



The Portola Valley Post

Winter 2004

Council Approves Master Plan for New Town Center

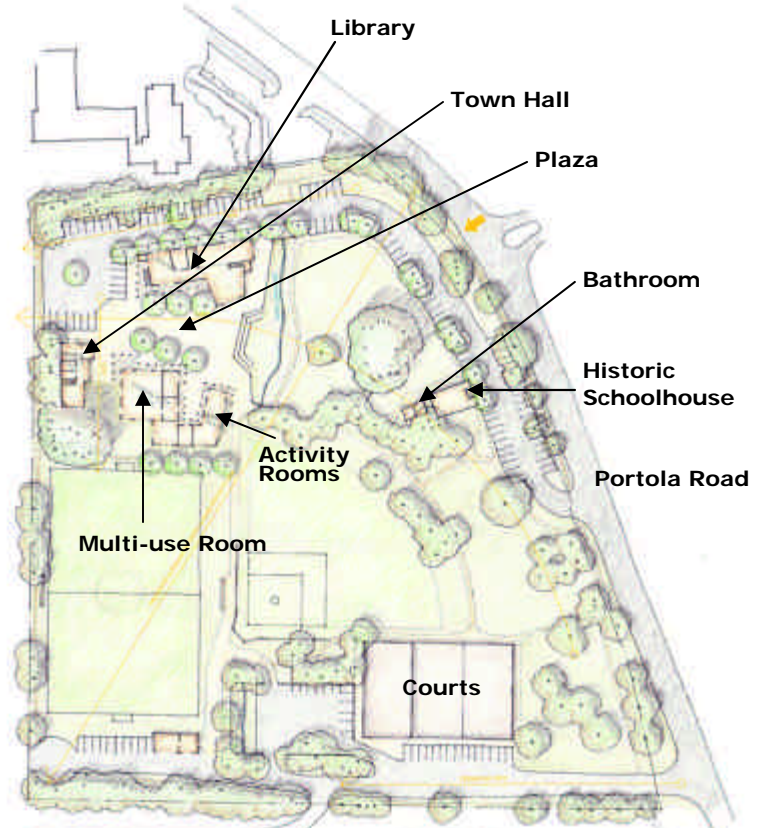
A new conceptual Town Center site plan designed in a three-month series of Design Charrettes involving Town residents, staff, local officials and the architectural firm of Siegel & Strain was approved by the Town Council on November 10.

The Final Plan is the result of over 180 different community members providing input during an intense community design effort of 4 Design Charrette Work Sessions, 4 Town Council Special Sessions, a joint meeting with the Planning Commission and Architectural & Site Control Commission, 2 large joint meetings of the Town's Standing Committees, and over 50 written comments.

This plan integrates open spaces, buildings, trails and views into a new town center while balancing the needs of governance, culture, open space and recreation uses.

The proposed design will:

- Move town functions out of old school buildings scattered across an active earthquake fault zone and onto a portion of the site safer for construction.
- Reduce overall paving and building footprints; consolidate parkland and increase parking and recreational fields.
- Keep roadways and paving to the edges of the property, leaving the center of the site free for outdoor recreation in a park-like setting.
- Extend a continuous swath of open parkland along the Portola Road Scenic Corridor from the existing mature oaks at Spring Down Lane through a restored Sausal Creek and into the new Town Plaza.
- Accommodate sustainable design goals by minimizing impervious surfaces, restoring natural habitats and orienting buildings to take advantage of solar access, daylight and natural cooling and ventilation.
- Place a cluster of new Town Center buildings at the existing tennis courts in the northwest corner against a backdrop of mature trees.
- Group together recreational sports fields and courts on the southern portion of the site. A slightly enlarged soccer field remains in its existing location. A new baseball field is located where the existing school buildings are. Three courts are placed adjacent to Spring Down Lane adjacent to parking.
- Consolidate maintenance functions into a single facility located off Spring Down Lane, separate from other uses.



