



# PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION AGENDA

5:00 PM - Thursday, February 27, 2025

*Community Meeting Chambers, Los Altos City Hall 1  
North San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA*

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**PARTICIPATION:** Members of the public may participate by being present at the Los Altos Community Meeting Chambers at Los Altos City Hall located at 1 N. San Antonio Rd, Los Altos, CA during the meeting. Public comment is accepted in person at the physical meeting location, or via email to [PCPublicComment@losaltosca.gov](mailto:PCPublicComment@losaltosca.gov).

**REMOTE MEETING OBSERVATION:** Members of the public may view the meeting via the link below, but will not be permitted to provide public comment via Zoom or telephone. Public comment will be taken in-person, and members of the public may provide written public comment by following the instructions below.

<https://tinyurl.com/4rmwr9p8>

**Telephone: 1-253-215-8782 / Webinar ID: 846 6314 0065 / Passcode: 242017**

**SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS:** Verbal comments can be made in-person at the public hearing or submitted in writing prior to the meeting. Written comments can be mailed or delivered in person to the Development Services Department or emailed to [PCPublicComment@losaltosca.gov](mailto:PCPublicComment@losaltosca.gov).

Correspondence must be received by 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting to ensure distribution prior to the meeting. Comments provided after 2:00 p.m. will be distributed the following day and included with public comment in the Planning Commission packet.

## AGENDA

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### ESTABLISH QUORUM

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

*Members of the audience may bring to the Commission's attention any item that is not on the agenda. The Commission Chair will announce the time speakers will be granted before comments begin. Please be advised that, by law, the Planning Commission is unable to discuss or take action on issues presented during the Public Comment Period. According to State Law (also known as "The Brown Act") items must first be noted on the agenda before any discussion or action.*

### DISCUSSION

#### **1. Study Session - Discuss Rezoning Options of Sherwood Triangle Area**

Discuss rezoning options of Sherwood Triangle Area as directed by the Los Altos City Council.

### COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND COMMENTS

### POTENTIAL FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

### ADJOURNMENT

SPECIAL NOTICES TO PUBLIC

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and California Law, it is the policy of the City of Los Altos to offer its programs, services and meetings in a manner that is readily accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and require information or materials in an appropriate alternative format; or if you require any other accommodation, please contact department staff. Advance notification within this guideline will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility.

Agendas, Staff Reports and some associated documents for the Planning Commission items may be viewed on the Internet at <http://losaltosca.gov/meetings>.

Decisions of the Planning Commission are final unless appealed by filing an appeal with the City Clerk within 14 calendar days of the decision. No building permits shall be issued during this 14-day period.



**Agenda Report**  
**Planning Commission**  
**Meeting Date:** February 27, 2025  
**Prepared By:** Nick Zornes

**Subject: Study Session – Discuss Rezoning Options of Sherwood Triangle Area**

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**COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA**

- Business Communities
- Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing
- Neighborhood Safety Infrastructure
- General Government

**RECOMMENDATION**

Discuss rezoning options of Sherwood Triangle Area as directed by the Los Altos City Council.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Not Applicable.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Not Applicable.

**BACKGROUND**

On January 28, 2025, the Los Altos City Council considered a Private Zone Text Amendment as required pursuant to Chapter 14.01 of the Los Altos Municipal Code. The Private Zone Text Amendment was for the consideration of allowing Residential Uses on the ground floor of the Commercial Neighborhood (CN) zoning district.

The City Council received a presentation from staff, accepted public testimony and discussed the request of the Private Zone Text Amendment. The City Council was informed that a rezoning of the parcel in question only would not be allowed as it is considered “spot zoning”. Additionally, the request would not be eligible for a Variance, as Variances are deemed unconstitutional when granted for Use in the State of California. The City Council was further informed that the Private Zone Text Amendment as requested would apply to all CN zoned properties within the city. The City Council clarified that they do not desire to have ground floor residential allowed throughout the City on all properties zoned CN. After further discussion the City Council directed staff to take this item to the Los Altos Planning Commission for consideration and discussion of what the

Sherwood Triangle Area could be rezoned to which would allow for ground floor residential, and to further consider the validity and necessity of the Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan.

**ANALYSIS**

There are currently forty-two (42) parcels within the Sherwood Triangle Area and are identified in Attachment 2, of which thirty-nine (39) are zoned Commercial Neighborhood (CN) and three (3) are zoned Office Administrative (OA). Additionally, all forty-two (42) parcels are designated Thoroughfare Commercial (TC) in the Los Altos General Plan – Land Use Element.

**Existing Zoning Standards**

<b>Development Standard</b>	<b>CN Zoning</b>	<b>CT Zoning</b>
Density	No Maximum	No Maximum
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	No Maximum	No Maximum
Front Setback	0 feet	20 feet
Side Setback	0 feet	10 feet (interior side) 15 feet (exterior side)
Rear Setback	20 feet	25 feet
Height Limit	45 feet/4 stories (Mixed Use) 30 feet/3 stories (Commercial)	55 feet/5 stories (Residential) 60 feet/5 stories (Mixed Use) 45 feet/4 stories (Commercial)

**Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan**

The Sherwood Gateway Specific Plan commonly referred to as the “Sherwood Triangle” Area was originally adopted on March 2, 1999, with a minor amendment on February 12, 2008. The Specific Plan as it remains today is largely a vision document as it was written with subjective criteria and is mostly unenforceable. The Specific Plan deviates to the underlying zoning for nearly all Development Standards.

**Zoning Designation Inconsistency**

The City of Los Altos General Plan Land Use Element establishes the allowed Land Uses for each category. The Zoning Code mirrors the City’s Land Use Element to help enable consistency between the two documents. The parcels located in the Sherwood Triangle Area currently have inconsistent Zoning Designations as all forty-two (42) parcels have a Land Use Designation of Thoroughfare Commercial (TC) per the Land Use Element. The correct Zoning Designation should be Commercial Thoroughfare (CT) for parcels with the Land Use Designation of Thoroughfare Commercial (TC).

**DISCUSSION**

Based on the existing Land Use Designation as established in the Land Use Element it is recommended that the Sherwood Triangle Area be rezoned to Commercial Thoroughfare (CT). This rezoning would create consistency between the Zoning and Land Use Designations which is required by California Planning & Zoning Law.

It is important to note that as apart of the rezoning that is being discussed the City is precluded by the Senate Bill 330 (SB 330), also known as the “Housing Crisis Act”, from reducing the density or intensity of a Zoning or Land Use designation. Since the City currently does not have a limit on

density this means that it must remain as it is today. As can be seen in the Analysis Section of this Agenda Report there are differences in the setbacks and height limits between the CN and CT zoning districts.

The following are recommended modifications for the CT zoning district:

	<b>EXISTING</b>	<b>EXISTING</b>	<b>PROPOSED</b>
<b>Development Standard</b>	<b>CN Zoning</b>	<b>CT Zoning</b>	<b>CT Zoning</b>
Density	No Maximum	No Maximum	No Maximum
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	No Maximum	No Maximum	No Maximum
Front Setback	0 feet	20 feet	10 feet
Side Setback	0 feet	10 feet (interior side) 15 feet (exterior side)	5 feet (interior side) 10 feet (exterior side)
Rear Setback	20 feet	25 feet	20 feet
Height Limit	45 feet/4 stories (Mixed Use) 30 feet/3 stories (Commercial)	55 feet/5 stories (Residential) 60 feet/5 stories (Mixed Use) 45 feet/4 stories (Commercial)	55 feet/5 stories (Residential) 60 feet/5 stories (Mixed Use) 45 feet/4 stories (Commercial)

The table provided above is proposed as a method of blending together the existing Development Standards that exist in the CN and CT zoning districts. This allows the parcels located in the Sherwood Triangle Area (currently zoned CN) to continue to benefit from smaller setbacks as are available today, while taking on the increased height allowances in the CT Zoning District. Effectively the CT Zoning District would reduce the setbacks required by 5-10 feet depending on the specific setback.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. **Rezoning Area Map**
2. **List of Parcels**
3. **Existing Chapter 14.40 (CN Zoning District)**
4. **Existing Chapter 14.50 (CT Zoning District)**
5. **City Council Agenda Report (1-28-2025)**
6. **City Council Agenda Attachment (1-28-2025)**





<b>APN</b>	<b>ADDRESS</b>	<b>EXISTING ZONING DESIGNATION</b>	<b>EXISTING LAND USE DESIGNATION</b>
17001065	961 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001064	949 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001063	949 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001062	941 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001061	933 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001059	921 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001058	911 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001057	905 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001056	899 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001055	895 SHERWOOD AVE	OA	TC
17001077	885 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	OA	TC
16716022	900 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	OA	TC
17001108	889 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001023	905 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001024	909 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001025	915 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001026	925 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001027	971 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001028	987 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001029	991 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001030	1019 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001031	1019 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001032	1031 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001033	1067 SAN ANTONIO ROAD	CN	TC
17001095	NO ADDRESS	CN	TC
17001035	NO ADDRESS	CN	TC
17001036	4598 EL CAMINO REAL	CN	TC
17001087	4636 EL CAMINO REAL	CN	TC
17001088	4646 EL CAMINO REAL	CN	TC
17001086	994 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC

17001042	988 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001043	987 ACACIA AVE	CN	TC
17001044	966 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001045	1005 ACACIA AVE	CN	TC
17001053	916 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001052	928 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001051	942 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001050	952 SHERWOOD AVE	CN	TC
17001111	962 ACACIA AVE	CN	TC
17001112	962 ACACIA AVE	CN	TC
17001113	962 ACACIA AVE	CN	TC
17001047	997 ACACIA AVE	CN	TC



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## Chapter 14.40 CN COMMERCIAL NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICT

### Sections:

#### 14.40.010 CN District.

The regulations, general provisions, and exceptions set forth in this chapter and in Chapter 14.66 shall apply in the CN District.

(Prior code § 10-2.1601)

#### 14.40.020 Specific purposes (CN).

The specific purposes of the CN District are as follows:

- A. To retain and enhance the neighborhood convenience character;
- B. To preserve and improve the existing character by encouraging pedestrian-scale development and amenities, circulation, and landscaping;
- C. To retain an emphasis on retail uses, including service and limited office uses;
- D. To allow for mixed uses of commercial and residential; and
- E. To buffer the impacts of commercial development on neighboring residential properties.

