

Town of Portola Valley General Plan

Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan

Amended May 10, 2023

Table of Contents

- Introduction 1
 - Planning Area 1
- Objectives 2
- Principles 2
- Standards 4
- Description 4
 - Community Commercial 5
 - Community Service 6
 - Community Park, Open Space and Buffer Planting 7
 - Institutional Uses 7
 - Low Intensity Residential Uses 7
 - Low-Medium Intensity Residential 8
 - Streets 8
 - Pedestrian Paths 8
 - Bicycle Path 9
 - Riding Trails 9
 - Bicycle Lanes 9
- Plan Diagram 9

Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan

Introduction

- 6100 The Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan deals with one sub-area of the town. While basic policy affecting the setting for the Nathhorst Triangle Area (NTA) is found elsewhere in the general plan, the most detailed proposals for this area are found in this sub-area plan. To obtain the fullest understanding of the town's policy for the development of the NTA, reference should be made to this sub-area plan, other pertinent parts of the town general plan, and to Appendix 20 for pertinent references to planning regulations. Background studies are on file with the town. Studies of particular relevance to population and commercial acreage projections include "Nathhorst Triangle Area, Preliminary Design Study for the Town of Portola Valley, January 17, 1967" and memorandum to the planning commission from the town planner, "Subject: A-P Zoning District Regulations", August 28, 1970; and Reevaluation of C-C and A-P Zoned Properties, Town of Portola Valley, January 9, 1992.
- 6101 The plan is intended to guide, unify and enhance, both functionally and aesthetically, the development of the separately owned private properties in coordination with public spaces and facilities, roads, trails and paths. The plan includes: objectives, principles and standards; description; and the plan diagram.

Planning Area

- 6102 This sub-area plan includes all land bordered by Alpine Road, Portola Road and Nathhorst Avenue, plus adjoining related lands as shown on the plan diagram. The planning area includes lands proposed for commercial and service activities serving

the town, public uses serving the town, and residential lands. The area is sufficient, when combined with the other commercial area in the town, to meet the needs of the town for local goods and services when the town is completely developed in conformance with the general plan.

6103 (Not Used.)

Objectives

- 6104
1. To develop the Nathhorst Triangle area (NTA) as a focal point for businesses and institutional type uses serving the residents of Portola Valley and its spheres of influence and as an informal social gathering place.
 2. To produce a unified commercial-service-institutional-residential complex with a scale and design quality compatible with the rural setting of the town.
 3. To serve the NTA with a system of roads, paths and trails that provide for safe, convenient and enjoyable access to, from and through the area.

Principles

- 6105
1. In order to serve as a community focal point, the NTA shall provide space for:
 - a. Convenience, goods and services and limited shopping goods in the community commercial areas.
 - b. Offices for businesses serving the community in the community service areas.
 - c. Institutional uses such as churches, a fire station and similar uses.
 - d. Those facilities which tend to bring people together informally such as an outdoor cafe and sitting areas.
 - e. Residential uses at a scale which blends with the existing and proposed commercial uses.
- 6106
2. In order to meet desired design objectives:
 - a. Growth shall be orderly and ultimately uninterrupted along property lines between commercial uses.
 - b. Flexibility shall be allowed as to land use on those community commercial parcels which due to location and access can reasonably accommodate commercial, office or residential uses. Requirements

shall be established to ensure their compatibility with surrounding land uses.

- c. Non-residential uses shall not adversely affect nearby residential property.
- d. Noise, sight, odor and other nuisances shall be held to a reasonable minimum.
- e. Excessive grading shall be avoided and attractive natural features such as the creek shall be preserved and enhanced.
- f. Structures shall be designed so that all sides are attractive.
- g. Parking lots shall permit convenient automobile movement, parking and access to facilities, avoiding unduly large, inefficiently arranged paved areas and avoiding automobile conflict with pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians.
- h. Service areas shall be segregated from other areas, and trash containers shall be screened. Equipment noises and emissions shall be minimized.
- i. Fire hydrants and good circulation for fire protection shall be provided as needed.
- j. Utilities including electric and communication services shall be underground, consistent with the regulatory authority of the town.

