Town of Portola Valley General Plan

Land Use Element

Last amended January 24, 2024

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Land Use Element

Introduction

2100 The land use element sets forth guidelines for land occupancy and describes the location and distribution aspects of land uses. Land use interrelationships and land use circulation relationships are also defined.

2101 Land use proposals in the plan include those for residential areas, those for community facilities and services, and those for region-serving facilities. For the purposes of this plan, all land uses are discussed separately in the following sections: residential areas; parks, recreation areas and open spaces; commercial and research - administrative areas; institutions; and public facilities and services. In these sections, objectives, principles, and standards are given, followed by a description of the plan proposals.

General Objectives

2102

1. To provide for residential uses and related facilities and services that will preserve and enhance the quality of living enjoyed by local residents.

2. To maintain the natural character of the planning area and to provide for limited park, recreation and open space uses in appropriate scenic areas where the uses will be compatible with the maintenance of the residential nature and quality of the planning area.

3. To minimize the need for non-local traffic to penetrate the planning area.

4. To minimize consumption of energy from non-renewable sources and to encourage the use of renewable energy sources while preserving the scenic and aesthetic qualities of the area.

5. To encourage and, where appropriate, require the conservation of water in new and existing developments and buildings.

6. To ensure that development in areas subject to geologic, fire and flooding hazards is controlled so that people and structures are not exposed to unacceptable levels of risk.

General Principles

2103

1. The planning area should have the low intensity of development which is appropriate to its location on the fringe of the urban area of the Peninsula and should provide a transition between urban densities of adjoining communities and non-intensive land uses west of the skyline.

2. Uses of land should include homes, open spaces, agricultural pursuits and such other private, office and commercial uses as are required to serve the frequent needs of local residents.

3. In addition to uses serving primarily local residents, public, private and limited commercial recreational facilities serving a broader area would be appropriate in locations on the periphery of the planning area but so located as not to encourage traffic through the town.

4. Those public and private facilities such as schools, parks, churches, public buildings, stores and offices which serve all or a major portion of the planning area should be grouped in readily accessible centers to the greatest extent permitted by site and location requirements of the individual facilities.

5. In any development within the planning area, full consideration should be given to the geologic conditions so that development on unstable land can be avoided or minimized.

5.1. In areas subject to flooding, including those identified in the safety element, development shall be precluded or designed to minimize risk.

6. In order to maintain the rural atmosphere of Portola Valley, all buildings should be subordinate to their natural surroundings in size, scale and siting. Monumental buildings should be avoided.

7. Non-residential buildings should generally be of small or moderate size and, where groups of buildings are used, connected by plazas, terraces, porches, arcades, canopies or roofs to provide a pleasant environment and safety and shelter to pedestrians.

8. In order to help minimize the adverse effects of higher intensity uses upon lower intensity uses, landscaping areas of primarily native plants appropriate to the site should be provided. Such buffers should be of a size and design that will provide an effective visual buffer.

9. In all developments in the planning area, full consideration should be given to fire protection needs, including those identified in the safety element, and adequate measures should be taken to ensure that these needs are met.

9.1. Development should be limited in areas when fire risk cannot be reduced to an acceptable level and adequate emergency access cannot be provided. Also, recognizing fire protection measures could have adverse effects on native vegetation, development should be configured to minimize damage as well as fire hazard.

10. The rate of development and location of projects should not exceed the capacity of the town, special districts and utility companies to provide all needed services and facilities in an orderly and economic manner.

11. Conservation of energy from non-renewable sources should be considered in the design, improvement, reconstruction and remodeling of buildings.

12. The use of passive and active solar energy should be encouraged in the siting, design and construction of buildings.

13. Where feasible, development proposals should incorporate unified planning for the largest land area practically possible in order to preserve open space, conserve unique natural features of the area, allow logical extensions of the trail and paths system, maximize the opportunities for controlling the extent and impacts of development and otherwise help ensure the application of good land use planning principles.

14. Grading shall normally be the minimum necessary to accommodate development; however, in those instances where increased grading can provide for greater compatibility of development with the natural setting and not cause significant adverse effects on the environment, such grading shall be preferred.

15. For all new developments within the planning area, full consideration shall be given to the fiscal ability of the town and other affected local governmental agencies to provide essential services. When fiscal impact will exceed tax revenue to be generated, provisions may be made to require off-setting fiscal impact fees.

16. In the planning, design, construction and operation of development within the planning area, water conservation should be a high priority.

17. In all new developments, the undergrounding of utilities should be considered a high priority.

Residential Areas

Objectives

2104 1. To assure that all building sites and residences are developed in a manner minimizing disturbance to natural terrain and vegetation and maximizing preservation of natural beauty and open space.

2. To organize residential areas in a manner providing maximum convenience in the daily use of local facilities such as parks, recreation area, commercial facilities and access to major roads, consistent with the attainment of other objectives stated within the general plan.

3. To provide for the grouping or clustering of residential buildings where this will maximize the opportunity to preserve natural beauty, habitat and open space without generally increasing the intensity of development otherwise possible.

4. To maintain the present character of established residential areas.

5. To control the occupancy of parcels so as to:

   a. Prevent overcrowding of dwellings.

   b. Insure that occupancy of land and dwellings will be in balance with service facilities such as on-site parking, traffic capacity of access streets and capacity of utilities such as water and sewage disposal.

   c. Insure against adverse impact on neighboring residences.

   d. Fix responsibility for use, occupancy and conduct on the premises in relation to town standards and requirements. That is, on each parcel and in each main dwelling, someone must be “in charge” as owners or tenant of the owner.

Principles

2105 1. Lands indicated for residential use on the comprehensive plan diagram should be used primarily for residential living, a use of land characterized by

a single household occupying a main detached dwelling as the principal use of a parcel, together with uses and structures customarily accessory to a main dwelling in a rural residential community.

2. In addition to other accessory uses and structures, accessory living quarters within the main dwelling or in a separate structure should be deemed an appropriate accessory use on parcels large enough and under conditions adequate to insure the objectives cited in Sec. 2104.5 are met. Specific limits on accessory living quarters should be included in the zoning ordinances.

2.1. Agricultural uses are encouraged as interim or long-term uses in residentially designated areas provided they are compatible with nearby nonagricultural uses and do not result in the significant degradation of the natural environment.

