



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-19-163  
Meeting 19-30  
December 9, 2019

## AGENDA ITEM 2

### AGENDA ITEM

Environmental Scan and Fiscal Year 2020-21 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS *den*

Review, update if needed, and adopt the Fiscal Year 2020-21 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives to meet emerging opportunities and challenges, and guide the development of the Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget and 3-year Capital Improvement and Action Plan.

### SUMMARY

Each year, the Board of Directors (Board) holds two retreats to kick-off the annual budget process. For the budget development cycle ending June 30, 2021 (FY21), these retreats are scheduled on Monday, December 9, 2019 and Tuesday, March 3, 2020. On December 9, 2019, the Board will review and discuss the following items:

- The Environmental Scan Report, which is prepared annually to inform any updates to the Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives (Attachment 1);
- Progress to date on fulfilling the FY20 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives, and any language revisions to adopt the new FY21 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives (Attachments 2 and 3).

This annual Board Retreat Meeting 1 (Strategic Planning) provides the Board with an early opportunity to set the overall course for the coming year at a broad policy level. It also provides the framework for Board Retreat Meeting 2 (Priority Setting) scheduled on March 3, 2020. At this future meeting, the Board will discuss and confirm the priorities for the next fiscal year to guide the Budget and Action Plan development ahead of the presentations to the Action Plan and Budget Committee, which begin in late April 2020.

### DISCUSSION

The Board adopted a comprehensive Strategic Plan in 2011 (R-11-96) to provide a high-level framework for guiding the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) implementation of its mission. Each year, the Board reviews, makes edits as necessary, and adopts the Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives for the following fiscal year to provide high-level direction for developing the upcoming Budget and Action Plan.

Environmental Scan

Staff will present the results of an Environmental Scan Report (Attachment 1) and discuss the strengths, challenges, barriers, and opportunities facing the District as it looks forward to FY21. The environmental scan includes significant internal and external conditions, data, and factors that may influence the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization's operations, services, and project delivery. The annual environmental scan informs the Board's subsequent review and any revisions to or affirmation of the Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives for FY21 (Attachments 2 and 3). Below is a summary of the high-level themes and findings from the environmental scan:

- The District remains focused on delivering Vision Plan and Measure AA projects.
- Work is underway on 20 of 25 Measure AA Portfolios.
- The District remains in a strong financial position yet aware of a looming recession and slower growth in assessed property values.
- Project complexity, and therefore costs and schedules, are increasing.
- The continued high demand for labor and materials regionwide continue to drive construction costs up. However, there has been a widening gap in bid prices as well.
- Extreme weather patterns are the new normal. Enhanced and expanded resiliency practices, systems, and policies will allow the District to better adapt and rebound to a changing climate and minimize disruptions to ongoing operations, services, and project delivery.
- Continued monitoring of state and national policies, especially after the 2020 elections, is important to maintain the long-term financial sustainability of projects and programs.
- Reaching out to and educating newly elected officials and the public of the critical role the District plays in protecting water quality and water supplies, reducing catastrophic wildfires and impacts from climate change, and furthering regional conservation goals to sustain our region's life support system continue to be important.
- High visitation at newly opened public access locations and the anticipation of opening new public areas is increasing the pressure and demand on field personnel.
- New public access areas and related infrastructure often require mitigation and permit conditions, expanding restoration and revegetation workloads and requiring multi-year efforts to reach performance goals.
- Recruitment and retention of employees continues to be a key focus for the organization; the record high job market is affecting staffing turnover and adding pressure to start new employees at mid or top salary ranges. These factors, coupled with the high cost of living and difficult commutes, warrant ongoing creative staff retention strategies.
- New staff present an opportunity to energize the organization and bring in new perspectives, ideas and solutions; there is also an opportunity and a need for new and remaining staff to glean institutional knowledge from those parting ways with the District.

The Board is encouraged to review the detailed information in Attachment 1 prior to the retreat to prepare for the discussion.

Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

Organizational revisions to the FY21 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives are being proposed to realign the goals and objectives with the District’s core mission. During prior Strategic Planning meetings, the lack of an obvious and clear link from the core components of the District’s mission to the annual Budget and Action Plan development process have been noted.

The recommended revisions, if approved, would have a positive impact throughout the entire organization by establishing a stronger and clearer link that tie the mission to the annual goals and objectives for improved alignment, as shown in the figure to the right.



Realigning – but not substantially changing the strategic goals and objectives – will enable management and staff to identify projects that support the core mission and to better communicate this alignment both internally across all levels of the organization and externally with the public and our partners. Furthermore, the recommended revisions to the Strategic Goals and Objectives provide a concrete structure for the annual Budget and Action Plan development process.

In support of this proposed realignment, the Strategic Goals were reassembled to reflect the major components of the District’s core and coastside mission statements. Strategic Objectives were then reassigned to the relevant Strategic Goals and the language updated slightly; however, most objectives were not materially changed. The prior adopted FY20 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives are presented in Attachment 2. A red-lined version of the draft FY21 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives is presented in Attachment 3. Attachment 4 includes flowcharts that visually depict the realignment of the adopted FY20 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives into the draft FY21 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives.

If the Board accepts the realignment proposal, the General Manager recommends using the draft FY21 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives document to incorporate Board edits to the language, as is District practice for the first annual Board retreat (Attachment 3).

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Acceptance of the Environmental Scan Report and adoption of the FY21 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives have no immediate fiscal impact. These actions will inform, together with Board confirmation of District priorities on March 3, 2020, the development of the FY21 Budget and three-year CIAP for FY21 through FY23 as part of the annual Budget and Action Plan development process.

**BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW**

This item was brought directly to the full Board given full Board interest and importance.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

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

**NEXT STEPS**

On March 3, 2020, the Board will confirm the District-wide priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. The outcomes of the December 9, 2019 and March 3, 2020 Board retreat meetings will guide the development of the Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget and Action Plan, including the 3-Year CIAP.

Attachments:

1. Environmental Scan Report for Fiscal Year 2020-21
2. Adopted FY20 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives
3. Draft FY21 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives
4. FY20 and FY21 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives Flowcharts

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# FY2020-21 Environmental Scan Report

## Introduction

This report summarizes the annual Environmental Scan results, as the District looks forward, planning for FY2020-21.

Each year, District managers take time to reflect on external and internal environments by answering a set of ten questions. The goal of this exercise is to identify any new trends that the District should be aware of, respond in a timely fashion, and ideally get ahead of to avoid potential challenges.

The Environmental Scan considers current and anticipated changes to the economy, political environment, local leadership, regulatory requirements, demographics, organization and workflow, and technology trends.

Key findings are presented below to inform Board discussion as they consider whether revisions to the annual Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives are warranted.

## Economy

There is an increased probability of a recession in the next twelve months; however, construction activity in the Bay Area remains strong. Staff continue to notice lower vendor availability combined with a widening gap in contractor pricing. Recent high and low bids for multiple projects were different by over 150%, suggesting that although the construction market is still very strong, there appears to be indications that a recession could be looming. A recession could reduce constructions costs and therefore allow the District to complete projects at lower cost, but may conversely impact District tax revenue if assessed values drop for an extended period of time.

As noted above, fewer consultants and contractors are submitting proposals or bidding on projects and there have been, again, several instances over the last year where there were no responders or only one respondent. This has been especially noticeable for smaller projects, including IST-related construction projects and planning projects with smaller scopes. If this continues and is exacerbated, the District can expect longer project timelines to account for added time to reach out to more contractors/consultants and/or to re-release Requests for Bids and Requests for Proposals.

