

# Draft Aptos Village Plan



November 24, 2009



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**Draft**



# CHAPTER 1: THE VILLAGE OVERVIEW

## INTRODUCTION

Aptos Village, located in the Aptos Planning area within the unincorporated portion of Santa Cruz County, lies about six miles east of the City of Santa Cruz and about eight miles northwest of the City of Watsonville. It is located just north of Highway 1 between the State Park Drive and Rio Del Mar Boulevard interchanges. The Village is 80 feet above the confluence of Aptos and Valencia Creeks and about one-half mile inland from the Monterey Bay.

The surrounding area is mainly developed with residential uses, and the Village serves as the gateway to the 10,000-acre Forest of Nisene Marks State Park. The main access to and from the Village is Soquel Drive, a major east-west arterial that parallels Highway 1. There are both commercial and residential uses to the east and west of the Village, with the major existing commercial development being the Rancho del Mar Shopping Center, just west of the Village.

There are 65 existing parcels within the boundaries of the Aptos Village Plan with a variety of land uses. These parcels range in size from 2,400 square feet to 4 acres. Previous patterns of development are reinforced by the various parcel sizes, especially in the Village Core, with the large parcels behind the Bay View

Hotel and Aptos Station reflecting their previous industrial uses related to the lumber and fruit packing industries.

Most of the parcels that lie south of Soquel Drive are either small or have potentially severe development constraints such as steep slopes, riparian corridors, and floodplains.

The small parcels that front on Valencia Street, Bernal Street, and Aptos Street are part of the Hihn subdivision, laid out in the late 1800s for residences. These parcels are mostly developed and have a mix of commercial and residential uses.

Figure 1 below provides an overview of land uses in the area, while Figure 2 provides an illustration of the current development pattern in the Village.

<b>FIGURE 1: SUMMARY OF CURRENT USES IN APTOS VILLAGE AREA</b>			
<b>Category of Development</b>	<b>Number of uses in category</b>	<b>Bldg Area Sq. Ft.</b>	<b>% of Bldg. Area</b>
Retail	9	25,118	19.0
Office	20	29,707	22.4
Dining and Hospitality	7	22,799	17.2
Government	3	19,010	14.3
Commercial Service	3	10,158	7.7
Grooming/Fitness	8	6,358	4.8
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>113,150</b>	<b>85.4</b>
Residential	32 units	19,398	14.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>132,548</b>	<b>100.0</b>

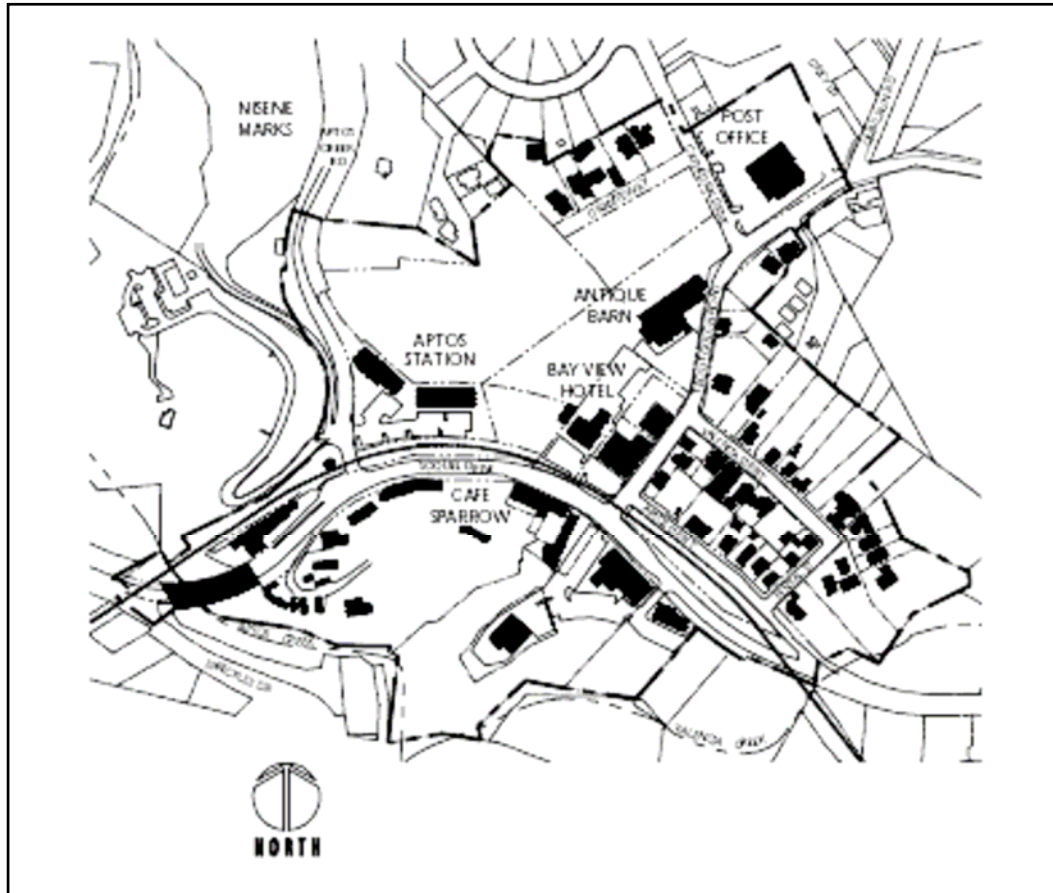


FIGURE 2: EXISTING DEVELOPMENT MAP

## VILLAGE PLAN HISTORY

### PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

Since 1979, land use in Aptos Village has been governed by the Aptos Village Community Design Framework, a Specific Plan which was originally adopted by the Board of Supervisors on April 17, 1979 and amended on June 18, 1985. The only major new buildings constructed since the late 1960s include the Aptos Station in 1981, the Founders Title Building in 1985, and the Appenrodt building at the southeast corner of Soquel Drive and Post Office Drive in 2006. There were several previous attempts to develop the vacant parcels adjacent to Aptos Station, the Bayview Hotel, and the Hihn apple packing shed (Apple Barn), but for a variety of reasons (including parcel configuration and lack of coordinated planning among all parties regarding development) none of those ever came to fruition.

The Aptos Village Community Design Framework covered an area of about 100 acres, including the area covered by this Village Plan. Even though the Framework covered an area larger than the Village, its primary focus was on future development of the Village core area. Due to the lack of progress over the years following approval of the Framework, members of the community felt that a more detailed plan would encourage the Framework vision to be realized. In addition to updating the Framework and re-evaluating the mix of land uses, it was critical to review parcel configuration and infrastructure planning. Therefore, this Plan, which builds upon the Framework, is structured to provide more clarity to guide possible new development. It is intended that, upon adoption of

this Plan by the Board of Supervisors, it will replace the Aptos Village Community Design Framework Specific Plan, focusing on the Village Core area.

### SETTING THE STAGE FOR A NEW PLAN

In 2001, the Aptos business community and the County began discussing the possibilities of coordinated development of the vacant parcels in the context of the overall development of Aptos Village. In mid-2002, the County conducted two public meetings to elicit comments from area residents, business owners, and other interested parties about what future development, if any, should occur in the Village.

On a parallel track to that process, the County has, through its Capital Improvement Program (CIP), established a plan for upgrading infrastructure in the Village area. Those efforts will serve to complement the activities called for in this Plan.

## HISTORIC ISSUES

### HISTORIC CONTEXT

The name "Aptos" has been ~~was~~ associated with the area since as early as 1791 when reference was made to a Costanoan native village. In 1833, Mexican Governor Jose Figueroa granted Rafael Castro 5,500 acres of land known as Aptos Rancho. In 1855, Rafael Castro deeded most of the property, which is now known as Aptos Village, to Maria Antonia Castro and her husband Guadalupe Bernal who were already living on the property. On their ranch, the Bernals produced stock, grain, and other agricultural products. The Bernal property was accessed by a spur off the "Old Coach Road"

which entered the ranch at what is today the junction of Soquel Drive and Trout Gulch Road. In 1857, access to the Bernal property was improved when a new road alignment was constructed that corresponds roughly with present-day Soquel Drive.

The first commercial activity in Aptos began in the late 1860s with the construction of the Arano Store on Aptos Wharf Road. In 1874, Frederick Hihn began buying rights-of-way from Rafael Castro, the Bernals, and others for his Santa Cruz Railroad Company.

Construction of the railroad, connecting Pajaro to Santa Cruz with a narrow gauge line, began in 1874 and was completed to Aptos by 1875. Commercial activity in what is now Aptos Village began in earnest during the 1870s, spurred on by the arrival of the railroad.

Tourism in Aptos dates back to the early 1870s when Claus Spreckles, the millionaire sugar baron, bought 6,685 acres of Aptos Rancho and surrounding area and developed the elegant Aptos Hotel, located south of Aptos. The lumber industry dates to the early 1850s when Rafael Castro authorized the construction of the first sawmill (1851) south of present-day Aptos Village and the construction of Judge John Watson's shingle mill in 1852 (later known as Nichols Mill). By 1870, lumbering was a major economic activity, with the resulting products being shipped from the Aptos Wharf.

Agriculture was another prominent industry in Aptos during the late 1800s, with a grain warehouse located on one of the railroad spurs west of the Bay View Hotel. With the development of orchards on the farms in the vicinity, Aptos became a center for the packing

and shipping of apples by the late 1890s, continuing until the late 1950s. The earliest packing house, then known as the Valencia Orchards & Packinghouse (located behind the Bay View Hotel), was constructed between 1892 and 1899 by F. A. Hihn. Added to over the years, it was most recently known as the Village Fair, an antique collective. By 1959, succumbing to public concern about inadequate sewer facilities and pollution of the creek, Western Frozen Foods relocated their operation to Watsonville, ending Aptos's tenure as a fruit-processing center.

The Hihn Subdivision, to the east of Trout Gulch Road, was created in the 1890s. During the 1920s through the 1940s, the subdivision of many of the nearby farms and the large Spreckles holdings brought many new residents into the area. During the 1930s and 1940s new construction waned. After the war, construction resumed in the Village as Fred Toney, one of the prominent entrepreneurs in Aptos, spearheaded modernizing the Village by building several new commercial buildings.

From 1960 on, the area experienced little new construction. Unfortunately, during that time many of the older buildings in the Village were demolished.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES

Since the creation of the County's first historic preservation ordinance in the 1970s, a significant number of buildings have been designated as historically significant and have been protected. These buildings add to the character of the Village and County policies require that they be respected by new development in

terms of design and scale. The following list contains the sites currently identified in the County’s Historic Inventory as historically significant in the Village area, which are illustrated on Figure 3.

1. Aptos Creek Bridge - Soquel Dr. at Spreckles Dr.
2. General Store and Post Office - 8040, 8042 Soquel Dr.
3. Village House - 8044 Soquel Dr.
4. Aptos Firehouse/VFW Hall - 8037 Soquel Dr.
5. Anchor Hotel - Bay View - 8041 Soquel Dr.
6. Apple Barn - 417 Trout Gulch Rd.
7. ----- - 502 Trout Gulch Rd.
8. Bonner House - 420a Trout Gulch Rd.
9. Ray McCawley Real Estate - 408 Trout Gulch Rd.
10. Hihn - Aptos Subdivision - 140 Summa Court
11. Hihn - Aptos Subdivision - 140 Summa Court
12. Hihn - Aptos Subdivision - 8059 Valencia Street
13. Somerset House - 8061 Valencia Street
14. Calvary Chapel - 8065 Valencia Street
15. Hihn - Aptos Subdivision - 8067 Aptos Street
16. Hihn - Aptos Subdivision - 8065 Aptos Street
17. Hihn - Aptos Subdivision - 8063 Aptos Street
18. Twitchell House - 8061 Aptos Street



**FIGURE 3: HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

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# CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT FOR VILLAGE PLAN

## GENERAL PLAN CONTEXT

The Village Plan is intended to comply with General Plan Objective 2.24 and specifically with Program “b”, which relates to Aptos Village. Objective 2.24 of the General Plan calls for the continued use of:

*Village, town, community and specific plans to provide a planning framework to guide future public and private improvements in town centers.... to provide a higher level of planning detail and public involvement; and to promote economic viability, coherent community design and enhancement of the unique characteristics of the village areas.... as focal points for living, working, shopping and visiting.*

Program “b” of Objective 2.24 recommends that the County “[r]eview and update the Aptos Village Community Design Framework to develop a more specific plan governing land use, circulation, design, and improvements in the village area.”

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

### UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES

As mentioned previously, there are several relatively large vacant parcels in the Village Core. These parcels have remained vacant since the demolition of the apple packing related buildings some 40 years ago. Even the Antique Barn property is underutilized, with

only about 25 percent of its area developed with buildings and parking. If more fully developed, these sites could significantly add to the vitality and character of the Village in the future.

### MARKET STUDY – COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

A market study to evaluate the market and financial feasibility of future commercial and residential development in Aptos Village was commissioned by the County and completed by Keyser Marston Associates Inc. in early 2003.

The market study looked first at the Aptos trade area, which the study defined generally as including “all or portions of the communities of Aptos, Seacliff, Rio del Mar, La Selva Beach, and Freedom...” According to the market study “there appears to be sufficient market support for an additional 235,000 square feet of comparison retail, 90,000 square feet of convenience retail and 50,000 square feet of eating and drinking space in the Aptos trade area.” The square footages mentioned are net, or leasable, square feet.

The 2003 market study generally described a range of possible mixed- use developments that could occur in the Village to address the market demand. By way of example, they described a mixed- use commercial/housing project that contained 30,000 to 40,000

square feet of retail uses, with office space totaling from 5,000 to 7,500 square feet.

The market study suggests that one of the conditions for success for the Village is to have enough density to create a critical mass and a sufficiently large range of uses to increase pedestrian traffic and business vitality in the overall Village area. While the market study is silent on the precise density needed to create a critical mass and a sufficiently large range of uses to increase Village pedestrian traffic, it states that the density should be significantly above the “typical density” of approximately 25 percent<sup>1</sup>.

Insufficient density of development in the Village Core was also noted in an earlier 1989 Aptos Village Market Analysis as a factor in limiting creation of a pedestrian-oriented district. That market analysis suggested a density of 28 to 35 percent would most likely create that critical mass of business activity. Applying the 1989 Market Analysis density range to the Village suggests that available space could provide approximately 54,000 to 67,000 square feet of new commercial development.

### MARKET STUDY – HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

The market study stated that “residential development in the trade area has been primarily targeted to the affluent, younger households newly relocating to the area” and that “nearly all the new residential development in the trade area has been upper-end, luxury single-family executive homes...” Thus the market study

reinforced the dubious honor the area has for having some of the highest average and median priced housing in the nation. The Aptos area in particular has some of the highest local housing prices in the County. According to the market study, “[t]here is little doubt that residential product of various types and of various densities...could be successfully marketed at sites in Aptos Village.” Further, the study indicates that it is advantageous to include residential uses in a mix with commercial uses because that enhances financial feasibility and vitality of the area.

The market study did not explore the housing potential in the Village to the degree that it did for the commercial potential. However, the study did suggest that residential units could “consist of a mix of market-rate lofts, flats and townhomes. . .in the range of about 900 to 1,500 square feet” and “might total about 50 units.” Thus the residential square footage could be in a range of approximately 45,000 to 75,000 square feet, although there was nothing in the market study that specifically limited the number of units or the square footage.

### INFRASTRUCTURE CHANGES

A number of infrastructure improvements that have been planned for years in the Aptos Village area are included in the current Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and could be constructed in the next few years, regardless of what happens elsewhere in the Village. It will be critical to coordinate those improvements with other possible changes in the Village.

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<sup>1</sup> Calculating the building area as a percentage of the land area

## POSSIBLE CONSTRAINTS TO CHANGE

### TRAFFIC ISSUES

Soquel Drive/Trout Gulch Road intersection currently operates at level of service (LOS) D during the p.m. peak hour. Soquel Drive/Aptos Creek Road intersection currently operates at LOS E during the p.m. peak hour. Both are currently not providing desirable wait times for motorists.

Appropriate solutions to both existing traffic issues and those created by additional development are addressed in this Plan.

### PARCEL CONFIGURATION

There are 65 existing parcels within the boundaries of the Aptos Village Plan. These parcels range in size from 2,400 square feet to 4 acres. Because of their relatively large size and odd parcel configuration, the parcels behind the Bayview Hotel and Aptos Station are not conducive to development on an individual lot-by-lot basis.

