



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-18-44  
Meeting 18-17  
May 9, 2018

## STUDY SESSION AGENDA ITEM 1

### AGENDA ITEM

Preserve Use Survey Project – Focus Group Update

### ACTING GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Informational item only. No Board action required.

### SUMMARY

San Francisco State University (SFSU) researcher, Professor Patrick Tierney, will provide an update and analysis of the focus group survey data collected from November 2017 to April 2018 as part of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (Midpen) Preserve Use Survey project (Project). Previously on March 14, 2018, Professor Tierney provided an update to the Board on Phase 1 of the Project - the results and findings from the fall 2017 intercept survey, which concluded that Preserve users overwhelmingly express approval of Midpen preserves (98%). Of the issues raised by Preserve users, the most common included lack of parking, dog waste on trails, and the availability and upkeep of restroom facilities.

As part of Phase 2, Focus Groups provided input from demographics that either historically do not use Midpen preserves or are of growing significance in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. These groups encounter barriers, some quite fundamental like transportation, which preclude them from accessing Midpen preserves. In some cases, however, a lack of awareness or knowledge of Midpen also prevented them from considering an outing. These results, along with recommended actions by Professor Tierney, are outlined in detail in Attachments 2 and 3.

### DISCUSSION

The Fiscal Year 2017-18 Action Plan includes the Preserve Use Survey Project to learn more about the people who currently use Midpen preserves, their preferences, and areas for potential improvement. With a total budget allocation of \$172,000 (research contract and temporary hires for survey work), Midpen contracted with San Francisco State University (SFSU). SFSU has conducted several similar surveys across the Bay Area, including for San Mateo County Parks, Marin County Parks, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Early in the Project, staff consulted with the Board's Diversity Ad Hoc Committee to refine the approach, goals, and objectives. The Project is divided into two phases: Phase 1) Trailhead intercept surveys of visitors exiting the preserves, and Phase 2) Focus group discussions with residents who represent important demographics of underserved communities and growing populations within Midpen. The data presented in this study session represent the Phase 2 findings.

### **Project Details**

**Project Goals:** Conduct a scientifically valid representative survey and collect baseline data on visitors and non-visitors to understand who and why people visit Preserves, their preferences, areas of potential improvement, and also understand the barriers and challenges that keep others from visiting or being aware of their local public open space lands.

### **Project Objectives:**

- Gather and analyze information on Midpen preserve visitor characteristics, trip purpose, and planning;
- Understand Midpen preserve visitor experience;
- Determine visitor desires and preferences regarding preserve themes, experiences, facilities, and resources;
- Count and estimate total number of visitors to Midpen preserves;
- Gather and analyze data on resident nonusers and underserved communities;
- Identify key barriers to visitation and strategies for increasing use of Midpen preserves by nonusers and underserved residents; and
- Understand visitor and non-visitor attitudes towards stewardship of preserves.

### **Project Timeline:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
July 2017	Survey goal and timeline definition
August 2017	Survey setup and temporary staff recruitment
September – November 2017	Intercept survey data collection and final report
November 2017 – April 2018	Conduct focus groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seniors (San Mateo &amp; Santa Clara County)</li> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• South Asian (Indian)</li> <li>• East Asian (Chinese)</li> <li>• Latino (East Palo Alto and Pescadero)</li> </ul>
March 2018	Board presentation of Phase 1, intercept survey results
Early May 2018	Board presentation of Phase 2, focus group results
May – June 2018	Applicable departments review findings and identify opportunities to improve Midpen outreach, projects, programs, and facilities, along with identifying open questions
July – August 2018	Departments research and answer open questions and formulate recommendations on specific findings
September – October 2018	Board Study Session to review opportunities for addressing visitation, outreach, and engagement gaps, receive responses to prior Board questions, and provide any additional direction
November 2018 and beyond	Departments work on immediate actions and integrate long-term actions into future budget cycles.

**Focus Groups:**

Between October 2017 and April 2018, seven focus groups were conducted by SFSU in both San Mateo and Santa Clara County. With each focus group, SFSU partnered with a local organization or individuals identified by Midpen staff to assist with participant recruitment:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Partner</b>
October 2017	South Asian (Indian)	Cupertino	Travel Backyard
January 2018	Latino	East Palo Alto	Nuestra Casa
January 2018	Youth	San Carlos	Youth Leadership Institute (YLI)
March 2018	Seniors	Redwood City	San Mateo County Senior Commission
March 2018	East Asian (Chinese)	Cupertino	Cupertino Sustainability Commission
April 2018	Latino	Pescadero	Puente de la Costa Sur
April 2018	Seniors	Palo Alto	Avenidas

**Results:****Barriers to Preserve Use and Concerns:**

From these seven focus group sessions of primarily preserve non-users, the most frequently discussed set of concerns and barriers to use are listed below. Barriers identified by Focus Group are included in Attachment 2:

1. Do not know about Midpen, lack info
2. Some, especially women, are concerned about personal safety; bad people, mountain lions, snakes, bikes, dogs, drinking parties
3. Lack of restrooms, or clean ones
4. Lack of transportation to preserves
5. Lack of programs and trails for kids and families
6. Lack of information about short, easy trails
7. Lack of a trail difficulty rating system
8. Concerns about getting hurt and no help
9. Inadequate parking
10. Trail surfaces that are unsafe or slippery

**Consultant Recommendations:**

Based on the issues raised by survey respondents and focus group participants, the consultant from SFSU presents the following recommendations. Recommendations broken out by Focus Group are included in Attachment 3:

1. Expand outreach to their community through community groups in their language
2. Provide more restrooms
3. Address significant personal safety concerns of non or less frequent visitors through:
  - Docent-led tours (get them to visit the first time) - must be better publicized
  - Organize group visits within their community (seniors, Hispanics, Asians)

- Provide hiking partners (seniors, women) through docent-led and/or group tours
- 4. Create a trail rating system and post trail difficulty on the website
- 5. Identify and post easier, shorter, loop trails
- 6. Work to expand transportation options (public and private) to preserves
- 7. Use more social media and communications technology
- 8. Expand programs and activities for families, kids, and women
- 9. Provide more and better directional signage
- 10. Provide more natural and historical resources information before and during visits

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

Receipt of the information does not result in a fiscal impact. Implementation of future actions to enhance outreach and address visitor concerns may result in a fiscal impact, which the Board would consider as part of future Board actions, including approval of the annual fiscal year Capital Improvement and Action Plan, and Budget.

## **BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW**

This item was not previously reviewed by a Board Committee.

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. No additional notice is required.

## **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

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

## **NEXT STEPS**

Public Affairs staff will review the SFSU Focus Group Report to identify short, medium, and long-term actions to reach and engage non-users and underserved communities. In addition, staff will collaborate with departments to determine how best to address preserve visitor issues, barriers to utilization, and other gaps highlighted in the Intercept Survey and Focus Group reports. The Acting General Manager expects to present the implementation recommendations to the Board in October 2018 at a Study Session, and then integrate the feedback into future fiscal year budgets.

Ultimately, Midpen will integrate these responses into departmental work plans to improve visitor experiences and better connect underserved populations to Midpen lands. Approximately every 5 to 10 years, Midpen will look to repeat the survey to keep the data fresh, recognize patterns of change, and determine whether Midpen is adequately addressing identified gaps and barriers, and achieving its goals.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Focus Group Survey Protocol
2. Barriers broken out by Focus Group
3. Recommendations broken out by Focus Group

4. SFSU Focus Group Report – East Palo Alto Latino
5. SFSU Focus Group Report – Pescadero Latino
6. SFSU Focus Group Report – San Mateo County Seniors
7. SFSU Focus Group Report – Santa Clara County Seniors
8. SFSU Focus Group Report – Youth
9. SFSU Focus Group Report – South Asian
10. SFSU Focus Group Report – East Asian

Responsible Department Head:

Christine Butterfield, Acting Assistant General Manager

Prepared by:

Joshua Hugg, Governmental Affairs Specialist

## **MROSD FOCUS GROUP PROPOSED PROTOCOL**

### ***Welcome & Introductions***

Hi, my name is [*Patrick Tierney*] I am a faculty of the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Department at SFSU. This is [\_\_\_\_\_] [a research assistant at SFSU] and [\_\_\_\_\_, a student at SFU]. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us today and agreeing to be part of this focus group. We'll do group introductions regarding who you are in a few minutes. This conversation will last about an hour and a half and will be recorded. We would like to record this conversation so we can use the recording to transcribe notes. The recording will be kept in a secure location and will not be used for any other purpose other than this project. [*Does anyone has any issues/problems with being audio-taped?*].

Thanks also go to many of you for completing the pre-focus group survey. That information is helpful for us to understand more about who is participating. This survey information will only be presented in summary form. No names will be associated with any of that information. No Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) staff are present here tonight so you should feel free to voice your opinions about MROSD open space preserves. No names will be associated with any of the comments you make during this interview. When you signed in today, there was a number next to your name; you'll use that, which I'll explain in a moment.

I will be leading the conversation today and [\_\_\_\_\_] will be taking notes. I am going to go over a few details before we start. If you have any questions, please ask as they come up.

### ***Purpose of the Focus Group***

We are working in partnership with the MROSD to better understand preserve users' attitudes, experiences, use patterns, and preferences and to identify reasons why people don't visit more often. The information you share will help MROSD determine how well they are supporting their strategic plan and contributing to their long-term goals. In addition, the information you provide can help improve existing preserve resources and services to meet community needs. Your participation is key as this group represents the ideas of [*user group*]. We welcome your input and your voice matters to the Open Space District so we need you to be honest with us and share your thoughts and opinions openly.

### ***Guidelines***

Has anyone ever participated in a focus group? [*Ask for show of hands*]. For some people being in a focus group can be a new experience. We'll first discuss general ground rules that can help ensure a safe environment where everyone's ideas are shared and valued, and to ensure we capture what everyone says on the recorder and in our notes. Again, your name will not be attached to your comments, only a number.

1. WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING. We need everyone to participate and talk to each other as you are comfortable. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
2. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. Every person's experiences and opinions are important. We want to hear what each of you think and feel about preserves and parks, in general, and within MROSD in particular. If you're not familiar with any open space preserves in MROSD, respond based on your knowledge of whatever open space areas or parks come to mind for you. You don't need to agree with others, but please listen respectfully to different points of view. If you do agree with what someone says, please speak up, rather than nodding your head or gesturing in some other way. This helps us capture agreement in the notes. Also, if someone else says something that reminds you of something or sparks a thought, please feel free to follow their comments with your own.
3. WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE. Everything you tell us today is anonymous. That means we will not share anything you say with your name attached. While we might use quotes or ideas that you share, as mentioned, we will never use your name in any way.
4. ONE MIC/1 NUMBER: Please speak one at a time – this will help us capture everyone's thoughts and opinions. Before you make your comment, simply state your number first (which is on your nametag), then go for it. For example, I may raise my hand and say, "Number five: I think that parks need to have more..." If you forget to state your number, I might ask you for it.
5. STEP UP STEP BACK. If you have shared a lot, step back to allow others to share.

Are there any questions before we begin?

**Icebreaker:** Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves then we'll turn on the recorder after this. Please state your first name and your favorite MROSD preserve in and why.

*[Student assistant turns on digital recorder and begins taking typed notes on laptop].*

### ***[SENIOR] RESPONDENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS***

***Generic Discussion Questions, Tier 1 - (As we move forward, it would be best to reply as it relates to MROSD, if you're not able to that's fine. Comments about any park experience are fair game.***

- A. Do you enjoy going to areas which are mostly natural, have trees, wildflowers and often wildlife, that are free of most buildings and roads and are located outside of cities? Why? Why not?

- B. In the last 6 months, have each of you visited any MROSD preserve? Any one not?
- C. Please share a sample of activities you like to do in MROSD preserves.  
**[use/experience—hike/run/walk, group activities, bike, etc.]**
- D. Where do you like to go most often within MROSD s? Why do you prefer these MROSD locations?
- E. How have your most recent MROSD experiences made you feel? Explain
- F. What do you like the most about MROSD?
- G. If you have not gone to MROSD in the last 6 months, please explain why. Have you stopped using MROSD locations altogether? Why? Would you like to visit a MROSD preserve? Why?
- H. What do you like least about MROSD open space preserves?
- I. Do you have any suggestions for MROSD management to improve your experience in MROSD open space preserves? Please explain.
- J. How might these suggestions be implemented?
- K. Are there any other concerns or needs you would like to share with MROSD [*volunteer or employment opportunities*]

***Tier 2 - If Time, Address the Following Questions***

**Does anyone have anything else to add based on what we've talked about or something else you'd like to share?**

***Closing & Wrap Up***

*[Research assistant turns off digital recorder, note-taking ends].*

Thank you all again for participating in this important conversation. The information you provided is significant and meaningful and can really help improve use throughout the



MROSD. If you are interested in the results and findings of this conversation, a summary report can be sent out to you upon request. If so, please give your name and email address, or postal address, to our student assistant.

In appreciation of your time, [\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_] will be distributing [a \$25 gift card *incentive*]. In order to receive this gift card we need you to please sign our receipt log for the university accounting purposes only.

## Attachment 2

### BARRIERS TO VISITATION AND CONCERNS FROM FOCUS GROUPS, BY COMMUNITY GROUP

Rank	Barrier/Concern	Partner Demogr.	Youth						
			Nuestra Casa Latino	Travel Backyard S. Asian	City of Cupertino E. Asian	SMC Senior Commission SMC Seniors	Avenidas SSC Seniors	Youth Leadership Institute Youth	Puente de la Costa Latino
1	Do not know about Midpen, lack info.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2	Some, especially women, are concerned about <u>safety</u> ; bad people, mtn. lions, snakes, bikes, dogs, drinking parties		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	Lack transportation to preserves		X			X	X	X	X
4	Lack of restrooms, or clean ones		X	X	X	X	X		X
5	Lack of programs/trails for kids/families		X	X	X			X	X
6	Lack of information about short easy trails				X	X	X	X	
7	Lack of a trail difficulty rating system			X	X	X	X		
8	Concerns about getting hurt and no help		X			X	X		X
9	Inadequate parking			X	X		X		
10	Some trail surfaces are unsafe, slippery			X	X	X			
11	Lack wheel chair accessible trails				X	X		X	
12	Fear of getting lost on the trail				X	X	X		X
13	Too hot, lack of shade			X	X				
14	Lack of collaboration between schools & MP		X					X	X
15	Information not in their language		X						X
16	Cost is a concern		X			X			X
17	Lack of internships and comm. service hours for high school students							X	
19	Do not feel welcome (1 Hispanic man)		X						
20	No one to go with					X			
21	Limited free time							X	X
22	Traffic to preserve is dangerous, takes too long					X			
23	Trash and pet waste			X					
<b>TOTAL WEIGHTED BARRIER LEVEL</b>			35	29	43	45	31	13	38

**Attachment 3**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FOCUS GROUPS BY COMMUNITY GROUP**

Recommendation	Partner	Nuestra Casa	Travel Backyard	City of	SMC Senior	Avenidas	Youth	Puente de	TOTAL #
	Demogr.	Latino	S. Asian	Cupertino	Commission	SSC Seniors	Leadership	la Costa	
				E. Asian	SMC Seniors		Institute	Latino	
More, cleaner restrooms		X	X	X	X	X		X	6
More outreach to their community		X		X	X	X	X	X	6
Personal safety concerns		X	X		X	X		X	5
Public transportation to preserves		X		X	X		X	X	5
More nature/history info		X	X	X		X		X	5
Trail rating system, difficulty on website			X	X	X	X			4
More social media, Facebook		X	X	X			X		4
Easier shorter, loop trails		X		X	X	X			4
More better signage		X		X	X	X			4
Family, women and kids programs		X		X			X	X	4
Docent led hikes		X			X	X		X	4
Improve parking at Rancho San Antonio			X	X		X			3
Use advanced communications tech/apps			X	X			X		3
Web cams of animals			X			X	X		3
Multi-lingual signs brochures		X	X					X	3
More trails for wheelchairs				X	X		X		3
Partner with schools		X					X	X	3
Allow dog walking						X	X		2
More camping opportunities				X		X			2
Allow dog walking						X	X		2

# NUESTRA CASA FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Midpen Visitors  
Study



**Prepared For:** Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

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## Appendices

Appendix A. Recruitment flyer

Appendix B. Focus group protocol and questions

## INTRODUCTION

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen), in partnership with San Francisco State University (SFSU), is conducting a Midpen Visitor Study. The overall purpose of the study is to assess visitor satisfaction, motivation, stewardship interests and future demands, for potential decision making. The study also aimed to offer recommendations for preserve programs, facilities, policies, and innovative ways to enhance community engagement and access. The study consists of two parts: Part I are intercept and follow-up surveys; while Part II consists of focus groups with specific community groups. This report represents the procedures and results of one focus group interview with fourteen Latino residents of the East Palo Alto area who were recruited by the Nuestra Casa community organization. It was held January 8, 2018 at the Nuestra Casa meeting room, 2396 University Blvd., East Palo Alto. In this report a reference to “Midpen trails” means trails in Midpen Open Space Preserves.

For more information about the purpose and scope of the research contact Joshua Hugg, Government Affairs Specialist for Midpen, at (650) 691-1200 or [jhugg@openspace.org](mailto:jhugg@openspace.org). Questions about the focus group process, data analysis or findings can be directed to Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor and principal investigator, at (415) 338-2030 or [rpt@sfsu.edu](mailto:rpt@sfsu.edu).

### **Special thanks to a community partner**

This project could not have been possible nor successful without the help and support of Julio Garcia, director of the Nuestra Casa organization.. He helped us find and recruit participants in this focus group, and translate the proceedings. We wish to express our thanks to him.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Phase II Overview**

The focus group interview part of this study aimed to capture the experiences of Midpen district residents of the East Palo Alto Latino community who may or may not have used Midpen preserves. The choice of this user group and the initial contact for Nuestro Casa community were provided by Joshua Hugg with Midpen. He and Midpen staff believed the opinions and motivations from this group, and from upcoming focus groups could benefit future planning of the district preserves and services.

### **Preparation**

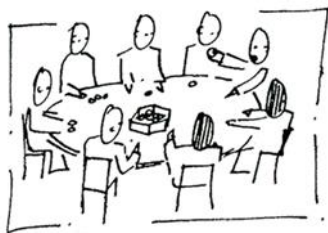
#### ***Development of Collateral Materials & Procedures***

SFSU created the materials needed to successfully set up and facilitate the focus group, such as focus group recruitment flyers, focus group protocol, and interview questions. The Nuestra Casa community leader was asked to recruit potential participants for the focus group. SFSU sent him an invitation and a recruitment flyer, he forwarded it to persons on in the Nuestra Casa organization, and he confirmed persons attending the focus group. SFSU showed maps of Midpen preserves at the focus groups.

SFSU also developed a participant sign-in sheet, log for signatures acknowledging receipt of gift cards, and sign-up sheet for Midpen (e.g., anyone requesting a copy of the final report or wish to be added to mailing list). Other materials used during the focus groups were name tags, map of Midpen preserves, and Safeway gift cards (purchased). SFSU also provided a lite dinner and refreshments at the start of the focus group. Many participants did not speak English fluently, and the SFSU facilitator was not fluent in Spanish, so Nuestra Casa staff translated question from SFSU into Spanish and responses from participants into English.

## Focus Groups

### What occurred, why, and how?



A focus group is a small group of four to fifteen people, ideally, led through an open discussion by a skilled moderator. The group needs to be large enough to generate rich discussion, but not so large that some participants are left out or a few people dominate the conversation. Additionally, the groups should be homogenous as homogeneity levels the playing field and reduces inhibitions among people who come together for the purpose of a group interview.

Focus groups can reveal a wealth of detailed information and deep insights. When well executed, a focus group creates a welcoming environment that allows participants to feel at ease and encourages thoughtful, honest answers providing added meaning to question responses. As a valid methodology, focus groups were chosen as one approach to elicit the thoughts, feelings, experiences, and recommendations residents of the Latino community in East Palo Alto. In addition, focus groups have the ability to generate rich qualitative data that comes from individual participants engaging in deep conversation, potentially capturing themes that would be missed from other, more quantitative, methods. Furthermore, focus groups foster a safe place for participants to be open and honest.

The SFSU principal investigator was the focus group moderator/facilitator who asked initial questions and nurtured disclosure in an open and honest format. The goal was to generate a maximum number of different opinions, experiences, attitudes, and ideas from as many people in the group in the time allotted. As reflected in the protocol that follows, the focus groups were structured around a set of carefully predetermined questions but the discussion was free-flowing. That is, participant comments stimulated and influenced the thinking and sharing of others.

### Recruitment: Where did participants come from?

This study used a convenience sampling method that enlisted a leader from the East Palo Alto Latino community to recruit focus group participants. This community leader recruited 14 participants who were occasional to non-users of Midpen preserves. The SFSU team developed recruitment flyer shown in Appendix A. Focus group participants were rewarded with a \$25 gift card to Safeway as an incentive to participate. Additionally, participants were informed a dinner-type meal would be provided and thirty minutes was allotted for general socializing (e.g., “meet and greet”) prior to the official start time of the interview process.



## Focus Group Protocol

The focus group protocol used for this study was created by the SFSU investigator, based on past experience, and included a description of the overall study, participant guidelines, focus group questions, and logistical information. Focus group questions were developed by SFSU based on models from prior studies and questions that were desired from the Midpen staff. A set of two-tiered questions were developed in which Tier 1 questions were the priority and focused on visitors' use, experiences, and recommendations. If additional time remained, Tier 2 questions were asked. Tier 1 questions asked participants about their most recent preserve experience, types of activities they undertake on Midpen open space preserves, how these activities make them feel, where they like to go most often in Midpen, what they like most about their recent experiences in Midpen preserves, what they like least, and any suggestions for Midpen management to improve their experience. The final focus group protocol and questions used during the Nuestra Casa focus group is available in Appendix B.

## Data Collection

The Nuestra Casa focus group had four participants. As participants arrived at the location, the SFSU facilitator asked them to sign a participant sign-in sheet requesting their demographic information. They then enjoyed the lite meal provided, during which comfort and rapport was established by the investigator. After a half hour the investigator introduced himself and Michala Roan, the student assistant, and described how the proceedings would be translated from English to Spanish and vice versa. Nuestra Casa staff were the translators. Then he then facilitated the interview process, beginning with a general ice breaker to get the group thinking about preserves and park use or non-use, and using the protocol and questions (Appendix B). All prepared questions were asked within the 90-minute time allotted and the facilitator was responsible for getting all participants to talk and fully explain their answers using helpful probes (e.g., "Can you say more about that?"; "Help us understand what you mean?" and "Can you give an example?"). The investigator demonstrated active listening and occasionally paraphrased long or ambiguous comments, or sought clarification for analysis purposes and/or summarized responses for the whole group.

The facilitator recorded the focus group using his Apple iPhone and the SFSU student assistant took supporting notes in case the recorder failed or any parts of the digital file were inaudible. Body language or other subtle relevant clues were recorded via typed notes. Audio files were uploaded to a secure computer for storage and backed up.

At the end of the focus group, participants were thanked and each person received the incentive (gift card) that required a signature on the receipt log for SFSU accounting purposes. If any participants wanted to receive the final report, or expressed interest in being put on a Midpen mailing list, they were asked to indicate that on the sign-in sheet.





## Data Analysis & Transcription

The demographic characteristics of these participants were gathered at the focus group location. Results are summarized in Table 1.

The focus group discussions were captured via audio recordings. The facilitator moderated, while the discussions were recorded. The interview was then transcribed verbatim by an outside contractor, Rev.com and verified by the SFSU student assistant.

In order for all participant comments to be understandable and useful, they were analyzed using a systematic and verifiable process. Hence, the investigator completed a manual content analyses process by first identifying question content categories and emerging themes with groupings entered into a Word document. Subsequently, the investigator extracted and explored common themes. The major findings from participants' comments are summarized in the results section that follows and includes a series of direct quotes highlighting relevant responses.

The investigator completed the final examination of the transcriptions. Results were reviewed and synthesized to ensure accuracy of themes and supporting quotes. The themes and conclusions presented in this report were reviewed twice by the investigator before the report was finalized.



## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Many valuable findings were revealed by this focus group interview process. Important to note that the majority of participants in this focus group were not familiar with Midpen preserves, and they may have been thinking about, and referring to, trails located outside of Midpen preserves. Although maps of the Midpen were provided at the focus group and the facilitator discussed some unique characteristics and uses in preserves, there were uncertainties about the preserve locations. There is a chance that some parks outside Midpen's were considered. Generalizing preserve/park experiences is not uncommon to occur within focus group interviews. The parks literature explains the difficulty for people in differentiating between lands/trails of adjacent park agencies. This further accentuates the need for park agencies to work together; and, this reveals the increasing importance to share such park use/non-use interview results with other park managers as well.



### Participant Characteristics

As participants were seated for the focus group they were asked to provide data on their age, sex, ethnicity and occupation. This was the source for the following demographic data about the four focus group participants. This was a group of mostly experienced Midpen visitors and one new user of district preserves, who were very familiar with information technology.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Average Age	44 years
Age Range	17-65 years
Sex	
Male	8%
Female	92%
Ethnicity	
Latino	100%
Occupation	
Mother	80%
Professional	20%

## EMERGING THEMES: NUESTRA CASA LATINO MEMBERS

An analysis of focus group responses produced the following themes and illustrative participant comments.

### **Theme: The Latino Community in East Palo Alto is not familiar with Midpen preserves**

*"I'm just confused about it [Midpen], because is something like the Yosemite park you can go and play and stay there. That's the confusion. I think everybody is a little confused about Midpen, what is the difference between a nature preserve, or a park, or a camping ground, or whatever?"*

*"She was looking for places to pass her time and with her family, but schools and families in general don't know about these areas. In our families, Latino families exclusively ... A lot of these families don't know that these places [preserves] exist"*

*"She doesn't know about these preserves. She knows about different parks and zoos and different activities they can go and do"*

*"I have went to one [Midpen preserve] in Half Moon Bay, I forgot what it's called, but it's nearby Bay Shore. I went to outdoor rec. You go camping for five days, you have lots of other activities."*

*"There is a little preserve in the back of Palo Alto called Cooley Landing."*

*"You are the first to discuss about these areas and open spaces, we didn't know about them."*

### **Theme: There is strong interest in going to Midpen preserves**

-Every single focus group participant indicated they want to visit a Midpen preserve in the future.

