

8 OPEN SPACE, PARKS, AND RECREATION ELEMENT

A. Introduction

The Open Space, Parks, and Recreation Element guides the long-range preservation and conservation of open space as well as the park and recreational facilities. These areas and facilities enhance the character of the Town, helping to create a unique and pleasant atmosphere for Town residents and visitors. This Element also addresses prehistoric and Native American resources indigenous to Los Gatos. Most of the information in this Element regarding open space, parks, and recreational facilities is based on the Los Gatos Open Space Inventory, conducted in 2008. The Open Space Element is divided into the following sections:

- ◆ **Government Code Open Space Classifications:** A description of how this General Plan addresses the six types of open space dictated by California Government Code.
- ◆ **Open Space and Preserves:** A description of the open space areas and preserves in Los Gatos.
- ◆ **Existing Parks and Recreational Facilities:** A description of parks and recreational facilities in Los Gatos.
- ◆ **Prehistoric and Native American Resources:** A description of prehistory and Native American peoples that have lived in the Los Gatos.
- ◆ **Goals, Policies, and Actions:** A list of goal, policy, and action statements intended to preserve and conserve open space, parks, and recreation in Los Gatos.

B. Government Code Open Space Classifications

The Government Code requires that General Plans identify and address six types of open space. This Element addresses open space for outdoor recreation, and open space for the protection of Native American sacred sites, while other elements in this General Plan cover the other four types of open space. Table OSP-1 lists the six open space types, and describes where each type is addressed in this General Plan.

TABLE OSP-1 GOVERNMENT CODE OPEN SPACE CLASSIFICATIONS

Category	Addressed In:
Open Space for the Preservation of Natural Resources	
◆ Plant and animal habitat areas	◆ Env & Sus, Section B (page ENV-2)
◆ Rivers, streams, lakes, and their banks	◆ Env & Sus, Section B (page ENV-2)
◆ Watershed lands	◆ Env & Sus, Section C (page ENV-14)
◆ Areas required for ecological and other scientific study purposes	◆ Env & Sus, Section B (page ENV-2)
Open Space Used for the Managed Production of Resources	
◆ Agricultural lands and rangelands	◆ Land Use, Section D (page LU-8)
◆ Forest and timberlands	◆ Not applicable to Los Gatos
◆ Mineral resource production areas	◆ Not applicable to Los Gatos
Open Space for Outdoor Recreation and Scenic Resources	
◆ Areas of outstanding historic or cultural value	◆ Community Design, Section G (page CD-13)
◆ Parks and other areas used for recreation	◆ Open Space, Section D (page OSP-5)
◆ Areas of outstanding scenic value	◆ Community Design, Section I (page CD-24)
◆ Scenic corridors, trails, and links between different open space areas	◆ Open Space, Section C (page OSP-3)
Open Space for Public Health and Safety	
◆ Areas requiring special management or regulation because of risks presented by natural hazards such as steep slopes or flooding	◆ Safety, Section B-D (page SAF-1 through SAF-13)
Open Space in Support of the Mission of Military Installations	
◆ Areas associated with military bases	◆ Not applicable to Los Gatos
Open Space for the Protection of Native American Sacred Sites	
◆ Local tribal lands	◆ Open Space, Section E (page OSP-8)
◆ Any Native American cultural sites	◆ Open Space, Section E (page OSP-8)

Notes: “Env & Sus” refers to the Environment and Sustainability Element.

C. Open Space and Preserves

Open space areas and preserves within Los Gatos protect the area's natural beauty and contribute to a regional system of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. As shown in Figure OSP-1, the Town of Los Gatos contains a total of four open space areas, all of which are publicly-owned and operated and total approximately 1,160 acres of wildlife and plant habitat. Two of the open space areas — Santa Rosa Open Space and Heinz Open Space — are located on Town-owned land and are maintained by the Parks and Public Works Department (PPW), while the other two — St. Joseph's Hill Open Space Preserve and the Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve — are owned and operated by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD). The MROSD is a special regional district that was created in the 1970s to acquire and preserve open space lands and provide and maintain access for public enjoyment. All of the open space areas offer abundant natural beauty and are available to the entire community for low-intensity recreation and environmental education.

