

# CANYON - CONTEXT - 1

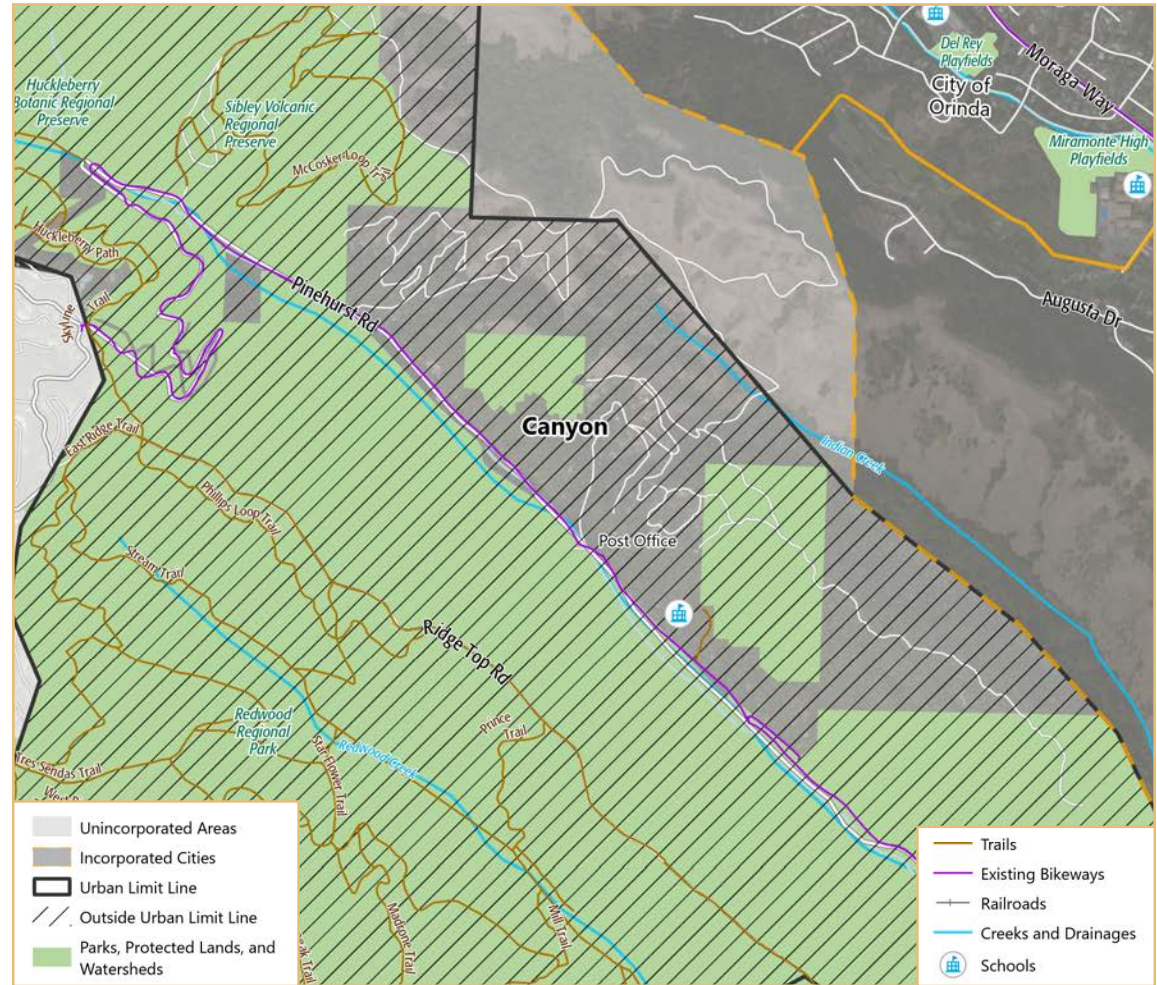
Canyon, one of the oldest communities in the East Bay, is hidden among stands of second-growth redwoods, oaks, and madrone on the eastern slopes of the Oakland/Berkeley Hills in western Contra Costa County. The earliest known construction in the area was a logging camp built in the 1850s. At the time California became a state, there were more registered voters in Canyon than in other East Bay precincts. Several subdivisions were planned in Canyon between 1912 and 1926.

Canyon Elementary School was established in 1918, Canyon Post Office and General Store in 1922. Associations were formed to cooperatively maintain the private roads and water supplies. The Canyon Community Association was organized in 1924 as the town's governing body and provides locally elected leadership to the present day.

The population of Canyon rose in the 1930s and 1940s as urban families occupied their summer homes permanently. In the 1950s, East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) acquired much of the land for watershed protection and tore down many homes. The remaining homes are accessible by narrow private roads and trails. Many households are intergenerational, with strong support for older residents. Canyon School serves as a vibrant community center and continues to provide an excellent K-8 curriculum with a small-school focus on environmental education and the arts. Pinehurst Road, the only public thoroughfare in and out of Canyon, remains one of the only east-west access routes over the Oakland/Berkeley Hills.

