

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
Open Space Committee Meeting
April 2, 2026
5:30 PM

Carter Warr, Chair
Jackie Magno, Vice Chair
Betsy Morgenthaler, Secretary
Nona Chiariello, Member
Terry Lee, Member
Delle Maxwell, Member
Gary Nielsen, Member

AGENDA

REGULAR MEETING

HISTORIC SCHOOLHOUSE- 765 PORTOLA RD. - PORTOLA VALLEY, CA

REMOTE MEETING ADVISORY: On March 1, 2023, all committees in Portola Valley will return to conducting in-person meetings. A Zoom link will be provided for members of the public to participate remotely; however, the Town cannot guarantee there will be no technical issues with the software during the meeting. For best public participation results, attending the meeting in-person is advised.

ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Town Clerk at (650) 851-1700 or by email at towncenter@portolavalley.net. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the Town to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION VIA ZOOM

To access the meeting by computer:

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89946271431?pwd=mlvaJpPjD76RQo3vrxQRadfYuVksI0.1

Meeting ID: 899 4627 1431

Passcode: 052438

To access the meeting by phone:

1-669-900-6833 or 1-888-788-0099 (toll-free)

Mute/Unmute - Press *6 / Raise Hand - Press *9

- 1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL
2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA
Speakers' time is limited to three minutes.
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
a. Draft Minutes February 5, 2026
4. OLD BUSINESS:
a. Open Space Fund Guidelines (attached)
Review and revise as necessary, Committee discussion
b. Hawthorns Area Plan
Current Midpen Proposal, Option 9 and Option 10 (attachments)
Subcommittee update and full Committee discussion
5. NEW BUSINESS:
a. Role of the Open Space Acquisition Committee is identifying lands appropriate for acquisition
6. ADJOURNMENT - The next regular meeting is June 4, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

Land Acknowledgement:

The Town of Portola Valley acknowledges the colonial history of this land we dwell upon—the unceded territory of the Ramaytush (rah-my-toosh) Ohlone, Tamien Nation, and Muwekma (mah-WEK-mah) Ohlone, who endured a human and cultural genocide that included removal from their lands and their sacred relationship to the land. Portola Valley recognizes that we profit from the commodification of land seized from indigenous peoples and now bear the ecological consequences. We seek to understand the impact of these legacies on all beings and to find ways to make repair.

Portola Valley Open Space Committee
Minutes, February 5, 2026 Meeting

Committee members present: Nona Chiariello, Terry Lee (arrival 5:40pm), Jackie Magno,
Delle Maxwell, Betsy Morgenthaler, Carter Warr

Members absent: Gary Nielsen

Other in person attendees: Judith Hasko, Council Liaison and Darcy Smith, Town Manager.

David Cardinal on zoom

2. Approval of Minutes and changing the order of the Agenda

Carter requested the Committee consider moving Item 4A (Officer Elections) to follow Item 6 which the Committee did.

The committee reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting. Betsy and Delle thanked Jackie Magno for the high level of detail, noting the minutes serve as a critical "reservoir of information" for the Town Council regarding land use and the snack shack location.

The November 6, 2025 Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Oral Communications No public comments.

5. Old Business, Committee Updates

A. Hawthorns Update and Subcommittee appointed

Betsy reported on the Midpen Board meeting held December 10, 2025 regarding Hawthorns to consider the General Manager's recommendation that the Midpen Board select one of these two options:

1. Defer the Hawthorns Historic Complex Project until after the Hawthorns Area Plan is adopted and implementation of the Area Plan is underway.
2. Defer the Hawthorns Area Plan Project and redeploy staff resources to other priority endeavors.

When the vote was called, option 1 passed unanimously.

Town Manager Darcy Smith offered remarks to the Midpen Board, calling out the significant public interest Hawthorns has inspired, and that project will need to comply with the town's general plan, code requirements, and go through the necessary approvals.

Apart from the Midpen Board meeting, their *Budget in Brief* for this Fiscal Year 2025-2026 envisions Hawthorns expenditures of close to \$1 million, in addition to the actual expenses through June 30, 2025 of \$490k. Midpen provisionally earmarked the share of Measure AA monies that Hawthorns would receive as \$1.7 million, and that is just to say this is a critically important year for the Hawthorns project as Midpen sees it.