1. Acquisition of Open Space Areas

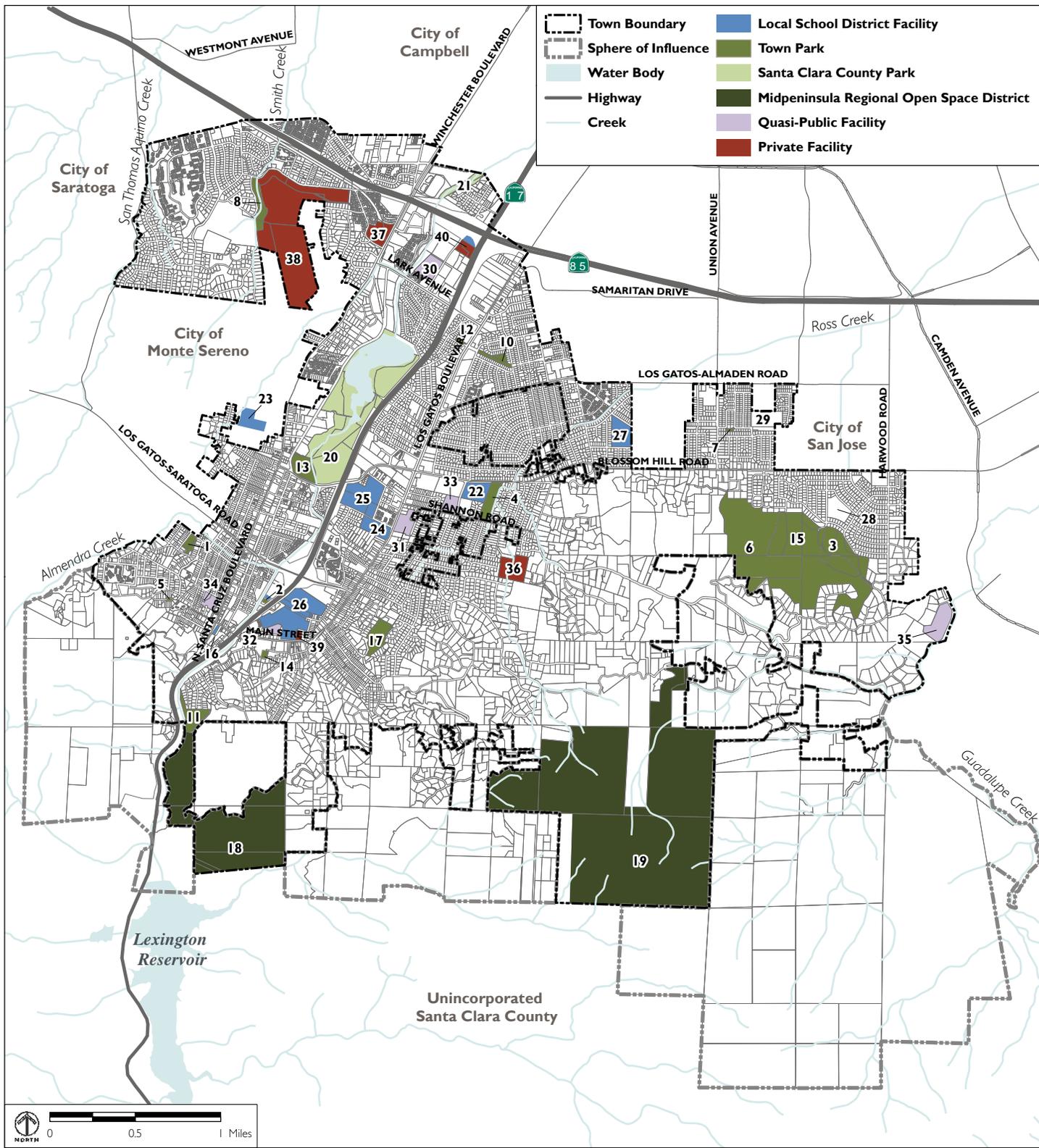
To enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors the Town of Los Gatos actively participates in the acquisition of properties as open space. Whether acting individually or in collaboration with other agencies, non-profits, or private land owners, the Town seeks to acquire open space areas that contribute to the protection of the environment and the safety of residents.

