

Town of Portola Valley General Plan

Portola Road Corridor Plan

Adopted March 11, 2015

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Objectives	2
Principles	2
Standards.....	3
Description.....	4

Portola Road Corridor Plan

Introduction

- 6400 The Portola Road scenic corridor comprises Portola Road, the trail that parallels the road, and the lands immediately on either side of the road and trail. Running along the floor of Portola Valley, this corridor is part of the area that helps define the visual character and quality of the community and is considered the “heart of the town.” Portola Road is designated a greenway. The corridor links many of the town’s most important destinations including commercial, institutional, recreational and natural resources. Both town residents and visitors alike make frequent use of the corridor and benefit from its scenic qualities. In addition, the corridor both divides and connects the steeper open spaces of the western hillsides and the more residentially developed eastern portions of the town.
- 6401 Immediate views and distant vistas within and from the roadway corridor define its character and underscore the open space and more rural values of Portola Valley as a whole. Therefore, management and treatment of both public and private lands along the corridor and the more critical viewsheds from the corridor should reflect the basic town values as set forth in this general plan. Landscaping, buildings and other land uses within and along the corridor need to be sited and designed to conserve the open and rural character.
- 6402 In addition to its scenic setting, the corridor plays a critical role as a transportation and recreation resource. Portola Road is one of the main arterial roads in town for motor vehicles, and the corridor is a key location for alternate forms of transportation and recreation, such as walking and biking. The corridor serves to connect or provide access to many horse trails.

6403 The Portola Road Corridor Plan provides a comprehensive land use perspective for the entire corridor, sets forth the main objectives for it, and identifies principles and standards for guiding public and private actions to achieve plan objectives.

Objectives

- 6404
1. To serve as a scenic corridor through the town that reflects the open space values of the town. Much of the area between the two more intense land use clusters is traversed by or near the San Andreas Fault and should therefore be kept in open space or low intensity uses.
 2. To protect or reestablish open views within and from the corridor, especially to the western hillsides, wherever possible while preserving valuable habitat and variety of experience for all users.
 3. To encourage more pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian use along the corridor, improve the experience for these users, and reduce local motor vehicle trips.
 4. To keep the corridor free of exotic invasive plants and promote rehabilitation of native ecosystems.
 5. To preserve, enhance and reinforce the identity of the town by providing for a unified design of the valley, with two clusters of commercial and civic facilities near the ends of the corridor as focal points that are linked by trails, open space and planting epitomizing the natural quality of the town
 - 5.

Principles

6405 The following principles should be followed to achieve the objectives described above:

1. The town should actively pursue acquisition of properties or other property rights, such as conservation easements, from willing property owners, to preserve and enhance the most sensitive views of the western hillsides and achieve the other objectives of this element.
2. Vegetation along the road, both within the right-of-way and on private property, should be managed so as to enhance and preserve views, especially of the western hillsides, existing orchards and open fields.
3. Parking along the shoulder of the road should be discouraged using measures that are as unobtrusive as possible and do not to impede the

movement of bicyclists, equestrians, pedestrians and other users or affect the visual character of the roadway corridor.

4. The shoulders along Portola Road should have a consistent width sufficient to provide for multiple users, as long as widening the shoulders would not adversely impact the adjacent trail.
5. Exotic invasive vegetation should be removed within the corridor, and native vegetation should be used for new plantings wherever possible.
6. The trail along Portola Road should be separate from the road and clearly delineated.
7. The trail should be designed to serve multiple types of users, including pedestrians, equestrians, and bicyclists consistent with the Trails and Paths Element of this General Plan.
8. The trail surface should not be paved but should be consistent with town trails standards for a multi-use corridor. Ideally, the trail would have a pervious surface with drainage improvements as needed.
9. Where appropriate, the town should acquire land, easements, or other property rights from willing property owners along or near the road to allow for a better trail configuration and better connections to the rest of the town's trail system.
10. Land within the corridor should continue to be zoned and otherwise managed to promote open space and enhance scenic quality. Special consideration should be given to building size, design and setbacks along this road.

Standards

- 6406
1. The multi-use trail along Portola Road shall have an all-weather, non-paved surface suitable for horseback riding, bicycling, pedestrians, and other permitted users.
 2. Where the trail crosses the road, the nature of the crossings should be assessed for safe use by all users, and if necessary, improved.
 3. While meeting town trail standards, the trail shall incorporate some variety in width, elevation and treatment of nearby vegetation. This variety helps to preserve the rural character of the area.

4. The town should thin or remove vegetation in the right-of-way in order to open views as a primary goal, retaining enough vegetation to provide a varied experience for trail users. These evaluations should be made on a case by case basis using input from the various committees and other community interests in town, including adjacent property owners.
5. The town should encourage property owners on the western side of the road to thin or remove vegetation within the corridor on their properties when the vegetation obscures views of the western hillsides, agricultural uses and open fields. In some cases, however, vegetation to provide screening may be appropriate, such as in places where structures are located in proximity to the road/trail.
6. Undergrounding utility lines along the corridor is desirable and should be considered.
7. The town should require utility companies and property owners to screen utility boxes and related equipment or develop other measures to decrease their aesthetic impacts.
8. Portola Road should remain as a two lane road, although turning lanes should be added as necessary.
9. The town should encourage removal of exotic invasive vegetation on both sides of the roadway corridor.