(Ord. 03-256 § 1 (part): prior code § 10-2.1601.1)

#### 14.40.030 Permitted uses (CN).

The following uses shall be permitted in the CN District:

- A. Office-administrative services located above the ground floor;
- B. Office-administrative services uses located on the ground floor on Sherwood Avenue within the Sherwood Gateway specific plan area, and in existing commercial buildings constructed before February 22, 2013, on Grant Road between Newcastle Drive and Farndon Avenue within the Woodland Plaza area, provided that any site with over five thousand (5,000) square feet of existing retail or restaurant space on the ground floor shall retain an equal or greater amount of its existing retail and/or restaurant space on the ground floor;
- C. Parking spaces and loading areas;
- D. Recycling facilities: (i) small collection facilities, and (ii) reverse vending machines, as provided for in Chapter 14.68 of this title;
- E. Restaurants, excluding drive-through services;
- F. Retail and personal service establishments;
- G. Medical and dental offices that are less than five thousand (5,000) gross square feet;

H. Mixed use development(s) which shall consist of residential uses and a minimum floor area ratio of twenty (20) percent nonresidential uses or a maximum thirty-three (33) percent nonresidential uses; and

I. Uses which are determined by the zoning administrator to be of the same general character.

(Ord. 07-306 § 3 (part); Ord. 05-280 § 4 (part); Ord. 03-256 § 1 (part); prior code § 10-2.1602)

(Ord. No. 2012-389, § 1, 1-22-2013; Ord. No. 2015-406, § 2, 2-10-2015; Ord. No. 2023-501, § 6(App. F), 10-10-2023)

#### **14.40.040 Conditional uses (CN).**

Upon the granting of a use permit in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 14.80 of this title, the following uses shall be permitted in the CN District:

A. Day care centers;

B. Office-administrative services uses;

C. Medical and dental offices that are five thousand (5,000) gross square feet or more;

D. Nurseries or garden supplies provided all equipment, supplies, and merchandise, other than plants, shall be kept within an enclosed structure; and

E. Uses which are determined by the planning commission to be of the same general character.

(Ord. 07-306 § 3 (part); Ord. 05-280 § 4 (part); Ord. 03-256 § 1 (part); prior code § 10-2.1603)

(Ord. No. 2012-389, § 2, 1-22-2013; Ord. No. 2015-406, §§ 2—4, 2-10-2015; Ord. No. 2023-501, § 6(App. F), 10-10-2023)

#### **14.40.050 Limited conditional uses (CN).**

Upon the granting of a use permit in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 14.80, the following uses shall be permitted except within fifty (50) feet of an R1 District:

A. Animal clinics;

B. Cocktail lounges;

C. Commercial recreation;

D. Drive-through facilities, except car washes;

E. Laundry and dry cleaning establishments, including self-serve dry cleaning;

F. Printing shops;

G. Recycling facilities: large collection facilities as provided for in Chapter 14.68;

H. Service stations provided the site has at least one hundred (100) feet of frontage on a street with a minimum site area of twenty thousand (20,000) square feet. The setback of structures shall be determined by the planning commission; and

I. Upholstery shops.

(Ord. 07-312 § 8; Ord. 03-256 § 1 (part); prior code § 10-2.1604)

(Ord. No. 2023-501, § 6(App. F), 10-10-2023)

#### **14.40.060 Required conditions (CN).**

The following conditions shall be required of all uses in the CN District:

- A. All businesses, services, and processes shall be conducted entirely within a completely enclosed structure, except for recycling facilities, parking and loading spaces, outdoor dining areas, nurseries, the sale of gasoline and oil at service stations, or as permitted under the terms of a permit issued pursuant to Section 4.24.020 of Chapter 4.24 of Title 4 of this code.
- B. All products produced on the site of any of the permitted uses shall be sold at retail only and on the site where produced.
- C. No use shall be permitted and no process, equipment, or materials shall be employed which are found by the commission to be objectionable by reason of odor, dust, noise, vibration, illumination, glare, unsightliness, or electrical disturbances which are manifested beyond the premises in which the permitted use is located.

No property owner, business owner and/or tenant shall suffer, permit, or allow the operation of a business on his or her property or on property upon which his or her business operates to violate the required conditions of this chapter. Enforcement shall be as provided for in Chapter 1.10 of this code.

- 1. General screening standard. Every development shall provide sufficient screening to reasonably protect the privacy, safety, and environment of neighboring residential properties and shield them from adverse external effects of that development.

Walls up to twelve (12) feet in height shall be required for the purpose of attenuating noise (as determined by an acoustical analysis), odor, air pollution, artificial light, mitigation for grade differential between properties and providing privacy and safety.

- 2. Sites for screening of refuse collection. Every development will be required to provide suitable space for solid waste separation, collection, and storage and shall provide sites for such that are located so as to facilitate collection and minimize any negative impact on persons occupying the development site, neighboring properties, or public rights-of-way.
- 3. Lighting. Lighting within any lot that unnecessarily illuminates any other lot and/or substantially interferes with the use or enjoyment of such other lot is prohibited. Lighting unnecessarily illuminates another lot if (i) it clearly exceeds the minimum illumination necessary to provide for security of property and the safety of persons using such roads, driveways, sidewalks, parking lots, and other common areas and facilities, or (ii) if the illumination could reasonably be achieved in a manner that would not substantially interfere with the use or enjoyment of neighboring properties.
- 4. Air pollution. Any use that emits any "air contaminant" as defined by the Bay Area air quality management district shall comply with applicable state standards concerning air pollution.
- 5. Maintenance of common areas, improvements, and facilities. Maintenance of all common areas, improvements, or facilities required by this chapter or any permit issued in accordance with its provisions shall be required except those areas, improvements, or facilities with respect to which an offer of dedication to the public has been accepted by the appropriate public authority.
- 6. Odors. No use may generate any odor that may be found reasonably objectionable as determined by an appropriate agency such as the Santa Clara County health department and the

Bay Area air quality management district beyond the boundary occupied by the enterprise generating the odor.

7. Noise. No person shall operate, or cause to be operated, any source of sound at any location within the city or allow the creation of any noise on property owned, leased, occupied, or otherwise controlled by such person, which causes the noise level when measured on any other property either incorporated or unincorporated, to exceed standards as set forth in Chapter 6.16 of the Los Altos Municipal Code.

In order to attenuate noise associated with commercial development, walls up to twelve (12) feet in height shall be required at a commercial/residential interface. Other conditions may be applied such as, but not limited to, muffling of exterior air conditioning facilities.

- D. No building or structure designed for, or intended to be used, or which has been used, or which is presently being used as a dwelling shall be used for the conduct of any business, store, shop, or other permitted use in the CN District unless and until such structure and the property on which it is located comply with the applicable provisions of this chapter, the Uniform Building Code (Chapter 12.08 of this code), and the Fire Code (Chapter 12.24 of this code).
- E. No use shall be permitted in setbacks immediately adjacent to single-family residential land uses which can not adequately be mitigated.

(Prior code § 10-2.1605)

#### **14.40.070 Floor area ratio (CN).**

- A. Mixed use development(s) shall have no maximum floor area ratio within the Commercial Neighborhood (CN) Zoning District.
- B. Non-residential use only development(s) shall have a maximum floor area ratio of thirty-five (35) percent of the total area of the site.

(Prior code § 10-2.1605.1)

(Ord. No. 2023-501, § 6(App. F), 10-10-2023)

#### **14.40.080 Front yard (CN).**

No front yard shall be required.

(Prior code § 10-2.1606)

(Ord. No. 2023-501, § 6(App. F), 10-10-2023)

#### **14.40.090 Side yards (CN).**

No side yards shall be required.

(Prior code § 10-2.1607)

(Ord. No. 2023-501, § 6(App. F), 10-10-2023)

**14.40.100 Rear yard (CN).**

The minimum depth of rear yards shall be twenty (20) feet. The required rear yard may be used for off-street parking, except for the area required to be planted.

(Prior code § 10-2.1608)

(Ord. No. 2023-501, § 6(App. F), 10-10-2023)

**14.40.110 Off-street parking (CN).**

(As provided in Chapter 14.74 of this title.)

(Prior code § 10-2.1609)

**14.40.120 Common parking facilities (CN).**

(As provided in Chapter 14.74 of this title.)

(Prior code § 10-2.1610)

**14.40.130 Off-street loading.**

(As provided in Chapter 14.74 of this title.)

(Prior code § 10-2.1611)

**14.40.140 Height of structures (CN).**

- A. Mixed Use Development(s) building height shall be a maximum of forty-five (45) feet and four stories.
- B. Non-Residential Use Only Development(s) building height shall be a maximum of thirty (30) feet and three stories.

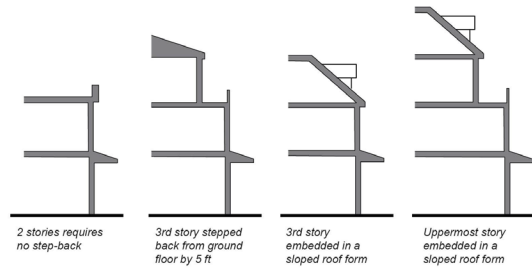
(Prior code § 10-2.1612)

(Ord. No. 10-349, § 1, 4-27-2010; Ord. No. 2023-501, § 6(App. F), 10-10-2023)

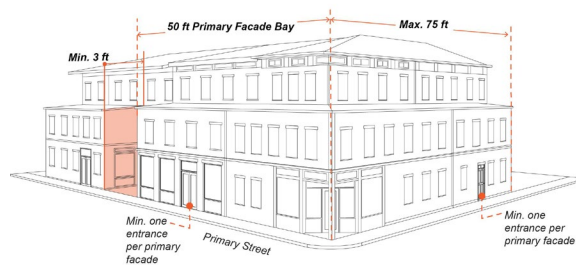
**14.40.150 Design control (CN).**

- A. Building Placement. A minimum seventy-five (75) percent of ground-floor building frontages facing El Camino Real must be built at the minimum setback line. This standard applies to the building frontage only (exclusive of side setbacks).
- B. Building Massing and Articulation.
  - 1. Upper-story Step-backs, Front and Street Side.
    - a. Along all frontages except El Camino Real, the third story must be either stepped back a minimum five feet from the ground floor façade or embedded in a sloped roof form such as a mansard roof or a hipped and/or gabled roof with dormers, as allowed by standards in Section 14.40.150.B.7.

