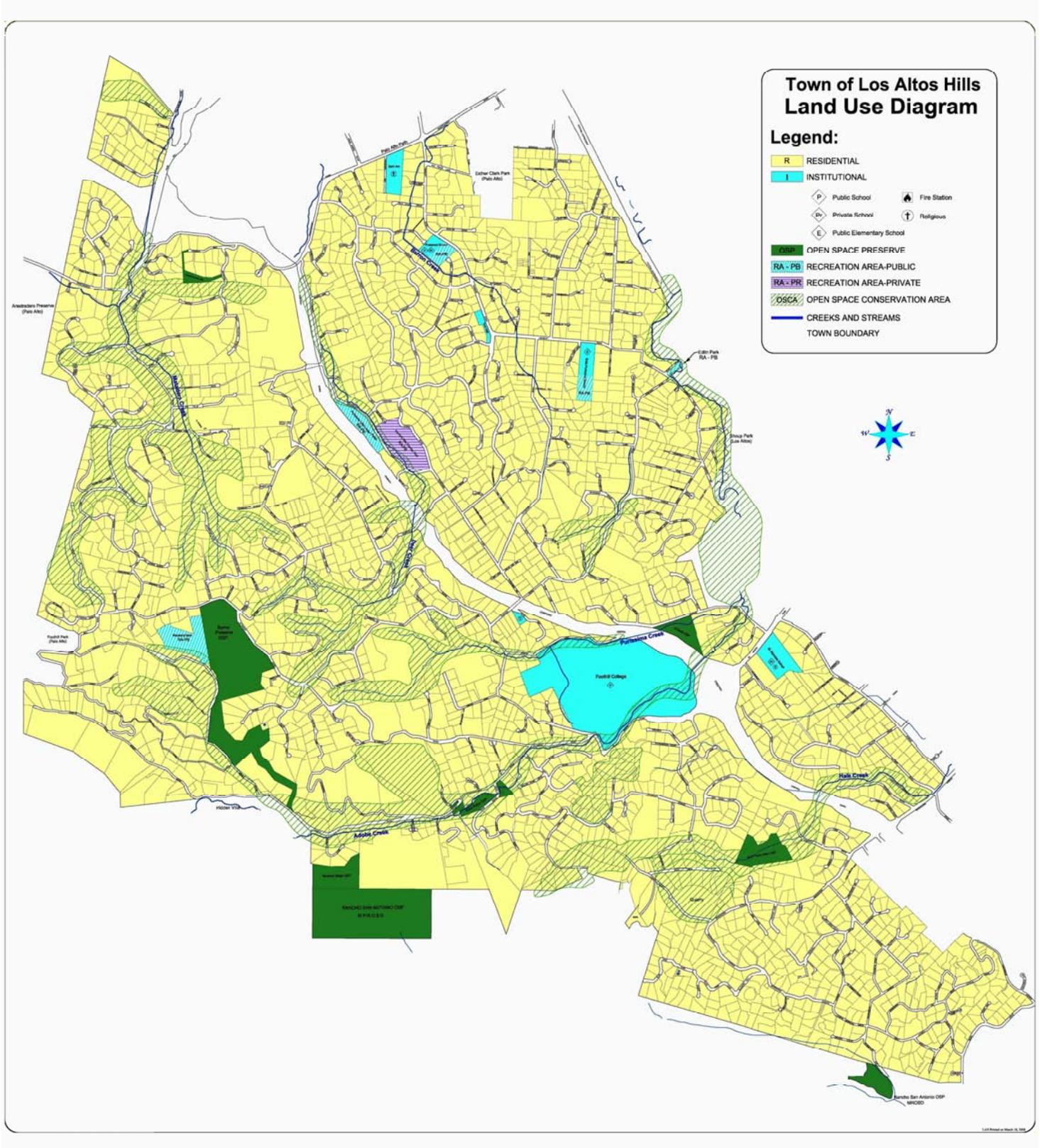
117. This designation identifies publicly owned open space lands used primarily for recreation. Development related to recreation is allowed. Examples include Westwind Community Barn, the Purissima Playing Fields (Little League Fields), and the Riding Arena.

### Private Recreation Area (RA-PR)

118. This designation identifies privately owned lands used primarily for recreation. Development related to recreation is allowed. An example is Fremont Hills Country Club.

### Institutional (I)

119. This designation identifies academic, governmental and community service uses and lands that are either publicly owned or operated by non-profit organizations. Examples are schools, religious facilities, fire stations and Town government.



## DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

### State Requirements

120. State planning and zoning law requires the Land Use Element to include a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the planning area. As used in this element, the term *density* refers to population and development capacity of residential land. Density is described in terms of dwelling units per net acre of land and is related to the average slope of the parcel or lot. The term *intensity* refers to the extent of development on a parcel of land or lot (i.e., maximum development area). The Town's development standards for hillside protection, slope density, and other related concepts are described below.

### Hillside Protection

121. The rolling hills of Los Altos Hills are a highly valued natural feature of the community that should be protected. The hillsides provide important wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and scenic resources. Hillside areas are also subject to potential seismic hazards, landslides, fires, and other environmental hazards that can create risks to public safety, expose homeowners to potentially significant damage, and require extraordinary expenditures for public services. It is important to provide safe residential development while preserving the natural features, environmental integrity, and scenic character of the hills.

122. Low-density residential development can be compatible with hillside protection, especially where slopes are not excessively steep. As discussed in the USGS report in Appendix A, environmental concerns increase progressively as the slope of the terrain increases. To the maximum extent feasible, steep slopes, canyons and ravines, as well as natural swales and drainage channels, and geological hazard areas within areas designated for residential development should be left undisturbed and preserved in their natural condition.

### Slope Density Standards for Subdivisions

123. Within those areas designated for low density residential use, net lot area should be not less than one acre (43,560 square feet) per primary dwelling unit. In addition, the minimum net lot area for subdivisions should increase with an increase in average slope, based on the following slope-density standards:

<u>Average slope of land to be subdivided</u>	<u>Minimum net lot size</u>
0 – 10% slope	One acre
10 – 50% slope	An increase from one to seven acres, based on the average slope of the land.
Over 50% slope	These areas generally should not be developed for residential purposes.

Lot Unit Factor

124. The lot unit factor (LUF) for any given parcel is based on lot size and average slope as determined by a formula established in the Town's Zoning Ordinance. Newly created lots must have a LUF of one or more. Some lots with a LUF of less than one were created early in the Town's history, prior to incorporation. These lots are considered non-conforming and their development is restricted today. Lots with a LUF of less than one may not be created today. Lots with a LUF of less than .50 require a conditional development permit.

Maximum Floor Area and Maximum Development Area

125. Floor area is the total square footage of a structure as specified in the Town's Zoning Ordinance. Development area is the total floor area of a residence, plus the total area of a parcel covered by other structures and hardscape not included in floor area. The maximum floor area (MFA) and maximum development area (MDA) for a parcel is based on the average slope and the Lot Unit Factor (LUF) as determined by formulas established in the Zoning Ordinance.

