



FRIENDS OF THE HILLS

HILLS 2000

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

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What is Hills 2000?

Reacting to a concern by many that the founding principles of the Town of Los Altos Hills are at risk of being forgotten, a group of Town residents has formed **Hills 2000**. Hills 2000 is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving a high quality rural lifestyle, consistent with sound environmental practices as Los Altos Hills begins to face the challenges of the next millennium.

Members of Hills 2000 recognize that these founding principles - low density, homes with open space, the right to keep animals, roads that are content to remain country lanes, and smart planning - help preserve the rural ambience, and contribute to long term growth in property values.

The main goals of Hills 2000 are to:

- Preserve the quality rural lifestyle of Los Altos Hills.
- Provide well-researched and unbiased communications on significant issues to all residents.
- Improve communication between residents and both elected officials and Town staff.
- Encourage leadership that understands and supports the

Town's founding principles.

"I am very encouraged by the number of residents, both long time and new ones, who have attended the organizational meetings of Hills 2000," noted **Ralph Vetterlein**, a founding member of Hills 2000 and a member of its steering committee.

"There is clearly a strong sentiment in the Town that all residents need to be ready to reach compromises between the rights of new property owners and those of existing owners. A spirit of mutual consideration is the key ingredient for being a good neighbor," Vetterlein continued.

"I strongly support the goals and objectives of Hills 2000," said **Sid Hubbard**, former Mayor and City councilman. "I look forward to studying their research on a number of issues facing the Town. I encourage their emphasis on providing fair and clear-sighted analyses to help educate all residents on the issues," Hubbard added.

Hills 2000 intends to reach Town residents as key issues arise. It maintains a web site at

www.hills2000.org.

Anyone interested in joining Hills 2000 should contact Nancy Couperas at (650) 941-4808. Membership dues are \$20 per year.

"I strongly support the goals and objectives of Hills 2000."

- Sid Hubbard,
former Mayor and
Town Councilman

Does House Color Need Regulation?

The following article is printed in an effort to keep residents informed of important upcoming issues facing the town. The Town plans to review the color board requirements and will send a letter to all residents asking for input on our present color board requirements. A Council meeting will be held September 16th at 7 p.m. to discuss the issue.

Color plays an important role in retaining the naturalness of our hillsides. It is one of the few techniques available to mitigate the initial obtrusiveness of large new homes. Many neighboring communities have color restrictions.

Los Gatos - There are two review boards: Planning Commission and Development Review. Hillside lots require light reflectivity value (LRV) of 30% or less on

house color. There are deed restrictions on view lots. Boards are especially concerned with trim and will reduce too much white.

Monte Sereno - Established a site and architectural review committee in 1998 and adopted the Los Altos Hills design guidelines. Prominent homes require color review and reflectivity value is considered

Portola Valley - Earth-tone colors required. Color is approved by Architectural Board.

Saratoga - Earthtone colors. Color approved by Planning Commission.

Woodside - Earthtone colors. Color approved by Architectural Board

Hillsborough - Architectural Board reviews compatibility

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A Hills 2000 Member Opinion

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Hills 2000 - Friends of the Hills
Newsletter
Statement of Purpose

To provide well researched
and unbiased communications
on significant issues to all
residents of Los Altos Hills.

The Hills 2000 Newsletter is
published with assistance from
members of Hills 2000.

Editor: Barbara Lamparter

A Need For Balance

By Fred Osterlund

Our group, Hills 2000, was organized, in part, to respond to the increased building pressures placed upon Los Altos Hills. Just like many communities in our area we are experiencing growing pains. The economic good times have conspired to make our community “ground zero” in the upscale land rush.

Our neighborhoods are coveted for their one-acre minimum lot size; the thoughtful street grids, which divert through traffic; the rural atmosphere and the panoramic views we enjoy. So what exactly is the problem? The style and scope of much of the new construction projects are jeopardizing the very character of our town. Please do not misunderstand my point. We welcome new residents who desire to build large well designed homes, but we would ask them to respect our town’s goals. This compliance benefits all concerned and keeps Los Altos Hills the way we like it best. In my article published in the *Los Altos Town Crier*, “Conundrum in the Hills”, (read it on the Hills 2000 web-site at www.Hills2000.org) I elaborate on these points to a greater extent.

