



TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028
Wednesday, March 4, 2015 – 7:30 p.m.
Council Chambers (Historic Schoolhouse)

REGULAR AGENDA

Call to Order, Roll Call

Chairperson Targ, Vice-Chairperson Hasko, Commissioners Gilbert, McKitterick, and Von Feldt

Oral Communications

Persons wishing to address the Commission on any subject, not on the agenda, may do so now. Please note, however, the Commission is not able to undertake extended discussion or action tonight on items not on the agenda.

Regular Agenda

1. **PRESENTATIONS – Jane Mark, MROSD Planning Manager, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's Proposal of Priority Conservation Areas (PCA) within Portola Valley and its Sphere of Influence**

Commission, Staff, Committee Reports and Recommendations

Approval of Minutes: **January 21, 2015**

Adjournment:

ASSISTANCE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Assistant Planner at 650-851-1700 ext. 211. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the Town to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

Any writing or documents provided to a majority of the Town Council or Commissions regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at Town Hall located 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA during normal business hours.

Copies of all agenda reports and supporting data are available for viewing and inspection at Town Hall and at the Portola Valley branch of the San Mateo County Library located at Town Center.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public Hearings provide the general public and interested parties an opportunity to provide testimony on these items. If you challenge a proposed action(s) in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the Public Hearing(s) described later in this agenda, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning Commission at, or prior to, the Public Hearing(s).

This Notice is posted in compliance with the Government Code of the State of California.

Date: February 26, 2015

CheyAnne Brown
Planning Technician



MEMORANDUM

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Debbie Pedro, Town Planner

DATE: March 4, 2015

RE: Proposed Priority Conservation Areas (PCA) within Portola Valley and its Sphere of Influence

RECOMMENDATION

Forward a recommendation to the Town Council to support the proposed PCA designations within Portola Valley and its Sphere of Influence.

BACKGROUND

On February 25, 2015, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) made a presentation to the Council regarding their plans to participate in the Association of Bay Area Government (ABAG) Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Program. The PCA program was first introduced in 2007 to identify regionally significant open spaces that are important natural resources. Through the Plan Bay Area process, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has established a \$10 million grant program to help fund the protection of PCAs.

Currently, there are over 100 PCAs located in the nine Bay Area counties. For the 2014/15 PCA program update, MROSD is proposing 16 new PCAs in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. The proposed PCAs in and around Portola Valley are all lands owned and/or managed by MROSD. These areas include Windy Hill, Coal Creek and Los Trancos Open Space Preserves.

Per Council's direction, this proposal has been forwarded to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation. Additional information about MROSD's proposal and the PCA program can be found in the February 25, 2015 Town Council report (Attachment 1).

ATTACHMENT

1. Town Council staff report dated February 25, 2015



MEMORANDUM

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

TO: Mayor and Members of the Town Council

FROM: Debbie Pedro, Town Planner

DATE: February 25, 2015

RE: Proposed Priority Conservation Areas (PCA) within Portola Valley and its Sphere of Influence

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Town Council adopt the resolution in Attachment 1 supporting the proposed Priority Conservation Areas located within the Town of Portola Valley and its sphere of influence (SOI).

BACKGROUND

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) has recently informed the Town of their plans to participate in the Association of Bay Area Government (ABAG) Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Program. (Attachment 2) The PCA program was first introduced in 2007 to identify regionally significant open spaces that are important natural resources. There are currently four categories of PCAs:

1. **Natural Landscapes** – Areas critical to the functioning of wildlife and plant habitats, aquatic ecosystems and the region's water supply and quality.
2. **Agricultural Lands** – Farmland, grazing land and timberland that support the region's agricultural economy and provide additional benefits such as habitat protection and carbon sequestration.
3. **Urban Greening** – Existing and potential green spaces in cities that increase habitat connectivity, improve community health, capture carbon emissions, and address stormwater.
4. **Regional Recreation** – Existing and potential regional parks, trails, and other publicly accessible recreation facilities.

PCA designations serve to identify regionally significant open spaces and to position agencies to attract grant funding to support the long-term protection of these areas. Through the Plan Bay Area process, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission

(MTC) has established a \$10 million pilot grant program to help fund the protection of PCAs. Additional information about the PCA program is included in Attachment 3.

Currently, there are over 100 PCAs located in the nine Bay Area counties. For the 2014/15 PCA program update, MROSD is proposing a total of 16 new PCAs in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. The deadline for submitting PCA applications to ABAG is May 30, 2015. Per the requirements of the PCA program, MROSD is reaching out to the Town to ensure that the proposed areas are appropriate and in line with the conservation goals of the affected jurisdictions. An adopted resolution of support from the jurisdiction in which the PCAs are located is required to be included with the application. Conversely, a jurisdiction can file a resolution of opposition within 90 days to invalidate the nomination.

The proposed PCAs in and around Portola Valley are all lands owned and/or managed by MROSD. These areas include the 1,000+ acres Windy Hill Open Space Preserve and the 79 acres Hawthorn property which became part of the District's Windy Hill Open Space Preserve in 2011. In addition, Coal Creek Open Space Preserve and Los Trancos Open Space Preserve, located in unincorporated Santa Clara County within the Town's sphere of influence are also included. (Attachment 4)

The proposed PCA designations for Windy Hill, Coal Creek, and Los Trancos open space preserves are consistent with the major community goals in the Town's General Plan which calls for the long range preservation and conservation of natural features and open space of the planning area.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and no CEQA analysis is therefore required.

ATTACHMENT

1. Resolution
2. Letter from MROSD General Manager Stephen Abbors dated January 29, 2015
3. Priority Conservation Area Concept Paper
4. Map of proposed PCAs within Portola Valley and its Sphere of Influence

APPROVED – Nick Pegueros, Town Manager

RESOLUTION NO. _____-2015

**A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
OF THE TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
SUPPORTING PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREA
DESIGNATIONS WITHIN THE TOWN AND ITS SPHERE OF INFLUENCE**

WHEREAS, the Association of Bay Area Governments is requesting nominations from local governments and special districts for Priority Conservation Areas (PCA) as part of the Plan Bay Area Implementation effort; and

WHEREAS, PCAs are intended to be areas which contain important agricultural, natural resource, watershed, historic, scenic, cultural, recreational, and/or ecological values and ecosystem functions deserving of conservation funding; and

WHEREAS, the 2014 PCA program update specifically addresses the Open Space and Farmland implementation areas and introduces four categories to recognize the role of different kinds of PCAs in supporting the vitality of the region's natural systems, rural economy and human health; and

WHEREAS, the Priority Conservation Areas that are nominated by Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, are mutually compatible and complementary, and represent a diverse and balanced mix of conservation priorities in the Town of Portola Valley.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Town Council of the Town of Portola Valley hereby RESOLVE to endorse the designation of Priority Conservation Areas, as listed below and as detailed in Exhibit A.

1. Windy Hill Open Space Preserve – Regional Recreation and Natural Landscapes
2. Coal Creek Open Space Preserve - Regional Recreation and Natural Landscapes
3. Los Trancos Open Space Preserve - Regional Recreation and Natural Landscapes

REGULARLY PASSED AND ADOPTED this 25th of February, 2015.

Jeff Aalfs, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sharon Hanlon, Town Clerk



Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

GENERAL MANAGER
Stephen E. Abbors

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Pete Siemens
Yoriko Kishimoto
Jed Cyr
Curt Riffle
Nonette Hanko
Larry Hassett
Cecily Harris

January 29, 2015

Town Manager Nick Pegueros
Town of Portola Valley
765 Portola Road
Portola Valley, CA. 94028

SUBJECT: Proposed Priority Conservation Area within Portola Valley

Dear Town Manager Pegueros:

In July 2013, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) Executive Board and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) approved Plan Bay Area, a long-range, integrated transportation and land-use/housing strategy through 2040 for the San Francisco Bay Area. Plan Bay Area includes the designation of Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) to balance housing and transportation demands with the need to preserve the region's diverse farming, recreational, scenic, and natural resource lands and their many ecological values and ecosystem functions for future generations.

PCAs are intended to identify lands of conservation significance that are broadly supported by the public and local jurisdictions to be eligible for future PCA Program funding and potentially other conservation-based funding. PCA designations are strictly for grant funding purposes only, to identify lands of key open space importance that merit grant funding. PCAs are neither regulatory in nature, nor do they have any effect on local land use or zoning designations or future local land use decisions. They are, however, intended to align with and build upon local General Plan strategies for open space conservation to remain consistent with local policies and objectives.

PCAs are of high importance to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen), as these designations will affect future funding opportunities for land conservation and recreation on the Peninsula. Midpen is reaching out to the Town of Portola Valley at this time to notify you of the proposed new PCA designation that is being considered within your jurisdiction, for which Midpen has already initiated conversations with staff from the Town Planning Department (see Attachment 1 for PCA Map and Attachment 2 for PCA description). Over the next three (3) months, Midpen will continue to work alongside Town Planning to further develop and refine the proposed PCA to ensure that the PCA is aligned with the Town's conservation strategies. Midpen anticipates submitting an application to ABAG by the May 30th deadline for PCA nominations.