6107

3. In order to provide desired circulation:

- a. Alpine and Portola Roads may need to be widened where turning lanes are required.
- b. Safe vehicle ingress and egress shall be accomplished by limiting points of access to public roads.
 - 1) Driveway entrances serving different property owners shall be combined at common property lines when serving non-residential uses.
 - 2) Driveways shall be a minimum safe distance from road intersections as determined by traffic safety standards.
 - 3) Not Used.

- 4) Easements and/or mutual use agreements may be required among the various property owners to connect driveway entrances in order to facilitate off-street circulation and reduce the number of driveway entrances required.
 - c. Safe pedestrian and bicycle access to and inter-communication among non-residential developments shall be provided.
 - 1) Separate pedestrian and bicycle paths, preferably separated from public roads, shall be installed in the front setbacks or road rights of way along Alpine and Portola Road frontages.
 - 2) Safe paths between the roadside and on-site improvements shall be required and compatible developments shall be interconnected.
 - d. Safe horse trails, separated from paths and roads, shall provide access to and through the NTA providing access to uses suitable for equestrians while assuring compatibility with land uses in the area.
- 6107a. In order to assist in providing housing pursuant to the provisions of the housing element, parcels of land classified as community commercial which are found not to be needed for such uses may be used for residential purposes if suitably located.

Standards

- 6108 Standards for development should be set forth in the town zoning, subdivision and site development regulations.

Description

- 6109 The plan sets forth a framework for the development of the NTA within which considerable latitude exists for design and development of individual properties. The basic distribution of land uses and key circulation features are set forth as controlling elements. Sensitive design on individual properties woven into the overall framework can produce a splendid center for the town. While the objectives, principles and standards set forth in the preceding sections are the guiding statements for future development, the plan diagram, when viewed in the context of this description, should convey an understanding of the type of development the town is seeking for this area.

Community Commercial

6110 The community commercial area is shown in two segments. The largest area is intended to be developed as a community shopping center for the town. The center is shown as served by six permanent entrances from bordering roads. Internal circulation between parcels is shown diagrammatically and would need to be adjusted to fit specific designs for development. Trails and/or paths run along three sides of the center. It is intended that normal yard setbacks of the zoning ordinance would be reduced or waived as necessary between parcels in the shopping center in order to achieve a unified design. Setback requirements along Portola and Alpine Roads, landscaping and open space requirements, parking requirements, floor area ratio and height limitations are set forth in the zoning ordinance.

6110a Two parcels are shown and numbered on the plan diagram as being suitable for alternate uses: community commercial, community service or residential.

1. This flexibility of use is based on two major factors:
 - a. The parcels have unusual locational attributes. **Parcel #1**, at the corner of Nathhorst Avenue and Portola Road can gain access from Portola Road and, if developed residentially, need to be linked internally by circulation with the adjoining community commercial parcel. **Parcel #2**, due to a lack of frontage on Alpine Road or Portola Road, can accommodate uses which do not require frontage, such as office or residential uses.
 - b. Projections of the amount of land needed for commercial uses indicate that these two parcels can be used for a non-commercial use and the town will still have sufficient acreage in commercial uses to meet the needs of the community for community-serving businesses.
2. Each of these parcels can be developed with any one of the alternate uses or a combination thereof and through careful design be well-related to the other parcels shown as community commercial as well as other adjoining uses. The flexibility of use on these parcels can and should be handled so as to not disrupt the continuity of commercial use on the three remaining community commercial parcels.
3. **Parcel #1** is shown with an alternate residential land use of low intensity residential. This intensity is compatible with the adjoining residential parcel and the parcels across Nathhorst Avenue. The parcel could also be developed at a low-medium intensity. If the parcel is residentially developed, it should be pursuant to a planned unit development (PUD) in which the

appropriate density is established as a part of the PUD, but in no case shall it exceed 5.8 housing units per net acre (exclusive of street and road rights-of-way).