The City Council and Planning Commission have the discretion to apply stricter standards for height, setbacks, floor area and development area where site-specific constraints dictate further limitations.

126. Building Setbacks

Setbacks regulate the placement of buildings with respect to their property lines in order to provide a minimum amount of open space between buildings on adjacent parcels and between buildings and street rights-of-way. Setbacks for single-family residences are generally 40 feet from the front property line and 30 feet from the sides and rear property lines. Increased setbacks are required for estate homes over 10,000 square feet in size.

Height Limits

127. The vertical height of buildings is limited to 27 feet in order to maintain a consistent, low profile that is compatible with the Town's semi-rural character. Building height may be increased to a maximum of 32 feet if setbacks are increased as specified in the Town's Zoning Ordinance.

Green Building

128. In response to growing concerns about rising energy costs and dwindling natural resources, an increasing number of communities are embracing the concept of "green building." This whole-systems approach to homebuilding seeks to minimize the use of energy, water and other natural resources and maximize the use of recycled and renewable construction materials. The Town should develop programs and development standards regarding green building practices such as the use of recycled and renewable construction materials, energy-efficient heating and cooling systems, water conservation and reuse, and energy-efficient appliances.

## **GOAL 2**

Ensure that all development occurs in a manner that minimizes disturbance of natural terrain, vegetation and wildlife, and maximizes the preservation of natural resources and open space.

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- Policy 2.1** Within incorporated Los Altos Hills and its sphere of influence dwelling types shall be limited to single-family detached residences, which may include a single secondary unit.
- Policy 2.2** Residential densities shall be guided by considerations of topography, vegetative cover and significant physical limitations inherent in the natural environment.
- Policy 2.3** The minimum parcel size shall be at least one acre and shall increase as the steepness of the land increases.
- Policy 2.4** In subdividing land, the number of dwelling units permitted shall decrease as the steepness of the land increases.
- Policy 2.5** Steep slopes, canyons and ravines generally in excess of 30% slope, as well as natural swales and drainage channels, and geologic hazard areas within areas designated for residential development shall be left undisturbed and preserved in their natural condition to the maximum extent feasible.
- Policy 2.6** Limits on the development of individual residential lots shall be determined based on evaluation of such factors as natural vegetation, topographic characteristics, soils and geology.
- Policy 2.7** The natural character of ridgelines shall be preserved to the maximum extent feasible.
- Policy 2.8** Promote the use of green building methods and practices in the planning, design, construction, renovation, operations, and demolition of buildings.
- Policy 2.9** The Town shall encourage the installation of drought-tolerant landscaping and other methods of reducing water use for landscaping.

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- Program 2.1** Continue to require the dedication of open space easements where appropriate as a condition of approval for new development. Each parcel shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis during the site development review process to determine whether an open space easement should be required, based on the extent of steep slopes generally in excess of 30% slope and the presence of heritage oak trees and/or creek corridors. Other considerations shall include the size of the proposed open space easement, its contiguity with existing open space easements, and whether the property is located within an Open Space Conservation Area.

- Program 2.2 Limit grading on hillsides to the minimum extent necessary to accommodate structures. Structures should be located so that they are consistent with slope contours and compatible with the terrain.
- Program 2.3 Encourage the preservation of existing trees, rock outcroppings, ridgelines and other significant natural features.
- Program 2.4 Encourage the preservation of native hillside vegetation and, if vegetation must be removed, require appropriate revegetation and planting in hillside areas.
- Program 2.5 Protect the public safety and minimize the risk of damage from natural hazards by requiring site-specific geologic investigations of proposed building sites.
- Program 2.6 Continue to require soil erosion control measures on construction sites and require revegetation thereof.
- Program 2.7 Make green building publications and other sources of information available to applicants, architects, builders and other individuals involved in the construction of new homes and major remodel projects.
- Program 2.8 Consider developing a green building ordinance for site development and building applications.
- Program 2.9 Develop and implement a program for the reduction and recycling of construction and demolition waste.

### **Open Space Easements**

**Open space easements (OSE's)** may be required as a condition of approval for site development. When an OSE is required, the property owner signs an agreement with the Town to keep the easement area undeveloped and in its natural condition. Once an OSE has been granted, the property remains under private ownership; the OSE does not give public access to the property.

*See the Open Space & Recreation Element for additional information on open space easements.*

## COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

### Public Schools

129. The Town is served by four public school districts:

- Los Altos School District (K-8)
- Palo Alto Unified School District (K-12)
- Mountain View–Los Altos Union High School District (9-12)
- Foothill Community College District

Historically, the majority of Town residents attending public elementary school were enrolled at one of three public schools located within the planning area, all of which were located west of Foothill Expressway. After elementary school, Town residents then matriculated to middle schools that were located in either Palo Alto or Los Altos. Students then attended Gunn High School in Palo Alto or Los Altos High School or Mountain View High School in Los Altos, based on attendance areas.

130. Over the past 25 years, in spite of significant opposition from Town government and residents, the school districts have closed all three elementary schools so that children in the Town presently must commute to elementary schools in either Palo Alto or Los Altos. All commutes, by necessity, require the crossing of Foothill Expressway, which is a heavily traveled, four-lane roadway. Due to safety concerns and the long distances involved, few elementary school children can walk to school. Many parents, unhappy with this situation, would like to have neighborhood schools reopened so their children can walk to school. Bullis-Purissima School, closed in 2003, is expected to be reopened in 2008. Recent cooperation between the districts (such as Inter-District Transfer Agreements) should be encouraged to allow children from both elementary districts to attend the same neighborhood public elementary schools in Town.

*Neighborhood schools are the basis for a successful, vibrant community where neighbors interact, establish common bonds, and provide a sense of community for all.*

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131. There are three existing public school sites within the Town's planning area. These sites are owned by either Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) or Los Altos School District (LASD):

- **26800 Fremont Road, formerly Fremont Hills Elementary School** (PAUSD property). The district closed the public school on this site in 1975 and signed a long-term lease with Pinewood School, a private, non-denominational school. The Town has some limited use of the athletic fields in the summer.
- **25890 Fremont Road, Bullis Purissima Elementary School** (LASD property). The district closed the public elementary school on this site in 2003 despite substantial opposition from the Town government and residents. The district presently is planning to reopen the renovated elementary school in 2008.

- **11311 Mora Drive, Los Altos** (LASD property). This site is located in unincorporated area within the Town's sphere of influence. The district has closed the public elementary school and leased it to the Waldorf School, a private school. The Town has no rights to use any of this property.

Town surveys indicate that residents view recreational fields and playgrounds at public and private schools as an important community resource. The Town should work with school districts to permit public use of these facilities.