- b. For buildings over three stories along all frontages except El Camino Real, the uppermost story must be embedded in a sloped roof form.



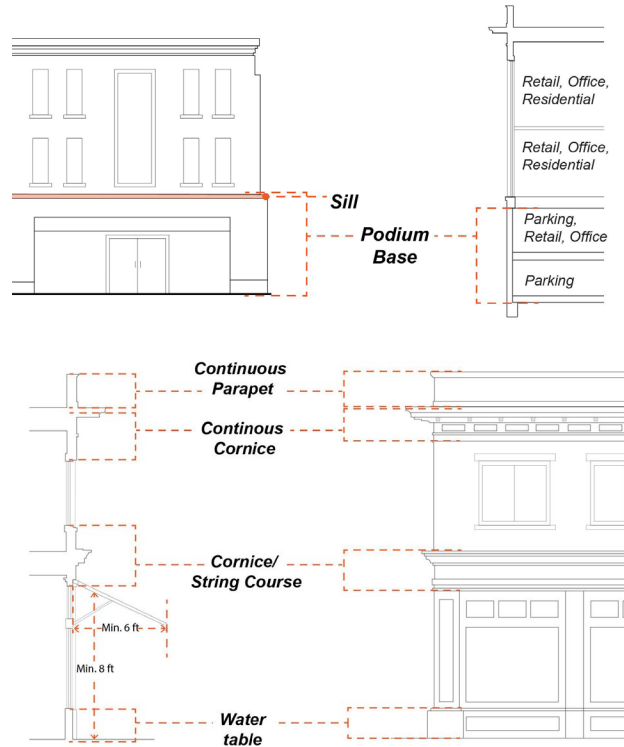
- c. There are no upper-story step-back requirements for building frontages along El Camino Real in the CN district.
2. Upper Story Step-backs, Side Interior and Rear where Abutting an R-1 District.
- a. The third story must be either stepped back a minimum ten (10) feet from ground floor façade or embedded in a sloped roof form.
  - b. For buildings over three stories, the uppermost story must be embedded in a sloped roof form.
3. Vertical Articulation.
- a. When a building façade exceeds seventy-five (75) feet in length along a right-of-way, it must be separated into primary façade bays no greater than fifty (50) feet and secondary façade bays defined by a recess a minimum three feet deep and ten (10) feet wide.
  - b. A minimum one entrance shall be provided per primary façade bay.
  - c. The eave/roof of a secondary façade bay shall be no higher than the corresponding elements of the primary façade bay.



4. Horizontal Articulation. New façades and façade modifications along a street or civic space shall be designed to visually express a base, middle, and top.
- a. One or more of the following patterns shall be used to define the base:
    - i. Watertable: Base material extends from grade to between eight and fifty-four (54) inches above grade.
    - ii. Podium: The base material encompasses the lowest story (or stories) of the building, with or without mezzanine(s), and terminates in a sill, string course, or cornice at its upper bound (multi-story buildings only).
    - iii. Watertable and Cornice/String Course: A watertable using the base material is combined with a cornice or string course at the lowest story's upper bound, including any mezzanine (multi-story buildings only).



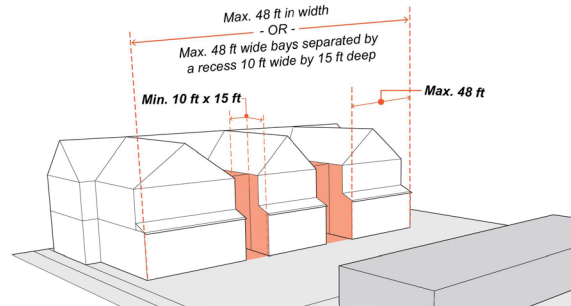
- b. The top of each building mass/bay shall be defined by elements spanning the full length of the façade of the mass/bay. Such elements may include a cornice, eave and/or gable(s), or other elements listed under Section 17.40.150.B.7. These elements shall be consistent with the overall architectural style of the building mass/bay.



## 5. Adjacencies.

### a. Façades adjacent to an R-1 District.

- i. Building façade planes abutting an R-1 district may not exceed forty-eight (48) feet in width.
- ii. When a building façade abutting an R-1 district exceeds forty-eight (48) feet in width, it must be separated into façade bays no greater than forty-eight (48) feet by a recess ten (10) feet wide and fifteen (15) feet deep.
- iii. Balconies, roof decks and other habitable outdoor space is not allowed on upper-story façades abutting R-1 zones.
- iv. Sliding glass doors, French doors, and floor-to-ceiling windows are not allowed on upper-story façades abutting R-1 zones.



b. Storefront Façades Adjacent to Storefront Façades.

- i. The height of a storefront shall not differ from the height of any adjacent storefront by more than two feet.
- ii. The height of ground story shall not differ from height of any adjacent ground story by more than two feet.
- iii. Storefronts may transition in height using a module of twenty-five (25) feet in length along a right-of-way.

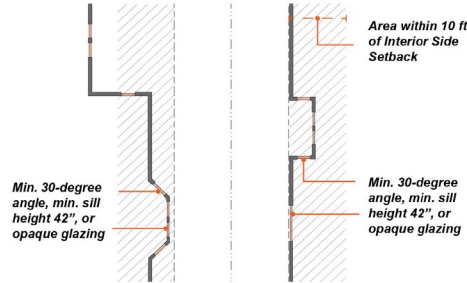


c. Compatibility with Adjacent Shorter Buildings with Height Difference of One Story or More. When adjacent to an existing shorter building with a height difference of one story or more, a proposed building must utilize two or more of the following strategies:

- i. Incorporate the uppermost floor into the roof form.
- ii. Break the mass of the building into smaller modules through changes in wall plane, setbacks, and/or height.
- iii. Match window heights and/or proportions.
- iv. Relate roof cornices and moldings at floor lines.

6. Privacy and Line of Sight.

- a. Primary living spaces and balconies located along a side setback shall orient principal windows and balconies toward the front and rear of the building.
- b. Where windows are within ten (10) feet of and oriented toward an interior side setback, glazing shall either be a minimum thirty (30) degree angle measured perpendicular to the adjacent side setback line, have minimum sill height of forty-two (42) inches, or be opaque.
- c. The maximum sill height for an ingress/egress window is forty-four (44) inches from finished floor.



7. Roofline and Roof Design.

a. Roof designs shall be limited to:

- i. Hipped.
- ii. Gable.
- iii. Shed.
- iv. Dormer.
- v. Parapet.

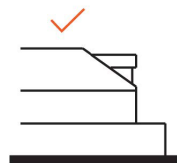
(a) Not allowed on frontages facing Fremont Avenue.

(b) When used on the first or second floor, a parapet longer than twenty-five (25) feet in length must include at least one but not more than two of the following design elements to break up the length of the parapet:

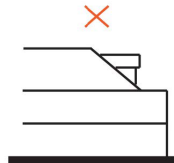
- (1) Steps.
- (2) Curves.
- (3) Angled surfaces.

(c) The length of a parapet segment on the third floor and above may not exceed twenty-five (25) feet.

b. When the top story is stepped back and embedded in a sloped roof form such as a mansard roof or a hipped and/or gabled roof with dormers, the floor below must (and other floors may) be stepped back to meet the slope of the top story.



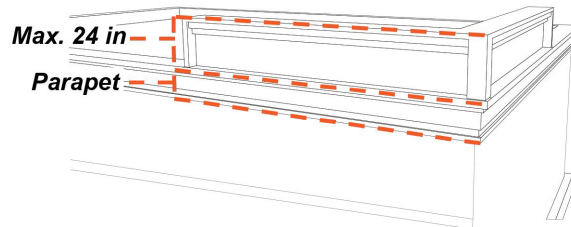
**Acceptable:**  
*One story below the story embedded in a sloped roof is also stepped-back .*



**Not acceptable:**  
*Top story embedded in a sloped roof is the only story stepped back.*

c. Building façades facing an R-1 district must have a hipped or gable roof and may incorporate dormers.

- d. Roofline/parapet at corners shall not exceed roofline/parapet of adjacent wallplanes by more than twenty-four (24) inches.



C. Building Design.

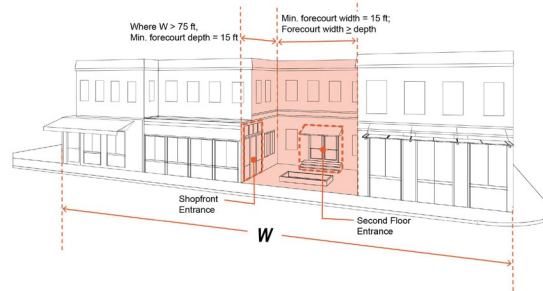
1. Façade Design.

- a. Building façades shall be arranged in an orderly composition of bays, defined by vertically aligned openings alternating horizontally with solid walls or columns. The pattern shall be visually expressed through the spacing of openings, recesses, eaves, inset panels, cornices, overhangs, trellises, exposed rafters, columns, or bay windows.
- b. The pattern may be shared between the ground floor and upper stories provided the ground floor exhibits enhanced detail or modulation.
- c. Residential façades shall incorporate at least one element that signals habitation, such as bay windows, or balconies.
- d. Non-glazed wall areas (blank walls) must be enhanced with architectural details, landscaping, and/or landscaped trellises or lattices.

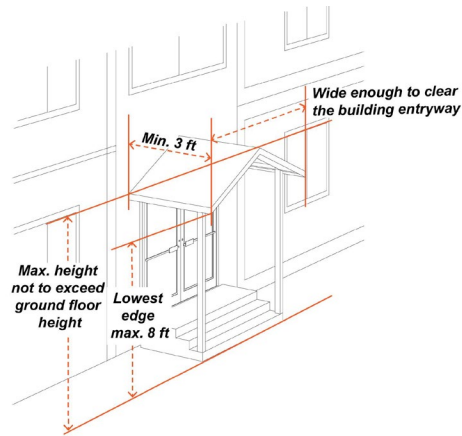
2. Pedestrian-Scaled Entrances.

