
Fw: reasons not to vote in favor of the Portola Terrace (Stanford Wedge) project

From:

Sent: Monday, December 2, 2024 2:58 PM

To: Town Center <TownCenter@portolavalley.net>; Jeff Aalfs <JAalfs@portolavalley.net>; Sarah Wernikoff <swernikoff@portolavalley.net>; Judith Hasko <jhasko@portolavalley.net>; Mary Hufty <mhufty@portolavalley.net>; Craig Taylor <ctaylor@portolavalley.net>; Town Center <TownCenter@portolavalley.net>

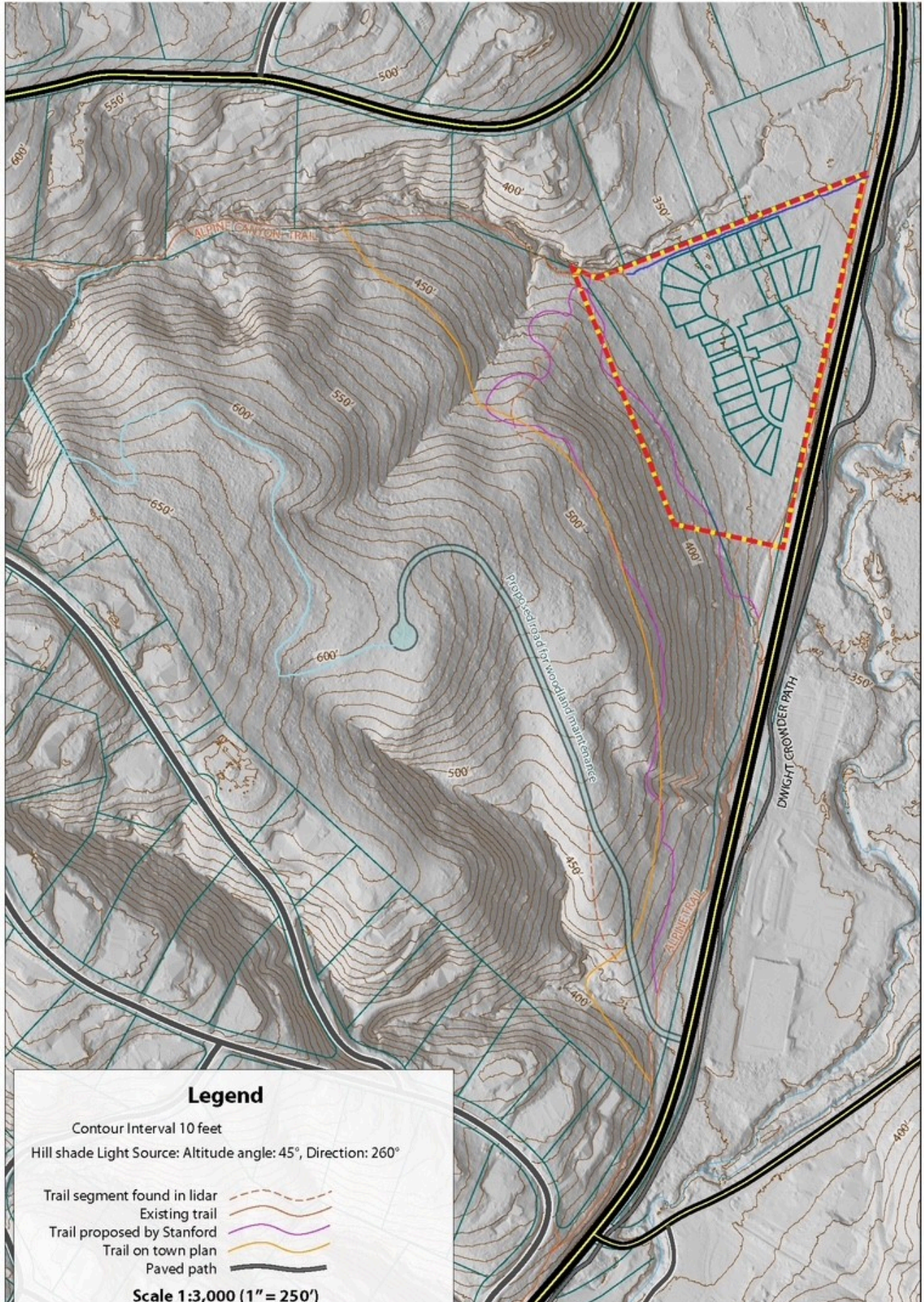
Subject: reasons not to vote in favor of the Portola Terrace (Stanford Wedge) project

Portola Valley Town Council Members:

The following provide reasons not to vote in favor of the would-be Conditional Use Permit, Vesting Tentative Map, Architectural Review Permit, Certification of the Environmental Impact Report and other items related to the "project" that is the subject of the September 2019 formal application (and any amendments) regarding developing the property often referred to as the "Stanford Wedge."

