

7 VASONA LIGHT RAIL ELEMENT

A. Introduction

Vasona Light Rail (VLR) mass transit facilities are projected to be extended along Winchester Boulevard and will link the Town with the rest of Silicon Valley and the Bay Area. The Town is actively working on planning processes to address how it can take advantage of the mass transit opportunities presented by these connections.

It is critical that the Town take advantage of the opportunities and respond to the challenges created by the VLR. The unique nature of these transportation facilities necessitates that the Town take a proactive role in planning for the future of the surrounding areas. The VLR, as well as the land uses planned for this area, will affect and benefit the entire community.

This Element is divided into the following sections:

- ◆ **History:** Provides background information about the background of this area within Los Gatos.
- ◆ **Guiding Philosophy:** Provides an overview of how the Town will help to guide future development and planning processes in this area.
- ◆ **Goals, Policies, and Actions:** Provides guidance to the Town related to decisions affecting this area.

B. History

In October 1990 the Town Council approved several agreements with the State Department of Transportation and the Santa Clara County Traffic Authority regarding the design of Highway 85. The agreements allowed for the construction of a six-lane freeway through the Town with a median reserved for mass transit. Since the opening of Highway 85 in October 1994, traffic patterns in the Town have changed significantly. A reduction of traffic volumes on some arterials and collector streets has occurred, while others have experienced increases. Highway 85 is approaching capacity during the peak commute hours, but is still a desirable primary transportation route.

The future mass transit system will help alleviate a portion of the existing commute traffic.

The VLR is proposed to utilize the existing Southern Pacific Railroad tracks adjacent to Winchester Boulevard. The mass transit system would connect the Town of Los Gatos to the City of San Jose. This system would provide a much needed means of connecting Los Gatos to regional mass transit systems in the rest of the Silicon Valley and Bay Area. The VLR area is shown on Figure VLR-1. Generally, it is bounded by Capri Drive and Winchester Boulevard on the west, Vasona Lake on the south, National Avenue on the east and the northern Town limits.