2. Access to Open Space Areas

The Town recognizes that open space areas, particularly regional open space areas, need to be easily accessible to all residents and visitors. To that end, the Town encourages development of appropriate staging areas and trail heads for equestrians, hikers, and bicyclists. Additionally, the Town understands and works to ensure that access is available for physically disabled persons.

3. Open Space and Existing Neighborhoods

Within Los Gatos, the Town endeavors to provide open space access areas that are designed in a manner that benefits the user without creating a burden



Source: Town of Los Gatos, 2008; DC&E, 2007; Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, 2008.

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|--------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Bachman Park | 14. Pageant Grounds | 27. Alta Vista Elementary School | 36. Hillbrook School |
| 2. Balzer Baseball Field | 15. Santa Rosa Open Space | 28. Mulberry School | 37. Courtside on Winchester |
| 3. Bel Gatos Park | 16. Town Plaza Park | 29. Stratford School | 38. La Rinconada Country Club |
| 4. Blossom Hill Park | 17. Worcester Park | 30. Jewish Community Center & Yavneh Day School | 39. Los Gatos Health and Fitness |
| 5. Fairview Plaza | 18. St. Joseph's Hill Open Space | 31. Calvary Church | 40. Los Gatos Swim and Racquet Club |
| 6. Heinz Open Space | 19. Sierra Azul Open Space | 32. Los Gatos United Methodist Church | |
| 7. Howes Play Lot | 20. Vasona Lake County Park | 33. Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos & Shannon Road | |
| 8. La Rinconada Park | 21. Los Gatos Creek County Park | 34. St. Mary's Church & St. Mary's Elementary School | |
| 9. Los Gatos Creek Trail | 22. Blossom Hill Elementary School | 35. Venture Christian Church & Los Gatos Christian School | |
| 10. Live Oak Manor Park | 23. Daves Avenue Elementary School | | |
| 11. Novitiate Park | 24. Louis Van Meter Elementary School | | |
| 12. Oak Hill Play Lot | 25. Raymond J. Fisher, Jr. Middle School | | |
| 13. Oak Meadow Park | 26. Los Gatos High School | | |

FIGURE OSP-1
 OPEN SPACE, PARKS, AND
 RECREATION FACILITIES WITHIN TOWN LIMITS

on existing neighborhoods. This unobtrusive approach allows for a more pleasant outdoor experience and preserves the character of each neighborhood.

4. Open Space, Development, and Hillside Preservation

The Town's hillside areas are unique and add to the quality of life of Town residents and visitors. While much of the Town is considered built out, opportunities to develop in the hillside areas remain. The Town's Hillside Specific Plan and Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines ensure that open space areas in the Hillside areas are preserved to the greatest extent possible by the Town. The viewsheds and existing character of the hillsides and open space areas are carefully maintained through the implementation of this General Plan and the Town's various planning processes.

D. Existing Parks and Recreational Facilities

In addition to the four open space areas and preserves described above, the Town has a total of 37 parks and recreational facilities. The following facilities are illustrated in Figure OSP-1 and further described in this section.

- ◆ Fifteen Town-owned and operated facilities
- ◆ Two Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation facilities
- ◆ Nine local public school district facilities
- ◆ One community-based facility
- ◆ Five faith-based facilities
- ◆ One private school facility
- ◆ Four private athletic club facilities

1. Town Parks

Local parks are essential to the quality of life for many Los Gatos residents, providing recreational opportunities, neighborhood gathering facilities, and natural beauty throughout the community. The Town of Los Gatos contains a total of seventeen publicly-owned and operated parks. As stated above, 15 of these parks are located on Town-owned land and are maintained by the

PPW and the remaining two parks are owned and operated by the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department. In total, there are approximately 240 acres of parkland within Los Gatos, containing nearly seven miles of multi-use trails and over 65 acres of lawn area.