If you have questions about the PCA Program and Midpen's proposed PCA within the Town of Portola Valley, please do not hesitate in contacting me at (650) 691-1200 or via email at SAbbors@openspace.org.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve E. Abbors for JEA". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Stephen E. Abbors
General Manager

Attachments: Map of proposed PCA in Portola Valley
Table of PCA Designation

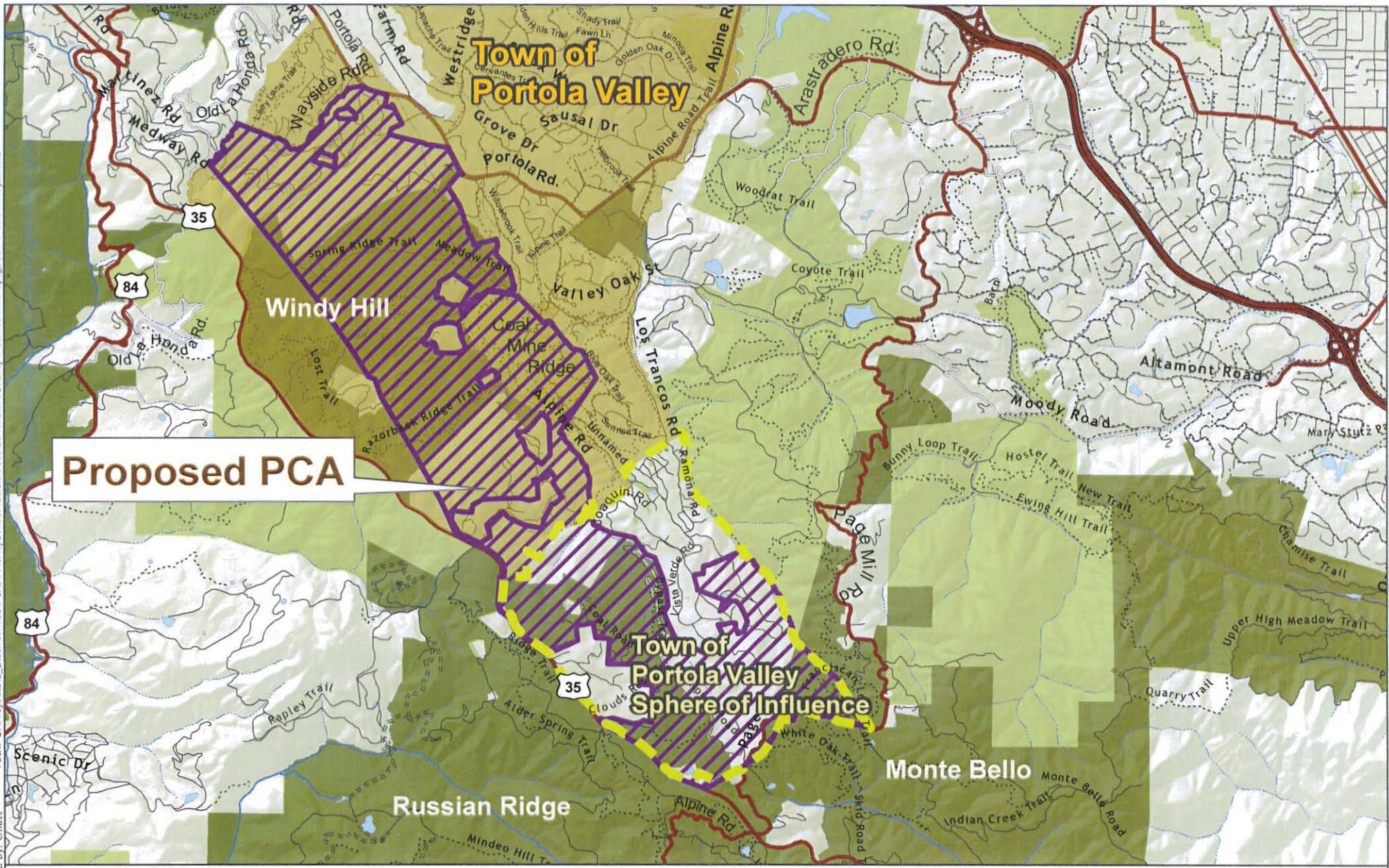
CC (email): Joanna Bullock, Association of Bay Area Governments
Debbie Pedro, Planning Director, Town of Portola Valley

ATTACHMENT

Proposed PCA Designation within Portola Valley

| Open Space Preserves | Affected Jurisdictions | Midpen Open Space Vision Plan Priority Areas | Proposed Designations for PCA |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Windy Hill & Coal Creek | Portola Valley | 6, 8, 10 & 40 | Regional Recreation, Natural Landscapes |

Path: G:\Projects\IA Districtwide PCAs\PriorityConservationAreas\SantaClaraCounty\NotificationMaps_SCL\PortolaValley2.mxd
Created By: chiatt



Proposed PCA

Town of Portola Valley Sphere of Influence

Proposed PCA Within Town of Portola Valley's Sphere of Influence

-  Proposed PCA
-  MROSD Preserves
-  Town of Portola Valley Sphere of Influence
-  Private Property
-  Town of Portola Valley

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD)



January, 2015
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While the District strives to use the best available digital data, this data does not represent a legal survey and is merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.

PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS

THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA IS UNIQUE AMONG AMERICAN METROPOLISES. Parks and trails support our health and quality of life. Watersheds and other natural areas contribute to our clean water and air and help to protect us from disasters. The region's farms and ranches give us fresh, healthy local food. Together our open spaces define the identity of the Bay Area and are a magnet for the innovators that drive its \$535 billion economy.

SAFEGUARDING THE BAY AREA'S ONE-OF-A-KIND LANDSCAPE WILL REQUIRE A REGIONAL CONSERVATION STRATEGY BASED IN CONSERVATION SCIENCE AND RIGOROUS DATA.

PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS ARE A CORNERSTONE OF THAT STRATEGY.

-  PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS
-  BAY AREA GREENBELT



OUR CHERISHED LANDSCAPE

We are lucky to live someplace so special. The San Francisco Bay Area is unique among American metropolises in the stunning beauty of its landscape. Parks and trails support our health and quality of life by giving us the opportunity to get outside. Watersheds and other natural areas contribute to our resilience by providing us with clean water and air and help to protect us from disasters like flooding and landslides—threats that will only grow with climate change. The region’s farms and ranches give us fresh, healthy local food. Together our open spaces define the identity of the Bay Area and are a magnet for the innovators that drive its \$535 billion economy.

The people of the Bay Area clearly cherish our special landscape. Through 24 bond measures and tax increases since 1988, voters across the region have approved close to \$1.6 billion to preserve critical habitat, protect farmland, improve water quality, and create new parks. Of the region’s 3.6 million acres of open space—our greenbelt—1.3 million acres have been preserved through land purchases and easements. An additional 2 million acres are protected through a range of growth management policies that have been put in place by voters and elected leaders.

Despite our region’s success in protecting open space, the risks to our greenbelt are profound. Over 322,000 acres are at risk of development in the next 30 years. The Bay Area will add 2 million new residents by 2040 and this growth could create pressure to weaken the growth management policies that protect 60 percent of the greenbelt. Effectively safeguarding the Bay Area’s one-of-a-kind landscape will require a regional conservation strategy based in the latest conservation science and rigorous data. Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) have the potential to be a cornerstone of such a strategy.