Although the region's robust job market remains strong, the residential real estate market has flattened. Median home prices have dropped by nearly 4.5% in the past year indicating assessed values will have slower growth or remain flat. Based on the District Controller's conservative 30-Year Cash Flow Model, property tax revenues are projected to slow down to a growth rate of 3.5% in FY2021-22 and beyond. While the total General Fund ad valorem

property tax revenue estimate for FY2019-20 is 6% above FY2018-19, this is lower than the past several years.

The current economy, including unemployment figures of under 3% for San Mateo and Santa Clara County, continues to support a competitive job market. The ongoing strong job market will again affect retention and recruitment in the coming year. This is discussed in further detail in the *Internal Organization and Workflow* section.

## Political Environment and Local Leadership

### **Federal**

Tariffs have impacted material costs for construction, specifically steel and aluminum. Moreover, reduced federal funding has the potential to impact the ability of federal agencies to respond to permitting requests and work on cooperative projects. Permitting is one of the primary factors outside District control that affects project timelines. Impacts to schedules may be experienced for projects that require federal permits from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Army Corp of Engineers. In addition, federal environmental protection laws have been curtailed and federal grant funding opportunities are limited.

Looking to November 2020, the outcome of the presidential election could impact the District by affecting the status of environmental laws, federal funding, and the capacity of federal permitting agencies to process permits.

### **State**

The Governor of California, Gavin Newsom, has stated that a recession is likely and has taken steps to shore up the state's "rainy day fund." Taking on new debt or financial obligations at the State level without a funding mechanism will become increasingly difficult as the Governor continues to pursue fiscal discipline in the face of predicted financial headwinds. This may affect grant availability and the size of budget requests pursued by the District as well.

The passage of statewide rent control may temper the rise in rental costs; this could have a positive impact for District staff and employee recruitment and retention.

The November 2020 general election includes all three state senators that represent the District. The District has had particularly productive relationships with the current state senators, all of whom are terming out. It will be important to build and develop relationships with newly elected senators.

While Latino and Asian communities across the state are growing more significant, most voters still tend to be Caucasian and older (55+) according to recent Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) polling. This is likely to change over time. Outreach and environmental education to these growing communities is important as their political voice continues to grow.

## Local

The District continues to develop relationships with new local representatives and nurture existing relationships with incumbents. Santa Clara County and San Mateo County have new County Park Directors, providing a good opportunity to partner on projects and programs of mutual interest. Moreover, Santa Clara County's new Supervisor in District 4 has an interest in promoting outdoor education experiences with local schools, presenting an opportunity to form new partnerships and extend outreach to younger, more diverse audiences.

Ward boundary redistricting will occur next year after the 2020 census. This is a time-intensive process that involves IST, GMO, Public Affairs, Legal, and the Board of Directors.

Staff has experienced an increase in requests for District staff time and funding support to assist regional partner projects. This trend is expected to continue into FY2020-21 and beyond. Examples of regional trail projects include: POST Bay-to-Sea Trail, San Mateo County Parks' Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail, and SF Public Utilities Commission's Bay Area Ridge Trail South Skyline Extension. The District will need to consider how much capacity can be set aside to support regional projects, partner projects, and co-agency projects while ensuring that District-led priority projects move forward as a desired pace.

The California Building Code, which governs much of our work, is updated approximately every 3 years, and the 2019 code goes into effect January 01, 2020. The trend is for the code to be stricter with each release. Changes to the code include more energy efficiency requirements. Typically, design consultants and District staff need time and some training to become familiar with the new code.

The State has recently focused on wildland fire protection projects for fire prevention, community resilience, forest management, and utility oversight with the passage of 22 new bills. This state focus has also been reflected locally with increased demands and opportunities to work with neighbors and fire agencies to address fire risk. These demands will bring new funding opportunities, and also require staff time that may divert resources away from more traditional open space projects. Additionally, the recent PG&E Public Safety - Power Shutoffs (PSPS) is an emerging trend in wildland fire management that directly impacts District operations. Loss of power combined with extreme fire weather has prompted preserve closures and limited operations, impacting staff's ability to effectively and efficiently carry out their duties, and limiting the recreational options for preserve visitors.

