

Hawthorns Area Public Access Framework

Purpose: *The Hawthorns Area Public Access Framework outlines proposed natural resource and land management considerations specifically related to public access at the Hawthorns Area of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve. Overarching themes informing the framework include diversity, equity, and inclusion; accessibility; climate change; financial sustainability; natural resource protections, the District’s mission; and the Board-approved vision and goals for the Hawthorns Area.*

Within the context of the Public Access Framework, the Public Access Working Group will consider:

- Preserve and trail uses
- Parking and driveway access locations
- Trail system pathways, including options for a closed trail network versus an open system connected to other nearby existing trails

Management Areas	Sub-Topics	Public Access Considerations
Natural Resources	Vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site public access and facilities to minimize detrimental impacts to vegetation communities (e.g., minimize tree removals, prevent habitat fragmentation and shrub encroachment to historic grassland areas, prevent proliferation of invasive species, etc.). • Avoid siting facilities in a way that would impact special status plant species if found.
	Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site public access elements sensitively to minimize impacts to wildlife habitat and movement, reduce barriers for wildlife (e.g., using wildlife-friendly fencing), and protect wildlife habitat connectivity. • Ensure public access continues to allow for monitoring, protection, and on-site habitat for special status species present.
	Aquatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict public access in the closed area around Los Trancos Creek and ensure future public access is sited away from the Los Trancos Creek riparian corridor and wetlands.

	Wildfire Resiliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site public access in alignment with the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program, ensuring sufficient defensible space and site access for emergency personnel. • Utilize hardened surfaces in parking area material design to reduce likelihood of wildland fire ignitions.
Cultural Resources	Native American Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict public access in the closed area with known cultural resources and ensure future public access avoids impacts to areas with cultural resource sensitivity. • Conduct tribal consultations as appropriate throughout public access development process.
	Historic Complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict public access to the Historic Complex area until (1) the long-term disposition of the structures has been determined through the Hawthorns Historic Complex Partnership project, and (2) the Historic Complex area and associated uses have been incorporated into the Hawthorns Area Plan. • Ensure future use of the Historic Complex is compatible with public access and other land/resource management considerations.
Aesthetic Resources	Viewsheds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site proposed infrastructure and amenities to minimize effects on viewsheds in the vicinity of the Hawthorns Area. • Site proposed infrastructure and amenities to highlight key vistas visible from the Hawthorns Area, such as the San Francisco Bay and nearby open spaces. • Showcase the Hawthorns Area’s natural beauty and internal features for public enjoyment. • Where feasible, use materials complementary of the Hawthorns Area’s natural landscape and cultural features.
	Scenic Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site proposed infrastructure and amenities to minimize effects on the Alpine Road Scenic Corridor in alignment with the Town of Portola Valley’s Alpine Scenic Corridor Plan.

Public Access	Public Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider adjacent uses, potential user groups, and user perspectives in determining allowable uses within the Hawthorns Area to reduce management, conflict, and safety concerns. • Provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public recreation, including hiking and equestrian access. • Consider allowing bicycle uses along the perimeter of the Hawthorns Area at Alpine Road to connect to regional bicycle accessible trails. • Consider evaluating the site for dog access. • Seek Easy Access trail opportunities where feasible and practical.
	Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering the site’s topography, vegetation, and other natural features, develop an internal trail system that aligns with the Board-approved Hawthorns Area vision and goals, is financially and operationally sustainable, considers the trail user experience, and strives to accommodate a range of hiking and equestrian abilities. • Explore opportunities for local and regional trail connections. Conversely, consider providing a closed loop trail system within the property boundaries. • Consider opportunities for Easy Access trails. • Seek opportunities to realign the Alpine Road Trail and offer safer passage within the Alpine Road corridor that align with the Board-approved Hawthorns Area vision and goals and minimize impacts to the site’s natural resources and public access opportunities.
	Driveways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop driveway(s) accessing future on-site parking with adequate lines of sight and consideration to local traffic and congestion patterns, including adjacent roadways and trails. Consider utilizing existing driveway to access potential parking if practical and feasible and if adequate separation from staff residence is achievable. • Consider relocation of the Alpine Road Trail in designing and/or developing driveways intersecting with Alpine Road.

	Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop on-site parking with surface material and location that aligns with the conservation easement, maintenance needs, and defensible space requirements. • Consider impacts to adjacent roadways and neighbors in locating and developing parking amenities. • Consider the appropriateness of multiple, smaller parking areas versus one large parking area based on existing resources, site conditions, and characteristics. • Consider required stormwater C3 treatments in the selection and development of on-site parking. • Consider accommodating transportation demand management strategies as appropriate (e.g., providing bicycle and/or equestrian amenities to encourage non-automobile access).
	Site Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide benches in select locations to enhance public enjoyment of vista points and other key property features. • Consider a vault toilet at the future on-site parking and consider an associated rain catchment system for resource management use.
	Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure public access amenities include relevant signage where appropriate to guide and inform members of the public (e.g., trail directional signs, a trailhead signboard, interpretative panels, and applicable regulation and resource management signs).
Operations and Maintenance	Gates and Fencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include perimeter and internal fencing and gates to ensure appropriate public access, site security, aesthetics, and historic resource management goals.
	Staff Residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard privacy for the staff residence to the extent feasible when siting parking and trail infrastructure.
	Roads and Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize use of existing driveways and internal roads required for public access and District operations before developing new driveways and roads.

	Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize gates, fencing, dark sky security lighting as needed, and signage on District property where appropriate to maintain site security and meet public safety objectives in alignment with the District’s Good Neighbor Policy. • Site parking area to facilitate law enforcement/ranger patrol and access for emergency response personnel. • Consider impacts to the adjacent Town roadways when siting parking and trail connections (e.g., line of sight, pedestrian safety, etc.).
	Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider restrictions set by the conservation easement regarding improvements to on-site utilities (e.g., no electrical or sewer improvements).
	Environmental Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict public access in the closed area with known environmental hazards and ensure future public access avoids environmental hazards if found.
	Legal Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop public access in alignment with stipulations set forth by the conservation easement held by the Peninsula Open Space Trust. • Explore options for the re-alignment and widening of the Alpine Trail, considering the District and the Town’s shared long-term maintenance and operational needs.
	Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider and identify local and regional partnership opportunities that encourage multimodal access to the Hawthorns Area and adjacent open spaces.