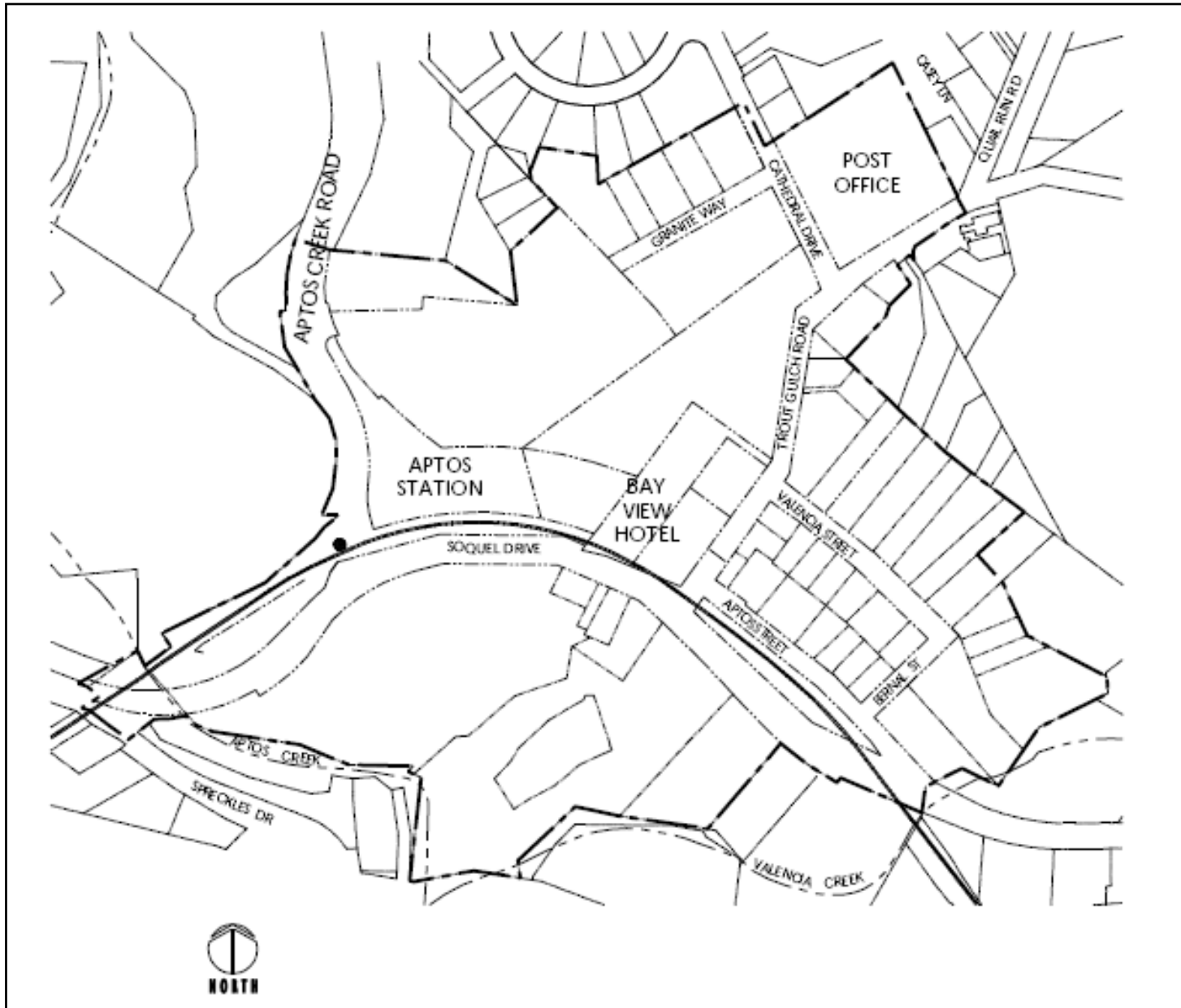
The rest of the Village is comprised mostly of smaller parcels and is largely built out. The one major exception is the area below the buildings on the south side of Soquel Drive (known as Aptos Hollow). Further environmental analysis of that area will be required to determine what, if any, development potential exists.

Clearly, one desired outcome of this Plan will be a reconfiguration of the Village Core parcel boundaries to allow for coordinated development. Figure 4 illustrates the existing parcel configurations.

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND FINANCING

Aside from parcel configuration, the greatest constraint to new development in the Village Core has been identifying the level of infrastructure needed to support new development and the sources of financing. Those improvements, which would serve both existing and new development, are critical for the successful development and vitality of the Village. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of infrastructure needs and financing.





**FIGURE 4: EXISTING PARCEL CONFIGURATIONS**



## CHAPTER 3: THE PLANNING PROCESS

### DESIGN CHARETTE

Two initial community meetings were held in late 2002 to discuss the need to update the older Design Framework. In response to positive public input received at those meetings, a community design charette was held at the Valencia School in June 2003. After introductory descriptions of the existing site conditions, opportunities, and constraints, participants were divided into four “Design Teams” to begin the charette process.

### COMMON DESIGN CONCEPTS

While each of the four teams generated different design concepts, there were significant parallels among them, as discussed below.

Two major organizing principles were common to all four schemes. Each proposed a community open space surrounded by a variety of mixed-use development with retail, office and residential. The open space, through its size, location and nature of adjoining uses could become a memorable gathering place for the Village and the neighboring community. And, each proposed a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use, neighborhood street that runs east-west across the site.

Commercial uses were proposed on the ground floor of mixed-use buildings and were located along the new east-west street and around the new community open space. Each concept strengthened

the commercial viability of the Village, offering an expanded variety of neighborhood and community-serving retail stores.

New residential developments were proposed on either side of Granite Way, on the sloped hillsides to the north, and on the upper floors of mixed-use development buildings.

Teams shared an interest in providing an information kiosk and entry landmark feature on Aptos Creek Road, which would serve as the gateway to Nisene Marks State Park.

### CIRCULATION & PARKING

All teams developed a circulation concept creating a network of streets and pathways, with an extension of either Trout Gulch Road at Cathedral Drive or Valencia Street at Trout Gulch Road, to Aptos Creek Road, serving as the primary vehicular spine. Most charette concepts extended Granite Way and Village Drive to connect with the new east-west road.

Plans emphasized the need to protect existing parking along Soquel Drive, wherever possible. Various suggestions to locate additional parking to meet the existing and new demands were suggested.

All plans suggested that the Village area should be well connected to the nearby community facilities, such as the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park, the Aptos Post Office, Valencia Elementary

School, and Rancho del Mar Shopping Center, with pleasant and safe pedestrian and bicycle connections.

## IMAGE & CHARACTER

Charette participants strongly favored that the overall image for the area should complement the existing village character. The architectural character of the various buildings should be no more than two to three stories.

Most participants felt that the amount of commercial space should not be inappropriately large, with the idea that the nature and size of shops and stores should be primarily to address the needs of the local community and not of a type that would substantially depend on attracting people from a larger regional area, with associated traffic congestion.

Plans suggested that all new and existing streets in the study area should be tree-lined, with pedestrian-friendly, pleasant, walkable sidewalks. The streetscape character of the new east-west street was visualized as a mixed-use street with primarily retail stores fronting the street. Granite Way would be more of a residential street with single-family homes and townhouses on either side. Aptos Creek Road, serving as the primary access route to the Park, could have rows of trees on either side of the road, park entry features, information kiosk, etc.

A strong visible structure would provide a sense of identity and make the Village memorable. Various possibilities proposed for such a structure include a sculpture in the community open space,

park kiosk at the intersection of Soquel Drive and Aptos Creek Road, or an entry feature between the railroad tracks and the Village common.

## POST-CHARETTE DISCUSSIONS

Another 10 public meetings were held after the charette, during the fall of 2003. These meetings included smaller committees that refined concepts and general standards for building design, uses, traffic and parking, the Village Common and a skatepark. Finally, a community meeting was held at which attendees wrote and/or drew comments on large conceptual site plans of the Village that were developed from the charette and other meetings. All of the information gathered from the various meetings was then used to develop the vision for the Village Plan.

A progress meeting with the Aptos community was held in February 2008 with additional oral and written comments received from the community.

## THE VISION

Moving forward with changes in Aptos Village requires a carefully thought out plan and design standards. The design must reflect the community's shared vision for Aptos Village, yet be financially realistic for developers and property owners. Otherwise, it is unlikely that investors will provide the significant investment in infrastructure to make the Plan possible.

As envisioned, Aptos Village will continue its historical role as the civic heart of Aptos. New private and public investments in the

Village will create new shopping, commercial services and residential opportunities that meet the needs of residents. Related infrastructure improvements will increase public parking and reduce traffic congestion. A Village Common and network of sidewalks and bikeways will make the Village an attractive and convenient destination for Aptos residents.

Historic buildings will be preserved and/or relocated such that they provide the setting for new buildings and related infrastructure. The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park, Aptos Village County Park, and Aptos and Valencia Creeks will continue to provide a natural boundary around the Village. New buildings and streets will reflect the small town ambience of the historic Village.

The vision for the Village includes the following key elements:

- A Village Common at the heart of the community.
- A new east-west street to connect Trout Gulch and Aptos Creek Roads.
- A new north-south street connecting Soquel Drive to the new east-west street, intersecting at a Village Common, to provide a face of the new Village Core area to the vehicles and pedestrians using Soquel Drive.
- Improvement of Aptos Creek Road to become a well announced entrance to Nisene Marks State Park.
- New housing developed as a transitional edge to the existing residential neighborhoods, with commercial and mixed commercial and residential uses in the interior of the Village.
- A network of sidewalks making it pleasant to be a pedestrian in the Village.

- Abundant parking, both on and off street, to make shopping convenient. To enhance the Village atmosphere, most off-street parking will be located behind buildings.
- Well-landscaped streets to give the Village a pleasant and inviting ambience.
- A mix of housing, shopping, dining, community services, and employment to make the Village a colorful, friendly place and one that complements the scale of the current Village area.
- A method to protect and encourage a mix of uses in the Hihn Subdivision (east of Trout Gulch Road).
- A way to include the area south of Soquel Drive as a vibrant and integral part of the overall commercial area in the Village.

Turning this vision into a Village Plan required years of additional work to ensure the feasibility of the vision in the context of financial, land use, property owner, and other realities. Planning staff worked with landowners in the Village and technical consultants to address a number of key issues, including identifying required infrastructure, defining how to finance the required infrastructure, and ensuring that there was a fully cooperative understanding among property owners. Additionally, further traffic analysis and historic and archaeological reviews took place. Once those efforts were completed, this Plan was drafted to reflect both the initial community actions and updated financial and technical information.

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# CHAPTER 4: CORE ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN

## LAND USES BY LOCATION

The existing Aptos Village area is a mixed-use area, containing retail, office, service commercial, residential and other uses. Future development under this Plan will continue the mixed-use theme, although there will continue to be areas that are distinctly residential and those that are distinctly commercial. As is illustrated in Figure 5, new residential uses will abut the existing residential area along the northern edge of the Village Core. Mixed commercial and residential use will provide a transition from the residential uses to the north to the new commercial and mixed uses in the heart of the Village. Finally, commercial uses will continue in the southern parts of the Village as will a mix of commercial and residential uses in the Hihn subdivision on the eastside of the Village.

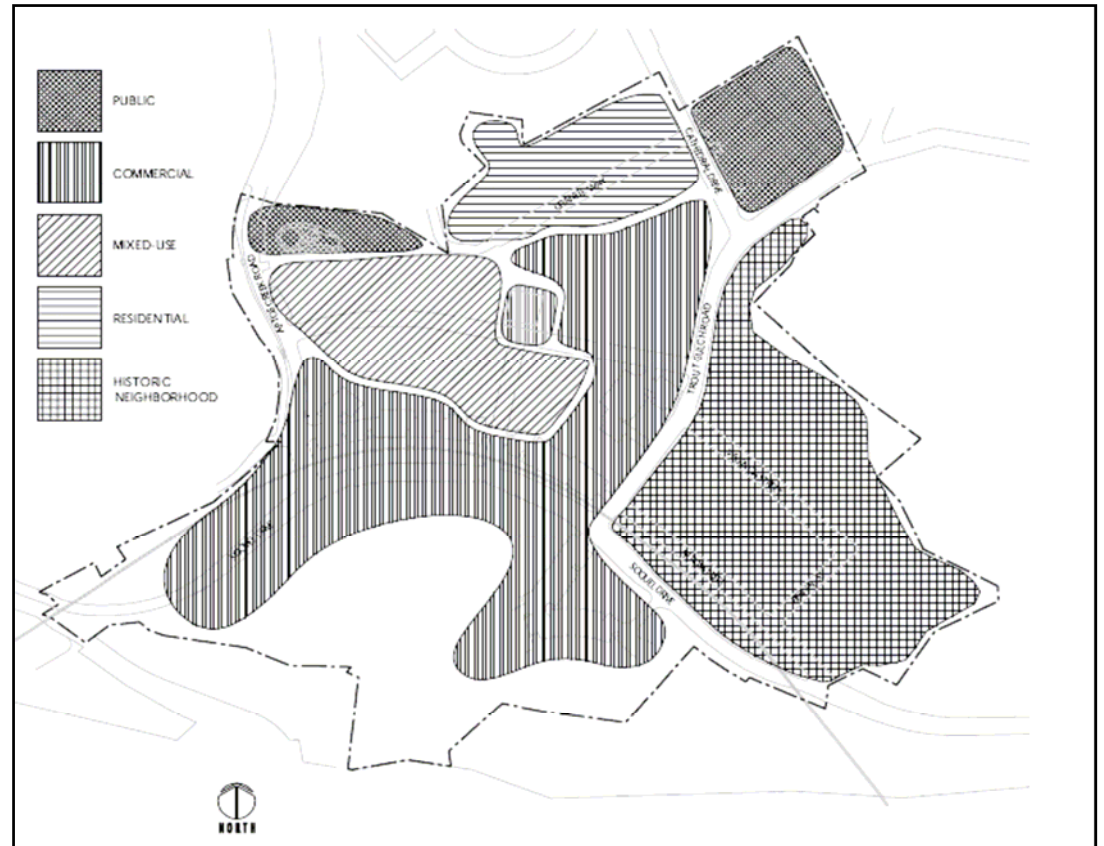


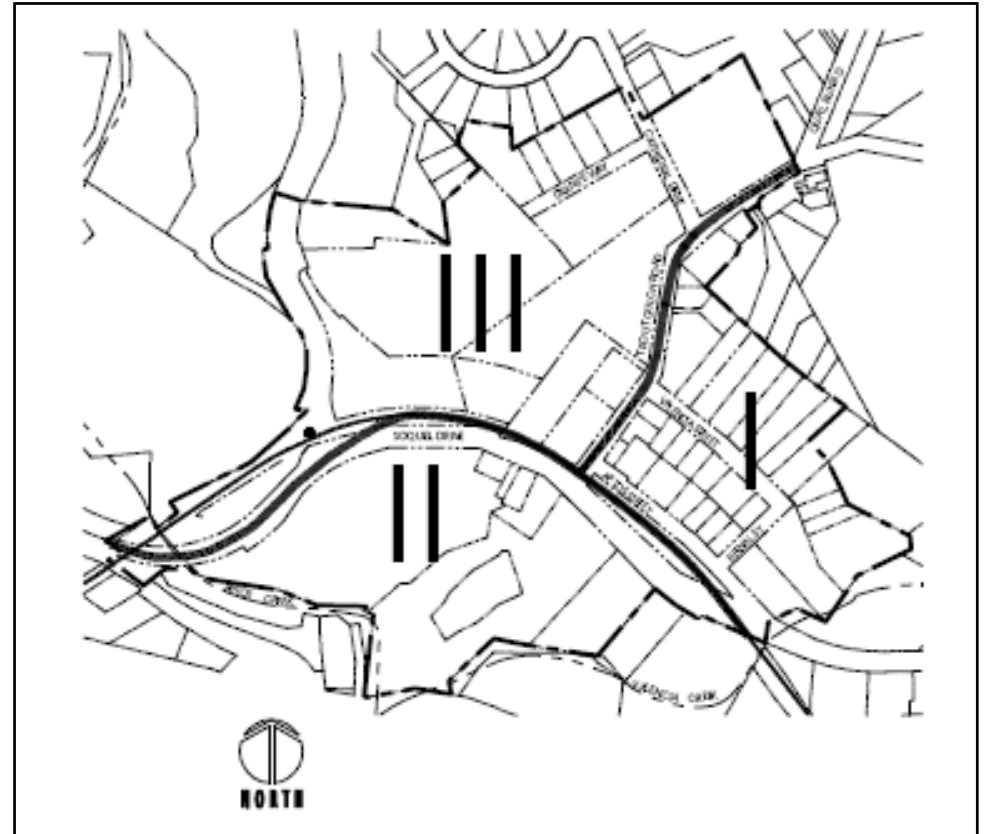
FIGURE 5: PROPOSED LAND USES

## PLAN AREAS

This Plan, in replacing the prior Framework, focuses on a somewhat smaller area, as is illustrated in Figure 6. Existing streets and the railroad divide the Village into three major areas that provide a convenient structure for discussing future land uses: I) the Hihn subdivision, separated from the rest of the Village by Trout Gulch Road and the railroad tracks; II) the area which lies south of Soquel Drive; and III) the Village Core, which lies north of Soquel Drive and west of Trout Gulch Road. These are illustrated in Figure 6 and discussed in more detail in the following section of the Plan.

### PLAN AREA I: HIHN SUBDIVISION

The Hihn Subdivision lies east of Trout Gulch Road and north of the railroad tracks. The area contains generally small lots with a mix of residential and commercial uses and the largest concentration of historic buildings in the Village with 10 of the 18 designated historic structures in the Village. Additional development potential is limited because the area is mostly built-out and there are challenges in meeting the County Code parking requirements; therefore, required parking for low-intensity commercial uses are relaxed to facilitate commercial vitality of the area.



**FIGURE 6: PLAN AREAS**

- I. Hihn Subdivision
- II. South of Soquel Drive
- III. Village Core

## USES

The intent under this Village Plan is that the Hihn Subdivision area will remain an eclectic mixed-use area allowing stand-alone residential, stand-alone small scale commercial and office uses or mixed uses. The zoning of the area will be changed to promote this variety of uses (see Chapter 7 for proposed zoning.)

## PARKING

Residential uses will use the parking standards found in County Code Section 13.10.552.

Commercial uses (except for restaurant or medical office use) will be required to provide 1 space per 300 square feet of gross floor area (excluding areas used only for storage or truck loading).