Concluding the agenda item, the Committee approved the creation of a 2026 OS Subcommittee on Hawthorns and appointed 2 members, Betsy Morgenthaler and Nona Chiariello.

B. Ford Field Snack Shack and Restrooms

On behalf of the Conservation Committee Nona reported on an element of Portola Valley's Muni Code, 18.56.020 (Required Landscaping), applies to Dorothy Ford Park . The code states that:

“planting in required front yards shall conform with any roadside planting standards adopted by the conservation committee. At least twenty-five percent of such required front yard shall be landscaped, such area to have a minimum dimension of five feet.” And,

“Parcels with Frontage on Alpine Road and Portola Roa -- Parcels with frontage on the following roads if planted with trees and/or shrubs, shall be planted with only such trees and shrubs as are on a plan approved by the conservation committee. This provision shall apply to the portion of the parcel within seventy-five feet of the road right-of-way.”

Nona shared that the existing redwoods along the Ford Field frontage were planted by volunteers organized by the conservation committee in 1975.

In her recent survey, a follow-up to a previous one in 2011, she found that 1/3, or 9 of 29 trees have been removed and are now stumps. Of the remaining 2/3rds, 1 is dead and 2 are visibly stressed. The Conservation Committee will follow-up with planting associated with the next phase of the baseball field landscaping.

Darcy Smith followed Nona with a snack shack and restroom planning update. In response to the RFPs for the snack shack and restrooms, the Town received 3 proposals currently under evaluation. Next week the Town Council will review a mid-year budget funding request to look at siting and associated costs at Ford Field, so we'll stay tuned.

C. Open Space Fund and Skyline Property

Betsy reported that in March 2025 the Committee voted on and approved monies to cover an appraisal and related costs for the 14+ acre Skyline property. That said, work did not commence until August 2025, so those Open Space Fund expenses will be reflected in the current fiscal year, rather than last year.

4. Committee Officer Elections

Chair: Betsy Morgenthaler (outgoing) / Carter Warr (incoming)

Vice Chair: Nona Chiariello (outgoing), Jackie Magno (incoming)

Secretary: Jackie Magno (outgoing) / Betsy Morgenthaler (incoming)

Following the conclusion of New Business and a warm exchange of thanks around the dais, the committee held elections for 2026.

Carter Warr was nominated (Betsy), seconded (Terry), and elected Chair.

Jackie Magno was nominated (Carter), seconded (Betsy), and elected Vice Chair; and

Betsy Morgenthaler takes over as Secretary with Jackie assisting with tech setup and initial verbatim drafts from which Betsy will draft the minutes.

6A. New Business: Open Space Fund, contingency funds

At the request of Town Manager Darcy Smith the Committee discussed a proposal intended to enhance the Town's responsiveness when presented with a prospective land acquisition not yet in the public eye. Real estate opportunities can arise and timely, confidential appraisals and some legal due diligence support their presentation to the Council. It is not always feasible to schedule an Open Space Committee meeting on short notice when an appraisal and basic legal advice would be meaningful. The proposal (that the Committee pre-approve monies for this purpose) is intended to be exceptional, not a regular occurrence.

Darcy proposed the Committee consider granting the Town Manager authority, in consultation with the Committee Chair or Vice Chair, to spend up to \$10,000 for property evaluation (appraisal and attorney time). The Town Manager envisioned that she or the Council Liaison would inform the Committee at the next meeting.

In response to Betsy's finance related question regarding handling an option for spending that may or may not be exercised, Darcy responded the Committee would be taking action to grant spending authority, which were it to come to pass would go to the Council for approval. Council Liaison Judith Hasko asked where the line item related to this bridging funding would appear in the budget, and Town Manager Darcy Smith responded that it would show up in the Open Space Fund expenditures and noted as an evaluation of potential acquisition of open space sites.

Dave Cardinal suggested increasing the limit to \$25,000 to further reduce Town red tape. The Committee opted to align with Darcy's request for \$10,000 though appreciated Dave's spirit of generosity.

The committee moved and voted unanimously to recommend that on an annual basis the Open Space Committee will consider whether to create an option to the Town Manager, in consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair, for spending authority for the timely use of open space funds for evaluation of property acquisition and on a case-by-case basis.