VOTER & ELECTED
LEADER SUPPORT
FOR LANDSCAPES

24 BOND MEASURES
& TAX INCREASES

\$1.6 BILLION IN
PRESERVATION,
WATER QUALITY &
PARKS

2 MILLION ACRES
PROTECTED BY
POLICY

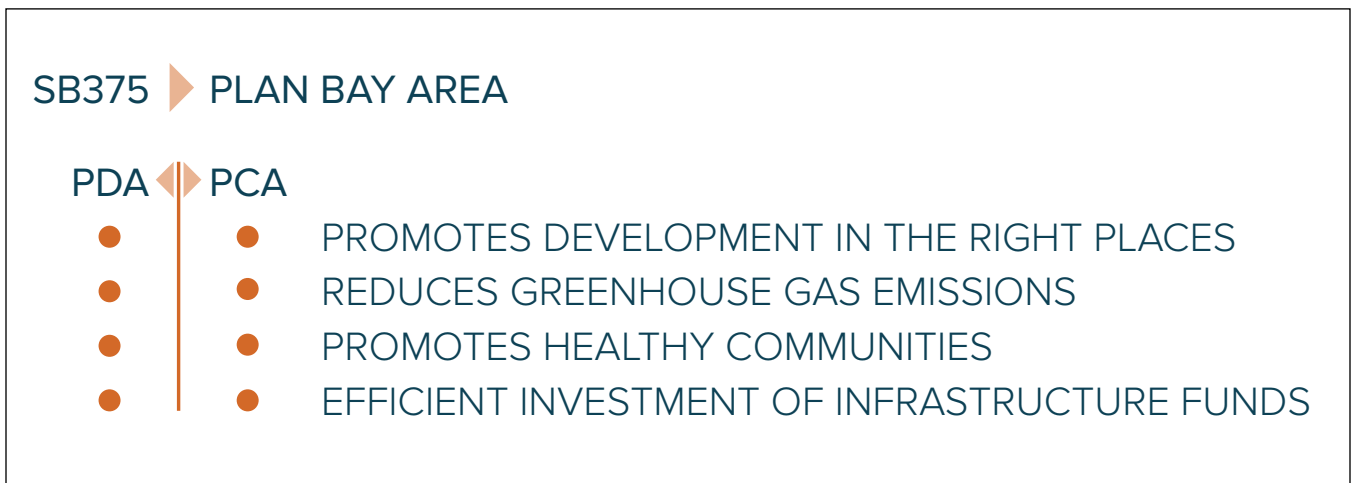


CONSERVING THE LANDSCAPE: KEY TO PLAN BAY AREA

The preservation and stewardship of the Bay Area’s greenbelt is key to implementing Plan Bay Area. Under Plan Bay Area, the region’s next generation of growth is to be focused in Priority Development Areas (PDAs) within our cities and towns; no development is envisioned beyond existing urban boundaries. Because this focused growth will require Bay Area residents and workers to drive less, greenhouse gas emissions from personal vehicles are expected to drop 16% per capita by 2035. Development in the greenbelt that is isolated from public transit and other services and amenities requires more driving and could cause the region to fall short of Plan Bay Area’s greenhouse gas pollution reduction expectation. Farms, ranches, and natural areas also function as carbon sinks. Trees, plants and crops growing on the landscape remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and store them away. Allowing development that paves over the Bay Area’s greenbelt degrades this carbon storage function.

Additionally, if development does occur beyond existing urban boundaries it will require significant expenditures to build new roads, sewer lines, and other infrastructure. Such infrastructure costs would be in addition to the substantial infrastructure investment needs within the region’s PDAs. Development in the greenbelt would result in the region’s infrastructure funds being spread too thin.

A robust regional conservation strategy for the Bay Area is a win-win approach. It will guide the protection of the unique open spaces that make the Bay Area so special—our parks and trails, farms and ranches, watersheds and other components of the greenbelt. Such a strategy will also serve as a driver of focused growth, ensuring that urban infrastructure dollars are spent wisely and that we achieve the ambitious greenhouse gas pollution reduction goals envisioned in Plan Bay Area.



Priority Conservation Areas and Priority Development Areas complement each other in many ways. For example, each contribute to the above goals.

THE PRESERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP OF THE BAY AREA'S GREENBELT IS KEY TO IMPLEMENTING PLAN BAY AREA.

PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS: WHAT ARE THEY?

In 2008, local governments, special districts and conservation organizations worked together to establish the Bay Area's original Priority Conservation Areas. These PCAs consist of regionally significant open spaces about which there is broad consensus for long-term protection. The PCAs are diverse and include everything from recreation areas that help Bay Area residents live healthy active lifestyles, to watersheds that provide the region with high-quality drinking water, to farmland from which we get fresh, local food. The PCAs serve to attract funds to support the long-term protection of these areas. Through the Plan Bay Area process, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) established a \$10 million pilot grant program to help fund the protection of the PCAs.

Community leaders embraced the PCA concept; currently there are nearly 100 PCAs spread across the nine Bay Area counties. The PCAs not only serve to indicate what land should be protected, they also help to articulate where urbanized development is most appropriate and where it is not. In doing so, the PCAs help to define the holistic vision of Plan Bay Area. They serve as the underpinnings of a "greenprint" to complement the region's blueprint for how our cities and towns should grow.

Since 2008, our understanding of the Bay Area's one-of-a-kind landscape has improved. Research and analysis now gives us a much better sense of how our farms, ranches, and working lands benefit our health and quality of life. This research and analysis also helps us understand how conservation of the landscape can contribute to our

economy as well as the resilience of natural systems that do everything from protect us from floods, to ensure the long-term viability of plants and animals that also call the Bay Area home. Using this information to update the PCA program will improve the program's ability to serve as a cornerstone of the region's conservation strategy.

THE PCA PROGRAM UPDATE

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) is now in the process of revising the PCA program. This update will result in greater specificity about the qualities and functions of different types of PCAs. To achieve this specificity, ABAG has developed a new set of designations for different PCA types (similar to the "place types" developed for PDAs during the Plan Bay Area process). Additionally, a science-based method has been developed for evaluating nominated PCAs. The revised PCA program also seeks to address the need for urban parkland and providing green space in growing PDAs.

These modifications will greatly enhance the ability of PCAs to contribute effectively to a regional conservation strategy.

By June 2014, ABAG will have adopted modifications to the PCA Program and opened an application window that will last through May 2015. As currently recommended, nominations will be accepted to transition existing PCAs into the revised program as well as for new PCAs. PCA applications will be accepted on a rolling basis with two adoption points over the course of the year.

ANALYZING THE UPDATE: REASONS TO BE EXCITED

ABAG's proposed revision to the PCA program is a significant positive step toward ensuring the program realizes its potential to serve as an effective guide for a regional land conservation strategy. The four "designations" (again, similar to the "place types" for PDAs)—Natural Landscapes, Agricultural Lands, Regional Recreation and Urban Greening—provide a simple typology that helps to communicate how the Bay Area's open spaces provide benefits to the quality of life, economy, and resilience of the region. The new application process explicitly requires applicants to use data from a rich set of information sources to articulate the benefits of proposed PCAs. This commitment to an evidence-based approach will help to ensconce conservation-science and an understanding of conservation priorities into land-use planning across the Bay Area.

The addition of **the Urban Greening designation is an exciting recognition that nature in urban areas matters.** To most effectively contribute to the region's conservation strategy, Urban Greening PCAs should contribute to regionally significant functions; functions such as contributions to regional agricultural, natural resource conservation, ecosystem protection, or the enhancement of scenic or recreational values.

Transitioning the existing PCAs into the new program is critical. These areas are a solid foundation upon which an even better program will be built. The original PCAs demonstrate the shared values regarding our landscape that exist across the Bay Area and a broad recognition of the many benefits our natural and working lands provide (maps at the end of the document demonstrate how current PCAs overlap with open space benefits). The original PCAs were adopted without requiring resolutions from city councils or boards of supervisors. A testament to the level of consensus that exists around the original PCAs is that none have been challenged since they were adopted. Since existing PCAs did not require approval from city

PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREAS AND PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS ARE ESSENTIAL PILLARS TO A SUSTAINABLE, THRIVING BAY AREA.

councils or boards of supervisors when they were initially approved, such resolutions should not be necessary to transition existing PCAs into the revised program.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

The Priority Development Areas and the Priority Conservation Areas are two essential pillars in the effort to make the Bay Area a sustainable, thriving region in the decades ahead. These two programs knit together the region's land use and transportation priorities and provide clear guidance on how to best focus limited intellectual and financial resources. Both programs help local leaders ensure that our cities and towns are healthy and thriving and are supported by the amazing assets nature provides. Effective implementation of the Priority Conservation Area program must be prioritized in order to fully achieve the vision of a sustainable and thriving region articulated in Plan Bay Area. The conservation community, from land trusts to special districts to local and regional non-profits, is ready to work with local leaders to effectively implement the PCA program, as well as use the plethora of data and analysis that now exists regarding the Bay Area's landscape to help make land-use decisions with conservation in mind.

The following are recommendations for how both local leaders and the Association of Bay Area Governments can ensure the implementation of the PCA program is successful—not only in the near-term as the program is updated and new PCAs are nominated and reviewed, but over the long-term as the PCAs anchor the region’s conservation strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL LEADERS

The first thing local leaders can do to maximize the success of the PCA program is to **support the immediate inclusion of existing PCAs** into the new framework.

Additionally, local leaders should **work with land management agencies and public health groups to identify new PCAs** and make sure they are adopted.