TRAILS OF PROPOSED PORTOLA TERRACE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Map A





Traffic safety – including regarding pedestrian trail users, pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists

Possibly, plans overlook safety hazards regarding the two confluences of Alpine Road, a driveway into and out of the “project,” and a public trail. Somewhat similar (with respect to at least Alpine Road and roads that tee from Alpine Road) junctions exist (at Westridge Drive, at Arastradero Road, and in Ladera) for which Alpine Road includes extra lanes to support left turns. Alpine Road is likely wider (than near the “project”) at these junctions. Uses of these extant intersections might seem somewhat problematic. Without widening Alpine Road, adding left-turn lanes in Alpine Road, and ensuring adequately unobstructed lines of sight from each driveway, risks of accidents might seem unacceptable.

Also, what about crosswalks for pedestrians (including school-aged children) crossing Alpine Road?

If current or future circumstances warrant widening or otherwise improving Alpine Road, who will pay for the improvements?

Fire risks – including to the Town, Stanford, Stanford families, and Woodside Fire Protection District personnel

“Project” buildings would be closer to each other than might be prudent or consistent with Town ordinances or with WFPD (Woodside Fire Protection District) recommendations or requirements. Seemingly, proximity might be so close that fire (which might start in one of the buildings) could spread – via just infrared heat – from building to building. Also, risks of fire spread, from the “project” to other parts of the Town may be unacceptable.

Views – including from a Town trail

For a pedestrian walking along the public trail on the east side of the “project,” views of the “project” would feature approximately 660 feet of essentially continuous multistory development, absent planting (or similar) to hide the housing. (There may be one place at which it would be possible to see hillside through a narrow gap.) What happened to the notion of a “scenic corridor?” Planting might lead to better optics, but seemingly appropriate planting may not be in plans and might increase fire risks.

Existence and location of trails

The following two notions seem to conflict with each other.

- PDF page 7 (with a text heading of “Page 4”) of the Town-generated 621-page [PDF](#) agenda for an ASCC meeting states “This includes the formalization of the existing Canyon Trail, and the segment of the Canyon Trail previously known as the “Woodside Trails Club Trail” that runs on the northern edge of the parcel and connects to Alpine Trail.”
- PDF page 10 (with a text heading of “Page 8”) of the Town-generated-[PDF](#) agenda package for a possible September 17, 2024 “Conservation Committee; Bicycle, Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Committee; and Trails and Paths Committee” joint meeting includes Figure 3: BLOWN UP GENERAL PLAN TRAILS MAP and, regarding that figure, states “4. The blue segment is commonly referred to as the “Alpine Canyon” trail. Stanford notes this segment of the trail is not on the project site, but on the adjacent neighboring properties,”
 - The Town document seems not to confirm or rebut the statement that the document attributes to Stanford.

There is no trail on three of the relevant adjacent neighboring properties. The Town should not issue a conditional use permit unless Stanford agrees to place the relevant part of the trail segment on its property or the Town waves needs for such a part of the trail segment.

Geology

A geologic study may have overlooked LIDAR data that might indicate a fault trace that might run through land on which the “project” would build residences.

Utilities

Neighborhood utilities – electric power, landline utilities, cellular service, over-the-air TV service – might seem to exhibit noticeable problems. Would there be enough capacity to accommodate – regarding those services, water, and fire hydrants – the “project?”

Architectural detail

During a public “show and tell” regarding “project” architecture, the Stanford-engaged architect indicated that it could reorient second-story windows so that none faced neighboring non-Stanford properties. Such would lessen, at night, light that (non-Stanford) neighbors would see. Do current plans reflect such reorientations?

To the extent that the trail segment discussed above associates with an actual or future trail, reorienting the second-story windows would lessen light seen from the trail.

Possible procedural concerns

- Have the Town and Stanford relied on the best available evidence regarding fire risks and geologic fault traces?
- Was the selection of EIR topics proper and was the process to select the topics proper? Were topics or aspects that should have been studied labeled untowardly as not to be studied or as mitigatable (without mitigation plans having – to this day – been stated, reviewed, or adopted and required)?
- Did the walk-throughs – to see the site and the tent poles – meet Town standards for being a (seemingly required) Town function? (It is possible, for example, that the Town did not send notices to nearby residents. Stanford sent notices and required visitors to sign contracts to go onto the property. Did the requirement to sign contracts deter public participation? Did the tent poles meet Town standards or comport with normal Town practices? Did Town committees and staff participate in manners consistent with other walk-throughs?)
- Is there adequate understanding between the Town and Stanford regarding administration of the for-the-public aspects of the housing? (A basis for a possible concern might be that applicable law might forbid precluding Stanford’s offering the units to Stanford personnel.)

- Tom

Thomas J. Buckholtz

Dec 5, 2024

To: Members of Town Council

From: Rebecca Flynn, ASCC Vice Chair and Town Council Member Elect

Although I am completely in support of Stanford developing their privately held land with a development that benefits Portola Valley in many ways and contributes to our RHNA BMR units, I write this note to express disappointment with the final design of the Portola Terrace Project and with the process followed to get to this point.

The Town and Stanford have held numerous meetings on this project since 2019. This meeting is the fifth and final meeting now allowed under the new SB330 law.