Having approved up to \$10,000 expenses this year with the intention of reviewing future funding needs annually, the Committee will revise the Open Space Fund guidelines accordingly.

6B. Future Agenda Topics

Chair Carter Warr led a discussion focused on future open space opportunities and improving our understanding of what we are looking at and what we are looking for. As well as open space properties, this could potentially include -- easements, paths & trails, and conservation areas relative to wildlife corridors, were we open to discussing it. Carter proposed developing some evaluation criteria for selection and updating the Open Space Fund Guidelines and Properties List.

Delle asked whether properties adjacent to existing open space might be the first line of inquiry? Carter agreed and added there would be a range of possibilities that could enhance continuity. He suggested opening access to open space is an alternate means of providing open space. The acquisition of open space is easy to understand, but Carter suggests the Committee think about access to open space via connectivity, trails, paths, wildlife corridors as being open space as well as he doesn't know that the committee has thought about it that way previously. He added that another potential opportunity would be for the Town to acquire conservation easements that might extend the Bay Area Ridge Trail or that would discourage fences while enticing owners with compensation that is also tax advantaged for the loss of use of their property. Delle responded that she knows of numerous occasions where a conservation easement has created a win-win.

Nona noted it was a great suggestion and reminded her of the work this Committee did on a host of underutilized and inaccessible Town owned properties such as "the sinkies" -- that came to the Town when a developer could not build on them or such -- and their potential as viable wildlife corridors / connectors. Having thought through whether the Town could divest of them given they are liabilities, and this is an interesting alternative. Carter recalled the upper regions of Wayside with access from the Larry Lane complex of trails and through there across to the top of El Mirador into Windy Hill could really be a viable way to use some of those public-owned properties with their potential to open maintenance pathways.

Betsy suggested including the Priority Conservation Area in what was Carter's good-sized list for the opportunity to extend further what exists today.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 PM.



MEMORANDUM

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

TO: Mayor and Members of the Town Council
FROM: Open Space Committee
DATE: March 22, 2017
RE: Open Space Fund Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Town Council adopt Open Space Fund Guidelines.

BACKGROUND

The Open Space Acquisition Advisory Committee is responsible for making recommendations on the purchase of properties in Portola Valley for the purposes of retaining and enhancing the rural character of the Town. The Committee uses the Open Space Fund to make such purchases.

DISCUSSION

The Committee, until this time, did not have a guiding document to help determine appropriate land acquisition purchases. The attached draft document, as recommended by the Committee, aims to give the Committee such guidance.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ATTACHMENT

1. Draft Open Space Fund Guidelines

Reviewed by Jeremy Dennis, Town Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Dennis'.

PORTOLA VALLEY OPEN SPACE FUND GUIDELINES

The Portola Valley Open Space Fund exists to acquire, preserve and enhance open space for the benefit of Portola Valley residents. The Fund is comprised of monies from a utility user tax (UUT) and individual contributions. The permanent acquisition of open space provides scenic vistas, places to experience natural surroundings and generally enriches our community. Additionally, the creation of open space helps to retain the rural qualities of the town, as called for in the General Plan, by preserving and protecting natural settings, including native plants, wildlife and landforms, and provides a counter-balance to development permitted in other parts of the town.

The Open Space Acquisition Advisory Committee recognizes that clearly defining permissible uses for the Fund are important and that acquiring properties is often just the first step in a process. In addition to acquiring new properties, it is vital to transition new purchases to a condition suitable for ongoing preservation and enjoyment. Therefore, it is consistent with the goals of the Fund to dedicate monies to this transition process. The transition process is meant to prepare the property for preservation and enjoyment; it should not cover ongoing maintenance expenses. Once a property is brought up to an agreed upon baseline, the costs for ongoing, long-term maintenance would become the general obligation of the Town and no longer supported by the Open Space Fund.

In addition to purchasing properties outright the committee strongly encourages conservation easements as a cost effective way to preserve the rural character and natural beauty of the Town. Conservation easements require legal documentation and ongoing annual monitoring. Annual monitoring is a responsibility of the committee and will be performed along with Town staff. Legal costs to acquire an easement will generally be paid for by the property owner given the beneficial tax treatment but in cases where sharing the costs is deemed necessary a predetermined dollar limit will be set by the Council.

