

# Town of Portola Valley General Plan

## Town Center Area Plan

Last amended April 22, 1998

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# *Town Center Area Plan*

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## ***Introduction***

- 6300 The Town Center Area Plan deals with one of the two commercial areas in the town, the other being the Nathhorst Triangle Area. While basic policy affecting the setting for the Town Center Area (TCA) is found elsewhere in the general plan, the most detailed proposals for this area are found in this sub-area plan. To obtain the fullest understanding of the town's policy for the development of the TCA, reference should be made to this sub-area plan, other pertinent parts of the town general plan, and to the town's planning regulations. A background study on file with the town which is of particular relevance to this plan is "Reevaluation of C-C and A-P Zoned Properties, Town of Portola Valley, January 9, 1992."
- 6301 The plan is intended to guide, unify and enhance, both functionally and aesthetically, the development of the separately owned private properties in coordination with public spaces and facilities, roads, trails and paths. The plan includes: objectives, principles and standards; description; and the plan diagram.

## **Planning Area**

- 6302 This sub-area plan includes all parcels fronting on both sides of the section of Portola Road generally from Wyndham Drive east to the Woodside town limits at Farm Road and adjoining nearby lands which should be considered when planning for this sub-area of the town. The planning area therefore includes lands proposed for community commercial and community service activities serving the town, institutional uses serving the town, recreation areas and residential lands. The community commercial and community service areas are sufficient, when

combined with the other commercial area in the town, to meet the needs of the town for local goods and services when the town is completely developed in conformance with the general plan.

6303 (Not Used.)

## ***Objectives***

- 6304
1. To develop the Town Center Area as an integrated area for businesses and institutional type uses serving the residents of Portola Valley and its spheres of influence along with compatible residential uses.
  2. To produce a unified commercial-service-institutional-residential complex in the TCA with a scale and design quality compatible with the rural setting of the town.
  3. To serve the TCA with a system of roads, paths and trails that provide for safe, convenient and enjoyable access to, from and through the area.

## ***Principles***

- 6305
1. In order to serve as an integrated community serving area, the TCA shall provide space for:
    - a. Convenience goods and services and limited shopping goods in the community commercial areas.
    - b. Offices for businesses serving the community in the community service areas.
    - c. Institutional uses such as churches and town civic facilities.
    - d. Those facilities which tend to bring people together informally such as parks, outdoor cafe and sitting areas.
    - e. Single family residences as well as housing for senior citizens.
- 6306
2. In order to meet desired design objectives:
    - a. Growth shall be orderly and, in so far as possible, ultimately uninterrupted along property lines between commercial and service uses.
    - b. Flexibility shall be allowed as to land use on those community service parcels which due to location and access can reasonably accommodate

office or residential uses, and requirements shall be established to ensure their compatibility with surrounding land uses.

- c. Non-residential uses shall not adversely affect nearby residential properties. Noise, sight, odor and other nuisances shall be held to a reasonable minimum.
- d. Excessive grading shall be avoided and attractive natural features such Sausal Creek shall be preserved and enhanced.
- e. Structures shall be designed so that all sides open to public view are attractive.
- f. Parking lots shall permit convenient automobile movement, parking and access to facilities, avoiding unduly large, inefficiently arranged paved areas and avoiding automobile conflict with pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians.
- g. In commercial, service and institutional areas, building service areas shall be segregated from other areas, and trash containers shall be screened. Equipment noises and emissions shall be minimized.
- h. Fire hydrants and good circulation for fire protection shall be provided as needed.
- i. Utilities including electric and communication services shall be underground, consistent with the regulatory authority of the town.

6307

- 3. In order to provide desired circulation:
  - a. Safe vehicle ingress and egress shall be accomplished by limiting points of access to public roads.
    - 1) Driveway entrances serving different commercial and office properties shall be combined at common property lines where possible.
    - 2) Easements and/or mutual use agreements may be required among the various property owners to connect driveway entrances in order to facilitate off-street circulation and reduce the number of driveway entrances required.
  - b. Safe pedestrian and bicycle access to and inter-connections among non-residential developments shall be provided.

- 1) A separate pedestrian path, preferably separated from the road, shall be installed in the front setbacks or the road right of way along the north side of Portola Road frontages of community commercial and community service properties.
- 2) Safe paths between the roadside and on-site improvements shall be required and compatible developments shall be interconnected.