Canyon residents maintain good relationships with EBMUD, and collaborate extensively with the Moraga-Orinda Fire Department on fire mitigation goals.

Land use in Canyon includes residential, a small number of public uses, watershed, and open space. Canyon residents value their riparian environment, with a firm commitment to the health of the local watershed and protected species.



Source: Contra Costa County, 2018; PlaceWorks, 2022.



## WHO LIVES IN CANYON?

<p><b>Median Age</b> 47 years old in Canyon</p> <p><b>VS</b></p> <p>40 years old in Contra Costa County</p>	<p><b>Average Life Expectancy</b> no data in Canyon</p> <p><b>VS</b></p> <p>81 years old in Contra Costa County</p>	<p><b>Median Household Income</b> \$129,167 in Canyon</p> <p><b>VS</b></p> <p>\$103,997 in Contra Costa County</p>	<p><b>Race &amp; Ethnicity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 70% White</li> <li>▶ 17% Asian</li> <li>▶ 2% Hispanic or Latino</li> <li>▶ 0% Black or African American</li> </ul>
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The information on this page presents a summary of hazards and vulnerabilities in Canyon based on the Contra Costa County Vulnerability Assessment; please see the [online Vulnerability Assessment](#) for a full description of these hazards and vulnerabilities.

## HAZARDS

-  Drought
-  Extreme heat
-  Fog
-  Human health hazards
-  Landslides
-  Seismic hazards
-  Severe storms
-  Wildfire

## MAJOR VULNERABILITIES

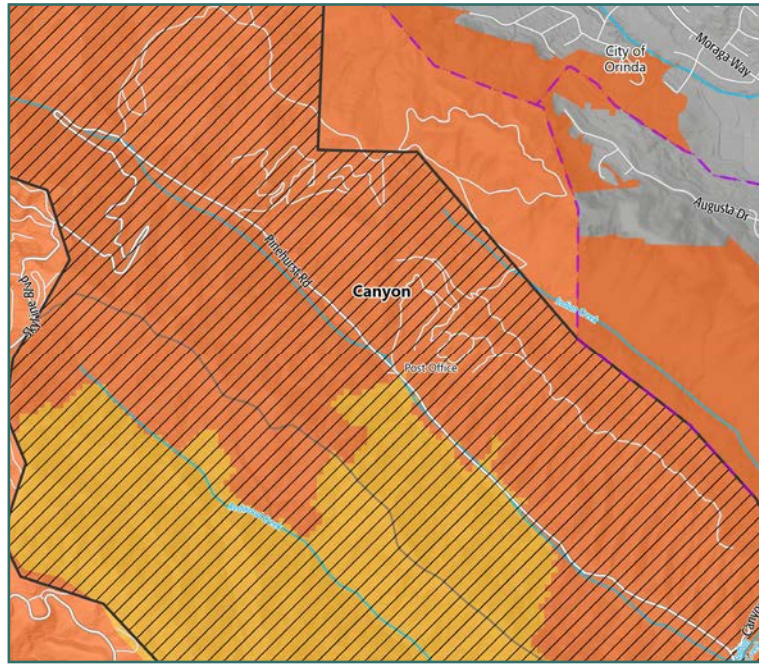
The entire community is on a single-access road (Pinehurst Road), and thus is vulnerable to landslides and wildfire. These vulnerabilities are exacerbated by limited cell phone coverage, which can inhibit emergency response and communication during a Public Safety Power Shutoff or other event that results in a loss of power to the community.

Children and seniors are vulnerable to extreme heat, human health hazards, and wildfire.

Cost-burdened households are vulnerable to drought, extreme heat, landslides, seismic hazards, severe storms, and wildfire.

Canyon Elementary School and the US Post Office are vulnerable to landslides, seismic hazards, severe storms, and wildfire.

San Leandro Creek, an aquatic habitat, is vulnerable to drought, extreme heat, and landslides.



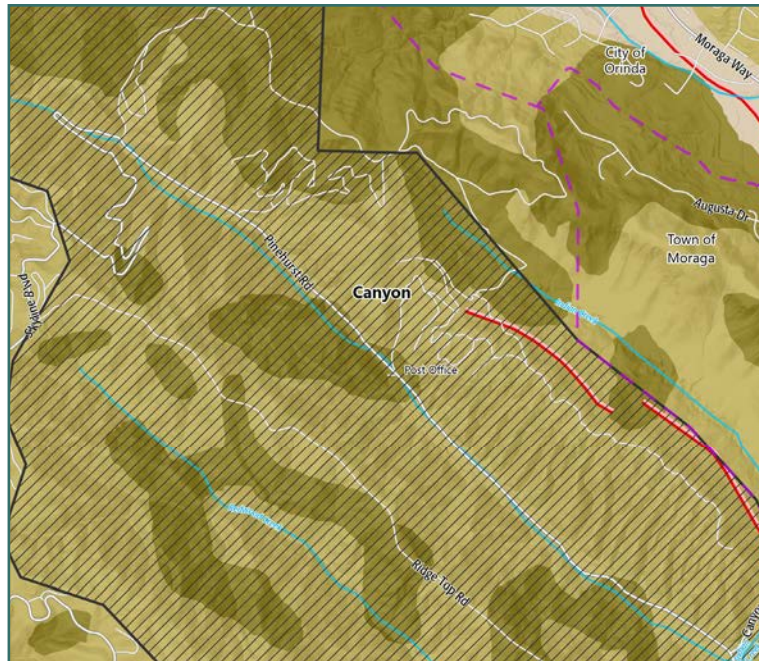
## WILDFIRE

### Wildfire Severity Zones

-  Very High
-  High
-  Moderate
-  Unincorporated Areas
-  Incorporated Cities
-  Urban Limit Line
-  Outside Urban Limit Line
-  Railroads
-  Creeks and Drainages