The Town Center Master Plan provides more community facilities, safer buildings, less paving, more green space, and more indoor and outdoor gathering spaces. Central to the Plan is a four-acre swath of open space that extends from the oak woodlands in the southeastern corner of the site, along the Portola Valley Scenic Corridor and back to the proposed Town Plaza area in the northwestern corner of the site.

Continued on Page 8

What's Up at the Schools this Fall?

As the PV Schools Foundation annual fundraising campaign comes into full swing, life is good at both campuses. Corte Madera's new principal Joel Willen reports that the 4th graders completed another exhausting, successful Gold Rush, their traditional five-day field trip to the Gold Country, and at the end of November the 7th graders will pack up their long underwear and mittens to board a bus for their five-day field trip to Yosemite.

Back in the classroom, art teacher Brigid Corboy and 5th grade teacher Denise Rodrigues teamed up to do a truly hands-on unit on Native American masks while 7th grade history teacher David Macomber has been getting ready to fire up the district's brand new video equipment, key to enabling the video production class to run live news shows on campus. Mr. Macomber and his leadership class

also spearheaded a school-wide mock Presidential election at Corte Madera on Election Day.

The first speaker in this year's PVPTA's parent education evening lecture series was William Damon, Professor of Education and Director of the Center on Adolescence at Stanford who spoke about how young people develop character and a sense of moral purpose. And to that end, in mid-November the district and the PTA brought Rosalind Wiseman's acclaimed Empower Program to the middle school to help all segments of the Corte Madera community deal with bullying, harassment, teasing, exclusion and other difficult rites of adolescent passage.

A garden grows at Ormondale, courtesy of parents who donated, designed and built the lovely fenced organic vegetable garden to be used by teach-

ers and students as part of the new service learning program and the science curriculum. And Art in Action, another maiden program this year at Ormondale, is roaring along, inspiring the kids to make great art.

At the end of September a group gathered at Ormondale on a hot, Indian summer afternoon to dedicate a tree to the memory of Joan Damm, much loved kindergarten teacher who taught 32 years in the PV School district and died two years after retiring. I think of Joan's bouncy gait and ready smile, and her often used line, "life is good," as I write this, wishing she could have lived to see the garden, evidence that indeed, in the Portola Valley Schools this fall, it is.

Maryann Derwin

Continuous Book Sale

Located to the right of the front door, the Friends of the Portola Valley Library's continuous book sale is a great find. Titles are being added several times a week, and books are rotated monthly. Prices start at 25 cents.

The sale of these used books at the Library continues to be very successful. Between

Do some holiday shopping and help the library

\$1,000 and \$1,500 is collected yearly from these sales and the funds are used to sponsor programs, buy DVDs, Books on Tape, library furnishings and computers. You can donate books by taking them to the desk at the library. We continue to take everything but magazines, textbooks, encyclopedias and religious books.

We wish to thank everyone who has contributed used books.

Earlyne Mund, Friends of the Library

Enjoy Writing and Portola Valley?

Our Town newsletter, The Portola Valley Post, is currently looking for a writer. Bring your talents and ideas for articles to the publication and find the answers to things you've always wondered about in Portola Valley. This volunteer opportunity allows you to explore a few local topics twice a year, meet some of your neighbors and help strengthen the Portola Valley community. To learn more send an email to the editor at julia8925@sbcglobal.net.

To volunteer, please respond to Town Hall with a short letter addressed to Angie Howard.