All the past meetings would appear to have served little to no purpose. There has been minimal shift on Stanford's part to create a project design more in line with Portola Valley's aesthetic. Instead, the Town is now at the point of having no choice but to approve a compressed, Menlo park-like suburban city scape (Stanford's stated area of expertise) with tiny, fenced back yards with ridiculous postage stamp lawns instead of larger common spaces and more separations between buildings that would have provided more of the Portola Valley natural aesthetic.

The more time I have spent delving into this project (now nearly 2000 pages of documentation when the final EIR is included), the more disappointed I get.

Trees

Stanford cites the mythology of designing the entire site around the two oak trees located at the middle of the complex. Those two oak trees are not in good health. Their trunks are currently embedded in a concrete pad, surrounded by a base rock road that goes directly over their dripline. Both trees have a toxic 4 by 6 pressure-treated beam attached between them and into their trunks. The trees have grown around the beam which cannot be removed in any easy way. They have been poorly trimmed in the past, are lopsided, and will take decades to recover, if ever, and will likely not survive the planned construction.



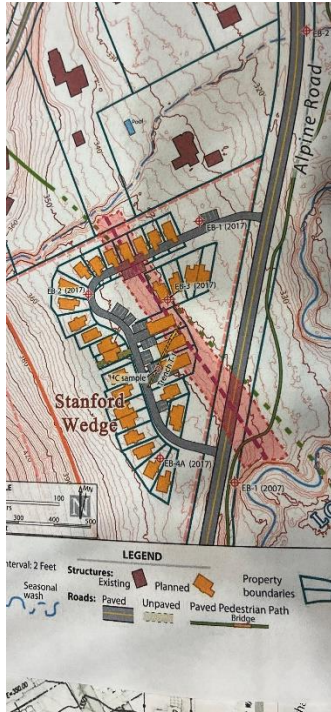


When one compares those trees to some of the more beautiful trees in the development area, the disappointment is compounded. While Stanford expresses concern with removing additional trees if they extend the complex to the west and south, the reality is those trees are mainly volunteers that create fire hazards as the land has not had any wildfire or controlled burns in likely a century or more.



Hermit Fault

When you add in the potential existence of the Hermit fault that the experts on our Geological Safety Committee have been studying and documenting, one wonders which Stanford faculty will buy the 3-4 houses directly over its hypothesized route? As the three BMR apartment buildings are directly within the borders of the demonstrated lineament that the GSC experts consider as one piece of evidence of this fault, one starts to get cynical about the entire project.



What would I have wanted:

1. Have ASCC and Stanford walk the site and highlight the truly most magnificent heritage trees worth saving.
2. Design the complex around those heritage trees. I would not have designed the entire complex around the two pathetic dying trees in the middle of the horse facilities.
3. I would have walked around the PV Ranch to understand how those houses interact with the natural surroundings without lawns or private fencing but yet provide private space.
4. I would have placed the tot lot and common space along the Hermit fault lineament to minimize any potential risk. (I write this as my phone has loud alerts about 7, 6. and 5.3 (and a dozen smaller) earthquakes and tsunami warnings in California.)
5. I would have opened up the development by pushing the western homes 5-10' more into the hillside. The additional cut dirt would be used at the fire road construction, minimizing trucking of dirt into PV and the concomitant greenhouse gas emissions. It would have reduced the need for fill along the eastern side of the complex. I also would have considered keeping more of the slope across the complex (east to west) instead of planning for massive earthworks (and all tree removal) to create a flatter development area.
6. I would have stretched the complex 25-50 feet further to the south along the flatter area along Alpine Road. This would provide room for the full 41 units and more space for individual homes and common spaces. It would avoid duet homes.
7. The fire department is already going to require Stanford to remove quite a few of the volunteer trees located in the area Stanford has called the 200' fire break so these changes would result in little change in tree removal, many of which are small volunteers. Many of

these trees are in poor health, scraggly, or dead and need to be removed any way for fire safety and to reduce ladder fuels and close proximity.

8. I would have ensured that buildings were barely visible from Alpine Road, probably by adding around 5 feet to the Alpine Road set back and most importantly I would not put the three largest buildings (BMRs) in the front of the complex at the more visible location to the road.
9. I would have interspersed the BMR buildings throughout the site and placed them more in the back. I would have preferred to have the BMR units placed in buildings that had no distinguishing features from the faculty houses by combining the smaller bmr units into houses that looked like the 4bedroom plus den homes.
10. I would have designed homes that were less bland and boring and had more traditional roof forms instead of the odd flattish and uneven ones.
11. In order to provide safer exits and entrances, I would make the road one way and allow parking on one side to eliminate the concerns about excess parking ending up on Alpine Road.
12. I would ensure that the 100' widening of Alpine Road that Stanford committed to during the Planning Commission meeting was fully documented and included a turn lane and center merge lane.

Upon today's approval of this project, as Stanford moves forward, they are going to discover that trucking in 4000 cu yards of dirt for the fire road from far away into Portola Valley is going to be far more expensive than simply moving dirt from the housing side. They will learn that compacting 2-7 feet of fill is prohibitively expensive, far more than adding 2-3 feet of additional cut on the western side of the complex (which would eliminate the 7' worth of retaining walls along Alpine Road). They will realize once they get their final soils reports and structural engineering that piers will be required for their homes and BMR units, not spread footings, due to all the fill and the alluvial substrate.