2. Major Recreational Facilities

Los Gatos has 15 recreational facilities containing one or more sports fields on-site. Table OSP-2 provides a summary of each facility's fields and recreational league use. As shown in the table, 13 of the 15 identified facilities currently have one or more baseball fields, for a total of 24 baseball fields.

These facilities are owned by public, quasi-public, and private organizations, including:

- ◆ Town of Los Gatos
- ◆ Los Gatos Union Elementary School District
- ◆ Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union High School District
- ◆ Los Gatos Union School District
- ◆ Campbell Union School District
- ◆ Community or faith-based groups
- ◆ A private school

Of the 15 facilities, two are unavailable for use by outside groups or leagues. Out of the 13 facilities available for use by outside leagues or teams, six have availability for additional activities and scheduled uses – Balzer Field, Blossom Hill Park, Live Oak Manor Park, Oak Meadow Park, Rolling Hills Middle School, and the Mulberry School.

Two of the facilities with fields have complete availability during the spring season: Oak Meadow Park and the Mulberry School. However, Oak Meadow Park is generally a high-use park where picnicking, use of the playground, hiking, and biking occur. Organized athletic activities would displace these informal uses. In addition, the Mulberry School is currently considered very undesirable for league activities due to its uneven terrain. There-

TOWN OF LOS GATOS
2020 GENERAL PLAN
OPEN SPACE, PARKS, AND RECREATION ELEMENT

TABLE OSP-2 RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Name of Facility	Total Campus or Facility Size (Acres)	Number of Baseball Fields	Size of Multi-Use Field Area (Square Feet)
Alta Vista Elementary School	8.2	4	0
Balzer Field	0.9	1	0
Blossom Hill Elementary School	3	3	36,000
Blossom Hill Park	9.2	1	11,000
Creekside Sports Park ^a	2.8	-	-
Daves Avenue Elementary School	2	2	36,000
Hillbrook School ^b	14	1	NA
Jewish Community Center of Silicon Valley (JCC)	NA	0	30,600
Live Oak Manor Park	4.1	0	17,000
Los Gatos High School	25	2	213,000
Louise Van Meter Elementary School	2.5	2	21,600
Mulberry School	6.8	2	0
Oak Meadow Park	12	0	33,600
Raymond J. Fisher Middle School	9	1	59,400
Stratford School	7.3	2	49,500
Venture Christian Church & Los Gatos Christian School ^b	NA	1	45,000
Totals		22	516,700

Note: NA = Not Applicable.

^a Facility in preliminary planning/design stages at the time of publication of this General Plan.

^b Facility not available to public.

Source: Los Gatos Open Space Inventory, 2008.

fore, for organized athletic events to occur on the Mulberry School field, renovations may be necessary.

The eight facilities that are currently at capacity (no additional field availability) include all four schools of the Los Gatos Union Elementary School District, Los Gatos High School, two schools in the Union School District, and the Jewish Community Center. In addition to student and resident use, several of the fields are utilized by local sports leagues for team practices and games. These leagues include: LGS Recreation, Los Gatos Unified Soccer League, Los Gatos Little League, Los Gatos-Saratoga Softball Association, Los Gatos Pony League, Union Little League, Pacific Union Academy, and the Branham Hill Girls Softball League. Currently, LGS Recreation and the Los Gatos Unified Soccer League each utilize seven different facilities for athletic activities throughout Los Gatos. Los Gatos Little League holds games and practices at five different facilities within Los Gatos.

Additionally, as shown in Table OSP-2, 11 of the facilities include a multi-use field area that permits scheduled activities and is appropriate for organized group sporting events. These facilities provide a total of approximately 516,700 square feet of multi-use field space within Los Gatos. These fields are utilized by school children, organized teams, and sports leagues, as well as by the general public.