*"They're interested and they're talking and they're wanting to engage, so we can go [to Midpen preserves]"*

*"She's saying that thanks to this meeting [focus group] and thanks to that paper and this new map [Midpen brochure] that she has, she didn't even know what that [a preserve] was. Or what natural preserves are or anything. And she still needs some clarification, but she needs to visit, and she's going to make big effort to go with her daughters and her family to go visit these places.*

### **Theme: The most important reason to visit a Midpen preserve is to benefit their family**

*"It [nature preserve] is a great way to bring their kids to this natural places. You can teach them about nature, you can teach them about the birds that are out there. You can teach them about what is going on with climate change. "*

*"They [their family] did it once.... And it's a really interesting activity for families to go hiking together.*

*"It's a good way to teach your kids to preserve nature"*

*"We visit parks mostly with our family, old and young"*

*"It [visit to preserves] would be good for these kids"*

*"We just want [Midpen] to talk about the different options you have for family activities."*



### **Theme: A low cost or free preserve entry fee is very important and can influence visitation**

*"Yeah, I mean it's [entry fee] important for low income families, because obviously most families have multiple children and sometimes they charge by person, per person. So, it adds up. Let's say it's five dollars per person and there's five different kids in a group, there's 25 to 30 dollars. That's just extra income, an extra bill for an activity they could just not go out and not spend that money."*

*"A while back they used to do that [visit]. I don't know at what park, but they used to collectively go together to do explorative groups, but now they [park] charge. They made it a business type model and now that free aspect isn't there. So, that would be nice to have free group together."*

## Theme: Nature (Midpen) preserves provide many benefits

- Subtheme A: Physical health

“She'd like to share that it's really important, the idea of more hiking. It's not only a nice place to see, but it's also good for your body, and family to exercise together.”  
 “He's saying is what he likes is all the green that we have right here, because this helps us with the oxygen. Helps us filter all the stuff that the factories are around here”  
 “Every year they go clean parks, adults and youth in her church.”  
 “Just different health aspects, it's not just for your mental health. It's for your physical health.”



- Subtheme B: Good for kids

“You can teach your kids about the responsibilities that they have for the nature or preserve our nature, spaces and everything cleaning.”  
 “You just go to enjoy yourself and your family.”  
 “It [visit to preserves] would be good for these kids, right. So, we need to take care of kids and the time now is very crazy. A lot of kids are with their telephone always. We want to start to give kids alternatives.”

- Subtheme C: Good for mental wellbeing

“I mean it's a good feeling to be around these nature areas”  
 “These places specifically bring a lot of memories for Latino people, because a lot of our families are from these locations of rural places. And so you visit these spaces [natural areas] and it transports you back to childhood, when there was natural birds, and animals, and plants, and things like that back in their home countries.”  
 “You're at peace. There's not a lot of cars, people, all what we see in the city.”  
 “It makes you feel free”  
 “You are disconnected and you enjoy the view and the scenery. Just being in a natural place”  
 “It's a place where she goes to distress, relax, and hangout, because she's not stressed out by like, oh someone's going to run over my daughter. It's just a place where it's relaxing”  
 “I really like the volunteer aspect of it [going to preserves]”  
 “She's saying this life, fast-paced life we live and everything, and stress, she knows a lot of people that suffer from chronic anxiety. And, so, she's saying that from now on she's going to try to tell people about this place, because that's a great way to disconnect and clear your mind.”

- Subtheme D: They are good for the environment

“He's saying is what he likes is all the green that we have right here, because this helps us with the oxygen. Helps us filter all the stuff that the factories are around here”

## Theme: There are significant barriers to visiting Midpen preserves

- Subtheme A: Lack of information about preserves and in their language

“Never has she known about these preserves and things that they should do, what options and things to do, like that”  
 “They need more information”  
 “It's hard, especially for people who doesn't speak English to look for this information [about preserves]”  
 “First of all, they need to know about them and also a means to get there, because these preserves are normally usually pretty far from where the city is.”  
 “Guided walks with school kids in preserves”

- Subtheme B: Personal safety

“The least that I don't like about preserves, is the safety, because I really love it. I really love to go to those places, but when you start to walking in those places, when you are a little bit far, it makes you feel, well in my experience, it makes you feel insecure.”

“There is good and bad animals and what that means in bad is that they're dangerous”

“He went with his family and there were a couple of rattlesnakes and those are really dangerous for children”

“What happens if there is like an animal that is savage, what am I going to do?”

“I would like to enjoy the nature and all this preserves, but I'm afraid.”

“Because you don't know exactly what kinds of persons go there. There are a lot of good people, but at the same time there are people that are no good. You don't know completely what's going to happen. Some people go alone and sometimes you want to go alone. You want to connect with the nature, but it's hard to do that.”

- Subtheme C: Lack transportation

“Transportation [to preserve] would be something that she advocates for, because there's some families that want to go, but transportation is a barrier. So, transportation must be at a really low cost or free, for more families to have the opportunity to see or look at these places”

“Set up car pools at school”

“Set up car pools through a Facebook page”



- Subtheme D: Cost of entry

“It's [entry fees] are a problem for low income families because obviously most families have multiple children and sometimes they charge by person, per person. So, it adds up. Let's say it's five dollars per person and there's five different kids in a group, there's 25 to 30 dollars. That's just extra income, an extra bill for an activity they could just not go out and not spend that money.”

- Subtheme E: Don't feel welcome in parks

“He felt racially profiled and hassled by police in the park so he doesn't go any more.”

“As soon as you enter the park from there on they would ask for an ID. Or like go, “If you don't have an ID you can't come into the park”.”

- Subtheme F: Other barriers

“Are there bathrooms at the preserves? There needs to be.”

“It has a lot of waste animal, animal waste in there, especially in Half Moon Bay in the years past. I think she's talking about the geeses go there and it's not real clean sometimes.”

## **Theme: Midpen can do things to encourage the Latino community to visit preserves**

- Subtheme A: Create information about preserves in Spanish

“I know they love the material [Midpen brochure] and everything, but if you don't have anything in Spanish, what is the use to try and engage the Latino population.”

“I don't know if they have brochures in Spanish. I've never seen them in Spanish. And the website, that is not in Spanish.”

“We need to have a website in Spanish and have the map in Spanish.”



- Subtheme B: Outreach to the Latino community

“You have to go into the [Latino] community and explain, because people, if you just pass out brochures, half of the time if you don't explain something, they're not going to pick it up or they're not going to use it.

But if you give some small explanation, they're going to spark an interest and say, hey, they know who to come with, who to speak to, and then they will participate for that reason.”

“Leaving information [Midpen brochures in Spanish] with churches, is a really good idea, it's been proven that if you just ask the priest, depending you have to gauge with the priest or whatever, but giving them announcements and finding someone who can translate that information into the Latino community.”

“That it would be nice for there to be follow up after these [focus group] suggestions, because a lot of the time institutions or agencies or people who come and speak for our advice or our suggestions, it's just a conversation and at that level it stays.”

“It's a good thing for you to share this information with the [Nuestra Casa] group.”

“She's just saying give that some follow up [to this focus group], because that's the only way we will begin to continue to engage and then want to continue participating in these community.” conversations.”

“We just want [Midpen] to talk about the different options you have for family activities and that's it.”

“It would be a good idea for all of us to take a walk and a hike and for them [Midpen] to be able to tell and show us.”

“She's asking that you guys have a plan to have more meetings [presentations] about it [preserves]. More focus groups about this thing? She would like to pass this information to her people.”

“I did feel that it was a lot of misunderstandings of it[preserves], if it was a camping place or different type of thing. If there's a PowerPoint or something. This is what exactly what is this [preserves] and this is what a city park is or ... Too see a difference between everything.”



- Subtheme C: Ways to reach the Latino community – Work with schools



“If you want to that this information get to the [Latino] community, especially the Latino, is good idea to go to the schools.”

“They take the kids from the school to these spaces”

“Get the word [about preserves] with school. It is a great way to reach us.”

“She knows some of the kids at school go in the morning to these events [at parks]. It would be nice to involve more of the parents.”

- Subtheme D: Ways to reach the Latino community – Collaborate with churches

“Working with the church or something like that with the church. He thinks that it's good idea.”

“Every year his church goes to camp in La Honda and they say it's about 300 people.”

“Every year youth in her church they go clean parks.”

“We're going to a catholic church and they have a teenager group. Like every month they go to parks.”

“Offer camping for groups”

- Subtheme E: Ways to reach the Latino community – Other ways for outreach

“For me, it's going to the library, because it's a lot of people you meet there at the library, kids also. It's more free, it's not mixed up with religion.”

“I think that in that [local gas] station will be a good place, because a lot of people from this area gets gas at it.”

“Place information in Spanish in local health care clinics”

“Have presentations at the Fair Oaks Community Center.”

- Subtheme F: Improve facilities

“To put restrooms where there are none. I'm thinking of families. Usually families it's more harder.”

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are a direct result of the data analysis of focus group responses. The recommendations presented below are from the perspective of the Latino Nuestra Casa community members, and they may or may not be different from the general public or other types of preserve users.

1. Increase outreach to the Latino community. Many do not even know Midpen preserves exist, what they offer, or they cannot distinguish them city or national parks.
2. Provide brochures, webpages, signs and public presentations in Spanish
3. Capitalize on the strong interest in visiting Midpen preserves among the Latino community
4. Offer programs in Spanish in preserve that cater to families, especially children
5. Maintain free entry into preserves to encourage visitation
6. Encourage walking in preserves for physical health
7. Offer programs for kids with their parents, which teaches about the environment
8. Communicate opportunities for women to hike in small groups in order to get away
9. Develop ways to help Latino women and men overcome fears about their personal safety in preserves
10. Provide free or low cost transportation from the central city to preserves.
11. Help some in the Latino community to feel more welcome to visit preserve
12. Add a few more restrooms.
13. Expand outreach to the Latino community through schools, churches, clinics and libraries.
14. Recognize the Latino community is very appreciative of efforts to communicate with them.

## Conclusions and Closing Thoughts

SFSU has the following conclusions and thoughts about the Nuestra Casa focus group. It is important to note the participants in this focus group were Latinos, preferred the dialog to be in Spanish, of a wide age range, and mostly women. It appeared that very few or none of the participants had ever visited a Midpen preserve.

Very few in the East Palo Alto Latino community know about or have visited Midpen preserves. The District needs to conduct extensive outreach to inform them about the opportunities and to distinguish preserves from other recreation and park sites. Explain in a simple concise way how Midpen preserves differ from city and other parks.

There are significant constraints which must be overcome or minimized in order to foster preserve visitation by the inner city Latino community. Barriers include: Lack of information about the preserves, misunderstandings about what can be done in preserves and their entry fees; fear about personal safety in preserves (especially among Latinas); lack of transportation to get to preserves which are perceived as “remote;” lack of discretionary income; and not feeling welcome or even racially profiled.

But there was enthusiastic interest by the Latino community to visit a Midpen preserve in the future. Participants especially thought preserves would offer opportunities for families to recreate together and promoted their health. The district should conduct more outreach to the Latino community and develop more programs in Spanish that encourage first time visitation to the preserves. Continue collaborations with Latino Outdoors to offer guided hikes, and combine this with transportation to preserves. The District could also make a special effort to recruit bilingual volunteers and docents for outreach and in-preserve programming.

Work with organizations in the inner city Latino community, such as public schools, churches, libraries and community groups (like Nuestra Casa) with a high Hispanic membership/use to get the word out about the preserves. These are trusted sources that can effectively reach the Latino community.

Develop pages on the district website that are in Spanish, in addition to the current district brochure in Spanish. This is a very important requirement to be able to work effectively with the Latino community in the Bay Area. Make presentations to the community in Spanish. Have some signs at the preserves in Spanish.

There are tremendous opportunities for the District to increase visitation by members of the Latino community to their preserves. The district is already working on some of these but more staff time and funding will be needed to optimize this opportunity to diversify preserve users.

## APPENDICIES





**APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER**



**YOU ARE INVITED:  
WE WANT TO HEAR  
YOUR VOICE!**

**JOIN US FOR A FOCUS GROUP**

This session is open by invitation only.  
Food will be provided! Receive a  
**\$25 gift card**  
for your time and active input!

The **Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MidPen)** is working with San Francisco State University to learn about your interest in parks, and any experiences you've had in their reserves and other parks in the Bay Area; what you like most and least; what could be done to encourage you to visit more; and what could improve your experiences in **MidPen** open space preserves.

*We want to hear from YOU! Learn more about **MidPen** while helping them to better assist your community -*

**Email a confirmation you will participate to:**



Dr. Patrick Tierney: [ptierney@sfsu.edu](mailto:ptierney@sfsu.edu)  
(415) 338-4534

**Tell us what  
you think  
about MidPen  
Open Space  
Preserves!**

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**Location: Nuestra  
Casa conference room,  
2396 University Ave, East  
Palo Alto, CA**

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**January 8, 2018**

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- **Sign-in and lite dinner at 6:15pm.**
- **Focus group starts promptly at 6:45 & ends by 8:45**

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## APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### MROSD PRESERVE VISITOR USE STUDY:

#### Nuestra Casa Focus Group Protocol for January 8, 2018

#### *Welcome & Introductions*

Hi, my name is [*Patrick Tierney*] I am a professor in the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Department at San Francisco State University. This is [\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ *a student in the RPT Department*]. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us today and agreeing to be part of this focus group on Midpeninsula Open Space preserves. Tonight when I say “Midpen”, I mean Midpeninsula Regional Open Space Preserves. We’ll do group introductions regarding who you are in a few minutes. This conversation will last about an hour and a half and will be recorded. We would like to record this conversation so we can use the recording to transcribe notes. The recording will be kept in a secure location and will not be used for any other purpose other than this project. [*Does anyone has any issues/problems with being audio-taped?*].

Thank you for completing the pre-focus group survey just now. That information is helpful for us to understand more about who is participating. This survey information will only be presented in summary form. No names will be associated with any of that information. No Midpen staff are present here tonight so you should feel free to voice your opinions about Midpen open space preserves. No names will be associated with any of the comments you make during this interview. When you signed in today, there was a number next to your name, you’ll use that when you want to make a comment, which I’ll explain in a moment.

I will be leading the conversation today and [*student*] will be taking notes. I am going to go over a few details before we start. If you have any questions, please ask as they come up.

#### *Purpose of the Focus Group*

We are working in partnership with the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to better understand their open space preserve users’ attitudes, experiences, use patterns, and preferences and to identify reasons why people don’t visit more often. The information you share will help Midpen learn how to reduce barriers to visiting the preserves and determine how well they are supporting their strategic plan and contributing to their long-term goals. In addition, the information you provide can help improve existing park resources and services to meet community needs. Your participation is key as this group represents the ideas of [*young people user group*]. We welcome your input and your voice matters to Midpen so we need you to be honest with us and share your thoughts and opinions openly.

I am passing around a map showing the locations of the Midpen preserves. We are currently helping them gather information on 21 preserves that are open to the public. Note that the preserves are located outside of cities but in the surrounding areas. We are not talking about city parks. The Midpen preserves protect wildlife, native plants, vistas and provide outdoor recreation opportunities. Do you have any questions about what are Midpen preserves or where they are located?

### **Guidelines**

Has anyone ever participated in a focus group? *[Ask for show of hands]*. For some people being in a focus group can be a new experience. We'll first discuss general ground rules that can help ensure a safe environment where everyone's ideas are shared and valued, and to ensure we capture what everyone says on the recorder and in our notes. Again, your name will not be attached to your comments, only a number.

1. **WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING.** We need everyone to participate and talk to each other as you are comfortable. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
2. **THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.** Every person's experiences and opinions are important. We want to hear what each of you think and feel about parks, in general, and within MCP in particular. If you're not familiar with parks and preserves in MCP, respond based on your knowledge of whatever parks come to mind for you. You don't need to agree with others, but please listen respectfully to different points of view. If you do agree with what someone says, please speak up, rather than nodding your head or gesturing in some other way. This helps us capture agreement in the notes. Also, if someone else says something that reminds you of something or sparks a thought, please feel free to follow their comments with your own.
3. **WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE.** Everything you tell us today is anonymous. That means we will not share anything you say with your name attached. While we might use quotes or ideas that you share, as mentioned, we will never use your name in any way.
4. **ONE MIC/1 NUMBER:** Please speak one at a time – this will help us capture everyone's thoughts and opinions. Before you make your comment, simply state your number first (which is on your name tag) then go for it. For example, I may raise my hand and say, "Number five: I think that parks need to have more..." If you forget to state your number, I might ask you for it.
5. **STEP UP STEP BACK.** If you have shared a lot, step back to allow others to share.

Are there any questions before we begin?

**Icebreaker:** Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves then we'll turn on the recorder after this. Please state your first name and your favorite outdoor recreation activity, if do it in a park or open space preserve, and why it is interesting to you.

*[When done, student assistant turns on digital recorder and begins typing notes on laptop].*

### ***[Nuestra Casa] RESPONDENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS***

***As we move forward, it would be best to reply to the question as it relates to Midpen preserves, if you're not able to that's fine. Comments about any park experience are appreciated.***

1. How many of you know what a Midpen open space preserve is? It's ok if you don't.
2. In the last 6 months, how many of you visited any Midpen open space preserve? Any one not?
3. Please share a sample of activities you like to do in Midpen open space preserves (MCP).

4. Which Midpen preserves do you like to go most often? Why do you prefer these Midpen locations?
5. How have your most recent Midpen experiences made you feel? Explain
6. What do you like the most about Midpen?
7. If you have not gone to Midpen preserve in the last 6 months or ever, please explain why. Did you go at one time and have you stopped using Midpen locations altogether? Why?
8. What do you like least about Midpen parks and open space preserves?
9. Do you have any suggestions for Midpen management to improve your experiences in Midpen open space preserves
10. Are there things that Midpen could do which increase the likelihood of you visiting a Midpen open space preserve? Please explain.
11. How might these suggestions be implemented?
12. Are there any other concerns or needs you would like to share with Midpen [*ideas, volunteer or employment opportunities*]

***Tier 2 - If Time, Address the Following Questions***

- a) Any ideas for other locations where Midpen can reach the Latino community? – what might you suggest and why?
- b) What transportation options do you have to get to a Midpen preserve?

**Does anyone have anything else to add based on what we've talked about or something else you'd like to share?**

***Closing & Wrap Up***

*[Research assistant turns off digital recorder, note-taking ends].*

Thank you all again for participating in this important conversation. The information you provided is significant and meaningful and can really help improve [\_\_\_\_\_] use throughout the Midpen preserve. If you are interested in the results and findings of this conversation, a summary report can be sent out to you upon request. If so, please give your name and email address, or postal address, to our student assistant.

In appreciation of your time, [Michala] will be distributing [a \$25 gift card] as a *thank you*. In order to receive this gift card we need you to please sign our receipt log for the university accounting purposes only.



# PESCADERO FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Midpen Visitors  
Study



**Prepared For:** Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

**Prepared By:** Patrick Tierney, PhD  
Professor

**Email:** [ptierney@sfsu.edu](mailto:ptierney@sfsu.edu)



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### Appendices

Appendix A. Recruitment flyer

Appendix B. Focus group protocol and questions

## INTRODUCTION

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen), in partnership with Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor at San Francisco State University (SFSU), is conducting a Midpen Visitor Study. The overall purpose of the study is to assess visitor satisfaction, motivation, stewardship interests and future demands, for potential decision making. The study also aimed to offer recommendations for preserve programs, facilities, policies, and innovative ways to enhance community engagement and access. The study consists of two parts: Part I are intercept and follow-up surveys; while Part II consists of focus groups with specific community groups. This report represents the procedures and results of one focus group interview with eight Latina residents of the Pescadero area. Assistance in organizing the focus group was provided by the Puente de la Costa community organization. It was held April 23, 2018 at the Pescadero Elementary School Library in the Town of Pescadero.

For more information about the purpose and scope of the research contact Joshua Hugg, Government Affairs Specialist for Midpen, at (650) 691-1200 or [jhugg@openspace.org](mailto:jhugg@openspace.org). Questions about the focus group process, data analysis or findings can be directed to Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor and principal investigator, at (415) 338-2030 or [rpt@sfsu.edu](mailto:rpt@sfsu.edu).

### **Special thanks to a community partner**

This project could not have been possible nor successful without the help and support of Lina Mira, program director of Puente de la Costa. She helped us find and recruit participants in this focus group, and translated the discussions. We wish to express our thanks to her.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Phase II Overview**

The focus group interview part of this study aimed to capture the experiences of Midpen district residents of the Pescadero Latino community who may or may not have used Midpen preserves. The choice of this user group and the initial contact for Puente community were provided by Joshua Hugg with Midpen. He and Midpen staff believed the opinions and motivations from this group, and from upcoming focus groups could benefit future planning of the district preserves and services.

### **Preparation**

#### ***Development of Collateral Materials & Procedures***

Dr. Tierney created the materials needed to successfully set up and facilitated the focus group, such as focus group recruitment flyer (in Spanish), focus group protocol, and interview questions. He also set up a table and recruited participants at the April 19 Science Night at Pescadero Elementary School. The Puente community leader supported the Science Night event and followed-up with interested persons to remind them before the event.

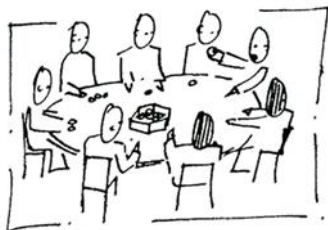
Dr. Tierney also developed a participant sign-in sheet, log for signatures acknowledging receipt of gift cards, and sign-up sheet for Midpen (e.g., anyone requesting a copy of the final report or wish to



be added to mailing list). Other materials used during the focus groups were name tags, map of Midpen preserves, and Safeway gift cards (purchased). Participants were also provided a lite dinner and refreshments at the start of the focus group. Many participants did not speak English fluently, and the facilitator was not fluent in Spanish, so Puente staff translated questions from Dr. Tierney into Spanish and responses from participants into English.

## Focus Groups

### What occurred, why, and how?



A focus group is a small group of four to fifteen people, ideally, led through an open discussion by a skilled moderator. The group needs to be large enough to generate rich discussion, but not so large that some participants are left out or a few people dominate the conversation. Additionally, the groups should be homogenous as homogeneity levels the playing field and reduces inhibitions among people who come together for the purpose of a group interview.

Focus groups can reveal a wealth of detailed information and deep insights. When well executed, a focus group creates a welcoming environment that allows participants to feel at ease and encourages thoughtful, honest answers providing added meaning to question responses. As a valid methodology, focus groups were chosen as one approach to elicit the thoughts, feelings, experiences, and recommendations residents of the Latino community in Pescadero. In addition, focus groups have the ability to generate rich qualitative data that comes from individual participants engaging in deep conversation, potentially capturing themes that would be missed from other, more quantitative, methods. Furthermore, focus groups foster a safe place for participants to be open and honest.

Dr. Tierney was the focus group moderator/facilitator who asked initial questions and nurtured disclosure in an open and honest format. The goal was to generate a maximum number of different opinions, experiences, attitudes, and ideas from as many people in the group in the time allotted. As reflected in the protocol that follows, the focus groups were structured around a set of carefully predetermined questions but the discussion was free-flowing. That is, participant comments stimulated and influenced the thinking and sharing of others.

### Recruitment: Where did participants come from?

This study used a convenience sampling method of adults attending the Pescadero Science Night event to recruit focus group participants. At this event 10 persons indicated they were interested in participating, who were occasional to non-users of Midpen preserves. The recruitment flyer in Spanish is shown in Appendix A. Focus group participants were rewarded with a \$25 gift card to Safeway as an incentive to participate. Additionally, participants were informed a e litdinner-type meal would be provided and thirty minutes was allotted for general socializing (e.g., “meet and greet”) prior to the official start time of the interview process.



## Focus Group Protocol

The focus group protocol used for this study was created by the Dr. Tierney, based on past experience, and included a description of the overall study, participant guidelines, focus group questions, and logistical information. Focus group questions were developed by him based on models from prior studies and questions that were desired from the Midpen staff. A set of two-tiered questions were developed in which Tier 1 questions were the priority and focused on visitors' use, experiences, and recommendations. If additional time remained, Tier 2 questions were asked. Tier 1 questions asked participants about their most recent preserve experience, types of activities they undertake on Midpen open space preserves, how these activities make them feel, where they like to go most often in Midpen, what they like most about their recent experiences in Midpen preserves, what they like least, and any suggestions for Midpen management to improve their experience. The final focus group protocol and questions used during the Pescadero focus group is available in Appendix B.

## Data Collection

The Pescadero focus group had eight participants. As participants arrived at the location, the facilitator asked them to sign a participant sign-in sheet requesting their demographic information. They then enjoyed the lite meal provided, during which comfort and rapport was established by the investigator. After a half hour the investigator introduced himself and described how the questions would be translated from English to Spanish and vice versa. Lina Mira of Puente was the translator. Then he facilitated the interview process, beginning with a general ice breaker to get the group thinking about preserves and park use or non-use, and using the protocol and questions (Appendix B). All prepared questions were asked within the 90-minute time allotted and the facilitator was responsible for getting all participants to talk and fully explain their answers using helpful probes (e.g., "Can you say more about that?"; "Help us understand what you mean?" and "Can you give an example?"). The investigator demonstrated active listening and occasionally paraphrased long or ambiguous comments, or sought clarification for analysis purposes and/or summarized responses for the whole group.

The facilitator recorded the focus group using his Apple iPhone. Body language or other subtle relevant clues were recorded via typed notes. Audio files were uploaded to a secure computer for storage and backed up. The audio recording was then transcribed into a Word document by Rev.com.

At the end of the focus group, participants were thanked and each person received the incentive (gift card) that required a signature on the receipt log for accounting purposes.



## Data Analysis & Transcription

The demographic characteristics of these participants were gathered at the focus group location. Results are summarized in Table 1.