3. Population densities within the planning area should be guided by considerations of topography, geology, vegetative cover, access to transportation and services, fire hazards, emergency access, impact on pre-existing residential development and other factors such as:

   a. The highest densities should be located on relatively level land close to local shopping and service areas, other local facilities and transportation facilities. Densities should decrease as the distance from these facilities increases.

   b. Population density should decrease as steepness of terrain increases.

   c. The lowest densities and largest lots should be located on the steepest hillsides on which the town allows development and in mountainous areas where it is necessary to limit storm runoff, prevent erosion, preserve existing vegetation, protect watersheds, avoid potentially unstable ground and maintain the scenic quality of the terrain.

4. Steep slopes, potentially unstable ground, canyons and ravines should be left undisturbed as residential open space preserves.

4.1 When residences are grouped or clustered in areas where intensity standards require one acre or more per dwelling unit:

   a. Each residence should have substantial direct frontage on a common open space of sufficient size to convey a feeling or being on the edge of a large and significant open space.

b. Clusters should generally consist of a small number of detached residences, and each cluster should be well-separated from adjacent clusters rather than interconnected in a linear form.

5. On tree covered buildable slopes, development should be designed to preserve groves of trees as well as individual trees and native understory to the maximum extent possible.

6. (Not used.)

7. To the extent feasible, all structures (including residences) should complement and blend in with the natural setting of the planning area; and to this end, the following principles should be adhered to:

   a. Structures may be located in existing tree covered areas to the extent possible and still be consistent with slope, geologic and related conditions and the need to preserve locally unique or especially beautiful wooded areas.

   b. Largely bare slopes and sparsely wooded ridges visible from large portions of the town or planning area should be kept free of structures to the maximum extent possible.

   c. If development does take place on highly visible barren slopes or ridges, it must be unobtrusive and of a scale and design to maintain the character of the natural setting, and with required planting of native trees and plants where appropriate.

8. In all residential areas of the town, or its spheres of influence, particular attention must be given to the effects of approaching the maximum amount of development permitted on individual parcels. The cumulative effect of buildout under appropriate ordinances and policies should be examined and steps taken to ensure that its effect will not be injurious to the unique and desirable characteristics of each area. Overall development levels as measured by floor area ratios and impervious surfaces should be limited so as to preserve the rural setting.

9. To the extent feasible, the design of subdivisions should retain a representative composition of habitats on the site and their interrelationships.

10. Residential development should not occur in areas subject to flooding as shown on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps issued under the National Flood Insurance Program by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Standards.

2106 Residential areas are shown in eight land use intensity categories, as described below in the table and text:

Residential Category	Intensity in Dwelling Units per Acre (du/a)
Gateway	20-23 du/a
Multi-Family – Medium	20-23 du/a
Mixed-use Residential	3-6 du/a
Multi-Family – Low	2-4 du/a
Low-medium	>1 du/a
Low	.5 - 1 du/a, on average
Conservation Residential a. Existing Development b. Undeveloped Lands	 .25 - .5 du/a .1~~11~~ - .5 du/a
Open Residential	.3~~33~~ - .05~~55~~, for slopes from 0% to 50%

1. **Gateway** – Existing developed and undeveloped areas where density is no more than twenty-three dwelling units per acre. These areas are generally geologically stable, in relatively level terrain, and have good accessibility.

2. **Multi-family – Medium**—Existing developed areas where density is no more than twenty-three dwelling units per acre. These areas are generally geologically stable, in relatively level terrain, and have good accessibility.

3. **Mixed-use**—Existing developed areas where density is no more than six dwelling units per acre. These areas are generally geologically stable, in relatively level terrain, and have good accessibility.

4. **Multi-family – Low**—Existing developed areas where density is no more than four dwelling units per acre. These areas are generally geologically stable, in relatively level terrain, and have good accessibility.

5. **Low-medium**—Existing developed areas where net residential land area per housing unit is less than 1 acre.

6. **Low**—Existing developed areas where net residential land area per housing unit averages from 1 to 2 acres. These areas are generally geologically stable, in only moderately steep terrain, and have good accessibility.

7. **Conservation-Residential**—Includes:

    a. Existing developed areas where net residential land area per housing unit averages from 2 to 4 acres.

    b. Relatively accessible undeveloped lands with few to considerable potential geologic instabilities. To be developed with a slope-intensity standard whereby the net residential land area per housing unit increases from 2 acres on level to 9 acres on slopes of 50 percent or greater.

8. **Open Residential**—Relatively inaccessible sparsely developed and undeveloped areas generally with extreme geologic instabilities and steep slopes. Fire hazards are often high and erosion potential great. These areas are often also of ecologic, scenic or historic importance. To be developed with a slope-intensity standard whereby the net residential land area per housing unit increases from 3 acres on level land to 18 acres on slopes of 50 percent or greater.

Additionally, the Housing Element establishes a Supportive Housing Overlay for 4394 Alpine Road to provide flexibilty for the potential devlopment of supportive housing at that site.

2106a Portions of some of these residential areas are classified as "residential open space preserves." These preserves possess one or more of the following characteristics: slopes, canyons and ravines generally in excess of 30% in slope, unstable lands, lands of significant scenic value to the town, historic resources, riparian environments, and lands inaccessible without traversing potentially unstable lands. To the maximum extent possible, these preserves should be kept free of structures and left in a natural condition with respect to terrain and vegetation. New residential subdivisions should provide for the clustering of residences outside of residential open space preserves so that these areas are left undisturbed for visual enjoyment and limited local use. However, on lands also shown as open residential, residences might be appropriate, if clustering is not possible, if acceptable development standards for access, utilities and geologic stability can be met, and if scenic qualities and historic features are preserved. Low intensity

recreation uses would be appropriate in residential open space preserves, and drainage and erosion control measures should be undertaken where necessary.

2106b The slope-intensity standards for the conservation residential and open residential categories recognize in part the overall problems of the development in areas with potential geologic instabilities. However, the intensity of development in individual developments should be further reduced as necessary to reflect specific geologic conditions encountered, to minimize significant visual impacts, to preserve scenic qualities and historic features, and to avoid high fire hazards and inadequate emergency access.

2106c Residential development and related improvements should be permitted only where geologic stability meets the standards of the town for the specific uses.