Restaurant or medical office uses will be required to meet the parking standards found in County Code Section 13.10.552.

## NEW COMMERCIAL/MIXED USE BUILDINGS

New Commercial or mixed-use buildings of less than 2,000 square feet will be processed as Level IV Use Approvals and new commercial or mixed-use buildings of 2,000 to 20,000 square feet will be processed as Level V Use Approvals. New commercial or mixed-use buildings greater than 20,000 square feet will be processed as Level VI Use Approvals.

## CHANGE OF USE

Changes of use that do not result in an intensification of commercial use, as defined in County Code Section 13.10.700-I, and do not include new residential uses will be processed as Level I

Use Approvals. This allows existing legal conforming and legal nonconforming uses to change to the same or less intensive use even if there is inadequate or no parking on-site. Changes of use resulting in an intensification of commercial use and/or additional residential uses will be processed as Level IV Use Approvals. All Change of Use approvals shall include a condition requiring compliance with the County Code and Aptos Village Plan sign regulations found in Chapter 6.

## PLAN AREA II: SOUTH OF SOQUEL DRIVE

Located between Soquel Drive and the Aptos Creek and Valencia Creek ravines, this area is essentially built out with 21 buildings. While there is little development potential, the amount of new commercial uses in this area is not specifically limited in this Plan; impacts of new development will be analyzed on a project-by-project basis, including the provision of adequate parking.

The limited parking in this area will not support significant new development or intensification of commercial use. Therefore, the two keys for the Plan are how to create strong pedestrian and other connections between Areas II and III and how to address the current inconsistency between commercial uses and zoning.

Connectivity to the other Areas will be through prominent pedestrian crossings of Soquel Drive at Aptos Creek Road, the new north-south street and Trout Gulch Road, a new bus stop on the north side of Soquel Drive and consistent signage throughout the three Areas (see Chapter 6 for sign regulations.) The Area will be

rezoned to bring the existing uses closer into consistency (see Chapter 7 for proposed zoning).

The only remaining area with additional possible development potential is the “Aptos Hollow” parcel, APN 041-561-06. However, that parcel, most of which lies 40 feet below Soquel Drive, has numerous constraints on new development including flood plain, biotic, and visual issues. Access to and from Soquel Drive to the lower portion of this area is difficult at best because of the steep slopes and the very low angle of intersection of the existing driveway with Soquel Drive. Any new proposed development in the Aptos Hollow will need to be addressed outside the context of this Plan.

### USES

The intent of this Plan is to allow only low parking demand, pedestrian-oriented commercial uses in expanded or new buildings on those parcels that cannot provide adequate on-site or off-site indentured parking. Mixed-use development is not allowed unless adequate on-site parking is provided. Parcels that can provide adequate on-site parking may apply for uses allowed in the C-2 zone district.

### PARKING

Commercial uses (except for restaurant or medical office use) will be required to provide 1 space per 300 square feet of gross floor area (excluding areas used only for storage or truck loading).

Restaurant or medical office uses will meet the parking standards found in County Code Section 13.10.552.

### NEW COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

New Commercial buildings of less than 2,000 square feet will be processed as Level IV Use Approvals and new commercial buildings of 2,000 to 20,000 square feet will be processed as Level V Use Approvals.

### CHANGE OF USE

Changes of use that do not result in an intensification of commercial use, as defined in County Code Section 13.10.700-I, will be processed as Level I Use Approvals. This allows existing legal conforming and legal nonconforming uses to change to the same or less intensive use even if there is inadequate or no parking on-site. Changes of use resulting in an intensification of commercial use shall be processed as Level IV Use Approvals. All Change of Use approvals shall include a condition requiring compliance with the County Code and Aptos Village Plan sign regulations found in Chapter 6.

### PLAN AREA III: VILLAGE CORE

The focus of the Village Plan is the Village Core. This approximately 15-acre area lies between Trout Gulch Road and Aptos Creek Road, north of the railroad. This part of the Village has the largest potential for new development and is largely underdeveloped. A total of seven commercial buildings currently exist in the Village Core. Three parcels—totaling almost six acres—are vacant. Another three acres have only about 10% of their land area developed. Plan

Area III also includes APN 41-561-04: a parcel located on the north side of Soquel Drive with several commercial uses, including Britannia Arms pub.

The Village Core is adjacent to residential development in the Vista Mar Court area at its northern boundary. This Plan envisions providing a high and medium density residential transitional area between the Village's commercial uses and this Urban Low Residential area to the north.

## **FRAMEWORK FOR THE VILLAGE CORE**

### **TRAFFIC CIRCULATION**

As was discussed during the community design process, the existing circulation system must be supplemented to allow for the expanded development in the Village Core. A new east-west road connecting Trout Gulch Road and Aptos Creek Road is required within the Village Core. In addition, a new street is required to connect Soquel Drive to the new east-west street and lead to the new Village Common. Figure 9 illustrates the location of the new streets.

### **PLAN FOR VILLAGE COMMON**

A common feature of most villages is a public open space near the village center that typically includes a lawn area. This open space can serve a number of functions, including public gatherings, a soft contrast to buildings, and a place to simply lie in the sun, read a book, or otherwise relax and take in the surrounding scene.

It is important to the community that the Village Common be a gathering area for social and civic events, so it needs to be large enough to accommodate those events. As well, the location of the Village Common is critical. It should be centrally located and surrounded with or adjacent to uses that encourage pedestrian traffic.

In order to provide this desirable amenity, the Village Common will need to be an open space area of approximately 10,000 square feet (in comparison, a major league baseball infield is 7,000 square feet in size), including a central lawn area, and shall be located at the intersection of the new east-west and new north-south streets (see Figure 9). The Village Common must be integrated with the uses abutting it, meaning that the uses and building designs shall be complementary to the greenspace. A platform or small stage for performances may be incorporated into the design of the Village Common.

At the heart of the Village Core, the Village Common will provide a community focus and multi-use community feature. The Village Common shall be located on private property, but reserved for public use. The construction of the Village Common improvements is entirely the responsibility of the owner of the land on which it is to be constructed. Future property owners will be responsible for providing on-going maintenance of the Village Common. Final design of the Village Common will be reviewed as part of the permits for the surrounding buildings, with maintenance and operational costs carried by businesses in the new buildings.

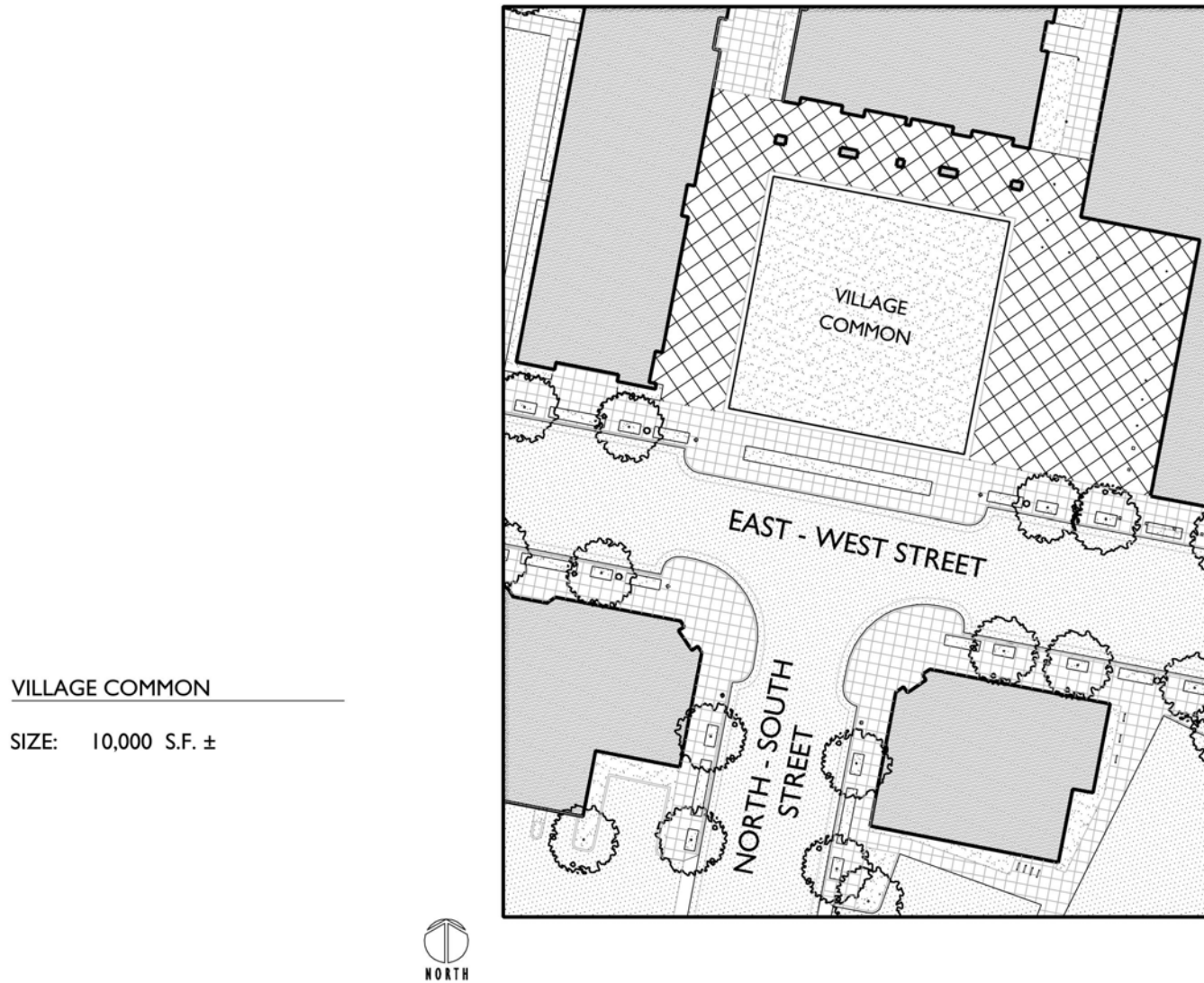


FIGURE 7: VILLAGE COMMON (CONCEPTUAL)

## SKATEPARK

As a result of community desires identified during the public input process, development of a skateboard park is included at the edge of the Village Core. During the charette discussions, several possible locations for the skateboard park were identified. This Plan proposes that the skatepark be located at the northwest edge of the Village Core area (see Figure 8). The park will be screened from residential areas by landscape planting and appropriately designed for its location. If a skatepark use is found to be infeasible or undesirable, other public open space/recreational uses may be considered for this area.

It is envisioned that the site will be donated to the County by the landowner, with the County responsible for design, financing and construction of the improvements and operational and maintenance costs. The donation to the County will be credited against the required park in-lieu fees for the new development in the Core area.

## NISENE MARKS PARK GATEWAY

Bordering the Village at its northwest is the entrance to the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park. The Park extends back into the hills many miles and includes hiking and biking trails as well as picnic areas and a large area that is managed as wilderness. It is very popular with local residents who use it extensively. The park provides a dramatic change of scenery from the built environment of Aptos, including several different ecosystems.

Having the park and its entrance abutting the Village is an asset and requires sensitive treatment of that portion of the Village. The entrance of the park also demands better signage than exists now at Soquel Drive and a more defined entrance.

As part of the development of the Village Core, improved park signage shall be provided near the intersection of Soquel Drive and Aptos Creek Road. In addition, an informational kiosk, benches and complementary infrastructure shall be provided (see Figure 8). While it will not be possible to provide a large parking lot to serve the Park in the Village, a parking area will be made available for park visitors along Aptos Creek Road. The construction of these facilities will be the responsibility of the master developer for the Village Core area.

Figure 9 illustrates a summary of the key features of the Village Plan.

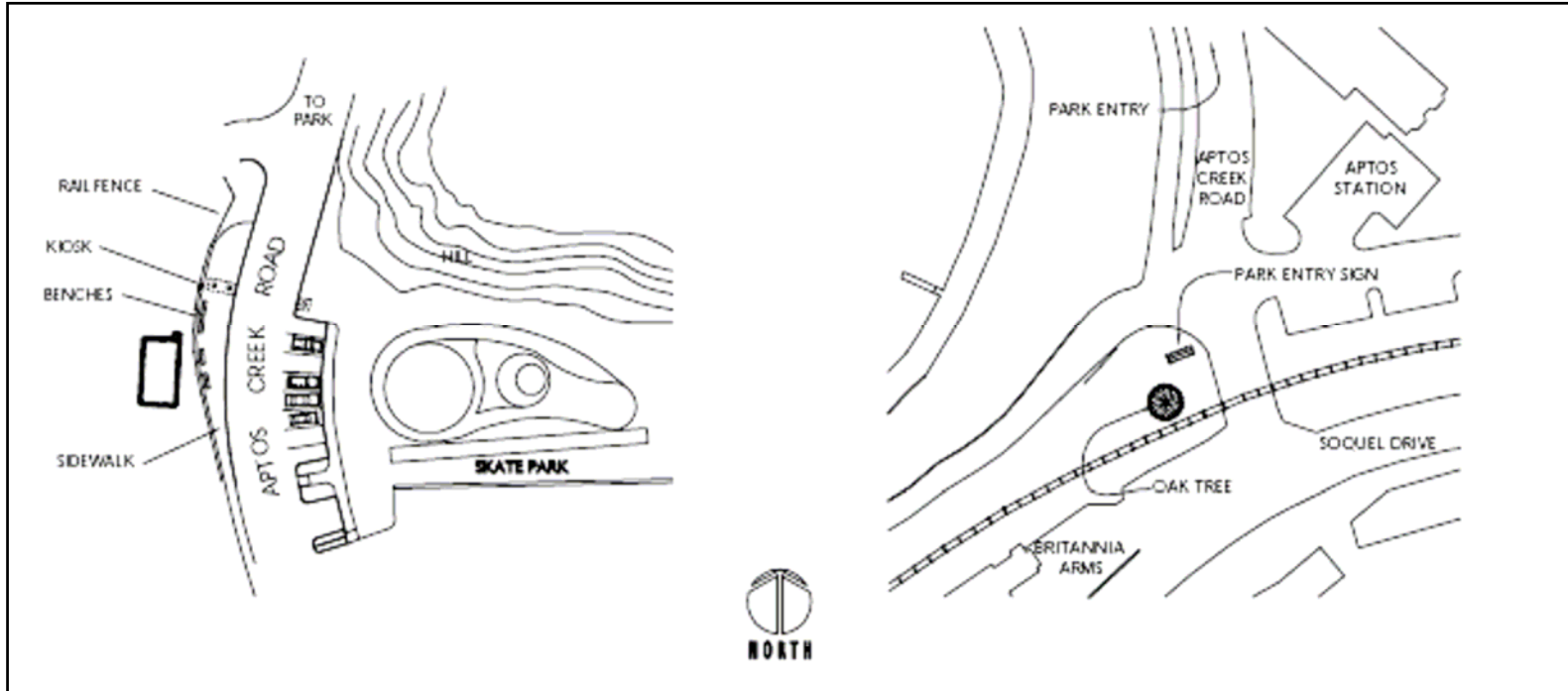


FIGURE 8: SKATEPARK AND NISENE GATEWAY



FIGURE 9: KEY FEATURES

## PARCEL RECONFIGURATION

Parcel reconfiguration of the majority of the Village Core will be necessary to facilitate the implementation of the Village Plan, including the creation of the new east-west and north-south streets. Development proposals in the past have not moved beyond the approval stage in part because the proposals attempted to fit the development into a single parcel, without regard to what might occur on adjoining parcels. Therefore, the parcels in the Village Core area must be reconfigured to provide frontage on the new streets as part of the implementation of the Plan.

## LAND USES & INTENSITIES

The Keyser Marston market study, mentioned earlier, concluded that there was a strong economic basis for expanding both commercial and residential land uses in the core of the Village. In order to find the right combination of land uses, it is critical to balance a number of factors, including:

- Providing enough square footage to attract the right range of businesses and create a strong pedestrian element;
- Limiting the square footage so that traffic impacts can be mitigated to reasonable levels;
- Providing enough square footage of uses (commercial and residential) to be able to financially support the substantial infrastructure needed to be constructed in the area; and
- Defining the proper scale of development that fits into the character of the Village.

Any change in land uses in the Village will need to address traffic and other infrastructure impacts. It is also important to achieve a

critical mass of activity to create the vitality needed for the economic success for future businesses in the area. While these factors are critical, it is equally important to establish a scale of development that complements the character of the Village.

A number of traffic studies have been conducted over the years in the area. The most recent, completed in 2008 and updated in 2009, analyzed potential development of 75,000 gross square feet of neighborhood commercial and 63 residential units. This revised traffic study found that the greatest number of trips—about 320—would occur in the weekday evening peak hour (existing p.m. volume on Soquel Drive is about 1440). The mitigations that would be required to reduce impacts from the additional number of trips to an acceptable level include the following:

- The installation of new traffic signals at the Soquel Drive-Trout Gulch intersection (currently needed for existing traffic), including a left-turn lane on westbound Soquel Drive at Post Office Drive;
- Installation of new traffic signals at the Soquel Drive-Aptos Creek Road intersection, including a left-turn lane (currently needed for existing traffic) on eastbound Soquel Drive at Aptos Creek Road;
- Modification of signal phasing to provide permissive left-turn phasing for Aptos Rancho Road, located outside of Aptos Village;
- Installation of an exclusive right-turn lane with storage length of at least 300 feet plus transition on eastbound Soquel Drive at the Soquel Drive-State Park-Sunset Way intersection, located outside of Aptos Village. Since the installation of a right-turn lane has right-of-way issues on the southwest corner of the

intersection if ideal land widths are used, narrower lane widths are recommended.