Recommendations

As our current Town development process does not serve its purpose well either for the Town nor for applicants, I encourage the Town Council to write language into their approval allowing Stanford to make the modifications I suggest and allow the PV Planning department to facilitate those changes. In exchange, Stanford should be allowed to add back their 2 allowed market rate units (assuming the complex is stretched out further) so that there are additional financial and housing unit incentives beyond the construction savings.

I do not know the legal ramifications of allowing the additional flexibility into the approval so that Stanford can make the recommended changes to lot lines, add the two units, change the lot sizes, setbacks, and the vesting tentative map while ensuring oversight from non public subcommittees of the ASCC, PC, and TC. In the hopes that the Town can approve the flexibility, I consider it would result in a far better project and cost less money.

I also request that Town Council require Stanford to provide full plans for the widening of Alpine Road and ensure that the utilities are extended as far as the Glen Oaks stable area.

Rebecca Flynn

ASCC Vice Chair

Town Council member elect.

FW: Trails and Paths comments for Town Council Meeting 12/5/2024

From Terrence Grindall <tgrindall@portolavalley.net>

Date Thu 12/5/2024 2:52 PM

To Christine Boland <cboland@portolavalley.net>

📎 2 attachments (4 MB)

Responses to stanford's objections.pdf; 56-RSM-PG032-TRACT NO. 803 PINE RIDGE.tif;



Terrence Grindall

Interim Planning & Building Director

Town of Portola Valley

765 Portola Rd

Portola Valley, CA 94028

Phone: (650) 851-1700 x 210

Cell Phone: (650)-847-0607

Web: www.portolavalley.net

Email: tgrindall@portolavalley.net

From: Gary Hanning [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2024 2:11 PM

To: Terrence Grindall <tgrindall@portolavalley.net>; Fred Leach <fredleach@gmail.com>; Sarah Wernikoff <swernikoff@portolavalley.net>; ctaylor@pvsd.net; Mary Hufty <mhufty@portolavalley.net>; Judith Hasko <jhasko@portolavalley.net>; Jeff Aalfs <JAalfs@portolavalley.net>

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Fwd: Trails and Paths comments for Town Council Meeting 12/5/2024

>>

>> Hi Terrance,

>>

>> Attached are the comments from the Trails and Paths Committee for tonight's Town Council Meeting. Please include them in the package if there is still time. My apologies this is coming in so late, the power is out at my home and I'm working on my phone.

>>

>> Also copying the council members directly.