Finally, for certain lands owned by the Town biological monitoring maybe required by law. The first choice for covering monitoring expenses would be the general fund but lacking better alternatives limited use of the fund would be acceptable.

The overall goal is to reserve the fund for the acquisition of land and funding projects that enhance the natural beauty of the Town.

In light of the foregoing, the Open Space Fund expenditures may include:

- Purchase price of fee simple properties or easements and all costs associated with the purchase.
- Initial costs of preparing a purchased property to fulfill its open space purpose, such as removal of invasive plants, landscape restoration, removal of inappropriate man-made structures and construction of limited improvements such as trails, benches and signage.

- Shared legal costs to acquire conservation easements.
- Biological monitoring as required by law.
- Preservation and enhancement of existing open space. Preservation and enhancement activities are typically “one-offs”, not general maintenance. Addressing the initial onset of sudden oak death or creating a wildlife corridor would be preservation and enhancement. Routine mowing, weed abatement and annual spraying for sudden oak death would be examples of maintenance.

The Open Space fund would not cover the following expenditures:

- The cost of maintaining properties after the property has completed the transition process and general use established. For example, mowing, resurfacing trails, or repainting signage should come from the town's General Fund or other sources and not the Open Space Fund. On rare occasions endowments could be created for maintenance (see description below).
- The cost of enhancing already-owned open space property when the enhancement simply restores attributes that the property possessed at some time during the Town's ownership. For example, removal of invasive plants from a property that was clear of invasive plants at the time of acquisition or reconstructing a bench that has fallen into disrepair.

From time to time, separate from the Open Space Fund, individual donors may wish to setup endowments for ongoing maintenance and monitoring of Open Space property. Example: The owner of a suitable property sells or donates it to the Town for open space. In addition at the time of acquisition the owner is willing to provide funds for monitoring and maintenance. Such an endowment would be used to provide monitoring and maintenance until exhausted or defined as a fixed contribution towards monitoring and maintenance drawn down at a predetermined rate over a set number of years.

Open space enhances the beauty of our Town and enriches our lives. The strong commitment from our community to acquire open space and preserve the nature beauty of the area is one of the attributes that makes Portola Valley special. Having well-defined guidelines provides donors with a clear idea for how the funds are spent. A strong, well-managed fund allows us maintain this tradition and continue to acquire, preserve and enhance open space within the Town.

*Portola Valley Open Space Committee
January 26, 2017*

To: Mayor and Members of the Town Council

From: Joint subcommittee appointed by Conservation and Open Space

Date: November 11, 2024

Subject: Recommendations on open space maintenance and funding

We are a joint subcommittee appointed by the Open Space Committee and the Conservation Committee to re-examine maintenance needs of town-owned open spaces and to consider the appropriate use of the 2% Utility Users Tax (UUT) in light of the town's financial challenges. Keeping in mind that the 2% UUT is restricted to "open space purposes only"¹ and that those purposes include maintenance of open space,² we offer four recommendations. To meet the Council's decision schedule, we submit our recommendations prior to committee review.³

1. We recommend allocating \$65,000 from the 2% UUT this year to maintain the primary town-owned open spaces⁴ and areas that have been designated for "open space purposes" by the Town Council.⁵ We recommend this amount in order to provide for the following routine maintenance⁶ this year:
 - a. four mowings at Spring Down
 - b. two mowings at Ford Field, Frog Pond, and Frog Pond/Alpine Road Remnant
 - c. 5 - 6 days of weeding at Spring Down by a contractor such as Go Native, Inc.
 - d. routine maintenance at Shady Trail and Triangle Park
 - e. maintenance of trails within town-owned open space parcels (~4 miles of trails)

2. We recommend against applying the 2% UUT to trail maintenance outside town-owned open spaces without first completing a comprehensive discussion that involves the Trails and Paths Committee, Town staff, and neighborhood groups that already work together on trail maintenance.⁷ We note that:
 - a. About 22 miles of trails, or roughly half the total length of trails⁸ in Portola Valley (not including Windy Hill trails) are in road rights-of-way. The rights-of-way are managed for multiple goals such as safe transit, utility corridors, evacuation

¹ [https://ballotpedia.org/Town_of_Portola_Valley_Open_Space_Appropriations,_Measure_R_\(November_2009\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Town_of_Portola_Valley_Open_Space_Appropriations,_Measure_R_(November_2009))

² <https://www.portolavalley.net/home/showpublisheddocument/13036/637045996424270000> red pages 53-67

³ Review by the Open Space Committee will be on Nov. 12, and by the Conservation Committee on Nov. 26.