Source: CAL FIRE, 2024; Contra Costa County, 2018; PlaceWorks, 2022.



## LANDSLIDES

### Landslides

-  Mapped landslides
-  Few large mapped landslides, but contains scattered small landslides and questionably-identified larger landslides
-  Areas of gentle slope at low elevation that have little or no potential for landslides
-  Incorporated Cities
-  Urban Limit Line
-  Outside Urban Limit Line
-  Regional Faults
-  Railroads
-  Creeks and Drainages



Source: California Geologic Survey, 2008; Contra Costa County, 2018; PlaceWorks, 2022.

## PLANNED LAND USE

Land use designations for Canyon are shown on Figure LU-1, General Plan Land Use Map, and defined in Table LU-1 in the Land Use Element. The community is planned for continued residential and agricultural use at existing densities, surrounded by protected watersheds and regional parkland.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles articulate the values, priorities, and aspirations for the future shared by Canyon community members:

1. Canyon is one of the oldest established communities in the East Bay. Its evolution has been organic and much of its growth occurred prior to current development regulations. The community's rich history, including the various phases of its development, should be understood and appreciated.
2. Residents identify their undeveloped surroundings as one of the most valuable assets of this area. Preservation of the natural setting, including scenic ridgelines, hillsides, creeks, trees, and wildlife habitat, should be prioritized.
3. Residents enjoy informal trails through the redwood trees and value their direct access to open space. Trails and walking paths should be preserved and protected.
4. Canyon's steep topography, secluded location, and singular access via Pinehurst Road expose the community to potentially severe impacts from wildfires, landslides, and earthquakes. These hazards should be mitigated through proper planning and emergency response efforts.
5. Canyon's small-town character, independence, and creativity should be celebrated. The unique history of many homes, the Canyon School, and Post Office buildings should be acknowledged and cultivated for future generations.
6. Canyon's community-mindedness, relative affordability, and family-friendliness should be supported.



## POLICIES

1. Respect legally established parcels, roads and access trails, and setbacks for homes and accessory buildings. Work collaboratively with the community to address issues specific to individual parcels, ingress/egress options, and applicability of and conformance with current development standards.
2. Protect the environment in Canyon by prohibiting development and land uses that disrupt its natural surroundings or negatively impact wildlife habitat.
3. Support new residential development that preserves and aligns with Canyon's character and history, which includes varying lot sizes and setbacks and innovative and often hand-built architecture. Respect Canyon's historical development pattern and unique natural characteristics, including its topography and dense tree cover, when processing variances and other discretionary permits.
4. Support establishment of reliable community-wide internet access and telecommunication services.
5. Improve public roadway infrastructure in a way that balances public safety and the needs of users with the desire to maintain Canyon's rural character and privacy.

## ACTIONS

1. Improve communication and outreach so that Canyon residents can be more engaged in decisions affecting their community.
2. Coordinate with the Canyon community and public safety and health agencies to create a comprehensive emergency response plan, including establishing evacuation routes and procedures and an emergency refuge, possibly at the Canyon Elementary School.

## ACTIONS (CONTINUED)

3. Establish consistency between the General Plan and zoning in Canyon by rezoning the portion of the community designated R-20 Single-Family Residential District to A-3 Heavy Agricultural District or its successor zoning district. If possible in the future, amend the General Plan land use designation and zoning to accurately represent and respect Canyon's unique topographical characteristics and historical development pattern, including existing and historical uses, buildings, structures, lot sizes, roadways, and open spaces, while protecting public health, safety, and general welfare. This may include adoption of Planned Unit District zoning with tailored development and design regulations that reflect and facilitate existing and anticipated land uses in Canyon and support the unique, historic community's rural residential character.
4. Work with the Canyon community to ensure that future development and land uses minimize impact on wildlife habitat and natural surroundings.
5. Address stormwater drainage issues and illegal dumping concerns, particularly along Pinehurst Road.
6. Work with transit providers to expand public transportation to include Canyon.
7. Add Canyon to the Contra Costa Historic Resources Inventory.
8. Develop long-term solutions to address traffic congestion and vehicle speed on Pinehurst Road, particularly "cut-through" rush hour traffic. Maintain and enforce speed limits in school zones and improve Pinehurst Road to minimize road hazards.
9. Develop turnarounds needed by emergency vehicles along Pinehurst Road and Canyon Road.
10. Work with the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority (RecycleSmart) to incorporate Canyon into its service area.