4. **Parcel #2** is shown with an alternate residential land use of low-medium intensity residential. This intensity is appropriate since the parcel is bounded on three sides by office and commercial lands. Any residential development should be a planned unit development (PUD) in which the appropriate density is established as a part of the PUD, but in no case shall it exceed 5.8 housing units per net acre (exclusive of street and road rights-of-way).*

6110b One parcel shown and numbered on the plan diagram as **Parcel #3** is suitable for the following alternate uses: community commercial or community service. This flexibility is based on the following factors:

1. There may not be sufficient demand for community commercial space which would warrant the use of the parcel for commercial use; therefore, community service is indicated as an alternate use.
2. Community service uses would reduce the intensity of use of the parcel over community commercial uses and thereby be more compatible with nearby residential uses and provide a transition to parcels #1 and #2 in the event they are used for community service or residential purposes.

6111 In the other community commercial area, which is in the southwest corner of Alpine and Portola Roads, very careful design will be required due to its small size. Design and landscaping will be very important in order to make this corner attractive and to visually integrate it with the other community commercial area.

6111a. Any residential development in the community commercial areas shall create an internal and external environment that is consistent with the residential qualities of the town including appropriate open spaces, planting and building design. While the intensity of development may be higher than generally found in the town, the overall feeling should blend in with the residential quality of the town rather than being distinctively different.

Community Service

6112 The community service areas are intended to provide space for office uses that are necessary to serve the needs of the residents of the town. These areas are also suitable for institutional uses such as public buildings, churches, etc. Perimeter access by trail and path is proposed to both community service areas. Limited

* This standard is based on the existing minimum lot size of 7500 square feet, which is a density of approximately 5.8 housing units per acre.

access to Alpine Road is shown with coordinated internal circulation between properties. Setback requirements along Portola and Alpine Roads, landscaping and open space requirements, parking requirements, floor area ratios and height limitations are set forth in the zoning ordinance.

Community Park, Open Space and Buffer Planting

- 6113 This designation includes portions of parcels shown for community commercial and community service uses, and land within the public right of way at the intersection of Alpine and Portola Roads.
- 6114 The community park at the intersection of Alpine and Portola Roads, Triangle Green Park, has been developed as a fitting landscape design for this important intersection.
- 6115 The existing creek is shown as a major feature of the NTA. Where the creek crosses private lands, it should be planted and located in an open space easement. Structural crossings of the creek should be held to the minimum feasible. Any area on private land proposed for open space land or buffer planting could be counted as part of the required open space for the particular parcel as required by the zoning ordinance. The rear portions of the two corner parcels at Nathhorst Avenue and Alpine Road are appropriate for private open space uses related to the uses on the remainder of the parcels as well as for buffer planting along the property line to the northwest.

Institutional Uses

- 6116 The only institutional land within the planning area is the fire station. Much of the balance of the NTA area, however, is shown as suitable for low intensity residential or institutional use.

Low Intensity Residential Uses

- 6117 The plan indicates extensive areas for low intensity use (typically 1 – 2 acres per housing unit). Where residential and other uses adjoin, site design of the other uses should minimize adverse impacts on residential parcels. Similarly, any residential use should be carefully designed so as not to be unduly exposed to possible external influences.
- 6118 The creek and creekside trees running through the parcel at the northeast side of the intersection of Nathhorst Avenue and Alpine Road, while not shown as having any special design treatment on the plan diagram, should be preserved in a natural state to the maximum extent possible. This creek plus the special building setback required along Alpine Road by the zoning ordinance should help shelter the remainder of the parcel from Alpine Road.

Low-Medium Intensity Residential

6119 This area is zoned for single family residential use at a density of 15,000 sq. ft. per housing unit.

Streets

6120 The plan diagram shows only the street rights of way and does not show paving width or location. These details should be the subject of traffic studies. Paving widths on Nathhorst Avenue should probably be to normal town standards. Paving widths, on Alpine and Portola Roads, however, will need to be based on careful studies of the needs of these roads. Basically, two lanes for traffic on each of these two roads plus turning lanes should be adequate to handle projected traffic.