- a. Building entrances must incorporate at least one of the following entry features. See Section 14.66.275 (Entrance Type Standards) for design standards applicable to each entrance type listed.
  - i. Stoop.
  - ii. Dooryard.
  - iii. Shopfront.
    - (a) Shopfronts more than twenty-five (25) feet in width must incorporate variations in bulkhead, awnings, materials and/or color to visually articulate the shopfront into modules not to exceed twenty-five (25) continuous feet.
  - iv. Gallery.
  - v. Arcade.
  - vi. Forecourt.
    - (a) Forecourts must feature at least one entry to a shop and/or second floor use.
    - (b) Forecourts for buildings more than seventy (70) feet in length along a right-of-way must have a minimum width and depth of fifteen (15) feet from front façade. Width of forecourt shall be equal to or greater than depth.
    - (c) The size of the forecourt must be appropriate relative to the size of the building. The maximum ratio of building height to forecourt is 2:1 (height < 2 x width).

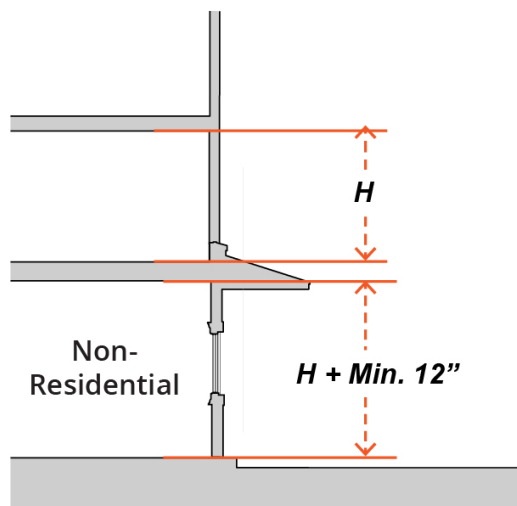
- (d) Forecourt must be enclosed on at least three sides by buildings.
- (e) Forecourt must remain open to the sky (arbors and trellises are allowed).



- b. Primary Entrance Location(s). The building entrance shall be located along the primary right-of-way.
- c. Corner Entrances. Chamfered corners must incorporate a building entrance. Any required entrances may be provided on the corner of the building assuming one of the intersecting sides is a primary frontage.
- d. Street-facing Entries to Upper Floors. Street-facing entries to upper floors shall be equal in quality and detail to storefronts. This standard may be satisfied through two or more of the following:
  - i. Dedicated awning, canopy, or other roof element.
  - ii. Stairs with a single color applied to treads and a contrasting color or pattern applied to risers.
  - iii. Dedicated light fixture(s).
  - iv. Decorative street address numbers or tiles.
  - v. Plaque signs for upper-floor business tenants.
- e. Entry Protection. Primary street-facing entrances shall be protected by a recess in the building frontage at least three feet deep or by a projection extending outward at least three feet measured horizontally from the entrance, and wide enough to clear the building entryway on both sides.
  - i. Protection may be coterminous with an accent element.
  - ii. Protection may take the form of an extended eave, overhang, awning, door canopy, gallery, arcade frontage, or other element that provides shade and shelter from the elements.
  - iii. The lowest edge of a projecting awning or door canopy shall have a vertical clearance of no more than eight feet.
  - iv. Recessed entries shall differentiate pavement within the recess through the use of a dedicated paving material or pattern.



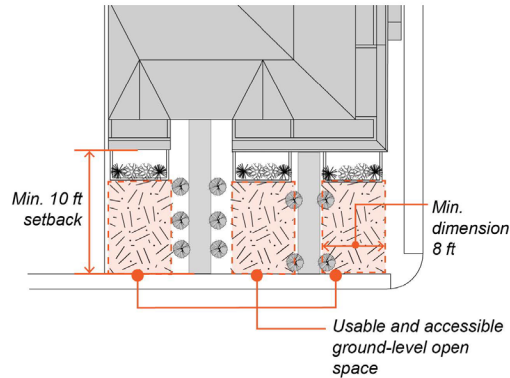
- f. Accent elements demarcating building frontage, entrance, and common open space areas shall not exceed the height of the ground floor story. Roof elements are excepted.
3. Ground Floor Floor-to-Ceiling Height. Minimum twelve (12) inches taller than typical upper floor floor-to-ceiling.



4. Interior Courtyard. Interior courtyards must be:
- Partially visible from the street and linked to the street by a clear accessible path of travel.
  - Enclosed on at least two sides by buildings.
  - Open to the sky (arbors and trellises are allowed).
  - A minimum width of twenty (20) feet and a minimum area of four hundred (400) square feet.
5. Paseos. Paseos must be:
- A minimum width of ten (10) feet for through-block paseos.
  - A minimum width of four feet for entries to courtyards or individual single businesses.
- D. Window Design.
- Window frames, backbands, and sills.



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- a. All windows shall have a sill.
    - i. The sill shall extend horizontally beyond the window opening or frame/casing (if present) at each end.
    - ii. The sill shall be sloped toward the outside.
    - iii. The sill shall have a drip at its outer edge.
  - 2. Vinyl windows are prohibited on façades visible from a right-of-way.
  - 3. Tinted glass is not allowed.
- E. Building Materials.
- 1. Primary shall mean fifty (50) percent or more of a façade surface area excluding transparent surfaces. Permitted primary cladding materials are limited to:
    - a. Stucco (minimum two-coat stucco; synthetic stucco or EIFS not allowed).
    - b. Siding (lap, vertical, panelized, or shingle).
      - i. All siding shall be wood, composite wood, or cement fiberboard.
      - ii. Wood siding shall be painted or stained.
      - iii. Vinyl and aluminum not permitted.
    - c. Stone.
    - d. Brick.
  - 2. Secondary shall mean less than fifty (50) percent of a façade surface area excluding transparent surfaces. Permitted secondary cladding materials are limited to:
    - a. Stucco (minimum two-coat stucco; synthetic stucco not allowed, EIFS not allowed).
    - b. Siding (lap, vertical, panelized, or shingle).
      - i. All siding shall be wood, composite wood, or cement fiberboard.
      - ii. Wood siding shall be painted or stained.
      - iii. Vinyl and aluminum siding are not permitted.
    - c. Stone (building base only).
    - d. Brick (building base only).
    - e. Tile (for bulkheads below display windows and decorative accents only).
    - f. Metal (matte finish or Cor-ten).
      - i. Ribbed metal, titanium, and mirrored finishes are not permitted.
    - g. Concrete Masonry Units (watertable and building base only, and not allowed on any façade facing a right-of-way or a single-family zone).
    - h. Concrete (building base only, board-form only, cast concrete not permitted).
- F. Ground Level Open Space. Where any required front, rear, or side yard setback is ten (10) feet or greater, on-site ground-level open space shall be provided within the setback.
- 1. The ground level open space shall be usable and accessible.
  - 2. The minimum dimension for ground level open space shall be eight feet.



G. Landscaping, Paving and Pedestrian Amenities.

1. Landscape elements shall be integrated with the building architecture, parking, and streetscape. Recommended patterns shall include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Planters for flowers and shrubs within street frontage.
  - b. Landscape buffers between parking spaces and building façades.
  - c. Landscaping within and/or on walls adjacent to courtyards, open spaces, and setbacks.
2. Within the Loyola Corners Specific Plan Overlay district, landscaping, paving and pedestrian amenities shall be as specified in the Loyola Corners Specific Plan.
3. See Sections 14.66.180 (Maintenance of Landscaped Areas) and 14.70.070 (Landscaped Strips) for additional landscaping standards.

H. Site Circulation and Access.

1. New development on abutting lots shall be designed to allow cross-access for internal pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation systems.
2. Bicycle racks shall be provided:
  - a. In or within fifty (50) feet of every parking area; and
  - b. Within twenty (20) feet of at least one building entrance.

I. Service Areas and Screening.

1. Service areas must be located at the rear of lot.
2. Service areas must be enclosed in enclosures that are architecturally consistent with primary building in terms of materials, colors, and style.

J. Additional Design Standards. See Section 14.66.280 for additional design standards applicable to all residential mixed-use development in the CN District.

(Amended during 2/06 supplement; prior code § 10-2.1613)

(Ord. No. 2021-478, § 1, 9-14-2021)

**14.40.160 Signs (CN).**

(As provided in Chapter 14.68 of this code.)

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(Prior code § 10-2.1614; Ord. No. 2015-414, § 12, 9-8-2015)

**14.40.170 Fences (CN).**

(As provided in Chapter 14.72 of this title.)

(Prior code § 10-2.1615)

**14.40.180 Nonconforming use regulations (CN).**

(As provided in Chapter 14.66 of this title.)

(Prior code § 10-2.1616)

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## Chapter 14.50 CT COMMERCIAL THOROUGHFARE DISTRICT\*

### Sections:

#### 14.50.010 CT District.

The regulations, general provisions, and exceptions set forth in this chapter and in Chapter 14.66 of this title shall apply in the CT District.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

#### 14.50.020 Specific purposes (CT).

Specific purposes for CT Districts are as follows:

- A. To encourage a variety of residential developments, including affordable housing development;
- B. To promote the economic and commercial success of Los Altos;
- C. To encourage aggregation of parcels;
- D. To buffer the impacts of commercial and multi-family land uses on neighboring residential properties;
- E. To emphasize a healthy proportion of retail uses as opposed to office and service uses; and
- F. To allow for mixed uses of commercial and residential

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 2017-436, § 1, 10-10-2017)

#### 14.50.030 Permitted uses (CT).

The following uses shall be permitted in the CT District:

- A. Professional and office-administrative services;
- B. Restaurants, excluding drive-through facilities;
- C. Retail and personal services;
- D. Residential only development(s);
- E. Mixed use development(s);
- F. Single room occupancy (SRO) housing;
- G. Emergency shelters; and
- H. Uses which are determined by the zoning administrator to be of the same general character.

(Ord. 05-280 § 8 (part): Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 2015-406, § 2, 2-10-2015; Ord. No. 2015-408, § 2, 6-9-2015; Ord. No. 2023-503, § 3(App. C), 11-28-2023)

#### **14.50.040 Conditional uses (CT).**

Upon the granting of a use permit in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 14.80 of this title, the following uses shall be permitted in the CT District:

- A. Animal clinics, hospitals, and kennels;
- B. Business, professional, and trade schools;
- C. Commercial recreation;
- D. Day care centers;
- E. Hotels and motels;
- F. Medical and dental clinics;
- G. Mortuaries;
- H. Pet shops;
- I. Printing shops;
- J. Upholstery shops; and
- K. Uses which are determined by the planning commission to be of the same general character.