## Regulatory Requirements

Regulatory permitting continues to take longer than the one-year that is typically planned in project schedules. The District regularly faces a multitude of overlapping jurisdictional permitting processes at the local, county, state, and federal level that increase project costs and extend project delivery times. Exploring San Mateo County permit streamlining solutions is currently underway to expedite County reviews. Staff is also pursuing new Programmatic

Resource Agency Permits for routine maintenance and small-scale projects. Furthermore, staff is monitoring legislative bills to identify additional opportunities for permit streamlining.

The California state legislature is moving very quickly on many pieces of legislation to increase the pace and scale of fire management and forest management projects across the state, making it difficult to stay abreast of and carefully track the high quantity of legislative activity. At the same time, much of the new legislation is highly complex with coexisting positive benefits and negative impacts that are of high interest to the District. For example, some of the forest management legislation that focused on permit streamlining for fire management and forest health purposes also included components that relax standards for commercial timber harvests where impacts to sensitive resources can occur.

### Demographics

The Bay Area has a very diverse population. Demographic trends include: an increased retiree population, higher per capita income, more renters, highly educated people, and more foreign-born residents. The demographics may increase the need to develop programming and facilities that meet the needs of a more diverse community. Visiting open spaces on the weekend is becoming more popular, affecting the need to facilitate alternative modes of transportation to District preserves.

### Internal Organization and Workflow

As the District expands public access, the construction of new trails, parking areas, and other visitor-serving amenities is increasing the demands for environmental mitigation (e.g. tree replacement, revegetation, biological protections) and ongoing maintenance and management of District preserves and facilities. An increased focus on wildland fire resiliency is also adding to staff demands.

Mitigation costs for public access projects have increased substantially. The maintenance of mitigation/restoration projects often takes multiple years (e.g. watering, weeding, plant establishment, and, if needed, plant replacement to reach 3-5 year re-vegetation performance goals). Additional mitigation/restoration projects are anticipated as public access improvements are implemented. Due to limited staff capacity, most of these tasks have been contracted out.

Although field staffing has grown significantly, maintenance and patrol demands continue to rise due to high visitation, increasing acreage, increasing trail mileage, and new public access facilities. As additional preserves and trails are opened, the need for additional field staff is expected to continue.

There has been some loss of institutional knowledge and momentum due to staff turnover. Over the last year, the District has experienced 3 retirements, with 5 additional retirements planned to occur by February, plus another 14 separations due largely to relocations (family commitments, commutes, cost of living) and outside promotional opportunities. As of

September 2018 (approximately one year ago), there are 42 new employees working for the District. This rate of new hiring has required the District to spend considerable time onboarding and training new hires, and requires lead time before new hires are fully immersed and able to manage a full workload of District projects.

Human Resources has noticed that recruitments pull many applicants, but typically, only a small number have relevant experience.

### Changing District Leadership

The District saw significant changes in leadership in the prior year. While these changes will have a lasting impact on the District, the new leadership team will provide stable leadership for the next five years and beyond. Under direction of the General Manager, the management team is participating in group training sessions to enhance team communications and cohesiveness.

### Technology Trends

Local agencies, like the District, are expected to deliver more services, including increased transparency and data access through technology and online tools. Another key area of recent and ongoing focus is cybersecurity. Cyberattacks on public agencies continue to increase. As cybersecurity resiliency systems evolve to help combat cyberattacks, the District will need to invest in these systems to ensure protection.

Staff has placed significant effort, time, and attention on the implementation and training of new technology, software and processes. These processes include using OneDrive and SharePoint, leveraging Project Central as a tool, and implementing CityWorks maintenance management software.