6307a. In order to assist in providing housing pursuant to the provisions of the housing element, parcels of land classified as community service which are found not to be needed for such uses may be used for residential purposes if suitably located.

## ***Standards***

6308 Standards for development should be set forth in the town zoning, subdivision and site development regulations.

## ***Description***

6309 The plan sets forth a framework for the development of the TCA within which considerable latitude exists for design and development of individual properties. The basic distribution of land uses and key circulation features are set forth as controlling elements. Sensitive design on individual properties woven into the overall framework can produce an attractive and functional commercial area for the town. While the objectives, principles and standards set forth in the preceding sections are the guiding statements for future development, the plan diagram, when viewed in the context of this description, should convey an understanding of the type of development the town is seeking for this area.

### **Community Commercial and Community Service Areas**

6310 The existing community commercial and community service areas are largely developed but can accommodate some additional growth. The land use plan has been prepared to guide any further development which can be expected as development pressures increase. The shape of the commercial and service area, lying north of Portola Road, is unusual in that it is a large triangular area with extensive frontage on Portola Road and considerable depth on several properties. This plan has been developed with recognition of the particular attributes of each parcel within this area. Each parcel is numbered on the plan diagram and described below.

6311 **Parcel 1**, designated as community commercial, is developed as a nursery on the front with the residence of the owner in the rear. This distribution of uses is

appropriate since it concentrates customers on the front of the property near non-residential uses and limits the use of the rear portion of the property to residential use which is compatible with the adjoining residential uses which front on Wyndham Drive.

- 6312 **Parcel 2**, designated as community commercial, is developed primarily as a restaurant. While the site is restricted in size and cannot supply all needed parking, it has joint use of parking at the nearby Village Square Shopping Center (Parcel #3) and customers park in the Portola Road right-of-way. The building does not meet the required setback from Portola Road since it was built prior to current regulations. It is prevented from meeting current front yard standards due to the shallowness of the parcel.
- 6313 **Parcel 3**, designated as community commercial, is developed with the Village Square Shopping Center. The parcel is virtually in full use with buildings and parking except for a portion of the rear of the parcel which is used largely for open air storage. The architectural style of the shopping center building is well-suited to the site which has a number of redwood trees. Any additional development on the rear of the parcel should be undertaken so as to minimize adverse effects on the creek and residential uses across the creek to the north.
- 6314 **Parcel 4**, designated as community service, is a small parcel containing an office building which has some historical significance. The building, described in the historic element of the general plan, was constructed in 1904 and known as "Hallet's Store." It subsequently had a saloon added to the front. In 1972, it was extensively remodeled so as to lose much of its historical character. If it is not preserved as a historical building, a suitable marker should be installed on the site. The parcel is well-suited to office use having direct frontage on Portola Road.
- 6315 **Parcel 5**, designated as community service, lies behind parcels 4 and 6 except for a narrow corridor extending to Portola Road. The parcel in reality consists of three smaller parcels, each of which is a legal parcel having been created prior to the establishment of planning regulations under San Mateo County. This parcel lacks substantial direct frontage on Portola Road. It could be developed for office use if properly related to the parcel in front. If offices were developed, consideration should be given to vehicular access to parcel 3 to the north to provide for a higher degree of integration.
- 6316 On the other hand, based on studies of the town's need for office space, it appears that there is slightly more land designated for commercial and office uses in the town than is needed. The most appropriate alternate use for parcel 5 is for residential purposes. Because the parcel is bounded by commercial property on one side and office property on the other side, it would be appropriate to allow residential uses of a density commensurate with these adjoining uses. This housing

could be in the form of either detached or attached units. The appropriate density and design should be controlled through the provisions of the zoning ordinance for planned unit developments, but in no case shall exceed 5.8 housing units per net acre (exclusive of street and road rights-of-way).\* Any additional development on the rear of the parcel should be undertaken so as to minimize any adverse effects on the creek and on the residential uses lying across the creek to the northeast.

6317 **Parcels 6, 7 and 8**, designated as community service, are currently used for offices. These uses appear appropriate and should be allowed to continue or be replaced with other office uses.