Assuming that future developments are conditioned to provide those traffic improvements, it appears that development in the neighborhood of that intensity could address the associated traffic impacts, and to some degree, improve current conditions.

Based upon the economic background reports, it appears that this scale of development will also provide the critical mass of development needed to support the vitality of the business area and an active pedestrian element in the Village. Based on further analysis of infrastructure costs, it appears that this level of development can also provide the financing needed for the new infrastructure. While this analysis will assume that the maximum quantity of new development that can be allowed in the Village Core Area will be no greater than 75,000 gross square feet of the total new commercial buildings and new residential use should constitute no greater than 63 new residential units, it is important to note that the issue of proper scale for the feeling of the Village must still be addressed. Scale and other design issues are further explored in Chapter 6.

### COMMERCIAL USES

On-site parking and landscaping requirements ultimately limit the area available for commercial use square footage. The County's zoning regulations do not have a maximum limit on commercial lot coverage (the amount of the lot area physically covered with buildings). But the most likely parking-intensive uses anticipated in the Village Core are food service and medical office uses. County

parking standards for food service require one on-site parking space per 100 square feet of area, excluding storage and truck loading area, contrasted with a requirement of one space per 200 square feet of area for retail and general office uses. As well, medical uses require larger parking requirements per square foot of building area (based on the number of practitioners.) A Planned Unit Development (PUD) will be required as an implementation measure of this Plan for the Village Core and is discussed more fully in Chapter 7. The Planned Unit Development will need to establish an upper limit for food-service to ensure that the ultimate combination of uses does not exceed available parking capacity.

The market study indicated office use was the weakest potential commercial use and suggested that office use comprise a relatively small percentage of the total commercial use. As part of the implementation of this Plan, the required Planned Unit Development (PUD) shall specify a limit for new office uses.

In order to respond to the economic report conclusions, the Village Core must include an anchor store (such as a specialty grocery store) of no more than 15,000 square feet in size for a new freestanding building or 17,500 square feet for reuse of the Antique Barn building. In order to reinforce the Plan goal of attracting small-scale businesses to the area, other freestanding individual retail uses will generally not be allowed if they exceed 7,500 square feet in size.

## RESIDENTIAL USES

Residential uses developed in conjunction with commercial uses enhance the economic viability of commercial uses. Having people living in the Village helps create a more vibrant and livable community. New housing is clearly indicated as a component of new development in the Village Core.

Recognizing that the amount of new residential development must be limited so as not to overwhelm the Village commercial activities, this Plan limits the number of new residential units in the Village Core to not exceed 63 units (this figure includes transitional residential units at the north of the Village Core). As well, the total unit sizes should not exceed 50% of the square footage of the mixed-use buildings so that they do not overwhelm the scale of the commercial uses in the Village.

The Village Core is adjacent to an established Urban Low density residential neighborhood to the north. In order to provide an orderly transition from this area to the commercial areas in the Village Core, the existing area designated Urban Medium density residential on the north side of Granite Way will remain residential and, in addition, a portion of the area on the south side of Granite Way (at the corner with Cathedral Drive) may be used for exclusive Urban High density residential purposes.

Like all projects containing residential development, residences built in the Village Core will be required to meet the housing affordability requirements of the County. An allowance for

clustering required affordable units may be considered as part of a Planned Unit Development application for the Village Core.

## KEY HISTORIC STRUCTURES

As noted previously, the Village Core was the site of lumber milling and several apple processing and packing operations. One building from the area's past use of apple processing remains: the Apple Barn at the corner of Trout Gulch Road and Cathedral Drive (given an historic rating of NR-3—a designation that recognizes its nomination by the County for national designation). Also located in the Village Core is the Bayview Hotel (rated NR-1 - a nationally recognized structure) and the old Aptos Firehouse/VFW Hall just west of the Bayview Hotel (rated NR-5 - of local interest).

It is envisioned that the Apple Barn could be used as an anchor store. This Plan envisions that the Apple Barn will be relocated to allow its presence on the Village Common and properly interact with the other new buildings. Any such movement will likely require some reconstruction. Because it is an historic resource of significance, any movement, exterior change, or reconstruction of the Apple Barn will require special review and approval by the County's Historic Resources Commission. Available technical information suggests that a minor change in location will not adversely affect the significance of the Antique Barn, given the condition of the surrounding setting. The Plan assumes that the small warehouse, a non-historic building adjacent to the Apple Barn, will be demolished. Any exterior changes must be sensitive to the historic significance and architectural features of the building and any relocation must follow the Secretary of the

Interior standards for relocation such that the NR 3 rating of the Apple Barn is not compromised.

To facilitate the new north-south street and the development of additional buildings, the historic Aptos Firehouse/VFW Hall will need to be relocated within the Village Plan area. Technical studies have determined that a portion of the rear of the building has been added since its period of significance. This Plan assumes that this newer area will be removed to restore the structure to its more original size. Any exterior changes must be sensitive to the historic significance and architectural features of the building and any relocation must follow the Secretary of the Interior standards for relocation such that the NR 5 rating is not compromised. If relocated, the building must be located on a prominent street within the Village and present to the street in its current narrow-side configuration. Before moving this building, the County's Historic Resources Commission must approve the relocation and associated reconstruction work.

Finally, given the highest rating of historic significance assigned to the Bayview Hotel, any new structures built adjacent to that site must be reviewed by the Historic Resources Commission to ensure that they do not compromise the historic context of this very important historic resource and centerpiece to the character of the Village.

Figure 10 illustrates in one place the key elements proposed by this Chapter for the Village Core. In addition to new roadways and private and public open spaces, it suggests the likely relocation of

historic structures and possible footprints for new residential, commercial and mixed-use buildings. Figure 16 in Chapter 6 provides more detailed requirements for these possible buildings.

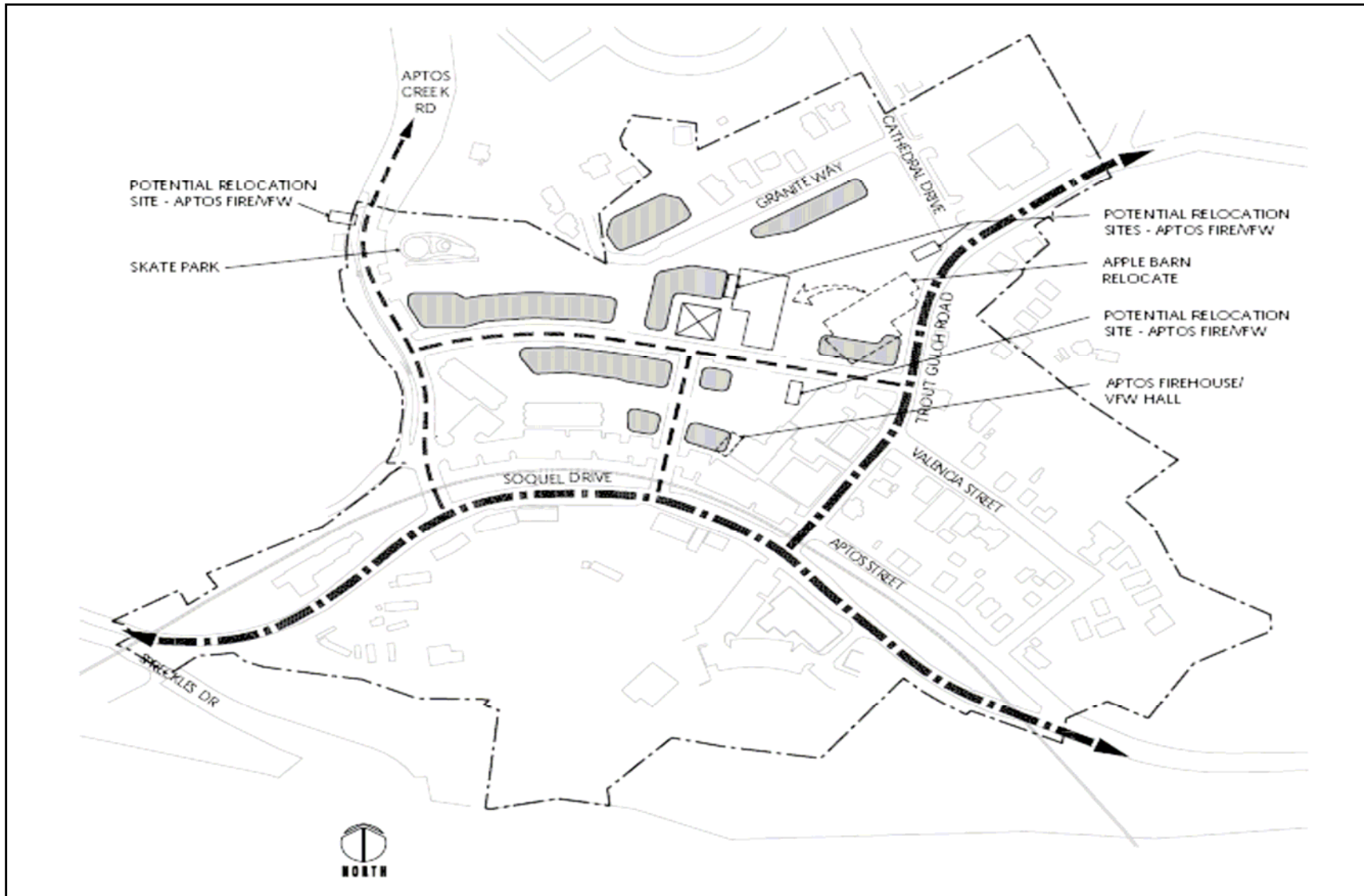


FIGURE 10: VILLAGE CORE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

## CHAPTER 5: INFRASTRUCTURE

The infrastructure in the Village is already inadequate in many ways to address the needs of existing development. Currently residents and business owners and customers are dealing with the impacts of outdated infrastructure - whether in the form of traffic congestion, inadequate drainage systems or parking shortages. Therefore, it is critical that any new Plan for the Village carefully review needed infrastructure—not only to address current needs, but also to address additional demand created by new development.

The projects envisioned by this Plan will require a wide range of infrastructure improvements to the Village area, including traffic improvements, expanded customer, resident and employee parking, improved drainage, sewage and water distribution systems, and park and open space amenities. This section of the Plan addresses those improvements and how to finance them. Without a clear plan for needed improvements and a means to finance them, as has happened in past planning efforts, this Plan will not be realized.

### **ROADWAY & TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS**

As stated previously, this Plan requires the construction of new roadways to serve the Village, including a new east-west roadway north of Soquel Drive, a north-south roadway connecting Soquel Drive to the new east-west roadway, and changes to Granite Way and Aptos Creek Road. To address current traffic congestion and

the additional traffic anticipated from new development in the Village, several traffic studies have been completed over the years to identify the proper level of traffic improvements that need to be included in the Plan to address traffic impacts. Those additional improvements include the following:

- The installation of traffic signals at the Soquel Drive-Trout Gulch intersection, including a left-turn lane on westbound Soquel Drive at Post Office Drive;
- Installation of traffic signals at the Soquel Drive-Aptos Creek Road intersection, including a left-turn lane on eastbound Soquel Drive at Aptos Creek Road;
- Modification of signal phasing to provide permissive left-turn phasing for Aptos Rancho Road, located outside of Aptos Village (required by the traffic study).
- Installation of an exclusive right-turn lane with storage length of at least 300 feet plus transition on eastbound Soquel Drive at the Soquel Drive-State Park-Sunset Way intersection, located outside of Aptos Village (required by the traffic study). Since the installation of a right-turn lane has right-of-way issues on the southwest corner of the intersection if ideal land widths are used, narrower lane widths are recommended.

Additionally, the County and future developers will need to work with the owner of the rail line through the Village to address safety concerns related to the current and proposed railroad crossings.

While Soquel Drive is a major arterial in the Aptos area, it is only a 50-foot wide right-of-way. The narrowness of the right-of-way presents a challenge for providing the required and desired feature upgrades to this major road. As illustrated in Figure 11A, it is envisioned that Soquel Drive will be improved with 10-11' travel lanes, left turn pockets at Soquel-Aptos Creek Road, Soquel-Trout

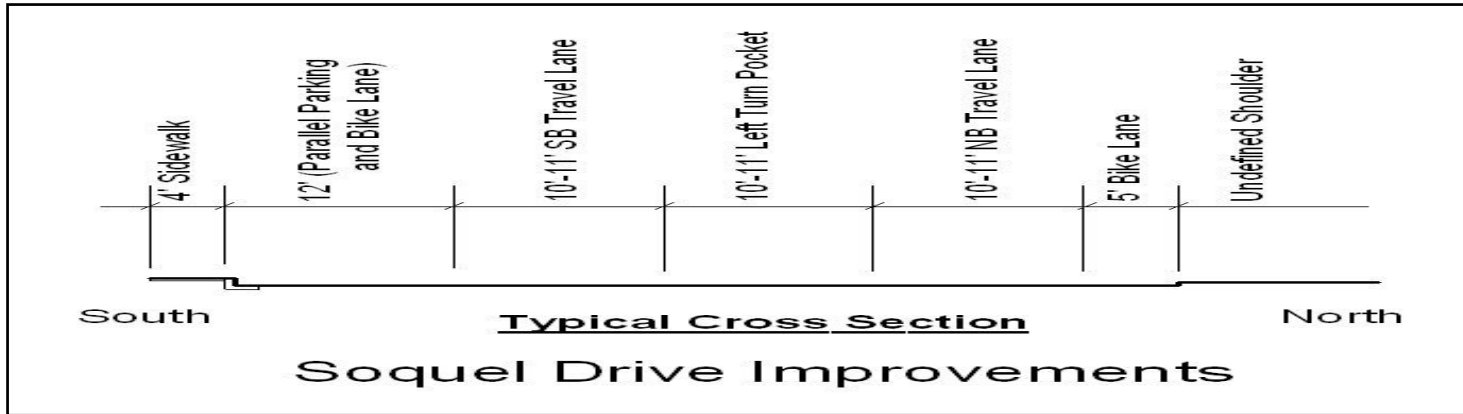
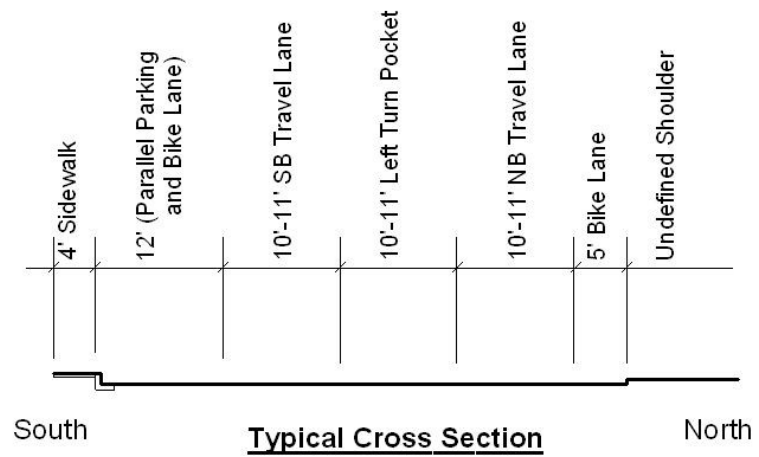
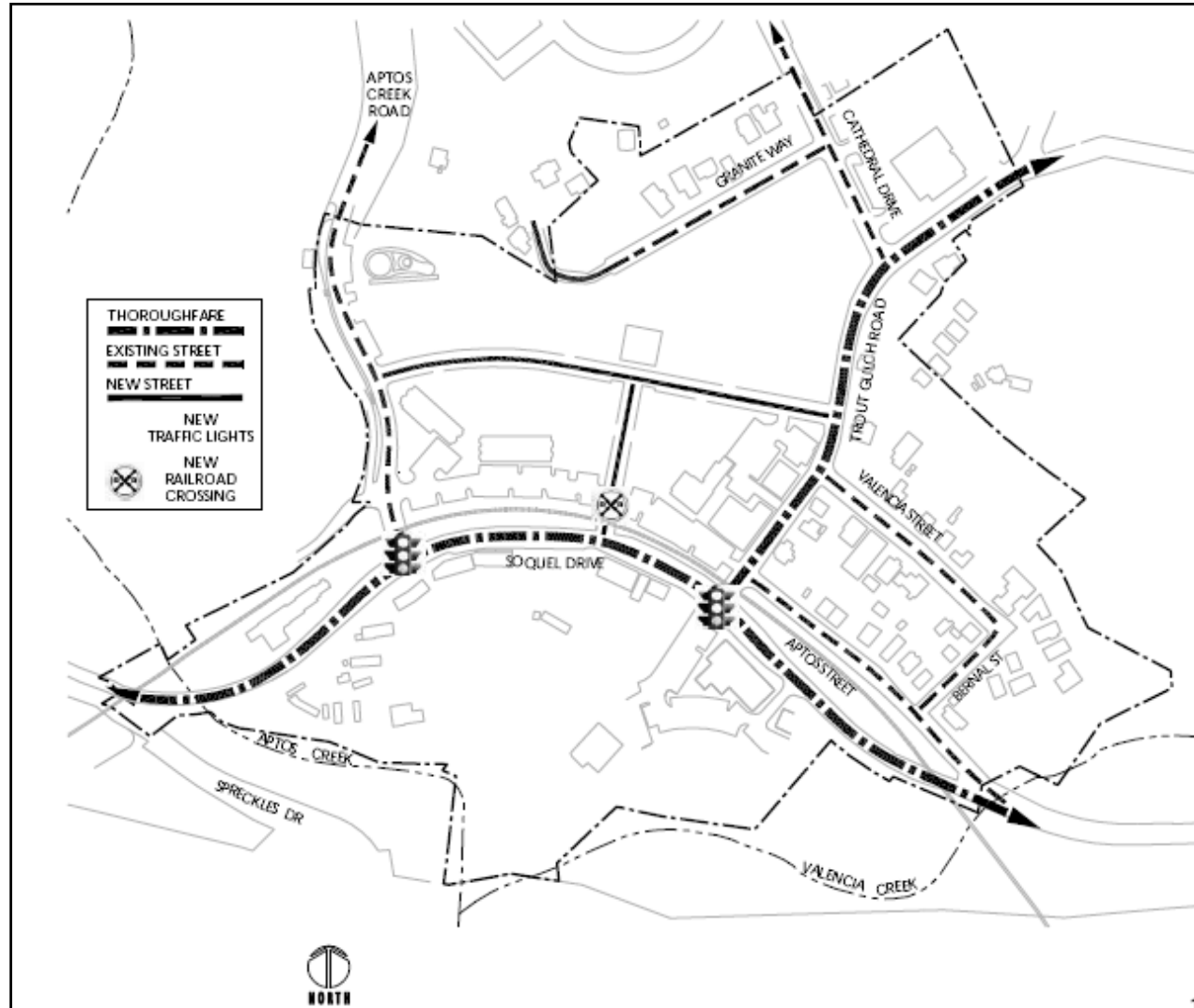


FIGURE 11A: SOQUEL DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS



**FIGURE 11B: TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS & NEW ROADWAYS, INCLUDING INTERSECTIONS, SIGNALS, & RR XING IMPROVEMENTS**

## **SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS**

Safe movement of pedestrians from one end of the Village to the other is a critical ingredient to the success of the Village Plan. Without improvements, the older part of the Village and the area of new development will never function as one integral Village area. Soquel Drive serves as the single biggest impediment to pedestrian access throughout the Village. Crossing this busy street can be hazardous. Pedestrian access into and out of the Village is also constrained by the lack of sidewalks at the railroad overpasses on Soquel Drive at each end of the Village. Finally, all the streets within the Village have gaps in the sidewalk system.