E. Prehistoric and Native American Resources

The Santa Clara Valley, possibly including the Los Gatos area, was most likely settled by native Californians between 12,000 and 6,000 years ago. Penutian peoples migrated into central California around 4,500 years ago and were firmly settled around the San Francisco Bay by 1,500 years ago. The descendants of the native groups who lived between the Carquinez Strait and the Monterey area are the Ohlone, also known by the name of their linguistic

group, Costanoan. The *Somontac*, a Costanoan linguistic group, resided in the area of what is today Los Gatos.¹

Like many other Native Americans in California, the acorn was the Ohlone's dietary staple. Acorns were knocked from trees with poles, then leached to remove bitter tannins and eaten as mush or bread. The Ohlone used a range of other plant resources, including buckeye, California laurel, elderberries, strawberries, manzanita berries, goose berries, toyon berries, wild grapes, wild onion, cattail, amole, wild carrots, clover, and chuchupate. Animals hunted by the Ohlone and their neighbors included black-tailed deer, Roosevelt elk, antelope, and marine mammals. Smaller animals such as dogs, skunks, raccoons, rabbits, squirrels, geese, ducks, salmon, sturgeon, and mollusks were also hunted, fished, or gathered. In addition to sustenance, the Bay Area's flora and fauna provided the Ohlone with raw materials for clothing, shelter, and boats.²

Intensive Hispanic exploration and settlement of the Bay Area began in the late eighteenth century, at which time Ohlone culture was radically transformed. European settlers established the mission system and exposed the Ohlone to diseases to which they had no immunity. Mission San Francisco, at which Ohlone from the entire Bay Area were converted, was founded in 1776. Studies of mission records list the Somontac at Mission Santa Cruz between 1793 and 1801.³ Mission Santa Cruz, in the present City of Santa Cruz, was founded in 1791. Following the secularization of the missions in

¹ Milliken, Randall, 1995. Anthropological Papers No. 43. *A Time of Little Choice, The Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area 1769-1810*. Ballena Press Menlo Park, California, page 254.

² Levy, Richard, 1977. Costanoan. In *California*, edited by Robert F. Heizer. Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 8; William C. Sturtevant, general editor. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., pages 485-495.

³ Milliken, Randall, 1995. Anthropological Papers No. 43. *A Time of Little Choice, The Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area 1769-1810*. Ballena Press Menlo Park, California, page 254.

1834, native people in the Bay Area moved to ranchos, where they worked as manual laborers.⁴

F. Goals, Policies, and Actions

The following goals, policies, and actions are intended to preserve and conserve open space in Los Gatos.

Goal OSP-1	To acquire open space areas within the Town of Los Gatos, particularly lands which provide recreational uses and will protect the public health, welfare, and safety of residents and visitors, including lands in flood plains, watershed lands, or lands subject to fire or geologic hazards.
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Policies

Policy OSP-1.1 Promote coordination with all levels of government in utilizing available resources for the acquisition and development of open space areas.

Policy OSP-1.2 Use open space acquisitions to support the programs in the Environment and Sustainability Element and Safety Element of this General Plan.

Policy OSP-1.3 Acquire and maintain open space areas in order to define the Town's southern boundary as passive recreation open space.

Policy OSP-1.4 Acquire parcels or easements via fees or dedication of land.

⁴ Levy, Richard, 1977. Costanoan. In *California*, edited by Robert F. Heizer. Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 8; William C. Sturtevant, General Editor. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., pages 485-495.

Actions

- Action OSP-1.1 Develop and institute an acquisition program consistent with the Housing Element that includes fee purchase, easement dedications and land donations. Areas to be considered: Novitiate, hillside open space, additional park sites, closed school sites, and large land-locked parcels.

	Goal OSP-2 To preserve open space in hillside areas as natural open space.
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Policies

- Policy OSP-2.1  Preserve the natural open space character of hillside lands, including natural topography, natural vegetation, wildlife habitats and migration corridors, and viewsheds.
- Policy OSP-2.2 Provide for open space areas in the hillsides. The provision of open space areas should not detract from the existing character of the Town's hillsides.
- Policy OSP-2.3  In all hillside subdivisions, the dedication of open space in fee or as an easement shall be required to protect unique natural features, habitats, and migration corridors, and to preserve the rural atmosphere.
- Policy OSP-2.4  Adjacent parcels in the hillsides shall provide an uninterrupted band of useable segments for wildlife corridors and recreational use, if applicable.
- Policy OSP-2.5 Maximize preservation of open space and scenic vistas in the hillside area by requiring dedications in fee (preferred) or easements and by restricting buildable areas on lots. Where buildable areas are restricted through clustering, planned developments, or other means, these means shall not allow higher overall density on the parcel than would otherwise

be allowed by the zoning. Dedications should be granted to the Town and Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District.