(Ord. 05-280 § 8 (part); Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 2015-406, §§ 3, 4, 2-10-2015; Ord. No. 2015-409, § 2, 6-9-2015; Ord. No. 2023-503, § 3(App. C), 11-28-2023)

#### **14.50.050 Limited conditional uses (CT).**

Upon the granting of a use permit in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 14.80 of this title, the following uses shall be permitted except on parcels within fifty (50) feet of an R District:

- A. Automotive display or salesrooms, servicing and repair;
- B. Cabinet and carpenter shops;
- C. Drive-through facilities, including car washes;
- D. Service stations provided the site has at least one hundred (100) feet of frontage on a street with a minimum site area of twenty thousand (20,000) square feet;
- E. Sheet metal shops;
- F. Sign painting shops; and
- G. Theaters and auditoriums.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 10-348, § 6, 4-13-2010)

#### **14.50.060 Required conditions (CT).**

The following conditions shall be required of all uses in the CT District:

- A. All businesses, services, and processes shall be conducted within a completely enclosed structure, except for recycling facilities, parking and loading areas, outdoor dining areas, nurseries, the sale of gasoline and oil at service stations, bus depots, or as permitted under the terms of a permit issued pursuant to Chapter 14.80 of this title.
- B. No use shall be permitted and no process, equipment, or materials shall be employed which are found by the commission to be objectionable by reason of odor, dust, noise, vibration, illumination, glare, unsightliness, or electrical disturbances which are manifested beyond the premises in which the permitted use is located.
- C. No property owner, business owner, or tenant shall permit or allow activities, which violate the requirements of this chapter, including the following general criteria:
1. General screening standard. Every development shall provide sufficient screening to reasonably protect the privacy, safety, and environment of neighboring residential properties and shield them from adverse external effects of that development.
 

Walls up to twelve (12) feet in height shall be required for the purpose of attenuating noise, odor, air pollution, artificial light, mitigation for grade differential between properties, and providing privacy and safety.
  2. Access and screening of refuse collection. Every development will be required to provide suitable space on-site for solid waste separation, collection, storage, and pick up and shall site these in locations that facilitate access, collection, and minimize any negative impact on persons occupying the development site, neighboring properties, or public rights-of-way.
  3. Lighting. Lighting within any lot that unnecessarily illuminates any other lot or substantially interferes with the use or enjoyment of such other lot is prohibited. Lighting shall be designed to minimize the glare and intensity of external illumination, and to respect the privacy of neighbors by avoiding direct and reflected illumination onto adjacent properties.
  4. Air pollution. Any use that emits any "air contaminant" as defined by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District shall comply with applicable state standards concerning air pollution.
  5. Maintenance of common areas, improvements, and facilities. Maintenance of all common areas, improvements, or facilities required by this chapter or any permit issued in accordance with its provisions shall be required except those areas, improvements, or facilities with respect to which an offer of dedication to the public has been accepted by the appropriate public authority.
  6. Odors. No use may generate any odor that reasonably may be found objectionable as determined by an appropriate agency such as the Santa Clara County health department and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District beyond the boundary occupied by the enterprise generating the odor. All mechanical, venting, and/or exhausting equipment that generates odors shall be located away from residential properties.
  7. Noise. No person shall operate, or cause to be operated, any source of sound at any location within the city or allow the creation of any noise on property owned, leased, occupied or otherwise controlled by such person, which causes the noise level, when measured on any other property, either incorporated or unincorporated, to exceed standards as set forth in Chapter 6.16 of the Los Altos Municipal Code. All mechanical, venting, and/or exhausting equipment that generates noise shall be located away from residential properties. Exterior heating, venting, and air-conditioning facilities shall be muffled.

In order to attenuate noise associated with commercial development, walls up to twelve (12) feet in height shall be required at a commercial or residential interface.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))



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(Ord. No. 2017-436, § 1, 10-10-2017)

#### **14.50.070 Site area (CT).**

The minimum site area shall be twenty thousand (20,000) square feet. The minimum site frontage shall be seventy-five (75) feet.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

#### **14.50.080 Residential density (CT).**

No residential density shall be applicable within the Commercial Thoroughfare Zoning District.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 2023-503, § 3(App. C), 11-28-2023)

#### **14.50.090 Front yard (CT).**

The minimum front yard depth shall be twenty (20) feet, with a minimum of fifty (50) percent of which shall be landscaped.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 2023-503, § 3(App. C), 11-28-2023)

#### **14.50.100 Side yards (CT).**

- A. The minimum interior side yard depth shall be ten (10) feet, with a minimum of fifty (50) percent of which shall be landscaped.
- B. The minimum exterior side yard depth shall be fifteen (15) feet, with a minimum of fifty (50) percent of which shall be landscaped.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 2017-436, § 1, 10-10-2017; Ord. No. 2023-503, § 3(App. C), 11-28-2023)

#### **14.50.110 Rear yard (CT).**

The minimum rear yard depth shall be twenty-five (25) feet, with a minimum of fifty (50) percent of which shall be landscaped.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 10-351, § 1, 5-25-2010; Ord. No. 2023-503, § 3(App. C), 11-28-2023)

#### **14.50.120 Off-street parking (CT).**

As provided in Chapter 14.74 of this title.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

#### **14.50.130 Off-street loading (CT).**

As provided in Chapter 14.74 of this title.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

#### **14.50.140 Height of structures (CT).**

- A. Residential only development(s) building height shall be a maximum of fifty-five (55) feet and five stories.
- B. Mixed use development(s) building height shall be a maximum of sixty (60) feet and five stories.
- C. Non-residential use only development(s) building height shall be a maximum of forty-five (45) feet and four stories.

(Ord. 08-323 § 1: Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 10-351, § 2, 5-25-2010; Ord. No. 2023-503, § 3(App. C), 11-28-2023)

#### **14.50.150 Open space (CT).**

All multiple-family residential projects, including mixed-use projects with multiple-family dwelling units, except duplexes, shall provide permanently maintained outdoor open space, subject to the following requirements:

- A. Although not required for each dwelling unit, an average of fifty (50) square feet of private open space shall be provided for the total number of dwelling units within a project.
- B. Any private open space provided shall be at the same level and immediately accessible from the unit it serves. The provision of private open space shall not reduce the common open space requirements of this section.
- C. Depending on the number of dwelling units in a multiple-family project, common open space shall be provided to meet the following criteria:
  - 1. Two to ten (10) units: a minimum of eight hundred (800) square feet of common open space shall be provided.
  - 2. Eleven (11) to twenty-five (25) units: a minimum of one thousand six hundred (1,600) square feet of common open space shall be provided.
  - 3. Twenty-six (26) to fifty (50) units: a minimum of two thousand four hundred (2,400) square feet of common open space shall be provided.
  - 4. Fifty-one (51) or more units: a minimum of three thousand two hundred (3,200) square feet of common open space shall be provided.
- D. Common open space areas:
  - 1. Shall be designed to be easily accessible and shall be available for passive and active outdoor recreational purposes for the enjoyment of all residents of the project;
  - 2. Shall be provided as continuous, usable site elements of sufficient size to be usable by residents that may be within the rear yard setback;

3. Shall not include driveways, public or private streets, or utility easements where the ground surface cannot be used appropriately for open space.
  4. Common open space areas shall be surfaced with any practical combination of landscaping, paving, decking, concrete, or other serviceable material with no more than fifty (50) percent of the area at grade level covered with a non-permeable surface.
- E. Required common open space shall be controlled and permanently maintained by the owner of the property or by a homeowners' association. Provisions for control and maintenance shall be included in any property covenants of common interest developments.

(Ord. No. 2017-436, § 1, 10-10-2017)

Editor's note(s)—Ord. No. 2017-436 § 1, adopted October 10, 2017, enacted new provisions set out as §§ 14.50.150, 14.50.160, and 14.50.180, and subsequently renumbered former §§ 14.50.150 through 14.50.180 as 14.50.170 and 14.50.190 through 14.50.210. Historical notation to the former sections have been retained for reference purposes.

### **14.50.160 Rooftop uses (CT).**

Rooftop activities or uses are permitted within the perimeter walls of a structure that meet all setback standards provided also that any such activities or uses are accessory to the principal use or uses of the development, and provided further, activities shall comply with the following performance standards:

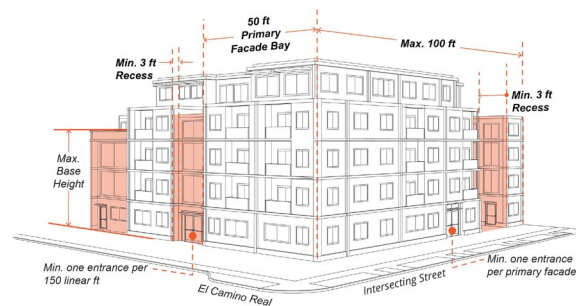
- A. No use shall be established or activity conducted that violates the noise standards and limits identified in Chapter 6.16, Noise Control, of the Municipal Code.
- B. No activity shall be conducted which causes ground vibrations perceptible at the property line.
- C. No lighting or illuminated device shall be operated so as to create glare which creates a hazard or nuisance on other properties.
- D. No use or activity shall be conducted without first obtaining any required permit from the county air pollution control district. Uses shall be conducted to prevent dust or other airborne material from crossing property lines.
- E. Solid wastes shall be handled and stored so as to prevent nuisances, health and fire hazards, and to facilitate recycling. Suitable containers shall be provided to prevent blowing or scattering of trash and screened by an enclosure. Suitable concealed space and containers shall be provided at the roof top to encourage the appropriate sorting and collection of discarded materials.
- F. No use may generate any odor that reasonably may be found objectionable as determined by an appropriate agency such as the Santa Clara County Health Department and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District beyond the boundary occupied by the enterprise generating the odor. All mechanical, venting, and/or exhausting equipment that generates odors shall be located away from residential properties.
- G. The use of conventional energy sources for space heating and cooling, water heating, and illumination shall be minimized by means of proper design and orientation, including provision and protection of solar exposure.
- H. These performance standards are general requirements and shall not be construed to prevent the council, boards or commission with review authority or staff from imposing, as part of project approval, specific conditions which may be more restrictive, in order to meet the intent of these regulations.

(Ord. No. 2017-436, § 1, 10-10-2017)

Editor's note(s)—See Editor's Note § 14.50.150.