132. The Town believes that it is extremely important for its residents to be able to send their children to local elementary schools, with the majority of children having the ability to walk or bicycle to school. This can be achieved by reopening public elementary schools on the two sites noted above that are currently being leased to private institutions. Providing public schools for kindergarten through grade 6 within the Town boundaries that primarily serve Town residents is an integral part of imbuing the community spirit of our Town into our children. Not only do neighborhood schools at this level promote the establishment of lifelong friendships among the children, but they also encourage positive intercourse and friendships among the parents. This is the absolute basis for all successful and vibrant communities where neighbors interact, establish common bonds and provide a sense of community for all.
133. The Town believes its residents are well served by the middle schools and high schools operated by Los Altos School District, Mountain View–Los Altos Union High School District, and Palo Alto Unified School District. These schools provide excellent educational opportunities and extracurricular activities.

Foothill Community College

134. The Town is served by an excellent community college in its midst, Foothill Community College. Like other public school districts, Foothill College generally is not subject to the Town's zoning and site development ordinances. However, the district is required to obtain conditional use permits for certain uses such as wireless communication antennas. The Town continues to work with the Foothill College administration to maximize the school's benefits to Town residents and minimize any traffic impacts and disruptions experienced by residents living near the campus.



*Foothill Community College has approximately 18,000 students.*

Private Schools

135. Private schools in the Los Altos Hills planning area include St. Nicholas School (K-8), Pinewood High School and the Waldorf School. The latter two are located on public school sites as discussed above.

Religious Facilities

136. Several religious facilities are located in the Los Altos Hills planning area, including four that are located within city limits:

- Poor Clare Monastery (Roman Catholic)
- Congregation Beth Am (Reform Jewish Synagogue)
- Chapel in the Hills (Episcopal)
- Daughters of Charity (home for retired Roman Catholic clergy)

All of these religious facilities hold conditional use permits issued by the Town.



*Chapel in the Hills is in the old Purissima School, a historic building.*

Town Government

137. The first Town Hall was built in the 1950's on land donated by the Town's first Mayor, Arthur E. Fowle, at the northeast corner of his 30-acre ranch at Fremont and Concepcion Roads. The original facility served until 2004, when it was torn down because it no longer met building codes, seismic requirements and accessibility standards. It was replaced by a new energy-efficient facility that more than doubled the size of the original building. Dedicated on June 16, 2005, the new facility was designed to blend with the residential character of the community. The new facility not only embodies the rural aesthetic of the community, but also demonstrates the Town's commitment to energy and water conservation.



*Energy-efficient Council Chambers incorporate natural lighting.*

138. Two other buildings in the Town Hall complex provide a base for Town staff and services:

- Heritage House, which is a historic house preserved by members of the community. The building is used as the Emergency Operations Center and local office of the County Sheriff's Department.
- The Parks and Recreation Center, located in the building formerly used by Purissima Hills Water District.



*Parks and Recreation Center Is next to Town Hall.*

Both buildings have recently been remodeled in order to better meet the needs of the community. The Town's corporation yard is located on Purissima Road adjacent to the Purissima Playing Fields (Little League Fields). It serves as the center for the Town's maintenance crew and mechanical equipment.

Public Recreation Facilities

138. Town-owned parks and recreation facilities include Byrne Preserve and six other open space preserves; Westwind Community Barn; Purissima Playing Fields (Little League Fields); the Riding Arena; and Edith Park. In addition, the community's extensive system of roadside and off-road paths provides recreational opportunities. Recreation programs sponsored by the Town include youth camps, fitness programs and the annual Pathways Run.

Public and private recreation facilities are described in the Open Space & Recreation Element, which also includes related goals, policies and programs.

Private Recreation Facilities

139. Privately owned recreation facilities in the planning area include Fremont Hills Country Club and several other country clubs in neighboring cities, as well as Hidden Villa, the Stanford University lands, and private boarding stables.

Fire Protection

140. The Los Altos Hills County Fire Protection District is a separate public agency, distinct from the Town, that contracts with the Santa Clara County Fire Department for the provision of fire protection, suppression and safety services. The district owns and operates the El Monte Fire Station near Foothill Community College.

Fire and police protection services are described in the Safety Element, which also includes related goals, policies and programs.

Police Protection

141. The Town contracts with the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department for police protection services. The Sheriff's Department typically provides one or two patrol cars at all times, which is adequate because Los Altos Hills is a low-crime community. In the event of emergencies, however, the Town has access to the full resources of the County Sheriff. The Town also has a public safety officer on staff and provides a substation at the Heritage House next to Town Hall for the use of the County Sheriff.

Emergency Services

142. Ambulance and paramedic services are provided by Santa Clara County on contract with the Los Altos Hills County Fire District. In the event of a major disaster such as earthquake or fire, emergency response services are coordinated by the Town as established in the Emergency Operations Plan. The Town's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is located in the Heritage House adjacent to Town Hall.

Emergency response services are described in the Safety Element, which also includes related goals, policies and programs.

### GOAL 3

Encourage the development of community services and facilities that are easily accessible, properly related to adjacent land uses, and in harmony with the semi-rural, residential character of the community.

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- Policy 3.1** School districts shall be encouraged to restore neighborhood public elementary schools in Los Altos Hills, particularly at the public school sites listed in Paragraph 131.
- Policy 3.2** The Town will encourage institutional uses that are necessary to serve local residents, such as public schools, religious facilities, governmental buildings, public recreational facilities and fire stations.
- Policy 3.3** Major community facilities should be located where they can be served directly by collector, or where possible, arterial roads so that they are reasonably convenient to residents. The primary consideration should be compatibility with adjacent land uses and with preserving the semi-rural, residential character of the Town. However, given the lack of commercial buildings and minimal number of institutions in the Town, some institutional structures by necessity will be adjacent to residential properties.
- Policy 3.4** Every effort should be made to ensure that recreational areas and playing fields at both public and private schools are available for use by Town residents during non-school hours.
- Policy 3.5** School service areas should be defined so as to maximize the number of children who can walk to schools within the Town borders, with particular emphasis on the use of the Town pathway system, using both on-road and off-road paths.
- Policy 3.6** Public buildings should be of a size and scale conducive to maintaining the semi-rural atmosphere of Los Altos Hills. The architectural design of non-residential buildings should incorporate those principles that guide our residential homes such as modest height and bulk appearance.
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- Program 3.1** Work with Palo Alto Unified School District and Los Altos School District to reopen public elementary schools in Los Altos Hills.
- Program 3.2** Cooperate with school districts in providing demographic data and other information supporting the need for new schools.
- Program 3.3** Continue to assist school districts by requiring the payment of school impact fees as per Government Code Section 65995 prior to issuance of building permits.
- Program 3.4** Explore innovative ways for the community to use school facilities and grounds jointly with the school districts.