2106d Land use intensities may be increased beyond those specified in this section in accordance with provisions for the inclusionary lot program adopted by ordinance by the Town Council and Policy 2, Program 2-1 of the Housing Element.

Description

2107 Residential areas of low intensities are the predominant land use proposed in this general plan. Eight categories of residential land use intensities are indicated. The multi-family – medium, mixed use, multi-family - low, low-medium and low intensities are restricted to areas of existing development. The conservation residential intensity is assigned to less steep land close to community and circulation facilities and existing development. The open residential intensity is applied to most undeveloped lands which have generally rugged topography, scenic qualities or historic features, are further from community facilities and major circulation routes, and have extreme geologic instabilities. These several residential intensities are generally similar to and compatible with intensities existing and proposed for most areas adjacent to the planning area.

2107a In addition to the eight residential land use intensities described in Section 2107 above, possible residential land uses are indicated in Section 6100, Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan, and Section 6300, Town Center Area Plan. These sections should be consulted to determine the recommended residential land use intensities for these areas.

2108 Land use intensity standards provide a guide for the intensity of residential development within which considerable flexibility remains as to design solutions. They indicate the maximum number of housing units to be permitted on a given piece of land but do not prescribe type of design in relation to a minimum lot standard. Specific conditions may require lower intensities.

2109 Superimposed upon the residential land use indicated on the comprehensive plan diagram is a tree symbol representing residential open space preserve. The residential open space preserve should be primarily a permanent open space, but should in addition accommodate a variety of recreational uses well suited to the natural terrain and which preserve the continuity of native vegetation. Such uses include riding and hiking trails, informal play areas, scenic walks, picnic areas, and residences subject to suitable conditions (see foregoing standards). These areas can be either privately controlled by the local property owners or held by a public agency.

2110 The delineation of the residential open space preserve usually is intended to be general in nature. As specific areas develop, it will be necessary to apply with care the objectives, principals and standards set forth in this plan in the preparation of detailed designs.

2111 Based on an evaluation of the slope and geologic constraints for each residential area, estimated holding capacities have been prepared and are included in Appendix 1 of this land use element. The holding capacity figures represent the maximum number of housing units estimated to be feasible under the criteria included in this plan.

2112 Each residential area is generally described below and shown on the following residential areas map.

2113 **Residential Area No. 1.** This area comprises the Brookside Park and Brookside Orchard subdivisions. The low-medium intensity recognizes the long-established character of the area. The area is almost fully developed with homes. Attention should be continually given to conserving and enhancing this residential area.

2114 **Residential Area No. 2.** This area comprises the Woodside Highlands subdivision. The low-medium intensity recognizes the character of this old subdivision. Originally an area of summer homes, this area has been converted to year-around living, is served by narrow roads and individual sewage disposal systems, and includes some areas of unstable ground. Some few lots are without homes. Continuing attention should be given to improving the quality and amenities of this area while protecting its individual character.

2115 **Residential Area No. 3.** This area comprises the Portola Redwoods subdivision. The low-medium intensity is consistent with the long-established nature of this subdivision. Virtually all lots are developed with homes. The character of this small residential area should be preserved and continual attention should be given to maintaining appropriate land use relationships between this area and surrounding and nearby non-residential uses.

2116 **Residential Area No. 4.** This area, in the town's sphere of influence, comprises the Ladera subdivision. The low-medium intensity recognizes the established character of this area. The area contains but a very few vacant lots. The existing character of Ladera should be maintained and attention should be continually given to assuring compatibility of uses on the Webb Ranch with the residential character of Ladera.

2117 **Residential Area No. 5.** This area, in the town's sphere of influence, consists of the Los Trancos Woods subdivision. The low-medium intensity is consistent with the character of the long-established residential area. Originally an area of summer homes, it is now used for year-around living, is served by narrow roads and individual sewage disposal systems, and is affected by some areas of geologic instability. Some lots are still vacant. Efforts should be made to improve the quality and amenities of the area while preserving its character.

2118 **Residential Area No. 6.** This area comprises the Willowbrook subdivision, with parcel sizes of 1 acre or more, and several larger parcels along the eastern side of the area. The area is shown in the low intensity category and is virtually entirely developed with homes. The character of this area should be preserved and efforts should be made to reduce through traffic.

2119 **Residential Area No. 7.** This area is composed primarily of the Arrowhead Meadows, Alpine Hills, Hillbrook, Stonegate, Stonegate Meadows, Corte Madera Acres, Palmer Estates, Portola Terrace, Portola Heights, and Pine Ridge subdivisions. All of these subdivisions have minimum parcel sizes of 1 acre or more. In addition, there are unsubdivided areas of larger parcels, namely in the vicinity of Georgia Lane. The entire area is shown in the low intensity category.

2120 As the unsubdivided areas are developed, attention should be given to ensuring careful integration into the largely already developed area so as to ensure compatibility. Particular attention will need to be given to land use relationships in the vicinity of the non-residential uses along Portola and Alpine Roads.

2121 **Residential Area No. 8.** This area is composed of the Westridge and Oak Hills subdivisions plus a steep undivided area between Westridge and Alpine Hills subdivision. The area is shown in the conservation residential intensity. Few lots are vacant in the subdivisions. The character and quality of the area should be conserved as the area plays an important part in maintaining the open space character of the town.

2122 **Residential Area No. 9.** The development pattern for a large portion of this area has been set by the Portola Valley Ranch subdivision where there are slightly in excess of two acres per housing unit. Most of the balance of the area is in large ownerships. The area is shown in the conservation residential intensity category.