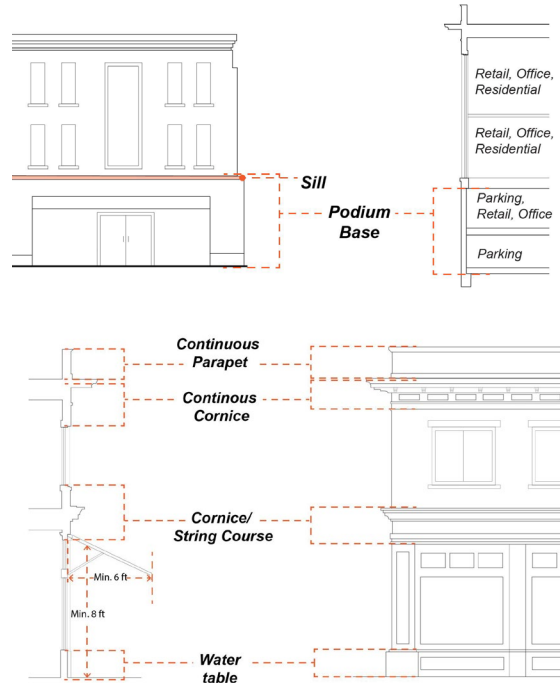
### 14.50.170 Design control (CT).

- A. Building Placement. A minimum seventy-five (75) percent of ground-floor building frontages facing El Camino Real must be built at the minimum setback line. This standard applies to the building frontage only (exclusive of side setbacks).
- B. Building Massing and Articulation.
  1. Upper-story Step-backs.
    - a. Front: Minimum ten (10) feet from ground floor façade for stories above forty-five (45) feet in height.
    - b. Street Side: Minimum ten (10) feet from ground floor façade for stories above forty-five (45) feet in height.
  2. Vertical Articulation.
    - a. When a building façade exceeds one hundred (100) feet in length along a right-of-way, it must be separated into primary façade bays no greater than fifty (50) feet and secondary façade bays defined by a recess a minimum three feet deep and ten (10) feet wide.
    - b. A minimum one entrance shall be provided per one hundred fifty (150) linear feet along El Camino Real and per primary façade bay along all other rights-of-way.
    - c. The eave/roof of a secondary façade bay shall be no higher than the corresponding elements of the primary façade bay.



3. Horizontal Articulation. New façades and façade modifications along a street or civic space shall be designed to visually express a base, middle, and top.
  - a. One or more of the following patterns shall be used to define the base:
    - i. Watertable: Base material extends from grade to between eight and fifty-four (54) inches above grade.
    - ii. Podium: The base material encompasses the lowest story (or stories) of the building, with or without mezzanine(s), and terminates in a sill, string course, or cornice at its upper bound (multi-story buildings only).
    - iii. Watertable and Cornice/String Course: A watertable using the base material is combined with a cornice or string course at the lowest story's upper bound, including any mezzanine (multi-story buildings only).

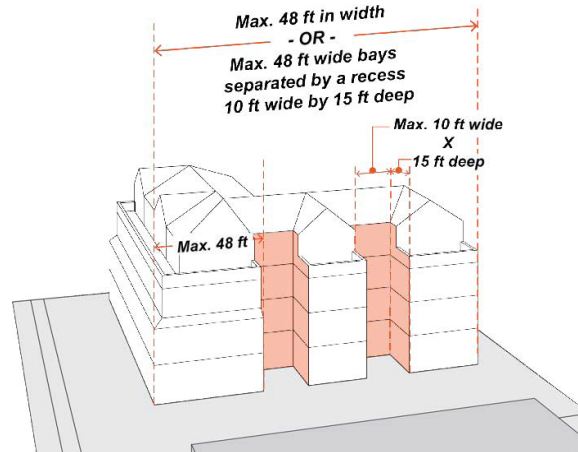
- b. The top of each building mass/bay shall be defined by elements spanning the full length of the façade of the mass/bay. Such elements may include a cornice, eave and/or gable(s), or other elements listed under Section 17.50.170.B.6. These elements shall be consistent with the overall architectural style of the building mass/bay.



4. Adjacencies.

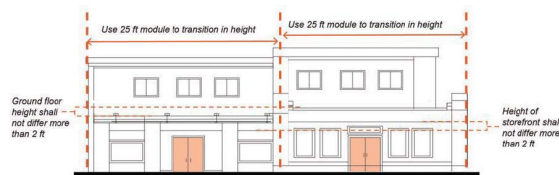
a. Façades Adjacent to an R-1 District.

- i. Building façade planes abutting an R-1 district may not exceed forty-eight (48) feet in width.
- ii. When a building façade abutting an R-1 district exceeds forty-eight (48) feet in width, it must be separated into façade bays no greater than forty-eight (48) feet by a recess ten (10) feet wide and fifteen (15) feet deep.
- iii. Balconies, roof decks and other habitable outdoor space are not allowed on upper-story façades abutting R-1 zones.
- iv. Sliding glass doors, French doors, and floor-to-ceiling windows are not allowed on upper-story façades abutting R-1 zones.



b. Storefront Façades Adjacent to Storefront Façades.

- i. The height of a storefront shall not differ from the height of any adjacent storefront by more than two feet.
- ii. The height of ground story shall not differ from height of any adjacent ground story by more than two feet.
- iii. Storefronts may transition in height using a module of twenty-five (25) feet in length along a right-of-way.

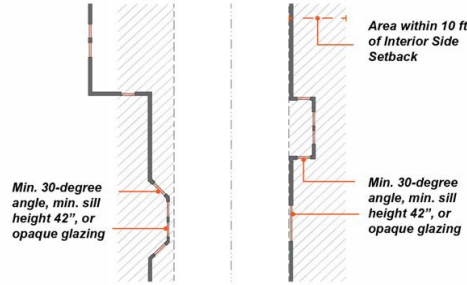


c. Compatibility with Adjacent Shorter Buildings with Height Difference of One Story or More. When adjacent to an existing shorter building with a height difference of one story or more, a proposed building must utilize two or more of the following strategies:

- i. Incorporate the uppermost floor into the roof form.
- ii. Break the mass of the building into smaller modules through changes in wall plane, setbacks, and/or height.
- iii. Match window heights and/or proportions.
- iv. Relate roof cornices and moldings at floor lines.

5. Privacy and Line of Sight.

- a. Primary living spaces and balconies located along a side setback shall orient principal windows and balconies toward the front and rear of the building.
- b. Where windows are within ten (10) feet of and oriented toward an interior side setback, glazing shall either be a minimum thirty (30) degree angle measured perpendicular to the adjacent side setback line, have minimum sill height of forty-two (42) inches, or be opaque.
- c. The maximum sill height for an ingress/egress window is forty-four (44) inches from finished floor.



6. Roofline and Roof Design.

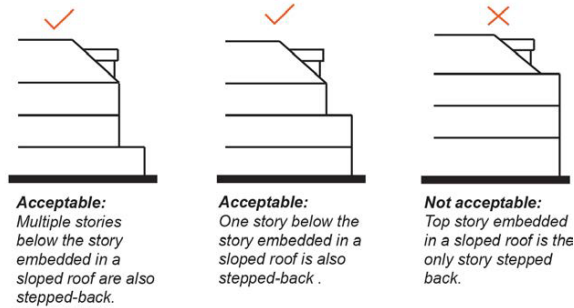
a. Roof designs shall be limited to:

- i. Hipped.
- ii. Gable.
- iii. Shed.
- iv. Dormer.
- v. Parapet.

(a) When used on the first or second floor, a parapet longer than twenty-five (25) feet in length must include at least one but not more than two of the following design elements to break up the length of the parapet:

- (1) Steps.
- (2) Curves.
- (3) Angled surfaces.

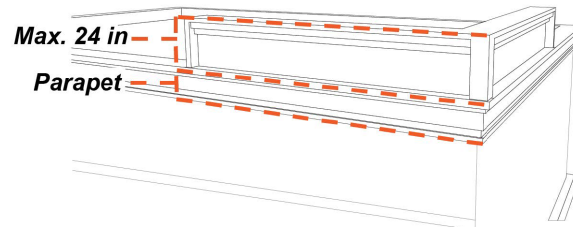
(b) The length of a parapet segment on the third floor and above may not exceed twenty-five (25) feet.



b. When the top story is stepped back and embedded in a sloped roof form, the floor below must (and other floors may) be stepped back to meet the slope of the top story.

c. Building façades facing an R-1 district must have a hipped or gable roof and may incorporate dormers.

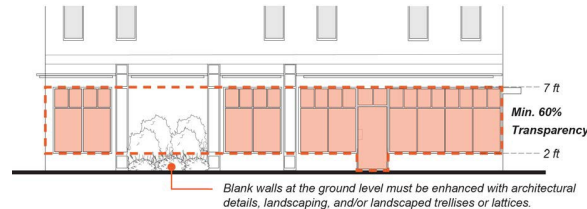
d. Roofline/parapet at corners shall not exceed roofline/parapet of adjacent wallplanes by more than twenty-four (24) inches.



### C. Building Design.

#### 1. Façade Design.

- a. Building façades shall be arranged in an orderly composition of bays, defined by vertically aligned openings alternating horizontally with solid walls or columns. The pattern shall be visually expressed through the spacing of openings, recesses, eaves, inset panels, cornices, overhangs, trellises, exposed rafters, columns, or bay windows.
  - b. The pattern may be shared between the ground floor and upper stories provided the ground floor exhibits enhanced detail or modulation.
  - c. Residential façades shall incorporate at least one element that signals habitation, such as bay windows, or balconies.
  - d. Non-glazed wall areas (blank walls) must be enhanced with architectural details, landscaping, and/or landscaped trellises or lattices.
2. Ground Level Transparency. A minimum sixty (60) percent of commercial ground floor street-facing façades between two and seven feet in height shall be transparent window surface. Opaque, reflective, or dark tinted glass is not allowed.