In order for all participant comments to be understandable and useful, the transcript was analyzed using a systematic and verifiable process. Hence, the investigator completed a manual content analyses process by first identifying question content categories and emerging themes with groupings entered into a Word document. Subsequently, the investigator extracted and explored common themes. The major findings from participants' comments are summarized in the results section that follows and includes a series of direct quotes highlighting relevant responses.

The investigator completed the final examination of the transcriptions. Results were reviewed and synthesized to ensure accuracy of themes and supporting quotes. The themes and conclusions presented in this report were reviewed twice by the investigator before the report was finalized.



Dr. Tierney recruiting at Science Night in Pescadero

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Many valuable findings were revealed by this focus group interview process. It is important to note that 88% of participants in this focus group were not familiar with Midpen preserves, and they may have been thinking about, and referring to, trails located outside of Midpen preserves. Although maps of Midpen were provided at the focus group and the facilitator discussed some unique characteristics and uses in preserves versus other types of parks, there were uncertainties about the preserve locations.



There is a chance that some parks outside Midpen's were considered. Generalizing preserve/park experiences is not uncommon to occur within focus group interviews. The parks literature explains the difficulty for people in differentiating between lands/trails of adjacent park agencies. This further accentuates the need for park agencies to work together; and, this reveals the increasing importance to share such park use/non-use interview results with other park managers as well.

### Participant Characteristics

As participants were seated for the focus group they were asked to provide data on their age, sex, ethnicity and occupation. This was the source for the following demographic data about the four focus group participants. This was a group of persons who had not visited Midpen preserves.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Average Age	42 years
Age Range	19-64 years
Sex	
Male	12%
Female	88%
Ethnicity	
Latino/a	100%
Occupation	
Mother	88%
Professional	12%

## EMERGING THEMES: PESCADERO LATINO MEMBERS

An analysis of focus group responses produced the following themes and illustrative participant comments.

### Theme: The Latino Community in Pescadero is not familiar with Midpen preserves

-None of the participants had ever visited a Midpen preserve. Only one person had even heard about Midpen preserves.

-When the facilitator asked if they'd heard about La Honda preserve, located about 8 miles from the town and which had publicity for its recent grand opening, none of the respondents had heard of it"

"I don't go because I don't know where they are or the entrances or what it takes for me to go"

"We would not go because we didn't know it [preserve][existed]"

"Are there any specific hours to visit these places [preserves]?"

### Theme: There is strong interest in going to Midpen preserves

-Every single focus group participant indicated they want to visit a Midpen preserve in the future.

"Everybody's interested in going "

### Theme: Observing and protecting nature are strong reasons for visiting preserves

"Observe nature, like what has been there before, like the trees and the rivers that have maintained itself throughout the years"

"Taking care of it [nature and preserves]"

"There's a misconception about what Latino people do or don't do and that we might not care and have the knowledge to talk about climate change, but we do. We do care about the environment."

"Exploring nature interests me"

"Visiting with my family, my children and helping them learn"

"Just enjoy nature because we don't have that here [in town]"

"Well, for me, I would imagine the difference between being around nature here [in town] and calling nature [at nearby] Memorial [County] Park. That's a big difference. More trees, more plants in preserves."

"I'd go to look at the plants, observe the plants, the wild flowers"

"If it [preserve] was in any way touched or destroyed, they [participants] would not like that"

"With no bathrooms [in many preserves], am I gonna contaminate nature?"



### Theme: An important reason to visit a Midpen preserve is to benefit their children

"I would go with my kids, my family"

"The kids here are like inside and just don't get out into nature"

"My children would be interested about the animals or the wildlife that's there so that if they spot it they can say, "Oh, I saw that."

"Kids would be running, playing [in preserves]. They like that"

"They'd learn about nature"



### Theme: A low cost or free preserve entry fee is very important and can influence visitation

"These places [preserves] are free and that is great."

"You don't have to spend a lot of money to go"

### Theme: Nature (Midpen) preserves provide many benefits



- **Subtheme A: Physical health**

"I like walking"

"The air is different than in the city.... It's fresher over there at Memorial Park"

"My son rides his bike"

"I'd probably go hiking"

"We have a lot [of nature] all around us but we don't [get out to] enjoy it. People come from over the hill but we don't go nearby. Yeah, it's true"



- **Subtheme B: Good for mental wellbeing**

"In a preserve I'd feel happy and free"

"My son would have a big smile on his face"

"I'd be calm, relaxed"

"You can hear the birds"

**Theme: Local Hispanic people don't feel unwelcome to visit preserves**

-The facilitator asked if people in the community felt welcome to visit preserves.

-Respondents said most people don't know about Midpen, but they also had not heard anything bad about Midpen

"I think that the people from this community would feel welcome there because we have contact with nature already"

"We haven't heard of anybody saying, "Oh, they don't like me there or they don't want me there"

**Theme: There are significant barriers to visiting Midpen preserves**

- **Subtheme A: Lack of information about preserves**

"We would not go because we didn't know it [preserve][existed]"

"More information is needed. It would be good if you had more information [about preserves in area]."

"I don't go because I don't know where they are or the entrances or what it takes for me to go"

"Can you take food on your hikes? Or is there places where you can sit and eat?"

"More information in Spanish"

- **Subtheme B: Personal safety**

"This brochure shows they [preserves] don't have bathrooms. Where do you go?"

"What would we do if there was an accident? What would happen if I got hurt by an animal or I got ... I broke a wrist or something?"

"[Visit] By myself, no. Unless someone comes out with me I wouldn't go"

"There are pumas and snakes"

"Do they have plants that are poisonous? Maybe my child touching it and not knowing. I don't have the understanding. People getting into plants that might have poison"

"There're snakes, rattlesnakes in some parts. They are a problem because if you're walking and you don't see them"

"There's pumas or mountain lions out there that you don't feel safe or have a lot of trust in going out there"

"I could get lost"

- **Subtheme C: Lack transportation**

-The facilitator asked the group if transportation to preserves was an issue. All participants agreed that lack of transportation was a large issue.

"Maybe some don't know how to drive, they won't have a ride up there"



- **Subtheme D: Too busy with family and job**

"I can't visit because I work and I have an infant"

"I have too busy of a schedule, I have kids"

- **Subtheme E: Other barriers**

"I see trash on the trails. People leaving mattresses, chairs or tires"

"I might not know how to read the maps"

"I don't have a phone or internet"

**Theme: Midpen can do things to encourage the Latino community to visit preserves**

- **Subtheme A: Create information about preserves in Spanish**

-All respondents agreed they'd like materials in Spanish

"I prefer the information in Spanish"

- **Subtheme B: Organize docent-led tours with transportation and knowledgeable Spanish speakers**

"Give kids information about the animals or the wildlife that's there so that if they spot it they can say, "Oh, I saw that."

"We in Puente want to partner up [to offer hikes] because we want to offer these resources to people"

"Puente would be interested in working again with Latino Outdoors [to offer docent-led hike]. The last time they only gave us two days advanced notice. They do it with the whole family. And we have a van"

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are a direct result of the data analysis of focus group responses. The recommendations presented below are from the perspective of the Latino Pescadero community members, who have never visited a Midpen preserve. Their ideas may or may not be different from the general public or other types of preserve users.

1. Increase outreach to the Latino community. Only one of the participants even knew Midpen preserves exist, what they offer, or how to get to them.
2. In-person presentations by Midpen in their community would be the most effective way to get information to them and encourage Latino residents to visit. Over half of the group members did not have internet access.
3. Provide brochures signs and public presentations in Spanish
4. Capitalize on the strong interest in visiting Midpen preserves among the Latino community
5. Offer programs for children and families
6. Develop ways to help Latino women and men overcome fears about their personal safety in preserves
7. Offer docent-led tours for families in the preserves, with transportation included
8. Add restrooms. Or at least better inform people if and where they are available

9. Work with community non-profit organizations, such as Puente, and schools
10. Recognize the Latino community is very interested in visiting preserves and protecting them.

## Conclusions and Closing Thoughts

The following conclusions and thoughts about the Pescadero focus group build upon the participant responses. It is important to note the participants in this focus group were Latinos, preferred the dialog to be in Spanish, of a wide age range, and mostly women. None of the participants had ever visited a Midpen preserve. So the facilitator instructed them to consider what Midpen preserves, with a mission of protecting nature and offering ecologically responsible recreation, would be like, what they could do there and what would be a barrier to them visiting.

The most important over-riding factor influencing visitation is the Pescadero Hispanic community does not know about Midpen preserves. The District needs to conduct extensive outreach to inform them about the opportunities and to distinguish preserves from other recreation and park sites. There is strong interest in visiting preserves, once they know about them.

There are significant constraints which must be overcome or minimized in order to foster preserve visitation by the Pescadero Latino community. Barriers include: Lack of information about the preserves, misunderstandings about what can be done in preserves (can they bring food; are their restrooms, etc.); fear about personal safety in preserves (especially among Latinas); lack of transportation to get to preserves even though some are less than 10 miles away; and concerns about dangerous animals and poisonous plants in preserves.

But there was enthusiastic interest by the Latino community in Pescadero to visit a Midpen preserve in the future. Participants especially thought preserves should offer opportunities to be in and learn about nature. The district should conduct in-person presentations in the Pescadero community about the preserves and what there is to do. Internet-based communication seems to not be very effective with this community. Develop more programs/tours in Spanish that encourage first time visitation to the preserves. Encourage collaborations with Latino Outdoors and Puente de la Costa to offer guided hikes, and combine this with transportation to preserves. Recruit local Spanish speaking volunteers to lead hikes after providing training.

Work with organizations in the community, such as public schools, churches and community groups (like Puente) with high Hispanic membership/use to get the word out about the preserves. These are trusted sources that can effectively reach the Latino community.

Develop pages on the district website that are in Spanish to reach younger Hispanic residents, in addition to the current district brochure (which is in Spanish). Each preserve should have a Spanish version of its website. This is a very important requirement to be able to work



effectively with the Latino community in the Bay Area. Make presentations to the community in Spanish. Have some signs at the preserves in Spanish.

There is strong interest in visiting and tremendous opportunities for the District to increase visitation by members of the Latino community to their nearby preserves.

## **APPENDICIES**

### **APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER**



USTED ESTÁ INVITADO:

¡QUEREMOS ESCUCHAR  
SU OPINIÓN!

**OBTENGA \$ 25**

ÚNASE A NOSOTROS EN UN GRUPO DE  
ENFOQUE

El Distrito Regional de Espacios Abiertos de la Península Central (MidPen) está trabajando con el Dr. Patrick Tierney en la Universidad Estatal de San Francisco para conocer sus intereses y experiencias en las reservas naturales MidPen y otros parques en esta área, lo que le gusta y lo que más le disgusta, lo que le impide visitar y lo que cree que podría mejorar sus experiencias en las reservas de espacios abiertos de MidPen.

*¡Queremos conocer SU opinion! Conozca más acerca de MidPen a la vez que se les ayuda a ayudar mejor a su comunidad ~*

**Correo electrónico:**  
**[adrift650@comcast.net](mailto:adrift650@comcast.net) to register**

SON BIENVENIDOS LOS NO VISITANTES DE MIDPEN RESERVES

EL ESPACIO ES LIMITADO, ASÍ QUE REGÍSTRESE AHORA

**¡Díganos lo que  
piensa sobre  
MidPen Open  
Space Preserves!**

**Ubicación: Escuela Primaria  
Pescadero, 620 North Street,  
Pescadero**

**23 de Abril, del 2018**

- **Registro y refrigerio a las 6:15 pm.**
- **El grupo focal comienza puntualmente a las 6:45pm y termina a las 8:00pm**



## **APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL**

### **MIDPENINSULA OPEN SPACE VISITOR USE STUDY:**

#### ***Welcome & Introductions***

Hi, my name is [*Patrick Tierney*] I am a professor in the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Department at San Francisco State University. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us today and agreeing to be part of this focus group on Midpeninsula Open Space preserves. Tonight when I say “MidPen”, I mean Midpeninsula Regional Open Space Preserves. We’ll do group introductions regarding who you are in a few minutes. This conversation will last about an hour and a half and will be recorded. We would like to record this conversation so we can use the recording to transcribe notes. The recording will be kept in a secure location and will not be used for any other purpose other than this project. [*Does anyone has any issues/problems with being audio-taped?*].

Thank you for completing the pre-focus group survey just now. That information is helpful for us to understand more about who is participating. This survey information will only be presented in summary form. No names will be associated with any of that information. No MidPen staff are present here tonight so you should feel free to voice your opinions about MidPen open space preserves. No names will be associated with any of the comments you make during this interview. When you signed in today, there was a number next to your name, you’ll use that when you want to make a comment, which I’ll explain in a moment.

I will be leading the conversation today. I am going to go over a few details before we start. If you have any questions, please ask as they come up.

#### ***Purpose of the Focus Group***

We are working in partnership with the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to better understand their open space preserve users’ attitudes, experiences, use patterns, and preferences and to identify reasons why people don’t visit more often. The information you share will help MidPen learn how to reduce barriers to visiting the preserves and determine how well they are supporting their strategic plan and contributing to their long-term goals. In addition, the information you provide can help improve existing park resources and services to meet community needs. Your participation is key as this group represents the ideas of the local *Hispanic community*. We welcome your input and your voice matters to MidPen so we need you to be honest with us and share your thoughts and opinions openly.

I am passing around a map showing the locations of the MidPen preserves. We are currently helping them gather information on 21 preserves that are open to the public. Note that the preserves are located outside of cities but in the surrounding areas. We are not talking about city parks. The Midpen preserves protect wildlife, native plants, vistas and provide outdoor recreation opportunities. Do you have any questions about what are MidPen preserves or where they are located?

#### ***Guidelines***

Has anyone ever participated in a focus group? *[Ask for show of hands]*. For some people being in a focus group can be a new experience. We'll first discuss general ground rules that can help ensure a safe environment where everyone's ideas are shared and valued, and to ensure we capture what everyone says on the recorder and in our notes. Again, your name will not be attached to your comments, only a number.

1. **WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING.** We need everyone to participate and talk to each other as you are comfortable. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
2. **THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.** Every person's experiences and opinions are important. We want to hear what each of you think and feel about parks, in general, and within MCP in particular. If you're not familiar with parks and preserves in MCP, respond based on your knowledge of whatever parks come to mind for you. You don't need to agree with others, but please listen respectfully to different points of view. If you do agree with what someone says, please speak up, rather than nodding your head or gesturing in some other way. This helps us capture agreement in the notes. Also, if someone else says something that reminds you of something or sparks a thought, please feel free to follow their comments with your own.
3. **WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE.** Everything you tell us today is anonymous. That means we will not share anything you say with your name attached. While we might use quotes or ideas that you share, as mentioned, we will never use your name in any way.
4. **ONE MIC/1 NUMBER:** Please speak one at a time – this will help us capture everyone's thoughts and opinions. Before you make your comment, simply state your number first (which is on your name tag) then go for it. For example, I may raise my hand and say, "Number five: I think that parks need to have more..." If you forget to state your number, I might ask you for it.
5. **STEP UP STEP BACK.** If you have shared a lot, step back to allow others to share.

Are there any questions before we begin?

**Icebreaker:** Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves then we'll turn on the recorder after this. Please state your first name and your favorite outdoor recreation activity, if do it in a park or open space preserve, and why it is interesting to you.

*[When done, student assistant turns on digital recorder and begins typing notes on laptop].*

### ***[YLI] RESPONDENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS***

***As we move forward, it would be best to reply to the question as it relates to MidPen preserves, if you're not able to that's fine. Comments about any park experience are appreciated.***

1. How many of you have heard about a MidPen open space preserve prior to this focus group invitation? It's ok if you have not.
2. In the last 6 months, how many of you visited any MidPen open space preserve? Any one not?
3. Please share a sample of activities you like to do in MidPen open space preserves, or if not visited Midpen, in other nature areas.

4. Which MidPen preserves do you like to go most often? Why do you prefer these MidPen locations?
5. How have your most recent MidPen (or nature area) experiences made you feel? Explain
6. What do you like the most about MidPen?
7. If you have not gone to MidPen preserve in the last 6 months or ever, please explain why. Did you go at one time and have you stopped using MidPen locations altogether? Why?
8. What do you like least about MidPen parks and open space preserves?
9. Do you have any suggestions for MidPen management to improve your experiences in MidPen open space preserves
10. Are there things that MidPen could do which increase the likelihood of you visiting a MidPen open space preserve? Please explain.
11. How might these suggestions be implemented?
12. Do you feel welcome to visit a Midpen preserve?
12. Are there any other concerns or needs you would like to share with MidPen [*ideas, volunteer or employment opportunities*]

***Tier 2 - If Time, Address the Following Questions***

- a) What is the reputation of Midpen in the local community?

**Does anyone have anything else to add based on what we've talked about or something else you'd like to share?**

***Closing & Wrap Up***

*[Research assistant turns off digital recorder, note-taking ends].*

Thank you all again for participating in this important conversation. The information you provided is significant and meaningful and can really help improve [\_\_\_\_\_] use throughout the MidPen preserve. If you are interested in the results and findings of this conversation, a summary report can be sent out to you upon request. If so, please write your name and email address, or postal address, on this sheet.

In appreciation of your time, I will be distributing [a \$25 gift card] as a *thank you*. In order to receive this gift card we need you to please sign our receipt log for the university accounting purposes only.

**(PT) I want to thank *Lina Mira* for helping organize this event and translating tonight. Here is a small donation to Puente for their assistance.**

***Equipment & Supplies Checklist***

- 1) Sign in sheet
- 2) Participant incentive log / accounting sheet
- 3) Name tags
- 4) Protocol copies
- 5) Question copies
- 6) Audio recording devices (2 iPhones), chargers
- 7) Gift cards
- 8) Visual charts, graphs, maps & brochures
- 9) Writing utensils: pens, pencils, sharpies
- 10) Money for caterer
- 11) Mailing list sheet
- 12) Laptops, chargers
- 13) Thank you card
- 14) Bring donation (money) for host/room rental (have receipt for it), if room not paid in advance.
- 15) Large map of the district
- 16) District brochure showing preserves

# SAN MATEO SENIORS FOCUS GROUP REPORT

A Component of the Midpen Visitors Study



**Prepared For:** Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

**Prepared By:** Patrick Tierney, PhD  
**Email:** [adrift650@comcast.net](mailto:adrift650@comcast.net)



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### Appendices

Appendix A. Recruitment flyer

Appendix B. Focus group protocol and questions



## INTRODUCTION

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen), in partnership with Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor of recreation, parks and tourism at San Francisco State University, is conducting a study of Midpen preserve users and non-users. The overall purpose of the study is to assess visitor satisfaction, motivation, stewardship interests and future demands, for potential decision making. It also aims to provide recommendations for preserve programs, facilities, policies, and innovative ways to enhance stewardship, community engagement and access. The study consists of two parts: Part I were intercept and follow-up surveys; while Part II consists of focus groups with specific community groups. This report presents the procedures and results of one focus group interview with seven senior residents of San Mateo County, who were recruited by the Michelle Makino of the San Mateo County Health Systems Aging and Adult Services. This focus group was held March 7, 2018 at 801 Gateway Center in South San Francisco. In this report a reference to “Midpen trails” means trails in Midpen Open Space Preserves.

For more information about the purpose and scope of the research contact Joshua Hugg, Government Affairs Specialist for Midpen, at (650) 691-1200 or [jhugg@openspace.org](mailto:jhugg@openspace.org). Questions about the focus group process, data analysis or findings can be directed to Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor and principal investigator, at (650) 255-2536 or [adrift650@comcast.net](mailto:adrift650@comcast.net).

### **Special thanks to a community partner**

This project could not have been possible nor successful without the help and support of Michelle Makino, Program Services Manager, San Mateo County Health Systems Aging and Adult Services. She helped us find and recruit participants in this focus group and secured the location. We wish to express our thanks to her.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Phase II Overview**

The focus group interview part of this study aimed to capture the experiences of Midpen district senior residents in San Mateo County. Several participants were members of the County Commission on Aging. Participants could have been persons who may or may not have visited Midpen preserves. The choice of this user group and the initial contact for this older adult community were provided by Joshua Hugg with Midpen. He and Midpen staff believed the opinions and motivations from this group, and from upcoming focus groups could benefit future planning of the district preserves and services.

### ***Development of Collateral Materials & Procedures***

Dr. Tierney created the materials needed to successfully set up and facilitate the focus group, such as focus group recruitment flyers, focus group protocol, and interview questions. The San Mateo senior community leader was asked to recruit potential participants for the focus group. Dr. Tierney created

an invitation and recruitment flyer. Michelle forwarded it to persons, and she confirmed persons attending the focus group. At the focus group Dr. Tierney showed maps of Midpen preserves and facilitated the focus group. Active participants were provided with a \$25 Safeway Stores gift card at the end of the event.

Dr. Tierney used a participant sign-in sheet, log for signatures acknowledging receipt of gift cards, and sign-up sheet for Midpen (e.g., anyone requesting a copy of the final report or wished to be added to mailing list). Other materials used during the focus groups were name tags and map brochures of all Midpen preserves. Dr. Tierney also provided a lite meal and refreshments at the start of the focus group to encourage attendance and thank the participants.

## Focus Groups

### What occurred, why, and how?



A focus group is a small group of four to fifteen people, ideally, led through an open discussion by a skilled moderator. Dr. Tierney was the focus group moderator/facilitator who asked initial questions and nurtured disclosure in an open and honest format. The goal was to generate a maximum number of different opinions, experiences, attitudes, and ideas from as many people in the group in the time allotted. As reflected in the protocol that follows, the focus groups were structured around a set of carefully predetermined questions but the discussion was free-flowing. That is, participant comments stimulated and influenced the thinking and sharing of others.

### Recruitment: Where did participants come from?

This study used a convenience sampling method employed a community leader to enlist members of the San Mateo Commission on Aging and other seniors as focus group participants. This community leader recruited 7 participants, some of whom were occasional users of Midpen preserves, while a most were not familiar with Midpen. Dr. Tierney developed the recruitment flyer shown in Appendix A. Focus group participants were rewarded with a \$25 gift card to Safeway as an incentive to participate. Additionally, participants were informed a lite meal would be provided and thirty minutes was allotted for general socializing (e.g., “meet and greet”) prior to the official start time of the interview process.



### Focus Group Protocol

The focus group protocol used for this study was created by the Dr. Tierney, based on past experience, and included a description of the overall study, participant guidelines, focus group questions, and logistical information. Since some participants were not familiar with Midpen preserves, Dr. Tierney handed-out a Midpen brochure showing the locations of all preserves to all participants, and referred to a large map showing district boundaries and preserve locations. At the start of the focus group he also presented a brief general introduction to what Midpen offers and how their preserves are different from city, county and national parks. Focus group questions were developed based on models from prior studies and questions that were desired from the Midpen staff. A set of questions were developed which focused on visitors’ use, experiences, and recommendations. If persons had not visited a Midpen preserve, they were asked to consider a visit

to another nature preserve, such as a national park or wildlife refuge. Questions asked participants about their most recent preserve experience, types of activities they undertook, how these activities make them feel, where they like to go most often in Midpen or nature preserves, what they like most about their recent experiences in the preserve, what they like least, and any suggestions for Midpen management to improve their experience. The final focus group protocol and questions used during the San Mateo Seniors focus group are available in Appendix B.

## **Data Collection**

The San Mateo Seniors focus group had seven participants. As participants arrived at the location, the facilitator asked them to sign a participant sign-in sheet requesting their demographic information. They then enjoyed the lite meal provided, during which comfort and rapport was established by the investigator. After a half hour the investigator introduced and described how the proceedings would go. He started the interview process, beginning with a general ice breaker to get the group thinking about preserves and park use or non-use, and used then the protocol and questions (Appendix B). All prepared questions were asked within a 120 minute time period and the facilitator was responsible for getting all participants to talk and fully explain their answers using helpful probes (e.g., “Can you say more about that?”; “Help us understand what you mean?” and “Can you give an example?”). The investigator demonstrated active listening and occasionally paraphrased long or ambiguous comments, or sought clarification for analysis purposes and/or summarized responses for the whole group.

The facilitator recorded the focus group using his Apple iPhone. Body language or other subtle relevant clues were recorded via typed notes. At the end of the focus group, participants were thanked and each person received the incentive (gift card) that required a signature on the receipt log for accounting purposes. If any participants wanted to receive the final report, or expressed interest in being put on a Midpen mailing list, they were asked to indicate that on the sign-in sheet. Audio files were uploaded to a secure computer for storage and backed up.



## **Data Analysis & Transcription**

The demographic characteristics of these seven participants were gathered at the sign-in for the focus group. Results are summarized in Table 1. The focus group discussions were captured via audio recordings. The facilitator moderated, while the discussions were recorded. The interview was then transcribed verbatim by an outside contractor, Rev.com, and verified by Dr. Tierney.

In order for all participant comments to be understandable and useful, they were analyzed using a systematic and verifiable process. Hence, the investigator completed a manual content analysis process by first identifying question content categories and emerging themes with groupings entered into a Word document. Subsequently, the investigator extracted and explored common themes. Supporting quotes for each theme were placed under the appropriate section to illustrate what participants stated. The principle investigator then used themes and quotes to develop recommendations.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Many valuable findings were revealed by this focus group interview process. It is important to note that the majority of participants in this focus group were familiar with Midpen preserves, but had not visited in the last six months. Although maps of the Midpen were provided at the focus group and the facilitator discussed some unique characteristics and uses in preserves, there were uncertainties about the preserve resources and locations.



There is a chance that some parks outside Midpen's were considered. Generalizing preserve/park experiences is not uncommon to occur within focus group interviews. The parks literature explains the difficulty for people in differentiating between lands/trails of adjacent park agencies. This further accentuates the need for park agencies to work together; and, the increasing importance to share such park use/non-use interview results with other park managers as well.

### **Participant Characteristics**

As participants were seated for the focus group they were asked to provide data on their age, sex, ethnicity and occupation and if they had visited a Midpen preserve. This was the source for the following demographic data about the seven focus group participants. Table 1 suggests this was a group of active older adults who visited parks but had not been to a Midpen preserve in the last six months to a year. Four of the seven participants has visited a Midpen preserve at some point.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Total Number of Participants	7
Average Age	69 years
Age Range	55-77 years
Sex	
Male	14%
Female	86%
Ethnicity	
Caucasian	71%
Asian	29%
Occupation	
Retired	43%
Professional	57%

## EMERGING THEMES: SAN MATEO SENIORS

An analysis of focus group responses produced the following themes and illustrative participant quotes.