Work that has been completed over the last few years has laid a strong foundation for future technological success, but the work is not yet done. Investments in technology for the District are continual and not one-time investments. A document retention policy is underway to assist departments with the retention, purging, and digitizing of documents before the administrative office is relocated.

### Other Topical Trends

As the District prepares for the next fiscal year, other topics to consider include:

- Public Access:
  - Recent public access development has increased the District's profile and visibility to the general public. This creates higher expectations from the public and pressure for more amenities (larger parking lots, benches, picnic tables).
  - As the Bay Area-wide population continues to grow, impacts related to traffic, congestion, and changes to community character are affecting local sentiments regarding new public access amenities. New and expanded outreach efforts to

engage the public in project planning efforts is becoming more and more important to effectively address potential concerns and gain wide support.

- Operations and Staffing:
  - The number of agricultural/grazing, residential, and office space leases continues to grow. To maintain an effective property management program, additional capacity is needed for responsive lessor-lessee communications and careful monitoring, tracking, and recording of lessee activities.
  - Newly opened areas require much more active management and maintenance than closed areas, particularly in areas with high visitation.
  - Developing a robust business continuity plan remains important to prepare for catastrophic disasters, such as wildfire and earthquakes.
- Regional Impacts:
  - Potential increases in government spending for public transportation may be of benefit to the District.
- Finances and Funding:
  - Changes to government pensions and pension reform have had a positive impact on the District as the long-term costs for PEPRA members are significantly less than classic members. The District should continue to monitor pension reforms.
  - Potential increases in government spending and grant funding in public transportation may be of benefit to the District.
  - The grants program continues to bring in funding for numerous projects and will continue to pay dividends into the future.
- Communications and Outreach:
  - The benchmark survey on public sentiment and awareness will yield important information to improve the effectiveness, reach, and outcomes of our communications and outreach.
  - As the District continues to pursue new policies, projects, and initiatives in support of its mission, non-traditional modes of outreach and engagement may be beneficial to keep the public well informed and contributing input early to help validate and support District processes and outcomes. Reviewing early concepts and ideas with key community leaders may also be helpful to gauge public support and interest, and to determine whether adjustments are needed to address potential issues.
  - The District’s 50 year anniversary is fast approaching in 2022. Lead time will be needed to appropriately plan for, organize, and hold celebratory events and activities to showcase the District’s work and positive impact. This major “golden” anniversary presents a tremendous opportunity to further educate and engage the public, and build widespread support and appreciation.

# FY2019-20 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

The Strategic Plan was adopted by the Board of Directors in September 2011 and is updated annually based on the results of an environmental scan. The FY2019-20 Strategic Plan provides high-level direction for the annual Budget and Action Plan.

## **GOAL 1 Promote, establish, and implement a regional environmental protection vision with partners**

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**Objective 1** – Continue implementation of the District’s Vision Plan and communicate progress on projects through reporting results and building partner relationships

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**Objective 2** – Build and strengthen diverse partnerships to implement a collaborative and science-based approach to environmental protection on the Peninsula, South Bay and San Mateo Coast

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**Objective 3** – Build and strengthen relationships with legislators to advocate environmental protection goals

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**Objective 4** – Take a regional leadership role in promoting the benefits of open space and sustainable agriculture

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**Objective 5** – Expand regional climate change resiliency and adaptation to preserve healthy natural systems

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**Objective 6** – Work with fire agencies and surrounding communities to strengthen the prevention of, preparation for and response to wildland fires

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## **GOAL 2 Connect people to open space and a regional environmental protection vision**

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**Objective 1** – Communicate the purpose of the regional environmental protection vision

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**Objective 2** – Refine and implement a comprehensive public outreach strategy, including the engagement of diverse communities and enhanced public education programs

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**Objective 3** – Expand opportunities to connect people to their public open space preserves consistent with an environmental protection vision

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## **GOAL 3 Strengthen organizational capacity to fulfill the mission**