⁴ Map of open spaces in Portola Valley, including the principal town-owned parcels: Ford Field, Frog Pond, Shady Trail, Spring Down, Triangle Park <https://www.portolavalley.net/home/showdocument?id=2747>

⁵ This includes the Alpine Road Remnant, which was designated for open space purposes by the Council in 2021: <https://www.portolavalley.net/home/showpublisheddocument/14723/637611825576800000> pages 2948-49.

⁶ We thank Recreational Facilities Coordinator Justin Bixby for providing a breakdown of mowing costs and weeding costs. Justin has managed mowing and weeding for years in a cost-conscious way. He hires contractors who know the Town's parcels and priorities. Against the exodus of many town staff, Justin Bixby and Scott Weber stand out as staff members who have remained and whose experience and institutional memory are vital to the Town and provide significant cost-savings.

⁷ We thank Gary Hanning of the Trails and Paths Committee for an overview of seasonal trail maintenance, trail repairs, capital improvements, and trail work by Town staff and volunteers.

⁸ We thank Dave Evans for sharing detailed data on trail segment lengths, which we used together with his trail map (<https://www.portolavalley.net/home/showpublisheddocument/18321/638494781326030000>) to categorize ~44 miles of unpaved trails in Portola Valley (not including those in Windy Hill).

safety, and recreation. Open space considerations are primarily about views to adjoining land and scenic horizons.

- b. Roughly two fifths (~18 miles) of trails are easements to the town on private property or informal neighborhood trails. Multiple groups are already involved in maintenance of these trails.⁹
3. We recommend stronger partnerships, coordination, and outreach in order to make the best use of maintenance dollars, specifically:
 - a. Creating a standing joint subcommittee from Open Space and Conservation to help ensure that maintenance priorities are identified by Conservation and evaluated by Open Space, providing checks and balances.
 - b. Closer coordination between the joint subcommittee and Justin Bixby to aid the success of weeding and mowing—where timing is everything!—and extend opportunities for checks and balances.
 - c. Outreach to neighbor groups of each open space to provide additional volunteer contributions, similar to the efforts at Frog Pond organized by PV Ranch. Examples include: horse-grazing days at Spring Down; student weeders at “poppy corner” in Triangle Park; an adopt-a-trail program.
 4. We recommend a return to annual reports to the Town Council by town committees so as to increase awareness of on-the-ground committee work that serves the Town and saves it money. Examples of projects and workdays by the Conservation Committee include:
 - a. For >20 years,¹⁰ an annual town-wide “Broom pull” in the road rights-of-way¹¹
 - b. Removal of *Dittrichia* (stinkwort) from all principal open space areas¹²
 - c. Spring Down weeding and seeding¹³
 - d. Surveys by botanists to compile plant lists for Spring Down¹⁴ and Frog Pond¹⁵
 - e. Eradication of an invasive tree, *Ailanthus altissima*, on Ford Field, Spring Down

We hope these recommendations help the Council create a budget that sustains the Town’s core open spaces, honors the will of voters, and is sound and balanced.

Respectfully,

Joint Subcommittee from the Conservation Committee and Open Space Committee:

Nona Chiariello

Nancy Freire

Judith Murphy

Gary Nielsen

⁹ For example, Trails and Paths Committee members on horseback prune trees to ensure clearance for horses.