### **Theme: The Senior Community in San Mateo County is generally not familiar with Midpen preserves**

- Two of the seven focus group participants could name a Midpen preserve they had visited in the last six months or ever before.

"People don't know about them for the most part. I mean the district has been around for 45 years now but people aren't aware of that"

"It's (Midpen preserves) the best kept secret around"

"There is a very large component of healthy seniors that probably if they knew more about where these wonderful places (preserves) are located would probably take advantage of this"

"The preserves are not widely promoted enough and known enough"

### **Theme: Hiking, looking at scenery and wildlife observation are by far the most common activities by seniors in preserves**

"It's walking for exercise"

"Just walking. It's just a great pleasure and also identifying some plants."

"I go not just to walk but to see if I can find animals or flowers or something beautiful so I can take a picture"

"I like to observe birds. If I see them and then really try to identify the species"

"I enjoy walking and the fresh air"

"There are great views"

"I spent a lot of time at Purissima Redwoods"

"Newts are one of my favorites and banana slugs out there"

"There are a number of places where you can see, on a clear day, you can see San Francisco and San Jose"

"But it's also we have a lot of trails around the ocean so if you are lucky you can see a whale or dolphins"



### **Theme: Senior populations will increase dramatically in the future**

"One of the things that just blows my mind is within 15 years, one third of your adult population is going to be over 65"

"94% of your (population) growth in the next 15 years is going to be in the over 65 category as people are aging into that and the young people kind of can't afford to move in here"

"I think once again as a whole growing cohort of people, we (seniors) need to be listened to more"

### **Theme: Midpen preserves provide many benefits**

- **Subtheme A: Good for mental wellbeing**

"It's an antidote to the stress of living in the crowded suburban areas"

"Being in the redwoods is the feeling of being away in a very deep sense that I don't get anywhere else."

"Open Space increases your happiness by tenfold"

"Open Space is not just the exercise but the spiritual connectiveness with nature"

"For me it's a mind, spirit and body experience and I never want to go home"

"It just gives you an opportunity to clear your mind of everything except how beautiful the world really is"

"I like the feeling of the sky and the visual freedom and I feel that it enhances my feeling that I'm free"

- **Subtheme B: Physical health**

"I go for walking, for exercise"

"I know walking and exercise works for me"

- **Subtheme C: Other benefits**

"I love history and evolution of this whole area"

"Bringing your dogs, that's one of the things that draws me"

"What I really like about the Open Space is fewer people, fewer dogs"

**Theme: Midpen preserves offer a different kind of experience and visitors need to be prepared for it**

"It (Midpen preserve) is just a different experience because it is warm nature without the frills"

"If you want to go you need to realize there are not bathrooms every where and signs and you need to be more prepared."

**Theme: There are significant barriers to visiting Midpen preserves**

- **Subtheme A: Transportation**

"I see transportation right up there with marketing as your challenges"

"I think that transportation (to preserves) needs to be improved especially for seniors"

"Many seniors don't have cars, some should not be driving and more seniors are disabled"

"Midpen preserves are remote and hard to get to"

"I think that there is a great concern about seniors continuing to drive and to get to these spots (preserves)"

"Accessibility and transportation is a problem"

"It is more logistics in terms of traffic and planning and requires a whole day to go to Midpen"

- **Subtheme B: Personal Safety**

"It's always in the back of my mind, am I going to be safe (in the preserves)?"

"You hear about people being bothered in these areas because they are isolated and I'm thinking, "It's not going to be me." That's why I haven't gone"

"I'm always thinking about safety a little bit and not having, once again engaged in all this great opportunities, I'm thinking is it going to really be safe"

"We are older and we know that we're not as agile as we used to be and I think maybe not having the knowledge and the information about the safety factors, when we hear so much about (safety) problems"

"I'm a senior, but I'm a woman first. These parks are a little more remote in terms of a local park, state park or just a trail that the city has or Golden Gate National Park has created, so it's a different kind of atmosphere, and you don't always have a buddy to go with you."

"I don't want to be attacked, because you are very vulnerable (in preserves), especially if you happen to try cross somewhere where there is not very good people"

"I don't like snakes. And then they always have those signs often at the beginning that say Bobcats, what are those other things (mountain lions)?"

"I wouldn't not do any of these (preserves) because I'm a senior, without a buddy"

"If somebody falls and you need to call somebody how do you reach help and tell them where you are?"

"I avoid being in the wilderness by myself"

- **Subtheme C: No one to go to preserve with**

"You don't always have a buddy to go with you"

"I'm always thinking about safety a little bit and not having, once again engaged in all this great opportunities"

"Several of my friends said they would never go because they had no one to go with"

"One of my friends suggested she'd love to go to all of these places but could there be a walking group, that type of thing, so that their aloneness isn't a factor"



- **Subtheme D: Lack of easy and disabled-accessible trails and information about them**

“There needs to be more attention to what trails are conducive for seniors or access for disability people”  
 “Our park is right in the middle of senior living center but both accesses are steep up hill and there’s just no way for seniors to access it, no matter how much we've been working with them to try to get the entrance to be more level ... so seniors just can't really utilize it.”  
 “How do we make this (preserve) accessible to everyone not just the young and healthier?  
 “My husband and I were just hiking a couple of weeks ago up in Oregon; not only do they have the designated common trail difficulty levels but also they put the number of miles to benchmarks”

- **Subtheme E: Traffic on roadways**

“Traffic is a big deterrent (to visiting preserves), therefore I go to closer ones (parks)”  
 “Traffic is a huge issue and my window for when I'm willing to go out has shrunk, it's now down to about 9:30 to 3 and it used to be 9 to 4 and it's soon going to be 10 to 2:30 ”

- **Subtheme F: Other barriers to visitation**

“I also think about bathroom facilities and is there a place on the trails”  
 “That (lack of restrooms) can be an issue or a barrier to someone going on because of basic needs”  
 “Signage is so important because you can so easily get lost. I would say good signage so you can't get lost”  
 “I don't like dogs and they are allowed”  
 “If somebody plays really loud music, I probably would rather not go to this place.”  
 “I like to have somewhere to stop and sit (on a bench)”

**Theme: Management issues**

“We have issues with the dogs being off leash and their waste not being picked up”  
 “They need good signage so you can't get lost”  
 “What really bothers me especially if I'm on a hiking trail with s (horse droppings)”

**Theme: Conflict between developing and improving preserves**

“I wouldn't want open space to change its mission and the mission is to maintain open space. I think (some changes can be made) within limitations maybe some of them where terrain, easier terrain, could be morphed into more trails for seniors or disabled or adults with children.”  
 “I don't want any of them (Midpen preserves) to go away and alter them in a way because we will have developed parks”  
 “Are we trying to turn this (preserve) into a city park?”  
 “But if you want to bring more in and access folks and more facilities then you are kind of at odds with (Midpen preservation) goals”



**Theme: Improve transportation options for seniors**

“Most cities have senior centers who are looking for options for their older adults and have vans”  
 “Connect with the Paratransit coordinating council”  
 “SAMTRANS options are very limited so need to seek other transportation options for seniors”  
 “Engage in churches so they sponsor a bus that would take a group of people to some of the open space”  
 “Choose senior centers in different cities that are maybe close by (to preserves)”  
 “Encourage transportation partnerships by having a church day or a community service day where they are going to take a bus to Midpen”

**Theme: Midpen can do things to encourage the older adult community to visit preserves**

- **Subtheme A: Improve facilities**

“Select some terrain (trail) changes or something like better signs, some benches or something that would be more user friendly, but not to go beyond that”

“Should we be asking for them to have more cell towers in the preserves, to get reception even in remote areas?”

“I suggest having a designated place to have lunch, with tables and benches”

“Improve signage in preserves”

- **Subtheme B: More better pre-visit information and signage in preserves**

“A lack of signage, in my opinion, is reducing the guest experience and also in terms of safety concerns”

“More interpretative signage”

“Trail heads could use some more information. The back of the map could be more specific on what wildlife you could possibly see”

“Use the app Visit where you download maps to your smartphone before you go to the preserve and use its maps to determine where you are on a trail”



- **Subtheme C: Improved services to the senior community**

“Docent led tours for seniors”

“Identifying both easy trails, as well as access point centers for people with mobility issues”

“I think that it will really be useful to have a universal (trail difficulty) rating system”

“Have the common trail difficulty levels and put the number of miles to junction or attraction”

“Test if signs are easy to understand by having some lay people who are not planners, come up and give you some feedback”

“Train seniors to lead a hike to whatever extent the liability was comfortable”

“Help people preview what their experiences are going to be like with video cams (in preserves)”

- **Subtheme D: Ways to reach the older adult community**

“I don't think there is one way to reach seniors. You got to do it in many ways all in bits and pieces”

“Maybe major employer HR departments should give employees something digital ... here is a map of Midpeninsula open space preserves to get out to use them”

“The preserves are not widely promoted enough and known enough”

“Midpeninsula could work with other organizations within the county to help them with information”

Examples:

“Every community has a senior center, and you could make presentations there”

“Senior villages (housing communities) to make presentations and handout info”

“Community rec centers”

“Open Space committee in Pacifica”

“San Mateo County Commission on Aging”

“YMCA”

“Senior lunch programs”

“Distribute their brochures at REI”

“Churches”

“Music and art festivals and fairs”

“Midpeninsula should be out there with their maps (and brochures) and having the representatives go and spread the word because obviously we don't feel educated about it”

“In whatever advertisement vehicles you have use pictures of seniors hiking would be really important”

“I would rather they use that money to buy open space than want them to print brochures”





## Recommendations

The following recommendations are a direct result of the data analysis of focus group responses. The recommendations presented below are from the perspective of the San Mateo senior community members, and they may or may not be different from the general public or other types of preserve users.

1. Increase outreach to the senior community. Many do not even know Midpen preserves exists, what they offer, or they have inaccurate mental images of them.
2. Prepare for the number of healthy seniors will increase dramatically in San Mateo County in the next 10-20 years.
3. Develop more communications with the senior community as there are now a large number of healthy seniors that would visit if they knew more about them
4. Offer docent-led hikes to overcome substantial personal safety concerns of first time visitors about use of preserves
5. Increase transportation options to preserves for seniors by partnering with community organizations. Many seniors lack transportation to preserves.
6. Encourage walking and wildlife observation in preserves for mental wellness and physical health
7. There is a need to communicate to seniors that Midpen preserves offer a different kind of experience from a city park and seniors need to be more prepared to visit them
8. Develop an easy to identify trail steepness and difficulty rating system to help seniors find suitable trails. Many are looking for easier trails.
9. Help many older adults overcome their substantial barriers to visiting preserves. Some have safety concerns about visiting them, are afraid of getting lost.
10. Develop senior group programs. Some senior are afraid to visit preserves alone and lack persons to go with.
11. Make only moderate improvements to preserves, such as better signage, more benches and smooth the surface of a few shorter trails to accommodate seniors and others with limited mobility
12. Add a few more restrooms.
13. Partner with senior-focused community organizations to communicate with their members about Midpen preserves and provide transportation to them.

## Conclusions and Closing Thoughts

Dr. Tierney has the following conclusions and thoughts about the San Mateo focus group. It is important to note the participants in this focus group were active seniors with an average age of 69, they were generally unaware of Midpen preserves but had a strong interest in visiting, if important barriers could be mitigated.

Populations of older adults in San Mateo is projected to increase dramatically in the next 10-20 years. The district should increase services and make a few important facility modifications to provide equal access for many of these seniors and increase visitation among under-served older adults.

The most important action the District should take is to conduct outreach to inform older adults about the opportunities, preserve locations, and to distinguish preserves from other recreation and park sites. This includes providing better communications about trail difficulty ratings, and offering easy trails with flatter terrain and smoother surfaces (including the existing district easy trail webpage). But not all seniors are the same, some are fully able to enjoy challenging trails on their own but others are certainly not.

The second greatest barrier to visiting is a lack of public and private transportation to Midpen preserves which are considered “remote.” Rather than seeking large increases in public transportation (SAMTRANS) to the more remote preserves, partner with senior-focused community organizations to communicate with their members about Midpen programs and provide transportation to them (weekdays and off-peak times). Community senior centers, private and public senior villages (housing centers) and senior lunch programs appear to be the most logical and effective partners to offer transportation to preserves for under-served seniors.

There are considerable fears, especially among older women, about their personal safety in preserves. This includes concerns about weird or dangerous visitors, wild animals, about falling and being injured with no means of communications, and getting lost in preserves. A substantial number lack partners to visit with and are unwilling to go without another person. Therefore, the third most important action the district could take for under-served seniors are developing and promoting docent-led group hikes in preserves with other seniors. These appear to offer one of the most effective ways to over-come personal safety concerns of first-time or infrequent senior visitors. Many senior support organizations are also interested in providing new healthy activities for their clients. These would be natural partners to co-develop and communicate such programs.

Many seniors want only moderate facility improvements, while others expect “city park” type facilities. The modifications desired that appear to be most aligned with Midpen’s mission of preservation and restoration are: Changes to select trails which are naturally flatter while going through visually interesting and shaded terrain. This would include smoothing the surface with placement of gravel; installation of comprehensive way-finding signage, and installation of benches, event picnic tables and restrooms at a shaded appropriate site along the trail. A higher percentage of seniors have disabilities so such trails could also expand accessible opportunities. These trails would have to be well identified and communicated, both before, at the start and during their visit, to allow what most seniors want; to be able to identify, access, select and enjoy appropriate trails on their own if they so choose.

Most seniors were not looking for high tech solutions to their concerns, many wanted more personal touch programs and sources of information. But a considerable number of seniors indicated they regularly use social media, the internet and specialized apps. They wanted a better district website for their needs. Both a high touch and a few high tech alternatives would be appreciated by older adults.

Seniors consider themselves a great volunteer resource that the District could tap into. Many are willing to help in less physical ways, such as spreading the word to other seniors, communicating information to preserve visitors, being another pair of eyes in the preserves, and providing input into planning processes. Seniors are another resource the District could employ, even more than they currently do.

## APPENDICIES

### APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER



YOU ARE INVITED:  
WE WANT TO HEAR  
YOUR VOICE!

JOIN US FOR A FOCUS GROUP

This session is open by invitation only.  
Food will be provided! Receive a  
\$25 gift card  
for your time and active input!

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MidPen) is working with Dr. Patrick Tierney to learn about your experiences in their reserves and other parks in the San Mateo area, what you like most and least, and what you think could improve experiences by older adults in MidPen open space preserves.

*We want to hear from YOU! Learn more about MidPen while helping them to better assist your senior community ~*

Email a confirmation you will participate to:

Dr. Patrick Tierney: [adrift650@comcast.net](mailto:adrift650@comcast.net)

**Tell us what you**  
**think about**  
**MidPen Open**  
**Space Preserves!**

**Location: 801 Gateway**  
**Blvd., go to 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor,**  
**South San Francisco, CA**

**March 7, 2018**

- **Sign-in and lite snack at 9:15am.**
- **Focus group starts promptly at 10:00 & ends by 11:45**



## APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### MIDPEN PRESERVE VISITOR USE STUDY:

#### San Mateo Seniors Focus Group Protocol for March 7, 2018

#### *Welcome & Introductions*

Hi, my name is [Patrick Tierney] I am a professor of recreation, parks and tourism at SFSU. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us today and agreeing to be part of this focus group. We'll do group introductions regarding who you are in a few minutes. This conversation will last about an hour and a half and will be recorded. We would like to record this conversation so we can use the recording to transcribe notes. The recording will be kept in a secure location and will not be used for any other purpose other than this project. *[Does anyone has any issues/problems with being audio-taped?]*.

No MROSD staff are present here tonight so you should feel free to voice your opinions about MROSD preserves. No names will be associated with any of the comments you make during this interview. When you signed in today, there was a number next to your name, you'll use that, which I'll explain in a moment.

I will be leading the conversation today. I am going to go over a few details before we start. If you have any questions, please ask as they come up.

#### *Purpose of the Focus Group*

We are working in partnership with the MROSD to better understand open space preserve users' attitudes, experiences, use patterns, and preferences and to identify reasons why people don't visit more often. The information you share will help the district determine how well they are supporting their strategic plan and contributing to their long-term goals. In addition, the information you provide can help improve existing preserve resources and services to meet community needs. Your participation is key as this group represents the ideas of *[members of the South Bay Asian Community]*. We welcome your input and your voice matters to the District so we need you to be honest with us and share your thoughts and opinions openly.

#### *Guidelines*

Has anyone ever participated in a focus group? *[Ask for show of hands]*. For some people being in a focus group can be a new experience. We'll first discuss general ground rules that can help ensure a safe environment where everyone's ideas are shared and valued, and to ensure we capture what everyone says on the recorder and in our notes. Again, your name will not be attached to your comments, only a number.

1. WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING. We need everyone to participate and talk to each other as you are comfortable. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
2. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. Every person's experiences and opinions are important. We want to hear what each of you think and feel about parks, in general, and within MCP in particular. If you're not familiar with parks and preserves in MCP, respond based on your knowledge of whatever parks come to mind for you. You don't need to agree with others, but please listen respectfully to different points of view. If you do agree with what someone says, please speak up, rather than nodding your head or gesturing

in some other way. This helps us capture agreement in the notes. Also, if someone else says something that reminds you of something or sparks a thought, please feel free to follow their comments with your own.

3. **WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE.** Everything you tell us today is anonymous. That means we will not share anything you say with your name attached. While we might use quotes or ideas that you share, as mentioned, we will never use your name in any way.
4. **ONE MIC/1 NUMBER:** Please speak one at a time – this will help us capture everyone’s thoughts and opinions. Before you make your comment, simply state your number first (which is on your name tag) then go for it. For example, I may raise my hand and say, “Number five: I think that parks need to have more...” If you forget to state your number, I might ask you for it.
5. **STEP UP STEP BACK.** If you have shared a lot, step back to allow others to share.

Are there any questions before we begin?

**Icebreaker:** Let’s go around the room and introduce ourselves then we’ll turn on the recorder after this. Please state your first name and your favorite MROSD preserve.

*[Turn on digital recorder].*

### **SAN MATEO SENIOR FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

***Generic Discussion Questions, Tier 1 - (As we move forward, it would be best to reply as it relates to Midpen Open Space preserves, if you’re not able to that’s fine. Comments about any preserve and park experiences are fair game.***

1. Have you heard of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space Preserves before learning about this focus group? If so, can you give me an example of a preserve?
2. In the last 6 months, have each of you visited any Midpen preserve for any purpose? Any one not? If not, have you visited a nature area, such as a state, national or county park or wildlife refuge?
3. Please share a sample of activities you like to do in Midpen preserves. If not visited Midpen, what activities do you like to do in nature areas?
4. Which Midpen preserves do you most like to visit? Why do you prefer to do these activities at these locations?
5. How have your most recent MidPen preserve experiences made you feel? Or if never visited Midpen, how do visits to other nature areas make you feel. Explain
6. What do you like the most about the MidPen preserves? If not visited Midpen, what do you like most about other nature areas you have visited? Explain.
7. If you have not visited a Midpen preserve in the last 6 months, please explain why. Have you stopped using MidPen altogether? Why?

8. What do you like least about visiting MidPen preserves? Or if you never visited Midpen, what do you like least about nature areas? Why?
9. Would you like to visit a Midpen preserve in the future? Why or why not?
10. Do you have any suggestions for MidPen management to improve your past preserve experiences, or encourage you to try visiting a MidPen open space preserve for the first time? Please explain.
11. How might these suggestions be implemented?

**Does anyone have anything else to add based on what we've talked about or something else you'd like to share?**

***Closing & Wrap Up***

*[Turn off digital recorder].*

Thank you all again for participating in this important conversation. The information you provided is significant and meaningful and can really help improve visitor experiences throughout the MidPen preserves. If you are interested in the results and findings of this conversation, a summary report can be sent out to you upon request. If so, please give your name and email address, or postal address, to our student assistant.

In appreciation of your time, I will be distributing [a \$25 gift card *incentive*]. In order to receive this gift card we need you to please sign our receipt log for the university accounting purposes only.

**(PT) I want to thank *Michelle Makino* for helping organize and translating this event. (Give thank you card to participant organizers).**



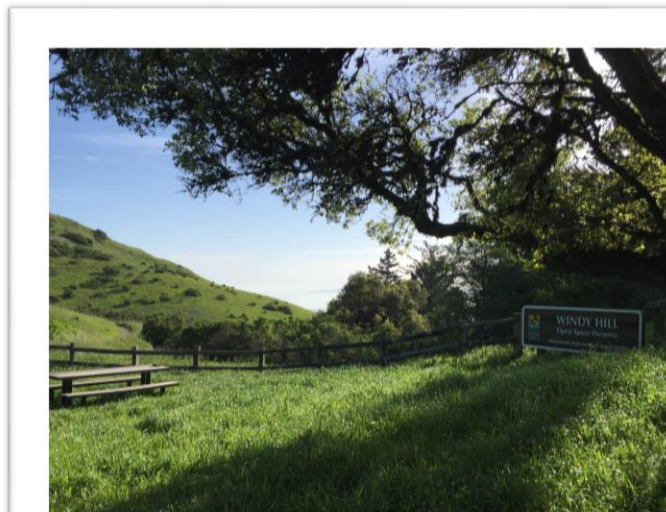
# PALO ALTO SENIORS FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Midpen Visitors  
Study

**Prepared For:** Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

**Prepared By:** Patrick Tierney, PhD  
Professor

**Email:** [adrift650@comcast.net](mailto:adrift650@comcast.net)





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### Appendices

Appendix A. Recruitment flyer

Appendix B. Focus group protocol and questions

## INTRODUCTION

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen), in partnership with Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor of recreation, parks and tourism, is conducting a Visitor Study of Midpen users. The overall purpose of the study is to assess visitor satisfaction, motivation, stewardship interests and future demands, for potential decision making. The study also aimed to offer recommendations for preserve programs, facilities, policies, and innovative ways to enhance community engagement and access. The study consists of two parts: Part I are intercept and follow-up surveys; while Part II consists of focus groups with specific community groups. This Palo Alto, Santa Clara County, Seniors Report presents the procedures and results of one focus group interview with ten senior members of Avenidas, a support and enrichment program for older adults in Palo Alto, who were recruited by the Tracy McCloud, Director of Avenidas. This focus group was held April 11, 2018 at the Cullerley Community Center, 4000 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto.

For more information about the purpose and scope of the research contact Joshua Hugg, Government Affairs Specialist for Midpen, at (650) 691-1200 or [jhugg@openspace.org](mailto:jhugg@openspace.org). Questions about the focus group process, data analysis or findings can be directed to Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor and principal investigator, at (650) 255-2536 or [adrift650@comcast.net](mailto:adrift650@comcast.net).

### **Special thanks to a community partner**

This project could not have been possible nor successful without the help and support of Tracy McCloud, Director of Avenidas. She helped us find and recruit participants in this focus group and secured the location. We wish to express our thanks to her.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Phase II Overview**

The focus group interview part of this study aimed to capture the experiences of Midpen district senior residents of Santa Clara County and the City of Palo Alto. All participants were members the Avenidas and/or Palo Alto community. Participants could have been persons who may or may not have used Midpen preserves. The choice of this user group and the initial contact for this older adult community were provided by Joshua Hugg with Midpen. He and Midpen staff believed the opinions and motivations from this group, and from upcoming focus groups could benefit future planning of the district preserves and services.

### **Preparation**

#### ***Development of Collateral Materials & Procedures***

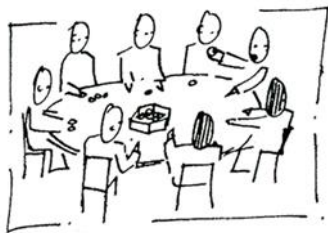
Dr. Tierney created the materials needed to successfully set up and facilitate the focus group, such as focus group recruitment flyers (see Appendix A), focus group protocol, and interview questions. A Palo Alto senior community leader was asked to recruit potential participants for the focus group. Dr. Tierney sent an invitation and recruitment flyer, she forwarded it to interested persons, and she confirmed people attending the focus group. Active participants were promised a \$25 Safeway Stores gift card at the end of the event. Additionally, participants were informed a lite meal would

be provided and thirty minutes was allotted for general socializing (e.g., “meet and greet”) prior to the official start time of the interview process.

At the event Dr. Tierney provided each participant with a Midpen brochure showing all preserves, used a participant sign-in sheet, and a log for signatures (acknowledging receipt of gift cards). Other materials used during the focus groups were name tags and a display map of Midpen preserves. Dr. Tierney also provided a lite meal and refreshments before the start of the focus group.

## Focus Groups

### What occurred, why, and how?



A focus group is a small gathering of four to fifteen people, ideally, led through an open discussion by a skilled moderator. Dr. Tierney was the focus group moderator/facilitator who asked initial questions and nurtured disclosure in an open and honest format. The goal was to generate a maximum number of different opinions, experiences, attitudes, and ideas from as many people in the group in the time allotted. As reflected in the protocol that follows, the focus groups

were structured around a set of carefully predetermined questions but the discussion was free-flowing. That is, participant comments stimulated and influenced the thinking and sharing of others.

### Recruitment: Where did participants come from?

This study used a convenience sampling method that enlisted the director of Avenidas center for seniors in Palo Alto to recruit focus group participants. This community leader recruited 10 participants, all of whom were at least somewhat familiar with Midpen preserves, while a few were frequent visitors.



