

PRESS RELEASE

March 26, 2026

**ForLosAltos Files Voter Initiative
To Protect Downtown Parking Plazas**

*Grassroots Community Group Launches Signature Drive to Give Residents a Vote on
Public Land*

LOS ALTOS, CA — ForLosAltos, a grassroots community organization representing residents and local businesses, announced the filing of the **Los Altos Downtown Parking Plazas Ordinance** with the City of Los Altos. The citizen-led voter initiative would require voter approval before the City can sell, repurpose, or significantly alter any of eight publicly-owned Downtown Parking Plazas.

“These parking plazas are public land, supported and used by the community, and they define the accessible, walkable, village character that makes Los Altos so special,” JoAnne Estill, a longtime resident and ForLosAltos member. “Before any single City Council makes irreversible decisions about these irreplaceable assets, residents deserve a vote.”

Once enacted, the initiative would add a chapter to the Los Altos Municipal Code, protecting the parking plazas that have served the Downtown since 1957 when they were acquired and developed through assessment funding from Downtown property owners. The ordinance would prohibit the City from selling, leasing, declaring surplus, or permanently modifying any of the plazas without first obtaining approval from a majority of Los Altos voters.

Under California Elections Code, the City now has until April 2 to prepare a title and summary for the measure. Once complete, ForLosAltos will launch a signature-gathering effort, targeting 3,000 signatures from registered Los Altos voters to qualify the measure for the November 2026 ballot or a future election. The Los Altos City Council can also choose to adopt the ordinance directly without requiring an election.

“This initiative gives City Council a clear path: adopt the ordinance now or let the voters decide,” said resident and ForLosAltos volunteer Cindy Andrews. “We are not opposed to thoughtful change. We are asking that the public have a meaningful say before public land is permanently altered.”

Under the measure, the City has flexibility for routine operations and retains authority to maintain and repair the plazas, and host farmers markets and community events. Most notably, the City can develop Parking Plazas 7 and 8 for affordable housing without a community vote. Both Plazas were previously declared Surplus Land by the current City Council. All other major changes, including redevelopment, long-term leases, sale, or physical alterations that reduce parking availability, would require a majority voter approval.

The filing comes amid growing and vocal community concern over the City's \$2.25 million "Downtown Park with Parking" design project targeting Plazas 1 and 2, and the recent addition of Plaza 3. The three plazas are slated for a multi-story parking garage, a downtown park and a performing arts center that replaces the Bus Barn theater. Residents and business owners have raised questions about the loss of surface parking, the removal of protected trees, and the cumulative impact on Downtown business.

Public comments also pointed to the use of restricted Park in Lieu fees for a new downtown park with parking when the City has five surrounding parks that could benefit by investment. Citizens have asked that, instead of a downtown park, the City add a park to the North Los Altos El Camino Real corridor where high-density housing is rising and no parkland exists.

Downtown business owners contend that the City has failed to complete studies and analysis of possible detrimental economic impact, and failed to understand traffic and circulation consequences. Merchants are concerned that making trips in and out of town more difficult will compel customers to shop elsewhere.

Considering the importance of the Parking Plazas to the way Los Altos feels and functions, Richard Draeger, owner of Draeger's Market an independent market celebrating 40 years in Los Altos, offers, "We believe that decisions of this importance deserve the vote of our community."

Residents and businesses interested in supporting the initiative can visit **www.forlosaltos.org**.

About FORLosAltos

FORLosAltos is an all-volunteer, grassroots member benefit association of Los Altos residents and local businesses advocating for community voice and fiscal transparency in City decisions affecting public lands.

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