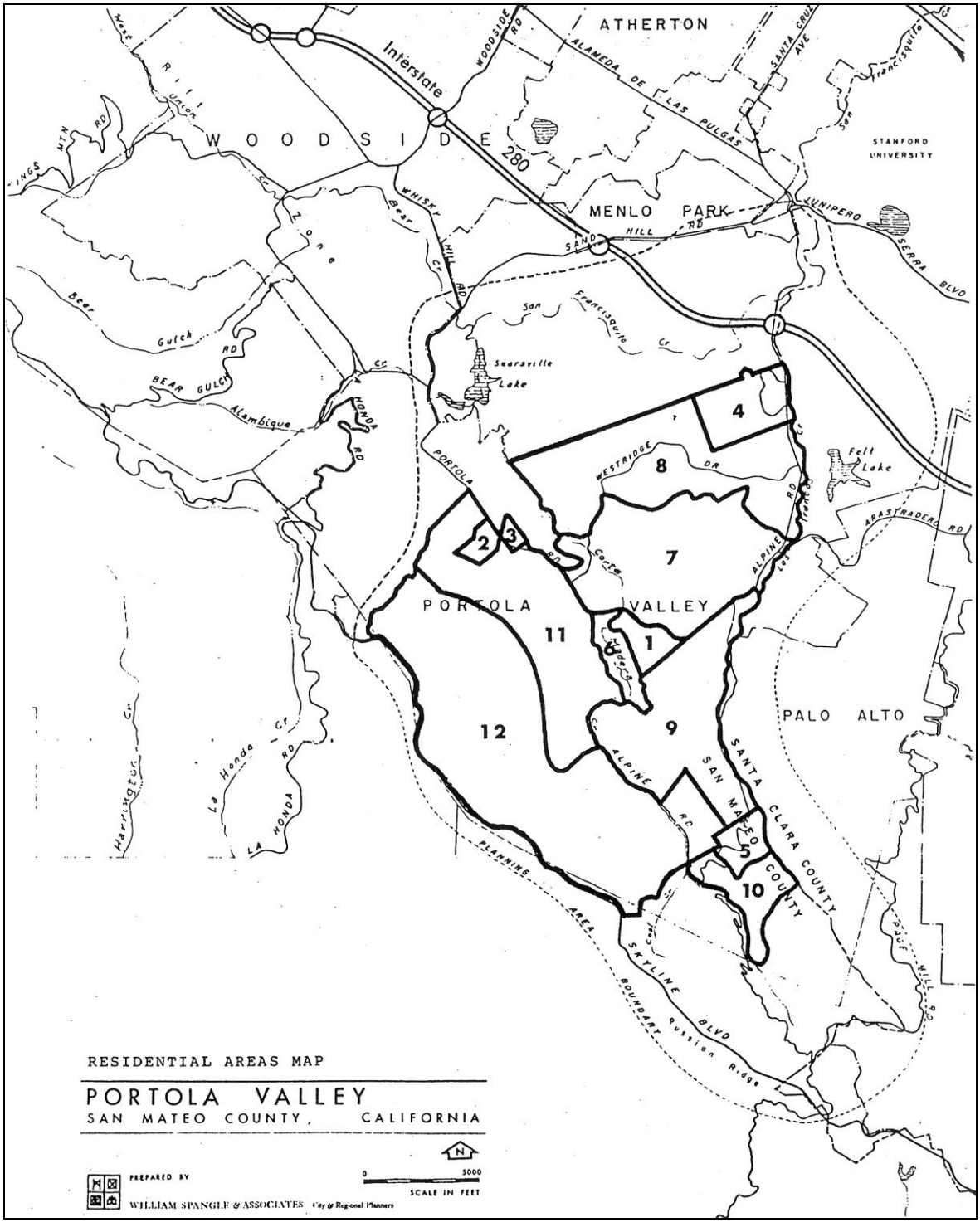
2123 Most of the area has good access to local town roads, most utilities, schools, and shopping. Parts of the area are quite stable geologically, while other parts are highly unstable, and slopes range from moderate to steep. The plan diagram indicates large areas in the residential open space preserve category.

2123a In the area along Alpine Road, any development should be kept well back from the road so as not to encroach on the Alpine Road Corridor, Portola Road Corridor, and Nathhorst Triangle Area.

2124 **Residential Area No. 10.** This area, in the town's sphere of influence, comprises the Vista Verde subdivision. The area is shown in the conservation residential intensity category. There are some vacant lots in the subdivision. Geologic instabilities in the area warrant careful continuing evaluation as additional homes are built.

2125 **Residential Area No. 11.** This area consists of the lower portion of the western hillsides and is unsubdivided except for the old Coombsville subdivision, which occupies a small part of the area. The area is shown in the conservation residential intensity category. It is characterized by gentle to steep slopes, geologically stable to unstable lands and grass covered slopes to tree covered canyons. The major development potential on the western slopes is confined to this area, which is less steep, enjoys somewhat more stable lands than the upper portion of the western hillsides, and has greater accessibility to roads, utilities, schools, and shopping. A major portion of this area is owned by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

2126 Most of the undeveloped portion of this area is in a few large holdings. This provides an opportunity for imaginative designs making full use of the range of


ATHERTON
Interstate 280
WOODSIDE
MENLO PARK
STANFORD UNIVERSITY
PORTOLA VALLEY
PALO ALTO
SANTA CLARA COUNTY
SAN MATEO COUNTY
Searsville Lake
Felt Lake
1
2
3
4
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11
12
RESIDENTIAL AREAS MAP
PORTOLA VALLEY
SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
PREPARED BY
WILLIAM SPANGLE & ASSOCIATES City & Regional Planners
SCALE IN FEET

natural features present. It should be possible and practical to preserve a large amount of the area in a natural state. In particular, it is desirable that the natural character of the open ridge leading up to the Windy Hill Open Space Preserve and the orchards and meadow adjacent to Portola Road and town center be retained.

2127 **Residential Area No. 12.** This area consists primarily of the upper portion of the western hillsides. It is similar in character to residential area No. 11; however, it is more removed from local town roads, utilities, schools and shopping, has steeper slopes, has a significantly colder, more foggy, and more windy climate and is somewhat less geologically stable. The most feasible access appears to be from Skyline Boulevard, and fire protection is minimal. Its reduced density is compatible with the adjoining agricultural, recreational, and forest resource region west of Skyline Boulevard. This area is shown in the open residential intensity category.

2128 It is envisioned that development in this area will be minimal. The foregoing factors make the area unsuitable for more than very sparse development. Large areas are shown in the residential open space preserve category. Any development in this area should have adequate access by roads which ensure prompt access to and from public facilities and commercial areas, and for fire, police and other emergency services.