Making the Village pedestrian friendly is an important Village Plan goal. New development will be required to create a network of sidewalks that provide for pedestrian connectivity. The elements of a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood include:

- Sidewalks along the edge of all streets, where feasible, and along all building frontages.
- Sidewalk widths that are comfortable for walking two or three people abreast.
- Sidewalks within parking areas and connecting parking areas to street frontages.
- Mid-block sidewalks that connect to parking located at mid-block.
- Barrier-free crosswalks with traffic controls, where possible.
- Pedestrian amenities such as benches, lights, trash receptors and landscaping.
- Shading for principal sidewalks with street trees, awnings, canopies and arcades.

It is critical that most of these improvements be installed concurrently with the private commercial and residential improvements, particularly the crossings of Soquel Drive.

## **BUS & BIKEWAY IMPROVEMENTS**

Bus service is currently provided to the area from Routes 54 and 71 that run between Santa Cruz and Watsonville along Soquel Drive and Freedom Boulevard.

Bicycle lanes exist along parts of Soquel Drive and Trout Gulch Road, but do not connect Aptos Village with other parts of Aptos to the east and west due to the narrowing of Soquel Drive at the two railroad overpasses at each end of the Village on Soquel Drive.

Needed bike improvements include better signage at the junction of Soquel Drive and Trout Gulch Road and bike racks in the commercial areas.

Bus stops will be improved with turnouts, shelters and connecting sidewalks and other pedestrian improvements.

Bus stop alternative locations are illustrated in Figure 12.

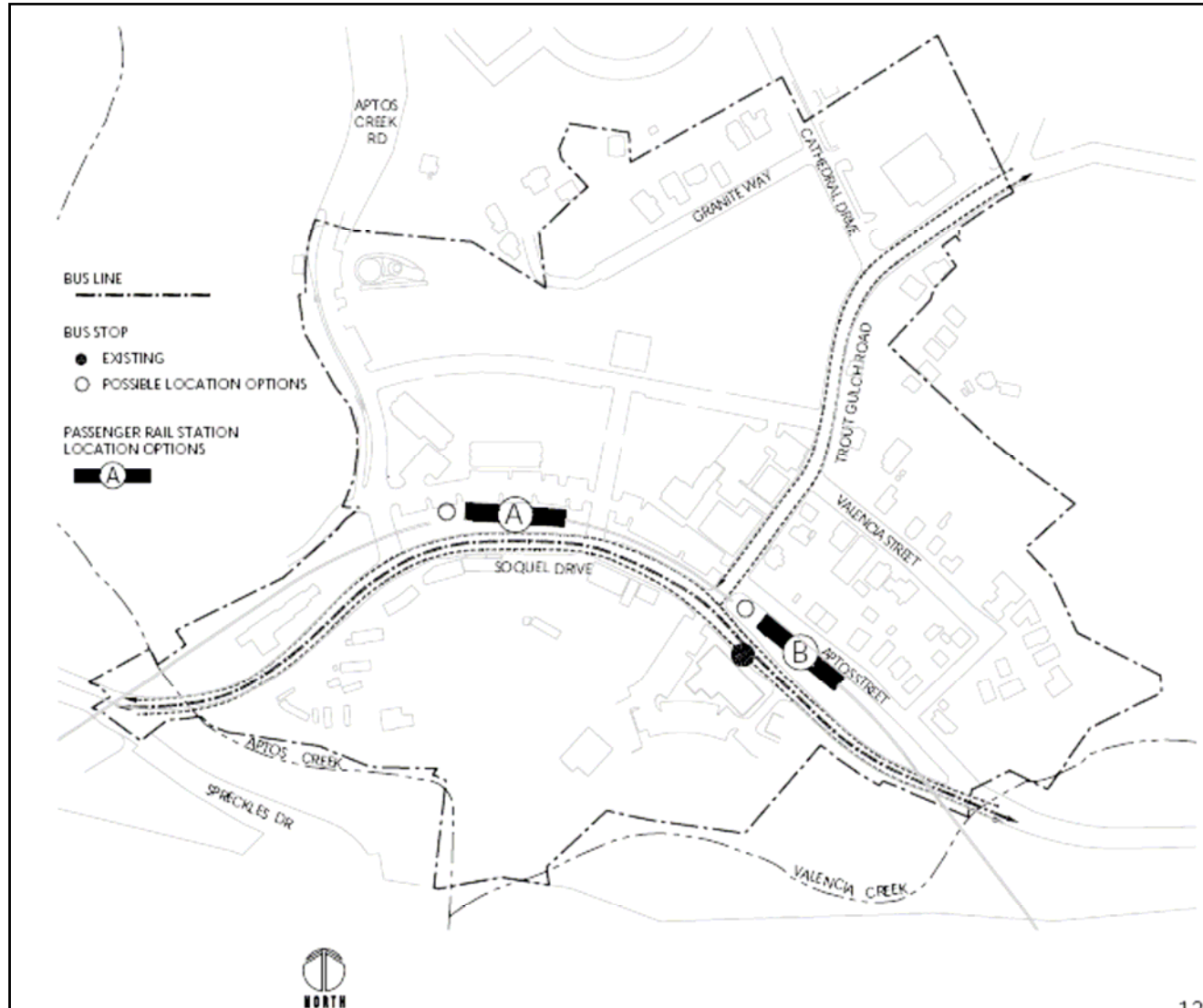


FIGURE 12: BUS AND RAILROAD OPTIONS

## RAILWAY LINKS

For many years there has been community-wide discussion about the potential for public ownership of the rail system and the potential for someday having a passenger rail system serving the area. While it is premature to assume that there will be passenger rail service, it is prudent to accommodate the potential for such a plan to occur in the future. Therefore, the Plan identifies two alternate areas to be set aside for locating passenger-loading areas should passenger rail service or a tourist trolley be provided in the future. Both locations A and B are 40' wide and 200' long and bisected by the railroad tracks. Both locations are well connected to the Village by sidewalks. These are illustrated in Figure 12.

## VEHICLE PARKING

Existing parking in the entire Village includes about 140 spaces on the street and 375 spaces in parking lots for a total of about 515 spaces. The existing Village Core includes 145 parking spaces in parking lots. It should be noted that this does not include the informal parking that currently is used in the core area - along the north side of Soquel Drive and at the entrance to Nisene Marks Park. As well, these parking tabulations do not include the off-street parking spaces that serve existing single-family residences on Granite Way, Valencia, Bernal and Aptos Street.

The existing parking supply is poorly distributed and badly connected by driveways and sidewalks to the businesses served. Future parking must not only provide all parking required for new

uses, but also ensure that any existing parking lost to street improvements be taken into account when sizing the new parking areas.

New off-street parking spaces must be well located to conveniently serve adjacent commercial and residential uses and be well connected by driveways and sidewalks. Additionally, some 80 to 85 more parking spaces will be provided on the new streets.

The Planned Unit Development (PUD) will address the parking needs of the Village Core and require adequate on and off-site parking be provided in the range of 400-500 spaces dependant on the ultimate amount of new commercial space, residential units and intensity of commercial uses. In addition, parking spaces for the future skatepark and parking for users of Nisene Mark State Park will be addressed in the PUD. Parking requirements for other areas of Aptos Village are found in Chapter 4.

It is also important to recognize that future County-sponsored improvements along the north side of Soquel Drive could reduce the number of informal parking spaces. This could occur with or without the additional development in the Village Core, given the need to formalize public transit pullouts and related pedestrian access in the area. As well, installation of an eastbound left turn pocket at the Soquel Drive/Aptos Creek Road intersection will require reconfiguring parking at the commercial property (APN 41-561-04) at the northwest corner of that intersection (currently Britannia Arms).

## **WATER DISTRIBUTION**

Currently, water distribution lines in Aptos Creek Road, Soquel Drive, Trout Gulch Road, Cathedral Drive and Granite Way provide water to serve the Village's needs. The system is owned and operated by the Soquel Creek Water District (SCWD). However, with the exception of the extension along Granite Way, the interior portion of development area lacks any existing facilities. Water mains are generally 6-inch to 8-inch diameter. Existing SCWD wells are located in the "flatland" area south of Soquel Drive and along the westerly side of Aptos Creek Road. Through discussions with personnel at both the SCWD and Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District, it has been determined that the existing water system is adequate to meet fire flow demands as well as the proposed Village Plan needs.

In conjunction with new development, new water lines will be installed throughout the development area. Additionally, SCWD has identified a potential need for a well site within the Village Plan area.

## **WATER SUPPLY**

The issue of the source of water supply is a different issue than how it will be distributed. Over the years, the groundwater basin that serves as the principal source of supply for the Soquel Creek Water District, has reached or exceeded its safe yield. As a result, the District has implemented a number of measures to ensure the protection of the water supply for current and future customers. In particular, they have instituted a "water offset" program that

requires developers to retrofit existing water consuming fixtures on other properties in an effort to create "new" water to meet the needs of the new development. In fact, the program requires the offset to exceed the projected water demand for the new development (currently 1.2 to 1.) Any development in the Village will be subject to these or subsequent requirements adopted by the Soquel Creek Water District in addition to using drought-tolerant landscaping.

## **SEWER SERVICES**

Much like the existing water system, sanitary sewer mains exist around the perimeter of the development area with short extensions along Granite Way and from Trout Gulch Road to serve the Bay View Hotel and surrounding buildings. The system is part of the Santa Cruz County Sanitation District system.

An 8-inch line runs north along Aptos Creek Road approximately 600 feet and will provide connection points for extensions into the westerly portion of the development area. The 8-inch line ties into the system in Soquel Drive flowing westerly toward Spreckles Drive.

Waste from the easterly half of the site as well as surrounding neighborhoods is collected in Trout Gulch Road. From there an 8-inch line carries it east along Valencia Street, then Bernal Street to Soquel Drive from where it leaves the Village heading easterly.

All waste from the Village area is sent to a pump station near the beach in Rio del Mar flats, where it will be piped in existing mains northward to the main sewage treatment plant in Santa Cruz. The

Santa Cruz County Sanitation District has conducted video inspection of the existing systems within the entire Village Plan area and has identified the need to replace some of the mains. These improvements will be made by the County prior to or in conjunction with any other infrastructure improvements made in conformance with the adopted Village Plan.

## **STORM DRAINAGE**

Presently, the Village area has very little in the way of storm drain improvements other than a system in Trout Gulch Road at the intersection of Cathedral Drive. That system conveys storm water easterly to Valencia Creek. Elsewhere throughout the Village storm runoff is handled by surface means in an informal and unregulated fashion with about 2/3 draining to Valencia Creek and about 1/3 draining to Aptos Creek. Soils behind the existing buildings along the northerly side of Soquel Drive are frequently saturated during the winter season, resulting in several areas of standing water. In the lower regions around Aptos Station and the Bay View Hotel, runoff from the parking areas is generally directed toward the northerly side of the railroad tracks paralleling Soquel Drive where the water tends to pond in the winter months before flowing into Aptos Creek.

Future development must provide engineered drainage improvements that will maintain or improve pre-development release rates and include an engineered system of inlets and storm drains designed to convey peak runoff to designated points of discharge near Aptos Creek and Valencia Creek. Detention basins, bioswales, rain gardens and other similar “Best Management

Practices” will be required to maintain or improve pre-development release rates, maintain water quality and supply and protect the two creeks from hydrologic disturbances. Future developers of the Village Core area will be required to coordinate drainage infrastructure and management.

Figure 13 illustrates the overall infrastructure improvements that would be required in the Village area to accommodate current and future developments needs.

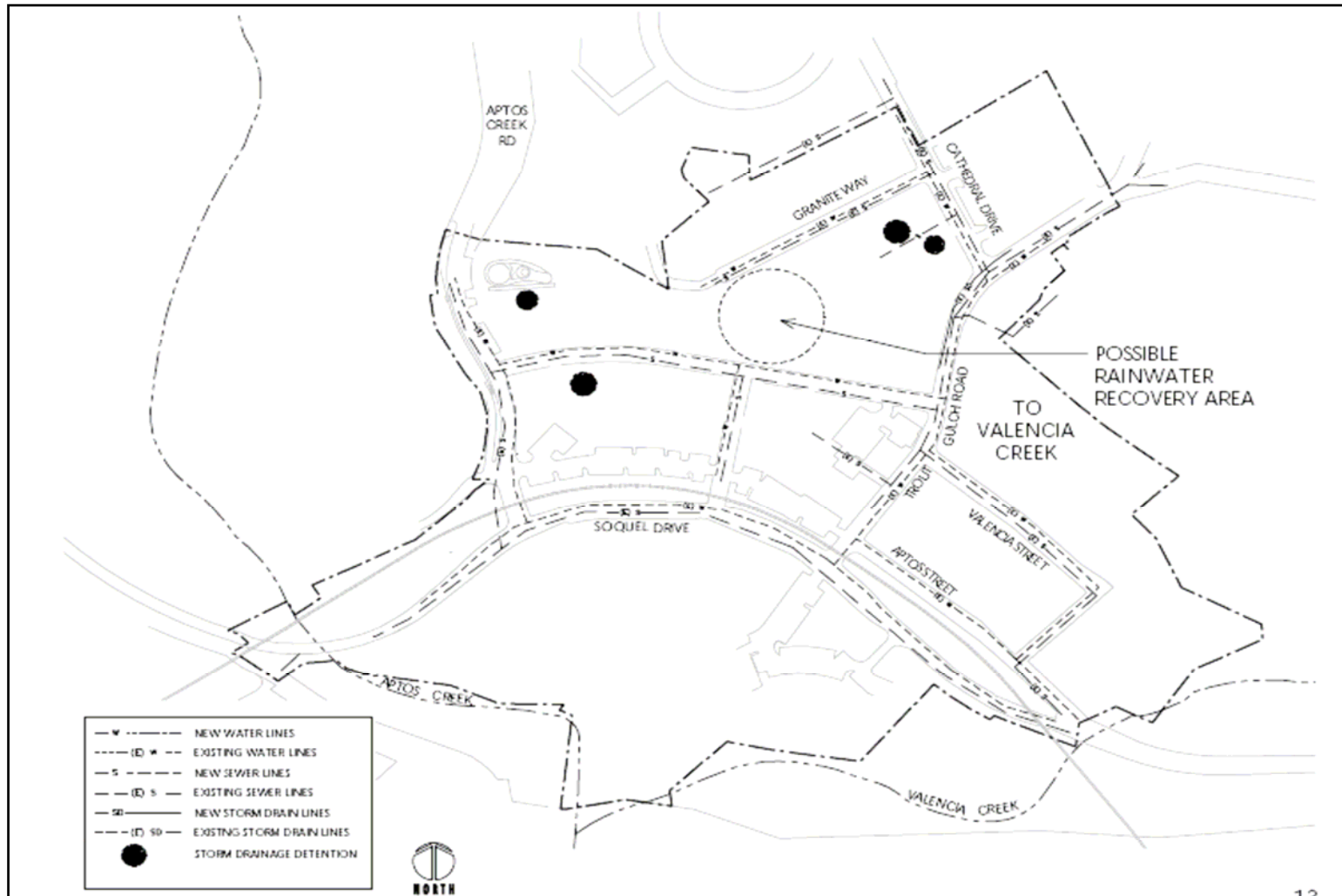


FIGURE 13: INFRASTRUCTURE

## **INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING**

Providing financing for the scale of infrastructure needed to make this plan possible is a major challenge. Preliminary estimates suggest costs for infrastructure improvements at approximately \$10 million (in 2007 dollars). The majority of these costs will need to be borne by future developers, under the guidance of this Village Plan. It will be critical to ensure that the Plan provide adequate development potential on vacant properties to allow developers to shoulder these substantial costs. It is also appropriate for the County to play a role in financing and constructing some of these improvements.