### Focus Group Protocol

The focus group protocol used for this study was created by the Dr. Tierney, based on past experience, and included a description of the overall study, participant guidelines, focus group questions, and logistical information. Since some participants were not familiar with Midpen preserves, Dr. Tierney handed-out a Midpen brochure showing the locations of all preserves to all participants, and referred to a large map showing district boundaries and preserve locations. At the start of the focus group he also presented a brief general introduction to what Midpen offers and how their preserves are different from city, county and national parks. Focus group questions were developed based on models from prior studies and questions that were desired from the Midpen staff. A set of questions were developed which focused on visitors’ use, experiences, and recommendations. If persons had not visited a Midpen preserve, they were asked to consider a visit to another nature preserve, such as a national park or wildlife refuge. Questions asked participants about their most recent preserve experience, types of activities they undertake, how these activities make them feel, where they like to go most often in Midpen or nature preserves, what they like most about their recent experiences in the preserve, what they like least, and any suggestions for Midpen

management to improve their experience. The final focus group protocol and questions used during the Palo Alto Seniors focus group is available in Appendix B.

## **Data Collection**

The Palo Alto Seniors focus group had ten participants. As participants arrived at the location, the facilitator asked them to sign a participant sign-in sheet requesting their demographic information. They then enjoyed the lite meal provided, during which comfort and rapport was established by the investigator. After a half hour the investigator introduced and described how the proceedings would go. He started the interview process, beginning with a general ice breaker to get the group thinking about preserves and park use or non-use, and using the protocol and questions (Appendix B). All prepared questions were asked within a 120 minute time period and the facilitator was responsible for getting all participants to talk and fully explain their answers using helpful probes (e.g., “Can you say more about that?”; “Help us understand what you mean?” and “Can you give an example?”). The investigator demonstrated active listening and occasionally paraphrased long or ambiguous comments, or sought clarification for analysis purposes and/or summarized responses for the whole group.

The facilitator recorded the focus group using his Apple iPhone. Body language or other subtle relevant clues were recorded via typed notes. Audio files were uploaded to a secure computer for storage and backed up.

At the end of the focus group, participants were thanked and each person received the incentive (gift card) that required a signature on the receipt log for accounting purposes. If any participants wanted to receive the final report, or expressed interest in being put on a Midpen mailing list, they were asked to indicate that on the sign-in sheet.



## **Data Analysis & Transcription**

The demographic characteristics of these ten participants were gathered at the focus group location. Results are summarized in Table 1.

The focus group discussions were captured via audio recordings. Unfortunately, the recorder stopped part way through the session and the facilitator later recalled and wrote out highlights of the conversations not recorded. The facilitator moderated, while the discussions were recorded. The portion of the interview that was recorded, was later transcribed verbatim by an outside contractor, Rev.com and verified by Dr. Tierney.

In order for all participant comments to be understandable and useful, they were analyzed using a systematic and verifiable process. Hence, the investigator completed a manual content analysis process by first identifying question content categories and emerging themes with groupings entered into a Word document. Subsequently, the investigator extracted and explored common themes. Supporting quotes for each theme were placed under the appropriate section to illustrate what

participants stated. Themes and conclusions presented in this report were reviewed twice by the investigator before the report was finalized.



## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Many valuable findings were revealed by this focus group interview process. It is important to note almost all participants in this focus group were familiar with Midpen preserves, and had visited in the last year. Although maps of the Midpen were provided at the focus group and the facilitator discussed some unique characteristics and uses in preserves, there were uncertainties by participants about the preserve locations. There is a chance that some parks outside Midpen's were considered. Generalizing preserve/park experiences is not uncommon to occur within focus group interviews. The parks literature explains the difficulty for people in differentiating between lands/trails of adjacent park agencies. This further accentuates the need for park agencies to work together; and, this reveals the increasing importance to share such park use/non-use interview results with other park managers as well.

### Participant Characteristics

As participants were seated for the focus group they were asked to provide data on their age, sex, ethnicity and occupation and if they had visited a Midpen preserve. This was the source for the following demographic data about the four focus group participants. Results show this was a group of active older adults. Nine of the ten participants has visited a Midpen preserve in the last year.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Total Number of Participants	10
Average Age	72 years
Age Range	59-92 years
Sex	
Male	30%
Female	70%
Ethnicity	
Caucasian	90%
Asian	10%
Occupation	
Retired	100%

## EMERGING THEMES: PALO ALTO SENIORS

An analysis of focus group responses produced the following themes and illustrative participant comments.

### **Theme: This group of participants in Palo Alto had visited a few Midpen preserves but were unfamiliar with the extent of preserves**

-All participants indicated they were familiar with the Midpen name.

-50% indicated they had visited a Midpen preserve in the last six months

-3 of the ten had visited the new Mt. Umunhum preserve

"When I came here, I liked to see this map showing all of these [preserves] because I'd like to try them. That is really very, very helpful, there's one I'd like to see, but I know that it was out there, it's just I didn't realize how much it encompassed that space. "

### **Theme: Hiking, learning about the area's nature and history, looking at scenery, photography and attending special events are the most common participant activities in preserves**

"It's walking, for exercise"

"Number Nine goes hiking every Tuesday and Thursday. So I go to different county parks for the two counties, and regional parks over in East Bay, city parks, so I end up going fairly often"

"I like doing hikes... easier hikes, not with all the elevation gain"

"I only like the long ones [hikes] and I don't go on the short ones

"I also went to Umunhum and it's fantastic. It's really very, very different. And it also gave a great history about the whole region, and so I thought that was extremely interesting"

"I've visited 14 of them [Midpen preserves], but I'm 92"

"The reason we went to the Mount Umunhum is because I found out about the grand opening and I love looking at the beauty of nature, but we don't generally go to visit unless there's something happening"

"Picnicking and hiking and being with my friends"

"We had [participated in"] a number of events at Los Trancos. One was an awards presentation for nature supporters, and one was earthquake walk"

"Photography or major events"

"I like to find some little creature and watch him. Whether it's a little teeny bug or a big animal, worm, or something to see what he does, where he goes."

"I don't know if it's in these parks, but where they've had [captured] animals or birds, and I love looking at animals and petting them, and birds ... I love learning about things, so, and I also love doing crafts.

"I remember going to something [at a preserve] about the Ohlone Indians

"Just getting out and being in the wilderness when you're so close to such a highly congested area is just a great benefit"



### **Theme: The most common preserves visited**

"Rancho San Antonio"

"Preserves closest to my home"

"I think [I visited] the opening of Monte Bello"

"Los Trancos"

**Theme: Midpen preserves provide many benefits**

- Subtheme A: Good for mental wellbeing

“To get away from the noise and whatnot”

“I really enjoy the tranquility and the ability to get away from this chaotic Silicon Valley

“Relaxed”

“Alive and free”

“Rejuvenated”

“Getting out in nature once in a while”

- Subtheme B: Physical health

“Its walking and exercise”

“I know walking and exercise works for me”

“What I like are hiking trails, especially the kind of active ones that lead to other trails”

- Subtheme C: Other benefits

““I really like the variety of being able to go up to the mountains, and also down to the shore, and see the various different changes in wildlife there”

” Being with my friends”

“Some of them [trails] I can actually take the dog if I want to. I don't do that a lot, but it's nice to have the choice. And the dog is on the leash, so I like the fact that if we meet other dogs they'll be on a leash”

**Theme: Things like least about preserve visit: lack of restrooms, lack of parking, fear for personal safety and lack of information about preserves**

“I don't know if there are bathrooms available along the trail”

“I am concerned about my safety if I am not familiar with a preserve. There can be bad people there. I prefer to go with others”

“I don't know much about them

“Some reserves are remote and take time to reach

“There is no cell phone service in them, and I'd like that in case of an emergency”

“I will only visit when there is an event going on. I don't know what events are available”

“Some hikes are too long and strenuous”

“I don't know how difficult the trails are”

“There is no parking at Rancho San Antonio, the lots are always full”



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**Theme: There is strong interested in visiting preserves in the future by participants**

-Everyone raised their hands when asked if they want to visit a preserve in the future”

**Theme: There are significant barriers to visiting Midpen preserves**

- Subtheme A: Transportation

- Participants were asked if they had a private car to reach a preserve. All said car was not a problem

“There is no parking at Rancho San Antonio, the lots are always full”

“Some reserves are remote and take time to reach”

” Some seniors need transportation to preserves”

“Parking at Rancho San Antonio is atrocious. It needs to be expanded”

**Theme: Midpen can do things to encourage the older adult community to visit preserves**

- Subtheme A: Improve facilities

“One place [preserve] has a Visitors Center and I enjoyed that”

“Could there be campgrounds”

“I like doing the hikes... easier hikes”

“Increase cell phone coverage in preserves, or at least say on the preserve website if coverage is available”

- Subtheme B: More and better pre-visit information, displays and signage in preserves

“ I don’t know how difficult the trails are”

“Have a Facebook page which talks about what is new at preserves, what wildlife has recently been seen”

“I don’t know much about them”

“I also went to Uminum and it's fantastic. It gave a great history about the whole region, and so I thought that was extremely interesting”

“I don’t know if there are bathrooms available”

“You know, photography or major events, and if they were well publicized. I think I would definitely go to an event-type of a thing. I'd like to learn more.”

“Some people who are really knowledgeable about medicinal plants and Indians”

“I'll second the enjoyment of the earthquake walk [at a preserve]. I thought that was fabulous”

“I like doing the hikes... easier hikes”

“One of the reasons I don't go on a lot of the advertised walks is because they are too long for me”

“There should be a trail difficult rating system for each preserve”

“More information about events and docent led walks”

“More info about easy hikes”

“Have an Op-In email list so I can receive email announcements about future events”

“Have live webcam feeds at preserves, such as at bird nest sites, on the district website”

“Since many mountain lions are collared have a live feed showing their locations”



- **Subtheme C: Improved services to the senior community**

“It would be fabulous to have someone, like a photographer, take a group maybe a docent type walk, showing you various different things”

“We don't generally go to visit unless there's something happening [at the preserve]”

“Semi-tame animals or birds to see, I love looking at animals and petting them”

“I'd like to know more about how difficult trails are before I go”

“I wanted to tell Midpen that they are doing a good job, the preserves are great”





## Recommendations

The following recommendations are a direct result of the data analysis of focus group responses. The recommendations presented below are from the perspective of the Palo Alto senior community members, and they may or may not be different from the general public or other types of preserve users.

1. Increase the number of special events
2. Provide more restrooms
3. More and better pre-visit information, displays and signage in preserves
4. Offer docent-led hikes to provide information about preserves
5. Increase transportation options to preserves for seniors
6. Keep up the good work
7. Encourage hiking in preserves to promote mental wellness
8. Provide more information about easy trails and trail difficulty
9. Provide live web cams of wildlife in preserves
10. Continue to allow dog walking at some preserves
11. Provide more historical and natural history information at preserves



## Conclusions and Closing Thoughts

Dr. Tierney has the following conclusions and thoughts about the Palo Alto seniors focus group. It is important to note the participants in this focus group were all active seniors who are visiting Midpen preserves already, despite an average age of 72. Several persons hiked two days a week in preserves or nearby parks, others had not visited often. They appear to have fewer serious barriers to visiting, partly because this is wealthy area, they all were retired and had free time, car and finances to enjoy preserves. They were generally looking for improvements in their experience through special events, more trip planning information about trail difficulty, docent-led tours and more signage about natural and cultural history of the preserves.

Commonly expressed facility needs were more restrooms and parking. This is similar to what we've heard at all focus groups. But this group was less emphatic about new facilities than others. Several

persons mentioned the need for cell phone reception in the preserves for emergency communications.

The most important action the District should take is to better communicate with older adults about the opportunities, their locations, trail difficulty and special events being offered at preserves, such as docent-led tours. An interesting suggestion was for motivated persons to sign-up for an “opt-in” list to receive regular email blasts about events and wildlife sightings at preserves. A district site on Facebook was mentioned as another source for information distribution. Some of these the district already conducts, while some suggestions by participants could be doable and effective.



The next most important action by the District for these active prior visitors to Midpen preserves was to give them new reasons to visit preserves. The most commonly mentioned idea was to offer and promote docent-led tours or other special events. The participants were hungry for more information about preserve natural history and past Indian cultures. The District could also keep past visitors more engaged by offering live web cams of nesting or other wildlife in preserves. Then you could send out emails via an “opt-in” service with links to the web cams.

There were some safety concern expressed, primarily going to new areas without a group. But these concerns were not as vocal, probably because participants were common visitors already. Better pre-trip planning information and docent-led tours would alleviate most of these fears.

This group was appreciative of what Midpen was doing and felt the preserves were a tremendous resource for their mental and physical health. Overall, their comments supported the preservation mission of the District. In fact, several participants complimented the District on a job well done.

## **APPENDICIES**

### **APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER**



YOU ARE INVITED:  
WE WANT TO HEAR  
YOUR VOICE!  
JOIN US FOR A FOCUS GROUP

This session is open by invitation only.  
Food will be provided! Receive a  
\$25 gift card  
for your time and active input!

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MidPen) is working with Dr. Patrick Tierney at SF State University to learn about your interest and experiences in their reserves and other parks in the Santa Clara County area, what you like most and least, what keeps you from visiting and what you think could improve visitor experiences in MidPen open space preserves.

*We want to hear from YOU! Learn more about MidPen while helping them to better assist your senior community ~*

Call Avenidas to make a reservation: 650-289-5400

NON-VISITORS TO MIDPEN RESERVES ARE WELCOME

SPACE IS LIMITED, SO REGISTER NOW

**Tell us what you think about MidPen Open Space Preserves!**

**Location: Avenidas, Cubberley Com. Center, Bldg. I, 4000 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto**

**April 11, 2018**

- **Sign-in and lite snack at 10:15 am.**
- **Focus group starts promptly at 10:30am & ends by 12:00pm**



## APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### **MROSD PRESERVE VISITOR USE STUDY: Palo Alto Seniors Focus Group Protocol for April 11, 2018**

#### ***Welcome & Introductions***

Hi, my name is [Patrick Tierney] I am a professor of recreation, parks and tourism at SFSU. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us today and agreeing to be part of this focus group. We'll do group introductions regarding who you are in a few minutes. This conversation will last about an hour and a half and will be recorded. We would like to record this conversation so we can use the recording to transcribe notes. The recording will be kept in a secure location and will not be used for any other purpose other than this project. *[Does anyone has any issues/problems with being audio-taped?]*.

No MROSD staff are present here tonight so you should feel free to voice your opinions about MROSD preserves. No names will be associated with any of the comments you make during this interview. When you signed in today, there was a number next to your name, you'll use that, which I'll explain in a moment.

I will be leading the conversation today. I am going to go over a few details before we start. If you have any questions, please ask as they come up.

#### ***Purpose of the Focus Group***

We are working in partnership with the MROSD to better understand open space preserve users' attitudes, experiences, use patterns, and preferences and to identify reasons why people don't visit more often. The information you share will help the district determine how well they are supporting their strategic plan and contributing to their long-term goals. In addition, the information you provide can help improve existing preserve resources and services to meet community needs. Your participation is key as this group represents the ideas of *[members of the Palo Alto Senior Community]*. We welcome your input and your voice matters to the District so we need you to be honest with us and share your thoughts and opinions openly.

#### ***Guidelines***

Has anyone ever participated in a focus group? *[Ask for show of hands]*. For some people being in a focus group can be a new experience. We'll first discuss general ground rules that can help ensure a safe environment where everyone's ideas are shared and valued, and to ensure we capture what everyone says on the recorder and in our notes. Again, your name will not be attached to your comments, only a number.

1. **WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING.** We need everyone to participate and talk to each other as you are comfortable. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
2. **THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.** Every person's experiences and opinions are important. We want to hear what each of you think and feel about parks, in general, and within MCP in particular. If you're not familiar with parks and preserves in MCP, respond based on your knowledge of whatever parks come to mind for you. You don't need to agree with others, but please listen respectfully to different points of view. If you do agree with what someone says, please speak up, rather than nodding your head or gesturing in some other way. This helps us capture agreement in the notes. Also, if someone else says

something that reminds you of something or sparks a thought, please feel free to follow their comments with your own.

3. **WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE.** Everything you tell us today is anonymous. That means we will not share anything you say with your name attached. While we might use quotes or ideas that you share, as mentioned, we will never use your name in any way.
4. **ONE MIC/1 NUMBER:** Please speak one at a time – this will help us capture everyone’s thoughts and opinions. Before you make your comment, simply state your number first (which is on your name tag) then go for it. For example, I may raise my hand and say, “Number five: I think that parks need to have more...” If you forget to state your number, I might ask you for it.
5. **STEP UP STEP BACK.** If you have shared a lot, step back to allow others to share.

Are there any questions before we begin?

**Icebreaker:** Let’s go around the room and introduce ourselves then we’ll turn on the recorder after this. Please state your first name and your favorite MROSD preserve.

*[Turn on digital recorder].*

### ***EAST ASIAN RESPONDENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS***

***Generic Discussion Questions, Tier 1 - (As we move forward, it would be best to reply as it relates to Midpen Open Space preserves, if you’re not able to that’s fine. Comments about any park experience are fair game.***

1. Have you heard of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space Preserves before learning about this focus group? If so, can you give me an example of a preserve?
2. In the last 6 months, have each of you visited any Midpen preserve for any purpose? Any one not? If not, have you visited a nature area, such as a state, national or county park or wildlife refuge?
3. Please share a sample of activities you like to do in Midpen preserves. If not visited Midpen, what activities do you like to do in nature areas?
4. Which Midpen preserves do you most like to visit? Why do you prefer to do these activities at these locations?
5. How have your most recent MidPen preserve experiences made you feel? Or if never visited Midpen, how do visits to other nature areas make you feel. Explain
6. What do you like the most about the MidPen preserves? If not visited Midpen, what do you like most about other nature areas you have visited? Explain.
7. If you have not visited a Midpen preserve in the last 6 months, please explain why. Have you stopped using MidPen altogether? Why?
8. What do you like least about visiting MidPen preserves? Or if you never visited Midpen, what do you like least about nature areas? Why?

9. Would you like to visit a Midpen preserve in the future? Why or why not?
10. Do you have any suggestions for MidPen management to improve your past preserve experiences, or encourage you to try visiting a MidPen open space preserve for the first time? Please explain.
11. How might these suggestions be implemented?

**Does anyone have anything else to add based on what we've talked about or something else you'd like to share?**

***Closing & Wrap Up***

*[Turn off digital recorder].*

Thank you all again for participating in this important conversation. The information you provided is significant and meaningful and can really help improve visitor experiences throughout the MidPen preserves. If you are interested in the results and findings of this conversation, a summary report can be sent out to you upon request. If so, please give your name and email address, or postal address, to our student assistant.

In appreciation of your time, I will be distributing [a \$25 gift card *incentive*]. In order to receive this gift card we need you to please sign our receipt log for the university accounting purposes only.

**(PT) I want to thank Tracey McCloud for helping organize and translating this event. (Give thank you card to participant organizers).**



January 29, 2018

# YOUNG LEADERS FOCUS GROUP REPORT

A Component of the Midpen Visitors Study



**Prepared For:** Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

**Prepared By:** Patrick Tierney, PhD  
**Email:** [adrift650@comcast.net](mailto:adrift650@comcast.net)



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Appendix A. Recruitment flyer

Appendix B. Focus group protocol and questions



## INTRODUCTION

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen), in partnership with Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor of recreation, parks and tourism at San Francisco State University, is conducting a study of Midpen preserve users and non-users. The overall purpose of the study is to assess visitor satisfaction, motivation, stewardship interests and future demands, for potential decision making. It also aims to provide recommendations for preserve programs, facilities, policies, and innovative ways to enhance stewardship, community engagement and access. The study consists of two parts: Part I were intercept and follow-up surveys; while Part II consists of focus groups with specific community groups. This report presents the procedures and results of one focus group interview with six young adults that are appointed members of the San Mateo County Youth Leadership Institute. They were recruited by Adam Wilson coordinator of the Institute. This youth leader focus group was held January 18 in the Diamond Room, 225 37<sup>th</sup> Street, San Mateo.

For more information about the purpose and scope of the research contact Joshua Hugg, Government Affairs Specialist for Midpen, at (650) 691-1200 or [jhugg@openspace.org](mailto:jhugg@openspace.org). Questions about the focus group process, data analysis or findings can be directed to Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor and principal investigator, at (650) 255-2536 or [adrift650@comcast.net](mailto:adrift650@comcast.net).

### **Special thanks to a community partner**

This project could not have been successful without the help and support of Adam Wilson, coordinator of San Mateo County Youth Leadership Institute. He helped us find and recruit participants in this focus group and secured the location. We wish to express our thanks to him.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Phase II Overview**

The focus group interview part of this study aimed to capture the experiences of Midpen district young residents in San Mateo County. All participants were members of the County Youth Leadership Institute. These persons may or may not have previously visited Midpen preserves. The choice of this user group and the initial contact for this older adult community were provided by Joshua Hugg with Midpen. He and Midpen staff believed the opinions and motivations from this group, and from upcoming focus groups could benefit future planning of the district preserves and services.

### ***Development of Collateral Materials & Procedures***

Dr. Tierney created the materials needed to successfully set up and facilitate the focus group, such as focus group recruitment flyers, focus group protocol, and interview questions. Adam Wilson was asked to recruit potential participants for the focus group. Dr. Tierney created an invitation and recruitment flyer. Adam forwarded it to persons, and she confirmed persons attending the focus

group. At the focus group Dr. Tierney showed maps of Midpen preserves and handed-out Midpen brochures, and facilitated the focus group. Active participants were provided with a \$25 Safeway Stores gift card at the end of the event.

Dr. Tierney used a participant sign-in sheet, log for signatures acknowledging receipt of gift cards, and sign-up sheet for Midpen (e.g., anyone requesting a copy of the final report or wished to be added to mailing list). Other materials used during the focus groups were name tags and map brochures of all Midpen preserves. Dr. Tierney also provided a lite meal and refreshments at the start of the focus group to encourage attendance and thank the participants.

## Focus Groups

### What occurred, why, and how?



A focus group is a small group of four to fifteen people, ideally, led through an open discussion by a skilled moderator. Dr. Tierney was the focus group moderator/facilitator who asked initial questions and nurtured disclosure in an open and honest format. The goal was to generate a maximum number of different opinions, experiences, attitudes, and ideas from as many people in the group in the time allotted. As reflected in the protocol that follows, the focus groups

were structured around a set of carefully predetermined questions but the discussion was free-flowing. That is, participant comments stimulated and influenced the thinking and sharing of others.

### Recruitment: Where did participants come from?

This study used a convenience sampling method that employed a community leader to enlist members of the San Mateo County Youth Leadership Institute as focus group participants. This community leader recruited 6 participants, some of whom were occasional users of Midpen preserves, while most were not familiar with Midpen.



### Focus Group Protocol

The focus group protocol used for this study was created by Dr. Tierney, based on past experience, and included a description of the overall study, participant guidelines, focus group questions, and logistical information. Since some participants were not familiar with Midpen preserves, Dr. Tierney handed-out a Midpen brochure showing the locations of all preserves to all participants, and referred to a large map showing district boundaries and preserve locations. At the start of the focus group he also presented a brief general introduction to what Midpen offers and how their preserves are different from city, county and national parks. Focus group questions were developed based on models from prior studies and questions that were desired from the Midpen staff. A set of questions were developed which focused on visitors' use, experiences, and recommendations. If persons had not visited a Midpen preserve, they were asked to consider a visit to another nature preserve, such as a national park or wildlife refuge. Questions asked participants about their most recent preserve experience, types of activities they undertook, how these activities made them feel, where they liked to go most often in Midpen or nature preserves, what they liked most about their recent experiences in the preserve, what they liked least, and any suggestions for Midpen management to improve their

experience. The final focus group protocol and questions used during the San Mateo Youth Leaders focus group are available in Appendix B.

### **Data Collection**

The San Mateo Youth Leaders focus group had six participants. As participants arrived at the location, the facilitator asked them to sign a participant sign-in sheet requesting their demographic information. They then enjoyed the lite meal provided, during which comfort and rapport was established by the investigator. After a half hour the investigator introduced and described how the proceedings would go. He started the interview process, beginning with a general ice breaker to get the group thinking about preserves and park use or non-use, and used then the protocol and questions (Appendix B). All prepared questions were asked within a 120 minute time period and the facilitator was responsible for getting all participants to talk and fully explain their answers using helpful probes (e.g., “Can you say more about that?”; “Help us understand what you mean?” and “Can you give an example?”). The investigator demonstrated active listening and occasionally paraphrased long or ambiguous comments, or sought clarification for analysis purposes and/or summarized responses for the whole group.

The facilitator later recorded the focus group using his Apple iPhone. Body language or other subtle relevant clues were recorded via typed notes. At the end of the focus group, participants were thanked and each person received the incentive (gift card) that required a signature on the receipt log for accounting purposes. If any participants wanted to receive the final report, or expressed interest in being put on a Midpen mailing list, they were asked to indicate that on the sign-in sheet. Audio files were uploaded to a secure computer for storage and backed up.



### **Data Analysis & Transcription**

The demographic characteristics of these six participants were gathered at the sign-in for the focus group. Results are summarized in Table 1. The focus group discussions were captured via audio recordings. The facilitator moderated, while the discussions were recorded. The interview was then transcribed verbatim by an outside contractor, Rev.com, and verified by Dr. Tierney.

In order for all participant comments to be understandable and useful, they were analyzed using a systematic and verifiable process. Hence, the investigator completed a manual content analysis process by first identifying question content categories and emerging themes with groupings entered into a Word document. Subsequently, the investigator extracted and explored common themes. Supporting quotes for each theme were placed under the appropriate section to illustrate what participants stated. The principle investigator then used themes and quotes to develop recommendations.

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

Many valuable findings were revealed by this focus group interview process. It is important to note that the majority of participants in this focus group were not familiar with Midpen preserves, and had not visited in the last six months.

Although maps of the Midpen were provided at the focus group and the facilitator discussed some unique characteristics and uses in preserves, there were uncertainties about the



preserve resources and locations. There is a chance that some parks outside Midpen's were considered. Generalizing preserve/park experiences is not uncommon to occur within focus group interviews. The parks literature explains the difficulty for people in differentiating between lands/trails of adjacent park agencies. This further accentuates the need for park agencies to work together; and, the increasing importance to share such park use/non-use interview results with other park managers as well.

