

# **Infill Development:**

**Transforming a Decaying Site in the  
Middle of a Rural Town – A Case Study  
of Portola Valley, California**

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# Importance of Infill Development

- Building/Developing in vacant areas in city centers
  - “The use of land within a built-up area for further construction”
- Promotes betterment of city centers while leaving rural areas undeveloped
- Benefits include:
  - Reduced traffic congestion
  - Preservation of open space
  - More livable communities

# A Brief Background of the Site

- Portola Valley, California is a small town of about 4,000 located in southern San Mateo County
- Characterized by affluent residents and the green foothills of the Peninsula Coastal Range of the Santa Cruz Mountains
- 900 Portola Road – formerly known as Al's Nursery
  - Across the street from the Town Center
  - Has been earmarked for an affordable housing development in the future

# Site Location



# Goals of the Town's General Plan

- Land uses, services, and facilities that make the town a meaningful constituent of the Mid-Peninsula and the San Francisco Bay Area
- Forming a “comprehensive unit”
- A guide for physical development
- Housing Module explores the success of prior housing elements, requirements for/status of housing within the town's boundaries, and sites presently available for housing

# An Overview of Housing Developments in Portola Valley

- Research demonstrates there is a specific requirement for housing that is affordable to the elderly and to people who work within the town
- Census shows increasing senior population in the town
- Portola Valley provides housing for people who work elsewhere on the Peninsula (and the entire Bay Area)
- The community consists primarily of single-family residences, generally on lots ranging from one to two-and-a-half acres or larger

# Proposal for Mixed-Use Development

- Rebuild the empty site as a mixed-use development
- Includes affordable housing
- Increased frequency of SamTrans buses
- Provide housing for elderly and town employees



# Proposal cont'd

- Buildings would be modern but still emulate Town's historical beginnings
- Commercial sections would improve economic vitality
- Redevelopment project would improve the region in ways specified by its General Plan-Housing Section's main goals





# Implementation Challenges

- Voters often object to the construction of low-cost housing in their neighborhoods
- Affordable housing proposal has already become a matter of contention the area
- Ensuring housing availability to the lower-income population has been a historically controversial subject in urban planning
- Concern that higher-density housing types will diminish the countryside feel of the area and could set precedents for future similar developments

# Questions?



Thank you!