>>

>> Thank you,

>>

>> Gary Hanning

>>

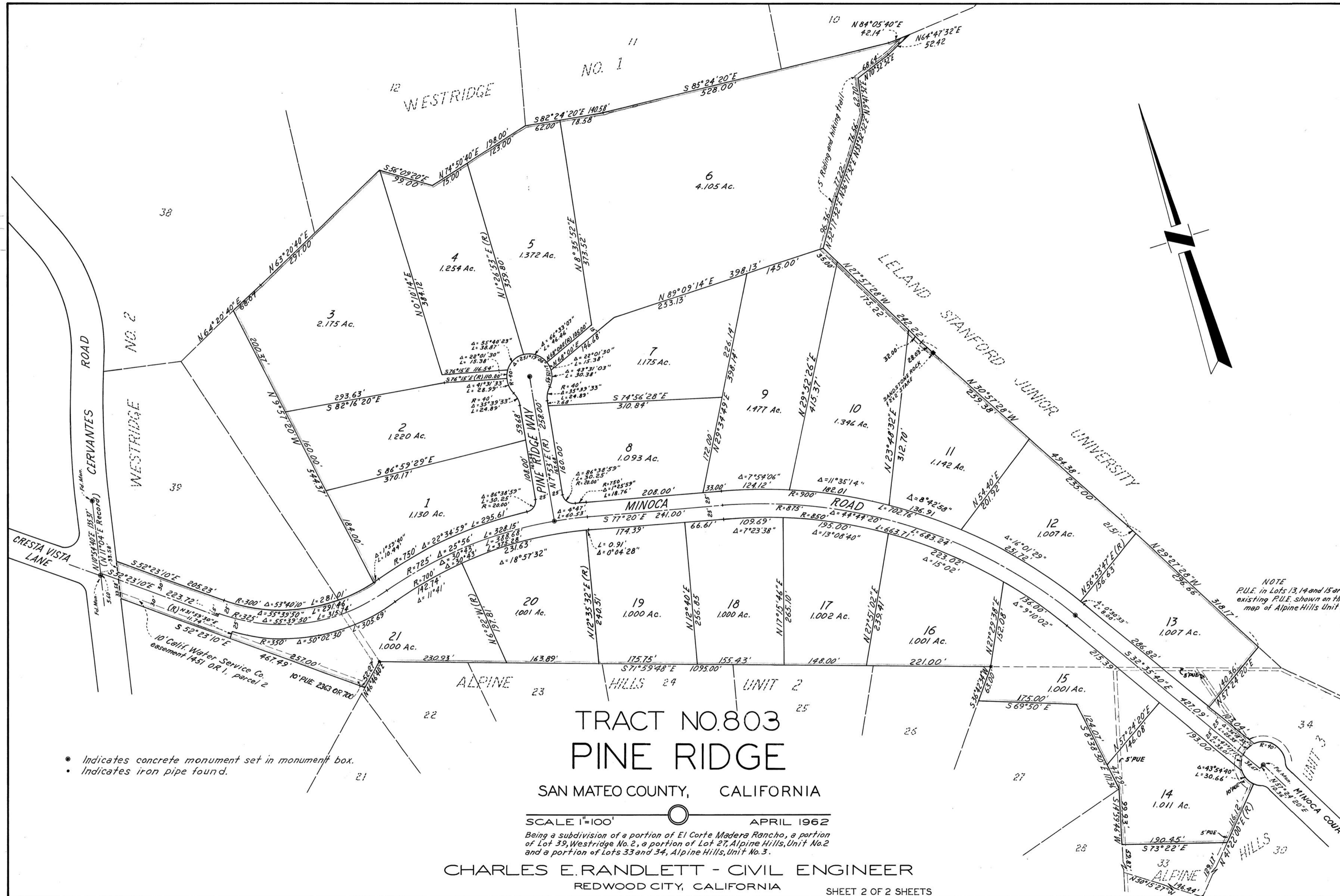
>>>>

1. The Alpine Canyon Trail exists today. It is a Westridge Trail and all the easements are in place. It is present on the official Portola Valley Trail Map and it is maintained by WASC and the neighbors who live along the trail. We are asking that Stanford make two connections to the Alpine Canyon Trail:
 - a. First, a connector trail that runs along the northern edge of the subject property and connects the existing Alpine Canyon Trail to Alpine Rd.. This trail would not be in a riparian corridor, in fact this segment of trail has existed on Stanford's property since ~1960. Stanford had objected to this recommendation citing privacy concerns. The planning Commission has rejected those concerns citing trails in PV Ranch and other parts of Town where trails are routed behind homes, including homes without fences. Those discussions can be found [here](#) and [here](#). The planning commission believes that this trail could be retained even if the subdivision were not moved south from the northern property line.
 - b. Second, the proposed upper "Loop Trail" should be routed all the way to the existing Alpine Canyon Trail per the Trails and Paths Element of the General Plan, diagram A. It should also be connected to the proposed lower "Loop Trail" per Stanford's trail map.
2. It was recommended by the ASCC and the Planning Commission that the Fire Road be a "trail" accessible to hikers. The ASCC went further and recommended that a new trail be created that starts at the fire road turn around and connects to existing public trail easements that cross several lots on Minoca Rd and Pine Ridge Way ultimately intersecting with the Alpine Canyon Trail. The Trails and Paths committee supports this request and in fact had this as one of our initial recommendations in 2020.

Stanford has objected to this recommendation claiming that trail users would want to park at the entrance to the fire road, and that the Trails and Paths element does not intend for Trailheads to have parking for cars. They are also concerned about the risk of fire created by trail users. Our position is that we have many similar trailheads in Portola Valley that do not have parking. We have not experienced any issues with regards to trail users parking in areas where parking is not permitted. We have also never experienced a fire created by a trail user. To the contrary, we have had trail users report fires that have been started by contractors, electrical equipment failures etc. We also receive regular requests from residents to

close trails so that they can be used to access areas for the purpose of fire abatement. When trails are properly designed and maintained they can also serve as a fire break.

3. The Trails and Paths Committee continues to recommend that the entire length of the Alpine Rd Trail be moved inward from the road right away approx. 15 feet and made multi-use (bicycles, hiking and equestrian). We believe that Stanford agrees with this request however it has not been shown on their current proposed trail map.



- Indicates concrete monument set in monument box.
- Indicates iron pipe found.

TRACT NO. 803
PINE RIDGE

SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

SCALE 1"=100' APRIL 1962

Being a subdivision of a portion of El Corte Madera Rancho, a portion of Lot 39, Westridge No. 2, a portion of Lot 27, Alpine Hills, Unit No. 2 and a portion of Lots 33 and 34, Alpine Hills, Unit No. 3.

CHARLES E. RANDLETT - CIVIL ENGINEER


REDWOOD CITY, CALIFORNIA

SHEET 2 OF 2 SHEETS

NOTE
P.U.E. in Lots 13, 14 and 15 are
existing P.U.E. shown on the
map of Alpine Hills Unit 3

Fwd: C-CAG Portola Valley Traffic report

From Kristi Corley [REDACTED]
Date Thu 12/5/2024 2:56 PM
To Christine Boland <cboland@portolavalley.net>

 1 attachment (639 KB)
28717 CCAG LRSP Portola Valley BPTS 02 07 2024.pdf;

Please post as a public comment for 12/5/24 special town council meeting at 6:00.

Begin forwarded message:

Date: November 20, 2024 at 11:03:07 AM PST
To: Judith Hasko <jhasko@portolavalley.net>, Jeff Aalfs <jaalfs@portolavalley.net>, Craig Taylor <ctaylor@portolavalley.net>, Mary Hufty <mhufty@portolavalley.net>, Sarah Wernikoff <swernikoff@portolavalley.net>
Subject: C-CAG Portola Valley Traffic report

I submit for public comment for 12/5/24 town council meeting. Please post as public comment.