Town of Portola Valley

765 Portola Road
Portola Valley, CA 94028
(650) 851-1700
townhall@portolavalley.net

Portola Valley Town Council

George Comstock, Mayor
Ed Davis, Vice Mayor
Ted Driscoll
Richard T. Merk
Steve Toben

The Portola Valley Post

Editor: Julia Dillingham
(julia8925@sbcglobal.net)
Associate Editor: Karen Vahtra
Council Liaison: Steve Toben

Contributors:

Virginia Bacon, Maryann Derwin,
Carolyn Dobeitch, Trish Hooper,
Derry Kabcenell, Nancy Lund,
Earlyne Mund, Linda Weil,
Ed Wells

Mayor's Letter

Serving as mayor of your town for the last twelve months has been a wonderful opportunity to get better acquainted with many of you, and to work in harmony with other dedicated volunteers and staff in wrestling with the challenges facing us. In my own life, it's been a great new experience to feel this integrated into my community.

This fall we moved Town staff into temporary quarters, and completed work on a Conceptual Master Plan to guide our steps in providing safer facilities in a more people-oriented Town Center focused around a new Library with expanded capability.

My personal thanks go to the two to three hundred folks who have contributed innumerable hours and energy to the

planning process over the last several months, presenting many helpful points of view, pro and con, about what the best course of action would be.

One of the greatest strengths of our Town is the large number of people who volunteer for our committees and commissions, or who undertake special projects for the Town. If you're not already involved as a volunteer for the Town, may I encourage you to take the plunge? It's a wonderful way to become a real part of our community. Call any council member, commission or committee member, or Angie Howard, our Town Administrator (851-1700, Ext 15) to hear more about how your talents could bear fruit right here in our home town

An Unusual Collection

Portola Valley is home to one of the world's largest and most significant collections of historical military vehicles. The Military Vehicle Technology Foundation is the passion of Jacques Littlefield, and his Pony Tracks Ranch in Vista Verde is home to 205 specimens on display in 48,000 square feet of exhibition space. The 470-acre ranch was previously owned by former California governor and longtime San Francisco mayor "Sunny Jim" Rolph.

The Foundation's goal is to acquire, restore, and interpret the historical significance of 20th and 21st century military vehicles. A nonprofit organization, the Foundation was formed by Jacques to keep the collection together and make it available to designers, contractors, modelers, students, history buffs and other interested groups. He frequently opens his property for fundraisers, donating tours and events, such as the tour he donated for the Blues & BBQ silent auction to raise funds for Portola Valley's open space acquisitions.

Jacques' interest in history and complex mechanical things began in his early years. He worked his way up from Erector set projects as a 10-year old to engineering miniature tanks

from scratch. He likes problem solving and enjoys the complexity and challenge of restoring vintage military vehicles.

The equipment is displayed in the formal museum, and there are several large barns full of tanks awaiting restoration. The ranch contains an extensive restoration facility,

Collecting something as unusual as historical military equipment isn't always easy

including a very knowledgeable full-time staff, tool shops, and an extensive technical library that describes many vehicles down to the part level. Four full-time mechanics restore two or three projects at a time, typically over a two-year stretch. The crew that does the restorations is comprised of other collectors, heavy equipment mechanics and people with fabricating skills. Most of them have been with the Foundation for eight or more years.

Continued on page 4

The Sequoias

Once again, a year has swept past too fast, and the Christmas catalogs are overfilling our mail boxes. With beautiful fall weather, residents have been enjoying the Windy Hill trails with poison oak taking first place in change of color in our local plants and trees.

The Sequoias celebrated the first Blue Ribbon Event on September 14 with President of the council Carolyn Rutherford reporting on the progress of the Health Center project. This concept has been approved by the town of Portola Valley Planning Commission after many years of work on both sides. 225 residents attended the evening event, each lady wearing a blue dress. Barbara Hood, CEO of Northern California Presbyterian Homes & Services added her thanks to

all who have contributed to this needed project. B.J. Sorensen, Harry Brawner, Jennifer Harris and the Rutherfords were among those thanked for their help in planning this event. Delicious food plus music in the background made this evening special.

The Alzheimer's Walk, which took place on Treasure Island on October 9 was well attended by Sequoians who were bussed over to the island. It was an especially beautiful morning and a wonderful tribute to all who work to increase funding for research into this dread disease.

Life is wonderful up here close to Windy Hill!