2129 The barren ridge leading up to Windy Hill from the east is a visually dominant feature of Portola Valley and highly noticeable from much of the Midpeninsula area. It should remain in its natural state to the maximum extent possible. Development which might go on these lands should preferably be located elsewhere on the same parcel of land. If any development takes place in this area, extreme care should be taken to ensure absolute minimum disruption of existing visual characteristics. A major portion of this ridge is owned by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

2129a A small portion of the area lies east of Alpine Road next to Los Trancos Woods and Vista Verde. This area is included because it is similar to the balance of the area in terms of remoteness and geologic instability, and also because it contains steep slopes, scenic qualities and the historic Coal Mine Ridge Trail.

Other Residential Areas

2130 In addition to the areas described above, there are several other residential areas included within the planning area. These areas, although in other jurisdictions, are of concern to the planning area because of common problems relating to drainage, circulation, public facilities and visual amenities.

2131 The portion of the Town of Woodside northeast of Portola Road and known as Hidden Valley Farm and Family Farm is shown on the plan diagram because of its

close physical relationships to Portola Valley. This area is shown as conservation residential and is consistent with the Town of Woodside's General Plan. There is a need to maintain compatible land use relationships between Hidden Valley Farm and the non-residential uses fronting on Portola Road within the Town of Portola Valley.

2132 The portion of the Town of Woodside along the Portola Valley town boundary between Portola Road and Skyline Boulevard is included because of the need to maintain compatible land uses on either side of the town boundary. The area in Woodside is shown as conservation residential and is consistent with the Woodside General Plan.

2133 Two areas of low-medium intensity are shown on the comprehensive plan diagram in the northern portion of the planning area: the Stanford Hills subdivision and the Stanford Weekend Acres area. The inclusion of these areas at these intensities indicates concurrence with plans of Menlo Park and San Mateo County. Continued attention to traffic control measures along Alpine Road in the vicinity of Stanford Weekend Acres appears warranted in order to help assure traffic safety.

Parks, Recreation Areas and Open Spaces

Objectives

2134

1. To retain areas of natural terrain and vegetation sufficient to preserve the overall natural open character and quality of the area, and to buffer the town from its neighbors and its constituent neighborhoods from each other while permitting reasonable development of private lands.

2. To provide for appropriate park and recreation areas for community and neighborhood use.

3. To encourage public parks, recreation areas and open spaces serving other than primarily local residents only in locations where they will not be a disruptive influence on local residents and where they will preserve unique natural resources for use by residents of the larger region.

Description

2135 Extensive parks, recreation areas and open spaces are proposed in the plan. Each proposal is based upon the natural resources of the planning area and related to the needs of local residents, Midpeninsula residents, or other Bay Area residents. These proposals and the elements in which they are described are indicated in Table 1: Guide to Park, Recreation, and Open Space Proposals in the General Plan.

2136 Each park or recreation area proposed is so located and served by circulation facilities that it can be reached and used by the intended users without interfering with the enjoyment of nearby areas. Thus, facilities serving other than primarily local residents should be located on the edges of the planning area accessible from major thoroughfares.

2136a The comprehensive plan diagram proposes certain parks, recreation areas and open space uses on privately owned land. It is anticipated that some of these proposals will be implemented through appropriate dedications pursuant to planning regulations when private development takes place. In some instances, rights in land may be purchased by the town or other appropriate agency. In other instances, the private use of the land for a recreation or open space use constitutes conformity with the plan. Nonetheless, there may be instances when a property owner wishes to put land to a use not shown on the comprehensive plan diagram and the town or some other public agency is not able to obtain public rights through regulation and does not negotiate a purchase with the owner. In such instances and only for lands designated on the comprehensive plan diagram as neighborhood preserve, community preserve, scenic corridor and greenway, or labeled "Other Community," the general plan hereby permits:

1. private use of a character and intensity no greater than the public use indicated on the comprehensive plan diagram, or

2. private use at the lowest residential intensity suitable for the property and designed to maximize the open space character of the land.

In implementing the foregoing policy with respect to any proposal by a property owner, the approving authority of the town shall exercise judgment in approving a use to ensure compatibility with surrounding and nearby uses, circulation facilities and the applicable objectives of this general plan. Any use permitted must, of course, conform to the zoning for the property.

Table 1. Guide to Park, Recreation, and Open Space Proposals in the General Plan

Park, Recreation or Open Space	*Park and Recreation Element*	*Open Space Element*	*Trail & Path Element*	*Scenic Roads and Highways Element*	*Land Use Element*
Neighborhood Preserve	X				
Neighborhood Park	X				
Community Preserve	X				
Community Park	X				
Other Community Parks or Preserves	X				
Regional Park or Private Regional Facility	X				
Open Space Preserve		X			
Scenic Corridor	X				
Greenway	X				
Open Space Limited Development		X			
Agriculture		X			
Secondarily Park, Recreation, or Open Space*					
Residential Open Space Preserves					X
Trails and Paths			X		
Scenic Roads and Highways				X	
* These land use categories serve primarily for residential or circulation purposes, but have secondary uses as parks, recreation areas, or open spaces.					

Commercial and Research – Administrative

Objectives

2137 1. To provide goods and services to satisfy the most frequently recurring needs of local residents.

2. To limit other commercial development to the maximum extent possible consistent with other objectives of the plan.

3. To group related facilities attractively for convenient use and to prevent continuous commercial development along arterials which would detract from the scenic character of the area.

4. To control commercial development in a manner that will minimize its impact on neighboring residential areas.

Principles

2138 1. Convenience goods and services and limited shopping goods should be available in local shopping centers in sufficient quantity and variety to meet

the most frequently recurring needs of the residents of the Town of Portola Valley and its spheres of influence.

2. The development of new commercial and office floor area should be controlled to avoid premature availability and should only be permitted when it is demonstrated that the proposed additional space and uses are needed, within the objectives of this plan, to serve the existing population or the population anticipated over a reasonable time period.

3. Local shopping and service centers should be centrally located with respect to the population served, have direct access from major streets and have sufficient parking and service areas.

4. Individual sites should be landscaped attractively with native plants so as to integrate the entire development visually with its neighbors and the overall natural qualities of the planning area. Protecting residential areas from noise, unsightliness, odor and other nuisances should be accomplished through adequate landscape buffers that also enhance pedestrian access and through other appropriate design features.

5. Night lighting visible from the exterior of buildings should be strictly limited to that necessary for security, safety and identification. All night lighting, including signs, should be low intensity and shielded from view from residential areas.

