



SPECIAL JOINT COMMISSION MEETING: PLANNING, COMPLETE STREETS, AND FINANCIAL COMMISSIONS MEETING AGENDA

**April 22, 2026 - 6:00 PM
Community Meeting Chambers,
Los Altos City Hall
1 North San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA**

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 generalplanupdate@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/46wsdr9r>

Telephone: 1-669-900-9128 / Webinar ID: 941 0422 4178 / Passcode: 209326

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 generalplanupdate@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 packet.

AGENDA

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. Please complete a "Request to Speak" form and submit it to the Staff Liaison. Speakers are generally given two or three minutes, at the discretion of the Chair. Please be advised that, by law, the 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 noticed on the agenda before any discussion or action.

DISCUSSION

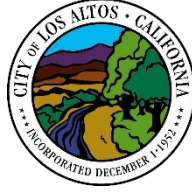
1. **Study Session – Comprehensive General Plan Update – Community Visioning and Guiding Principles**

Discuss the community vision and guiding principles associated with Phase 1 of the Los Altos Comprehensive General Plan Update.

ADJOURNMENT

SPECIAL NOTICES TO THE 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.



CITY OF LOS ALTOS
PLANNING, COMPLETE STREETS AND FINANCIAL COMMISSIONS
STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date April 22, 2026

Subject Comprehensive General Plan Update - Community Visioning and Guiding Principles

Prepared by: Brittany Whitehill, Senior Planner

Background

General Plan Overview

The Los Altos General Plan is the City’s primary long range planning document and serves as a comprehensive blueprint for future development, preservation, and public investment. It reflects a shared community vision for what residents and businesses want Los Altos to be and guides decisions related to land use, housing, mobility, environmental resources, community design, and public services. State law requires every California city and county to adopt a general plan addressing eight mandated elements, and the City’s Zoning Code must remain consistent with it. The General Plan applies citywide to both public and private property and provides the framework for decision making by Commissions and the City Council. As the City’s policy “constitution” for land use and related public services, it establishes long-term goals and policies; designates the general distribution, location, and intensity of land uses; and provides a basis for coordinating investments in infrastructure and public facilities.

The General Plan is used to evaluate development proposals and land use actions for consistency; inform the City’s annual budget and capital improvement programming by identifying needed facilities and priorities; and align related plans and implementation tools, including zoning, open space, transportation and circulation, and other functional and infrastructure plans, with adopted community goals. The City’s Sphere of Influence identifies areas outside City limits that may be considered for future annexation, and these areas are also subject to the General Plan.

The General Plan is intended to provide a “10,000-foot” policy framework rather than to design, approve, or fund specific projects. While the General Plan informs City decision making and provides the basis for evaluating future development proposals for consistency, it does not by itself authorize individual development projects, dictate specific project designs, or commit the City to

construct particular capital improvements. Instead, the General Plan establishes long-term goals, policies, and general land use and circulation direction that are carried forward through implementing tools and more detailed plans, such as zoning and development standards, specific plans and master plans, design guidelines, functional plans (e.g., transportation and infrastructure), and the City's annual budgeting and Capital Improvement and Major Maintenance Program.

The current General Plan was adopted in 2002 with a planning horizon through 2020. Although the Housing and Safety Elements have been updated to comply with state law, the plan has not been comprehensively revised in more than two decades and no longer reflects current conditions, emerging technologies, demographic shifts, or evolving community priorities. The City has therefore initiated a comprehensive update to establish a renewed vision and policy framework to guide growth, investment, and decision making for the coming decades.

Project Initiation and Team

The Comprehensive General Plan Update is included in the City's Capital Improvement and Major Maintenance Program, the Development Services Department budget, and the Planning Commission's 2026 Work Plan.

The project is led by the Planning Division, with support from subject-matter experts across City departments and coordination with partner agencies such as Santa Clara County Fire, Cal Water, and Valley Water.

The City has retained Dyett & Bhatia, an experienced California planning firm, to prepare the General Plan Update and the associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR) required under the California Environmental Quality Act. The consultant team includes specialists in community outreach and engagement, land use, economics, transportation, historic resources, utilities, and noise.

Project Timeline

The project began in January 2026 and is anticipated to conclude in late 2027. The update includes four major phases:

Phase 1 – Issues, Opportunities and Visioning: Identification of key issues and opportunities, culminating in a Vision Statement and Guiding Principles that articulate shared community values and aspirations based on community engagement.

Phase 2 – Alternatives Exploration: Development and evaluation of land use and circulation alternatives, and selection of a preferred land use plan and key strategies informed by community engagement and the Vision and Guiding Principles established in Phase I.

Phase 3 – Draft Plan Preparation: Preparation of the draft General Plan based on the preferred strategy, along with the EIR analyzing potential environmental impacts and mitigation strategies.

