

---

**PROGRAM L-50:**

*Undertake a comprehensive review of residential and commercial zoning requirements to identify additional architectural standards that should be incorporated to implement Policy L-49.*

---

**PROGRAM L-51:**

*Use illustrations and form code methods for simplifying the Zoning Ordinance and to promote well-designed buildings.*

---

**PROGRAM L-52:**

*Discourage the use of fences that obscure the view of houses.*

Tall fences along the street make the street both less appealing and less safe. Even the houses and yards behind tall fences are thought by law enforcement officers to be less safe when closed off from view. Being able to see private homes and gardens as you pass down the street conveys a sense that people are nearby and shows the special character of the neighborhood. While tall hedges can sometimes have the same undesirable effects as walls, they usually are more attractive and, in some areas, are an important component of neighborhood character. Both hedges and walls should be used in a way that permits views of the house from the street.

---

**POLICY L-50:**

**Encourage high quality signage that is attractive, appropriate for the location and balances visibility needs with aesthetic needs.**

---

**PROGRAM L-53:**

*Promote awards programs and other forms of public recognition for projects of architectural merit that contribute positively to the community.*

## Historic Character

### **GOAL L-7: Conservation and Preservation of Palo Alto's Historic Buildings, Sites, and Districts.**

Palo Alto has a rich stock of historic buildings, some predating the City's establishment in 1894. The City's Historic Inventory identifies approximately 400 buildings of historical merit. There are 12 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. There are also two National Register historic districts in the City: the Ramona Street District and the Professorville District. The "El Palo Alto" redwood tree, believed to be the site of a 1776 encampment of the Portola Expedition, is one of 19 sites in town that are registered California Points of Historical Interest. Seven sites or structures are listed on the California Register of Historic Landmarks, including the garage at 367 Addison that was the birthplace of Hewlett-Packard. The length of El Camino Real from San Francisco to San Diego, including the section that passes through Palo Alto, is a State Historic Landmark.

---

**POLICY L-51:**

**Encourage public and private upkeep and preservation of resources that have historic merit, including residences listed in the Historic Inventory.**

---

**PROGRAM L-54:**

*Review and update the City's Inventory of historic resources including City-owned structures.*

---

See also Policy L-14 on the relationships of buildings to the street

---

---

See also Program B-9 about revising the sign ordinance

---

---

See Map L-7 for the location of historic districts, buildings of historic merit, and other historic resources

---

**Buildings on the National Register of Historic Places**

- Downing House  
706 Cowper St.
- Dunkir House  
420 Maple St.
- Fraternal Hall  
140 University Ave.
- Kee House  
2310 Yale Ave.
- Norris House  
1247 Cowper St.
- Pedro de Lemos House  
100-110 Waverley Oaks
- Pettigrew House  
1336 Cowper St.
- Post Office  
300 Hamilton St.
- Southern Pacific Depot  
95 University Ave.
- Squire House  
900 University Ave.
- YWCA Hostess House  
25 University Ave.
- Wilson House  
860 University Ave.

A subdivision exception was granted in 1996 to preserve the gateway and attached wall, entry to the Pedro de Lemos Hacienda.

**PROGRAM L-55:**

*Reassess the Historic Preservation Ordinance to ensure its effectiveness in the maintenance and preservation of historic resources, particularly in the University Avenue/Downtown area.*

**PROGRAM L-56:**

*Maintain and strengthen the design review procedure for exterior remodeling or demolition of historic resources. Discourage demolition of historic resources and severely restrict demolition of Landmark resources.*

**PROGRAM L-57:**

*Encourage salvage of discarded historic building materials.*

**PROGRAM L-58:**

*For proposed exterior alterations or additions to designated Historic Landmarks, require design review findings that the proposed changes are in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.*



Photo courtesy of Sandy Eakins

**POLICY L-52:**

**Encourage the preservation of significant historic resources owned by the City of Palo Alto. Allow such resources to be altered to meet contemporary needs, provided that the preservations standards adopted by the City Council are satisfied.**

**POLICY L-53:**

**Actively seek state and federal funding for the preservation of buildings of historical merit and consider public/private partnerships for capital and program improvements.**

**POLICY L-54:**

**Support the goals and objectives of the Statewide Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan for California.**



**POLICY L-55:**

**Relocation may be considered as a preservation strategy when consistent with State and National Standards regarding the relocation of historic resources.**

**POLICY L-56:**

**To reinforce the scale and character of University Avenue/Downtown, promote the preservation of significant historic buildings.**

Older buildings may be at a disadvantage because of the expense and specialized skills needed to adapt them for contemporary use. This is particularly true where seismic strengthening is needed or where the site cannot accommodate current parking requirements. In some cases, the use for which the building was designed is not even allowed by current zoning. The following programs are intended to help overcome these obstacles and enable older buildings to be more competitive with new development.