- Program 3.5 Work with school districts in the design and development of school facilities to provide for community needs in the areas of parks and recreation, community meetings, and similar activities.
- Program 3.6 Work with school districts to minimize potential impacts on neighboring residential areas.
- Program 3.7 Continue to require conditional use permits for the location and operation of private schools, religious facilities, and other institutional uses. Monitor and mitigate potential impacts on neighboring residential areas by limiting the hours of operation, the location of parking, and other factors as appropriate.



Photo by Jitze Couperus

*The Purissima Playing Fields, Town Riding Arena and Fremont Country Club are in the foreground of this aerial photo looking northeast from Interstate 280 towards San Francisco Bay.*

## UTILITIES

### Anticipated Needs

143. The Town is expected to experience very modest growth mostly through infill development and redevelopment of underdeveloped parcels. As a result, the need for a full range of public facilities and urban services is expected to grow very modestly in the future. To preserve the natural environment and semi-rural atmosphere desired by the residents of Los Altos Hills, it is important that the installation and/or extension of utilities be conditioned by concerns for preventing damage to the natural beauty and environmental integrity of the area. Standards for the extension of utilities, sewers in particular, must be based on health and safety considerations as well as environmental protection.

### Water Supply

144. The Town's drinking water is provided by two water suppliers: Purissima Hills Water District and the California Water Service Company (Cal Water). As discussed in the Conservation Element, the amount of water available is constrained. Purissima Hills presently obtains all of its water from San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy system and currently is exceeding its supply assurance by 25-35 percent. Capacity limitations in the Hetch Hetchy system may be reached in six to eight years, or sooner in times of drought. Cal Water obtains the water supplied to Los Altos Hills from the Santa Clara Valley Water District via pipelines from the Santa Clara Valley Water District's Rincoñada treatment plant and from company-owned wells. During the dry season, the plant and pipelines are at capacity. According to Purissima Hills Water District, over two-thirds of the water used each year is for the irrigation of landscaping.

Water resources are also discussed in the Conservation Element, which includes related goals, policies & programs.

### Sanitary Sewer

145. There are more than 3,100 parcels within the Town, of which less than half are currently connected to the municipal sanitary sewer system. The existing municipal system includes approximately 52 miles of 6- to 12-inch diameter gravity pipelines, several reaches of force mains, 1,305 manholes, and 2 lift stations. The Town straddles two drainage basins, including the Palo Alto Basin to the north and the Los Altos Basin to the south. Sewage collected by the Town's existing system is conveyed to sewer trunk lines owned by the cities of Los Altos and Palo Alto, with the portion of the Town in the Palo Alto Basin draining into the City of Palo Alto municipal sewer system, and the Los Altos Basin draining into the City of Los Altos municipal sewer system. The use of conveyance and treatment systems owned by these cities is governed by separate service agreements with the Town. The wastewater from all three communities eventually drains into the Palo Alto wastewater treatment plant for treatment and disposal.
146. While there has always been sufficient capacity in the Palo Alto system to accommodate all residences on the north side, the Town has been constrained by capacity limitations in the Los Altos system. However, in 2007, the Town and the City of Los Altos signed a new contract that provides additional capacity that will now allow all residences within corporate limits of the Town and its sphere of influence to access sewers.
147. The Town prefers that as many residences as practicable connect to the sewer system. While a properly constructed and maintained septic system typically does not present an environmental hazard, the failure of a septic system can induce contaminants into the

underground water table. Also, smaller lots may not be able to replace a failed system due to issues regarding the construction of a new leach field. The Santa Clara County Health Department requires all new residences to connect to the sewer system if there is an existing sewer main within 200 feet of the new residence.

148. All new residences resulting from new subdivisions should be served by sanitary sewer trunk lines. All new residences resulting from the teardown of an existing residence or a newly constructed home on an existing lot should be required to connect to sanitary sewer trunk lines, provided there is an existing trunk line within 200 feet of the new residence. Wherever the possibility of biological harm from septic tank use exists, requirements for conversion to sanitary sewers should be established. Standards should reflect Bay Area Water Quality Control Board and Santa Clara County Health Department requirements.
149. The Town has appointed a committee to review the existing issues in regard to bringing sewer mains to as many neighborhoods as possible. This committee has conducted a survey among residents on septic tanks to determine the major issues that prevent these residents from connecting to the system. Through various methods such as sewer reimbursement districts, sewer assessment districts and the extension of sewer mains up main arteries to make sewer connection more accessible, the Town hopes to significantly increase the number of residences connected to the sewer system.

Storm Drainage System

150. The Town's storm drainage system consists of a combination of roadside drainage ways, cross culverts, and underground pipes. Stormwater in Los Altos Hills initially flows over land, following the natural contours of the terrain and then moving to roadside flow routes. Some of these are paved with asphalt concrete, but most roadside flow routes are dirt ditches, which help preserve the natural, semi-rural feel of the community. Stormwater in the roadside flow routes travels downhill to culverts, pipes or creeks that eventually carry the storm runoff to the San Francisco Bay.
151. Silt and debris in the storm drain system sometimes cause water to back up and flood the surrounding areas. The Town provides maintenance of the stormwater facilities in the public right-of-way, including culverts crossing under public roads and public roadside flow routes. This also includes areas where the Town has permanent storm drain easements for public drainage structures on private property. Although regular maintenance helps prevent flooding problems, in some cases the repair of deteriorated facilities and construction of new facilities are needed to improve the storm drainage system.
152. The Storm Drainage Master Plan prepared in November 2004 identifies the location of drainage problem areas in the Town and proposes solutions ranging from the installation of new pipes and catch basins to the regrading of ditches and provision of riprap protection. The Master Plan ranks the proposed projects in order of priority and estimates the costs involved. Each year the Town adopts a Capital Improvement Program that includes some of these projects and budgets for their completion.

Areas subject to flooding are identified on the map included in Appendix B and addressed in the Safety Element.

153. The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program controls water quality by regulating point sources of pollution, including municipal storm drain systems, that discharge pollutants into surface waters. The Town is a co-permittee with other members of a regional association known as the Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program (SCVURPPP), which shares a joint permit issued by the Regional Quality Control Board to discharge stormwater into the San Francisco Bay. The conditions of the permit require the Town to reduce pollution in urban runoff to the maximum extent possible. Recent changes strengthen the regulations for projects that replace or create new impervious surface. The permit must be reissued every five years. Policies and programs related to stormwater quality are contained in the Conservation Element.

Stormwater pollution is also discussed in the Conservation Element, which includes related goals, policies & programs.