6. All commercial uses should be compatible with adjacent development in terms of scale, general visual character and siting. (For principles relating to design objectives, building size and scale, conservation of natural beauty, and landscaping, see “General Principles” of the land use element and “Principles” of the open space element and “Principles” of the Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan.)

Standards

2139 1. In local shopping and service areas, a small percentage of the total net site area (exclusive of street and road rights-of-way) should be occupied by buildings. A substantial percentage of the site area should be left as natural and/or developed as landscaped open space using native plants.

2. Within local shopping and service areas, the ratio of total floor area to net site area for commercial uses shall not exceed 0.18 and for office uses shall not exceed 0.13.

Description

2140 The major shopping, service and employment opportunities in nearby areas are recognized, and hence a duplication is not proposed within the planning area. Thus, while frequently needed local shopping and service facilities are proposed within the area, activity centers outside the planning area such as the Stanford-Palo Alto shopping area are relied upon for more specialized goods and services.

2141 Four local shopping and service centers are indicated on the plan diagram. These centers are all existing at the present time and have sufficient area to meet the needs of local residents when the planning area is fully developed. The four centers are Ladera Country Shopper, Nathhorst Triangle Area, Town Center, and Sharon Heights Shopping Center.

2142 The two centers within the town, the Nathhorst Triangle Area and Town Center, should strictly adhere to the objective that these centers should provide only those goods and services necessary to satisfy the most frequently recurring needs of residents of the town and its spheres of influence. Thus, these centers are seen as including but not being limited to: hardware stores, food service stores, drug stores, beauty parlors and similar convenience goods, and very limited shopping goods. Limited office uses, such as doctors, banks and real estate offices serving the same population are also appropriate. Uses which would attract a majority of patronage from outside the service area should more appropriately be located in larger and more centrally located commercial and office centers elsewhere on the Midpeninsula or the Bay Area. These centers are related by the Portola Road corridor, which is described in the Corridor Plan starting with section 6400 of this General Plan.

2143 It is recognized that the Sharon Heights Shopping Center and the Ladera Country Shopper and adjoining professional center do not completely meet the criteria for commercial uses described above. These centers, outside the town and developed under other criteria, do however, provide largely convenience goods and services with limited shopping goods. The Ladera professional center also provides general office space not geared to serving local residents. Both of these centers are well-served by circulation and are accepted by this plan as appropriate for the locations involved. The undeveloped hillside behind the Ladera Country Shopper should be left as open space to balance the intensive development of the remainder of the site and provide a buffer between the shopping center and nearby residences.

2144 Existing research-administrative areas are recognized. The major use is the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC). This facility will have a continuing major impact on the planning area. Employment and access traffic to SLAC should be confined to Sand Hill Road. Attention should be given to assuring maximum compatibility of this installation with the surrounding area. Those aspects of the

development continuing to require special attention include: power transmission to the accelerator, control of noise and exterior lighting, traffic, landscaping and building design. It is likely that continuing attention to "temporary" installations will also be required. An existing research building complex on Arastradero Road is also recognized. The existing tree nursery, because of its largely impervious gravel surface, contributes considerable runoff to the creek. This use and similar uses should provide a buffer along the creek to minimize runoff, erosion and disturbance of habitats. In addition, present controls over these areas should be maintained or strengthened.

2145 Additional areas are shown for research-administrative use north of the Junipero Serra Freeway as proposed on the Menlo Park General Plan. Uses in these areas should be of very low intensity in order to be compatible with uses in nearby residential areas. Sites used for research-administrative purposes should be primarily open, buildings should be low and perhaps in small clusters, and the site development and landscaping should be designed to blend the buildings into the natural landscape.

2145a One area for research-administrative use is shown along Arastradero Road in Palo Alto. This use is inconsistent with Portola Valley's position as to appropriate uses in this area, but is recognized because of the substantial investment involved and the limited extent of the uses. No additional development of this intensity is shown on the comprehensive plan diagram for this area because of the adverse impact such uses have on the surrounding area. In particular, the road system is not adequate to accommodate the heavy traffic characteristic of such uses, and in addition, such uses tend to attract additional high intensity uses which are not compatible with the low intensity residential character of Portola Valley.

2145b Near the area for research-administrative use along Arastradero Road is a headquarters for a tree maintenance service which serves the Midpeninsula. This use is relatively low intensity and is not shown separately on the comprehensive plan diagram. The town recommends that this use be kept within limits which are compatible with the low intensity character of the surrounding area.

2145c The "Lee" quarry on Los Trancos Road in Palo Alto is within the town planning area. The quarry scar is visible from Portola Valley, but efforts have been made and should continue to be made to reduce the negative impacts of the quarry, including long-range restoration of the quarry to a more natural appearance.

Institutions

Objectives

2146

1. To provide for those institutions that are for the use of local residents and in harmony with the residential character of the Valley.

2. To ensure that existing institutions will be properly served by trafficways and are properly related to adjacent land uses.

3. To provide an appropriate area for the grouping of major community-serving institutional facilities.

Principles

2147

1. All institutional uses should be served directly by major collector roads or roads with higher capacities.

2. All institutional uses should be compatible with adjacent development in the planning area in terms of scale, general visual character and siting.

3. Space should be provided for all local institutional uses that may be necessary such as elementary and intermediate schools, churches, libraries and local governmental buildings.

4. Major community facilities should be located where convenient to the entire planning area.

5. Schools should make recreation areas and facilities available for use during non-school hours.

6. Schools should be located so as to minimize the time necessary to be spent in travel to and from school.

7. Schools should be located to provide safe and convenient access giving particular attention to the requirements of young children.

8. (For principles relating to building size and scale, and landscaping, see "General Principles" of the land use element.)

9. If an institutional land use ceases to exist, the town shall consider an appropriate alternate institutional use or development for other appropriate uses giving due consideration to the relationship to adjacent and nearby land uses.

Standards

2148 1. Residential type institutional facilities should be limited to a density of population no greater than that proposed for adjoining residential areas in the general plan. Section 2106.e. provides guidance with respect to appropriate ranges for building intensities and population densities.