Trish Hooper

Pelotons in Portola Valley

Cycle racing has a long history and huge popularity in Europe. The Tour de France is over one hundred years old. Since the US native Lance Armstrong won the race a record six times, more Americans are now aware of the sport. Minor crashes are common on the tour but only a few accidents are more serious than a few bruises and some bent metal. During the tour, most of the roads are automobile free keeping serious incidents at bay.

During competitive cycle racing, individuals cannot win without a great team, the peloton. The peloton increases their speed by using each other as windshields by riding close to each other and drafting. The rider drafting uses about 30 percent less energy than the person in front of him.



Multiple riders work together rotating the front position so that the group can travel more efficiently than one rider by himself.

On a daily basis, several packs of bicycle riders and many individual riders pass through rural Portola Valley. Residents in Portola Valley have complained to the sheriff about some group cyclists who violate the law: riding five abreast, not stopping at a stop sign, or crossing the white line of a bike lane.

Portola Valley is highly regarded as a great place to go for a bicycle ride, and numerous bike guides and web sites feature the Portola Valley loop. The loop begins at Stanford and follows along Page Mill, Arastradero, Alpine, Portola and Sand Hill roads, a moderate ride with some elevation gain but no steep hills. The most treacherous section of the Portola Valley loop is narrow and windy Arastradero road, which has no bike lane.

Cyclists join group rides for a variety of reasons. Some group rides are serious others are more social. Every weekday, an informal non-organized group of riders meets at noon on Old Page Mill Road to ride the Portola Valley loop. Despite the informal organization, the "noon riders" are one of the more intense groups of cyclists and include several former Olympians.

Continued on Page 7

The lure of the noon ride differs for each rider. Some riders

The peloton creates a challenge on Arastradero Road

Photo by Karen Vahtra

An Unusual Collection

Collecting something as unusual as historical military equipment isn't always easy. In 1998, U. S. Customs officials blocked his effort to import a Soviet-made Scud missile and its bus-size mobile launcher stating that the missile had not been dismantled as required. Jacques did prevail after an investigation that included determining that the paperwork and the collector were legitimate.

On rare occasions the vehicles leave Pony Tracks to be displayed at a local show but Jacques prefers to show people the vehicles in his facilities because there is so much more to see and the supporting displays are all in place.

Hollywood has been in touch with Jacques, but although he's never sent a vehicle to a movie set, sometimes Hollywood comes to Pony Tracks. His most notable film participation was a portion of the soundtrack for "Saving Private Ryan" created by George Lucas's Skywalker Sound at Pony Tracks and then dubbed back into the film.

Next time you see a tank in a state of disrepair on a flat-bed truck heading out Alpine Road, you'll know where it's going.

The Black Magic emblem on this tank was inspired by a decal for a 1960's Revell model tank that Jacques built.

Photo by Karen Vahtra

Continued from Page 3



Portola Valley Residents for 40 Years



Top Row (from left): Walter LeClerc, Jr., Grace LeClerc, Andy Browne, Susan Browne, Bernie Bayuk, Loraine Bayuk, Carol Campbell, Sharon Refvem, Janet Refvem, Carl Larson, Judy Lipman, Nancy Wilson, Hew Crane, Sue Crane, Rosemarie Luce, Fran Dempsey, Alan Andrew, Ed Wells, Jackie Andrew, Alison Wells, Bob Anderson, Bob Katz, Jeanne Iverson, Dean Babcock, Agnes Babcock, Dick Emerson, Rite Emerson, Adele McPartland, Unidentified, Phyllis Quilter
Middle Row: Al Schreck, Jo Schreck, Marjorie Larkin, Shirley Larson, Evelyn Hobart, Pat Brown, Bob Brown, Sam Halsted, Jean Lane, Bill Lane, Eleanor Boushey, Bob Heen, Jane Heen
Front Row: Ted Luce, Tom Dempsey, Mimi Breiner, Sheldon Breiner, Charlotte Anderson, Jim Lipman, Rowland Tabor, Elsa Roscoe, Richard Merk, Sally Stewart, Bjorn Conrad, Adaline Jessup, Geraldine dePorttere, Sheila Zipf, Diana Raines

For a more complete list of 40-year residents, please see the enclosed insert.