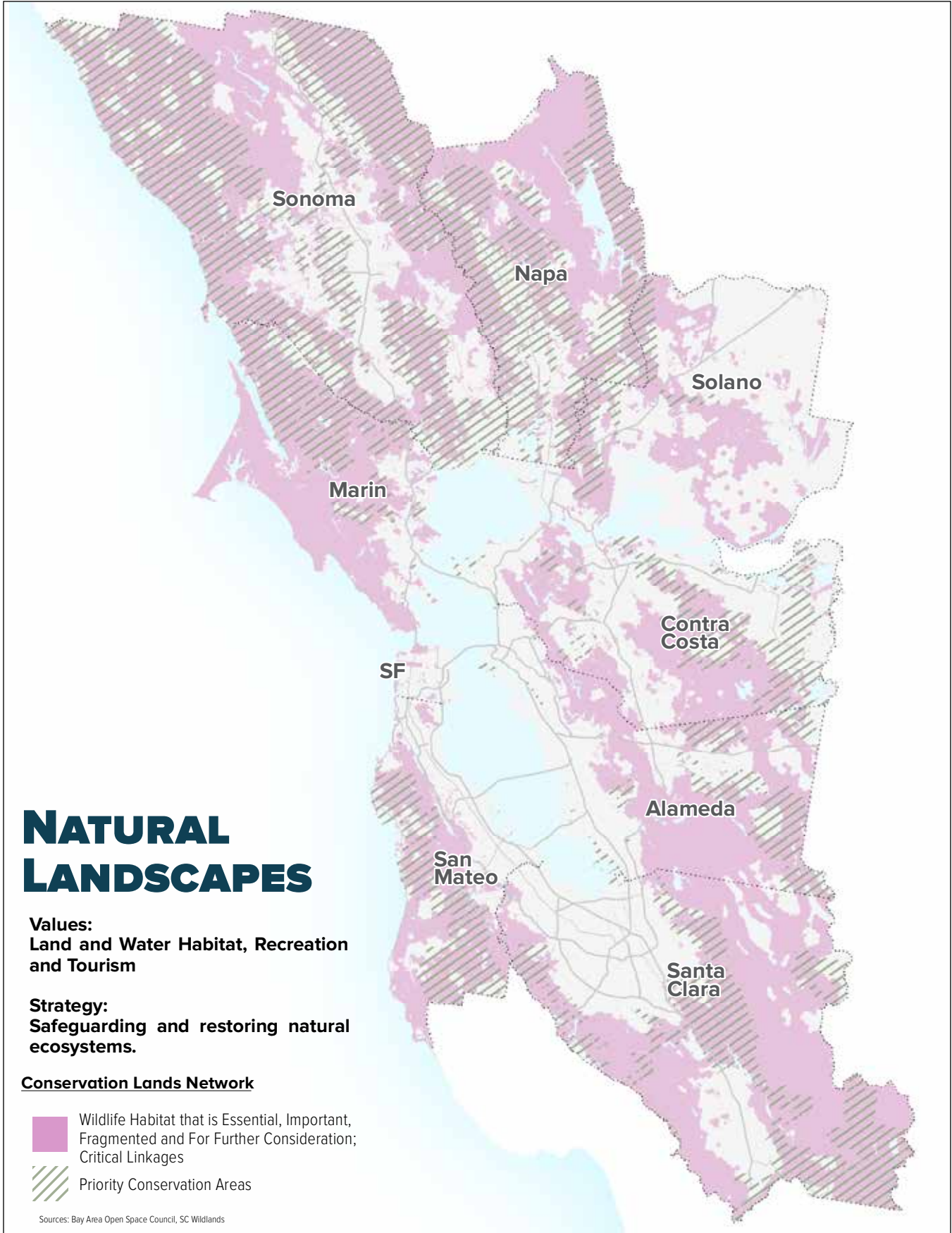
Also, local leaders should **feel empowered to take the conservation science that will be used to modify and create PCAs and use those tools broadly** in land-use decision making. Steps can be taken such as:

- Factor in the impacts/benefits of natural resources, working lands, and parks as a baseline for infrastructure plans, programs, and project decisions.
- Consider “green infrastructure” as a viable solution to infrastructure challenges, such as water quality control and sea-level rise adaptation.
- Establish agricultural land preservation strategies that ensure a critical mass of land for the production, processing, and distribution of local food.
- Ensure conservation best practices are integrated into the implementation of development and infrastructure projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ABAG

ABAG should **continue to play a leadership role by providing support and guidance to local leaders** as they submit PCA applications. As the PCA program is implemented ABAG can take the specific following actions to help ensure that conservation strategies are effectively implemented throughout the region.

- Facilitate access to online data that will allow users to identify the specific benefits a particular geographic area contains.
- Develop a system to track how well communities across the region are achieving conservation goals.
- Provide technical assistance to facilitate connection of conservation funds with appropriate projects.
- Support policy innovation as a strategy to protect PCAs and implement regional conservation strategies.
- Continue to support the State Coastal Conservancy’s management of the region-wide OBAG conservation grant program.
- Scale local efforts to map urban greening benefits to produce a regional strategy.




NATURAL LANDSCAPES

Values:
Land and Water Habitat, Recreation and Tourism

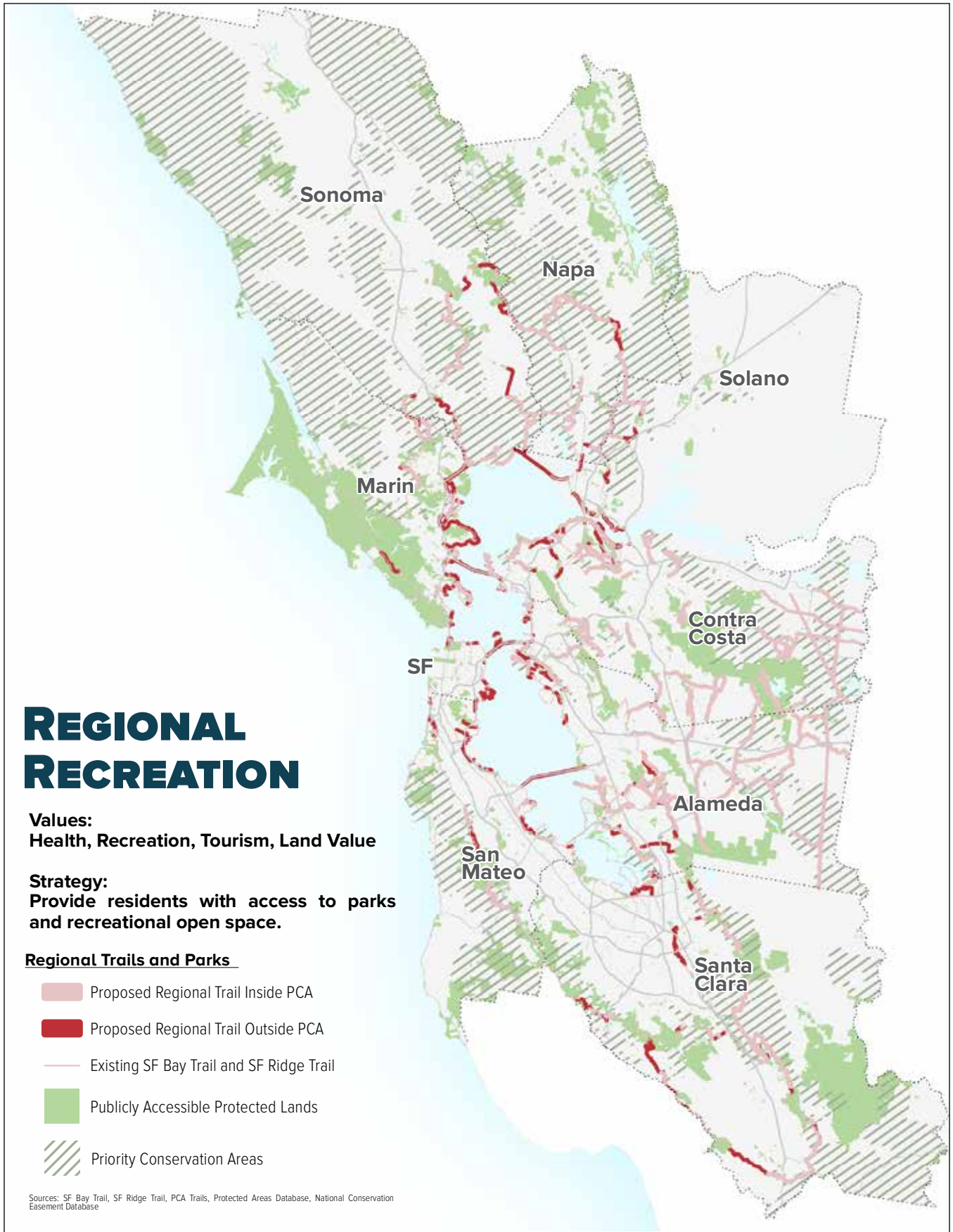
Strategy:
Safeguarding and restoring natural ecosystems.

Conservation Lands Network

-  Wildlife Habitat that is Essential, Important, Fragmented and For Further Consideration; Critical Linkages
-  Priority Conservation Areas

Sources: Bay Area Open Space Council, SC Wildlands










REGIONAL RECREATION

Values:
Health, Recreation, Tourism, Land Value

Strategy:
Provide residents with access to parks and recreational open space.