2. Public Schools:

Grades	***Maximum Desirable Travel Time***
K-5	20 minutes
K-6	20 minutes
6-8	30 minutes
High School	40 minutes

Description

2149 Institutions needed to serve all or parts of the planning area are proposed and are located so as to be convenient to their service areas. Institutional uses proposed include schools, churches and fire stations.

2150 Schools. With regard to public schools, the plan indicates one elementary school and one intermediate school in the planning area.

2151 The Portola Valley Elementary School District serves the Town of Portola Valley plus some areas beyond the town boundary. The Ormondale elementary school serves the entire Town of Portola Valley as does the Corte Madera intermediate school. Thus, most children in the town have to travel considerable distances to school. As the population of the town grows, there may be a need for additional school facilities. The changing age composition of the population, however, makes it very difficult to project the number of school age children accurately. It is recommended that population changes be watched closely and appropriate school facility decisions be made in advance of any deficiencies.

2152 The Las Lomitas Elementary School District serves Ladera and a considerable area to the north. The Ladera elementary school, well located to serve that local community, is integrated with the adjoining recreational facilities of the Ladera Recreational District. The school is currently leased to a private school. Should the use of the school change, any new use should be compatible with the surrounding residential uses.

2153 One private school is shown on the plan diagram, the existing Woodside Priory school with grades 6 though 12.

2154 Churches. Five churches are shown, three of which are in the town. All are well served by major thoroughfares. Additional churches may be needed in the planning area in the future. Those areas indicated as "institutional" on the plan diagram provide suitable locations for additional churches.

2155 Fire Stations. Fire protection to the town and most of the planning area is provided by the Woodside Fire Protection District. The district has a station on Portola Road near Alpine Road as shown on the comprehensive plan diagram. This station will provide primary service to the town. The other district station is located to the north in the Town of Woodside. For further description of fire service and fire hazards, see the safety element.

2156 Other Institutional Uses. Other appropriate institutional uses that may be needed in the town would include but not necessarily be limited to local governmental buildings. Each institutional use should be judged separately and, if compatible with other uses in the area, could be located in one of the local shopping and service areas or in the vicinity thereof.

2156a The town center contains the historic schoolhouse, town hall (administration building), meeting rooms, indoor recreation facilities, outdoor recreation facilities and the library. The site is within the San Andreas Rift Zone and occupancy of buildings should be related to the risk due to earthquake hazards. The outdoor recreation facilities at the site should be used and augmented as appropriate as a part of the town center (see the recreation element for further description).

2157 An extensive area is shown as "low intensity academic reserve" for Stanford University. This area is presently being used for various radio telescopes, antennas, other experimental installations, stabling and training facilities for horses, and agriculture. Where it does not interfere with these primary uses, lands are also used for grazing. Much of this area is visible from the Portola Valley area. The retention of agricultural uses is encouraged. Any further developments in this area by Stanford University should be referred to the local governments in the nearby areas so that the effects on these areas can be properly evaluated and modifications recommended where necessary and desirable.

2158 Another area owned by Stanford University and shown as "low intensity academic reserve" is the area designated "Webb Ranch" on the comprehensive plan diagram, Part 5. A portion of this area designated for agricultural use is described in the open space element. A variety of uses would be appropriate on the balance of the Webb Ranch and therefore a detailed plan for this area is not appropriate at this time. Town guidelines for development are appropriate, however, and are as follows:

1. Lands within the area are appropriate for development of Stanford University's academic program and closely related land uses provided the intensity of development and use conforms with standards and criteria set forth in this plan. Opportunities exist for outdoor education including study of plant and animal life, geology and paleontology.

2. The retention of agricultural uses is encouraged. These activities allow use of the land while retaining the essential natural open space qualities of the area. The combining of agricultural uses with educational programs may be feasible. Agricultural uses would be appropriate on all lands shown as low intensity academic reserve, as an interim use on lands ultimately to be used for academic purposes, or as permanent open space. Proper attention should be given to prevent stream pollution from agricultural activities.

3. Intensity of use should be compatible with present and planned uses of adjoining and nearby lands when measured by such factors as vehicular traffic, ratios of building coverage and floor space in buildings to land area, building height, daytime and nighttime population density, artificial light, glare, noise, emission of smoke, smog, dust, odor, vibration and radiation or other deleterious factors. The volume of site traffic generated (people and vehicle) should not exceed the capacity of off-site transportation facilities to handle such traffic with reasonable convenience. The limited traffic capacity of the system is a major factor in determining the appropriate intensity of development within this area. Expansion of transportation facilities should be controlled to preclude aesthetic or ecological damage. Because of physical limitations, road access within the area can be developed at only two points on Alpine Road. In addition, in the freeway design and construction, provision has been made for only one road under the freeway interconnecting the Stanford lands to the north and south. Consideration should also be given to potential failure of Searsville Dam and consequent downstream flooding.

4. Development on the "low intensity academic reserve" areas should allow very substantial open space (all natural or replanted). Paved areas and building ground coverage shall not count as open space. Each developed area should emphasize uninterrupted open space. All development should be concealed from view, through location, from Freeway 280, Alpine Road and residential uses as much as possible. The low intensity academic reserve designation is intended to help meet the objectives of Section 2158,3. and the scenic roads and highways element.

2159 – 2162 Not used.

Public Facilities and Services

Objectives

2163

1. To ensure the development of public utilities in a manner that will cause minimum disruption of the natural beauty of the area.

2. To provide utilities adequate to serve local needs in the planning area.

3. To conserve natural resources and prevent pollution of water and air.

Principles

2164

1. All lines and facilities related to the transmission and distribution of power and telecommunications should be placed underground. If this is not practical and such lines or facilities are to be placed aboveground, the impact should be compensated by the undergrounding of lines or facilities in other locations within the planning area. The undergrounding of lines and facilities should be balanced against adverse effects on native vegetation.

2. A program should be developed for progressively placing existing overhead lines underground.

3. All utility installations should be sited, designed, developed and landscaped so as to blend with the natural scenery of the area.

4. All utility installations should be designed to minimize damage from identified geologic hazards.

5. Water, electric and gas supply lines should be loop systems where feasible.

6. Water supply systems must conform with established health and fire protection standards.

7. Waste water must not pollute ground water or streams or cause public or private nuisance.

8. Vegetative ground cover should be sustained to prevent storm water erosion. Unobstructed natural drainage channels should remain the principal storm drainage system, and riparian vegetation along their sides should be maintained in order to reduce erosion and bank failure and preserve habitat. Publicly owned drainage structures should be provided and maintained in accordance with the current Storm Drainage Plan of Portola Valley.