Portola Valley Town Council,

Please review this traffic report prior to 12/5/24, 6:00pm Town Council meeting. Please consider inviting the C-CAG author to attend this meeting for explanation. I believe we pay an annual fee to C- CAG so best to invite them when needed.

Thank you,



San Mateo Countywide Local Road Safety Plan

Portola Valley Bicycle,
Pedestrian, and Traffic
Safety Committee

February 7, 2024
8:15 am



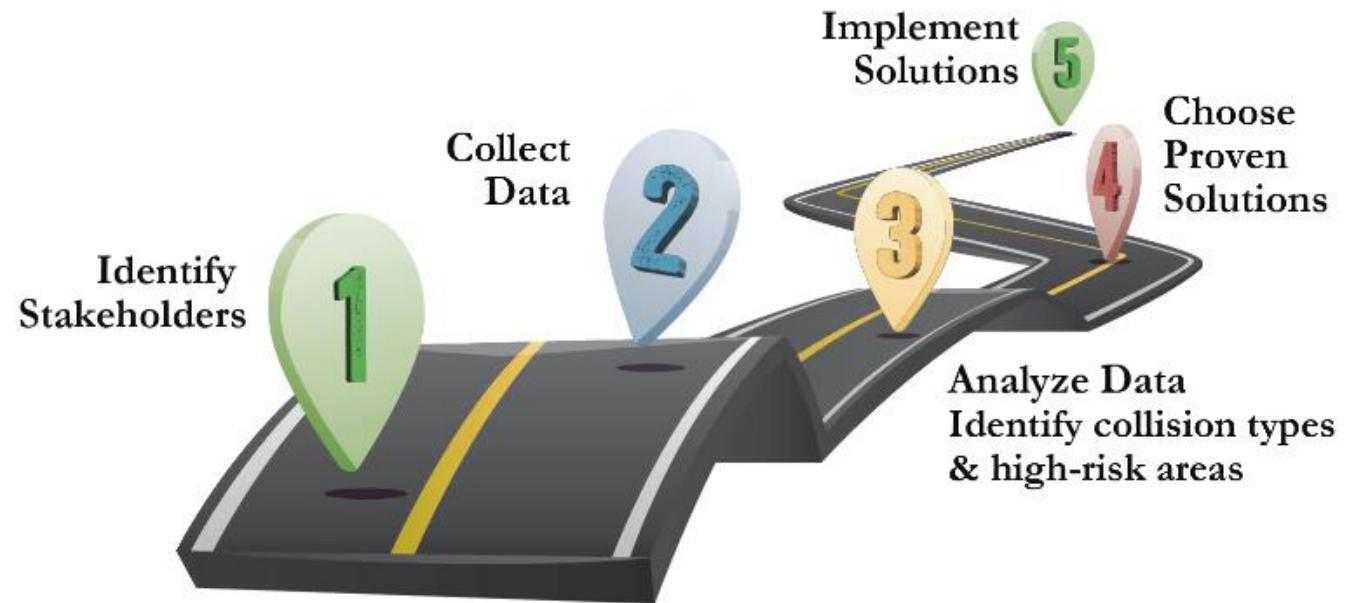
C/CAG Countywide Local Roadway Safety Plans

- Received funding from MTC through OBAG 3 Regional Program
- Sets a regionwide vision to advance roadway safety, while also developing LRSPs for local agencies without one
- Position all local agencies for HSIP/ USDOT SS4A funding
- 11 jurisdictions do not have an existing or on-going safety plans meeting USDOT criteria, including Portola Valley

What is a Local Road Safety Plan?

A **data-driven** safety action plan that will produce:

- Partnership/stakeholder recommendations
- Countywide crash risk trends and emphasis areas
- Prioritized project locations for safety improvement
- A toolbox of systemic engineering countermeasures
- Safe System-aligned recommendations



Safety Analysis Findings

- The LRSP includes:
 - Countywide High Injury Network identified for **motor vehicles**, **pedestrians** and **bicyclists**
 - County crash patterns
 - Detailed findings for jurisdictions without a plan:
 - Atherton
 - Colma
 - Belmont
 - Brisbane
 - East Palo Alto
 - Foster City
 - Half Moon Bay
 - Hillsborough
 - Portola Valley
 - San Carlos
 - Woodside

High Injury Network

- Developed Countywide bicycle, pedestrian, and motor vehicle High Injury Networks