*Purissima Hills Water District is a county special district that provides water to many residents of Los Altos Hills. The district office is located near Town Hall on Fremont Road. Constructed in 2007, the building was designed to blend with the residential character of the community.*

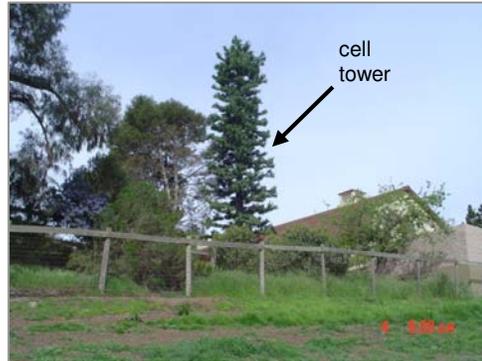
### **PRIVATE UTILITIES**

*The following companies provide utilities to residents of Los Altos Hills:*

Cal Water Service Company	Water
Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E)	Electrical power and gas
Comcast	Cable TV and broadband
SBC Communications	Local landline telephone and DSL internet connections
Multiple providers	Wireless telecommunication services

Wireless Communication Facilities

154. The residents of Los Altos Hills depend on cell phones and other forms of wireless communication services for convenience, business activities and security. As one of the premier residential areas of the Silicon Valley, the Town should have a high level of wireless service available to its residents in order to meet increasing demands for new and better services. However, the Town's topography, with its steep slopes and canyons, have made cell phone reception problematic. To meet the demands for new and better services, providers need an adequate number of wireless communication facilities in the planning area.
155. The Town currently has 11 cell sites, each shared by multiple service providers who have co-located antennas and equipment. Because the Town is entirely residential, with no commercial or industrial areas, wireless communication facilities are most appropriately located on Town property or other public or institutional sites such as schools and religious facilities. The location of new facilities on or near existing buildings, the co-location of antennas owned by two or more companies, and landscape screening should be utilized to minimize any adverse visual impacts. To ensure that new facilities are appropriately located, the Town has developed policies and siting criteria for wireless communication antennas and equipment shelters. These policies and siting criteria should be reviewed and updated as needed.



*The wireless communication facility at Westwind Barn is designed to blend in with the scenery.*

**GOAL 4**

Provide adequate, reliable utilities and urban services that will protect the health and safety of all residents, while minimizing environmental and aesthetic impacts on the community.

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- Policy 4.1** All utility installations shall be sited, designed, developed and landscaped so as to blend with the natural character of the vicinity.
- Policy 4.2** New and existing developments shall be adequately served by utilities and infrastructure in accordance with Town standards. New projects that require construction or expansion of public improvements shall pay their fair share of the costs necessary to improve or expand infrastructure to serve them, including street improvements, parks, pathways, sewer and water services, storm drainage, and other urban services.
- Policy 4.3** Power transmission lines, power distribution lines, and telephone lines serving new development shall be placed underground.

- Policy 4.4** A systematic program for the undergrounding of all existing overhead lines shall be developed and implemented.
- Policy 4.5** All new residences and major additions shall be served by sanitary sewer trunk lines or other disposal systems meeting adequate health standards. Connection to sanitary sewer systems shall be required if available facilities are within 200 feet.
- Policy 4.6** The Town shall coordinate with the City of Los Altos and the City of Palo Alto in the provision of sewer services to residents of Los Altos Hills.
- Policy 4.7** New wireless communication facilities shall preferably be located on Town property or other public or institutional sites such as schools and religious facilities.
- Policy 4.8** The co-location of wireless communication facilities with other facilities shall be encouraged to the maximum extent feasible.
- Policy 4.9** Wireless communication facilities shall be adequately screened by landscaping in order to minimize any visual impacts.
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- Program 4.1 Prepare, adopt and implement an annual Capital Improvements Program supporting policies in the General Plan to maintain, improve or expand public utilities and infrastructure.
- Program 4.2 Continue to require the payment of fees such as road impact fees, sewer hook-up fees, and storm drainage fees for the costs of providing and maintaining public utilities and infrastructure that serves new development.
- Program 4.3 In coordination with the Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program, continue to implement measures consistent with the Santa Clara Countywide NPDES Stormwater Permit.
- Program 4.4 Continue to implement the Town's policies and siting criteria for wireless communications facilities, and review and update them as needed.

## GROWTH BOUNDARIES

### Sphere of Influence (SOI) Boundary

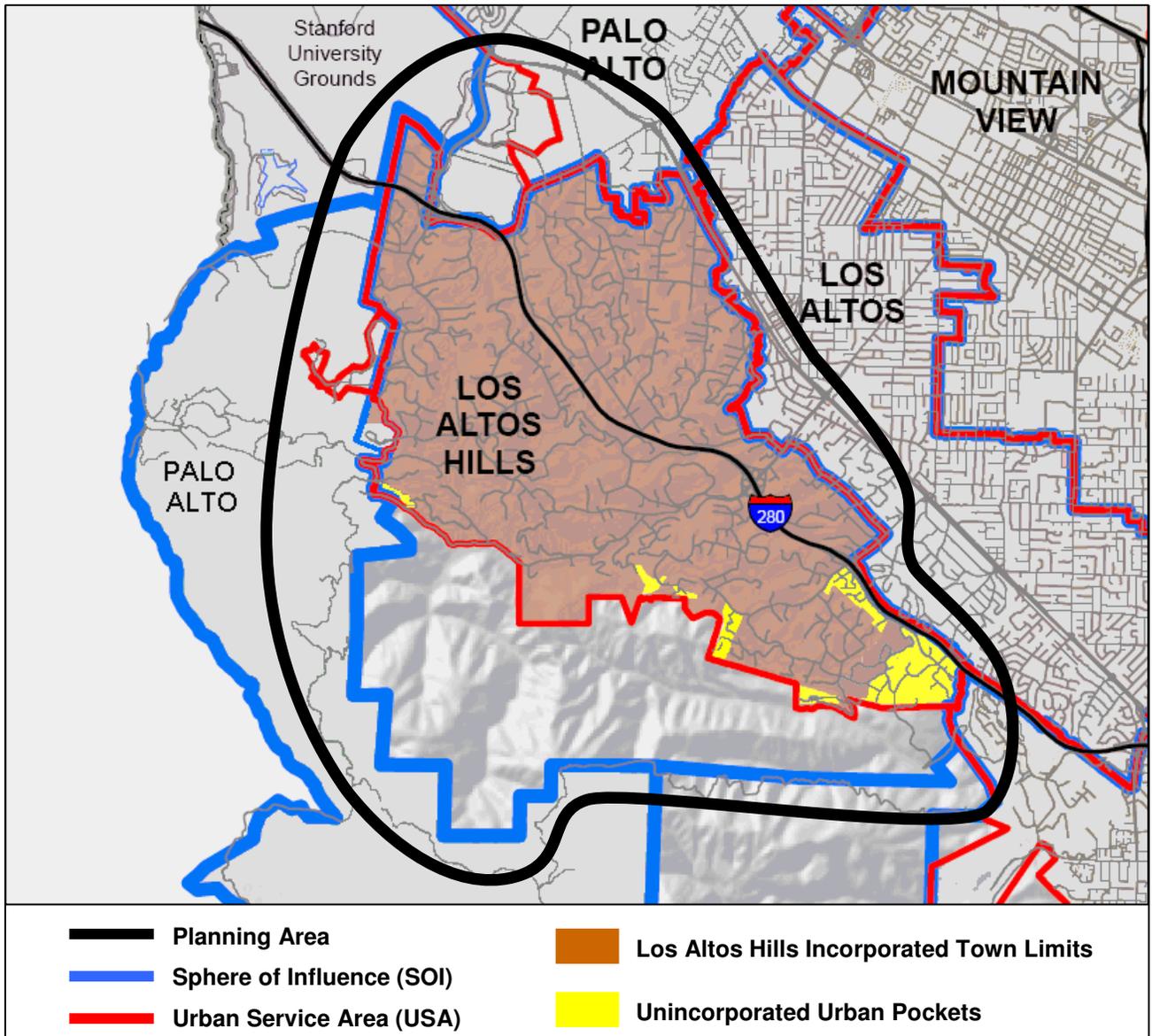
156. As required by state law, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) has adopted a sphere of influence (SOI) for each city and special district in Santa Clara County. The SOIs are intended to ensure that urban development takes place in an orderly manner, to preserve agricultural and open space lands, and to ensure that the land use and development policies of a city are recognized in areas that will eventually be part of a city.
157. The SOI indicates areas that may be annexed to the Town and for which urban services, if available, could be provided. The Town's existing SOI, which was adopted in February 1985, is coterminous with the town limits to the north, west, and most of the east. The boundaries of some of the Town's unincorporated islands, unincorporated hillside lands, lands within the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve, and lands within the County of Santa Clara's Rancho San Antonio Park help form sections of the southern and southeastern portion of the Town's SOI boundary. Permanently preserved open space areas such as MROSD's Rancho San Antonio Preserve do not require urban services, but are appropriately included in the SOI due to their location.