Description

- 6407 The Portola Road Corridor extends approximately two miles from Alpine Road northward past the Priory School and the Sequoias Retirement Community to Portola Valley Town Center and the northern town boundary with the Town of Woodside. Much of the corridor is located east of the San Andreas Fault zone, and a significant segment of the the corridor, primarily from Willowbrook Drive to the Wayside Road, separates the eastern, more developed portion of Portola Valley from the steeper, less stable and less developed western hillsides.
- 6408 The corridor links clusters of community-serving uses at either end with open space, recreational, institutional, agricultural and residential uses in between. The cluster at the northern end includes churches, a commercial area and the town center with community-serving meeting, classroom, recreational and library facilities. The cluster at the southern end includes a commercial area, space for institutional uses and a fire station. The town's two largest institutional uses, the Sequoias and the Priory School, are both located between these two clusters. The visibility of all of these uses from

within the corridor should be managed so as to minimize visual intrusion or conflict with the objectives of this element.

- 6409 The road itself is a two-lane arterial road, with a bicycle route designated in the Trails and Paths Element along its length. Together with the lower portion of Alpine Road, Portola Road serves as part of a popular regional bike loop. The trail along the corridor is a critical link in the town's overall trail system for multiple types of users and has many important destinations along its length.
- 6410 The following descriptions are for specific segments for the corridor starting at Alpine Road and extending to the northern limits of Portola Valley.
- 6411 **Segment 1, Alpine Road to Willowbrook Drive and the Sequoias.** Land along this segment is more intensely developed than in the rest of the corridor. There are many developed residential parcels, with more dense development along the west side of the road. This segment also includes the significant Woodside Priory and Sequoias institutional uses and facilities, as well as the commercial and offices uses within the Nathorst Triangle. The land use pattern in this segment is well established, and efforts to enhance the sense of the town's character along the corridor need to recognize this. As a result, techniques such as encouraging or requiring planting of native materials, removal of exotic invasive vegetation, and more natural landscaping would be more appropriate in this segment than increased setbacks or other similar land use controls.
- 6412 **Segment 2, Sequoias to the Town Center.** On the east side of the corridor in this segment, the residential land use pattern is well established, with approximately one acre per dwelling unit, and no significant changes are anticipated. Development areas visible from the corridor should continue to be controlled through setback and architectural review to protect the visual character of views from the road. Similar to Segment 1, the main objectives for this area will be to control exotic invasive plant materials and replace these with native landscaping consistent with town landscaping guidelines. Within the public right-of-way, vegetation can be addressed through annual roadway maintenance programs and other programs as consistent with town budgetary priorities and resources. For privately held lands on the east side of the corridor, the town should seek to encourage, and where possible in conjunction with development review proposals, require conversion of highly visible non-native plant materials to native species.
- 6413 In this segment, larger parcels, some of which extend from the road up into the western hillsides towards the Skyline scenic corridor, are located on the west side of the corridor. The largest property on the western hillsides is the Windy Hill Open Space Preserve, which is owned by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, while other properties are in private ownership. In addition, this area includes lands closer to the road which are identified for Community Open Space Preserves in the Open Space Element. The west side of the corridor along this segment provides some of the most

magnificent views in town. The Town will need to manage its lands along the right of way to protect and improve these views and should also work with both private and public land owners to take actions on their properties consistent with this Corridor Plan and other applicable elements of the General Plan. Where appropriate, the town should acquire land or other property rights, such as conservation or open space easements, from willing property owners, or should encourage designation under the Williamson Act.

- 6414 **Segment 3, Town Center to Wayside Road.** The land use pattern adjacent to this segment is largely set and controlled by provisions set forth in the town center area plan element of this general plan. This area includes the Town Center Preserve and also the larger private land holdings to the north of this Preserve. As with the larger privately held lands on the west side of Segment 2, the town should pursue actions that would protect the visual qualities of the lands critical to the views from the corridor.
- 6415 **Segment 4, Wayside Road to the northern town limits.** On the east side of the corridor north of Wayside Road and the Wyndham Drive subdivision, most land is within the Town of Woodside and occupied by the “Family Farm” private low density use. The town encourages the low intensity uses in this area to continue and for the roadside and lands immediately east of the corridor to be maintained in the existing open and tree covered condition.
- 6416 Land on the west side of Segment 4 is largely developed in low to medium intensity residential uses, and no significant change in land use or pattern of uses is expected. As for Segment 1, the corridor in this segment should be managed to discourage exotic invasive plantings, enhance native vegetation and, to the extent possible, limit views to houses and other site improvements. It is recognized, however, that like portions of Segment 1, there will be limited option for changes to the established visual character along the corridor in Segment 4.

Portola Road Corridor Plan Appendix 1: Implementation of the Portola Road Corridor Plan

Actions to date:

1. ASCC review is required for all buildings along Portola Road.
2. Conservation Committee review is required for all landscaping within 75' of Portola Road. The town has adopted design guidelines that include lists of native plants that are to guide the Conservation Committee in its actions. The use of native plants in the scenic corridor will help retain the natural beauty of the area.

Future actions:

1. The trail along Portola Road from the Town Center to Nathhorst Triangle should meet the town standards for a multi-use trail, with a minimum 6' wide trail surface of compacted base rock. Land or easements should be acquired as necessary to allow this trail standard to be met.
2. Widen shoulders in key locations along Portola Road to make them consistent in width.
3. The town should thin vegetation in the road right-of-way in locations where vegetation blocks views, and work with private property owners to encourage similar thinning on their lands.