Photo by Karen Vahtra

A Second Generation Of Oak Trees

A 123-year old oak and another that is at least 300 years old are “mothers” to a second generation of trees on the Woodside Priory School campus.

“In the late 1960s, Father Maurus (Nemeth) found sprouting acorns around the Big Coast Live Oak, or *Quercus agrifolia*. I planted them in one-gallon and later in five-gallon containers. About 30 are planted on the west side of the monastery, near the mother tree, the enormous Big Coast Live Oak. It measures seven feet in diameter and eighty feet tall, with a 120-foot spread,” said Grounds Manager Louis Kovacs.

The other “mother tree,” a Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*) located on the soccer field in front of the school, blew over last year in a high wind.

“Fortunately, I had picked up several

Woodside Priory's Grounds Manager Louis Kovacs with a heritage oak
 Photo by Karen Vahtra



acorns eight to ten years ago. I grew them in containers and now they are planted outside the science building,” Mr. Kovacs said.

The two heritage oak trees and a large palm were the main foliage on a largely bare hillside purchased by Father Egon Javor for the school, which opened in 1957.

In the mid-1960s, Mr. Kovacs and a colleague, Brother Francis, started a plant nursery with a greenhouse and the seeds of six different conifers. By 1966, they had 2,000 trees in one-gallon and five-gallon containers. The groves along the soccer field, including the majestic trees lining the front driveway, began life in this nursery. Today, some are 100 feet tall and more than 2 ½ feet in diameter. Some of the double-trunk trees are almost 5 ½ feet in diameter.

Mr. Kovacs has planted at least 800 trees on the campus grounds, he says.

Continued on Page 6

A Surprise in a Plain, White Wrapper

Portola Valley residents received a little something extra in the mail in October. This surprise in a plain, white wrapper is the "Conservation Guide for Portola Valley Residents," a publication of the Town's Conservation Committee.

The Conservation Committee is best known as an advisory committee to the Architecture and Site Control Commission, deciding on the appropriateness of landscaping plans associated with construction. But our broader mission is the preservation and enhancement of the environmental values that have made Portola Valley such an attractive place in which to live. Those values are spelled out in the new Guide, on the theory that residents who understand them will be more likely to want to protect them.

The Guide lists twelve specific values, such as "Views", "Wildlife" and "Energy", under the general headings of

"Ambiance", "Nature" and "Resources".

Each section explains a value, lists the Town's efforts to preserve it, and offers specific actions residents can take. For example, if you "feed pets indoors; do not feed wildlife," you may prevent wildlife from becoming too accustomed to humans. According to Marge DeStaebler, chair of the Conservation Committee, "The Guide gives all of us tools to help us protect what we cherish."

In addition to the Committee's work on the Guide, a number of others helped to make it happen. Local authors of photographs, drawings and quotations kindly allowed us to borrow their work, and printing was made possible by a generous gift from Bill and Jean Lane. The Guide will be provided to new and prospective residents, and copies will be available at Town Center.

Derry Kabcenell, Conservation Committee

A Variety of Interesting Challenges

The Historic Resources Committee is looking for new members. The committee's main tasks are to advise the Town Council on issues relating to the Historic Element of the General Plan and to preserve the history of the town through the collection of documents, photographs, artifacts and maps.