### Unincorporated Pockets in Urban Serviced Area (USA)

158. The urbanized unincorporated areas within the Urban Service Areas (USA) of Los Altos Hills are referred to as urban pockets or islands. The pockets are a result of development that occurred in the County in the 1950s and 1960s. Santa Clara County and LAFCO have adopted policies that state that urban islands and pockets should be annexed. There are seven unincorporated urban pockets within the Los Altos Hills urban service area (USA). Figure 1-2 shows current Town boundaries and urban pockets subject to future annexation within the Town's planning area.

### Prezoning

159. The purpose of prezoning an area is to establish the zoning district that will apply in the event of subsequent annexation to the Town. The proposed zones must be consistent with the General Plan, and the prezoning has to be approved by the City Council at a public hearing. There are two advantages to prezoning. First, the Town will have zoning in effect immediately upon annexation. Local residents will thereby have prior knowledge of the land use regulations that would affect them should annexation occur. Secondly, prezoning acts to serve notice to LAFCO of the city's intentions regarding its adjacent areas. Prezoning is the procedural first step necessary to ultimately annex a particular territory. However, the act of prezoning does not compel the Town to initiate annexation proceedings.



<b>Definitions of Key Terms</b>	
Incorporated Town Limits	Delineates lands currently within or annexed to the Town
Sphere of Influence (SOI)	The probable physical boundaries and service area of the Town. Inclusion of an area in the Town's SOI is not necessarily an indication that the area would be annexed to the Town or receive urban services.
Urban Service Area (USA)	Delineates incorporated and unincorporated areas authorized to receive urban services or proposed to receive urban services when they are available.
Planning Area	Encompasses incorporated and unincorporated territory that bears a relation to the Town's planning.

160. In August 2002, the Town rezoned approximately 245 parcels in unincorporated county lands known as San Antonio Hills. The rezoned area is generally between Ravensbury Avenue and Interstate 280, including portions of West Loyola Drive, Mora Drive, and Berkshire Drive. In March 2006, the Town rezoned an additional 82 parcels between Magdalena and Eastbrook Avenues including properties on Spalding Avenue, Par Avenue, Winding Way, Putter Avenue and Putter Way.

Annexation

161. Subsequent to the rezoning of San Antonio Hills in 2002, the Town annexed 118 parcels totaling 142 acres within the unincorporated urban pocket. (Ravensbury Annexation, March 2002; West Loyola Annexation, September 2007) The properties in the annexed areas are mostly developed with single-family homes on parcels of one acre or more. There remain approximately 280 acres of unincorporated land within the Town's Urban Service Area that may be subject to annexation in the future. The Town should conduct a comprehensive evaluation of all future annexations to ensure that they are compatible with the land use patterns and zoning designations of the Town and that such annexations do not negatively impact the Town's finances, facilities and services.

Areas of Direct Concern

162. Areas of Direct Concern are within the planning area but beyond the Town's corporate limits and the sphere of influence. These areas include several pockets of existing residential and commercial/industrial development as described below:

Residential Areas

Portions of several residential areas in Los Altos and Santa Clara County are included within the planning area. These areas, although in other jurisdictions, are of direct and immediate concern to the planning area because of common problems relating to drainage, circulation, public facilities, and visual amenities.

Existing development within the portion of Los Altos that is within the planning area is low-to-medium density residential. Development of existing vacant land immediately adjacent to Los Altos Hills should be no more intense than one-half acre per dwelling unit in order to provide a gradual transition between residential densities as previously agreed to by the City and the Town.

Commercial/Industrial Areas

The planning area includes commercial areas within the City of Los Altos and light industrial development in the Stanford Industrial Park. These areas, however, do not occur within the Town limits or its SOI.

## **GOAL 5**

Ensure that the Town's growth will proceed in an orderly, planned manner in order to provide efficient and economical urban services.

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- Policy 5.1**      **Issues within the sphere of influence shall be monitored for their effects on the Town.**
- Policy 5.2**      **Any proposed annexations shall be consistent with the Town's General Plan land use designations and adopted annexation procedures.**
- Policy 5.3**      **Maintain a cooperative working relationship with Santa Clara County regarding land use issues.**
- 

- Program 5.1      Request that Santa Clara County and other applicable agencies refer all proposed projects and programs within the sphere of influence to the Town of Los Altos Hills for review and comment, and act favorably on the Town's recommendations.
- Program 5.2      Review annexation proposals to assure that they are consistent with sphere of influence boundaries, General Plan land use designations and established annexation procedures and criteria.
- Program 5.3      In evaluating proposed annexations, require the preparation of a fiscal impact analysis to determine the costs and benefits to be received by the Town as a result of the proposed annexation.

## APPENDIX A

### **Excerpt of 2002 USGS Report by Suzanna K. Brooks, Arthur H. Lachenbruch, and Carl M. Wentworth (2002)**

#### Planning with Slope

Problems of regulating the creation of flat space and impermeable surface and their community impacts are generally greater for steeper slopes (Nilsen and others, 1979, p.80). Whether such problems might require regulation in any particular community depends upon the community's physical setting and planning goals. For the example of Los Altos Hills, Figure 3 shows that about one third of the community has slopes less than 10%, a category in which experience has shown that grading, erosion, and other development alterations to the natural terrain can generally be handled without difficulty (Mader and others, 1988).