¹⁰ https://www.almanacnews.com/morgue/2004/2004_04_07.zbroom.shtml

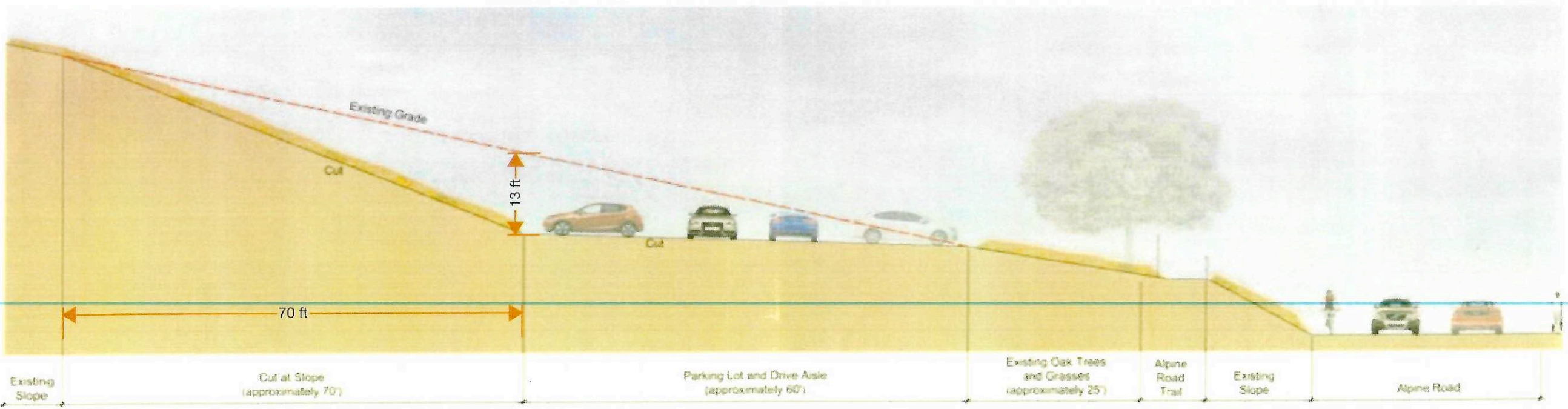
¹¹ <https://www.portolavalley.net/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/32560/20?curm=3&cury=2024>

¹² <https://www.portolavalley.net/home/showpublisheddocument/18786/638646903250200000> pages 9-12

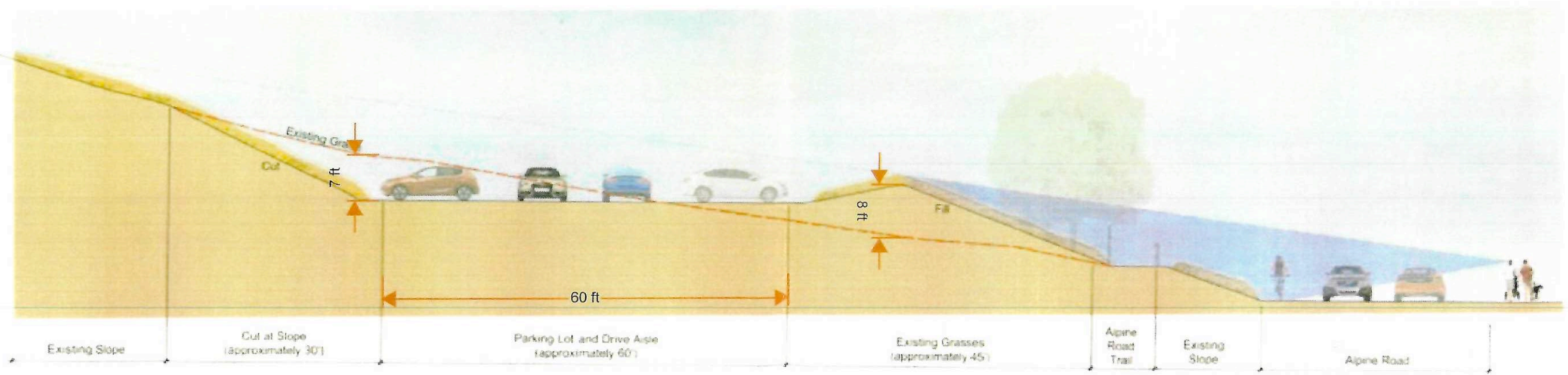
¹³ For example: <https://pvforum.us/g/main/topic/105757341#msg190715>

¹⁴ <https://www.portolavalley.net/home/showpublisheddocument/18786/638646903250200000> pages 5-8

¹⁵ <https://www.calflora.org/app/ipl?bloom=t&vrid=svy3632>



OPTION 9 - SECTION - E-E - PARKING LOT WIDTH



OPTION 10 - SECTION - G-G - PARKING LOT WIDTH

Commercial Development
(Including Roberts Market)