Having the town archive in good order by the time we move from its current cramped, unheated home in a section of the maintenance staff's office to quarters in the new library/cultural center is the immediate goal. The committee doesn't meet often, only when decisions must be made, but members work independently on projects of their choice. During warm months, we occasionally have working sessions

There are many ways to be involved: Taking oral histories of long-time residents; working with maps to preserve and protect them; preparing a simple program to take local history to school children; helping to oversee

The Historic Resources Committee is looking for new members

the rehabilitation of the historic Freeman house, arranging displays in the library or historic schoolhouse, cataloging the files of former mayors and newspaper articles from the morgue of the *Almanac* and the defunct *Palo Alto Times*; or identifying and organizing photographs are examples.

The committee has slightly crossed the threshold of the computer age by entering 2000 photographs (so far) and several dozen maps into databases. Having a member with computer expertise who could continue this process would be excellent with the goal of a searchable database of documents and a collection of historic photos on the Town website.

If this sounds interesting, please leave your name and contact information with the staff at Town Hall.

Nancy Lund

Oak Trees

Continued from Page 5

As a young man, Mr. Kovacs was fortunate to work alongside Brother Francis, who held a degree in horticulture from UC Davis and was a willing teacher, he said. Later, Mr. Kovacs earned his own degree in botany and a horticulturist's certification. He has been responsible for the plantings on the campus for more than 30 years.

The beauty of the campus today is in its trees, not its buildings, which are very functional but simple in design, Father Egon said in a recent issue of the school's newsletter. Donations and volunteer effort helped to transform

the site. An acclaimed landscape architect, Thomas Church, donated a long-range plan, and a friend of the school, Suzanne Eyre, organized her friends to provide funding and gardening support. For many years, the students, staff and monks would look up to find these socially prominent ladies in their work clothes, planting, spading and weeding, Father Egon said. Mr. Kovacs continued to discuss plantings with Mrs. Eyre right up to her death in 2001, he said.

Carolyn Dobervich, Woodside Priory

Portola Valley's Trails

One of the treasured assets of Portola Valley is the approximately 36 miles of trails and paths in town. There is a lot of history behind our trails. Perhaps the oldest, Old Spanish Trail which winds up Coal Mine Ridge, was first mentioned in an 1823 account of Spanish soldiers pursuing an escaped mission Indian who was on a crime rampage. Planning for the trails date back to 1964 when the town was incorporated and countless volunteer hours have been devoted to create and maintain them.

Historically, the trails have been built and maintained by volunteers. It took 100 volunteers three years working every second Saturday to build the Toyon trail. Today, with the exception of the Westridge trails, all trails are maintained by the town staff – under the guidance of the town's Public Works Director, Howard Young and the all-volunteer Trails and Paths Committee. Occasionally we have volunteer work days where town residents help repair a trail or clear invasive weeds.

The trails are shared by hikers, walkers, equestrians, dogs and in selected instances, bicycles. In order to preserve and enjoy this asset it is important that we respect the rights of other users as well as the private property that the trails may pass through. All restrictions are indicated on posts at the trailheads and trail junctions as well as marked on the town Trail map. The Trail map is available at the Town Center and can be downloaded from the town web site (<http://www.portolavalley.net>).

- Pedestrians are allowed on all trails and paved paths. Hikers and walkers should give way to horses, preferably by standing off to the side of the trail on the downhill side.
- Equestrians are permitted on all trails with the exception of the narrow Toyon trail in Portola Valley Ranch. In addition, during the winter rainy season certain trails that have steep segments, or become

soggy from standing water, may be closed to horses both for the safety of horses and riders and to preserve the tread.

- Bicycles are permitted on all paved paths and permitted on selected unpaved trails near schools. Bicycles should stop for equestrians and yield for pedestrians. The bicycle speed limit is a maximum of 15 mph and 5 mph when passing hikers. Bicyclists under 18 years of age are required to wear a helmet.
- Dogs are permitted on many trails and prohibited from certain marked trails. The San Mateo County and Portola Valley leash law requires that dogs be on a six foot leash at all times. Please pick up after your pets.
- For safety reasons no motorized vehicles, including scooters and dirt bikes, are allowed on the trails. This includes no parking of cars on the roadside trails.