9. A solid waste and hazardous waste program which will assure adequate services, protect health, reduce waste generation and conserve energy and resources without adversely affecting the environment should be supported. Wastes resulting from animal keeping should also be controlled and disposed of in a sanitary manner.

10. The planting of native vegetation in developments should be encouraged as a water conservation measure.

11. Utilities should first serve adjoining areas and then be incrementally extended to serve contiguous new development rather than be extended so as to allow development to "leap-frog" over intervening lands.

12. Whenever there is a known limited supply of a public facility or service which is beyond the control or ability of the town to overcome, such limited facility or service shall be allocated approximately evenly over the time period of the anticipated shortage.

Description

2165 It is recognized that this general plan shows areas for development which are not served by utilities or which have utilities inadequate to serve additional development. Such areas shall not be developed until all utilities are supplied.

2165a In the planning area, where the preservation of the natural scenery and environment is the one most important consideration by most residents, it appears appropriate to require that all public facilities not detract from the natural environment but to the maximum extent possible blend into the natural setting. In order to ensure that this is done, adequate review procedures should be established.

Land Use Element Appendix 1:
Calculating Holding Capacity for the Land Use Element

The holding capacity of the general plan is an estimate of the total number of housing units that could be accommodated within the planning area under the plan proposals when and if the land is fully developed. It is a maximum figure and may be approached in time, but will probably never be achieved since some properties will never be developed to their fullest potential. The holding capacity shows a reduction in the overall holding capacity projected at the time the general plan for the Portola Valley area was originally prepared in 1964. This reduction is primarily a result of greater awareness by the town of development constraints imposed by unstable lands and conscious policies to reduce unnecessary exposure of persons and property to potential geologic hazards. The housing unit holding capacities were derived in the following manner.

1. Within existing subdivisions, the number of existing houses, vacant lots and potential lots that could be created through resubdivisions were counted. A small percentage of the vacant lots may never be built upon due to geologic hazards.

2. In unsubdivided areas, the residential land use intensity standards and policies contained in Sections 2106, 2106a and 2106b of the land use element were applied to obtain an estimate of the potential number of lots (see the detailed explanation below).

3. The number of lots from 1 and 2 above were added to obtain the housing unit holding capacity.

Estimating the number of lots in unsubdivided areas

The housing unit holding capacity for undeveloped lands was calculated by applying the residential land use intensity standards for each parcel and considering analysis of slope, unstable lands, and land that could be reasonably developed within the objectives and principles of the land use element. In some cases, the other factors analyzed reduced the holding capacity below the level that would be expected if only the basic land use intensity standard were applied. This is true in particular for lands with severe geologic stability problems whose holding capacity was calculated as follows:

1. Areas of geologic instability (Pmw, Ms, Pd, Psc, Md, Pf) and areas of geologic stability (Sbr, Sun, Sex, Sls, Ps) were identified. These areas are shown on the map "Movement Potential of Undisturbed Ground" for Portola Valley as of 1/23/76, as amended through 1995.

2. The land use intensity standards for the parcel were determined from the comprehensive plan diagram and section 2106 of the land use element. The

methods of applying the standards are those in effect in the Portola Valley zoning ordinance.

3. The land use intensity standards were applied to geologically stable areas providing a housing unit yield for stable lands.

4. The land use intensity standards were applied to the geologically unstable lands to obtain a housing unit yield that would be expected if there were no severe geologic constraints present. Then, to account for geologic instability, the yield was reduced by 90%. This reduction stems from the provisions of Sec. 2106 b. of the general plan. It was assumed that the remaining housing unit yield of 10% could be transferred to stable portions of the same parcel.

5. The housing unit yield from 3 and 4 above were added to obtain total housing unit holding capacity for the parcel.

HOLDING CAPACITIES

Residential Area	*Land Use Intensity*	*Estimated Existing 1996 Housing Units*[1]	*Holding Capacity Housing Units*
1	Low-Medium	205	207
2		100	116
3		30	37
4[2]		539	542
5[3]		149	157
		1,023	*1,059*
6	Low	56	60
7		553	582
		609	*642*
8	Conservation Residential	268	322
9		224	290
10[4]		105	143
11[4]		46	116
		643	*871*
12	Open Residential	*15*	*44*
Planning Area Total (all areas)		***2,290***	***2,616***
Portola Valley Total (Areas 1-3, 6-9, 11, 12)		***1,497***	***1,774***

Totals may not add due to rounding

[1] Estimated numbers of existing housing units are from available records for approximately March 1996. The records were least accurate for areas 5 and 10. Due to the small number of housing units in these areas, however, minor inaccuracies would not significantly affect the planning area totals.

[2] The existing number of housing units in 1996 is from the Los Trancos Woods Community Association.

[3] The existing number of housing units in 1996 is from the San Mateo County Planning Department.

[4] Although residential area 11 includes The Sequoias, the number of housing units and persons at The Sequoias are not included in the area 11 figures. Since the population at The Sequoias is approximately 325, the total holding capacity for the town is approximately 5,000 persons and for the planning area approximately 7,100 persons.

Land Use Element Appendix 2:
Implementation of the Land Use Element

Actions to date:

1. A wide range of recommendations are set forth in Appendix 5 of the Portola Valley General Plan adopted in 1965 pertaining to needed rezonings and other regulating ordinances. These recommendations were all subsequently enacted. These regulations guide implementation of the plan except where public purchase of property may be required. (See Open Space Appendix 2: Implementation of the Open Space Element for examples).

2. The 1977 general plan amendments included provisions regarding a new "Open Residential" category, revised guidelines for clustering, allowed only partial density credit for unstable lands and added impervious surface limitations and new provisions for accessory living quarters, among other changes. These changes have been reflected in amendments to the zoning ordinance.

3. The 1980 general plan amendments, among other matters, changed the land use intensity for the "Conservation-Residential" category from one to two net acres per housing unit. This change has been reflected in the zoning ordinance.

Future actions:

1. The town should undertake the preparation of a plan for the Portola Road corridor.