Regional Trails and Parks

-  Proposed Regional Trail Inside PCA
-  Proposed Regional Trail Outside PCA
-  Existing SF Bay Trail and SF Ridge Trail
-  Publicly Accessible Protected Lands
-  Priority Conservation Areas

Sources: SF Bay Trail, SF Ridge Trail, PCA Trails, Protected Areas Database, National Conservation Easement Database

CONTACTS

Jeremy Madsen, Executive Director

Greenbelt Alliance

jmadsen@greenbelt.org | 415-543-6771 x310

Jennifer Fox, Executive Director

Bay Area Open Space Council

jenn@openspacecouncil.org | 510-809-8009 x254

Elizabeth O'Donoghue, Director of Infrastructure and Land Use

The Nature Conservancy

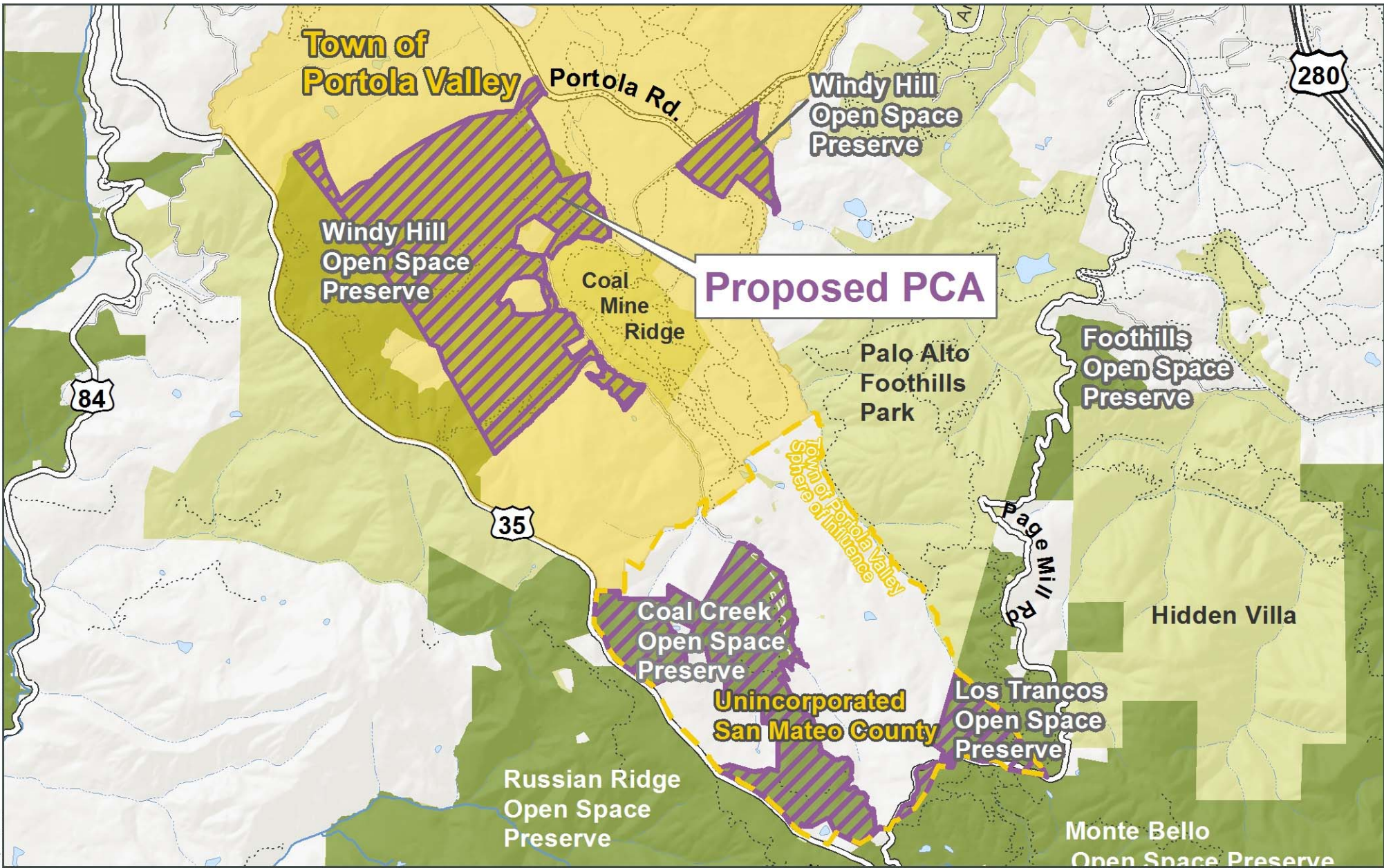
eodonoghue@tnc.org | 415-281-0436

Ed Thompson, California Director & Senior Associate

American Farmland Trust

ethompson@farmland.org | 530-564-4422

TOGETHER OUR
OPEN SPACES DEFINE
THE IDENTITY OF
THE BAY AREA AND
ARE A MAGNET FOR
THE INNOVATORS
THAT DRIVE ITS \$535
BILLION ECONOMY.



Proposed PCA Within Town of Portola Valley and its Sphere of Influence

-  Proposed PCA (includes Midpen lands only)
-  Town of Portola Valley
-  Town of Portola Valley Sphere of Influence (Unincorporated San Mateo County)
-  Midpen Preserves
-  Private Property

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
(Midpen)



February, 2015



While the District strives to use the best available digital data, this data does not represent a legal survey and is merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.

DRAFT UNAPPROVED MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING, TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY, JANUARY 21, 2015, SCHOOLHOUSE, TOWN CENTER, 765 PORTOLA ROAD, PORTOLA VALLEY, CA 94028

Chair Gilbert called the Planning Commission regular meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Ms. Pedro called the roll.

Present: Commissioners Alexandra Von Feldt, Judith Hasko and Nate McKittrick; Vice Chair Nicholas Targ; Chair Denise Gilbert

Absent: None

Staff Present: Debbie Pedro, Town Planner
Karen Kristiansson, Deputy Town Planner
Leigh Prince, Town Attorney

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

REGULAR AGENDA

- (1) Public Hearing: Portola Road Corridor Plan, Related General Plan amendments and Initial Study/Negative Declaration

Ms. Kristiansson said that tonight the Planning Commission would be considering and holding public hearings on the Portola Road Corridor Plan, related General Plan amendments and the CEQA Analysis for the project, with the aim of taking final action on these items and moving them forward to the Town Council for its review.

Work on the Portola Road Corridor Plan began in 2012, with three meetings of the Portola Road Task Force and follow-up Planning Commission work at 11 public meetings, all of which were duly noticed. Ms. Kristiansson said that property owners were not sent individual notices for the meetings because the proposed plan does not change the allowed uses or intensity of uses on any properties. Last fall, property owners at 555 Portola Road (Kirk Neely/Holly Myers) and 683 Portola Road (Phil and Cindie White) submitted their concerns about the plan to the Town. In addition, the Whites requested more time to review the plan.

In order to accommodate their request for additional time, consideration of the Plan was postponed after the Planning Commission meeting on November 5, 2014 until tonight. All of the letters received regarding the Plan were attached to the staff report, as well as a letter from Town staff to the Whites providing them with additional background information about the process and the draft Corridor Plan.

Ms. Kristiansson explained that the public comments and concerns can be grouped the concerns into four categories:

- 1) Consistency relative to the boundaries of the Portola Road Corridor, which is mentioned in four paragraphs and could be clarified to clearly refer to the boundaries shown on the Comprehensive Plan Diagram;
- 2) The last sentence of paragraph 6401, which begins, "New development should be subservient to the setting";
- 3) Screening and vegetation thinning along the Corridor, which is discussed in two paragraphs;
- 4) The description of the western side of Segment 2 of the Corridor, from The Sequoias to Town Center, which is in Paragraph 6413.

Ms. Kristiansson noted that the Corridor Plan would be an element of the Town's General Plan, which is a general vision document rather than a specific regulatory document like the zoning ordinance. As such, the aim is to provide general guidance and direction, rather than language that's detailed and tightly constrained. She advised that resolutions were attached to the staff report which the Planning Commission could use to approve

DRAFT UNAPPROVED MINUTES

the Plan and the CEQA documents and forward them to the Council. The Town Council would then consider the documents and public comments, hold their public hearing, and have the opportunity to further refine the plan prior to final action.

Commissioner Von Feldt asked for clarification about preserves or proposed preserves in the Open Space Element. Ms. Kristiansson said the Open Space Element discusses its open space proposals as a whole, as well as the specific Meadow Preserve, Orchard Preserve, Stables Preserve, etc. along Portola Road. She explained that these are “proposed” in that the Town has no easements over them and they aren’t owned by a public agency. Ms. Prince added that these areas have been designated as preserves as part of the vision statement in the General Plan. There is no conservation easement, but the vision for these areas is that they would be preserves. Ms. Pedro noted that the current version of the Comprehensive Plan Diagram was adopted in the 1980s, and at the time, those areas were designated as “proposed” open space preserves. Some of these areas have since matured as existing conditions, she said. For example, the Stable Preserve in front of the Spring Down property is now owned by the Town, and so it is no longer a “proposed” Stable Preserve. Chair Gilbert said that by acting on conditional use permits (CUPs), the Town has already partially implemented some of the others as well.