Phase 4 – Adoption and Finalization: Public review of draft documents and formal hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council leading to adoption of the updated General Plan.



Figure 1: Tentative Project Timeline

Community Engagement

Community engagement is central to all phases of the General Plan Update and is a primary focus of Phase 1, particularly in developing the Vision and Guiding Principles. This early work sets the tone for the entire plan by identifying key themes and priorities and describing a shared vision for what Los Altos should be in 2050. The Vision and Guiding Principles are intentionally broad and aspirational, forming the foundation for the more detailed goals and policies that will follow.

The engagement strategy is designed to be inclusive, accessible, and welcoming, with an emphasis on helping residents feel comfortable, informed, and able to share their perspectives. Staff is making a concerted effort to reach community members who are not typically engaged in planning processes and to reduce barriers that can make participation feel intimidating or burdensome. Outreach methods are intentionally varied and include digital engagement, mailed materials, stakeholder interviews, school and community partnerships, and in-person events in familiar community settings. Outreach conducted to date to inform the Vision and Guiding Principles includes the following initiatives:

- Communitywide online survey on preferences and priorities offered in English, Spanish, Traditional Chinese, and Simplified Chinese
- Outreach to schools and faith-based organizations, including collaboration with students from Los Altos High School
- Stakeholder meetings with nonprofit organizations, developers, and downtown business representatives
- Four community pop-up events: Adult 50+ Luncheon (February), Valentine's Choco Super Stroll (February), Family Dance Party at Woodland Branch Library (March), Spring Egg Hunt (April)
- Community open house at the Grant Park Community Center (April)
- Two citywide mailings to provide information on the General Plan Update and highlight opportunities for engagement

Input from these efforts is being documented and synthesized to identify key themes that will inform the draft Vision and Guiding Principles. Engagement will continue throughout the project and be refined in response to community needs.

Discussion

Because the General Plan is a broad citywide policy document that spans all areas of municipal operations, staff is seeking input from multiple commissions to ensure the Vision and Guiding Principles reflect a wide range of perspectives. While the Planning Commission will serve as the formal recommending body, early feedback from all commissions is important to shaping a comprehensive and community informed plan. This study session provides an opportunity for commissions to provide input on the Community Vision and Guiding Principles. Commission feedback will complement Phase 1 outreach and help ensure the draft Vision and Guiding Principles reflect diverse community priorities. Two study sessions are scheduled to engage all City commissions:

- **Wednesday, April 22:** Planning Commission, Complete Streets Commission and Financial Commission
- **Monday, April 27:** Parks, Arts, Recreation, and Cultural (PARC) Commission, Library Commission, Senior Commission, Environmental Commission, and Historical Commission

Each study session will follow a consistent format, beginning with a presentation on the General Plan, the update process, and the role of Vision and Guiding Principles. Commissions will then provide input in the order listed on the agenda. Each commission will have approximately 30 minutes for discussion, facilitated by the Chair. Meetings will comply with Brown Act requirements and include time for public comment. Commission input is advisory and will be considered alongside broader community feedback.

Commissioners are invited to provide input on the following topics:

1. What defining features and characteristics of Los Altos should the General Plan seek to preserve and enhance?
2. What key challenges should the City plan for in the coming years?
3. What assets or opportunities should the City leverage for the benefit of the community?
4. What is your vision for Los Altos in the future?
5. What programs or projects could help advance that vision?

Commissioners are encouraged to review these topics in advance and consider them in relation to the specific focus and responsibilities of their commission.

Next Steps

Following the study sessions, staff and the consultant team will prepare a draft Vision and Guiding Principles that reflect existing conditions, community outreach findings, and commission input. The draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles will be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council in early summer.

PUBLIC COMMENT ITEM #1 APRIL 22, 2026

Regarding the "Communitywide online survey on preferences and priorities"

Council Members and Commissioners:

The contract with Diyett and Bhatia for the General Plan Update includes \$300,000 for public engagement. Page 31 describes online surveys saying, "We will draft content and revise it based on staff feedback prior to launching activities."

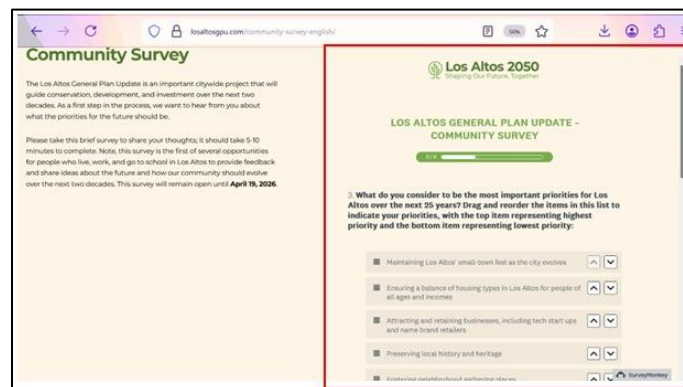
I don't know who drafted this survey or who provided feedback, but I don't think there was any beta testing where "a near-finished product is released to a select group of **external, real-world users** (not internal developers) to identify bugs, evaluate usability, and provide feedback before the official launch."