### Participant Characteristics

As participants were seated for the focus group they were asked to provide data on their age, gender, ethnicity and occupation and if they had visited a Midpen preserve. This was the source for the following demographic data about the six focus group participants. Table 1 suggests this was a group of active young persons, ages 15-30 years, who visited parks but mostly had not been to a Midpen preserve in the last six months to a year. Two of the six participants had visited a Midpen preserve at some point.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Total Number of Participants	6
Average Age	19 years
Age Range	15-30 years
Gender	
Male	66%
Female	33%
Ethnicity	
Caucasian	50%
Hispanic	50%
Occupation	
High School Student	66%
Working full time	33%

## EMERGING THEMES: SAN MATEO SENIORS

An analysis of focus group responses produced the following themes and illustrative participant quotes.

### **Theme: The Youth in San Mateo County are generally not familiar with Midpen preserves**

- Two of the six focus group participants could name a Midpen preserve they had visited in the last six months or ever before. The preserves mentioned were in walking distance of their house.

“My friends don’t know anything about these preserves”

“I think that a lot of people just don't even know where they can go to hike, parks like this are just local parks, or what kind of terrain is there, how long the walks are”

“I am not familiar with any Midpen preserves except for Pulgas Ridge near my house

“I would say city parks are probably what I visit most often just because they are much closer, and you don't have to deal with traffic. Like, you can just walk to them whenever”

“People just don’t know where they (preserves) are, what they are, or what you can do there”

### **Theme: An escape, hiking, jogging, dog walking, discovery, exercise and views are the most common reasons for visiting a preserve**

“They are a space that I go, like, a quiet space”

“I go to Pulgas a lot to walk my dogs”

“I'll go running sometimes with him [my dad] and they [my dogs] will stay on the leash next to us”

“It was nice to be able to just spend some time with them and get away from everything else. It was like, good quality time. Again, not with phones”

“Normally it's go hiking with my family so, it's a nice chance for me to connect with them”

“Just discovering new things. I have a background in conservation biology, but I'm from a different part of the country, so coming out here, and going to parks and preserves out here is much different than going to them back home and seeing the wildlife, and flowers, and everything up here”

“I like to go on a bike”

“Once you're up to the top, you kind of get to see the whole picture. So, I really enjoy nice views”

“I like being able to get exercise and get outdoors”

“I went hiking this morning, and it was a great way to start the day”

“We go on really long walks. Because it's very relaxing and calming, again. It's away from a lot of people”

### **Theme: Midpen preserves provide many benefits**

- **Subtheme A: Good for mental wellbeing**

“I think it [preserves] makes you kind of free, it's like I'm away from everything”

“I find myself going to those places usually when I like, need some grounding, or reflection time”

“[in a nature preserve] there's a disconnect from the rest of the world”

“It [visiting nature preserves] just kind of relaxes you, it's kind of like dang, life isn't that hard. Your life is great”

“I can actually go out instead of being tied to my job. It's kind of like, I forget I have a job, I forget I have responsibilities in that moment. It feels good, I feel really reenergized”

“It's relieving to go somewhere else and not have to worry about what you're gonna do when you get home, what you're gonna do tomorrow, the next day, the next week. You just go and you do, you take it one minute at a time and you enjoy the moment where you are”

"It's still a place that you're surrounded by nature, but it's really different from say like, a park. Because, at those preserves there's a lot less man-made things. And I feel like the experience is a lot different"

"You lose noise from highway one and I don't have to talk to anybody"

"I want to intake, nature, like, being away from people"

"I felt calm. I think, I felt more like, I guess, isolated. Not in bad way, just more isolated from other people than I do at the other places I go to walk my dog"

"We go for our really long walks. Because it's very relaxing and calming, again. It's away from a lot of people"

- **Subtheme B: Connecting with family and friends is an important benefit of visiting**

"The last time I was out, I was with my partner. So, it was nice to be able to just spend some time with them and get away from everything else. It was like, good quality time. Again, not with phones"

"Normally it's go hiking with my family so, it's a nice chance for me to connect with them"

"Its very nice to sort of focus on my family, and focus on nature and not be distracted by a phone, or by news, or anything like that."

- **Subtheme C: Escaping from technology and social media is another reason for visiting nature preserves**

"Its very nice to sort of focus on my family, and focus on nature and not be distracted by a phone, or by news, or anything like that."

"I feel like, most of the time I get lost in my phone and I forget there's all this other stuff out there"

"I'll try putting my phone away (in a preserve) but I am always using Snapchat"

### **Theme: There are significant barriers to visiting Midpen preserves**

- **Subtheme A: Transportation**

"I have no transportation. They're like, pretty far, and I feel like to go there, but I want to go on my own"

"San Mateo County has a shuttle service that will take you from certain areas of the county to some of the parks. I think if there's something along those lines that could take you to some of the more popular [Midpen] areas that'd be really beneficial to me"

"It'd be really helpful to have a free shuttle to the preserves"

"I think parking is an issue. I went to John Muir Woods up north a couple months ago, and we had to park like, a mile away from the actual park"

- **Subtheme B: Lack of free time**

"I think that students just don't, like everyone was saying, have a enough time [to visit]"

"A lot of 20, 30 year olds they're kind of starting their careers off so, a lot of them are working longer hours and have less time."

"I think a lot of youth don't have a lot of time like, free time to go and spend several hours somewhere"

- **Subtheme C: Other barriers to visitation**

"I'd say parking is always an issue."

"Going there (to a preserve) by myself is a little scary. You do not know what to expect"

"I've noticed that people still let their dogs off a leash and that's the biggest thing for me, I don't like dogs"

“And when a dog comes up and starts jumping on me and licking me, even if it's just meaning it in a friendly way it kind of takes me out of the zen of the moment, because then I have this animal trying to like, I don't even know what. That can be something that disrupts the experience”  
 “There's not a lot of handicapped accessible trails. There's a lot of families that have handicapped parents and you can't really take your kid there”

**Theme: Midpen can do things to encourage youth in the community to visit preserves**

- **Subtheme A: Collaborate with local schools**

- **Offer community service hours at preserves**

“I'm gonna be so honest, the only reason I joined this whole little group was two years ago, I really needed so many community service hours for high school. Preserves could offer these hours”

“Volunteering can, like, be used for the community service requirements at school”

“Sequoia Ivy students need 150 hours of community service, so they're constantly looking for good opportunities. So, schools with Ivy diploma, require a large amount of community service hours. There's got to be students that are starving for something good they can participate in”

“Tell students: “This is a great way to get outdoors, get exercise and get community service hours”

“I went to Catholic school for nine years, even there we had to do community service. There's actually a requirement to get your papers signed by wherever you went. I go to a Christian school right now and we have to do, everyone has to do 100 hours as graduation requirement”

- **Work with teachers to offer extra credit and field trips at preserves**

“I was kind of thinking too, extra credit. For my school, they'll offer extra credit to go to San Francisco and go take pictures with statues, and monuments, and go to museums, and go to all these populated areas, but nobody gives you extra credit to go to a forest, or a preserve, or anything, and I'd prefer that”

“You can learn a lot more there [in a preserve] than you can in a museum, or at least I feel like you can. They don't really offer that at schools. I think that'd be really great”

“If my environmental science class let me get extra credit for going to these parks, I would be there like, every week”

“I know there are environmental science classes in the area, because I take one. It's not like that [visiting preserves] couldn't be incorporated.”

“If you had youth that are going to one of these places on a field trip, that can be really beneficial because they're forced to go to it, right. So they go to it”

“Have some sort of organized volunteer program for teens in the summer”

- **Subtheme B: Offer internships for college applications, to explore outdoor careers and increase job skills**

“I'll say there definitely are youth that are interested in maybe like, looking for a career in the park service, or some sort of like, conservation work. Maybe offer a junior ranger program.”

“At Sequoia [High School] at least, we get a weekly email, and a lot of the time it'll show opportunities for volunteer work, or for jobs”

“So if somehow an internship opportunity for just even one park was in that {Sequoia high school] email and it was from an official organization, an accredited place, that would definitely get people to do it”

“A lot of youth volunteer to help their college applications”

“Like having youths volunteer in groups [at preserves], maybe you won't get money, or anything, or paid for it, but like an internship”

“A potential partnership for the Midpeninsula Open Space district could with the County Office of Education because they're trying to implement an environmental literacy program that would then be going out to all of the public schools”

- **Subtheme C: Improve outreach to youth and their families in the community**

“Especially my family, we like doing a lot of outdoors stuff. So, I think if I went home after today and I told my mom, and I showed her this map, and showed her these places, she'd probably look them up and she'd find a place and we'd go. And then we'd go back and she'd tell one of her friends, and then they go. And it'll get out to other people”

“I've never even seen these maps [Midpen brochure/map] before. So, if I had it, I would definitely use it.

“At Sequoia [High School] at least, we get a weekly email, and a lot of the time it'll opportunities for volunteer work, or for jobs”

- **Subtheme D. Other suggested changes**

“Signage isn't clear”

“It's easier to go with someone else for the first time. Are there tours?”

“Get these [Midpen] brochures to a store where you would buy sporting equipment”

“It's still a place that you're surrounded by nature, but it's really different from say like, a park. Keep them that way”

“I'm interested in shorter loop trails”

**Theme: More technology before and during visit to a preserve**

“I think that youth are super connected with technology. So, most youths who are going to visit one of these park independently are going to look for it first on the internet, right? So, I think that it's [technology] really, really important that if you type in Pulgas Ridge, it pops with information, and it has current information, and it's very clear what the park is like”

“I'm a really big fan of virtual tours. You play the little two minute video, it shows you some highlight clips from around the park”

“Use technology to entice them in, show inspiring slow motion shots of birds flying in the air, or something along those lines. Because teens are very digital people”

“Have an [augmented reality] app for you to be able to look at a place in the preserve, and see what happened there.

“I was thinking of maybe having Pokemon Go or similar game”

“I think especially you could put trail maps on there (Midpen website) with descriptions of each trail”

“I think online information is just super important, because nowadays, if the website doesn't have enough information most people I think are quite frankly, just too lazy. They're not gonna call someone to find out more information, or stop by and visit them themselves.”

“I use Snapchat and Instagram. They have notifications and little “filters” [geo-locators] where you can see somebody that's in somewhere. it's makes me want to look into the place, I will. I will look it up, whereas, if it doesn't have one they're just at like, a park and I don't know where they are”

“Social media is a way to show what's there”

“I definitely think Instagram is a great idea, because parks are very aesthetically pleasing, right? You can take some nice photos of them, of wildlife, of just nature. I know a lot of various places offer like, a photo competition so you could be like, “Hey teens, go out and take a photo in one of the preserves”



## Recommendations

The following recommendations are a direct result of the data analysis of focus group responses. The recommendations presented below are from the perspective of the San Mateo young leaders, and they may or may not be different from the general public and other types of preserve users.

1. Increase outreach to youth and their families. Many do not even know Midpen preserves exist and what they offer
  - a. Work with schools to provide announcements about service and internships opportunities at preserves
  - b. Better use social media
  - c. Offer virtual tours, virtual reality apps, social games to generate interest and views
2. Do not provide cell service in preserves, so youth can still escape from their phones and related social media, to focus on getting away with family and friends
3. Offer or coordinate public transportation to preserves because many youth lack cars and want to be independent of their parents at times
4. Collaborate with local high schools to offer community service hours at preserves
5. Work with teachers to offer extra credit and field trips at preserves
6. Offer internships to build college applications, allow youth to explore outdoor career opportunities and increase their job skills
7. Employ more technology for use before and during a visit

## Conclusions and Closing Thoughts

Dr. Tierney has the following conclusions and thoughts about the San Mateo youth leader focus group. Findings from the recent District visitors survey showed that young adults are greatly under-represented in visits to Midpen preserves, compared to their population in the County. In fact, young adults had the lower percentage of visitation versus all other age cohorts. These facts add importance to efforts the District should make to convert local youth into life-long visitors, supporters and stewards of preserves.

It is important to note the participants in this focus group were leaders in the youth community, appointed to the San Mateo Youth Commission. They were generally unaware of Midpen preserves but had a strong interest in visiting, especially if incentives through school could be provided.

These young adults, compared to other focus groups, were less interested in new facilities, such as bathrooms and signs, or their personal safety in preserves. But like other groups they were mostly unaware of Midpen preserves, except for a few near their homes. The district should expand

collaboration with local teachers and schools, increase their social media efforts and presence and employ more communications technology to influence young adults to visit.

The most important action the District needs to take to increase awareness and visitation to preserves are partnerships and collaboration with local schools and teachers. The most effective efforts would be offering volunteer work projects that would satisfy high school community service requirements. Older district volunteer could lead such activities. Another fruitful approach would be offering internships and summer jobs for students. Working with local teachers by offering field trips and extra credit opportunities in their classes is another option to increase visitation by young adults.

A combination of other barriers limits visitation by youth, including busy work and school schedules, lack of their own transportation and a lack of presence on the internet by the District. Except for a greater online presence, these other barriers are difficult to mitigate. Youth are very video and internet focused. So more efforts to increase video and live cams on the District website, along with greater use of social media frequented by youth would be cost effective. Youth were the first group to suggest use of virtual reality and game apps, such as something like Pokeman Go. We have seen how these strongly appeal to their generation.

Many youth according to these young adults, are willing to volunteer in preserves if external incentives are provided. Incentives include meeting community service and internship requirements at their schools. The potential number of youthful volunteers is quite large, but these efforts would need to be focused and well organized to meet both youth, school and district needs.

## APPENDICIES

### APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER



YOU ARE INVITED:  
WE WANT TO HEAR  
YOUR VOICE!  
JOIN US FOR A FOCUS GROUP

This session is open by invitation only.  
Food will be provided! Receive a  
\$25 gift card  
for your time and active input!

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MidPen) is working with San Francisco State University to learn about your interest in parks, and any experiences you've had in their reserves and other parks in the Bay Area; what you like most and least; what could be done to encourage you to visit more; and what could improve your experiences in MidPen open space preserves.

*We want to hear from YOU! Learn more about MidPen while helping them to better assist your community ~*

Confirm you will participate to: [awilson@sli.org](mailto:awilson@sli.org)  
to: [aaawilson@yli.org](mailto:aaawilson@yli.org)



**Tell us what you think about MidPen Open Space Preserves!**

Location: Diamond Room,  
San Mateo Health Systems,  
225 37<sup>th</sup> Ave.,  
San Mateo

January 18, 2018

- Sign-in and lite dinner at 4:30pm.
- Focus group starts promptly at 5:00 & ends by 6:30pm



## APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

#### MIDPENINSULAR OPEN SPACE VISITOR USE STUDY:

##### ***Welcome & Introductions***

Hi, my name is [*Patrick Tierney*] I am a professor in the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Department at San Francisco State University. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us today and agreeing to be part of this focus group on Midpeninsula Open Space preserves. Tonight when I say “MidPen”, I mean Midpeninsula Regional Open Space Preserves. We’ll do group introductions regarding who you are in a few minutes. This conversation will last about an hour and a half and will be recorded. We would like to record this conversation so we can use the recording to transcribe notes. The recording will be kept in a secure location and will not be used for any other purpose other than this project. [*Does anyone has any issues/problems with being audio-taped?*].

Thank you for completing the pre-focus group survey just now. That information is helpful for us to understand more about who is participating. This survey information will only be presented in summary form. No names will be associated with any of that information. No MidPen staff are present here tonight so you should feel free to voice your opinions about MidPen open space preserves. No names will be associated with any of the comments you make during this interview. When you signed in today, there was a number next to your name, you’ll use that when you want to make a comment, which I’ll explain in a moment.

I will be leading the conversation today. I am going to go over a few details before we start. If you have any questions, please ask as they come up.

##### ***Purpose of the Focus Group***

We are working in partnership with the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to better understand their open space preserve users’ attitudes, experiences, use patterns, and preferences and to identify reasons why people don’t visit more often. The information you share will help MidPen learn how to reduce barriers to visiting the preserves and determine how well they are supporting their strategic plan and contributing to their long-term goals. In addition, the information you provide can help improve existing park resources and services to meet community needs. Your participation is key as this group represents the ideas of [*young people user group*]. We welcome your input and your voice matters to MidPen so we need you to be honest with us and share your thoughts and opinions openly.

I am passing around a map showing the locations of the MidPen preserves. We are currently helping them gather information on 21 preserves that are open to the public. Note that the preserves are located outside of cities but in the surrounding areas. We are not talking about city parks. The Midpen preserves protect wildlife, native plants, vistas and provide outdoor recreation opportunities. Do you have any questions about what are MidPen preserves or where they are located?

##### ***Guidelines***

Has anyone ever participated in a focus group? *[Ask for show of hands]*. For some people being in a focus group can be a new experience. We'll first discuss general ground rules that can help ensure a safe environment where everyone's ideas are shared and valued, and to ensure we capture what everyone says on the recorder and in our notes. Again, your name will not be attached to your comments, only a number.

1. **WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING.** We need everyone to participate and talk to each other as you are comfortable. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
2. **THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.** Every person's experiences and opinions are important. We want to hear what each of you think and feel about parks, in general, and within MCP in particular. If you're not familiar with parks and preserves in MCP, respond based on your knowledge of whatever parks come to mind for you. You don't need to agree with others, but please listen respectfully to different points of view. If you do agree with what someone says, please speak up, rather than nodding your head or gesturing in some other way. This helps us capture agreement in the notes. Also, if someone else says something that reminds you of something or sparks a thought, please feel free to follow their comments with your own.
3. **WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE.** Everything you tell us today is anonymous. That means we will not share anything you say with your name attached. While we might use quotes or ideas that you share, as mentioned, we will never use your name in any way.
4. **ONE MIC/1 NUMBER:** Please speak one at a time – this will help us capture everyone's thoughts and opinions. Before you make your comment, simply state your number first (which is on your name tag) then go for it. For example, I may raise my hand and say, "Number five: I think that parks need to have more..." If you forget to state your number, I might ask you for it.
5. **STEP UP STEP BACK.** If you have shared a lot, step back to allow others to share.

Are there any questions before we begin?

**Icebreaker:** Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves then we'll turn on the recorder after this. Please state your first name and your favorite outdoor recreation activity, if do it in a park or open space preserve, and why it is interesting to you.

*[When done, student assistant turns on digital recorder and begins typing notes on laptop].*

### ***[YLI] RESPONDENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS***

***As we move forward, it would be best to reply to the question as it relates to MidPen preserves, if you're not able to that's fine. Comments about any park experience are appreciated.***

1. How many of you know what a MidPen open space preserve is? It's ok if you don't.
2. In the last 6 months, how many of you visited any MidPen open space preserve? Any one not?
3. Please share a sample of activities you like to do in MidPen open space preserves (MCP). ***[use/experience-hike/run/walk, group activities, skateboarding, etc.]***

4. Which MidPen preserves do you like to go most often? Why do you prefer these MidPen locations?
5. How have your most recent MidPen experiences made you feel? Explain
6. What do you like the most about MidPen?
7. If you have not gone to MidPen preserve in the last 6 months or ever, please explain why. Did you go at one time and have you stopped using MidPen locations altogether? Why?
8. What do you like least about MidPen parks and open space preserves?
9. Do you have any suggestions for MidPen management to improve your experiences in MidPen open space preserves
10. Are there things that MidPen could do which increase the likelihood of you visiting a MidPen open space preserve? Please explain.
11. How might these suggestions be implemented?
12. Are there any other concerns or needs you would like to share with MidPen [*ideas, volunteer or employment opportunities*]

**Does anyone have anything else to add based on what we've talked about or something else you'd like to share?**

### ***Closing & Wrap Up***

*[Turn off digital recorder].*

Thank you all again for participating in this important conversation. The information you provided is significant and meaningful and can really help improve use by young adults throughout the MidPen preserve. If you are interested in the results and findings of this conversation, a summary report can be sent out to you upon request. If so, please give your name and email address, or postal address, to our student assistant.

In appreciation of your time, I will be distributing a \$25 gift card as a *thank you*. In order to receive this gift card we need you to please sign our receipt log for the university accounting purposes only.

**(PT) I want to thank *Adam Wilson* for helping organize this event. (Give thank you card to participant organizer).**



# SOUTH ASIAN FOCUS GROUP REPORT

MidPen Visitors  
Study



**Prepared For:** MidPeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

**Prepared By:** Patrick Tierney, PhD  
Professor

**Email:** [ptierney@sfsu.edu](mailto:ptierney@sfsu.edu)



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Appendix A. Recruitment flyer

Appendix B. Focus group protocol and questions



## **INTRODUCTION**

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MidPen), in partnership with San Francisco State University (SFSU), is conducting a MidPen Visitor Study. The overall purpose of the study is to assess visitor satisfaction, motivation, stewardship interests and future demands, for potential decision making. The study also aimed to offer recommendations for preserve programs, facilities, policies, and innovative ways to enhance community engagement and access. The study consists of two parts: Part I are intercept and follow-up surveys; while Part II consists of focus groups with specific community groups. This report represents the procedures and results of one focus group interview with four South Bay residents of the South Asian community. It was held October 5, 2017 at the Cupertino Senior Center in Cupertino. In this report a reference to “MidPen trails” means trails in MidPen Open Space Preserves.

For more information about the purpose and scope of the research contact Joshua Hugg, Government Affairs Specialist for MidPen, at (650) 691-1200 or [jhugg@openspace.org](mailto:jhugg@openspace.org). Questions about the focus group process, data analysis or findings can be directed to Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor and principal investigator, at (415) 338-2030 or [rpt@sfsu.edu](mailto:rpt@sfsu.edu).

### **Special thanks to a community partner**

This project could not have been possible nor successful without the help and support of Atul Chaudhari with TravelBackyard.com and a leader in the South Bay South Asian Community. He helped us find and recruit participants in this focus group. We wish to express our thanks to him.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Phase II Overview**

The focus group interview part of this study aimed to capture the experiences of MidPen district residents of the South Asian community who have used MidPen preserves. The choice of this user group and the initial contact for the South Asian community were provided by Joshua Hugg with MidPen. He and MidPen staff believed the opinions and motivations from this group, and from upcoming focus groups could benefit future planning of the district preserves and services.

### **Preparation**

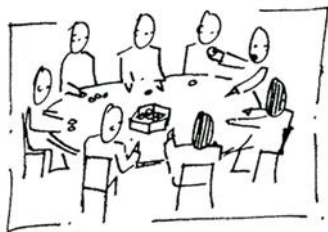
#### ***Development of Collateral Materials & Procedures***

SFSU created the materials needed to successfully set up and facilitate the focus group, such as focus group recruitment flyers, focus group protocol, and interview questions. The South Asian community leader was asked to provide a list of potential participants for the focus group. SFSU sent an invitation and a recruitment flyer to persons on this list, and confirmed persons attending the focus group. SFSU showed maps of MidPen preserves at the focus groups.

SFSU also developed a participant sign-in sheet, log for signatures acknowledging receipt of gift cards, and sign-up sheet for MidPen (e.g., anyone requesting a copy of the final report or wish to be added to mailing list). Other materials used during the focus groups were name tags, map of MidPen preserves, and Trader Joe's gift cards (purchased). SFSU also provided a lite dinner and refreshments at the start of the focus group. Finally, SFSU contracted with the City of Cupertino Senior Center who provided a room in the center to hold the focus group.

## Focus Groups

### What occurred, why, and how?



A focus group is a small group of four to twelve people, ideally, led through an open discussion by a skilled moderator. The group needs to be large enough to generate rich discussion, but not so large that some participants are left out or a few people dominate the conversation. Additionally, the groups should be homogenous as homogeneity levels the playing field and reduces inhibitions among people who come together for the purpose of a group interview.

Focus groups can reveal a wealth of detailed information and deep insights. When well executed, a focus group creates a welcoming environment that allows participants to feel at ease and encourages thoughtful, honest answers providing added meaning to question responses. As a valid methodology, focus groups were chosen as one approach to elicit the thoughts, feelings, experiences, and recommendations residents of the South Bay. In addition, focus groups have the ability to generate rich qualitative data that comes from individual participants engaging in deep conversation, potentially capturing themes that would be missed from other, more quantitative, methods. Furthermore, focus groups foster a safe place for participants to be open and honest.

The SFSU principal investigator was the focus group moderator/facilitator who asked initial questions and nurtured disclosure in an open and honest format. The goal was to generate a maximum number of different opinions, experiences, attitudes, and ideas from as many people in the group in the time allotted. As reflected in the protocol that follows, the focus groups were structured around a set of carefully predetermined questions but the discussion was free-flowing. That is, participant comments stimulated and influenced the thinking and sharing of others.

### Recruitment: Where did participants come from?

This study used a convenience sampling method that enlisted a leader from the South Asian community in the South San Francisco Bay area to recruit focus group participants. This community leader provided a list of the names and emails of 15 potential participants who were long time to new users of MidPen preserves. The SFSU team followed up with an invitation and a recruitment flyer in a more detailed email about the purpose and details of the focus group (See Appendix A for recruitment flyer designed by the SFSU team). Once there were 4 individuals who agreed to participate, then SFSU emailed these persons a confirmation message. The South Asian focus group was held 10/5/17 at the Cupertino Senior Center classroom.

Focus group participants were rewarded with a \$25 gift card to Trader Joe's as an incentive to participate. Additionally, participants were informed a dinner-type meal would be provided and

thirty minutes was allotted for general socializing (e.g., “meet and greet”) prior to the official start time of the interview process.



## Focus Group Protocol

The focus group protocol used for this study was created by the SFSU investigator, based on past experience, and included a description of the overall study, participant guidelines, focus group questions, and logistical information. Focus group questions were developed by SFSU based on models from prior studies and questions that were desired from the MidPen staff. A set of two-tiered questions were developed in which Tier 1 questions were the priority and focused on visitors’ use, experiences, and recommendations. If additional time remained, Tier 2 questions were asked. Tier 1 questions asked participants about their most recent preserve experience, types of activities they undertake on MidPen open space preserves, how these activities make them feel, where they like to go most often in MidPen, what they like most about their recent experiences in MidPen preserves, what they like least, and any suggestions for MidPen management to improve their experience. The final focus group protocol and questions used during the South Asian focus group is available in Appendix B.

