

DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS COMMITTEE
JANUARY 26, 2016 – CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Charter:

"The Committee will review recently completed buildings in downtown Los Altos in the context of the current zoning regulations, the adopted Downtown Design Guidelines, Downtown Design Plan, the results of downtown surveys conducted by the City, and the General Plan. The Committee will recommend next steps to ensure new buildings downtown meet community expectations."

Rules of engagement:

- Residents were appointed by Council to be the voice of the community.
- Those eligible to apply for committee membership included residents of the City of Los Altos whose only property interest downtown is their primary residence, no more than 25% of the committee live within the downtown triangle, the committee include no more than one current Planning and Transportation (PTC) commissioner. (No PTC commissioner is on the committee.)
- Economic considerations were specifically removed from the discussion. The committee was to determine the ideal development residents want.

Process:

- Reviewed 2 downtown surveys and comments from 2 downtown walking tours. Analyzed new buildings re: compatibility (or conflict) with zoning ordinances, Guidelines, and public opinion.
- Formed 3 subcommittees to focus on:
 - Documentation, process, procedures
 - Height, height exceptions, towers
 - Materials, curb appeal, landscape, light plane, views
- Subcommittees and individuals consulted Los Altos staff, architects, residents.
- Compared Los Altos process and documents to those of nearby comparable cities.

Topics for Discussion:

- Coherence of documents; adherence to them; planning process.
- Interrelation of narrow streets and sidewalks with the increased height, bulk and mass of the newer buildings.
- Building materials and landscaping.