We need help and support if we are to stem the tide and rediscover the common ground between redevelopment and neighbors’ rights. A good place to start would be the town’s design guidelines for new construction and remodels. If everyone of us would familiarize himself or herself with desirable versus undesirable planning techniques, this would go a long way toward stabilizing the situation. These guidelines are available in printed form or on the Internet.

We need to put our elected Council members on notice that business as usual is no longer acceptable. Their sworn duty as elected officials is to uphold the codes and ordinances of Los Altos Hills and not to concentrate on political paybacks. For example, one council member in particular rarely has seen a variance she didn’t like!

We are a community with rules and regulations regarding where and how we construct our homes, but some feel a need to press to the limit, seeking more square footage, higher rooflines, less setback and smaller conservation easements. We can all bear witness to the resulting visual impact of these homes.

I urge you to join us, Hills2000, in our endeavor to retain what is special about the place we call home! Thank you.

Save This Date for Hills 2000 First Educational Forum

Sunday, October 10, 1999 at 3:30 p.m.

On October 10 at 3:30 p.m. join friends and neighbors at the Hidden Villa Visitors Welcome Center to learn more about native plants and how to use them in your landscaping.

Erin O’Doherty, a Landscape Contractor and owner of Native Revival Nursery and Landscapes, will discuss ways of creating aesthetically beautiful gardens using native perennials, shrubs, trees and vines. She will answer your questions about drought tolerant plants. She will show us plants from her nursery and will have plants available for purchase.

Don’t miss this chance for an important educational community event. Learn how to create a landscape harmonious with the environment and consistent with the need to conserve water. View the native plants being cultivated at Hidden Villa, courtesy

of Jean Struthers. And join us for refreshments afterwards.

Hidden Villa is at 26870 Moody Road in Los Altos Hills. The Visitors Welcome Center is the building on the right after the entry gatehouse. Parking is free for those attending this program..

Members of the Native Plant Education Committee are: Diane Barrager, Ginger Summit, Sandy Humphries, Sylvia Jensen and Jean Struthers.

This event is free to members of Hills 2000. A \$5 donation is requested from non-members. Space is limited. To reserve your place call Diane Barrager at (650) 949-4837 or Sylvia Jensen at (650) 948-5382

Design Guidelines Under Attack

The **Guidelines for Residential Design and Land Use** (the **Design Guidelines**) were prepared by the Town in 1994 to provide a user-friendly description of the planning process and town planning objectives for prospective developers of property. Copies can be perused at Town Hall and in the public library, and can be purchased at Town Hall for \$5. This booklet which has been so well received by residents of both our town and neighboring communities is under attack. Council Member Steve Finn stated at the July 17, 1999 Council meeting that “the design guidelines should be thrown out.”

The booklet was written by a broad-based committee of two council members, two planning commissioners, the Town planner, and representatives of Town committees. The architectural firm of Carrasco and Associates worked with the committee and took the lead in writing and illustration. The booklet was approved in February 1994.

During the preparation several informal forums seeking input from builders and architects were held and their input was utilized. Before Council approval, several public meetings were held at which more revisions were suggested and approved.

The resulting booklet, prepared at a cost of \$30,000, has been favorably received and used not only by residents of Los Altos Hills, but in neighboring towns. Several cities have requested copies, which were then used as a model for their own design guidelines. In 1998, the City of Monte Sereno adopted the booklet as its own. Recently, in a letter to Mayor Dauber, the Mayor of Belmont, Coralin Feierbach, writes that she was so inspired by Los Altos Hills’ Design Guidelines booklet that she is looking forward to creating one for Belmont. She adds, “Design review has been criticized by some developers and by the *it’s my property* people. They are forgetting that we can have it both: development with design review will maintain our property values.”