Commissioner Hasko inquired about boundaries of the word corridor, wanting to know how far it extends from the trail. Ms. Kristiansson said the light green area along Portola Road on the Comprehensive Plan Diagram is currently the Town’s only visual depiction of the Portola Road Corridor. The width varies from 50 to 150 feet – most commonly in the 100 foot range – from the road. It’s not as specific as a zoning district, she said, but more a general depiction. The General Plan itself states that it is “general in nature and therefore does not indicate precise locations for land use and circulation facilities.” Ms. Kristiansson also advised that nothing in the Corridor Plan draft would prohibit development within the corridor itself, but only requires that any development be done carefully, respecting the views and features of the Corridor. In response to Commissioner Hasko, Ms. Kristiansson indicated that the variations in the width of the corridor as shown on the Diagram was likely done with some care and was not random, although it is not precise and cannot be measured to the foot all along the corridor. Ms. Pedro added that the boundaries of the corridor shown on the Comprehensive Plan Diagram was not meant to be precise, but was intended to show the general location and general width.

In response to Commissioner McKitterick, Ms. Pedro confirmed that the road right of way is delineated by specific boundaries, within which both the Town and landowners have certain rights and obligations. The corridor comprises the areas adjacent to the right of way that extends further into the properties on both sides of Portola Road.

Commissioner Hasko requested clarification of what was meant by the word “encourage” versus the word “require” in Section 6406.5, and how it would be applied. Commissioner McKitterick said that “encouragement” would be meeting with landowners about things that the Town wants to accomplish, reaching out to determine whether they’d be interested or ask property owners when they come to the Town with an application. He noted that the Town already does this in various neighborhoods for certain issues. For example, when property owners along trails propose projects, the Town may ask them to not denigrate the trail experience. It’s not forcing anyone to do anything, but educational efforts have proven successful. Ms. Prince added that, when an applicant seeks a use permit for example, the Planning Commission must make number of required findings, among which is conformance with the General Plan – and the Portola Road Corridor Plan would be part of the General Plan. Therefore, the Town would look at the application with that in mind.

In response to Chair Gilbert asking whether the Corridor Plan includes any provisions for trail-widening, Ms. Kristiansson said the Corridor Plan includes principles and standards for trail improvements that are consistent with the Trails and Paths Element.

Chair Gilbert opened the public hearing.

Kirk Neely, Portola Road, said the Community Open Space Preserves are “proposed,” as they appear in the General Plan, and will stay that way until they are implemented. He said he absolutely, unequivocally rejects the notion that the Meadow Preserve has been “partially implemented.” Those terms, which he considers deceptive, were never discussed when the use permit for his property was negotiated and are not in the CUP itself, he said. Dr. Neely also said he finds it absurd that the exact width of the corridor is not defined.

DRAFT UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Cindie White, Portola Road, said she and her husband, Phil White, own Jelich Ranch, which is part of Segment 2 on the Portola Road Corridor Plan. She appreciated that the Town deferred action on the Corridor Plan to give them time to review it, and thanked staff for their assistance.

Ms. White said that based on the January draft of the Corridor Plan, she has two particular concerns: 1) The definition of the corridor, and 2) views of the hills as the number one most important objective, with the secondary objective being the multiuse path.

Ms. White said that the Comprehensive Plan Diagram shows that the corridor includes private property. That being the case, she said she doesn't understand why her family didn't get notice that their property would be included as part of the Corridor Plan, or that a major portion of their property is identified as a Community Preserve. Considering their house is only 85 feet from of the property line at Portola Road, she said she objects to including private property in the definition of the corridor.

As far as having views of the hillside as the number one objective, Ms. White said that the General Plan prior to 2012 was sufficient. It characterized Portola Road as a scenic corridor and greenway which is green, natural, and rural. What anyone finds sacred is a matter of personal perspective, Ms. White said. Some people might find looking at the views sacred, but she finds ancient trees sacred, as well as shrubbery with animal habitats and personal privacy on her property. She said she thinks the views are sacred too, but to make that the number one goal for the Portola Road Corridor Plan is very narrow, based on personal interest, and doesn't show the big picture. She sees no reason to change the General Plan from the way it was.

Ms. White asked why the Town would invest the time and trouble to develop a Corridor Plan because it isn't required by law. She said the only reason she can see is so that the Town can use government controls to take over private property and have control of it, from dictating landscaping so that you can see the views, to expanding the paths.

With only three private property owners within Segment 2 of Portola Road, she is concerned the Town is pitting three private property owners against 4,500 residents in Town, and in the worst case, they could lose their private property. She said that when the Town was incorporated in 1964, it seems like there was a loose, general vision of Portola Road as a rural, scenic greenway, but somewhere along the line, someone decided the views and the path were more important.

She is also concerned about how the Corridor Plan will be interpreted when there are different people on the Commission, because the Corridor Plan would give the Town a lot more control over their property and allow them take it by force, maybe by eminent domain. She said she doesn't think any law grants anybody a legal right to a view of the mountain.

Marilyn Walter, Coyote Hills, said she thinks the views are very important. She said she'd like people to be able to maintain the shrubbery in front of their houses, too, but said there are areas where there could be open views such as south of the Town Center and over Dr. Neely's meadow. She said that she doesn't want to look at their house or the barn, but just wants to look up and see the views of the mountains.

Phil White, Portola Road, said they just added a new wing on their house which is 80 feet from Portola Road, but now they find out that they're in the Corridor Plan. Mr. White cited several objectives and principles from the plan: "To protect and reestablish open views," "Encourage more pedestrian, bicycling and equestrian along the paths," ". . . actively pursue acquisition of the properties or other property rights." He said if he had seen such wording beforehand, he'd never have purchased his property. He also cited the section, "Where appropriate, the Town should acquire land, easements or other property rights along the edge of the road to allow for better trail configurations" and noted that a winding trail 10 feet along his property would reduce his property's value. Jelich Ranch is private property, and he does not want it to be the Orchard Preserve, he wants it to be Jelich Ranch. In closing, Mr. White encouraged the Commission to restore the original Portola Road wording and take out everything else, which is really detrimental to private property rights.

Beverly Lipman, Favonio Road, said she has been following the Portola Road Corridor Plan because she thinks it is important. She thinks the comments of the large property owners are important also, but she said Ms. Walter hit the nail on the head – it's encouraged; nobody's going to make the property owners do anything. She also

DRAFT UNAPPROVED MINUTES

pointed out that the “Portola Road Corridor” terminology isn’t new but is mentioned in the Land Use Element of her old copy of the General Plan. In addition, Ms. Lipman also credited Ms. Kristiansson for spending time listening to the property owners and drafting recommendations that responded to the concerns expressed in their letters. She said that the Commission should take the property owners’ comments into account but that the Corridor Plan is important and the Commission should move ahead with it.

Dr. Neely said that the recommended wording for the formerly contentious paragraph 6413 is now much more acceptable to him. However, he said that he continues to find the last sentence of paragraph 6401 problematic. Since it specifically mentions features such as the western hillsides, fields and orchards, it’s clearly targeting major landowners, he said. Dr. Neely said that since the term corridor isn’t defined and because it doesn’t say exactly where these structures are, it could be a controlling General Plan statement that limits development all the way up to Skyline Boulevard. Dr. Neely said the beginning of Section 6401 stands alone quite well and get the point across, and he emphatically agrees with Dan Casas, the Whites’ lawyer, who suggested striking the last sentence of 6401, so that it would end after the phrase “open and rural character.” Dr. Neely would make the respectful request that that sentence be eliminated if possible.

Dan Casas, the Whites’ attorney, said he understands the plan’s objectives and finds them reasonable in all respects except for the definition of the corridor. It wasn’t until he saw the color Comprehensive Plan Diagram today, and in the context of the revision in Section 6400 that he realized the extent of private property within the corridor’s boundaries. He said that given what history he does know, he does not think that the Comprehensive Plan Diagram was prepared at a time when the Corridor Plan was being considered; it seems like it is a historical map that was done for other reasons. There were references in the old General Plan to a greenway and that seems to be indicated by the Diagram. Now it’s included as the definition of the corridor in paragraph 6400. Mr. Casas said what he finds objectionable is that the Corridor is located in part outside of the original Portola Road right of way, so it in effect encroaches on private property, somewhat like an overlay zone. He said he could foresee a scenario in which the Corridor Plan could rise to the level of a taking of private property. The way that would happen is that an applicant whose property is within corridor boundaries could apply for a building permit, and town staff could require eliminating some vegetation on the property as a condition of the building permit, because the property is within the corridor. In Portola Valley’s General Plan, both your Open Space Element and Scenic Roads and Highways Element already define Portola Road as scenic. The issue that scares the Whites is, why the Corridor Plan encompasses private property, Mr. Casas said, and he also thinks it is Dr. Neely’s concern. Mr. Casas said it’s a balancing act between private property interests and the interests of the general public and the general policy for the Town. He said the idea of the Corridor Plan is great and the objectives are reasonable, but it’s over-inclusive.