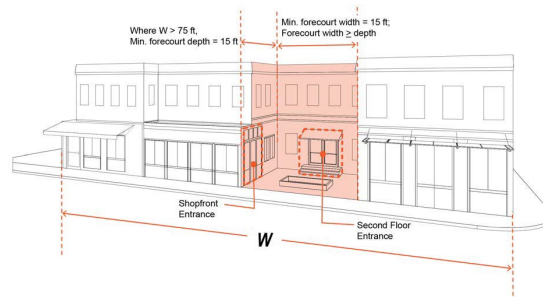


#### 3. Pedestrian-Scaled Entrances.

- a. Buildings more than seventy (70) feet in length along a right-of-way must incorporate at least one forecourt frontage on the right-of-way-facing façade. Required forecourts must also comply with the standards of Section 14.50.170.C.3.b.v. below.
- b. Each street-facing building façade must incorporate at one of the following entry features. See Section 14.66.275 (Entrance Type Standards) for design standards applicable to each entrance type listed.
  - i. Stoop.
  - ii. Shopfront.
    - (a) Shopfronts more than twenty-five (25) feet in width must incorporate variations in bulkhead, awnings, materials and/or color to visually articulate the shopfront into modules not to exceed twenty-five (25) continuous feet.
  - iii. Gallery.

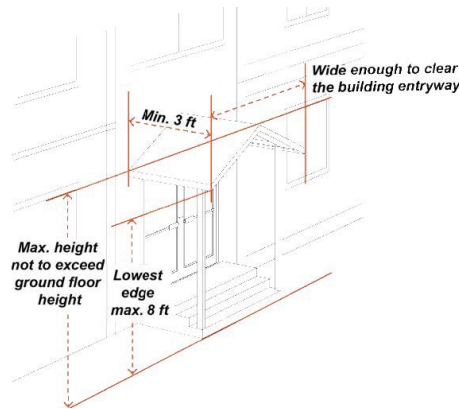


- iv. Arcade.
- v. Forecourt.
  - (a) Forecourts must feature at least one entry to a shop and/or second floor use.
  - (b) The size of the forecourt must be appropriate relative to the size of the building. The maximum ratio of building height to forecourt is 2:1 (height < 2 x width).
  - (c) Forecourt must be minimum fifteen (15) feet in width.
  - (d) Forecourt must be enclosed on at least three sides by buildings.
  - (e) Forecourt must remain open to the sky (arbors and trellises are allowed).



- vi. Terrace.
- c. Primary Entrance Location(s). Locate primary entrance on the front right-of-way.
- d. Individual Entries. Ground floor residential units facing a street must provide individual entries along the street frontage.
- e. Corner Entrances. Chamfered corners must incorporate a building entrance. Any required entrances may be provided on the corner of the building assuming one of the intersecting sides is a primary frontage.
- f. Street-facing Entries to Upper Floors. Street-facing entries to upper floors shall be equal in quality and detail to storefronts. This standard may be satisfied through two or more of the following:
  - i. Dedicated awning, canopy, or other roof element.
  - ii. Stairs with a single color applied to treads and a contrasting color or pattern applied to risers.
  - iii. Dedicated light fixture(s).
  - iv. Decorative street address numbers or tiles.
  - v. Plaque signs for upper-floor business tenants.
- g. Entry Protection. Primary street-facing entrances shall be protected by a recess in the building frontage at least three feet deep or by a projection extending outward at least three feet measured horizontally from the entrance, and wide enough to clear the building entryway on both sides.
  - i. Protection may be coterminous with an accent element.
  - ii. Protection may take the form of an extended eave, overhang, awning, door canopy, gallery, arcade frontage, or other element that provides shade and shelter from the elements.

- iii. The lowest edge of a projecting awning or door canopy shall have a vertical clearance of no more than eight feet.
- iv. Recessed entries shall differentiate pavement within the recess through the use of a dedicated paving material or pattern.

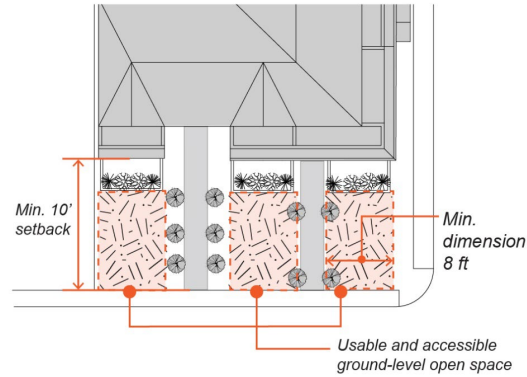


- h. Accent elements demarcating building frontage, entrance, and common open space areas shall not exceed the height of the ground floor story. Roof elements are excepted.
4. Ground Floor Floor-to-Ceiling Height.
- a. Minimum twenty-four (24) inches taller than typical upper floor floor-to-ceiling height where ground floor is non-residential.
  - b. Minimum twelve (12) inches taller than typical upper floor floor-to-ceiling where ground floor is residential.



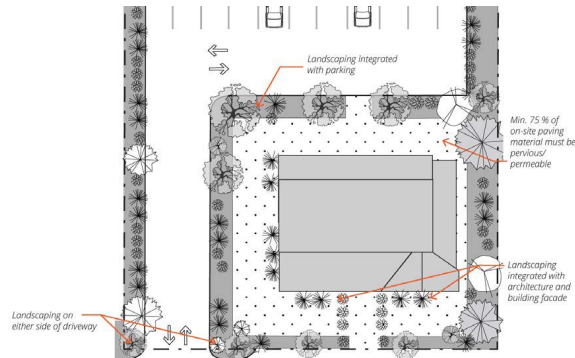
5. Interior Courtyard. Interior courtyards must be:
- a. Partially visible from the street and linked to the street by a clear accessible path of travel.
  - b. Enclosed on at least two sides by buildings.
  - c. Open to the sky (arbors and trellises are allowed).
  - d. A minimum width of twenty (20) feet and a minimum area of four hundred (400) square feet.
6. Paseos. Paseos must be:
- a. A minimum width of ten (10) feet for through-block paseos.
  - b. A minimum width of four feet for entries to courtyards or individual single businesses.
- D. Window Design. Vinyl windows are prohibited on façades visible from a right-of-way.
- E. Building Materials.
- 1. Primary shall mean fifty (50) percent or more of a façade surface area excluding transparent surfaces. Permitted primary cladding materials are limited to:

- 
- a. Stucco (minimum two-coat stucco; synthetic stucco or EIFS not allowed).
  - b. Siding (lap, vertical, panelized, or shingle).
    - i. All siding shall be wood, composite wood, or cement fiberboard.
    - ii. Wood siding shall be painted or stained.
    - iii. Vinyl and aluminum siding are not permitted.
  - c. Stone.
  - d. Brick.
  - e. Concrete (board-form only).
2. Secondary shall mean less than fifty (50) percent of a façade surface area excluding transparent surfaces. Permitted secondary cladding materials are limited to:
- a. Stucco (minimum two-coat stucco; synthetic stucco not allowed, EIFS not allowed).
  - b. Siding (lap, vertical, panelized, or shingle).
    - i. All siding shall be wood, composite wood, or cement fiberboard.
    - ii. Wood siding shall be painted or stained.
    - iii. Vinyl and aluminum siding are not permitted.
  - c. Stone (building base only).
  - d. Brick (building base only).
  - e. Tile.
  - f. Metal (matte finish or Cor-ten).
    - i. Ribbed metal, titanium, and mirrored finishes are not permitted.
  - g. Concrete Masonry Units (watertable and building base only, and not allowed on any façade facing a right-of-way or a single-family zone).
  - h. Concrete (building base only, board-form only, cast concrete not permitted).
3. On attached elements, such as bay windows, orioles, and balconies.
- F. Ground Level Open Space. Where any required front, rear, or side yard setback is ten (10) feet or greater, on-site ground-level open space shall be provided within the setback.
- 1. The ground level open space shall be usable and accessible.
  - 2. The minimum dimension for ground level open space shall be eight feet.



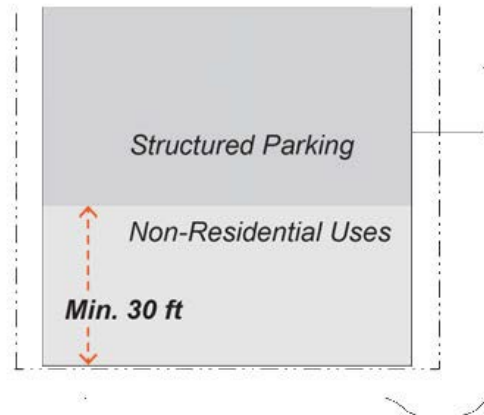
G. Landscaping and Paving.

1. Landscaping must be placed on each side of a driveway at grade or in raised planters.
2. Landscape elements shall be integrated with the building architecture, parking, and streetscape. Recommended patterns shall include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Planters for flowers and shrubs within street frontage.
  - b. Landscape buffers between parking spaces and building façades.
  - c. Landscaping within and/or on walls adjacent to courtyards, open spaces, and setbacks.
3. See Sections 14.66.180 (Maintenance of Landscaped Areas) and 14.70.070 (Landscaped Strips) for additional landscaping standards.

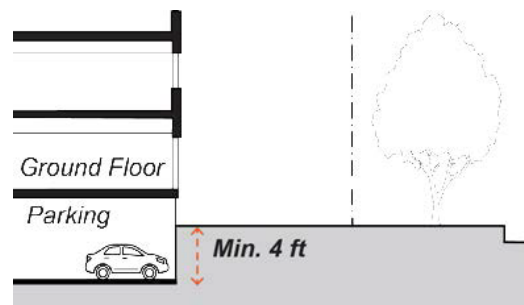


H. Parking Design and Access.

1. Where structured parking is provided, the parking area must be either:
  - a. "Lined" with ground-floor non-residential uses at least thirty (30) feet deep as measured from the front façade; or



- b. Designed such that the floor elevation is a minimum four vertical feet below the elevation of the adjacent sidewalk.



2. Visible structured parking must be screened from view from the right-of-way by at least one of the following features:
  - a. Regular punched openings designed to resemble windows of habitable spaces.
  - b. Trellis/living wall.
  - c. Custom textured or decorative screening.
3. Entrances to Parking Facilities.
  - a. A maximum of two curb cuts for one-way traffic and one curb cut for two-way traffic may be permitted per street frontage per lot.
  - b. Controlled entrances to parking facilities (gates, doors, etc.) shall be located a minimum ten (10) feet from the back of sidewalk.
  - c. Entrances to parking facilities along a street frontage shall be separated by a minimum of sixty (60) feet.
  - d. Where possible, curb cuts serving adjacent parking facilities shall be shared.
- I. Site Circulation and Access.
  1. New development on abutting lots shall be designed to allow cross-access for internal pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation systems.
  2. Bicycle racks shall be provided:
    - a. In or within fifty (50) feet of every parking area; and

b. Within twenty (20) feet of at least one building entrance.