The booklet’s major sections are arranged under the headings of four major goals:

- 1) Retain the open natural atmosphere of Los Altos Hills,
- 2) Design homes to fit the site and be unobtrusive in the neighborhood,
- 3) Design to minimize the appearance of bulk, and
- 4) Design for your needs **and** those of your neighbor.

As new policies and ordinances have been approved, the book has been updated and expanded to reflect any changes. Following the recently passed fast-track ordinance, a subcommittee of Council members Dauber and Casey was established to determine if changes in the book were needed as a result of the “limitations” section of the ordinance.

The subcommittee was deadlocked as to the extent of “limitations” and the full Council voted on a 3-2 vote to take a literal interpretation of “limitations” (that is, only those items specifically mentioned in the ordinance) until the impact of the ordinance could be fully assessed.

Hills 2000 Web Site Up and Running

The Hills 2000 website located at www.hills2000.org is now up and providing current and in depth articles on issues related to Los Altos Hills. The site includes a wealth of information focused on Los Altos Hills including articles on Town issues, Council agendas, analysis by council members, community calendars, monthly humor columns and repostings of letters to the editors printed in the Town Crier. The site also includes longer, researched articles on town topics and how other local cities are handling similar growth and planning issues.

General information about town and a Useful Links page provide quick access to many of the town services web sites (water, garbage, schools, clubs, organizations, etc). A bulletin board section also allows Hills 2000 members to post information about clubs and organizations, recreational groups, kids and Moms/Dads organizations and items wanted or for sale. The site will even offer audio clips from council meetings to better inform Los Altos Hills residents of council discussions. Point your browser to www.hills2000.org and be sure to bookmark the site.

Land Use Committee Formed

The Town Council, at the July 1st meeting, voted to establish a Land Use Committee to help staff update the Land Use element section of the General Plan. The present element was adopted in 1975. A twelve member Committee will be comprised of two Planning Commissioners, one member each from Environmental Design, Finance, Pathways, Safety and Utilities. Each Town Committee will select its representative. In addition, each Council member will appoint a town resident to the committee.

The Land Use Element will update the Town’s basic philosophy concerning land use and development in town. One of the committee’s first tasks will be to assist the town’s consultant, Chris Clark of Crawford, Multari, Clark & Mohr, to draft a community survey. The questions will be sent to all residents and will seek their input on land use issues facing the town.

Other issues to be addressed include development of individual properties, annexations, non-residential facilities such as schools and churches, and open space designations for town owned properties.

The committee will meet once or twice a month, beginning in September through mid-2000. The five Council appointments have been made: Toni Casey appointed Emily Cheng, Bill Siegel appointed Doni Hubbard, Sandy Humphries was appointed by Bob Johnson, Elayne Dauber appointed Richard Lamparter and Evan Whyte was appointed by Steve Finn.

Fast Track Begins

The new “Fast Track” Ordinance goes into effect on August 1. It places limitations on the site development review process and establishes a fast-track process for the review of new residences and major additions. The ordinance was adopted in response to months of debate among residents who were frequently critical of the current process, which was perceived as being too lengthy, often resulting in increased costs to the applicant. While the idea of speeding up the application process is a good one, Hills 2000 has some concerns regarding the implementation of the Fast Track Ordinance.

- The new procedure will increase the demands on an already overworked Town staff and will add to the workload of Town Council members.

- Considerable pressure could be placed on the Planning Director to fast track individual applications by applicants and Town politicians.

- Only immediate neighbors will be notified of a proposed project. No one will safeguard the visual impact of a project on the Town beyond the immediate neighbors.

- Prohibits Planning Commission and Town staff from objecting to certain elements of houses. At present it is not clear how much the authority of site development has been limited and how much this will impact neighbors..

Hills 2000 will follow the implementation of the new ordinance and will keep members informed in future newsletters and on their web site.

The text of the ordinance can be found on the Hills 2000 web site at www.hills2000.org.

A brief overview of the fast-track procedure follows.