This Plan envisions that the Village Core be developed as a whole, although various aspects of the development may be phased. As part of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) for the Village Core, the developers may request that the Board of Supervisors direct the use of impact fees to particular County projects in the Village or reduce all or a portion of the applicant's impact fees in recognition of other off-site improvements that they will construct in and near the Village.

Design and construction of a new east-west street, and new north-south street connecting Soquel Drive to the new east-west street by the developer will qualify for fee offsets.

The following off-site improvements qualify for fee offsets, based on total costs:

- Design and construction of drainage systems outside the boundaries of the Village Core.
- Although not offsite, the skatepark donation (dedication) to the County.
- Modification of signal phasing to provide permissive left-turn phasing for Aptos Rancho Road, located outside of Aptos Village.
- Installation of an exclusive right-turn lane with storage length of at least 300 feet plus transition on eastbound Soquel Drive at the Soquel Drive-State Park-Sunset Way intersection, located outside of Aptos Village. Since the installation of a right-turn lane has right-of-way issues on the southwest corner of the intersection if ideal land widths are used, narrower lane widths are recommended.

This Plan envisions that the following improvements will ultimately be constructed by the County, as part of the overall improvements to the Village area:

- Traffic signals and westbound left turn lane onto Post Office Drive for Trout Gulch/Soquel Drive intersection;
- Traffic signals and eastbound left turn lane for Aptos Creek Road/Soquel Drive intersection;
- Cost-share improvements to Aptos Creek Road roadway with future developers;
- Railroad safety barriers where they are required for Aptos Creek Road and Trout Gulch Road railroad crossings.
- Sewer mainline replacements and upgrades along Soquel Drive, Trout Gulch Road, Aptos Street, Bernal Street, Valencia Street and across the northern portions of APNs 41-011-32 and 041-011-34.
- Roadside improvements along the north side of Soquel Drive (between Aptos Creek Road and Trout Gulch), Aptos Creek

Road, and Trout Gulch (except the frontage of the new development areas).

- Pedestrian improvements across the Soquel Drive Bridge and along Trout Gulch to the Valencia Elementary School will occur at a later date, depending on available funding.

Based on the most recent cost estimates, the developer would be responsible for approximately 52% of the overall infrastructure costs, or about \$4,200,000. The County's share (in 2007 dollars) would be about \$3,750,000 which would need to be financed through development impact fee revenues, grants, or other sources. The County's CIP should be updated to include the County's share of improvements. It is possible that some components of the infrastructure improvements that are the responsibility of the County could lag behind the development, if adequate public funding sources cannot be identified; however, needed improvements to the Soquel Drive-Aptos Creek Road and Soquel Drive-Trout Gulch Road intersections must be installed prior to occupancy of new buildings in the Village Core. The Planned Unit Development will address the phasing of and responsibility for infrastructure improvements in more detail.



## CHAPTER 6: DESIGN

The purpose of this Chapter is to define in more detail the design requirements for the Village area and for the new development area in the Village Core.

Residents of Aptos have experienced numerous proposals for new developments in the area over the years. For a number of reasons, property owner cooperation and financial feasibility has faded over time. The point of this Chapter is to clearly define the foundation design concepts that will be expected of anyone attempting to implement this Plan -- whether next year or ten years from now.

### UNIFYING THE VILLAGE

Before engaging on the details for new possible developments in the Village Core, it is important to first establish key design elements that will serve to unify the overall Village area. Because it is important for the entire commercial area in the Village to function as one cohesive area, with the benefits of the new development experienced by the entire business district, it is important to unify the area with regard to a number of key features, including:

- Entry signage for the Village,
- Common private business signage standards,
- Common street lighting,
- Integrated pedestrian improvements, including key connections across Soquel Drive,

- Access from public transit to all areas of the business district,
- Common street side landscape features, where possible, and
- Common architectural design standards among the commercial buildings.

These are discussed in more detail in the following sections of the Plan.

### SIGNAGE

#### ENTRY SIGNAGE

Clearly defined complementary entry signs for the Village should be provided along Soquel Drive at the eastern and western entries to the Village, as well as entering the Village from Trout Gulch Road.

#### PRIVATE BUSINESS SIGNAGE

Private business signage throughout the older and newer sections of the Village should reinforce the pedestrian character of the area. While harmony of signage is desirable, uniformity stifles the uniqueness of the Village; therefore, several types of acceptable signage are allowed.

The following are the sign standards for the Village Plan area:

- The maximum sign area is limited to ½ square foot (72 square inches) per lineal foot of the frontage of the business. Sign area includes:
  - The area within a well-defined sign border;
  - On a sign without a defined border, the area within the perimeter which encloses the letters, symbols or logo.

- More than one sign per business is allowed as long as the maximum sign area is not exceeded.

Allowable sign types include (also see Figure 14):

1. Wall signs
2. Blade signs: Blade signs may extend out from the façade or hang from porch and arcade soffits. There must be at least 7 feet of headroom to the bottom of the sign. The sign is limited to 24" extending from a wall or hanging from a soffit. Soffit signs must have a 6" gap between the sign and the soffit. One blade sign is allowed per business
3. A-Frame (Sandwich Board) sign: (one maximum per business) not exceeding 24" in width and 36" in height located inside a dooryard and not impeding pedestrian traffic. The sign shall be removed when the business is not open.
4. Window Signs: Window signs are allowed in storefront windows except in any portion of the window between 3 feet and 6 feet above the sidewalk. Window sign area

must not exceed 20% of the glass area of the window in which it is located.

5. Monument Signs
6. One monument sign may be allowed for those buildings facing Soquel Drive or Trout Gulch Road.

Prohibited sign types include:

1. Roof signs
2. A-Frame (Sandwich Board) signs located outside of a dooryard or impeding pedestrian traffic.
3. Monument signs for buildings not facing Soquel Drive or Trout Gulch Road.

### SIGN LIGHTING

Wall, blade and window signs may be lit from above. Monument signs may be lit from below. Internally lit and box signs are not allowed. Neon signs are not allowed; however, accents are allowed.

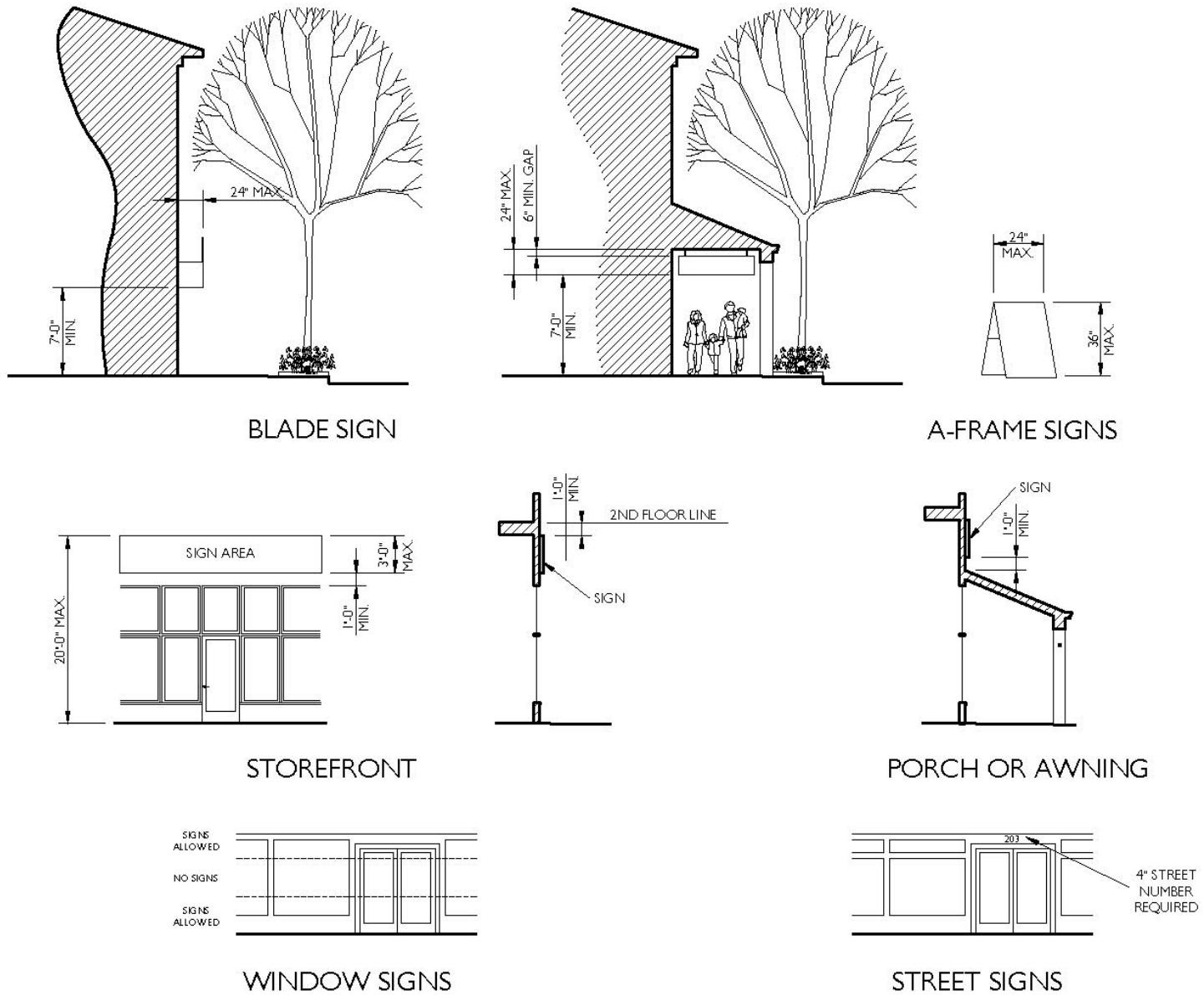


FIGURE 14: SIGNS

## STREET LIGHTING

Street lighting in the Village should be consistent and complement the character of the architecture of the Village. Lighting should illuminate the street and not upper-story residential units or the night sky.

It will be important to establish a funding mechanism for maintaining the new street lighting, ideally funded by merchants in both the established and new business areas.

## STREET FURNITURE

Attractive street furniture can serve as jewelry to a neighborhood's appearance. Benches, waste receptacles, landscaping grates and similar items should be selected for both their utility and enhancement of the architectural character of the Village.

## INTEGRATED PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS & DISABLED ACCESS

As was already illustrated in Chapter 5, sidewalks will need to create a strong pedestrian connection between the new and older portions of the Village. Additionally, it will be critical that access for persons with disabilities be provided from the new, more formal transit bus pullouts to both the established and new commercial areas of the Village.

## UNIFYING LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Since the new east-west and north-south roadways will be designed and built to include street trees and other landscaping, it will be important to provide such features, with similar drought-resistant

landscaping materials, as part of County-funded improvements along Soquel Drive, Trout Gulch Road, and Aptos Creek Road. Because the width of the right-of-way is limited in some areas, such features would only be required where adequate space exists. Additionally, it will be important to establish a funding mechanism for maintaining such landscaping, ideally funded by merchants in both the established and new business areas.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The issue of architectural design is a more delicate topic. Some would suggest that new buildings be designed to strictly conform to the predominant architectural character of the established business area. Others would argue that new structural design requirements, available materials, and the desire for providing opportunities for more diversity in architecture would lead to a lighter touch in terms of architectural standards. In fact, there is room between these two perspectives, which allows for newer buildings that meet current standards while reflecting some of the key elements of the current style buildings. The new building at the southeastern corner of the Soquel Drive/Trout Gulch intersection (APN 41-042-47) is a good example of balancing these two goals.

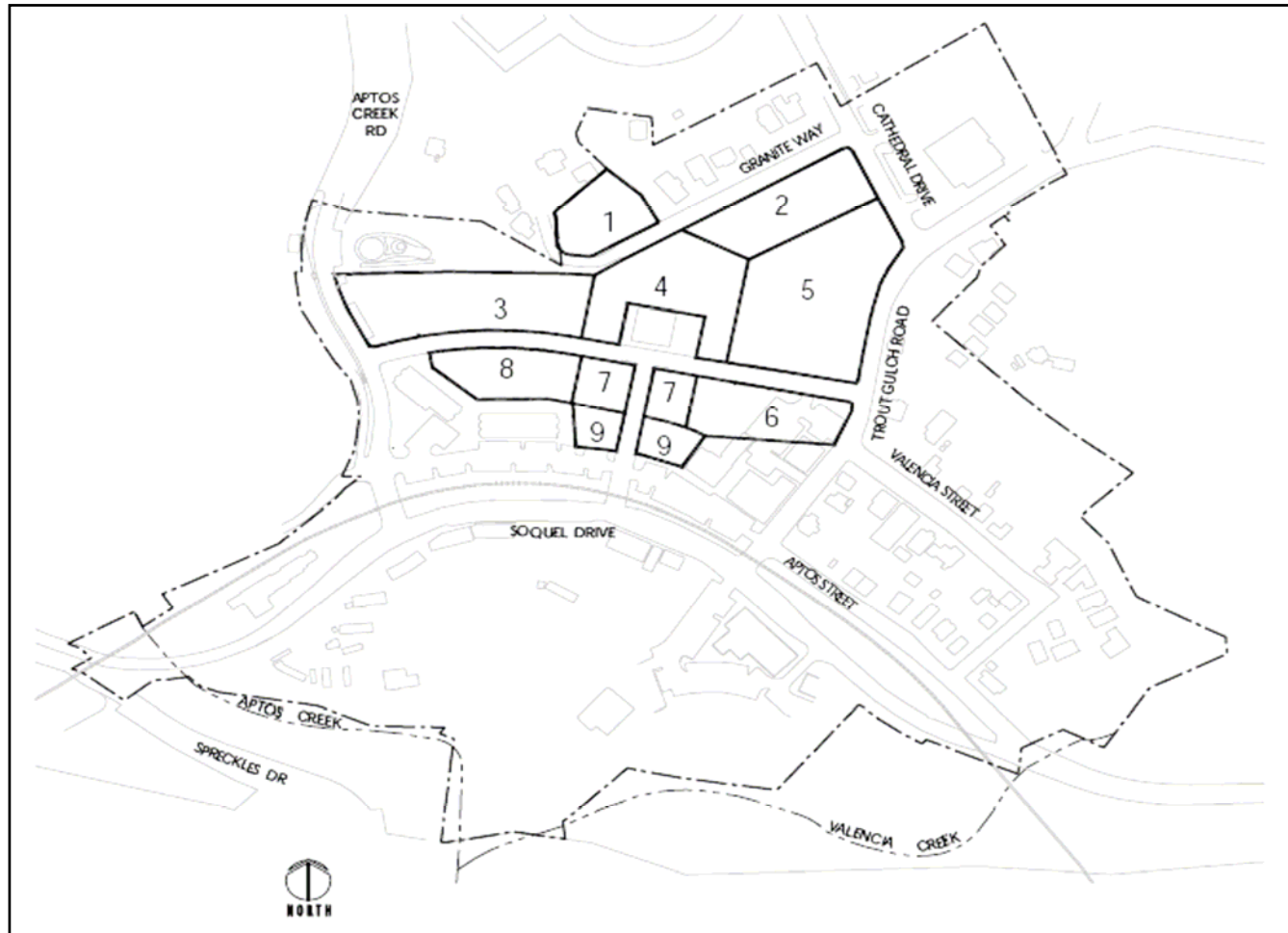
This Plan recommends that balance be extended to new buildings constructed throughout the Village area. In addition, it is required that new buildings incorporate green building principles in layout, materials and finishes. More details for the Village Core Area (Area III) are discussed in the following section.

## **NEW DEVELOPMENT AREAS**

### **DEFINING OPPORTUNITY SITES**

As was the case with the 1979 Design Framework for the Village, this Plan builds from a core framework of elements within which the various development sites become defined. These key elements include the existing and new roadways serving the area and the private and public recreational areas (Village Common and Skatepark).

Once those elements are defined, a series of possible development sites become defined. These are illustrated and numbered in Figure 15, with development potential within each site described below in Figure 16. Altogether, these sites, if developed to the maximum allowed by Figure 16, would add 75,000 gross square feet of new commercial space and 63 residential units to the Village Core area. While there may be some minor variations to what is laid out in that figure, for the purpose of this Plan, it defines the upper limit of possible development.