It is not unusual to encounter wildlife while walking the trails. Deer, rabbits and banana slugs are common and bobcats and coyotes are more elusive. Now that the rains have started we will begin to see flowering vegetation. The red berries of the Toyon shrubs and trees are already apparent. The purple Douglas iris, white milkweed, orange California buttercup and purple Hounds tongue are just some of the first natives to flower. Please do not disturb or remove wildlife or vegetation on the trails.

Finally it is important that we do not smoke or build fires on any trails.

Take a break, enjoy the wilderness that surrounds us and go for a stroll on one of the town trails – soak in the view from the top of Coal Mine Ridge; feel the cool, smooth red bark of the many Madrone trees along the trails; and take time to smell the flowers!

Trails and Paths Committee

Cyclists

like the intensity, others like the adrenaline rush, some like the personal challenge, and others do it for an opportunity to keep in shape. Competitive cyclist Jim Walton finds the noon ride the best way to keep in racing shape.

Unfortunately, cars and bicycles are often a dangerous mix. The automobile is a lethal weapon to a cyclist, whose only protection is a helmet. In January of this year in Palo Alto, Megan Coughran's car killed 6-year old bicyclist Amy Malzbender. Megan is spending one year in jail, following with five years of probation and paying a \$10,000 restitution.

Portola Valley has limited resources to finance traffic control, but the sheriff's office does regularly monitor the situation. By regularly parking his car at the corner of Alpine and Portola Road, Deputy Sheriff Robert Lawrence encourages cyclists to stop at the stop sign. His goal is to avoid any acci-

Continued from Page 4

dents. The vehicle code states that riders must ride single file unless passing another bicycle or vehicle to the right and stay within a designated bike lane. The town would like to improve enforcement of the vehicle code and have more sheriff patrols but funds are limited.

Bicyclists have equal rights on the road but are the most vulnerable vehicles. Jim Walton suggests that drivers could slow down a bit and be cautious around all cyclists. If a cyclist doesn't move out of the way, a driver can first lightly tap their horn to notify the cyclist of the driver's presence.

Karen Vahtra

New Town Center

Continued from Page 1

Next Steps:

Develop Project Funding Strategies. If the entire master plan is built out, the estimated cost is approximately \$15 million. Now that the community has a Master Plan that incorporates a balance of the range of activities to take place on the site, Town Council will begin developing possible financing strategies. The initial source of funding for the first phase of construction will be current revenues. The next priority source of funding will be private contributions. Town Council would like to avoid or minimize public financing, if possible. The Town welcomes interested members of the community to participate in the financial planning for this project and will keep the community apprised of the Town's current thinking on funding strategies.

Review of Retrofit Options. At the urging of some residents who prefer not to abandon the current buildings, the Town Council has requested a memo from the Town Attorney on the lawfulness of retrofitting and updating structures that straddle the San Andreas Fault. This document will be presented at the December 8 Town Council meeting at 8:00 p.m. in the Historic Schoolhouse. Interested citizens are invited to attend.

Begin Environmental Review Process. All projects that could have a potential environmental impact are required to go through an "Initial Study" to determine if the project will have potential significant impacts on the environment. The Town will be initiating this process in early 2005.



Over 180 residents worked to layout eight site plan alternatives that formed the basis for design alternatives.

Photo by Virginia Bacon

Stay Involved. The Town will continue to notify interested community members about the Town Center Project through ads in the Almanac, direct mailings and email. If you are not already on the project email list, please call Sharon Hanlon at Town Administration at 851-1700, or go to the Town website at www.portolavalley.net and send an email stating you would like to be included on the project mailing list. The Town website also includes detailed history and information about the Town Center project.



The Portola Valley Post
765 Portola Road
Portola Valley, CA 94028

Presorted
Standard
US POSTAGE
PAID
Menlo Park, CA
94025

Permit No. 581

ECRWSS
Postal Customer
Portola Valley, CA 94028