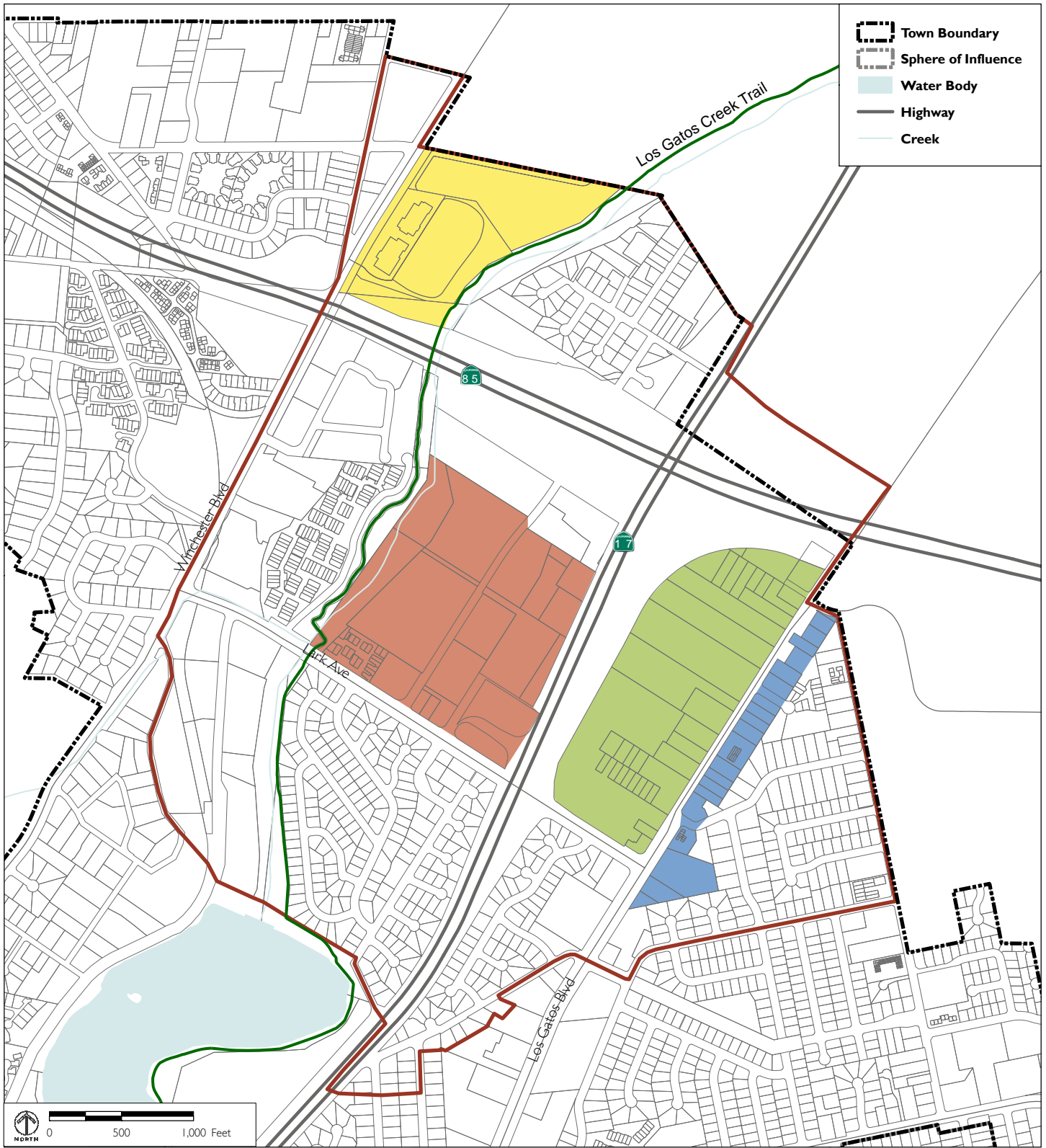
Since the VLR will have a significant impact on transportation within the Town, it is critical to determine what land uses will best take advantage of these transportation facilities as well as meet the needs of the Town. The Town has taken a proactive approach on this important issue and supports land uses that maximize transit opportunities while meeting the housing and commercial needs of the Town.

As stated in the Housing Element, Los Gatos has a need for affordable housing, both for seniors and families. Areas adjacent to the VLR facility would be good locations for meeting these Town needs due to their proximity to mass transit and to commercial needs of the future residents.

Los Gatos is a special place, and it is important to demarcate The Town's boundaries when entering or leaving from/to other cities. Open space and gateways, including open space as gateways, are a means of doing so. The VLR area offers opportunities to preserve and use open space for this purpose.

C. Guiding Philosophy

There are more large parcels of land that are suitable for residential development within the VLR area than within any other area of the Town.



Source: Town of Los Gatos, 2010.

Vasona Light Rail Area Boundary

Sub Areas

- Vasona Junction
- Oka Road
- North Forty
- East Los Gatos Boulevard

FIGURE VLR-1


VASONA LIGHT RAIL AREA

The current uses of these parcels range from orchards to underutilized residential property to manufacturing. The commonality of all of these parcels is their proximity to future mass transit and their capability to help the Town meet its housing goals. The Town is working to identify which types of housing are best suited for the area, and where new development should be constructed. This area also has easy access to both Highway 85 and Highway 17 and includes connections to several major arterials including Winchester and Los Gatos Boulevards and Lark Avenue. These large underdeveloped parcels may be suitable for other commercial or recreational uses. Throughout the process of preparing this Element, a basic planning philosophy has served as the foundation for designating land uses in the area: development should be community-, pedestrian- and transit-oriented, and designed and scaled to maintain a small-town character. This Element consists of goals, policies, and actions that apply specifically to the VLR area.


D. Goals, Policies, and Actions

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| Goal VLR-1 | To promote the construction of Vasona Light Rail and mass transit facilities. |
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Policies

Policy VLR-1.1  Circulation planning for the Town shall recognize the potential for mass transit connections via the Vasona Light Rail.