J. Service Areas and Screening.

1. Service areas must be located at the rear of lot.
2. Service areas must be enclosed in enclosures that are architecturally consistent with primary building in terms of materials, colors, and style.

K. Additional Design Standards. See Section 14.66.280 for additional design standards applicable to all residential mixed-use development in the CT District.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 2017-436, § 1, 10-10-2017; Ord. No. 2021-478, § 1, 9-14-2021)

Editor's note(s)—See Editor's Note § 14.50.150.

### **14.50.180 Off-street loading for residential (CT).**

In order to accommodate the delivery or shipping of goods at a multiple-family residential project, on-site loading/unloading space shall be provided:

- A. There shall be at least one loading/unloading space provided, which shall have minimum dimensions of at least ten (10) feet by twenty-five (25) feet, with fourteen (14) feet of vertical clearance;
- B. Loading and unloading spaces shall be located and designed so that the vehicles intended to use them can maneuver safely and conveniently to and from a public right-of-way without interfering with the orderly movement of traffic and pedestrians on any public way and complete the loading and unloading operations without obstructing or interfering with any parking space or parking lot aisle;
- C. No area allocated to loading and unloading facilities may be used to satisfy the area requirements for off-street parking, nor shall any portion of any of off-street parking area be used to satisfy the area requirements for loading and unloading facilities;
- D. A loading/unloading space may be located in the front yard setback, but shall comply with other required setbacks;
- F. All loading spaces shall be designed and maintained so that vehicles do not back in from, or onto, a public street;
- G. Loading spaces shall be striped indicating the loading spaces and identifying the spaces for "loading only." The striping shall be permanently maintained by the property owner/tenant in a clear and visible manner at all times; and
- H. Adequate signage shall be provided that directs delivery vehicles to the loading space.

(Ord. No. 2017-436, § 1, 10-10-2017)

Editor's note(s)—See Editor's Note § 14.50.150.

### **14.50.190 Signs (CT).**

As provided in Chapter 14.68 of this code.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part); Ord. No. 2015-414, § 12, 9-8-2015; Ord. No. 2017-436, § 1, 10-10-2017)

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Editor's note(s)—See Editor's Note § 14.50.150.

**14.50.200 Fences (CT).**

As provided in Chapter 14.72 of this title.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 2017-436, § 1, 10-10-2017)

Editor's note(s)—See Editor's Note § 14.50.150.

**14.50.210 Nonconforming use regulations (CT).**

As provided in Chapter 14.66 of this title.

(Ord. 04-259 § 1 (part))

(Ord. No. 2017-436, § 1, 10-10-2017)

Editor's note(s)—See Editor's Note § 14.50.150.

Attn: City of Los Altos

I am writing to make a request regarding my property at 962 Acacia Ave. Just to remind you a bit about the property, it's a brand new building that we got our Certificate of Occupancy for on June 1, 2023.

The building includes two 2-story condominiums that take up the 2nd and 3rd floors and are each about 2000 square feet. On the first floor, we were told we needed to build a retail space, so that's what we did. It's a 600 sf commercial space facing Acacia Ave and has one designated parking space and one handicapped parking space.

The whole building became available to rent in June of last year, and we easily rented out the 2 residential units, but have gotten no inquiries on the commercial unit. We've listed it on loopnet, had several realtors try to rent it for us, and done personal door knocking and phone calling and haven't been able to get it rented. It's not in a place that gets any kind of foot traffic, it's hard to find, and doesn't have great parking, so we haven't gotten a single inquiry.

Because of this I have several concerns. First and most obviously, I don't think it's safe or good for the neighborhood to have an empty unit there. I think in general it's always better to have spaces filled, just to lower vandalism and crime in an area. I'm sure all the neighbors would agree that they'd rather not have that unit empty. Second, I'd rather not be the owner of a completely vacant unit, and based on my experience so far I'm not sure if I will be able to rent it.

So, as I think of my alternatives, since I haven't been able to rent it as a commercial space, I'm thinking we should convert the space to residential. Residential has proven to rent easily in that area. And the 3 points I listed above for why it's not a good commercial unit actually are great benefits for a residential unit. And, I know Los Altos is looking for more affordable options for people to rent in the community. Even at market rates, because this would be a smaller unit, this would be a space that would be much more affordable to rent for anyone who works and wants to live in Los Altos. So, I think this would really help. And to make it even more attractive, we do have a commercial storage space attached behind this unit, that we could add into the reconstruction so we could make the unit an 800 sf unit. It's going to cost us a bit to remodel this area, but I think it could be a really good thing for everyone involved.

To make this happen, we are willing to remap the property since the current condo plan shows a commercial use on the ground floor, if the City is willing to allow for a residential use.

Additionally, based on what I understand about the zoning of the area, I believe that in section 14.40.030 of the zoning code, we would need to do a zoning modification. This would be a private party request (which I am requesting now) to do a zone text amendment to allow for a residential unit on the ground floor of my building. One way to do this is to maybe do a site specific zone amendment for my building only because the Commercial unit is not realistic for commercial viability. That way you don't need to worry about changing the code for all CN zones and all the implications of that. Another option might be to just write into the code an option to convert to residential any commercial space in the CN zones that are less than 1000sf.



You know much more about this than I do, so I'm of course open to any ideas or suggestions you may have.

My question is, would you like to consider allowing us to do this remodel, and what would you need from us to make it work the best for the Los Altos community? Please let me know your thoughts.

Warmly,  
Moneeka



**City Council Agenda Report**

**Meeting Date:** January 28, 2025

**Prepared By:** Nick Zornes

**Approved By:** Gabe Engeland

**Subject: Private Zone Text Amendment Request**

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**COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA**

- Business Communities
- Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing
- Neighborhood Safety Infrastructure
- General Government

**RECOMMENDATION**

Authorize or Reject Private Zone Text Amendment Request

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Not Applicable.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This action involves only feasibility or planning study for possible future action and as such is statutorily exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15262 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION**

Not Applicable.

**BACKGROUND**

Pursuant to Section 14.01.080(B) of the Los Altos Municipal Code, Amendments to Land Use Documents are allowed of any person who can demonstrate ownership interest in real property located within the City of Los Altos. An interested party shall make their request in writing to the Zoning Administrator. The written request shall be reviewed by the Zoning Administrator and analyzed for initial potential impacts associated with the request. Once reviewed, the Zoning Administrator will present the amendment request to the City Council for authorization or denial to submit a formal application for further consideration.

**ANALYSIS**

The Zone Text Amendment Request was received in late 2024 by one of the owners of 962 Acacia Ave, Los Altos, CA, 94022. The request would necessitate modification to Section 14.40.030 of

the Los Altos Municipal Code which contains provisions for Permitted Uses in the Commercial Neighborhood (CN) District.

**Section 14.40.030 – Permitted uses (CN).**

The following uses shall be permitted in the CN District:

- A. Office-administrative services located above the ground floor;
- B. Office-administrative services uses located on the ground floor on Sherwood Avenue within the Sherwood Gateway specific plan area, and in existing commercial buildings constructed before February 22, 2013, on Grant Road between Newcastle Drive and Farndon Avenue within the Woodland Plaza area, provided that any site with over five thousand (5,000) square feet of existing retail or restaurant space on the ground floor shall retain an equal or greater amount of its existing retail and/or restaurant space on the ground floor;
- C. Parking spaces and loading areas;
- D. Recycling facilities: (i) small collection facilities, and (ii) reverse vending machines, as provided for in Chapter 14.68 of this title;
- E. Restaurants, excluding drive-through services;
- F. Retail and personal service establishments;
- G. Medical and dental offices that are less than five thousand (5,000) gross square feet;
- H. Mixed use development(s) which shall consist of residential uses and a minimum floor area ratio of twenty (20) percent nonresidential uses or a maximum thirty-three (33) percent nonresidential uses; and
- I. Uses which are determined by the zoning administrator to be of the same general character.

The above-listed Permitted Uses of the Commercial Neighborhood (CN) District does not provide allowance for a 100% residential housing development as an allowed use. Based on the private zone text amendment requested this would effectively change the permitted uses within the district which would necessitate modification of the adopted chapter contained within the Zoning Code.

**DISCUSSION**

The existing Zoning regulations applicable to the Commercial Neighborhood (CN) District were last modified in late 2023 as part of the Housing Element implementation process. At that time the City Council did not include the allowance for a 100% residential housing development instead allowing mixed use development(s) to consist of residential uses and a minimum floor area ratio of twenty (20) percent nonresidential uses in the Commercial Neighborhood (CN) District. The adopted provision would not allow the desired conversion of existing nonresidential square footage at 962 Acacia Avenue to residential square footage.

The legal mechanism to allow for such a modification of allowed uses in the Commercial Neighborhood (CN) would be initiation of a Zone Text Amendment which applies to all parcels located within the zoning district. The specific modification(s) to Chapter 14.40 of the Los Altos Municipal Code and any other conflicting land use documents would be determined through the formal review process if authorized by the City Council.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Letter of Request Received



February 26, 2025

Re: February 27, 2025, Study Session, Agenda Item #1  
(Rezoning Options of Sherwood Triangle Area)


Dear Chair Beninato and Members of the Planning Commission:

The League of Women Voters (LWV) supports policies that encourage the development of housing, including rezoning commercial to residential or mixed use.

The League supports the staff recommendation to rezone the Sherwood Triangle to Commercial Thoroughfare (CT) from Commercial Neighborhood (CN). That change would allow mixed use or all residential development of those parcels. This rezoning should encourage construction of housing, which would help Los Altos meet its Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) goals.

Please send any questions about this email to Sue Russell, Co-Chair of the Housing Committee, at [housing@lwvlamv.org](mailto:housing@lwvlamv.org).

Sincerely,



Katie Zoglin, President  
Los Altos-Mountain View Area LWV

C: Gabe Engeland, City Manager  
Nick Zornes, Assistant City Manager  
Jon Maginot, Assistant City Manager  
Melissa Thurman, City Clerk  
[PC PublicComment@losaltosca.gov](mailto:PC PublicComment@losaltosca.gov)