

# *Town of Los Altos Hills*



## 2026-27 PRIORITY SETTING SESSION SUMMARY REPORT

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## 2026-27 Priority Setting Session Final Report

### Introduction

The City Council of Los Altos Hills conducts Bi-Annual Priority Setting to provide direction to staff on priorities for the coming two years, and to hear from the public on their interests related to priorities for the Town and its residents. The Priority Setting process ensures that Council, Committees and staff are all aligned on where time and resources should be focused. The 2026-27 Priority Setting Session was held on February 4 in the Council Chamber, with Mayor Bhateja presiding over the public meeting.

Acting City Manager Cody Einfalt and members of the executive team were present at the meeting, which was facilitated by Dan Rich from the Renne Public Management Group (RPMG). Ultimately, a Work Plan with **63 projects**, including 6 projects added at the session, was unanimously endorsed by the Council and is attached as Exhibit A to this report. A summary of the session follows.

### Background

Planning for the session began long before the actual meeting. The effort started in September with the help of Frank Benest, ICMA Executive Leader, who worked with staff to build and facilitate a process to collect and consider all the priorities from the various stakeholders. This effort was followed by the City Manager meeting with all of the City's standing committees to discuss the process and ask them to develop a list of desired priority projects for 2026-27. Concurrently, Dan Rich held one-on-one meetings with each member of the Council to hear from them on the process and discuss their priorities for the two year cycle. Staff then went through an organized process to determine the proposed priorities, including two half day work sessions with Dr. Benest. In doing so, they considered mandates and carryover items from 2025, as well as new items identified

by Council, Committees and staff. Using all that input, staff developed the proposed 2026-27 Work Plan.

On January 21, the City Council held a special meeting to hear from the Planning Commission and standing committees on their accomplishments and proposed 2026-27 priorities. Then, at the February 4<sup>th</sup> session, staff presented a recommended two-year Work Plan with 60 projects, categorized by department in order to better show the total workload for various staff teams.

The recommended work plan incorporated 22 items proposed by standing committees - and 27 others can be worked on by the committees with limited staff time from the Town; an additional 21 are considered day to day items and will be done but not shown on the Work Plan. So 74% of the 94 items proposed by the committees will be worked on. The presentation also included a total of 27 “Beyond Capacity” items – projects suggested by Council or others that were desired but there were not sufficient resources to undertake.

### *Agenda*

The agenda for the priority setting session was as follows:

- *Introductory Comments*
- *Agenda Overview*
- *Recommended 2026-27 Work Plan*
- *Council Questions and Initial Discussion*
- PUBLIC COMMENTS
- *Identify Possible Changes to the Work Plan*
- LUNCH
- *Discuss new approach for items added during the year*
- *Discussion of Items NOT on the Work Plan*
- PUBLIC COMMENTS
- *Vote on 4 Strategic Goals and approach to new items*
- *Discuss and Vote on Changes to the 2026-27 Work Plan*
- *Staff Huddle*
- *Recap and Next Steps*

## Ground Rules

After introductory comments by the Acting City Manager, Dan Rich from RPMG reviewed the agenda and proposed the following suggested ground rules which were similar to those used in 2025:

- *All voices matter; all voices are equal*
- *Actively listen*
- *Be constructive when providing feedback or asking questions*
- *Recognize common interests and seek consensus*
- *Focus on special projects, not the day-to-day operations*
- *Enjoy the day*

## Guiding Principles

In 2023, staff created and presented “foundational principles” to the Council; they were designed to acknowledge the importance of prioritizing, ensure clarity of roles, and to focus staff work with the Council’s priorities. For the current cycle, the Guiding Principles were modified, reordered, and shortened slightly, without changing the intent. Council adopted the following as presented.

:

- *Council’s role is to provide strategic direction and policy guidance, approving budget and staffing resources*
- *Management’s role is to implement the Council’s adopted Work Plan*
- *If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority;*
- *Day-to-day operations take up 85-95% of organizational capacity*
- *Upcoming budget allocations need to be aligned with the Council’s priorities*

## Review of the 2024-25 Work Plan and Presentation of the Recommended 26-27 Work Plan

The Acting City Manager provided a recap of the 2024-25 Council priorities and achievements: there were 63 items adopted initially, including 34 new items from Council and a total of 159 milestones. During the course of the two year cycle, 23 additional projects were taken on. A total of *65 out of 86 projects were completed*. The Acting City Manager then went through a presentation of the proposed 2026-27 Work Plan and how it was developed. He noted that the proposed Work Plan included 60 projects, many of which are mandated or carryover items; *39 are new* for the upcoming cycle. 19 of the projects in the plan came from Council and another 19 came from the committees.