Policy VLR-1.2 Coordinate and proactively participate with other communities and agencies to ensure that the proposed mass transit facilities are acceptable to the Town.

Policy VLR-1.3  Future development shall contribute financially to support transit services that link the Vasona Light Rail with the rest of Los Gatos.

VLR-4


Policy VLR-1.4 Encourage parcel assembly in the East Los Gatos Boulevard sub-area to provide greater design flexibility and minimize driveways along Los Gatos Boulevard.


Policy VLR-1.5 Project applicants shall demonstrate how their projects meet the specific goals and policies of the Vasona Light Rail Element.

Goal VLR-2 To encourage affordable housing (senior housing, multi-family housing, mixed-use with housing) in appropriate locations within the Vasona Light Rail area to address the Town's housing needs and take advantage of the opportunities afforded by mass transit.



Policies

Policy VLR-2.1 Encourage development of residential rental units throughout the Vasona Light Rail area. Residential development proposals shall demonstrate how they address the Town's unmet housing goals for affordable housing.

Policy VLR-2.2  Proposed mixed-use projects in the Vasona Light Rail area which include residential uses shall assist the Town in meeting its housing goals of providing rental units, senior housing, and affordable housing.

Goal VLR-3  To encourage mixed-use developments that coordinate housing in proximity to either neighborhood commercial uses or employment centers.

Policies

- Policy VLR-3.1 Mixed-use proposals within the Vasona Light Rail area shall address how the proposed uses would be compatible and synergistic with each other.
- Policy VLR-3.2 Mixed-use commercial/market rate and/or affordable housing developments may be considered in the Vasona Light Rail area.
- Policy VLR-3.3  Encourage a mix of commercial, office, and light industrial and recreational uses within the Vasona Light Rail area, especially in areas less suited to residential development due to noise.
- Policy VLR-3.4 Encourage mixed-use development of commercial, office, and medium-high density residential uses in the North Forty area and along East Los Gatos Boulevard, north of Lark Avenue.
- Policy VLR-3.5 Projects in the Vasona Light Rail area proposing all commercial, office or residential uses shall be evaluated to ensure that the Town's desire for mixed-use is fulfilled.
- Policy VLR-3.6 If development of air rights in the Vasona Light Rail area is allowed, coordinate with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and other agencies to allow development of appropriate uses, such as affordable housing and neighborhood commercial and businesses that cater to commuters.
- Policy VLR-3.7  Shared parking for mixed-use projects will be allowed within the Vasona Light Rail area.

Actions

- Action VLR-3.1 Conduct a study to evaluate whether development of air rights at the Vasona Light Rail station facility should be allowed or could feasibly be accomplished without creating visual congestion or violating the small-town character of Los Gatos.
- Action VLR-3.2 Develop and adopt standards for mixed-use design to be used in the review process of all mixed-use developments in the Vasona Light Rail area.

Goal VLR-4 To provide opportunities for a variety of non-residential land uses within the Vasona Light Rail area.

Policies


- Policy VLR-4.1 Development in the Vasona Junction sub-area shall consist of neighborhood commercial uses that provide services to all residents of Los Gatos.
- Policy VLR-4.2 Non-residential development projects shall limit impacts on residential uses.

Goal VLR-5 To provide opportunities for the Vasona Light Rail area to address the recreational and open space needs of the Town.

Policies

- Policy VLR-5.1 Projects developed in the Vasona Light Rail area shall contribute to a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Los Gatos Creek.

Policy VLR-5.2 Orient development to take advantage of the amenities of the Los Gatos Creek and the Creek Trail.

Policy VLR-5.3  Development in the Vasona Light Rail area shall be designed and oriented to take advantage of the amenities offered by Los Gatos Creek and to preserve watersheds, riparian habitats and wildlife corridors.