According to the consultant, "Our goal was to keep the survey accessible and straightforward so that it would not feel overly time-consuming or complex."

When I took the survey it did not meet that goal in either respect.

1. Was it accessible?

The survey seems to have been designed for phones, which I assume is why it's squeezed into half the horizontal screen space and looks like a mobile phone screen on my laptop and tablet:



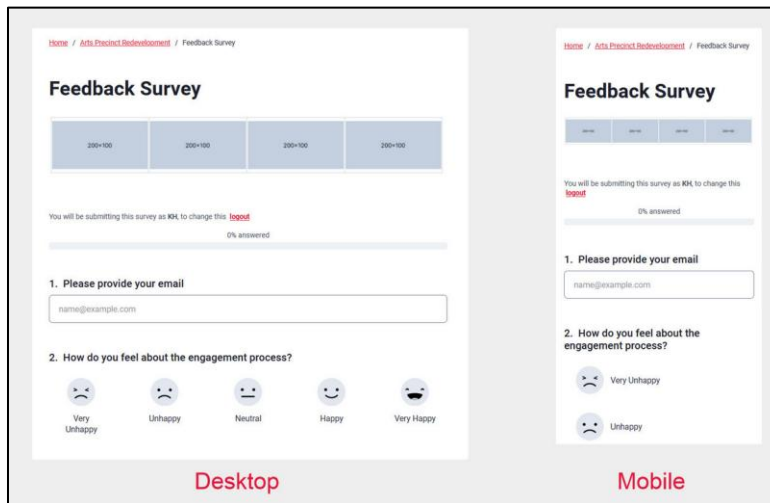
I took the survey on a laptop and a tablet. A marketing professional friend took it on an iPhone. Our experiences were the same:

- Too much scrolling – jumping back and forth from top to bottom – is required to view all the choices.
- You cannot reasonably rank a list of 15 items without being able to see all 15 at once.

Core principles for cross-device surveys include:

- Avoid excessive scrolling.
- Use tools that automatically adjust layouts based on the device with preview mode to test them.
- Test on desktop, tablets, smartphones to ensure functionality.

Many survey programs (including Survey Monkey) can create "responsive surveys" that automatically detect the user's device (desktop, tablet, or smartphone) and adjust the layout for best viewing experience, for example:



Why didn't our consultant take advantage of that capability?

2. Was it straightforward? Certainly not Question 3 with 15 items to rank.

According to Survey Monkey guidelines: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/rating-vs-ranking/>

"Ranking questions can get difficult in a hurry. Once you get past three choices in a ranking question, it gets downright sloppy and confusing—and psychological research has proven that it's a very tough thing for people to rank more than three options."

"The problem: When you give people a cognitively difficult task like ranking question choices of say, six things, often they will end up getting frustrated and will start to rank choices randomly. This will lead to higher dropout rates from your surveys and even worse, messy data for you to analyze from those who do manage to power through and finish."

Most important question: Will the survey provide meaningful results?

None of the questions REQUIRES an answer!

What's the point of a survey if I'm not required to provide any answers?

What assumption would be made on Question 3 for example, if a respondent did not do any ranking? Would the default list be considered a response?

Would you make a business decision or an investment on the results of this survey?

Probably not. So why give any credence to it for a project as important as the General Plan?

The city pays a lot to consultants, trusting their expertise. This survey indicates more accountability and less trust is required.

Respectfully,

Pat Marriott

From: [Maria Bautista](#)
To: [Public Comment - PC](#); [Public Comment - FC](#); CSPublicComment@losaltosca.go; [General Plan Update](#)
Subject: Joint Commissions Meeting April 22 General Plan Update
Date: Wednesday, April 22, 2026 3:50:10 PM

Dear Commissioners,

Why is the General Plan not part of your annual Work Plan?

Why have each of your commissions not met first as a commission for an introduction to and discussion about the General Plan at a regular commission meeting that allows for sufficient opportunity for public comment and for commission consensus?

As individuals, your opinions are very valuable, but you are seated tonight as a commission and your commission voice serves a different purpose.

The General Plan is the “constitution” of Los Altos. Statements that speak to *Community Vision and Guiding Principles* will set the course for the General Plan update that will impact the City for the next 20 years. Phase 1 of the update is not a trivial step and should be handled with the time and attention it deserves.

Please place the *General Plan Phase 1 Community Vision and Guiding Principles* on the agenda of your next regularly scheduled meeting as well.

Thank you for serving the Los Altos community.

Best,

Maria Bautista