According to Figure 3, almost half of the community has slopes from 10% to 30%, a slope category usually targeted for residential development but with progressively increasing concerns and regulatory restrictions toward the upper limit. In the one fifth of the town with slopes greater than 30% (Figure 3), residential development without extensive modification of the surroundings becomes increasingly difficult, and much of the land may be classified for limited uses with conservation easements, or with an open space designation.

Because slope is a fundamental physical parameter affecting land use in hillside communities, the community general plan and many controlling ordinances (e.g. for grading, lot size, house size, development intensity, foundation design, impermeable surface area, erosion control, and conservation easements) are often formulated in terms of the slope of the land. The slope map (Figure 2) provides a useful means of viewing the distribution of these potential problem areas, and of visualizing the community-wide implications of various regulations proposed to deal with them.

#### Flat Space and Grading

Typically, to create a square one-acre flat pad with balanced amounts of cut and fill on a hillside where the neutral slope is 20%, a total of two acres of natural terrain must be altered by grading (Figure 4) – the second acre is occupied by the steep compensating cut and fill banks (typically 67% and 50% respectively). Similarly, where the natural slope is 30%, about three acres must be graded to produce one flat acre (see dots, Figure 4A) – the remaining 2 acres are occupied by cut-and-fill banks that are roughly twice as steep as the original surface. . . The graded cut-and-fill slopes are not only steeper than the natural surface, they are stripped of existing trees and other vegetation; both factors can contribute to the instability and visibility of the graded slope.

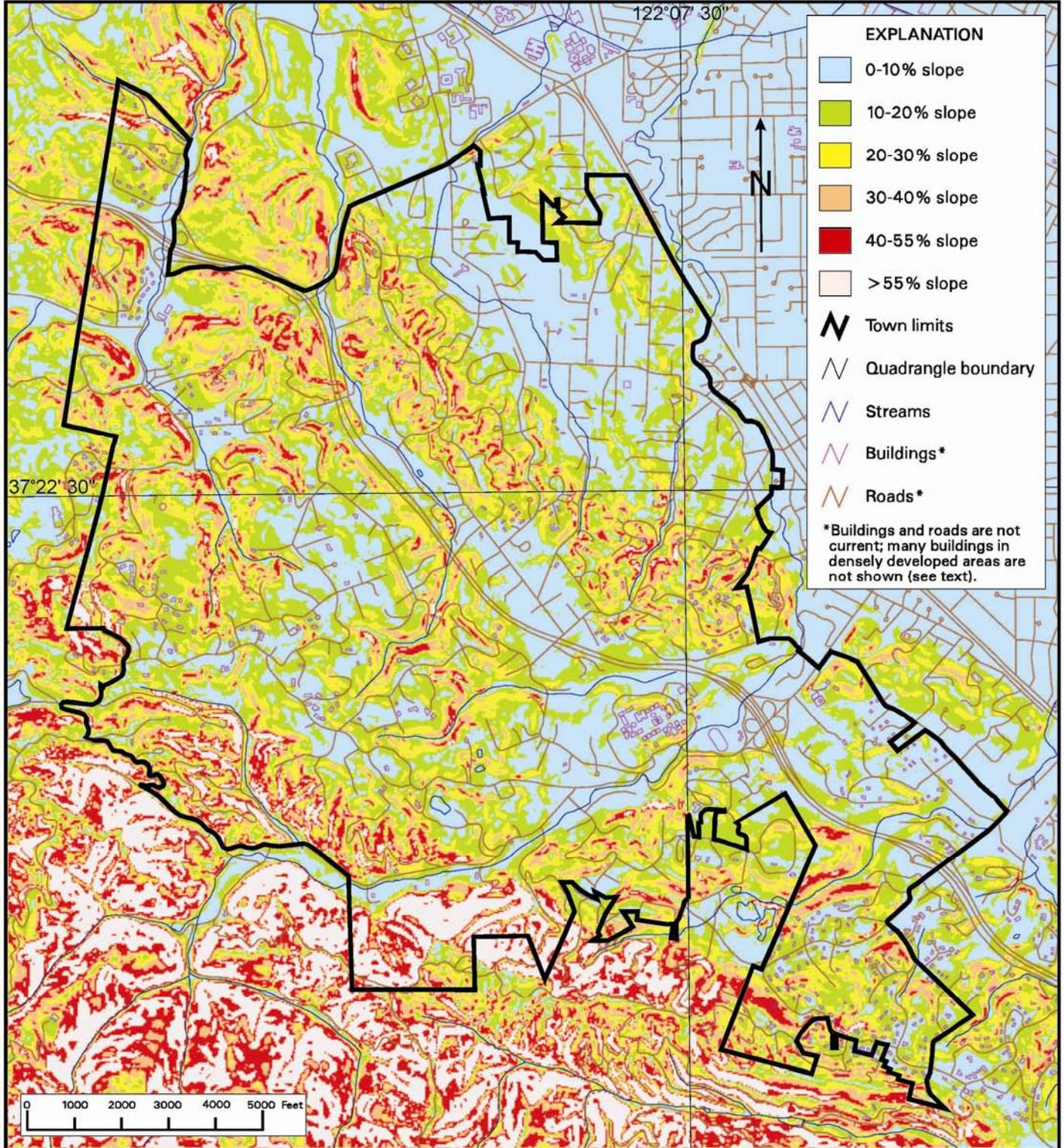


Figure 2. Slope Map of the Los Altos Hills Area,  
 San Francisco Bay Area, California  
 1:35,802