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**Objective 1** – Provide the necessary resources, tools, and infrastructure, including technology upgrades and capacity building

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**Objective 2** – Continuously improve recent process and business model changes to effectively and efficiently deliver Vision Plan projects and the District’s ongoing functions

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**Objective 3** – Reflect the changing community we serve in the District’s visitors, staff, volunteers, and partners

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**Objective 4** – Build state of readiness for potential disruptions by completing a risk assessment and creating a business continuity plan

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## **GOAL 4 Position the District for long-term financial sustainability to fulfill the District’s mission on behalf of the public**

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**Objective 1** – Continue to engage constituents for bond sales and via the work of the Bond Oversight Committee –“Promises made, promises kept.”

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**Objective 2** – Pursue discretionary funding opportunities and partnerships to augment operating, capital, and bond funding sources

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**Objective 3** – Ensure discretionary funding opportunities are available and successful through advocacy and education

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**Objective 4** – Ensure large capital expenses are evaluated within the long-term financial model and remain financially sustainable

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**Objective 5** – Ensure land acquisitions, including associated public access and land management costs, are evaluated within the long-term financial model and remain financially sustainable

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## Proposed FY2020-21 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

**Key:** Gray shading indicates language was moved and not materially changed  
Red underline indicates proposed language addition  
~~Red strikethrough indicates proposed language deletion~~

### **Goal 1 – Promote, establish, and implement a regional environmental protection vision with partners**

- Objective 1 – Continue implementation of the District’s Vision Plan and communicate progress on projects through reporting results and building partner relationships
- Objective 2 – Build and strengthen diverse partnerships to implement a collaborative and science-based approach to environmental protection on the Peninsula, South Bay and San Mateo Coast
- Objective 3 – Build and strengthen relationships with legislators to advocate environmental protection goals
- Objective 4 – Preserve open space lands of local and regional significance

### **Goal 2 – Protect the open space values of natural and agricultural lands**

- Objective 1 – Take a regional leadership role in promoting the benefits of open space and sustainable agriculture
- Objective 2 – Protect and restore the natural environment in a manner that expands regional **resiliency** and climate change adaptation to preserve healthy natural systems
- Objective 3 – Work with fire agencies and surrounding communities to strengthen the prevention of, preparation for and response to wildland fires for enhanced ecosystem resiliency and public safety

