

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Board Policy Manual

Factors to Consider for Structures Disposition	Policy 4.09 Chapter 4 – Acquisition and Maintenance of District Lands
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Purpose

Disposition of existing structures or the construction of new structures requires, at a minimum, an evaluation of existing conditions, a determination of the structure’s value to the District and its constituents, short-term and long-term costs, maintenance, and staffing requirements. These factors provide a framework for discussion to assist the Board with considering the disposition or construction of a structure and to provide the public with an understanding of the factors that normally must be considered as part of the decision-making process.

Policy

Decision Making Factors to Consider for Existing or New Structures	
A.	Board-Adopted District Policies
B.	Compatibility with Open Space Character of the Site
C.	Historic and Educational Value
D.	Partnership Opportunities / Cooperation
E.	Potential Financial Cost, Including Liability and Management
F.	Proposed and Potential Uses
G.	Public Sentiment and Input
H.	Regional Important or Value
I.	Strategic Fit
J.	Tradeoffs and Impacts on District Resources
K.	Visitor Experience
L.	Condition of the Structure

A. Board-Adopted District Policies

The District Board of Directors has adopted various policies to guide day-to-day administration, operation, and management of District Preserves and to lay out the District’s objectives and means by which it accomplishes its mission *“to acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity; protect and restore the natural environment; and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education”*. One factor to consider is whether the structure under review is consistent with Board-adopted policies. The underlined headings B. through K. below were extracted or inferred from existing Board policies and include a brief summary to help lead a discussion of how they might apply to the disposition of District structures.

B. Compatibility with Open Space Character of the Site

Consistent with the board policy 4.02, *Improvements on District Lands*, it is important to consider whether a structure is believed to be compatible with and/or add to the character of the site and its

surrounding landscape. This includes whether the structure provides a sense of place as seen from afar, or whether the structure detracts from the natural surroundings.

C. Historic and Educational Value

The policy, *Improvements on District Lands*, calls for the gathering of information pertaining to the historical, cultural, or architectural significance of a structure. Existing historic-era structures inherited through past purchases or under consideration for purchase require surveys conducted by an expert consultant to evaluate the structure's potential eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR). As part of this survey, the history and significance of *individual* buildings and structures should be placed in context of any remaining or demolished *larger* facility in order to determine eligibility for listing. Taken together, these assessments would determine historic significance and integrity.

This factor also includes "Educational" value given the high value placed by the public on the educational opportunities that exist for visitors, and especially younger generations, to gain a greater understanding of why a structure exists and its relevance to historic events.

D. Partnership Opportunities/Cooperation

The District's *Basic Policy* includes a commitment to cooperatively engage with other agencies, community organizations, and individuals to preserve open space and to facilitate development and management of recreation facilities and public use. Beyond this, private organizations and entities could also provide cost-sharing and partnership opportunities to retain and/or manage structures. Existing structures may be more attractive to an entity if accessory amenities are already provided or are anticipated, or if a portion of the structural improvements are already completed. The Board may also want to consider the minimum match amount needed for the District to retain a structure. Consideration may be given to a cost-sharing situation where only a portion of the necessary funding to retain a structure is actually obtained by outside sources.

E. Potential Financial Cost, Including Liability and Management

Cost is an important decision-making consideration in either retaining or building a new improvement. Costs may include initial construction costs, one-time renovation costs, ongoing and long-term maintenance and management costs, and eventual demolition costs. Costs should be evaluated by the Board on a case-by-case basis and weighed proportionally with all other factors outlined in this policy.

F. Proposed and Potential Uses

The policy, *Improvements on District Lands*, identifies the structure's proposed use as an important consideration in the decision to retain or remove it. An evaluation of the structural conditions can inform what repairs are necessary and the associated cost to 'repurpose' the structure into an occupied structure for public use. Although it is typically desirable to re-use existing structures, building a new facility that meets current code and/or meets a specific District need may be much more cost effective. Also, consideration should be taken on the remoteness of the structure since location may impede its accessibility and usefulness.

G. Public Sentiment and Input

(District Constituents and Residents Living Outside District Boundaries)

This factor considers input from not only constituents whose property taxes support the District, but also from the larger regional constituency outside the District boundary. The District is divided into seven geographic wards, each represented by an elected Board member for a four-year term. Wards are drawn to divide the population evenly among Board members; in 2010 each Director represented approximately 107,000 constituents (2010 census), or 1/7th of the population residing within the

District boundary, which was approximately 749,000. Wards are redrawn at the conclusion of every national census, or when land is annexed for incorporation as part of the District. It is the responsibility of every Board member to provide representation to his or her individual constituents, and to also integrate the opinions of the larger public that reside outside the drawn boundary, particularly when decisions affect the larger region. It is common for buildings to elicit strong and varied responses from the public and staff since buildings often touch on people's values, personal experiences, memories, and desires. As such, it is important to consider and evaluate each single comment that is received as part of the decision-making process.

H. Regional Importance or Value

Even if a structure cannot be seen from miles away, many buildings hold intangible values associated with memories of past personal experiences, important events, or regional occurrences that affect a wide distribution of people. The Board of Directors will consider this criterion in the context of the District's mission to "...protect and restore the natural environment, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education." Although some structures may not be deemed eligible for historic listing, the District might consider whether a structure is seen by some members of the public as a historic or cultural symbol, or a visual landmark, for current, former and future residents of the area.

I. Strategic Fit

Strategic Fit ensures that decisions regarding District structures further the District's long-term goals, consistent with the District's Strategic Plan. When viewed in context with the District's other priorities, projects and processes that affect the management of public land, the Board will consider how each particular structure aligns with the District's mission: to acquire land, protect and restore it, and provide public access and education.

In 2011, the Board of Directors approved a Strategic Plan for the District (refer to Report R-11-96) to address the new challenges that the District is facing, including a reduced ability to purchase land while adequately addressing its resource management needs. As a result, consideration of any management decision on a District structure will be evaluated against the guidelines set forth in the Strategic Plan. A determination should be made of how each structure aligns with the Strategic Plan goal of balancing the three-part mission within the context of other current and future projects, as well as its role in fostering partnerships, enhancing public support, and expanding District financial and staffing resources.

J. Tradeoffs and Impacts on District Resources

Every budget cycle brings tough decisions to the District. In an environment of competing resources, some projects move forward while others must be deferred. This requirement to choose one project over another forces the District to compare the values and priorities of each project: for example, the value of completing one highly worthwhile resource management project ahead of another. Any determination about a structure, will also need to be judged against other competing projects, new land purchases, regulatory mandates, etc., in terms of cost, maintenance requirements, and staffing.

K. Visitor Experience

The Mission Statement of the District includes "opportunities for ecologically-sensitive public enjoyment and education". The goal of the Project is aligned with this mission, and consideration should be given as to whether a structure adds value to, or takes away from the visitor experience.

L. Condition of the Structure

One of the most important factors to consider is not derived from Board policy and is simply the condition of the structure. The condition of the structure clearly impacts the costs associated with

stabilization, maintenance and renovation. In addition, many structures are not salvageable due to structural problems, rot and decay. If not addressed either through stabilization repairs, renovation or demolition, many structures can present hazards to District employees and the public including hazardous material exposure, rodent infestations, and structural hazards. Site conditions including the condition of access roads, availability of water, septic and power, and geologic stability play a key role in determining the disposition of existing structures, as well as the appropriateness of new construction.