6318 **Parcel 9**, designated as community service, is very small and currently occupied by a residence. Since the parcel is next to office uses, it could be used for offices as long as parking requirements and other standards of the zoning ordinance can be met. Alternatively, the parcel could continue to be used for a small residence.

6319 It is intended that normal yard setbacks of the zoning ordinance would be reduced or waived as necessary between community commercial and community service parcels in order to achieve a unified design.

6319a. Any residential development in the community service areas shall create an internal and external environment that is consistent with the residential qualities of the town including appropriate open spaces, planting and building design. While the intensity of development may be higher than generally found in the town, the overall feeling should blend in with the residential quality of the town rather than being distinctively different.

### **Institutional**

6320 A church occupies the parcel west of parcel 1. This use provides a transition between the residences fronting on Wyndham Drive and the commercial uses to the east. The use of Parcel 1 should always be controlled so as to minimize disturbance to the adjoining residential uses.

6321 To the south of Portola Road, there are two churches and the town center. These are all important community-serving facilities.

### **Residential**

6322 The Wyndham Drive area is shown as Low-Medium Intensity Residential (typically less than 1 acre per housing unit.) North of the TCA, in the Town of Woodside, the typical land area per housing unit is 3 acres or more. West of Portola Road, two

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\* This standard is based on the existing minimum lot size of 7500 square feet, which is a density of approximately 5.8 housing units per acre.

residential densities are shown: Low Intensity Residential (typically 1-2 acres per housing unit) and Conservation Residential (typically 2-4 acres per housing unit).

### **Community Park, Recreation Area, Greenway**

- 6323 A major town recreation area is a part of the town center and contains playing fields, a recreation area for small children and tennis courts. This area functions in conjunction with the buildings of the town center.
- 6324 A private stable that boards horses and provides lessons is located adjoining the town center.
- 6325 A greenway is shown extending from Portola Road behind a church and the town recreation area. This greenway is shown on the comprehensive plan diagram as extending to the southwest behind The Sequoias to connect with lands in the ownership of the Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District and Alpine Road.
- 6326 A greenway is shown along the both sides of Portola Road. It is intended that this area be retained as an open corridor planted with native vegetation. Buildings on properties should be subordinated to the greenway in so far as possible.
- 6327 Sausal Creek is a major feature of the planning area. It supports considerable riparian vegetation and presumably a significant amount of wildlife. The creek bed, its banks and vegetation should be protected and enhanced as appropriate as development takes place along the creek. The creek is shown within a greenway.

### **Circulation**

- 6328 Portola Road is classified as an arterial road in the circulation element of the general plan. As such, it is well-suited to providing access to the TCA. In addition, it is striped with a left turn acceleration and deceleration lane in front of the commercial and office designated areas.
- 6329 A possible future street is shown entering Portola Road from the southwest. This is part of a loop road which, if developed, would provide access to several properties in the western hillsides of the town.

### **Trails, Paths and Bicycle Lanes**

- 6330 The adopted trails and paths element of the general plan shows a pedestrian path along the entire frontage of the TCA on the north side of Portola Road.- This path needs to be enhanced and completed to properly interconnect these parcels.

6331 Several pedestrian paths, bicycle paths and riding trails are shown on the south side of Portola Road. All of these facilities are also shown on the trails and paths element of the general plan.

6332 Bicycle lanes are shown along Portola Road.

### **Sanitary Sewers**

6333 Many of the non-residential uses in the planning area are served by septic tanks and drainfields. As further development takes place, these facilities should be abandoned and connections should be made to the sanitary sewer.

### **Fault Constraints**

6334 The San Andreas Fault crosses parcels 7, 8 and 9 and is to the rear of parcel 5. Construction on these parcels will have to comply with the fault setback regulations of the town zoning regulations.

6335 –

6339 Not Used.

### ***Plan Diagram***

6340 The plan diagram is part of this sub-area plan and is labeled Town Center Area Plan Diagram. The plan diagram is found in a pocket following this general plan.

## **Town Center Area Plan Appendix 1: Implementation of the Town Center Area Plan**

### **Actions taken:**

1. The town center area plan is subject to the same zoning provisions as specified for the Nathhorst Triangle area plan (see Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan Appendix 1: Implementation of the Nathhorst Triangle area plan) except that provisions related to frontage on Alpine Road do not pertain.

### **Future actions:**

1. The town should continue to apply the zoning standards and procedures that are in place