## Public Comments and Council Dialogue

After initial questions and a general discussion of the proposed Work Plan, public comments were solicited. Many of the comments related to the Tree/View ordinance;

other comments included a request for funding for the History Committee, proceeding with the Summerhill path, and enhancements to the etrak-IT system. The consultant then facilitated a multi-step process for the Council to consider possible deletions or additions to the Work Plan, which included a review of the “Beyond Capacity” and committee items not proposed to be worked on. Council then had a preliminary discussion of items they were interested in considering adding to, or dropping from, the Work Plan prior to a lunch break.

After lunch, Council discussed and confirmed a new process for adding work items mid-cycle. Specifically, it will be a *two-step process* where if a majority wants to add something, staff will return with a report indicating what resources are needed to take it on (added personnel, consultants, budget, delaying or dropping other projects, etc.). Council then reviewed and approved the following Strategic Goals, which are the same as they are currently. When the Work Plan is brought back to Council for final approval, the projects will be categorized by the following Strategic Goals, not by department.

- Maintain Quality of Life and Community Character
- Promote Public Safety
- Increase Effective Service Delivery and Governance
- Protect and Maintain Infrastructure

Council then discussed potential items to drop from – or add to - the Work Plan, reviewing the list department by department. Council identified the following potential drops:

- Fire services review (CMO) - 100 hrs estimated
- Green House Gas Inventory (CDD) - 120 hrs
- Muni code – Firescape and landscaping (CDD) - 240 hrs
- Bench Policy (P&R) – 10 hrs
- Senior Programing for the Heritage House - 20-40 hrs
- Summerhill Pathway (PW) - 200hrs

Initially, the following thirteen items (and the “host” department) were identified as potential additions and discussed by Council, with another opportunity for public input before the Council discussed them further and went through a “dot” voting exercise:

- *PRA Software (Clerk)*
- *AI Workshop (CMO)*
- *Heat Pumps (CDD)*
- *Deposit Management (CDD)*
- *Inspection Scheduling Software ((CDD)*
- *Historic Preservation Ordinance (CDD)*
- *Pickleball Courts (P&R)*
- *Water Well (PW)*
- *Eucalyptus Trees (PW)*
- *Native Garden expansion (PW)*
- *Monitor SOP documentation*
- *Green Sheets*
- *View Ordinance*

Council discussed the potential items to add and determined that one of them could be handed off to a committee to take the lead on (AI Workshop) and one should not be added (Water Wells) so voted on the remaining eleven items. The vote tally (and estimated work hours) is shown below.

✓ PRA Software (30 hours):	<b>3 votes</b>
✓ Heat Pumps (50 hours):	<b>3 votes</b>
✓ Deposit Management (100 hours):	<b>4 votes</b>
✓ Inspection Scheduling software (50 hrs)	<b>4 votes</b>
✓ Historic Preservation Ord. (240 hours):	1 vote
✓ Pickleball courts (50 hours)	2 votes
✓ Eucalyptus Trees (100 hours)	1 vote
✓ Native Garden (TBD)	<b>4 votes</b>
✓ Documenting SOPs (TBD)	0 votes
✓ Green Sheets (TBD)	<b>3 votes</b>
✓ View Ordinance (240 hours)	1 vote

So six items were supported by a majority of the Council, with four of them receiving a “#1” vote.

## **Final changes made to the 2026-27 Work Plan**

After the Council vote to add items, the meeting was recessed briefly so staff could huddle to assess what tradeoffs or resources would be needed to incorporate the items a majority of the Council wished to add. After the staff discussion, the following changes were recommended:

### ***Deletions from the Work Plan***

1. *Fire Services Review (CMO)*

### ***Deferred to Committees***

1. *Green House Gas (CDD)*
2. *Senior Programing for the Heritage House (P&R)*

### ***Additions to the Work Plan***

1. *Green Sheets (CMO) – Commitment to have Council discussion*

### ***Additions to the Work Plan pending upcoming Budget Asks***

1. *Inspection Software (CDD)*
2. *Deposit Management (CDD)*
3. *Heat Pumps (CDD)*
4. *Native Gardens (PW)*
5. *PRA Software (Clerk)*

On a motion by Councilmember Tankha, seconded by Vice Mayor Tyson, the Council unanimously supported the changes to the Work Plan.

Exhibit A is the updated final 2026-27 Work Plan with these changes incorporated.

Staff will begin working on the plan and will seek budgetary funding for specific projects on the plan during the 2026-27 Budget Process. The staff will also update the City Council on the status of each project within the plan at a regularly scheduled City Council meeting in approximately 6 months. As noted earlier, there is a “two-step” process for new items to be added during the year. And next January, a review and fine tuning of the two-year Work Plan will be undertaken by the Council.

The Council priority setting session adjourned at approximately 2:30.