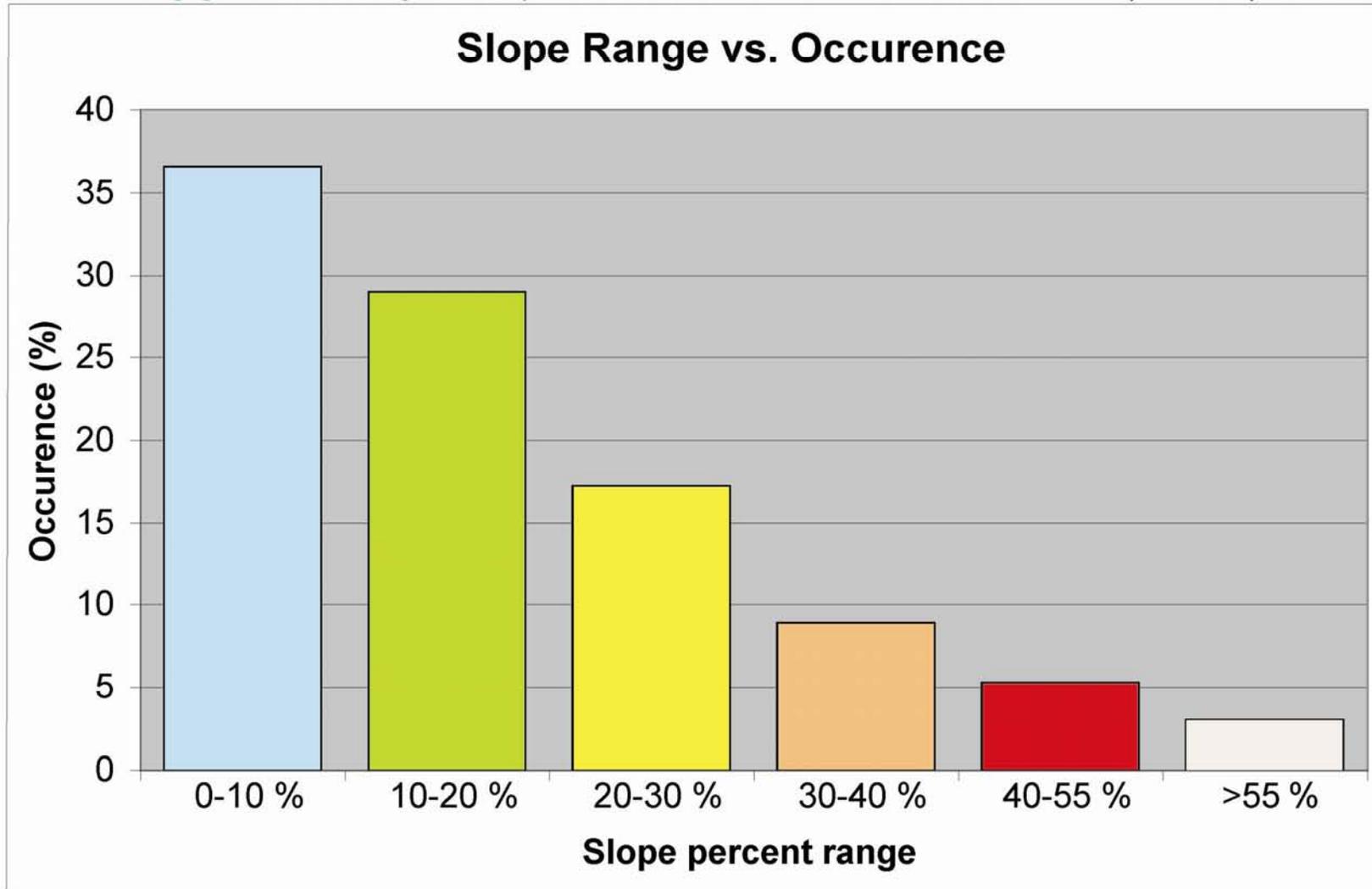


Figure 3. Histogram of Slope Range vs. Occurrence within the town limits of Los Altos Hills, San Francisco Bay Area, California

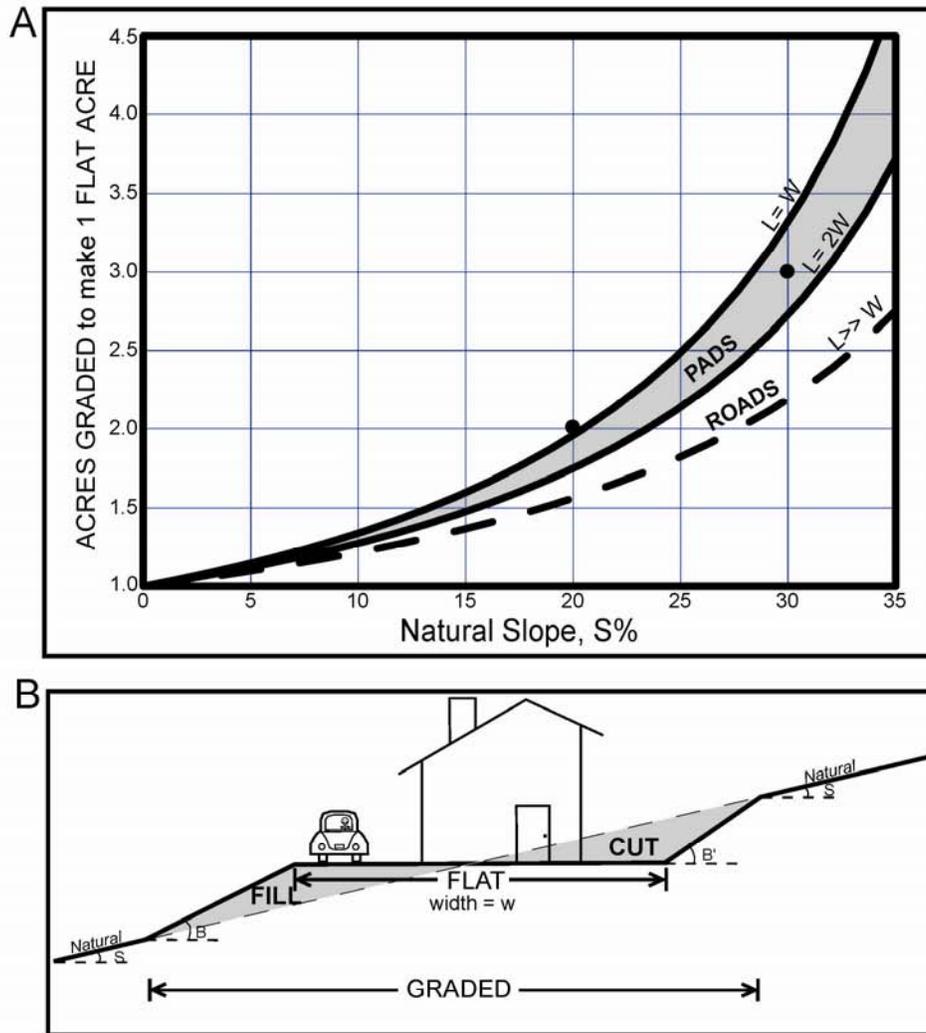


Figure 4. Surface alteration required to create a graded flat space.

A. The number of acres that must be graded to produce 1 flat acre on uniform natural slopes (S) up to 35 %. The graph also can be used with other units of area, such as square feet graded to produce 1 flat square foot. The upper curve represents a square pad (length (L) = width (W)). The middle curve represents a rectangular pad with a length twice its width (L = 2W). The dashed curve represents a hillside road (much longer than it is wide, L >> W). The volumes of cut (at angle B' = 67%) and fill (at B = 50%) are assumed equal. Dots on graph represent examples discussed in text.

B. Cross section to illustrate grading and notation. "W" is the width of the pad. "L", in part A, is the length of the pad along the slope contour ("L" is in and out of the cross section). □

## APPENDIX A

# FEMA Flood Map Los Altos Hills

