



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-24-86  
Meeting 24-19  
July 10, 2024

## SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA ITEM 1

### AGENDA ITEM

Hawthorns Historic Complex – Draft Vision and Goals

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

(5)

Review and comment on the Vision and Goals for the Hawthorns Historic Complex as recommended by the Hawthorns Historic Complex Ad Hoc Committee. No Board action required.

### SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) is planning for the future use and management of the Hawthorns Historic Complex (Historic Complex). At this July 10, 2024 Board of Directors (Board) meeting, the Board will review and comment on the Historic Complex Vision and Goals as reviewed and forwarded by the Hawthorns Historic Complex Ad Hoc Committee (Ad Hoc Committee).

### DISCUSSION

#### Preserve Background

The 79-acre Hawthorns Area, which is located within the Town of Portola Valley, was gifted to the District in 2011 and is currently closed to the public in accordance with the Preliminary Use and Management Plan (R-06-53). The Hawthorns Historic Complex is an approximately 13-acre area located within the Hawthorns Area and includes several structures that date back to the late 1800s.

The planning process for the Historic Complex is a separate but parallel process to the Hawthorns Area Plan project, which is currently underway with a focus on the use and management of the overall Hawthorns Area. The Hawthorns Area Plan will provide overarching guidance on resource and land management actions at the Hawthorns Area while the Historic Complex project focuses specifically on future use and management of the Historic Complex area consistent with the goals of the Area Plan.

#### Hawthorns Area Plan

In 2021, the District initiated the multi-year Hawthorns Area Plan process to develop the property in alignment with Board policy 4.01, *Open Space Use and Management Planning Process*. Engaging community members, District staff, and the Board, this multistep planning process will result in the Hawthorns Area Plan, a comprehensive use and management plan guiding resource and land management actions at the site. The Hawthorns Area Plan, which is currently in the Programming/Conceptual Planning phase, began with the development of vision

and goals for the entire property, approved by the Board on March 23, 2022 ([R-22-45](#)). The Vision Statement and Goals established in 2022 set the overarching direction for the future use and management of the property and are included below.

#### *Board-approved Hawthorns Area Vision Statement*

The Hawthorns Area offers picturesque views of rolling oak grasslands and the Santa Cruz Mountains, provides important wildlife refuge, and reflects the region's natural, agricultural, and social history. The District will protect and manage natural, scenic, cultural, and open space resources at the Hawthorns Area and provide ecologically sensitive public access consistent with the District's mission and the allowable uses outlined in the property's conservation easement.

#### *Board-approved Hawthorns Area Goals*

- Protect and restore native habitat and manage for ecological resiliency of aquatic and terrestrial habitat, wildlife connectivity, and other natural resources.
- Open the Hawthorns Area to low-intensity public access, provide an internal trail system, and provide multi-modal access to the property.
- Connect to adjacent public trails and explore opportunities for trail connections to regional open space lands.
- Interpret the rich natural, cultural, and historic features and pursue partnerships to manage the property's natural and cultural history.
- Highlight scenic viewpoints and design recreational amenities while protecting scenic viewsheds.
- Manage the property for safe public access in a fiscally sustainable manner that promotes ongoing public support and appreciation with ongoing public engagement and consistent with the District's Good Neighbor Policy.

#### **Historic Complex Planning**

While the Hawthorns Area Plan will provide overarching guidance on resource and land management actions at the Hawthorns Area, planning for the specific future use and management of the Historic Complex is not included in the Area Plan planning process and is a separate and parallel planning project which has recently started. The Board formed the Historic Complex Ad Hoc Committee (Ad Hoc Committee) during the September 13, 2023 Board meeting ([R-23-103](#)) to review and guide the District's development of preliminary use and management ideas for the Historic Complex. Recognizing the Historic Complex is a unique resource within the Hawthorns Area, the Ad Hoc Committee recommends a separate vision statement and goals for the Historic Complex that complement the overall Hawthorns Area Vision Statement and Goals, but specifically guide the future use and management of the Historic Complex. This approach mirrors the process that guided the Alma Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation Plan, which has a separate vision statement and goals under the umbrella of the overall vision and goals for Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve.

#### *Proposed Historic Complex Vision Statement*

The vision for the Hawthorns Historic Complex is to implement a fiscally sustainable plan, including clean-up, rehabilitation, and long-term operations and maintenance that allows the site's cultural significance to be understood and safely enjoyed by the public, provides a location for the public to learn about environmental resources, and remains within the District's mission.

*Proposed Historic Complex Goals*

1. Integrate with the Hawthorns Area Plan and its vision and goals.
2. Manage structures in the Historic Complex in consideration of the federal guidelines for the treatment of historic properties and consistent with the <sup>1</sup>Conservation Easement.
3. Balance the potential uses, improvements, and programs for the Historic Complex with the District's Mission, where future uses would achieve multiple goals.
4. Balance long-term financial and operational sustainability with potential benefits.
5. Through partnerships connect with the community to advance the District's diversity, equity and inclusion goals.
6. Ensure safe access, guided by the District's Good Neighbor Policy, for the public to view and learn about the site's history and stories, and incorporate interpretive elements throughout the site.
7. Engage with Indigenous groups to explore opportunities for advancing the understanding of Indigenous history around the Hawthorns Area and Portola Valley.
8. Consider housing, either short-term or long-term, that supports the District's mission.
9. Incorporate the Historic Complex holistically within the overall Hawthorns Area Plan.

The Ad Hoc Committee is exploring the feasibility of a partnership opportunity to re-use the Lower Barn as community programming space for adults with intellectual or developmental delays living in residential facilities near the Hawthorns Area and for the general public ([April 10, 2024 FYI](#)). Staff are in the process of a high-level feasibility analysis to confirm the permitting process and constructability of repairs and improvements to the Lower Barn and anticipate presenting the results of the accelerated site feasibility analysis and draft terms for a partnership agreement at a Board study session in late 2024. Based on the Board's direction, staff would return to the Board in January 2025 for a decision on the Lower Barn partnership opportunity. Given the anticipated timeline of the overall planning process, the Ad Hoc Committee is also recommending an Interim Stabilization and Debris Removal Plan to mitigate structural degradation for structures retaining historic integrity and remove secondary structures that no longer retain historical integrity. The Board is considering approval of this action at this July 10, 2024 Board meeting.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommendation.

**BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW**

- March 23, 2022: Board reviewed and approved the Hawthorns Area vision and goals. ([R-22-45, meeting minutes](#))
- September 13, 2023: Board formed an Ad Hoc Committee to ([R-23-103, meeting minutes](#))

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<sup>1</sup> The Hawthorns Property is overlain by a Conservation Easement held by Peninsula Open Space Trust that establishes use restrictions for the property. Neither the Federal guidelines for the treatment of historic properties nor the Conservation Easement prohibit the removal, repair, or replacement of existing buildings or structures on the property.

- April 10, 2024: FYI to the Board regarding partnership opportunity for the Lower Barn ([April 10, 2024, meeting minutes](#))

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

## **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

## **NEXT STEPS**

Staff will return to the Board for approval of the Hawthorns Historic Complex Vision and Goals in the late summer of 2024. Staff will continue to work with the Ad Hoc Committee, guided by the Vision Statement and Goals, and anticipate presenting the results of the accelerated site feasibility analysis and seek Board input on a potential partnership at a Board study session in late 2024. Pending the Board's direction on a potential partnership, staff would present draft terms for a partnership agreement to the Board in early 2025.

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