See also Policies B-19 and B-20 and Programs N-64 and N-65



Photo courtesy of Sandy Eakins



An exemption from on-site parking requirements helped preserve the historic Byxbee House (left) and the early 20th Century garden at the Dr. Thomas M. and Dora Moody Williams Park (above).

**PROGRAM L-59:**

**Allow parking exceptions for historic buildings to encourage rehabilitation. Require design review findings that the historic integrity of the building exterior will be maintained.**

**PROGRAM L-60:**

**Continue to use a TDR Ordinance to allow the transfer of development rights from designated buildings of historic significance in the Commercial Downtown (CD) zone to non-historic receiver sites in the CD zone. Planned Community (PC) zone properties in the Downtown also qualify for this program.**

**POLICY L-57:**

**Develop incentives for the retention and rehabilitation of buildings with historic merit in all zones.**

---

**PROGRAM L-61:**

*Allow nonconforming uses for the life of historic buildings.*

---

**PROGRAM L-62:**

*Promote awards programs and other forms of public recognition for exemplary Historic Preservation projects.*

---

**PROGRAM L-63:**

*Streamline, to the maximum extent feasible, any future processes for design review of historic structures to eliminate unnecessary delay and uncertainty for the applicant and to encourage historic preservation.*

---

**PROGRAM L-64:**

*Encourage and assist owners of historically significant buildings in finding ways to adapt and restore these buildings, including participation in state and federal tax relief programs.*

---

**POLICY L-58:**

**Promote adaptive reuse of old buildings.**

Part of what makes Palo Alto's business districts and neighborhoods so interesting is the juxtaposition of buildings from different eras. This richness of character can be preserved by "adaptively reusing" or updating older buildings instead of tearing them down and replacing them. Even when the buildings are not historic, their reuse can help maintain the scale and visual interest of the City or a business district.

---

**POLICY L-59:**

**Follow the procedures established in the State Public Resources Code for the protection of designated historic buildings damaged by earthquake or other natural disaster.**

The State Public Resources Code establishes a procedure for determining whether structures listed on National, State, or local public registers of historic places that are damaged in an earthquake or other natural disaster may be demolished or significantly altered. The Code prohibits demolition unless the structures present an imminent threat of bodily harm to the public or damage to adjacent property, or unless the State Office of Historic Preservation determines that the structures may be demolished. The State Code provides that local governments may request a determination about demolition from the State Office of Historic Preservation, which then reviews the buildings with the participation of a team of three local residents. After this team has conducted their review of the buildings, the State Historic Preservation Office may approve demolition of the buildings.

---

**PROGRAM L-65:**

*Seek additional innovative ways to apply current codes and ordinances to older buildings. Use the State Historical Building Code for designated historic buildings.*

The Uniform Building Code, adopted by the City Council, allows flexibility in the way that code requirements for repairs, alterations, and additions are applied to designated historic buildings. Since 1985, the State Historical Building Code has been mandatory for all agencies and jurisdictions in California with designated historic buildings.

---

See also State Health and Safety Code Section 18950 and 18951

---

---

The State Historical Building Code is found in Part 2.7 of the California Health and Safety Code

---



**PROGRAM L-66:**

*Revise existing zoning and permit regulations as needed to minimize constraints to adaptive reuse, particularly in retail areas.*

**POLICY L-60:**

**Protect Palo Alto’s archaeological resources.**

The Palo Alto area is known to have been inhabited by indigenous people for many centuries prior to the arrival of the first Europeans. Discoveries of the “Stanford Man” skeletons near San Francisquito Creek at Stanford indicate human presence as early as 7,600 years ago. Over 50 archaeological surveys have been conducted in Palo Alto in association with specific projects but no systematic citywide survey aimed at locating all sites has been undertaken. There may still be undiscovered archaeological resources in many parts of the City. Such resources are most likely to occur near the original locations of streams and springs and northeast of El Camino Real near old tidelands.

**PROGRAM L-67:**

*Using the archaeological sensitivity map in the Comprehensive Plan as a guide, continue to assess the need for archaeological surveys and mitigation plans on a project by project basis, consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.*

See Map L-8 for known areas of archaeological sensitivity

**Civic Uses**

**GOAL L-8: Attractive and Safe Civic and Cultural Facilities Provided in All Neighborhoods and Maintained and Used in Ways that Foster and Enrich Public Life.**

Palo Alto has a variety of schools, cultural, and civic facilities located throughout the community. These facilities can take on a more multifaceted role, serving as a center for public life in neighborhoods that do not have a commercial center close by. This role can be encouraged by physical changes that create informal gathering places, bicycle and pedestrian access, lighting for night time use, and in some cases, small-scale retail services such as cafes.

On Saturday mornings a civic facility is transformed into a public gathering place when people come to the colorful Farmer’s Market held in this public parking lot.