**FIGURE 15: MAP OF VILLAGE WITH KEY FEATURES AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY**

**FIGURE 16: DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF SITES  
(KEY TO FIGURE 15)**

Site #	Maximum Commercial Square Feet	Maximum Number of Residential Units	Maximum Number of Stories	Uses/Other Requirements
1	0	6	3	Multi-Family dwellings developed at RM-3 density. 3 stories allowed if 1 <sup>st</sup> story is used for in-grade parking.
2	0	11	2	Row-house style multi-family dwellings developed at RM-2 density. Some units must front on Cathedral Drive.
3	10,500	17	2 with lofts	Buildings must appear as 2 stories along the new east-west street frontage.
4	31,500	8	3	3-story buildings facing the Village Common must minimize shading of the Village Common, include articulation to soften the bulk of 3-story buildings and allow for a harmonious transition to buildings of fewer stories such as the Apple Barn building.
5	13,000	0	2	Design of the building, if proposed as a sub-anchor, must give the appearance of a multiple tenant building. A portion of the building must front on Trout Gulch Road. Entry and access must be from the new east-west street.
6	2,500	0	2	Building must front on the new east-west street. Parking may occur off-site through indenture. If no building is proposed for this area, the 2500 maximum square footage may be reallocated to other site(s). The rear of the Bayview Hotel property, if no building is proposed, must be improved to provide a welcoming presence along the new east-west street frontage.

Site #	Maximum Commercial Square Feet	Maximum Number of Residential Units	Maximum Number of Stories	Uses/Other Requirements
7	5,500	7	3	Buildings must front on both streets and include an articulated corner feature.
8	6,000	10	2 with lofts	Buildings must appear as 2 stories along the new east-west street frontage.
9	6,000	4	2	Buildings must present well to Soquel Drive and provide a "front" appearance on the new north-south street frontage
Totals	75,000	63		

**INITIAL DESIGN STANDARDS**

In addition to establishing size, height and uses for the various private development opportunity sites created through this Plan, it is important to establish some basic parameters for the design of the buildings located on these sites. While more detailed design standards will be established in the implementing Planned Unit Development (PUD) for this Plan, key principles can be established at this time, including:

- To encourage more opportunities for quasi-public outdoor uses, establish that the County-controlled right-of-way along the new roadways in the Village Core will only cover the curb-to-curb area, allowing for more flexible uses along the sidewalk areas and private financing for the maintenance of planters and sidewalk areas.
- To create a more pedestrian and business friendly environment, require that new buildings be built in a location close to the new street (through reduction or elimination of front yard setbacks) with off-street parking generally to the rear of buildings.
- To ensure that larger commercial uses not dominate the new development area, the PUD will establish frontage and appearance standards for anchor and sub-anchor stores.
- The architectural style of the buildings fronting the new east-west and new north-south streets shall give the impression of being constructed over a period of time, as is the case of organic main streets, rather than appearing to be matching or identical.
- To provide for an interesting variety of exterior materials and to honor the character of the current Village, a variety and mixture of exterior materials are encouraged.
- To encourage more vital activities in commercial and mixed use areas, require dooryard areas that allow for quasi-public outdoor areas in the front of businesses for street furniture and other uses (see Figure 17), wherever possible.
- To enhance the appearance of the new development areas, require privately maintained planting pockets along the new roadways (see Figure 18).

- To encourage more interest in business areas and passage to parking lots, allow arcades through commercial and mixed use buildings (see Figure 19).
- To encourage residential activity along the new roadways to enhance vitality and create a public presence 24/7, allow overhanging decks (on upper stories) or porches to intrude into traditional setback areas (see Figure 20).
- To encourage more interesting architectural texture, allow other building projections into setback areas (see Figure 20).
- To provide variety and to reduce the appearance of bulk and mass, horizontal and vertical elements shall be incorporated into both commercial and residential structures (see Figure 21).
- To provide visual interest, a variety of roof types shall be used in both commercial and residential structures.
- To provide for complementary storefronts among buildings and provide light and adequate window area, establish standards for storefronts. Awnings may be used to shield glare and provide visual interest (see Figure 22).

Signs (see text and illustrations on Pages 43-45).

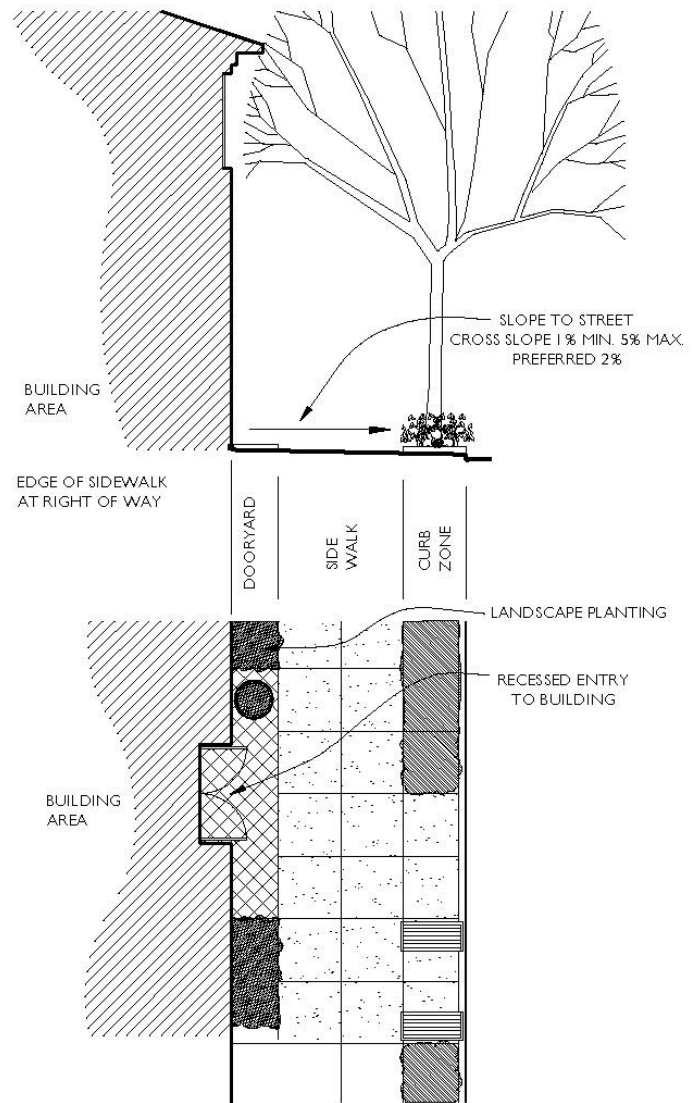
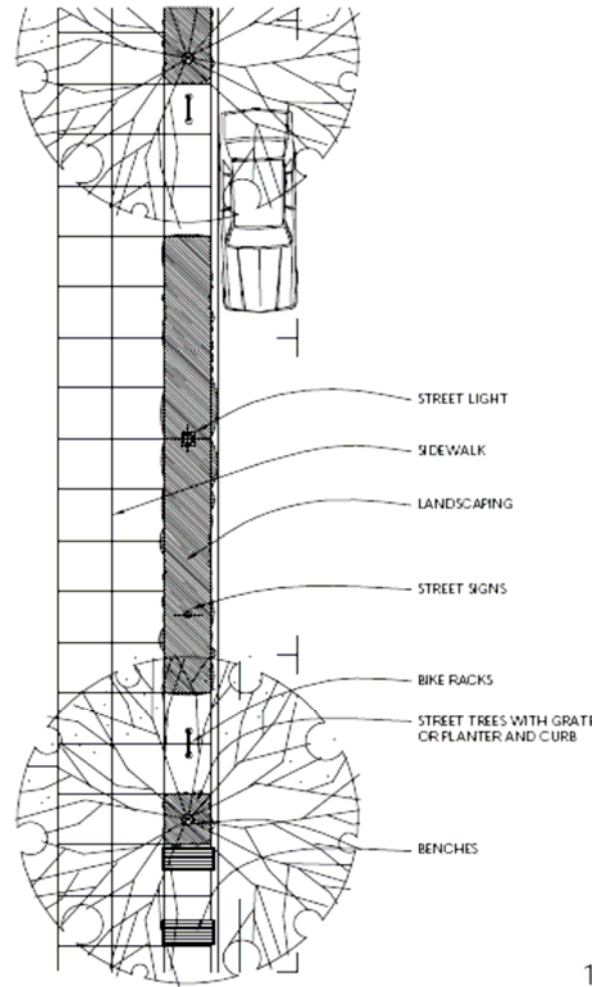


FIGURE 17: DOORYARDS



**FIGURE 18: PLANTING POCKETS ALONG ROADWAYS**

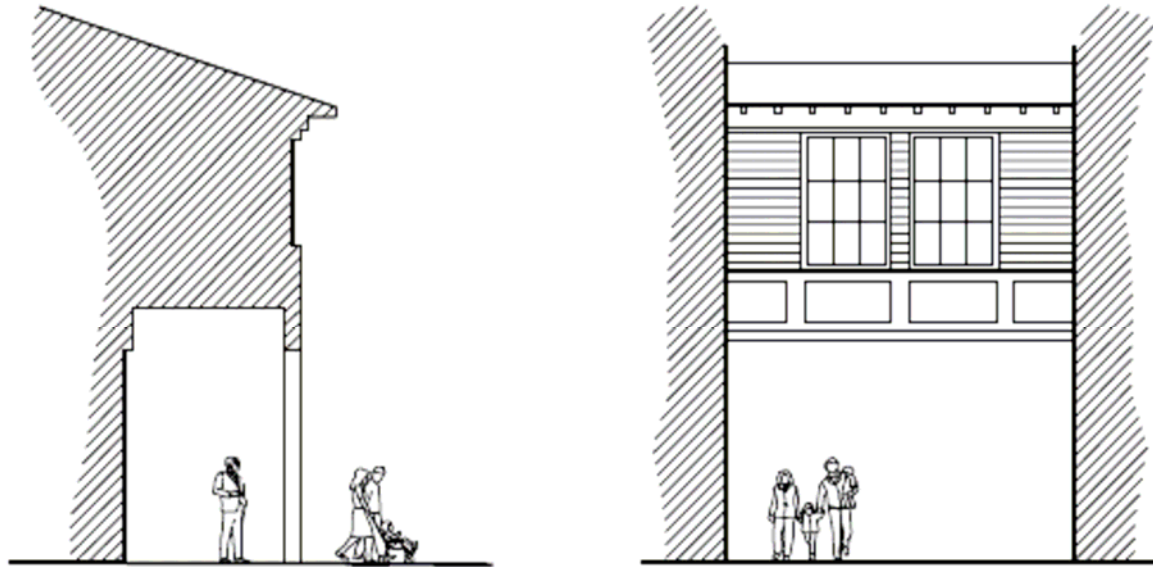


FIGURE 19: ARCADES

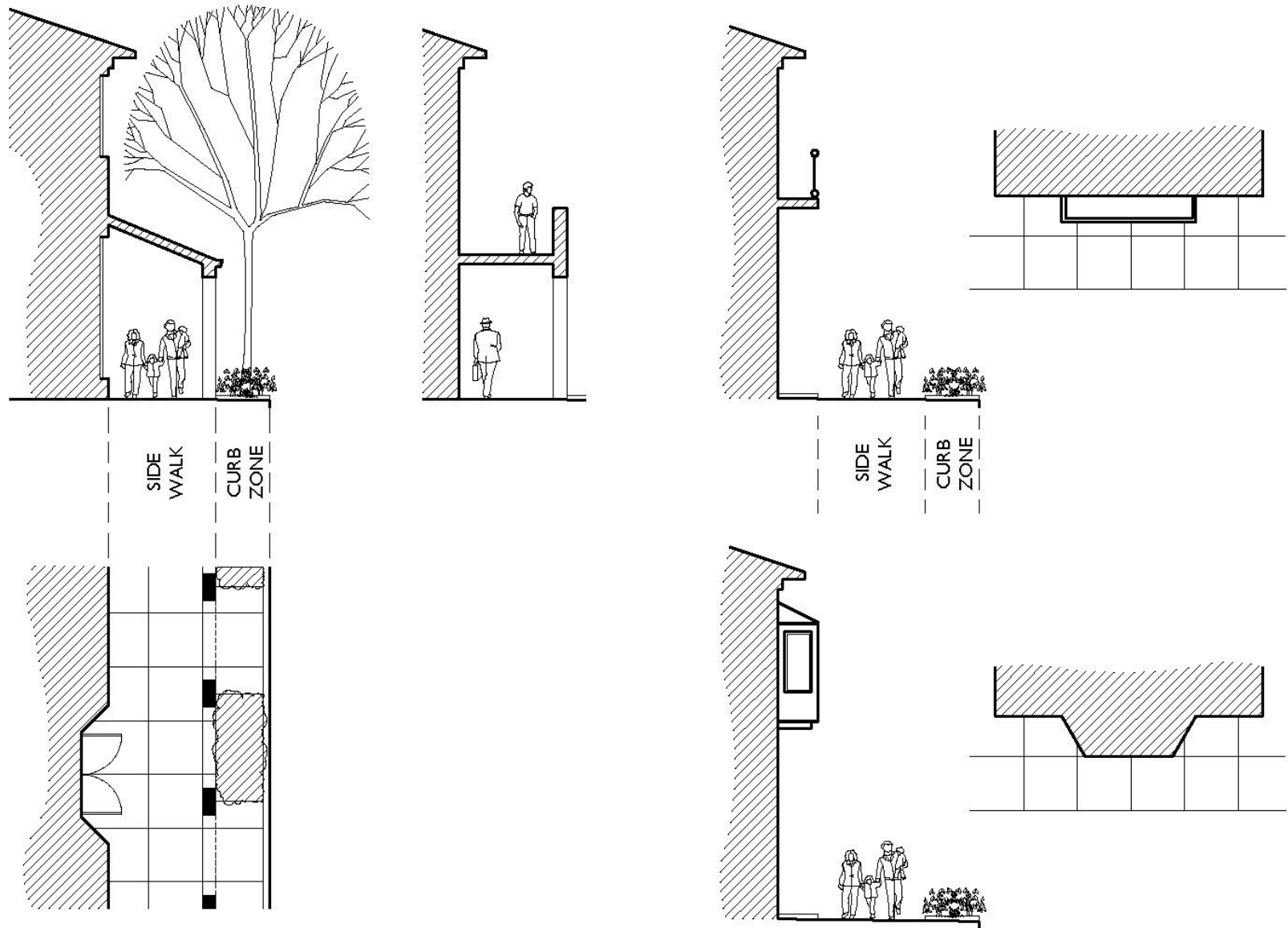
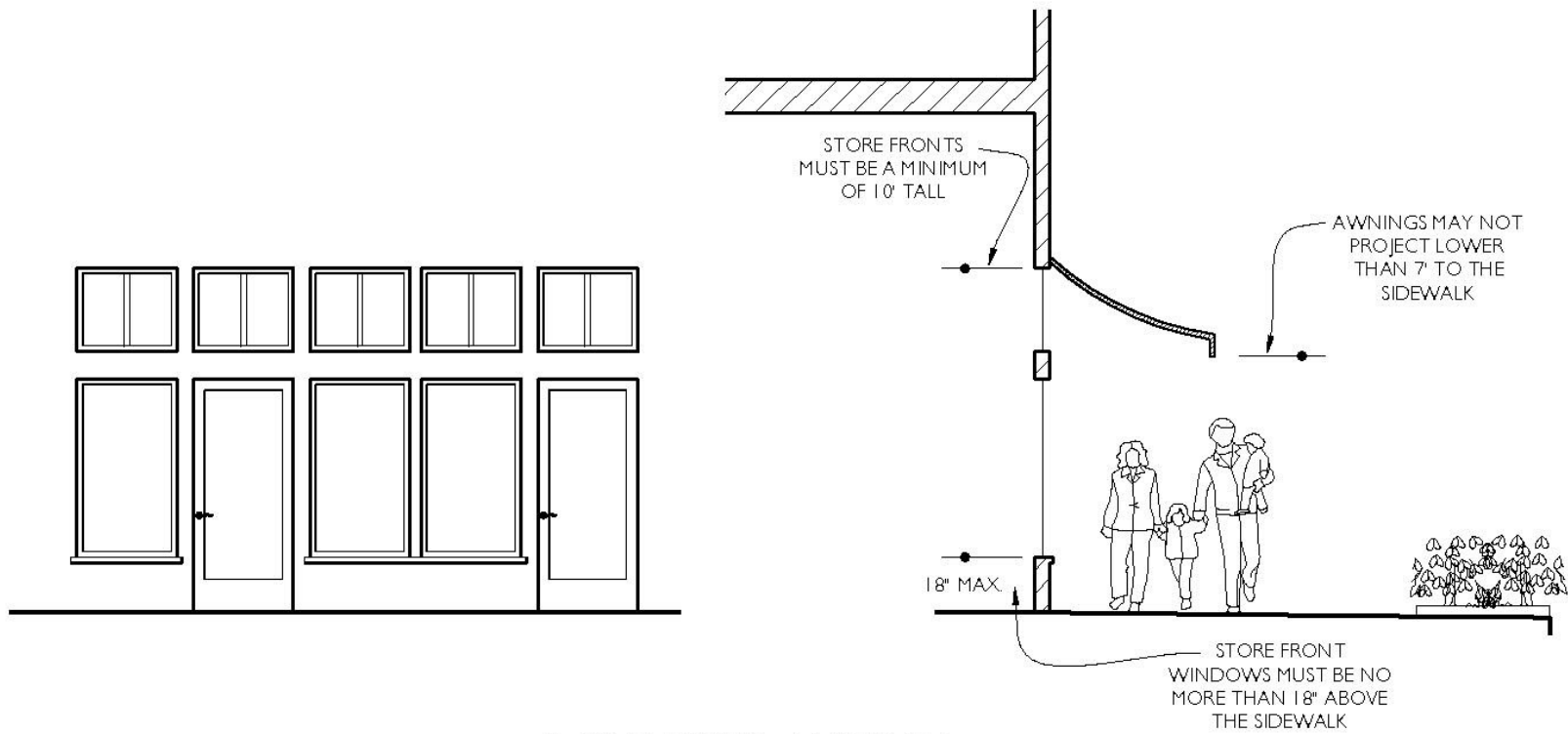