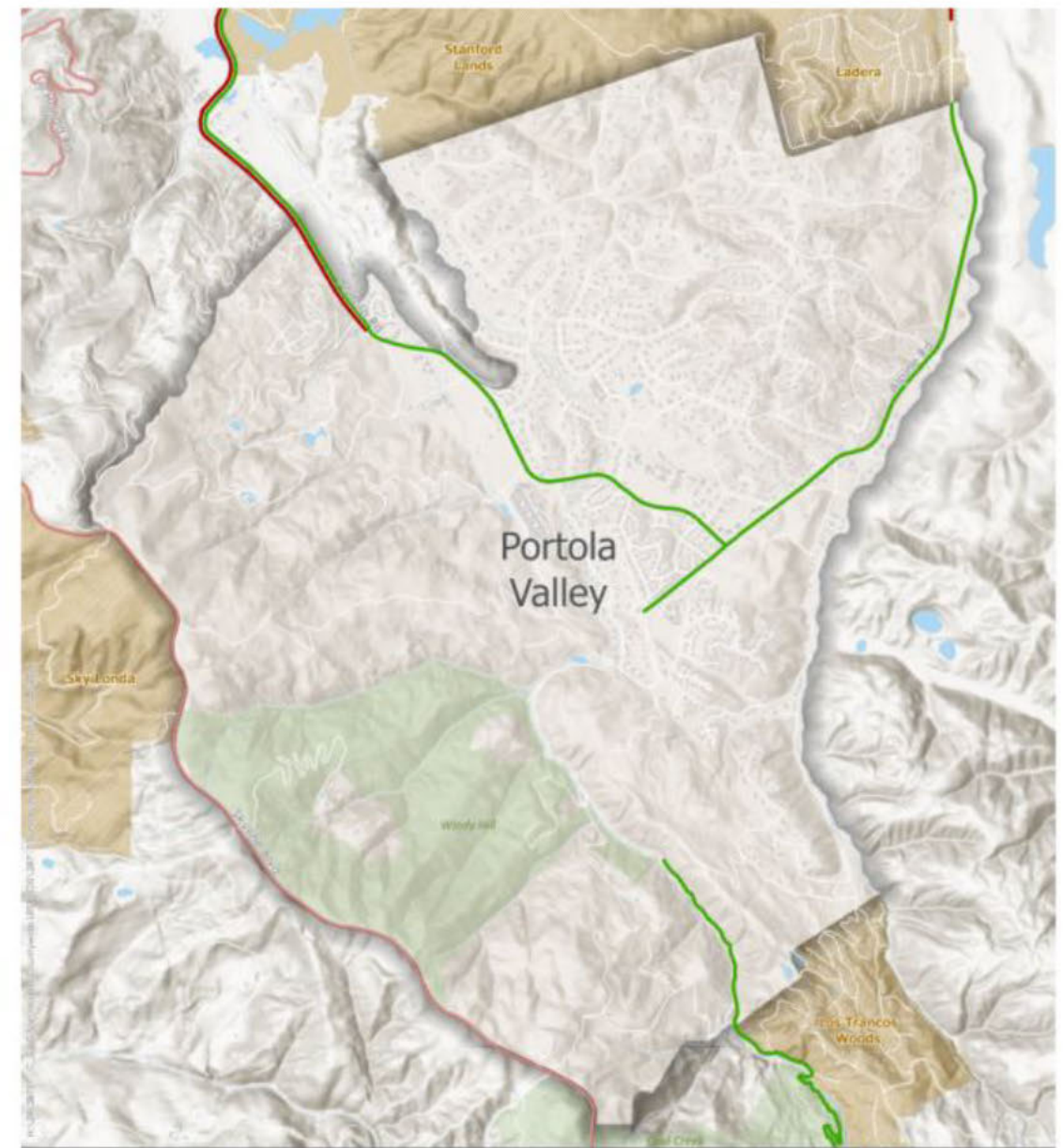
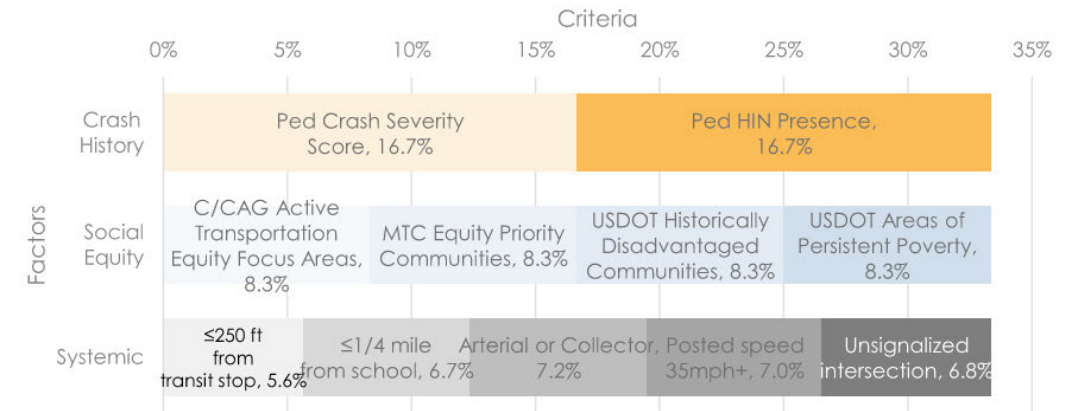


Figure C-14

Draft Priority Project Lists

- Factors for draft project lists locations (equally weighted)
 - **Crash History** – highest reported five-year crash frequency and severity
 - **Social Equity** – where project would benefit disadvantaged populations and align with future grant opportunities
 - **Systemic Factors** – have roadway and land use characteristics associated with crash frequency and severity