With no other speakers coming forward, Chair Gilbert closed the public hearing and asked Ms. Prince to address the implications of having private property within the corridor. Ms. Prince said that the California constitution gives the Town various powers, including the power to adopt a General Plan and impose zoning regulations. The General Plan can be thought of as a global document which covers all of the land in Town, not just the Town’s own land. As a result, the mere fact that private property is included in this Corridor Plan isn’t necessarily a taking. The Corridor Plan just sets a vision similar to the other Elements of the General Plan, such as the Land Use Element and the Housing Element, for what the Town hopes to see in this area. The concept that the corridor wasn’t just the road itself, but the road and lands adjacent, has been in existence in the General Plan for some time, she said. For example, Section 2161 in the Land Use Element, which would be deleted with adoption of the Corridor Plan, states that, “The Portola Road Corridor includes those lands lying adjacent to the Portola Road from the northern Town limits to Alpine Road.”

In response to a further question from Chair Gilbert concerning potential impacts that adoption of this Corridor Plan could have on private property owners, Ms. Prince responded that legislation occurring at the Town level such as adoption of an element of the General Plan would have some impact on private property owners but it is not the same as zoning regulation, which would say you can only develop a certain number of square feet or the setbacks have to be this defined amount. It doesn’t necessarily indicate that they can or cannot do certain things. It just sets that broad brushstroke vision.

Commissioner McKitterick, who served on the Portola Road Corridor Plan Task Force, said that the group reviewed the General Plan overall and the Open Space Element in particular for guidance in putting together the Corridor Plan. He said he is sympathetic to specific concerns that pertain to notification about meetings and

DRAFT UNAPPROVED MINUTES

screening of houses, but is less receptive to the idea the Town has no ability to control things outside the road itself and that this is a big change from what's on the books already.

Vice Chair Targ said he would agree with the Town Attorney that this is not a taking. That notwithstanding, he said there are valid issues relate to the line drawn with respect to personal and real property, and the direction given by the proposed modifications.

Chair Gilbert asks the Commission to begin working its way through the Plan starting with the Introduction.

Commissioner McKitterick said that he would like to talk about the boundaries of the road corridor and whether it has defined boundaries. Commissioner Von Feldt said that she had concerns about that as well, and felt that adding the reference to the Comprehensive Plan Diagram in Section 6400 seemed to insinuate that there is a defined area under discussion rather than a broad brush of 50 to 100 to 150 feet.

Ms. Kristiansson advised that the Portola Road Corridor plan is consistent with the Alpine Road Corridor Plan in that the boundaries of the corridor is not specifically defined.

Commissioner McKitterick said he wouldn't want to delineate a particular distance for the Portola Road Corridor. Chair Gilbert asked whether it would work better to refer to views of the land on either side of the road, and Commissioner McKitterick responded that there would still be the question of where it begins and ends, and where the Town is exerting control. He said that what he remembers from the Task Force discussion is that the idea was to refer to land on either side of the road to the town border. They did not talk about how far into adjacent properties the corridor extended. Commissioner Hasko agreed and said that she remembers the Task Force focused more on the general policies of how the whole area should look.

Ms. Prince suggested that one approach to provide more definition yet remain broad as is appropriate for a General Plan would be to say "generally as shown on the adopted Comprehensive Plan Diagram."

Commissioner McKitterick pointed out that the definition in the Corridor Plan appears to be based on the language currently in Section 2161, with the addition of the reference to land immediately adjacent to the road and trail. He said that he recalls some discussion by the Planning Commission about how far the influence of the corridor should extend, and he is comfortable with the language in the previous version of the Plan. In response to Chair Gilbert, he said that he has no objection to adding the word "generally," although he doesn't think it solves the problem and would be happier without the reference to the Comprehensive Plan Diagram.

Commissioner Von Feldt said that including a reference to the Comprehensive Plan Diagram in the Corridor Plan would not be either more or less binding, because the Diagram has already been adopted as part of the General Plan.

Vice Chair Targ said the idea of viewing the corridor as a bit of an overlay – not as a zoning overlay but in the context of the General Plan – isn't necessarily wrong, but limiting the corridor to a specific ribbon could lead to further confusion. Vice Chair Targ suggested striking the reference to the adopted Comprehensive Plan Diagram added to Section 6400.

Chair Gilbert offered another alternative for consideration. She said that on the one hand, she would prefer to keep the language as general as possible, but she also wants to minimize uncertainty for the property owners. With that in mind, she suggested revising the first sentence of 6400 to read:

The Portola Road Scenic Corridor comprises Portola Road, the trail that parallels the road, lands within the setbacks, and views of the lands immediately on either side of the road and trail.

Commissioner McKitterick said the Task Force had added "immediately on either side of the road" to modify "lands" and he would like to see that included. Commissioners agreed to strike out the language about the Comprehensive Plan Diagram that had been added to Section 6400.

DRAFT UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Chair Gilbert said she believes the language in the last sentence of Section 6401 echoes a broader, overriding principle of the General Plan about development being subservient. After some discussion, the Commissioners agreed to strike the final sentence of Section 6401.

Chair Gilbert turned to Objectives (Section 6404.1 through 6404.5) and suggested reorganizing the objectives by having the broadest statement, which is currently #5, to the top. The rest of the Commissioners agreed.

Section 6405.1 speaks to the Town's active pursuit of acquisition of properties or other property rights, such as conservation easements . . ." Chair Gilbert said someone in the audience expressed a concern that this point implied takings, and she asked whether Commissioners had any concerns about the way this section is worded.

Ms. Prince clarified that a "taking" is taking someone's property without just compensation, but there is a give-and-take that would be part of actively pursuing property rights such as conservation easements. She also pointed out that generally, property owners rather than jurisdictions seek Williamson Act contracts or conservation easements.

Vice Chair Targ said he'd favor striking Section 6405.1 since he doesn't think it is necessary, but he suggested the statement could also work by inserting the concept of a willing seller. Commissioner McKitterick said that he thinks the Town has been too passive about property acquisition. He would like to leave Section 6405.1 in since he thinks it's important for the Town in the next 50 years to purchase open space and land to improve trails.

Commissioner Von Feldt said that if a large property owner wanted to do more development on property on the Corridor, she could see that having language like this could lead to approaching the Town about a conservation easement along the Corridor in exchange for more development rights elsewhere on the property.

Commissioner Hasko said that she is a little concerned that something like this could be overreaching and imply that providing a conservation easement could be necessary for a permit to do something to which a property owner is entitled, but the concept of a willing property owner does address that in part.

Commissioners agreed to modify the language in 6405.1 to refer to willing property owners, and to make the same change to Section 6405.9.

Commissioners briefly discussed and agreed on the staff-recommended changes for Sections 6405.10 and 6406.4.

The Commission moved on to discussion of 6406.5. Commissioner McKitterick proposed keeping the language intact with the exception of substituting "where habitable structures" for the phrase "such as in places where structures." After discussion, Commissioners agreed to leave the language as presented, without referring to habitable structures. Vice Chair Targ suggested removing the word "close" to avoid redundancy, and the Commission agreed.

Discussion then moved to Section 6413. Commissioner McKitterick asked whether the Town has property rights in the Portola Road corridor outside of the road right of way. Ms. Prince explained that oftentimes when a street is dedicated to the Town, the easement that's dedicated is wider than the actual roadway width. So although a chunk of it is paved, a portion on either side of the paved roadway that's still part of that right of way also may be given to the Town. In addition, staff clarified that this language would refer to lands such as the Town Center and the open space in front of Spring Down which are owned by the Town.

Vice Chair Targ suggested adding the "from willing property owners" language to the last sentence, after the phrase "open space easements and asked whether saying "the west side of the corridor includes mostly larger parcels" extends the corridor up into the hillside. Ms. Kristiansson suggested a modification such that this sentence would simply indicate that there are large parcels on the west side of the road in this segment. Commissioners agreed to both changes.

Commissioner Hasko mentioned that Mr. Casas had proposed alternative text to the last part of the sentence which starts, "The Town will need to manage its lands . . ." and suggested that the Commission discuss that. In particular, that version says that the Town should "work with" landowners rather than "encourage" landowners,

DRAFT UNAPPROVED MINUTES

and also that this should be done “to preserve and protect such views, consistent with the General Plan and applicable state and federal laws.” Commissioner Hasko said the phrase “work with” may capture some of the spirit of collaboration that some people feel is missing. She said it has a better tone than “encourage,” which comes over as more prescriptive.