Goal OSP-3	To make open space areas within the Town accessible to all residents of and visitors to the Town, as appropriate.
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Policies

- Policy OSP-3.1 Access shall be consistent with types and locations of open space areas and shall protect the safety, privacy, and security of adjacent residential areas.
- Policy OSP-3.2 Improve connections between existing on-street bicycle lanes, multi-use trails, and open space.
- Policy OSP-3.3 All open space areas and related facilities shall provide adequate access for the physically disabled.
- Policy OSP-3.4 All developed parks shall provide disabled access and facilities, unless access and facility improvements would be detrimental to public safety or welfare.
- Policy OSP-3.5 Consider access from new residential developments to open space where appropriate.
- Policy OSP-3.6 Access roads shall be located, developed, and maintained in ways that avoid negative impacts on open space areas.
- Policy OSP-3.7 All open space adjacent to developments shall have access from streets.
- Policy OSP-3.8  All publicly owned natural open space shall have access by trails or local streets, with adequate protection of rare and sensitive plants and animals and their habitats, and of adjacent residential areas.

Goal OSP-4 To provide recreational facilities that address the needs of the community.

Policies

- Policy OSP-4.1 Acquire and develop more active and passive community recreation spaces and/or facilities.
- Policy OSP-4.2 Encourage the development of amenities and programs in parks and other recreational facilities that cater to a variety of ages and address the needs of families.
- Policy OSP-4.3 Continue to work with the Los Gatos-Saratoga Recreation District, local school districts, and faith communities to provide shared recreational and sports facilities.
- Policy OSP-4.4  Encourage community gardens on appropriate public and private properties.
- Policy OSP-4.5 Consider including more varied, active recreation spaces in new and/or existing recreational facilities.
- Policy OSP-4.6 Actively pursue opportunities for dedicated off-leash dog recreation areas and/or for allowing off-leash dog times at specific parks.

Actions

- Action OSP-4.1 Conduct an assessment of existing parks to determine the unmet recreational needs and implement new facilities as parks are upgraded.
- Action OSP-4.2 Conduct a study to determine the feasibility of providing dedicated off-leash dog recreation areas and/or for allowing off-leash dog times at specific parks.

Action OSP-4.3 Conduct a study to determine the appropriate use of “air space” over Seven Mile Reservoir.

Goal OSP-5	To create and maintain open space areas and parks that enhance and blend into existing natural habitats, residential neighborhoods, and other Town features.
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Policies

Policy OSP-5.1 Promote a system of Town parks and trails.

Policy OSP-5.2 Maximize the use of public utility easements, flood control channels, school grounds, and other quasi-public areas for recreational uses and playfields.

Policy OSP-5.3 Encourage the development of informal gathering spaces for local residents and visitors in appropriate locations throughout the Town.

Policy OSP-5.4 Maintain the Town’s high standards for landscaping and tree preservation, helping to maintain cohesiveness between existing neighborhoods and surrounding open space areas and reducing disturbances to adjacent natural habitats.

Policy OSP-5.5 Utilize private and public landscaping to help open space and park areas along Town streets blend with the surrounding neighborhood.

Policy OSP-5.6 Preserve open space and public uses upon the sale of existing school property in order to preserve school playing fields as developed open spaces.

- Policy OSP-5.7 Use the Public School Overlay Zone to keep closed school sites in public ownership and to preserve the playing fields as developed recreation spaces.
- Policy OSP-5.8 Encourage all new development to provide informal outdoor gathering spaces.
- Policy OSP-5.9 Encourage new multi-family residential development of eight units or more to include tot lots or similar shared open space for young children.