Policy VLR-5.4 Projects developed in the Vasona Light Rail area shall contribute to and enhance the natural view corridor and landscape of the Los Gatos Creek Trail.

Actions

Action VLR-5.1 Develop a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Los Gatos Creek through development fees, grants, and other means available to the Town. Establish in-lieu fees for new projects that will fund a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Los Gatos Creek.

Action VLR-5.2 Provide a trail connection for pedestrians and bicyclists to the Los Gatos Creek Trail along the east side of Los Gatos Creek, north of Lark Avenue.

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| Goal VLR-6 To work with property owners and prospective developers to facilitate orderly development. |
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Policies

Policy VLR-6.1 Encourage innovative designs, phased design schemes, and mixes of uses in the Vasona Light Rail area that are consistent with the Los Gatos Boulevard Plan and Commercial Design Guidelines.

Policy VLR-6.2 Site plans in the Vasona Light Rail area shall be designed to minimize traffic impacts and to preserve sufficient open space.

Policy VLR-6.3 The siting, scale, and design of buildings in relationship to each other shall facilitate and encourage pedestrian activity.

Actions

Action VLR-6.1 Adopt design guidelines for the Vasona Light Rail area and use them to review development applications for issues unique to the area such as gateway features, scenic vistas, and open space provisions.

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| <p>Goal VLR-7 To ensure that the design review process produces a high quality mixture of residential and non-residential uses within the Vasona Light Rail area.</p> |
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Policies

Policy VLR-7.1 No downzoning of residential properties shall be allowed within the Vasona Junction sub-area until development of the Vasona Light Rail is planned and funded.

Policy VLR-7.2 Development may be phased with the completion of the Vasona Light Rail. In no case may development exceed transportation capacity.

Policy VLR-7.3 Developers may be asked to provide surveys, market studies, and other information deemed necessary to ensure the projects are consistent with the Los Gatos Boulevard Plan and Commercial Design Guidelines.

Goal VLR-8 To limit the adverse impacts of development within the Vasona Light Rail area.

Policies

Policy VLR-8.1 Development in the Vasona Light Rail area shall facilitate the upgrading of utilities to the level needed to serve the area when it is fully developed.

Policy VLR-8.2 Development projects in the Vasona Light Rail area shall incorporate design features to buffer dwelling units from the visual and noise impacts of Highway 17 and Highway 85.

Policy VLR-8.3 Require a noise study for all development applications within the Vasona Light Rail area, identifying degrees of impact and noise attenuation measures, if necessary, to mitigate noise impacts on residential neighborhoods.

Actions






Action VLR-8.1 Construct an emergency access to Lark Avenue via the Santa Clara Valley Water District maintenance road for properties between Los Gatos Creek and Oka Road through conditions on development applications.

Action VLR-8.2 Explore methods of financing infrastructure improvements in the Vasona Light Rail area.

Goal VLR-9 To reduce traffic impacts of residential development within the Vasona Light Rail area by taking advantage of mass transit opportunities.



Policies

- Policy VLR-9.1  Residential development proposals within the Vasona Light Rail area shall address how they take advantage of mass transit opportunities.
- Policy VLR-9.2  The Town shall work with developers, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and other agencies to ensure that the Vasona Junction sub-area is developed in a manner that takes full advantage of the transit opportunities afforded by the Vasona Light Rail.
- Policy VLR-9.3  Development in the Vasona Light Rail area shall provide Transportation Alternative programs or facilities that help link development and mass transit. These programs may include providing bicycle racks, shower and locker facilities, transit passes to employees, etc. In-lieu fees or other funding mechanisms may be required to provide a shuttle for the area.
- Policy VLR-9.4  Facilities developed for the Vasona Light Rail station shall be safe, convenient, and attractive for bicycle and pedestrian use.
- Policy VLR-9.5  Promote the development of mass transit links between Los Gatos Boulevard, particularly any development on the North Forty site, and the planned Vasona Light Rail station.

TOWN OF LOS GATOS
2020 GENERAL PLAN
VASONA LIGHT RAIL ELEMENT