The ordinance gives the Town Planning Director the discretion to fast track site development applications that:

- Conform to all of the Town’s codes, guidelines and policies;

- Do not require approval of a variance;
- Have no substantive neighborhood opposition; and
- Obtain the written agreement of the applicant to accept all proposed conditions

Neighbors within 500 feet of the proposed project and members of the Environmental Design Committee and Pathways Committee will be notified of a site development meeting and a staff report will be available for public review prior to the hearing. The applicant will be required to erect story poles to represent the size, height and location of the proposed project. If the Planning Director determines that the project complies with the Town’s General Plan, Zoning and Site Development Codes, Design Guidelines, Town policies and subdivision conditions and that no substantive neighborhood opposition exists he will approve it. The Planning Director’s decision may be appealed in writing to the Council by any interested party.

Applications that fail to meet any of the stipulations above or that present unique planning issues will be submitted to the Planning Commission. The Planning Director’s decision to fast-track or submit a project to the Planning Commission will be final.

In addition to the fast track procedure several limitations were placed on the site development review process.

- A reduction in height, floor area or development area below the maximum allowed by the Town’s Zoning Code, can only be required if the Site Development committee finds that the development would be highly visible to the general public or impair scenic views from nearby property **and** that there is no other reasonable means to mitigate the impact of the structure.

- Specific design and architectural features, including, but not limited to, architectural style, chimneys, window treatment and skylights, shall not be considered or altered by the Site Development Authority.

Color Board (continued from page 1)

with neighborhood. Roof color and material must be pre-approved. Very few metal roofs are approved.

Atherton – No color requirements. The town is built out and has only remodels and tear-downs. Mature landscaping is established

Los Altos Hills regulates color as a means of blending in new homes which might otherwise be obtrusive. The color requirements are intended to blend homes with immature landscaping. The expectation was that when repainting is necessary the house will have mature landscape so there would no longer be a need for restrictions. The town has had a color board for thirteen years. Adopted in 1986, the first group of colors followed the General Plan and code provisions for earthtone colors. The present color board was adopted in 1995 in response to concerns that the board was being applied subjectively. A light reflectivity value requirement of 50% for house colors and 40% for roofs was added making the determination of

allowed colors an objective one. Over the years hundreds of new homes have followed this policy. Integrating new structures into the surrounding landscape has protected the natural character of Los Altos Hills.

Over the past few years, several concerns have surfaced that need to be addressed:

- Several new homes have ignored the color board.
- Approved colors have been used in combinations deemed inappropriate by neighbors and have resulted in complaints.
 - The sheen or gloss of metal roofs has impacted neighbors.
 - There is no time requirement before residents may change the color of their house. Some residents have repainted before trees and shrubbery have had time to grow.



The Watchman

I was just coming out of the Los Altos Pharmacy when I had the misfortune of running into Cousin Festus. This is unusual because said cousin normally resides safely somewhere in Texas, but apparently he was in the Bay Area for a flying visit.

Courtesy demanded. So we dove into the Coffee Shop across the street for a chat. I treated myself to a Grilled Cheese with fries - this is not generally permitted by my overseer, but I figured Festus wouldn't rat on me, and I might need the sustenance. He went with the quiche.

Festus was clearly in fine shape. "I'm in town on business," he announced. "I'm here to persuade the Board of Directors to see it my way." I wasn't aware that he had connections with any Board of Directors, and was loath to probe deeper - Festus can be a crashing bore if you give him any encouragement - so I merely raised my eyebrows politely, and braced for his pitch.

"It's like this," he continued. "There are five of us on the Board, two of us want to go clockwise, two of them want to go anti-clockwise, and Charlie in the middle is the swing vote. But if I can get sufficient shareholders riled up, then Charlie will have to vote our way."

Festus moved the ever-present toothpick from the port side of his mouth to starboard. Apparently this meant that he was waiting for my approval and admiration.

"You got a mandate," I asked, "You got an overwhelming majority?"

"Well - we got more votes than the other guys in the last election."

"How many more?" I pressed.