## Data Collection

The South Asian focus group had four participants. As participants arrived at the location, the SFSU facilitator asked them to sign a participant sign-in sheet requesting their demographic information. They then enjoyed the lite meal provided, during which comfort and rapport was established by the investigator. After a half hour the investigator then facilitated the interview process, beginning with a general ice breaker to get the group thinking about preserves and park use or non-use, and using the protocol and questions (Appendix B). All prepared questions were asked within the 90-minute time allotted and the facilitator was responsible for getting all participants to talk and fully explain their answers using helpful probes (e.g., “Can you say more about that?”; “Help us understand what you mean?” and “Can you give an example?”). The investigator demonstrated active listening and occasionally paraphrased long or ambiguous comments, or sought clarification for analysis purposes and/or summarized responses for the whole group.

The facilitator recorded the focus group using his Apple iPhone and took supporting notes in case the recorder failed or any parts of the digital file were inaudible. Body language or other subtle relevant clues were recorded via typed notes. Audio files were uploaded to a secure computer for storage and backed up.

At the end of the focus group, participants were thanked and each person received the incentive (gift card) that required a signature on the receipt log for SFSU accounting purposes. If any participants wanted to receive the final report, or expressed interest in being put on a MidPen mailing list, they were asked to indicate that on the sign-in sheet.



## Data Analysis & Transcription

The demographic characteristics of these participants were gathered at the focus group location. Results are summarized in Table 1.

The focus group discussions were captured via audio recordings. The facilitator moderated, while the discussions were recorded. The interview was then transcribed verbatim by an outside contractor, Rev.com.

In order for all participant comments to be understandable and useful, they were analyzed using a systematic and verifiable process. Hence, the investigator completed a manual content analyses process by first identifying question content categories and emerging themes with groupings entered into a Word document. Subsequently, the investigator extracted and explored common themes. The major findings from participants' comments are summarized in the results section that follows and includes a series of direct quotes highlighting relevant responses.

The investigator completed the final examination of the transcriptions. Results were reviewed and synthesized to ensure accuracy of themes and supporting quotes. The themes and conclusions presented in this report were reviewed twice by the investigator before the report was finalized.



## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Many valuable findings were revealed by this focus group interview process. Important to note, however is that at times, participants may have been thinking about, and referring to, trails located outside of MidPen preserves. Although maps of the MidPen were provided at the focus group and the facilitator referred participants to this map if there were any uncertainties about the preserve location, there is a chance that some parks outside MidPen's were considered. Generalizing preserve/park experiences is not uncommon to occur within focus group interviews. The parks literature explains the difficulty for people in differentiating between lands/trails of adjacent park agencies. This further accentuates the need for park agencies to work together; and, this reveals the increasing importance to share such park use/non-use interview results with other park managers as well.



### Participant Characteristics

As participants were seated for the focus group they were asked to provide data on their age, sex, ethnicity, occupation and city of residence. This was the source for the following demographic data about the four focus group participants. This was a group of mostly experienced MidPen visitors and one new user of district preserves, who were very familiar with information technology.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Average Age	33.5 years
Age Range	31-35 years
Sex	
Male	75%
Female	25%
Ethnicity	
Indian/Asian	100%
Occupation	
IT Engineer	75%
Scientist	25%

## EMERGING THEMES: SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY MEMBERS

An analysis of focus group responses produced the following themes and illustrative participant comments.

**Theme 1:** For the focus group participants, hiking was the primary activity undertaken in MidPen preserves.

*"I'll generally go there for hiking. 90 percent of the time that I go to any of these preserves it's for hiking."*

*"I have done a lot of hikes in the preserves"*

**Theme 2.** Favorite preserves for hiking are Rancho San Antonio, Skyline, Monte Bello, Windy Hill, La Honda and Russian Ridge.

*"Most of the times I go to Windy Hill, Russian Ridge and Skyline, so those are the three preserves that I usually hike."*

*"Rancho San Antonio and La Honda Preserve are more common (to hike) because they are very reachable, like I can take my car"*



**Theme 3:** Primary reasons for visiting these favorite areas are proximity to their home, variety of hiking (easy to hard and medium to long hiking trails), the variety of other activities you can do, good views, share time with friends/family and they have somewhat cooler temperatures than the city. In spring they offer wildflower viewing. One person flies a drone.

*"I live in San Jose so other places in the mountains (Sierras), they're a little far. These two places (preserves) offer mid-sized hikes and good hikes so you can just ... You don't have to plan anything, you can just get up in the morning and go and do it, back by lunch."*

*"I've also done wildflower photography over there across different seasons."*

*"I like La Honda Creek a lot, maybe because it's so wooded and shaded especially during summer months it doesn't feel so summery and sunny"*

*"Recently I went with my roommate to La Honda Creek and she's pretty new to hiking so it kind of offers both flavor. For someone who is really new trying to get into it and for someone who's looking at it as a workout. It was a good blend for both of us."*

*"We organized a group for hiking. There were some elderly people, there were some kids, some of them were first-time hikers so we had about four or five hike leaders, we were taking them up."*

*"It could be just hiking or just sitting and hanging out with your friends"*

*"There are so many other activities that you can do like biking, running"*

*"We also do dance in the park sometimes so there's a lot of open space, covered spaces as well."*

*"Visited just to have a short picnic"*

*"So one thing I'd be interested in doing is flying a drone. So I have a drone and one of the thing I've seen is that in California there's not a lot of open spaces where you can fly your drone"*

*"He has an inflatable boat that we took out paddling on the Bay (from Ravenswood)."*

*"You can see (from the preserve) flights landing on SFO, SJC and the other airports around Bay, the Palo Alto Airport and the Reed Airport in San Jose."*

*"The boating on the Bay was an adventure."*

**Theme 4:** They go to preserves for their health and exercise. They are also used for training for longer hikes elsewhere. It can be an adventure.

*“Black Mountain is a good work out for training.”*

*“I prefer working out in the hills than the gym.”*

*“So we were training (for a Grand Canyon hike), basically I viewed Black Mountain as a training hike”*

**Theme 5:** Communing with nature and relaxing are also important reasons for visiting.

*“The moonrise and the sunset (at Ravenswood) is amazing and I had been there just for photography but it's a different experience than hiking”*

*“Other times I've been to Alviso area and just lie in the park, sit there, watch the Bay, and then that's it.”*

*“It was fun just kind of relaxing and the weather was really nice”*

*“We like to explore the wildlife ... wildflowers and wildlife”*

*“During summer months after sunset you can see the Milky Way, so it's a very rare to see the Milky Way from the city”*

*“For the Black Mountain I can say it had a lot of variety. So you start in redwoods, the middle part is deep in the oaks and the last part is steep and hot so you get all into kinds of zones.”*

*“If they can have a list of birds and animals in the district property, both endangered and which are not on tracking list ... have that information somewhere, and how we can spot them, when we can, where we can so, that would be helpful.”*

*“From the top we have a really good view of the Bay and when the sky is clear you get to see the sea.”*

**Theme 6:** Lack of parking is a big problem at Rancho San Antonio, but less so at other preserves.

*“The only thing that I don't like actually is the parking problem (at Rancho San Antonio).*

*You spend half an hour sitting, waiting for parking. And that's in spite of having four parking lots*

*”There is always a (parking) problem there (Rancho San Antonio)”*

*“If you go to Skyline (on weekends) there is also a parking problem”*

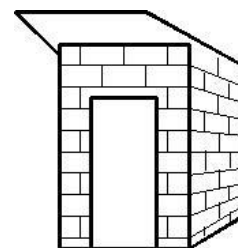
*“Actually that (Rancho San Antonio) is the only one which is having parking problem. Other preserves, pretty fine, not much.”*

**Theme 7:** Restrooms are a concern of visitors

*“Restrooms is a problem, like some of the places are really dirty, they are not clean.”*

*“I know friends who surely don't come, many times, for hiking, if the restrooms are not good.”*

*“I think a couple of preserves don't have enough restrooms as well. Skyline, I think it doesn't have anything besides the one near parking lot and that too again, only one parking lot ... Other ones they don't so sometimes when you're hiking around over there if you want to use it, it's always a challenge.”*



**Theme 8:** Trail conditions were cited by some respondents as a safety problem.

*“Before winter if it's (the trail) not clean, the trails becomes a little challenging because of the mud and sometimes the leaves are also slippery.”*



*“Many times we were worried that if someone falls they will go down the valley, all the way. Yeah, it was really scary. That's one thing (slippery trails) which I did not like.”*

**Theme 9.** There was strong unanimous agreement that MidPen should use more communications technology to help visitors plan and enjoy their visits to preserves.

*“I do not find (at MidPen preserves) where you can just download an offline pdf map, the same map that's printed there on the park entrance. I'd like the same map you can just download as a free map, a guide.”*

*“They (MidPen) have some apps for maps, it's just that they have not published it right. Even if it is, people are not aware (of an app for online maps)”*

*“So when you go there it is nice if you have the link right on the main board (at the trailhead) and download the map to use it on the hike. So you're getting to the parking lot, you changed your mind and you decided to go to another place (trail). Having the link right there that you type in and download it there.”*



*“When I went to Mindego and I found out they have a link and we just downloaded a map and that was really helpful because I don't have to carry paper map. Mount Diablo has it also.”*

*“I think if you put it (map link) at the entrance then people know that there's a map out there”*

*“You want to download the park map before you go there, ideally, and you can use it as you're walking in the area.”*

*“An offline map is important even sometimes what happens is when we download, plan the map we mark only the route we will not take. But when you're hiking and since you didn't mark everything and you missed a turn signal you really don't know how much I'm going to add. If you have complete offline map then you can actually say, “Okay, now I just know how much, what are the different options that I can take.”*

*“If (MidPen) cannot provide an app then put up more details on Google Maps (of the preserves)”*

*“We do not use the paper maps.”*

*“There's no cellphone coverage over there (in preserves). In case there is an emergency it becomes challenging. I know it's not supposed to be in the wilderness, you should be disconnected, but when emergencies are there at least a little, some option, of reaching out to 911, that should be available.”*

*“Not many trails have call box at the park entrance or trail head or anywhere in between. So it would be good if they have call boxes somewhere on the trails or someway that there is network coverage so that we can reach out to 911, emergency numbers.”*

*“I've seen MidPen is not that active on Facebook and, social media with things that they are trying to do. In general, I'd like (on Facebook) info on trail closures, trail updates, any new trail that is added, wildflowers and wildlife sighted.”*

*“Have bird-nest cameras to get people interested in wildlife and visiting preserves.”*

*“At the trailhead it would be nice to have maps for the hike, foot elevation gain profile and like how the wildlife is changing and what are the highest point. So people can know how tough the hike is going to be.”*

*“If they can have a list of birds and animals in the district property somewhere, both endangered and which are not on tracking list ... have that information somewhere, and how we can spot them, when we can, where we can so, that would be helpful.”*

**Theme 10:** Some respondents would like more campsites or at least a better way to find campsite availability online.



*“The ease of finding campsites is a problem. There are so many contorted ways when I go to the (MidPen) website to actually look for a campsite. I'm used to recreation.gov, it's just what all of us use and it's just so convenient. But when I go try finding campsites here it's like I have to go into each parks website and then each park has it's own sort of way to ... There's not a specific way that each park site is organized.”*

*“There is only one preserve that offers camping and there is demand for more.”*

**Theme 11:** There is illegal and inappropriate activity going on in parking lots and trails.

*“On the Skyline parking lot it's everything, I don't know what they smoke but it's everything; drinking, smoking, breaking bottles. It's insane stuff happening over there.”*

*“MidPen should make it compensatory that smoking is not allowed on the trail. They need to enforce it. It's a fire hazard and it is second hand smoke bothers others.”*

*“It (others smoking pot) is really annoying to be walking beside and I don't feel safe anymore.”*

**Theme 12:** There should be more pet-friendly trails and enforcement of pet mess cleanup.

*“There are very few pet-friendly trails. I wish they would add some.”*

*“People are always pinging me asking which is a good dog friendlier, pet-friendly trail. I don't have much to say to that.”*

*“Don Edwards has active pet friendly trails and I've seen people with their dogs. But then that has to come along with the enforcement that people pick up after their pets.”*

**Theme 13:** Better public transportation to preserves.

*“Public transport is not good in the Bay Area and to preserves.”*

*“All those long trails if you want to not back track, there is no public transport that you can use to go back to your car.”*

*“There should be transport from one preserve to another along Highway 35”*

*“I was thinking transport mostly for hiking but I think bikers also.”*

NOTE: The participants were not concerned about public transit from cities to preserves



**Theme 14:** There should be some new programs offered by the district.

*“At most of the places a night hike is not allowed. You're not allowed after sunset and that's kind of very restrictive. They should offer full moon hikes to see the Milky Way.”*

*“More ranger-led hikes on full moon, like at Chabot”*

*“Wildlife tours”*

**Theme 15:** These participants were appreciative of the efforts of MidPen and would like to volunteer to help.

*“Volunteers can just keep adding photos and videos on Google Maps and Facebook of the preserves and that helps a lot.”*

*“Volunteers can add sightings of birds on Google Maps”*

*“Volunteering even where one cleans the trails.”*

*“MidPen does not have many times to volunteer. We are willing to volunteer but we don't know how or when we can volunteer.”*

*“I volunteer for bird counts, then I take people out on the trails to show wildflowers. Then find out about endangered species, catalog that and notify California Native Plant Society plus also work with Audubon Society and some other biologists to update the iNaturalist app.*

*“I like things that they (MidPen) are doing over there, all the conservation projects. I attended a couple ... one board meeting, seeing what they were doing plus I've been reading through their meeting notes a lot, which they share quite often on their website. I like what they are doing, what efforts they have put forth.”*

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are a direct result of the data analysis of focus group responses. The recommendations presented below are from the perspective of South Asian preserve visitors, and they may or may not be different from the general public or other types of preserve users.

1. Continue to provide outstanding hiking experiences as this is the most frequent visitor activity at the preserves.
2. Provide and/or better communicate a list on the district website of birds and animals in the district, both endangered and common and best places to observe them.
3. Increase the amount of parking at Rancho San Antonio, Skyline and other crowded sites.
4. Clean restrooms more frequently. Add a few more restrooms at select preserves.
5. Improve surface condition of select trails to enhance visitor safety during the winter months.
6. Provide offline maps and link addresses at trailheads so visitors can download them when they arrive.
7. Provide apps for offline maps so visitors can plan their routes and ascertain their exact position during the hike or bike activity.
8. The district should work with volunteers to add more information and photos of preserves on Google Maps.
9. Identify the most feasible technology to use which would allow visitors to contact emergency services, be it call boxes at trailheads or enhanced cell service.
10. Install cameras at select bird nest sites to increase interest in the preserves by persons who cannot visit.
11. MidPen should be more actively engaged on Facebook and other social media providing information such as, trail closures, trail updates, any new trail that is added, wildflowers and wildlife sighted and upcoming programs.

12. Provide more detailed information about preserve trails at the trailhead, such as elevation gain/loss, mileages of common trails, loop trails, and wildlife observation areas.
13. Consider offering more backcountry and front county campsites and provide online reservations.
14. Provide and/or better communicate on the MidPen website a comprehensive list of wildlife and best places to observe them.
15. Provide more ranger patrols at Skyline and other preserve parking lots where there is illegal or inappropriate activity taking place.
16. More strongly communicate when and where smoking is prohibited in preserves.
17. Consider opening more dog-friendly trails. Enforce dog waste clean-up policies.
18. Consider offering bus shuttles between reserves along Highway 35 on weekends.
19. Offer reservation-only, ranger-led, full moon night hikes.
20. Make it easier to be trained to be a volunteer for the district, and better communicate these volunteer opportunities via various online and offline channels.
21. Encourage more citizen science at preserves.
22. Keep up the good work.

## Conclusions and Closing Thoughts

SFSU has the following conclusions and thoughts about the South Asian focus group. It is important to note the participants in this focus group were all young South Asian adults who were software engineers/scientists and were avid users of communications technology. All but one of respondents were frequent users of MidPen preserves.

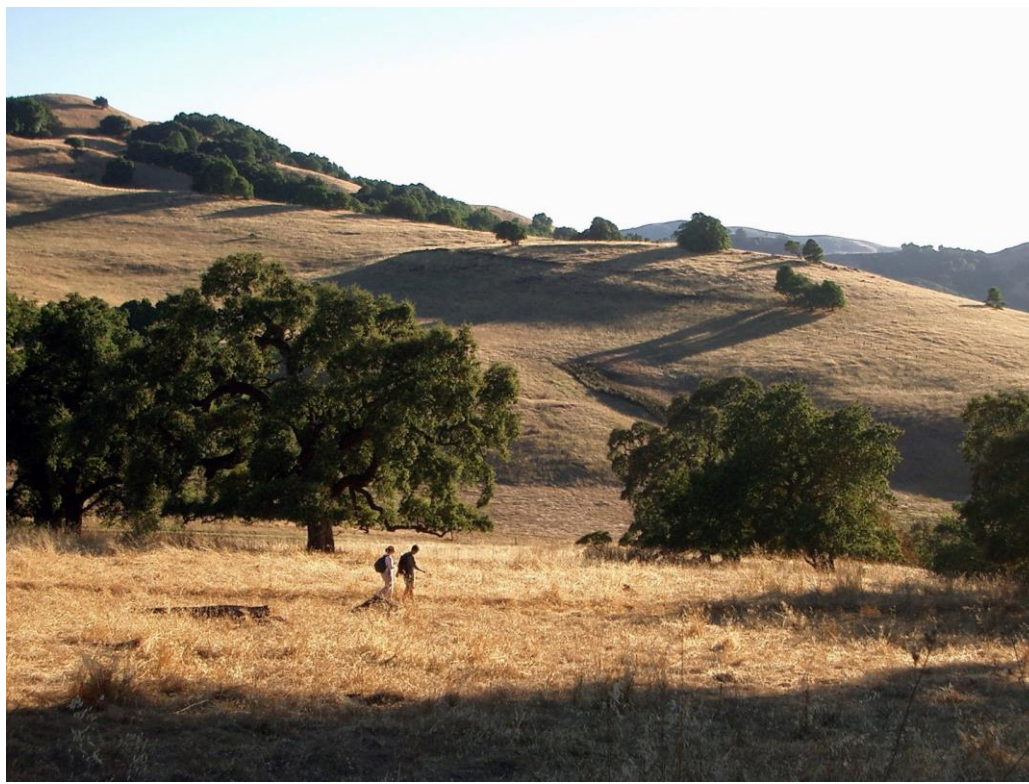
There was strong unanimous support for MidPen using more communications technology to help visitors plan and enjoy their visit, and communicate quickly about any emergencies that might arise. If not already available, MidPen could provide apps and links to offline preserve maps at some trailheads, and enhance downloadable pdf maps of all preserves from the district website (or communicate more effectively that are already available). Better use of social media and Google maps is encouraged. Informal volunteers could be enlisted in this effort by the district organizing photo and Google Maps contests and updates. Engage users and non-users through more Facebook and social media efforts.

These users wanted the district to compile and present more detailed information about key trails (e.g. elevation profiles, wildlife resources, loop trails) on the district website and most

importantly, at popular trailheads. Consider offering limited backcountry camping opportunities, as is done in East Bay Regional Parks. Strategically improve degraded trail conditions to enhance safety, using district trail crews and volunteers. Develop or revise a district dog management plan with consideration for limited new dog-friendly trails, possibly like East Bay Regional Parks has done. Develop or revise a transportation plan for busy preserves. Identify new opportunities for limited full moon, permitted, docent or ranger-led night hikes and communicates these widely.

Not all of these suggestions may be appropriate and the district may already be working on some. Neither could all of them be implemented in the short term. But they provide a menu of ideas for the district to consider, as generated by these young South Asian focus group participants.

## APPENDICIES





**APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER**

**YOU ARE INVITED:**  
**WE WANT TO HEAR**  
**YOUR VOICE!**  
**JOIN US FOR A FOCUS GROUP**

This session is open by invitation only.  
 Food will be provided! Receive a  
**\$25 gift card**  
 for your time and active input!

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MidPen) is working with SF State University to learn about your experiences in their reserves and other parks in the South Bay area, what you like most and least, and what you think could improve visitor experiences in MidPen open space preserves.

*We want to hear from YOU! Learn more about MidPen while helping them to better assist your community ~*

**Email a confirmation you will participate to:**



**SAN FRANCISCO  
STATE UNIVERSITY**

Dr. Patrick Tierney: [ptierney@sfsu.edu](mailto:ptierney@sfsu.edu)  
 (415) 338-1531

**Tell us what  
you think  
about MidPen  
Open Space  
Preserves!**

**Location: Cupertino  
Senior Center, 21251  
Stevens Creek Blvd**

**October 5, 2017**

- **Sign-in and lite dinner at 6:15pm.**
- **Focus group starts promptly at 6:45 & ends by 8:45**



## APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### MROSD PRESERVE VISITOR USE STUDY:

#### South Asian Focus Group Protocol for October 5, 2017

#### *Welcome & Introductions*

Hi, my name is [Patrick Tierney] I am a professor of recreation, parks and tourism at SFSU. This is [Michala Roan], a student at SFSU]. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us today and agreeing to be part of this focus group. We'll do group introductions regarding who you are in a few minutes. This conversation will last about an hour and a half and will be recorded. We would like to record this conversation so we can use the recording to transcribe notes. The recording will be kept in a secure location and will not be used for any other purpose other than this project. *[Does anyone has any issues/problems with being audio-taped?]*.

No MROSD staff are present here tonight so you should feel free to voice your opinions about MROSD preserves. No names will be associated with any of the comments you make during this interview. When you signed in today, there was a number next to your name, you'll use that, which I'll explain in a moment.

I will be leading the conversation today and [Michala] will be taking notes. I am going to go over a few details before we start. If you have any questions, please ask as they come up.

#### *Purpose of the Focus Group*

We are working in partnership with the MROSD to better understand open space preserve users' attitudes, experiences, use patterns, and preferences and to identify reasons why people don't visit more often. The information you share will help the district determine how well they are supporting their strategic plan and contributing to their long-term goals. In addition, the information you provide can help improve existing preserve resources and services to meet community needs. Your participation is key as this group represents the ideas of *[members of the South Bay Asian Community]*. We welcome your input and your voice matters to the District so we need you to be honest with us and share your thoughts and opinions openly.

#### *Guidelines*

Has anyone ever participated in a focus group? *[Ask for show of hands]*. For some people being in a focus group can be a new experience. We'll first discuss general ground rules that can help ensure a safe environment where everyone's ideas are shared and valued, and to ensure we capture what everyone says on the recorder and in our notes. Again, your name will not be attached to your comments, only a number.

1. WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING. We need everyone to participate and talk to each other as you are comfortable. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
2. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. Every person's experiences and opinions are important. We want to hear what each of you think and feel about parks, in general, and within MCP in particular. If you're not familiar with parks and preserves in

MCP, respond based on your knowledge of whatever parks come to mind for you. You don't need to agree with others, but please listen respectfully to different points of view. If you do agree with what someone says, please speak up, rather than nodding your head or gesturing in some other way. This helps us capture agreement in the notes. Also, if someone else says something that reminds you of something or sparks a thought, please feel free to follow their comments with your own.

3. **WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE.** Everything you tell us today is anonymous. That means we will not share anything you say with your name attached. While we might use quotes or ideas that you share, as mentioned, we will never use your name in any way.
4. **ONE MIC/1 NUMBER:** Please speak one at a time – this will help us capture everyone's thoughts and opinions. Before you make your comment, simply state your number first (which is on your name tag) then go for it. For example, I may raise my hand and say, "Number five: I think that parks need to have more..." If you forget to state your number, I might ask you for it.
5. **STEP UP STEP BACK.** If you have shared a lot, step back to allow others to share.

Are there any questions before we begin?

**Icebreaker:** Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves then we'll turn on the recorder after this. Please state your first name and your favorite MROSD preserve.

*[Student assistant turns on digital recorder and begins taking typed notes on laptop].*

### ***SOUTH ASIAN RESPONDENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS***

***Generic Discussion Questions, Tier 1 - (As we move forward, it would be best to reply as it relates to MCP, if you're not able to that's fine. Comments about any park experience are fair game. When I say "Marin County Parks", I mean both Marin County Parks and Open Space Preserves).***

1. In the last 6 months, have each of you visited any Midpeninsular Regional open space District preserve for any purpose? Any one not?
2. Please share a sample of activities you like to do in MROSDPs. **[use/experience]**
3. Where do you like to go most often within MROSDPs? Why do you prefer to do these activities at these locations? Which preserves do you like to visit?
4. How have your most recent MidPen preserve experiences made you feel? Explain
5. What do you like the most about the MidPen preserves?
6. If you have not visited a MROSD preserve in the last 6 months, please explain why. Have you stopped using MidPen altogether? Why?
7. What do you like least about riding on MidPen preserves? Why?
8. Do you have any suggestions for MidPen management to improve your experience at MidPen open space preserves? Please explain.



9. How might these suggestions be implemented?

***Tier 2 - If Time, Address the Following Questions***

1. Are you familiar with the MidPen district sources of funding?

**Does anyone have anything else to add based on what we've talked about or something else you'd like to share?**

***Closing & Wrap Up***

*[Student assistant turns off digital recorder, note-taking ends].*

Thank you all again for participating in this important conversation. The information you provided is significant and meaningful and can really help improve visitor experiences throughout the MidPen preserves. If you are interested in the results and findings of this conversation, a summary report can be sent out to you upon request. If so, please give your name and email address, or postal address, to our student assistant.

In appreciation of your time, [Michala] will be distributing [a \$25 gift card *incentive*]. In order to receive this gift card we need you to please sign our receipt log for the university accounting purposes only.

**(PT) I want to thank Atul for helping organize this event. (Give thank you card to participant organizers).**

***Equipment & Supplies***

- 1) Sign in sheet
- 2) Participant incentive log / accounting sheet
- 3) Name tags
- 4) Protocol copies
- 5) Question copies
- 6) Audio recording device
- 7) Gift cards
- 8) Visual charts, graphs, maps & brochures
- 9) Writing utensils: pens, pencils, sharpies
- 10) Money for caterer
- 11) Mailing list sheet
- 12) Press release on Phase I results
- 13) Bring older laptop and charge cord for Bernice to use
- 14) Thank you card
- 15) Bring donation (money) for host/room rental (have receipt for it), if room not paid in advance.