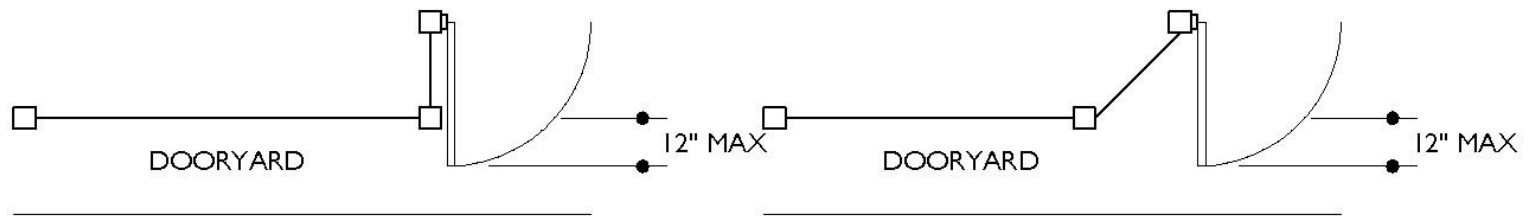
FIGURE 20: UPPER STORY PROJECTIONS



FIGURE 21: INCORPORATE HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL ELEMENTS



STORE FRONT EXAMPLE



DOORS MAY SWING OVER A DOORYARD BY NO MORE THAN 12"

FIGURE 22: STORE FRONTS



## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION & PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

For decades there has been an interest in expanding and unifying the various portions of the Aptos Village area. Building on the Aptos Village Design Framework, developed in the 1970s and modified in the 1980s, the community in 2001 came together to update that Framework and provide further details for changes in the Village area, in the form of a Village Plan. The initial stages of the associated community planning process developed a number of key goals for the Plan, including:

- Creating a Village Common at the heart of the community.
- Establishing a new east-west street to connect Trout Gulch and Aptos Creek Roads.
- Establishing a new north-south street connecting Soquel Drive to the new east-west street, intersecting at a Village Common, to provide a face of the new Village Core area to the vehicles and pedestrians using Soquel Drive.
- Defining improvement of Aptos Creek Road such that it will become a prominent entrance to Nisene Marks State Park.
- Building new housing developed as a transitional edge to the existing residential neighborhoods, with commercial and mixed commercial and residential uses in the interior of the Village.
- Defining a network of sidewalks making it pleasant to be a pedestrian in the Village.
- Requiring abundant parking, both on and off street, to make shopping convenient. To enhance the Village atmosphere, most off-street parking will be located behind buildings.
- Establishing well-landscaped streets to give the Village a pleasant and inviting ambience.

- Ensuring a mix of housing, shopping, dining, community services and employment to make the Village a colorful, friendly place and one that complements the scale of the current Village area.
- Providing a mechanism to protect the Hihn Subdivision (east of Trout Gulch Road) as a mixed-use area.
- Providing a mechanism to protect the existing business area along Soquel Drive as a vibrant and integral part of the overall commercial area in the Village.

### NEXT STEPS IN IMPLEMENTATION

The preceding pages of this Plan lay out an approach for accomplishing these goals. But it is important, given the complexities of property lines, infrastructure, and market conditions, to provide a clear path for implementing the Plan and the vision. While past efforts for expanding and revitalizing the Village have failed, key past impediments to progress can be reduced through a series of actions, including:

- The County processing amendments to the General Plan and zoning designations for areas of the Village to reinforce this Plan;
- Future developers submitting an application for a parcel reconfiguration of the Village Core properties, in cooperation with the property owners, to conform to the new roadway layout and provide appropriate frontage on the proposed new streets;
- Future developers submitting an application for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) within the Village Core. The PUD will both define what would be expected of the developers and provide certainty for the developers, in light of the substantial private

infrastructure required to implement the Plan. That PUD would be subject to public input prior to final approval by the Board of Supervisors.

- Future developers bringing forward specific development proposals to address the requirements of the PUD. These plans would also be subject to public review to ensure compliance with the Plan vision.
- Ultimately, the developer would receive permits to install required infrastructure and build commercial and residential structures in the Village, as allowed by a phasing plan.
- The County installing infrastructure—such as traffic signals and road improvements—as outlined as Chapter 5.

In order to recognize that the Village Plan addresses more than the area of new development, implementation measures should also include:

- Ensuring that key connections are made between the Village Core and the business area along Soquel Drive through pedestrian connections, common lighting and landscaping, and other features.
- Enhancing the vitality of the current business area along Soquel Drive through amending the current zoning for commercial properties to recognize those legal uses that have and will continue to provide services to the larger Aptos community.
- Amending the current zoning for the Hihn Subdivision area to allow continuation of the current mix of uses in the area.

The key steps are described in more detail below.

## RECOMMENDED LAND USE AMENDMENTS

One of the first steps to allow the Plan to proceed is putting into place the appropriate General Plan and Zoning designations for the various properties in the Village area. In order to enact the land use designation changes needed to implement this Plan, the following changes are recommended.

### HIHN SUBDIVISION

Because the Hihn Subdivision is almost completely built-out, there is no particular reason or advantage to the community to change the existing General Plan land use designations there. As such, it would remain as Community Commercial (C-C), Residential Urban High Density (R-UH), Residential Urban Medium Density (R-UM), Public Facility/Institutional (P), and Urban Open Space (O-U). The Hihn Subdivision area is comprised of commercial, residential and mixed uses. To better recognize existing uses and to allow for flexibility of use and regulation to ensure consistency with the General Plan, under this Village Plan the zoning of the area should be changed to Special Use (SU) while retaining the existing Historic Resource (-L) Combining District for historic structures. This would formally recognize the mix of stand-alone residential, commercial, and office uses as well as mixed uses and allow the property owners to more easily develop and upgrade their properties.

### SOUTH OF SOQUEL DRIVE

Land uses in this area should remain commercial, and therefore are recommended to remain Community Commercial (CC), Parks and

Recreation (O-R) and Urban Open Space (O-U) for the parcels included in this Plan. To be consistent with the uses of the rest of the developed parcels in this Plan Area, the zoning of the Plan Area should be changed from Neighborhood Commercial (C-1) and Professional and Administrative Office (PA) to Community Commercial (C-2) and Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PR) and retain the existing Combining Districts.

### VILLAGE CORE

Under this Village Plan, the Village Core (including the Residential Transitional area), is proposed to have five land use designations: Community Commercial (C-C); Residential Urban High Density (R-UH); Residential Urban Medium Density (R-UM); Public Facility/Institutional (P); and Park, Recreation and Open Space (O-R). Similarly, the area should be rezoned to seven zone districts: Community Commercial (C-2); Single-Family Residential, 6,000 square feet of land per unit (R-1-6); Residential Multifamily, 2,000 square feet of land per unit (RM-2); Residential Multifamily, 3,000 square feet of land per unit (RM-3); Residential Multifamily, 4,000 square feet of land per unit (RM-4); Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PR); and Public Facility (PF).

The existing Historic Resource (-L) Combining District will remain on the properties housing the three historic structures. When and if the Apple Barn or Aptos Firehouse/VFW Hall are proposed to be moved, the future developers will be responsible for filing an application requesting that the new locations be rezoned to add the -L Combining District and the current locations have the -L designation removed.

### RESIDENTIAL TRANSITIONAL AREA

Solely residential uses are allowed along the northern edge of the Village Core and on both sides of the existing Granite Way, opposite the Post Office, at densities consistent with the Residential Urban-High and Residential Urban-Medium land use designations.

Since land on the south side of Granite Way will be redesignated from commercial to exclusive residential use, future developers will be required to provide 40% of the resulting residential units as affordable units, pursuant to Chapter 17.10 of the County Code.

Figures 24 and 25 illustrate proposed General Plan and zoning changes to implement this Plan.

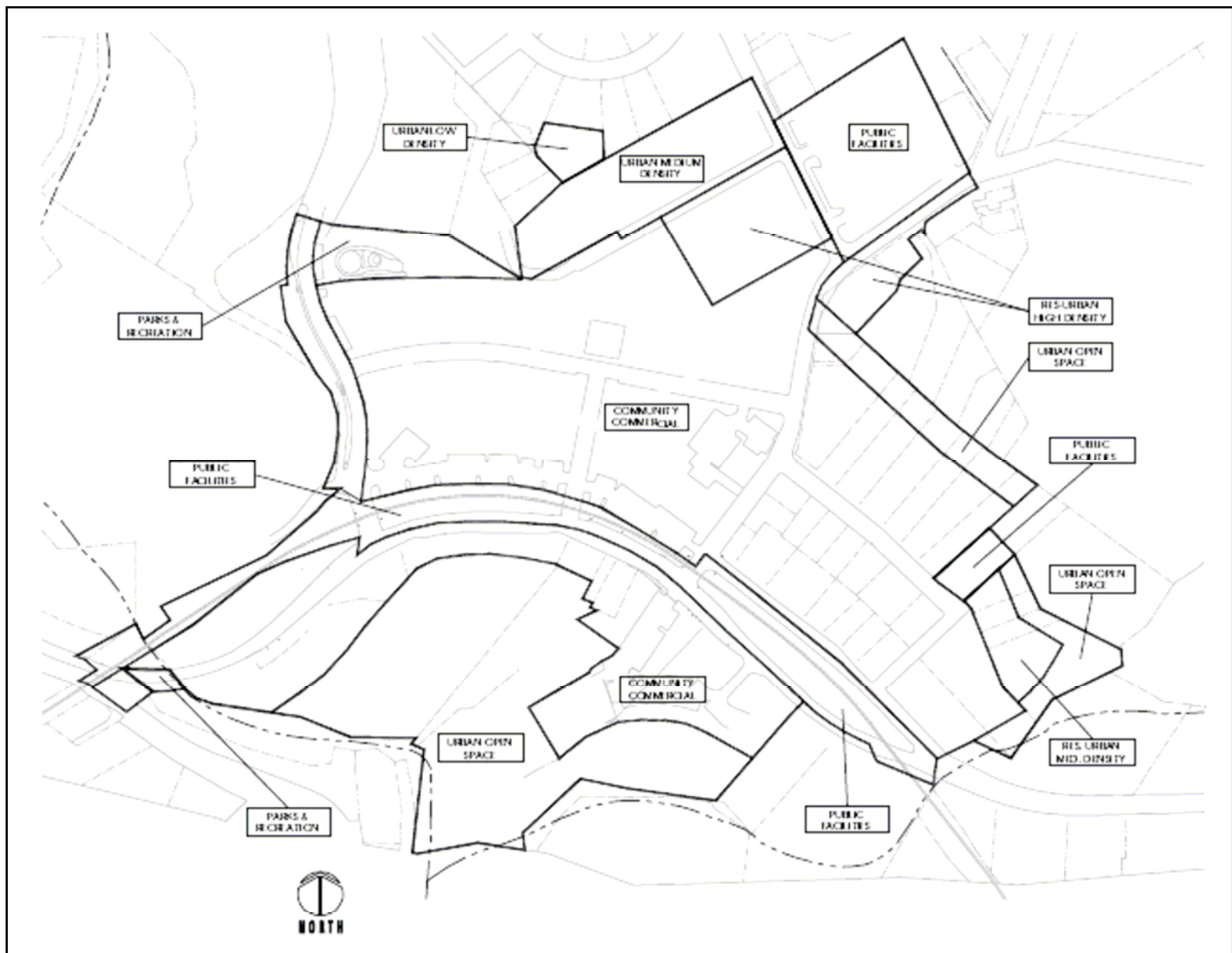
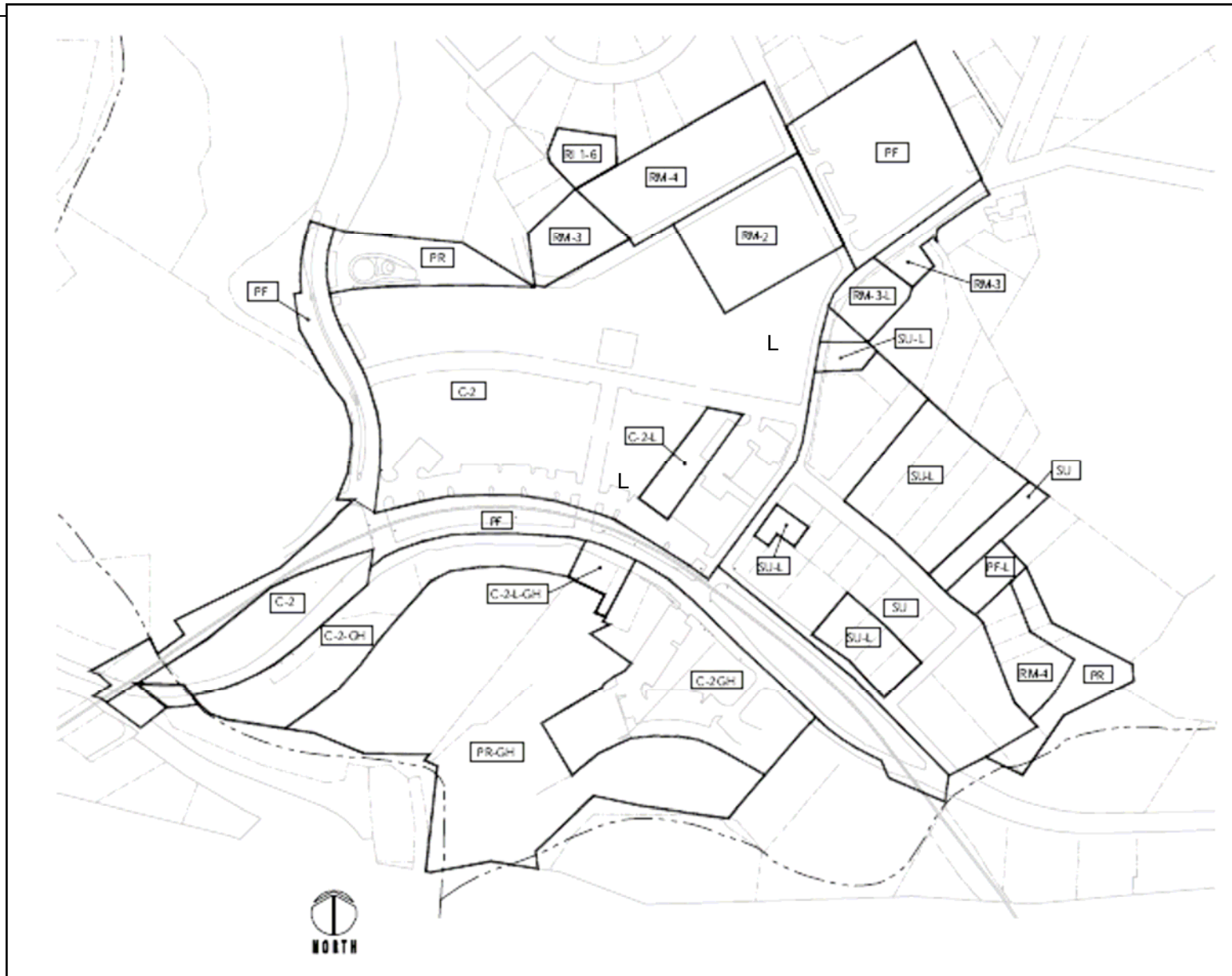


FIGURE 23: PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN CHANGES



**FIGURE 24: PROPOSED REZONINGS**

## **RECOMMENDED FEATURES OF A PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD)**

One of the advantages of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) is that it allows the County to define a portion of the community that, because of unique attributes, warrants creating special development standards, permit processes, and financing structures that are different than those that generally govern development throughout the rest of the County. In the case of Aptos Village, the mixed use nature of the Village Core, the desire to create a more “Main Street” feel to the area, and the goal to manage the development and ultimate uses in an integrated fashion, makes a strong case for use of a PUD to guide new and existing development in the Village Core. The PUD also provides the developers more certainty with regard to development standards, enabling them to make the long-term investment in infrastructure that will serve both future and existing uses.

Key features to be addressed in the PUD include:

- Ensuring that development of any properties in the Village Core cannot occur without adherence to this Plan;
- Defining preferred uses for existing as well as future buildings;
- Defining allowed special building, zoning and parking standards for any future development;
- Establishing use standards to ensure that new commercial uses are properly scaled for the proposed parking;
- Establishing building scale standards to ensure that they are compatible with the character of the Village;
- Creating standards for protection of historic structures;

- Ensuring that the size and location of the Village Common and Skatepark occur, consistent with the Plan;
- Formalizing infrastructure requirements and financing responsibilities;
- Establishing potential infrastructure and private development phasing;
- Establishing a method for financing the maintenance of private and quasi-public facilities; and
- Providing the developer(s) with surety of allowed building sizes and uses.

## **POSSIBLE TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION**

It is recommended that Planning Department staff bring this Plan, the recommended land use and rezoning changes to the Board of Supervisors for review and adoption concurrently. Actions on these elements will require formal public hearings and are anticipated to be completed in early 2010. The remaining timeframe for implementation of the parcel reconfiguration, adoption of the Planned Unit Development, infrastructure and private development will be driven by the landowners in the area.

Developer actions and timing will be driven by available financing and market conditions to construct the required infrastructure and private development projects as well as a cooperative working relationship among affected property owners. To the extent that improvements are phased over a number of years, the PUD will need to develop a thoughtful plan for phasing infrastructure with private developments.