Actions

- Action OSP-5.1 Maintain and update the parks and open space inventory every ten years.
- Action OSP-5.2 Adopt Best Management Practice park service standards for the Town.
- Action OSP-5.3 Install interpretive signage at parks when feasible and appropriate, providing a description of features such as the park's history, native species that live in or near the park, and existing or historic waterways.
- Action OSP-5.4 Identify Native American/cultural resources and heritage trees with interpretive signs as appropriate.
- Action OSP-5.5 Develop an electronic database and ArcGIS files for all parks, trail, and open space easements, trails, and recreational facilities.

<p>Goal OSP-6 To consider the provision of open space in all development decisions within the Town.</p>
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Policies

- Policy OSP-6.1 Promote private open space in all planning decisions for new development.
- Policy OSP-6.2 New development projects shall include conditions to preserve open space.
- Policy OSP-6.3  Consider effects on watershed areas, plant and wildlife habitats, and migration corridors before allowing development of any open space.
- Policy OSP-6.4 Consider health, welfare, and public safety in the design of open space facilities.
- Policy OSP-6.5 Provide permanent common open space in high-density developments.
- Policy OSP-6.6 Site plans for new development along the Highway 85 corridor shall incorporate adequate open space.
- Policy OSP-6.7 Encourage the use of Williamson Act contracts and Planned Development applications as a means to preserve large tracts of open space.
- Policy OSP-6.8 Encourage the use of innovative development techniques which will provide open space within individual developments, public or private.
- Policy OSP-6.9 Town staff shall evaluate all development projects to determine the benefit of requiring open space dedication.
- Policy OSP-6.10 Update the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines as needed to include measures that address open space in new development.

Action

Action OSP-6.1 Adopt standards specifying the type and quantity of open space required for new developments.

Goal OSP-7	To preserve and enhance Los Gatos Creek and the Los Gatos Creek Trail as open space amenities.
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Policies

Policy OSP-7.1  Restore Los Gatos Creek to a more natural state, removing concrete channelization, where feasible.

Policy OSP-7.2 Ensure that Los Gatos Creek Trail is accessible to and safe for all users.

Actions

Action OSP-7.1  Work with the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, the California Department of Fish and Game, and Caltrans to develop a restoration plan for channelized segments of Los Gatos Creek.

Action OSP-7.2 Seek and obtain funding for creek restoration.

Action OSP-7.3 Identify additional opportunities for access along the Los Gatos Creek Trail.

Action OSP-7.4 Seek and obtain funding for beautification projects and trail connection opportunities along Los Gatos Creek and the Los Gatos Creek Trail.

Goal OSP-8	To preserve and enhance Ross Creek as an open space amenity.
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Policy

Policy OSP-8.1  Restore Ross Creek to a more natural state, removing concrete channelization, where feasible.

Action

Action OSP-8.1  Work with the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, and Caltrans to develop a restoration plan for channelized segments of Ross Creek.

Goal OSP-9	To protect Los Gatos's archaeological and cultural resources to maintain and enhance a unique sense of place.
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Policies

Policy OSP-9.1 Evaluate archaeological and/or cultural resources early in the development review process through consultation with interested parties and the use of contemporary professional techniques in archaeology, ethnography, and architectural history.

Policy OSP-9.2 Ensure the preservation, restoration, and appropriate use of archaeological and/or culturally significant structures and sites.

Policy OSP-9.3 Treat with respect and dignity any human remains discovered during implementation of public and private projects within the Town and fully comply with California laws that address the identification and treatment of human remains.

Policy OSP-9.4 Require that if cultural resources, including archaeological or paleontological resources, are uncovered during grading

or other on-site excavation activities, construction shall stop until appropriate mitigation is implemented.

Policy OSP-9.5 Encourage development to avoid impacts to burial sites by designing or clustering development to avoid archaeological deposits that may contain human remains.

Action

Action OSP-9.1 Develop guidelines for project review to ensure that potential impacts to archaeological and/or cultural resources are minimized.

TOWN OF LOS GATOS
2020 GENERAL PLAN
OPEN SPACE, PARKS, AND RECREATION ELEMENT