Commissioner Von Feldt said she also likes “working with,” but that “preserve and protect such views” seems much narrower than “take action on their properties. With the focus on views, other things in this Corridor Plan, such as removing invasives and planting native plants, may be left out a bit. She said that preserving and protecting properties could perhaps be read as including managing for some views and trying to remove some invasive species.

Commissioner McKitterick said he thinks the Commission wants not just preservation and protection but also affirmative action to be taken. After a brief discussion the Commission decided to change “encourage” to “work with” and to otherwise move forward with the original proposed language.

The Commission briefly reviewed of the sections of the General Plan proposed for elimination with the adoption of the Portola Road Corridor Plan and agreed with the changes.

Chair Gilbert then invited public comments.

Ms. White said she thinks the idea of the views being the number one concern was not put into the General Plan wording until the 2011 revisions to the Open Space Element. It’s not something that’s been in the General Plan all along, although it’s being perceived that way. She said that she wanted to go back to the original language about Portola Road and the greenways. By definition, open space is not private property but is public land or MidPen. In terms of their land being characterized as “Community Open Space Preserve,” Ms. White stated that she does not agree with that because their land is not a preserve, it is proposed, although the 2011 amendments to the Open Space Element took out the word “proposed.” In addition, when the words “community” and “open space” are added in front of it, it doesn’t make any sense because their land is not open space but is private property, and nothing on it will ever be available to the community. In sum, she would like the Commission to understand that she doesn’t agree that the views and trails are most important; that their land is not part of the corridor; and that their land is not open space but private land.

Dr. Neely said the fact that the Town has identified four Community Open Space Preserves does not preclude the fact that they’re proposed, and they’re stated as proposed elsewhere in the General Plan, but he can live with the language proposed for the Corridor Plan. He also inquired about the use, and former use, of the word “greenway” to describe the Portola Road Corridor in the General Plan language to be deleted, and whether that had any specific meaning.

Chair Gilbert said that in terms of the Community Open Space Preserves, the Town Council asked the Planning Commission perhaps a year ago to look at these with a couple of things in mind. One would be to ensure that requirements are applied to each Community Open Space Preserve in similar fashion, and the other would be to review the definitions. The Commission has been accumulating items to add to that discussion, and although the discussion will be a difficult one, the Commission does need to have it because they continue to make decisions that relate to it.

In terms of the word “greenway,” Commissioner McKitterick noted that the label on the map indicates a “greenway” but then there is language that greenways are corridors. Staff advised that there is a definition of greenway in Section 2203 of the Open Space Element, which says, “Greenways are corridors of natural beauty often enhanced by landscaping. They provide pleasant traveled ways for motorists, cyclists, those on foot and equestrians that link portions of the planning area. A number of greenways are proposed in the plan along roads and natural features such as canyons, streams and woods.” Ms. White also read excerpts from the background report and suggested that the change from greenway to scenic corridor occurred with the 2011 Open Space Element in order to prioritize views. In response to Commissioner Von Feldt and Vice Chair Targ asking about whether “greenway” is a legal term of art in the Municipal Code, Ms. Prince said she found only one mention of it in the Municipal Code. In discussing the dedication of land for open space as part of a subdivision, Section 17.20.200 says all land to be dedicated for park or recreational purposes must be found suitable and one suitable location would be in parkways or greenways.

DRAFT UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Commissioner Hasko asked staff for more information. Ms. Kristiansson said that the intent was to consolidate all of the references to the Portola Road Corridor in one place, and that while there were references in other elements to the corridor as both a scenic corridor and a greenway, it appeared that most of the references called it a scenic corridor. However, she noted that there were multiple references and it was not entirely clear. Ms. Pedro noted that in terms of implementation, the appendix to the Open Space Element states that greenways should be implemented by actions such as acquisition of fee title and conservation easements.

Commissioner Hasko said that deleting the greenway reference with no deliberate purpose might be interpreted in a way that the Commission does not intend. She proposed putting in one line: "Portola Road is designated as a greenway." Commissioners discussed this suggestion and alternatives. Chair Gilbert said that including this could add confusion, and since there seems to be a lot of overlap in the definitions, putting in a reference to a greenway does not add a lot. Commissioner Hasko agreed that it is not as clear as she would like, but she is concerned that taking it out could be construed as a deliberate decision on the Commission's part to change the designation of Portola Road rather than simplifying language. Based on the information available tonight, she would not be comfortable making that change. After some discussion, Commissioners directed staff to add "Portola Road is designated a greenway" where it makes sense in the first paragraph.

Chair Gilbert asked whether Commissioners had any issues with the negative declaration.

Vice Chair Targ moved to adopt the resolution recommending that the Town Council approve the Negative Declaration for the Corridor Plan. Second by Commissioner Von Feldt, the motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Von Feldt moved to adopt the resolution recommending that the Town Council approve the Portola Corridor Plan as amended during the discussion. Seconded by Commissioner McKitterick, the motion carried 5-0.

Chair Gilbert thanked everyone in the audience for their patience and suggestions.

ANNUAL ELECTION OF PLANNING COMMISSION CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Chair Gilbert nominated Vice Chair Nicholas Targ as Chair and Judith Hasko as Vice Chair of the Planning Commission, effective with the next meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Von Feldt and passed unanimously.

COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. Kristiansson said the Town Council had approved the Housing Element as recommended by the Planning Commission. There were no public comments. She will submit the Element to the state as soon as she receives the signed resolution. Vice Chair Targ said the Element was very nicely done.

Commissioner Von Feldt asked whether the Town has a process for mitigation when new people move in and cut down heritage oaks. Ms. Pedro said that staff would first try to determine the type and number of trees removed and then work with the owner to try to replace the trees and mitigate impacts to neighbors, such as views and light pollution.

Commissioner Von Feldt said that it would be nice to have a discussion about penalties or tree replacement ratios for removing heritage oaks. She noted that removal of these heritage oaks is not just an issue of screening and views for neighbors, but habitat loss and carbon released into the environment. She said mature oaks sequester a lot of carbon and once it's lost, it takes 50-odd years to get it back. She would like the Town to have a very clear plan for what happens if they are cut down so that it doesn't become a personal issue between neighbors. Ms. Pedro said she would review the code more closely in terms of penalties and look into strengthening that section.

Vice Chair Targ noted that it's not just owners, but sometimes the fault lies with arborists or tree service contractors, and maybe training or educational literature could help as well as substantive provisions. He also emphasized the importance of opportunity for restorative justice to enable owners to make demonstrations of good faith rather than being pilloried. Commissioner Von Feldt said she would support the restoration aspect more than fines, since that is really what the Town is trying to get at here.

DRAFT UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Ms. Kristiansson said staff has talked previously about sending letters to landscapers and others doing work in Town to inform them of the rules and that they are supposed to get permits.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: December 3, 2014

Commissioner Hasko moved to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2014 meeting, as amended. Seconded by Commissioner McKittrick, the motion carried 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT [9:52 p.m.]

Denise Gilbert, Chair

Debbie Pedro, Town Planner

Town of Portola Valley General Plan

**DRAFT FOR PLANNING COMMISSION
REVIEW AND ACTION**

Portola Road Corridor Plan

January 21, 2015

*Incorporates revisions based on the January 22, 2014 Joint Study Session of the Town Council and Planning Commission, and from the February 5, 2014, October 1, 2014, and November 5, 2014 Planning Commission meetings
plus
staff recommendations for modifications to be considered at the January 21, 2015 Planning Commission meeting (shown in track changes) and changes made by the Planning Commission at the January 21 meeting*

Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Objectives 2
Principles 2
Standards 4
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, ~~as shown on the adopted Comprehensive Plan Diagram~~. 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.” 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. Portola Road is also designated a greenway.

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. ~~New development structures should be subservient subordinate to the setting, taking into account including both the distant views to the and largely undeveloped western hillsides and closer in views to features such as orchards, and fields, and also the native landscaping within the public right of way and on the frontages of privately held parcels.~~

- 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. ~~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.~~

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, ~~such~~

~~as conservation easements,~~ 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 along 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 abutting 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 ~~close~~ 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 Nathhorst 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, ~~the west side of the corridor includes mostly~~ 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 encourage 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. ~~The lands on the west side of the corridor in Segment 2 are dominated by larger parcels, several of which extend from the Valley floor to near the top of the western hillsides, including the Windy Hill Open Space Preserve lands of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. These parcels contain some of the most magnificent viewsheds in the town and also include the areas shown on the general plan diagram as “Meadow Preserve,” “Orchard Preserve” and “Stable Preserve.” Efforts should be made to work with landowners to preserve, protect and where necessary, re-establish critical views of the western hillsides and nearby meadows.—~~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.