# EAST ASIAN FOCUS GROUP REPORT

A Component of the Midpen Visitors Study



**Prepared For:** Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

**Prepared By:** Patrick Tierney, PhD  
**Email:** [adrift650@comcast.net](mailto:adrift650@comcast.net)



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### Appendices

Appendix A. Recruitment flyer

Appendix B. Focus group protocol and questions

## INTRODUCTION

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen), in partnership with Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor of recreation, parks and tourism at San Francisco State University, is conducting a study of Midpen preserve users and non-users. The overall purpose of the study is to assess visitor satisfaction, motivation, stewardship interests and future demands, for potential decision making. It also aims to provide recommendations for preserve programs, facilities, policies, and innovative ways to enhance stewardship, community engagement and access. The study consists of two parts: Part I were intercept and follow-up surveys; while Part II consists of focus groups with specific community groups. This report presents the procedures and results of one focus group interview with 14 east Asian residents of Santa Clara County, who were recruited by the Angela Chen of the City of Cupertino. This focus group was held March 8, 2018 at Cupertino City Hall. In this report a reference to “Midpen trails” means trails in Midpen Open Space Preserves.

For more information about the purpose and scope of the research contact Joshua Hugg, Government Affairs Specialist for Midpen, at (650) 691-1200 or [jhugg@openspace.org](mailto:jhugg@openspace.org). Questions about the focus group process, data analysis or findings can be directed to Dr. Patrick Tierney, professor and principal investigator, at (650) 255-2536 or [adrift650@comcast.net](mailto:adrift650@comcast.net).

### **Special thanks to a community partner**

This project could not have been possible nor successful without the help and support of Angela Chen of the City of Cupertino. She helped us find and recruit participants in this focus group and secured the location. We wish to express our thanks to her.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Phase II Overview**

The focus group interview part of this study aimed to capture the experiences of Midpen district East Asian residents in Santa Clara County. Participants could have been persons who may or may not have visited Midpen preserves. The choice of this user group and the initial contact for this east Asian community were provided by Joshua Hugg with Midpen. He and Midpen staff believed the opinions and motivations from this group, and from upcoming focus groups could benefit future planning of the district preserves and services.

### ***Development of Collateral Materials & Procedures***

Dr. Tierney created the materials needed to successfully set up and facilitate the focus group, such as focus group recruitment flyers, focus group protocol, and interview questions. The east Asian community leader was asked to recruit potential participants for the focus group. Dr. Tierney created an invitation and recruitment flyer. The flyer was translated into Simplified Chinese by Rev.com, as shown in Appendix A. Angela forwarded it to persons, and she confirmed persons attending the focus group. At the focus group Dr. Tierney showed maps of Midpen preserves and facilitated the

focus group. Active participants were provided with a \$25 Safeway Stores gift card at the end of the event.

Dr. Tierney used a participant sign-in sheet, log for signatures acknowledging receipt of gift cards, and sign-up sheet for Midpen (e.g., anyone requesting a copy of the final report or wished to be added to mailing list). Other materials used during the focus groups were name tags and map brochures of all Midpen preserves. Dr. Tierney also provided a lite meal and refreshments at the start of the focus group to encourage attendance and thank the participants.

## Focus Groups

### What occurred, why, and how?



A focus group is a small group of four to fifteen people, ideally, led through an open discussion by a skilled moderator. Dr. Tierney was the focus group moderator/facilitator who asked initial questions and nurtured disclosure in an open and honest format. The goal was to generate a maximum number of different opinions, experiences, attitudes, and ideas from as many people in the group in the time allotted. As reflected in the protocol that follows, the focus groups

were structured around a set of carefully predetermined questions but the discussion was free-flowing. That is, participant comments stimulated and influenced the thinking and sharing of others.

### Recruitment: Where did participants come from?

This study used a convenience sampling method employed a community leader to enlist members of the east Asian community in Santa Clara County as focus group participants. This community leader recruited 14 participants, three who indicated they had not previously visited a Midpen preserve, and 11 who marked they had visited. So in general these participants were familiar with Midpen, but as we shall see, fewer actually visited a preserve or could name a Midpen preserve



### Focus Group Protocol

The focus group protocol used for this study was created by the Dr. Tierney, based on past experience, and included a description of the overall study, participant guidelines, focus group questions, and logistical information. Since some participants were not familiar with Midpen preserves, Dr. Tierney handed-out a Midpen brochure showing the locations of all preserves to all participants, and referred to a large map showing district boundaries and preserve locations. At the start of the focus group he also presented a brief general introduction to what Midpen offers and how their preserves are different from city, county and national parks. If persons had not visited a Midpen preserve, they were asked to consider a visit to another nature preserve, such as a national park or wildlife refuge. Questions asked participants about their most recent preserve experience, types of activities they undertook, how these activities make them feel, where they like to go most often in Midpen or nature preserves, what they like most about their recent experiences in the preserve, what they like least, and any suggestions for Midpen management to improve their experience. At the start of the focus group the facilitator asked the group if it was ok to audio record the session and present in English (versus Chinese). Everyone agree to the recording and us of

English. The final focus group protocol and questions used during the East Asian focus group are available in Appendix B.

## **Data Collection**

The East Asian focus group had 14 participants. As participants arrived at the location, the facilitator asked them to sign a participant sign-in sheet requesting their demographic information. They then enjoyed the lite meal provided, during which comfort and rapport was established by the investigator. After a half hour the investigator then asked the group if it was ok to conduct the focus group in English (versus Chinese). He then introduced and described how the proceedings would go. He asked if it would be ok to audio record the session. Everyone agreed to use of English. He started the interview process, beginning with a general ice breaker to get the group thinking about preserves and park use or non-use, and used then the protocol and questions (Appendix B). All prepared questions were asked within a 120 minute time period and the facilitator was responsible for getting all participants to talk and fully explain their answers using helpful probes (e.g., “Can you say more about that?”; “Help us understand what you mean?” and “Can you give an example?”). The investigator demonstrated active listening and occasionally paraphrased long or ambiguous comments, or sought clarification for analysis purposes and/or summarized responses for the whole group.

The facilitator recorded the focus group using his Apple iPhone. Body language or other subtle relevant clues were recorded via written notes. At the end of the focus group, participants were thanked and each person received the incentive (\$25 gift card) that required a signature on the receipt log for accounting purposes. If any participants wanted to receive the final report, or expressed interest in being put on a Midpen mailing list, they were asked to indicate that on the sign-in sheet. Audio files were uploaded to a secure computer for storage and backed up.



## **Data Analysis & Transcription**

The demographic characteristics of these 14 participants were gathered at the sign-in for the focus group. Results are summarized in Table 1. The focus group discussions were captured via audio recordings. The facilitator moderated, while the discussions were recorded. The interview was then transcribed verbatim by an outside contractor, Rev.com, and verified by Dr. Tierney.

In order for all participant comments to be understandable and useful, they were analyzed using a systematic and verifiable process. Hence, the investigator completed a manual content analysis process by first identifying question content categories and emerging themes with groupings entered into a Word document. Subsequently, the investigator extracted and explored common themes. Supporting quotes for each theme were placed under the appropriate section to illustrate what participants stated. The principle investigator then used themes and quotes to develop recommendations.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Many valuable findings were revealed by this focus group interview process. It is important to note that the majority of participants in this focus group were familiar with Midpen preserves, but had not visited in the last six months. Although maps of the Midpen were provided at the focus group and the facilitator discussed some unique characteristics and uses in preserves, there were uncertainties about the preserve resources and locations.



There is a chance that some parks outside Midpen's were considered. Generalizing preserve/park experiences is not uncommon to occur within focus group interviews. The parks literature explains the difficulty for people in differentiating between lands/trails of adjacent park agencies. This further accentuates the need for park agencies to work together; and, the increasing importance to share such park use/non-use interview results with other park managers as well.

### Participant Characteristics

As participants were seated for the focus group they were asked to provide data on their age, sex, ethnicity and occupation and if they had visited a Midpen preserve. This was the source for the following demographic data about the seven focus group participants. Table 1 suggests this was a group of active older adults who visited parks but had not been to a Midpen preserve in the last six months to a year. Four of the seven participants has visited a Midpen preserve at some point.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Total Number of Participants	14
Average Age	58 years
Age Range	22-67 years
Sex	
Male	29%
Female	71%
Ethnicity	
Caucasian	0%
Asian	100%
Occupation	
Professional	55%
Retired	36%
Student	9%



## EMERGING THEMES: SANTA CLARA COUNTY EAST ASIAN RESPONDENTS

An analysis of focus group responses produced the following themes and illustrative participant quotes.

### **Theme: The East Asian community in Santa Clara County is generally not familiar with Midpen preserves**

"I really don't think Midpen have done a good job in terms of advertising yourself. Because every weekend our families first we go to hike. Then we always go to those same old place. And now you show us they have so many wonderful places. I just look at your website. You have a lot of docent led tours, right, so does any of us know about these?"

### **Theme: Hiking, looking at scenery and wildlife observation are by far the most common activities by seniors in preserves**

"I think hiking is probably the most common thing"

"It's usually two to three hour type of hike, generally we're looking for elevation."

"I wish I know (the names of), this tree and that tree and that plant and that wildflowers"

"I enjoy the nature scene"

"You exercise yourself and walk the dog"

"The view is wonderful"

"I've now started seeing eagles"

"I just love the nature. They (preserves) are all pretty and different"

"I enjoy the flowers in the springtime, enjoy the animals. We saw deers all the time and like Rancho you also have turkeys"

"My last visit was to Rancho is the program for a third grade field trip, the Ohlone Village"



### **Theme: There is substantial confusion over what is a Midpen preserve and other parks**

"What's different between this one (Midpen) and Sierra Club? And also, is this a private land"

"They have a festival"

"I used to go to a place in the Midpeninsula where there's a log cabin and we can camp"

"I'm really confused by the objective of Midpen. And their intention also to try to preserve the nature. So they don't want to provide facilities. But then very few people will be able to enjoy that kind of benefit."

"I just reviewed this Midpen district website. It look like San Jose is not represented by this district. Why not?"

### **Theme: Midpen preserves provide many benefits**

- **Subtheme A: Mental wellbeing**

"It's (preserves) are like anti-depressant. Better than anti-depressant. It makes you happy in a natural healing kind of atmosphere"

"I'm not going to any natures to see some man made stuff. Mostly try to enjoy the nature itself.

"I join a group that is every Tuesday they are hiking and then they are hiking all day long so sometimes I feel that it is quite stressful"

"This is Silicon Valley and people are very stressful and then you go to nature or some open space and you really feel relaxed and calms you down"

"The more I go, I will live longer. The more I see, the more I watch all that Gods created, all the pretty areas for human beings, It keeps me smiling, keeps me positive thinking"



"You know, every time there (at preserve) I feel like I'm rich man"

- **Subtheme B: Family and friend bonding**

"Hike with my family and then you can talk about a lot of things"

"I am a student at UCSD and when I come home, I felt more productive there (Midpen preserve) being able to spend time with my friends and ..... no reception so we weren't really distracted by our phones and we were able to focus on the conversation"

"I spend a lot of time talking to my daughters on hikes and we can talk about work, we can talk about our lives and stuff like this where you can't do it at home"

"Our family walks together, kids can run behind or just play"

- **Subtheme C: Physical health**

"It's usually two to three hour type of hike, generally we're looking for elevation."

"Fresh air, you get exercise"

"You are physically challenged (by hikes) but you mentally are relaxed"

"Get exercise, get body in shape"

"This is huge, 100% of oxygen. I can breathe"

- **Subtheme D: It is an inexpensive outing**

"You doesn't spend money, besides your time"

### Theme: There are significant barriers to visiting Midpen preserves

- **Subtheme A: Parking**

"Whether it's the big place like Rancho that has large sets of parking lots but they're always full, or many of the places they just don't have parking spots, you just find any place along the road"

"The parking is not enough. We stop going, part of the reason was parking was difficult, even seven, six o'clock in morning it's full."

"There is no parking"

"Parking is most the headache. You cannot find parking and it's depressing and then forget it"



- **Subtheme B: Personal Safety**

"He actually gets quite anxious about mountain lions and the coyotes. For some reason he's very terrified of the mountain lions and the coyotes. Although, we're told that you're more likely to be attacked by a turkey."

"In the summer time you have to watch out because you worry about the rattlesnakes"

"So I also sometimes, even me or maybe other friend, just two ladies, I'm scared"

"I am a little afraid, for example, some people ride bikes. (People) Ride bikes with tattoos, you know, you just feel not safety"

"The people I go with are relatives and they're some concern that if the road is not well maintained it had a lot of small stone, it becomes slippery and they are afraid that they may fall down. And also it's too steep"

- **Subtheme C: Lack of restrooms**

"I sometimes feel very stressful because you always afraid there is no restroom"

### Theme: Management issues

- **Subtheme A: Mountain biking**

"Sometimes there's a problem with aggressive bikers and they don't use bells"

"We've been hit by a bike (while hiking in a preserve)"

"I'm a biker and actually when we bike sometime we are ringing but some people not react and we shout but people when they're hiking, they have tendency to line up and block the whole street. Then we talk, we shout and they don't really listen to us"

"So there are lots of bikes. Sometimes I'm a little bit afraid, you know, about the guy coming down"

- **Subtheme B: Other management issues**

"The poison oak is starting to grow pretty fast right now and I've already gotten it once this year so get out there and deal with the poison oak."

"My family decided to set up a memorial bench in his memory (person who died in Rancho San Antonio). So we email Midpen and then they said, "Oh, no, no, no. We cannot accept the average people. We need people special contribution, special ... some kind of monetary, whatever. And plus. Each bench is about \$5,000. We need to see how (preserves) can to be usable for people, how to be part of the humanity and community. That part I want you to bring back to the Midpen"

## **Theme: Midpen can do things to encourage the community to visit preserves**

- **Subtheme A: Improve facilities**

"You know, Open Space, although their mission is preserve nature, however, you need to compromise a little bit for creation of purpose. You know, there should be bathroom, parking, good trail or some kind of resting bench or even just small, those kind of shed area (shade structures)"

"I also find that not so many emergency phones"

"The trail most times was open with no shade. And for this time of year it's wonderful, but then during summer days sometimes it's tough"

"If we can develop some trails that are more in the middle of nature and have shade"

"I think I like the idea that we have a lot of open space. But you get a feeling that you cannot access it. So at least small areas with some sort of higher level of maintenance and basic facilities"

"There's not enough restrooms"

"The road (hiking trail) is not maintained because they want to keep nature, right? So very few people can enjoy that kind of benefit"



- **Subtheme B: Better pre-trip information, maps and signage**

"You also feel little lost because the directions sometimes is not good. And some directions could be very artistic and point to the sky. Which way do you go? And they have really strange signs so you get confused"

"But it isn't very simple a lot of times (to find the right trail). You're given the map, you got the trails on it, but then you have to decide, well, which trail am I gonna go to"

"One of the things we always do is on Google you can download offline maps and that's very important. Otherwise you're just in this big green spot, you know, there's a little blue dot in a big green thing and it's like, well, I don't know where to go."

"I don't think that the organization's done a good enough job in categorizing the types of hikes and recommendations"

"It will be better to have sometimes a master list and say, "These are easy hikes"

"And your website can make a little bit improvement also. I think for the first page, your main page, the map, just where you can zoom in, zoom out because it's so crowded page. I mean, so many preserves all in there. I have difficulty to find out which one is the closer to where I live"

"The organization needs to do more reach out to the community. Just Saturday I hiked with another mom and she was so happy because that's her first time to be at the Fremont Older. She's in our neighborhood so it means she's been living here for I don't know for how many years, but she never been there at Fremont Older"



- **Subtheme C: Better transportation and parking**

“Build more parking”

“A shuttle bus, those kind of ideas may work much better and they're not tear down trees and then build more parking lots”

“For a shuttle bus system (to Rancho San Antonio), particular on the weekends, you can use the elementary school parking lot, right? You know, of course it takes money to run something like that but then there's a demand”

“Place on their website for you to reserve parking for two or three hours so at least you have expectation you go there for three hours, I have a space”

“A shuttle bus type of service to take people to different places (preserves), I think that is a good idea”

- **Subtheme D: Other suggestions**

“If possible, there should be more volunteer lead hikes, that would be nice, regularly. I looked at the website and they do have them but it's kind of like those are very long, I am very busy”

“People with spinal cord injury and they are all wheelchair bound. Those open space there's minimal wheelchair accessible trail for wheelchair bound population access”

“I think in general Midpen is doing a good job as is. Their places, they're well used. I see that places, the facilities are well maintained. I see changes, so they keep coming (to maintain). So yeah, they're doing a good job. If they can save more money, purchase more land, preserve more land, then that would be great”

“The state, it's under huge pressure to solve the housing crisis and everywhere they try to build up high rises and all those kind of things. In the meantime I'm thinking there's so many open space. It seems like no one dare touch those space for housing”



## Participant Recommendations

Focus group participant responses were used to develop the following recommendations. The recommendations presented below are from the perspective of the East Asian community in Santa Clara County, and they may or may not be different from the general public or other types of preserve users. It is important to note the closest popular preserve near many participants was Rancho San Antonio, a preserve that receives by far the largest amount of visitation of any.

1. Conduct more outreach to the East Asian community in Santa Clara County. Many do not even know Midpen preserves exist and what programs, such as docent-led tours, they offer.
2. Develop more parking and/or shuttles, as this is the number one identified need by both Midpen visitors and non-visitors.
3. Educate residents about how Midpen preserves are different from other parks because there is confusion about what they are.
4. Optimize opportunities for hiking, especially easy loop trails. These are well situated for multi-generation family hikes.
5. Establish a list of easy hikes. On each preserve maps identify easy trails.

6. Encourage wildlife observation in preserves. But also educate about likelihood of encountering mountain lions and rattlesnakes.
7. Develop small areas along trails with some facilities, such as restrooms, benches and shade structures.
8. Improve the district website, maps and signs to help people find the right trail for them.
9. Provide more trails suitable for persons in wheelchairs.

## Conclusions and Closing Thoughts

Dr. Tierney has the following conclusions and thoughts about the East Asian focus group. It is important to note that the closest most popular Midpen preserve to many of the focus group participants is also the busiest one, Rancho San Antonio. Few seem to visit the more remote preserves, such as those along Skyline Drive. Those in the focus group who had not visited or were infrequent visitors, cited many barriers to visiting, from mountain lions to other visitors making it unsafe to hike in preserves.

Some participants wanted city park or national park type facilities where there were more man-made features and services, such as smooth trails, more restrooms, lots of signs, garbage cans, shade structures, etc. Or at least one area along the trail away from the trailhead with these. Some or all of these may be inappropriate in nature preserves other than at trailheads and parking areas.

Develop or identify more easy trails, including ones accessible to persons in wheelchairs. Or at a minimum provide more information about easy loop trails on the district website. The Activities Key webpage did not seem to be easily found by focus group participants or the symbols (for easy trails) did not seem to be easily understood or identified. An easy-to-read and highly visible list of easy hiking trails at all preserves seems warranted or made more visible.

More parking was a very important issue to preserve visitors and non-visitors. This is the most frequently mentioned facility need. Several participants did not want more parking lots but were supportive of shuttles from other areas to the reserves.

Personal safety was a frequently mentioned issue and barrier to visiting. This includes concerns about dangerous visitors, wild animals, mountain bikers and getting lost in preserves. Therefore, an important action the district could take is developing and promoting docent-led group hikes in preserves, especially with other East Asian community leaders or docents. Easy docent-led tours appear to be one of the most effective ways to over-come personal safety concerns and being unfamiliar with preserves, for first-time visitors. Another option would be organizing groups of East Asian families through schools, churches or non-profits serving their community.

An important need for the East Asian in Santa Clara County, as well as other communities, is to conduct outreach to them. This includes providing information about the opportunities, preserve locations, and differences between them and other types of parks is warranted, based on focus group

participants. As with other communities, many persons do not even know Midpen preserves exist or about docent-led tours that are available. There seems to be strong interest in visiting Midpen preserves among focus group participants who had not visited previously.

## APPENDICIES

### APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER





**您受到邀請：**  
**我們要聽到您的聲音！**  
**加入我們的 FOCUS GROUP**

Midpeninsula 開放區保留空地(Midpen) 和舊金山州立大學的 Patrick Tierney 博士合作以了解您對公園的興趣以及保留地和其他 Bay Area 公園保留方面的經驗。您最喜歡和最不喜歡的東西是什麼，如何才能使您更多的參觀公園，怎樣能提高您在 MidPen 保留空地的經歷。

我們想聽取您的意見！

在有助於他們更好的幫助您的社區的同時，了解到更多關於 Midpen 的情況~

發電郵以便確認您的參加

Angela Chen: Achenlee8@gmail.com

**告訴我們關於您對**  
**MidPen**  
**保留空地的想法**

地點 **Cupertino City Hall,**  
**EOC conference room, 10300**  
**Torre 大街, Cupertino, 加利**  
**福尼亞州 95014**

2018年3月8號

- 登記并參加6:15pm晚餐
- Focus group 在6:45  
馬上開始& 在8:45結束





## APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### **East Asian Focus Group Protocol for March 8, 2018**

#### ***Welcome & Introductions***

Hi, my name is [*Patrick Tierney*] I am a professor of recreation, parks and tourism at SFSU. Is everyone ok with having this event being presented in English? If not I have a Chinese translator. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us today and agreeing to be part of this focus group. We'll do group introductions regarding who you are in a few minutes. This conversation will last about an hour and a half and will be recorded. We would like to record this conversation so we can use the recording to transcribe notes. The recording will be kept in a secure location and will not be used for any other purpose other than this project. [*Does anyone has any issues/problems with being audio-taped?*].

No MROSD staff are present here tonight so you should feel free to voice your opinions about MROSD preserves. No names will be associated with any of the comments you make during this interview. When you signed in today, there was a number next to your name, you'll use that, which I'll explain in a moment.

I will be leading the conversation today. I am going to go over a few details before we start. If you have any questions, please ask as they come up.

#### ***Purpose of the Focus Group***

I am working in partnership with the MROSD to better understand open space preserve users' attitudes, experiences, use patterns, and preferences and to identify reasons why people don't visit more often. The information you share will help the district determine how well they are supporting their strategic plan and contributing to their long-term goals. In addition, the information you provide can help improve existing preserve resources and services to meet community needs. Your participation is key as this group represents the ideas of [*members of the East Asian Community*]. We welcome your input and your voice matters to the District so we need you to be honest with us and share your thoughts and opinions openly.

#### ***Guidelines***

Has anyone ever participated in a focus group? [*Ask for show of hands*]. For some people being in a focus group can be a new experience. We'll first discuss general ground rules that can help ensure a safe environment where everyone's ideas are shared and valued, and to ensure we capture what everyone says on the recorder and in our notes. Again, your name will not be attached to your comments, only a number.

1. WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING. We need everyone to participate and talk to each other as you are comfortable. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
2. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. Every person's experiences and opinions are important. We want to hear what each of you think and feel about parks, in general, and within MCP in particular. If you're not familiar with parks and preserves in MCP, respond based on your knowledge of whatever parks come to mind for you. You don't

need to agree with others, but please listen respectfully to different points of view. If you do agree with what someone says, please speak up, rather than nodding your head or gesturing in some other way. This helps us capture agreement in the notes. Also, if someone else says something that reminds you of something or sparks a thought, please feel free to follow their comments with your own.

3. **WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE.** Everything you tell us today is anonymous. That means we will not share anything you say with your name attached. While we might use quotes or ideas that you share, as mentioned, we will never use your name in any way.
4. **ONE MIC/1 NUMBER:** Please speak one at a time – this will help us capture everyone’s thoughts and opinions. Before you make your comment, simply state your number first (which is on your name tag) then go for it. For example, I may raise my hand and say, “Number five: I think that parks need to have more...” If you forget to state your number, I might ask you for it.
5. **STEP UP STEP BACK.** If you have shared a lot, step back to allow others to share.

Are there any questions before we begin?

**Icebreaker:** Let’s go around the room and introduce ourselves then we’ll turn on the recorder after this. Please state your first name and your favorite MROSD preserve.

*[Turn on digital recorder].*

### **SAN MATEO SENIOR FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

***Generic Discussion Questions, Tier 1 - (As we move forward, it would be best to reply as it relates to Midpen Open Space preserves, if you’re not able to that’s fine. Comments about any preserve and park experiences are fair game.***

1. Have you heard of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space Preserves before learning about this focus group? If so, can you give me an example of a preserve?
2. In the last 6 months, have each of you visited any Midpen preserve for any purpose? Any one not? If not, have you visited a nature area, such as a state, national or county park or wildlife refuge?
3. Please share a sample of activities you like to do in Midpen preserves. If not visited Midpen, what activities do you like to do in nature areas?
4. Which Midpen preserves do you most like to visit? Why do you prefer to do these activities at these locations?
5. How have your most recent MidPen preserve experiences made you feel? Or if never visited Midpen, how do visits to other nature areas make you feel. Explain
6. What do you like the most about the MidPen preserves? If not visited Midpen, what do you like most about other nature areas you have visited? Explain.
7. If you have not visited a Midpen preserve in the last 6 months, please explain why. Have you stopped using MidPen altogether? Why?

8. What do you like least about visiting MidPen preserves? Or if you never visited Midpen, what do you like least about nature areas? Why?
9. Would you like to visit a Midpen preserve in the future? Why or why not?
10. Do you have any suggestions for MidPen management to improve your past preserve experiences, or encourage you to try visiting a MidPen open space preserve for the first time? Please explain.
11. How might these suggestions be implemented?

**Does anyone have anything else to add based on what we've talked about or something else you'd like to share?**

***Closing & Wrap Up***

*[Turn off digital recorder].*

Thank you all again for participating in this important conversation. The information you provided is significant and meaningful and can really help improve visitor experiences throughout the MidPen preserves. If you are interested in the results and findings of this conversation, a summary report can be sent out to you upon request. If so, please give your name and email address, or postal address, to our student assistant.

In appreciation of your time, I will be distributing [a \$25 gift card *incentive*]. In order to receive this gift card we need you to please sign our receipt log for the university accounting purposes only.

**(PT) I want to thank *Angela Chen* for helping organize and translating this event. (Give thank you card to participant organizers).**