Figure 1. Pedestrian Prioritization Factor/Criteria Weighting (Sum to 100%)



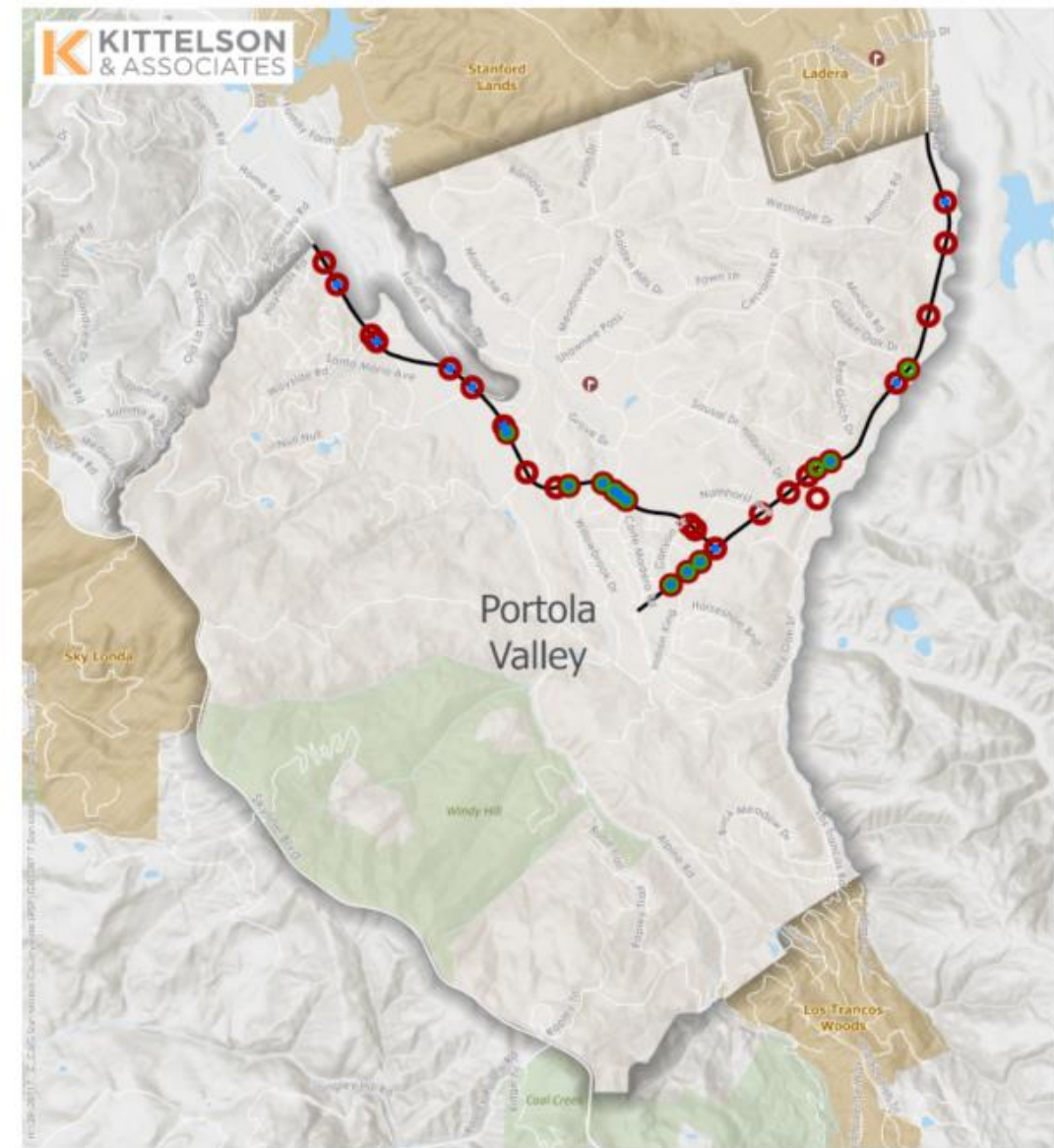
Draft Priority Project Lists

- Resulting Project List
 - Locations were scored for each **mode (bike, ped, motor vehicle)**
 - There is some overlap in locations
 - The three factors were normalized to all range from 0 to 1 and were equally weighted
 - The top 10 non state highway intersection locations and at least one segment were identified for the following 11 jurisdictions:
 - Atherton
 - Belmont
 - Brisbane
 - Colma
 - East Palo Alto
 - Foster City
 - Half Moon Bay
 - Hillsborough
 - Portola Valley
 - San Carlos
 - Woodside

Draft Priority Project Lists

- Max. Ped. Crash Severity Score: 0
- Max. Bike Crash Severity Score: 213
- Max. MV Crash Severity Score: 191
- Max. Social Equity Score: 0

Note: pedestrian and motor vehicle locations draw heavily on the risk factors



Draft Priority Project Lists Feedback!

- We want your comments/input on:

Section	We Want to Know
Draft Prioritized Project List (Attachment 1)	Want your help editing the list down based on local knowledge
	Want your help selecting project scope locations