Festus shifted uncomfortably, sensing that I wasn't going to roll over like a puppy.

"Oh - about one percent," he allowed. "But that's still more than they got, so we got us a mandate!" he growled.

"So the other forty-nine percent of the shareholders don't have a voice and can be safely ignored?" I inquired gently. Festus shifted his toothpick back to port - not a good sign.

"We got more votes than they did - and we spent nearly five times more money to do so than they did - so we got us the majority. We got us the mandate - fair and square!" His toothpick was now wagging threateningly.

"And what about the other three Board members?" I asked. "When they got elected to their terms, didn't

they get a majority in their elections - and now suddenly they're chopped liver?"

Festus glared at me. "You some kind of tree-hugging liberal?" he asked. His toothpick migrated again to the other side of his mouth in obvious agitation. He paused in uncomfortable silence for a moment. Then the smile returned to his face as a new thought struck him.

"It don't matter no how," he ventured. "As long as we can get Charlie to vote our way, then who cares what anybody thinks?"

"Charlie has a secret weak point," Festus whispered conspiratorially. "He listens to his constituents."

The puzzlement on my face must have shown through, because the toothpick went back to the other side.

"It's easy - all we gotta do is persuade his constituents that we have a mandate. Make like all the shareholders really see it our way. Write a couple of letters to the editor. Make a couple of speeches about how insulted we are. Speeches about shareholders rights. Get people riled up. Stuff like that."

"Isn't that being divisive?" I asked. "Is that what your so-called mandate is for?"

The toothpick waggled furiously for a moment.

"It's about winning," he growled. "That's what my mandate is - to get everything going clockwise. This way I can divert folk's attention, befuddle them about the anti-clockwise, make like there really is a mandate for clockwise out there - and then Charlie is bound to follow his principles. Piece of cake."

Just then the waitress came with the bill. Festus picked up a fresh toothpick on the way out and we emerged into the bright sunlight of Second Street. We bade each other the usual fond farewells, and I went to look for my car breathing a sigh of relief - and happy in the assurance that nothing as perverse could ever happen in the small-town politics of Los Altos Hills.

And I didn't feel guilty about the Grilled Cheese at all.

Getting Involved with Hills 2000 – Friends of the Hills

Although formally organized for only a few months, volunteers have already staffed several committees including Membership, Research and Analysis, Council Watch, Neighborhood Alert, Public Relations, and Newsletter. One group of **Hills 2000** members is supporting the Town's Safety Committee's effort to address resident concerns about neighborhood safety. Another group is planning educational forums. (See page 2 SAVE THIS DATE.)

Hills 2000 members believe it is important to provide the electorate with a solid understanding of all sides of the issues facing the Town. Well-informed voters are the best safeguard for preserving the founding principles of the Town. **Hills 2000** intends to keep residents informed of all sides of key issues as they arise. A web site at **www.hills2000.org** will provide up-to-date information for those residents with access to the Internet.

New members are welcome. Volunteers with time to serve on committees are needed. Membership dues are \$20 per year . To be assured of receiving future newsletters and notices of educational and social events, please fill out and return the enclosed envelope or contact **Nancy Couperas** at **(650) 941-4808**.

Summer Harvest Pot Luck Party and First Annual Meeting

**Sunday, September 12, 1999
4 - 7 p.m.**

Families and Children are Welcome
Swimming, Games, and Music
Pot Luck Dinner at 5:30 p.m.
Hills 2000 Annual Meeting at 6:30 p.m.

At the home of
Tay and Scott Vanderlip
13851 Fremont Pines Lane, Los Altos Hills

RSVP by Sept. 8th for pot luck signup and
parking directions
(650) 948-6455

Hills 2000 – Friends of the Hills
Box 31
Los Altos, CA 94023-0031
www.hills2000.org

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
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Adopt a Tree

Oak Tree Seedlings Available

Hills 2000 has some native oak seedlings left over from the family picnic. If you would like to adopt one, please call **Sandy Humphries** at **(650) 948-6579**