6121 The plan diagram shows driveway entrances to only a portion of the planning area – the community commercial and community service uses within the area bounded by Nathhorst Avenue and Alpine and Portola Roads. These points of access are shown to indicate how adjoining properties should share access points in order to minimize driveway entrances on these two busy roads. Minor shifts in location of access points are acceptable if the same mutual access to properties is maintained and traffic engineering aspects are acceptable. Access points to other properties on Alpine and Portola Roads should also be limited.

6122 A possible future street is shown at the bend in Nathhorst Avenue. This street extends up a hill at a slope in excess of 15%. The lands it would serve also have access onto Sausal Drive. As uses are proposed in the area, the wisdom of developing this road will need to be studied. A straight steep road can be hazardous and unattractive. Landscaping and changes in alignment could help the situation. The road would, however, bring increased traffic to the area. One option would be for the road to serve only the lower portion of the hill, with the rest of the hill being served from Sausal Drive.

6123 (Not Used.)

Pedestrian Paths

6124 Pedestrians should be able to walk to, from and through the NTA on all-weather surfaces. The proposed pedestrian paths, plus the bicycle path which should also be available to pedestrians, provide for such circulation. While the steeper pedestrian paths need probably only be built to the usual town standard of a rock base with oil seal, the more level paths along Nathhorst Avenue, Portola Road, Alpine Road and Canyon Drive should probably have an asphalt surface to permit limited use by bicycles. While the proposed paths have been located with considerable care, slight changes in alignment are to be expected as more detailed plans for developments are prepared.

Bicycle Path

6125 One bicycle path is proposed – along Alpine and Portola Roads. This path should be built to at least the town standard width for bicycle paths of five feet, and preferably six feet because it will also serve pedestrian traffic. Where the path serves considerable two way traffic, it should preferably be eight feet wide. In some places the street right of way will probably be wide enough to accommodate the path while in other locations it will need to be located on easements adjacent to the right of way.

Riding Trails

6126 While heavy equestrian use in the area is not anticipated, some provision must be made for horses. The main trails include one along Alpine Road – Nathhorst Avenue – Portola Road, and the second one along Alpine Road. The other horse trails consist of connections. The trail for which federal funds were expended at an earlier time follows the north side of Alpine Road, the north side of Nathhorst Avenue and the east side of Portola Road.

Bicycle Lanes

6127 Future bicycle lanes are shown along the very popular Alpine-Portola Road route used by residents and bicyclists from surrounding communities. These lanes provide for bicycle traffic that might be hazardous on the bicycle paths which accommodate leisurely bicycling and walking. Also, bicycle lanes are shown heading southwest on Alpine Road; these lanes are part of a proposed system destined to link to Page Mill Road.

Plan Diagram

6128 The plan diagram is part of this sub-area plan and is labeled Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan Diagram and can be found in a pocket following this general plan.

Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan Appendix 1: Implementation of the Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan

Actions to date:

1. The lands shown as community commercial on the Nathhorst Triangle area plan diagram have been zoned C-C (community commercial) and A-P (administrative professional) (municipal code sections 18.20.010, 18.22.010).
2. Limitations on building coverage, floor area and height have been established for the permitted uses (municipal code sections 18.48.010 - 18.56.020).
3. Special provisions for total open space on parcels and for landscaping along Alpine and Portola Roads have been established (municipal code section 18.56.020).
4. Off-street parking requirements have been established (municipal code chapter 18.60).
5. Special conditions to help ensure compatibility with the intent of the districts have been included (municipal code chapters 18.20, 18.64, 18.72 and 18.40).
6. Planned unit development provisions have been added to allow design flexibilities including yards, heights and building coverage (municipal code chapters 18.52 and 18.54)

Future actions:

1. The town should continue to apply the zoning standards and procedures that are in place.