PORTOLA ROAD

ALPINE ROAD

Alpine Road
Realignment

Potential
Site Walls

Potential
Affected Trees

ALPINE ROAD
TRAIL

Permeable
Concrete

Screening
Berm

3' Tall Site
Wall

Signboard

Bike Parking

75' Scenic Corridor Special
Building Setback Line

CONCEPTUAL TRAIL
CONNECTION TO
TRAILHEAD

Restroom

ADA Parking

Phase 1
(21) Stalls

Phase 2
(29) Stalls

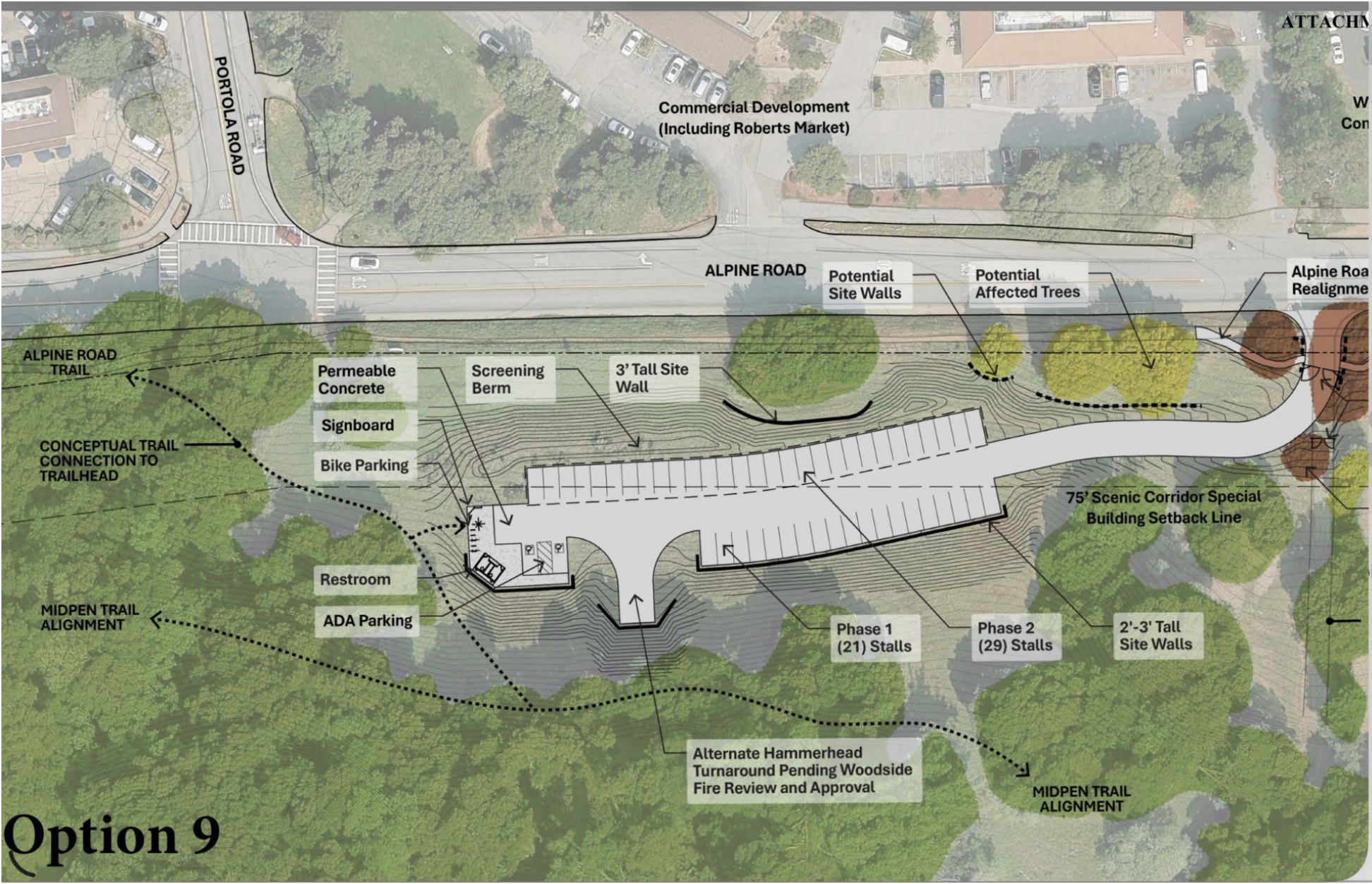
2'-3' Tall
Site Walls

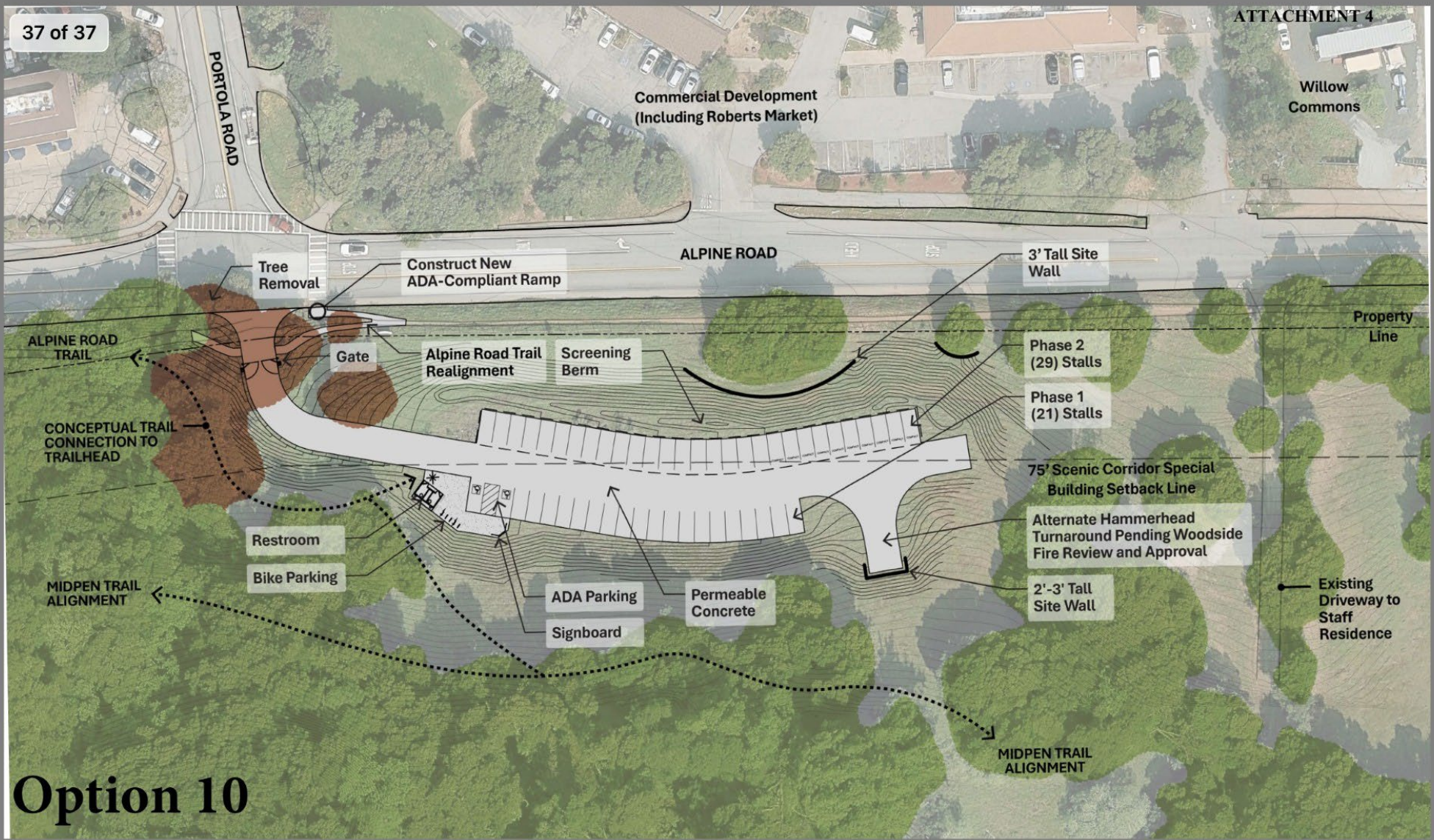
MIDPEN TRAIL
ALIGNMENT

Alternate Hammerhead
Turnaround Pending Woodside
Fire Review and Approval

MIDPEN TRAIL
ALIGNMENT

Option 9





Option 10