### **Goal 3 – Connect people to open space and a regional environmental protection vision**

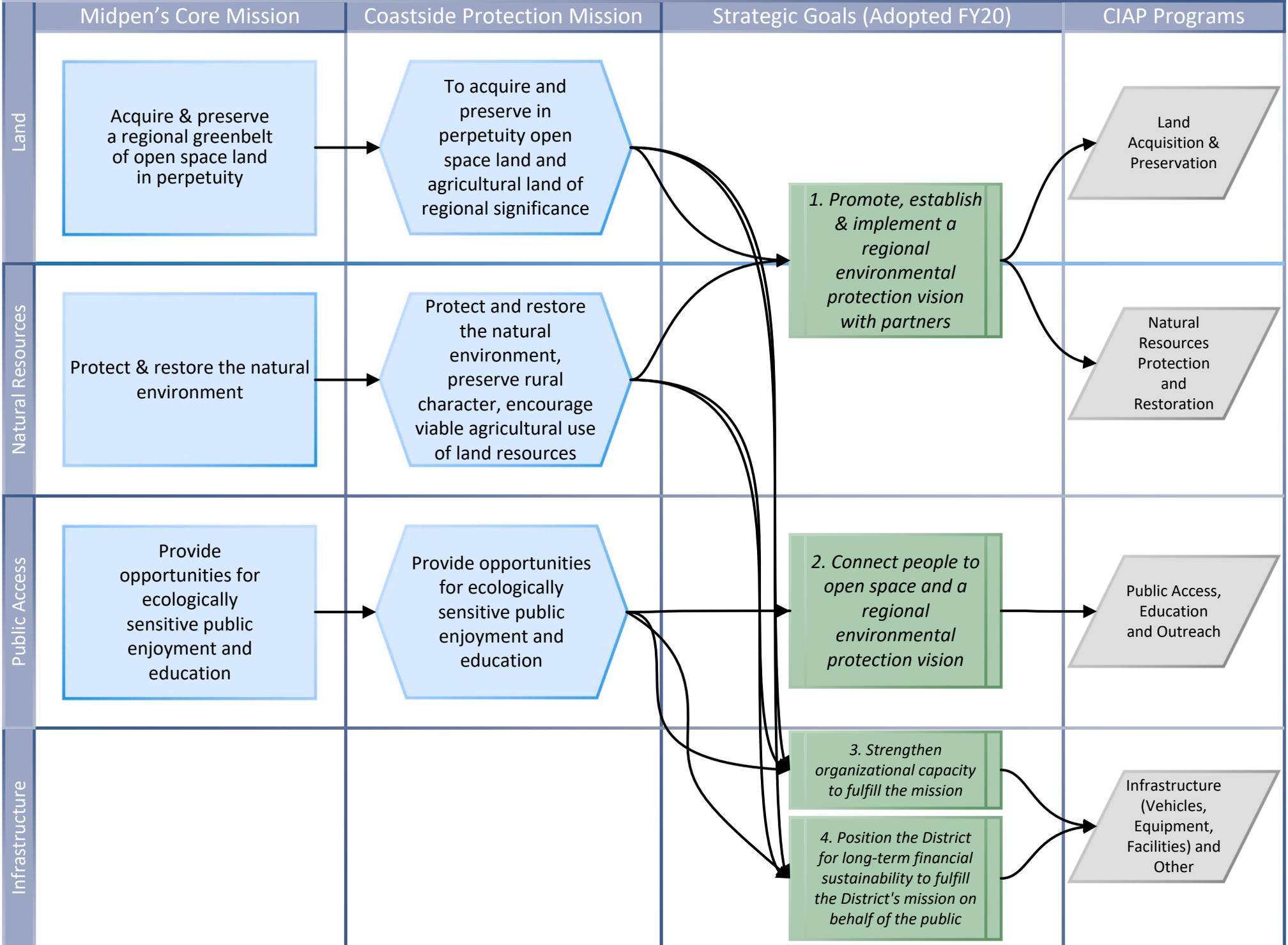
- Objective 1 – Communicate the purpose of the regional environmental protection vision
- Objective 2 – Refine and implement a comprehensive public outreach strategy, including the engagement of diverse communities and enhanced public education programs
- Objective 3 – Expand opportunities to connect people to their public open space preserves consistent with an environmental protection vision
- Objective 4 – Reflect the changing community we serve in the District’s visitors, staff, volunteers, and partners through broad community engagement, communications, and outreach

### **Goal 4 – Strengthen organizational capacity and long-term financial sustainability to fulfill the mission**

#### ~~Goal 4 – Position the District for long-term financial sustainability to fulfill the District’s mission on behalf of the public~~

- Objective 1 – Provide the necessary resources, tools, training, and infrastructure, including technology upgrades and capacity building
- Objective 2 – Continuously improve recent process and business model changes to effectively and efficiently deliver Vision Plan projects and the District’s ongoing functions
- Objective 3 - Build state of readiness for potential disruptions by completing a risk assessment and creating a business continuity plan
- Objective 4 – Continue to engage constituents for bond sales and via the work of the Bond Oversight Committee – “Promises made, promises kept.”
- Objective 5 – Remain financially sustainable by pursuing and ensuring discretionary funding opportunities and partnerships to augment operating, capital, and bond funding sources, and ensure large capital expenses and land acquisitions, including associated public access and land management costs, are evaluated within the long-term financial model and remain financially sustainable

Midpen's Mission Synergy (Retreat #1 December 9, 2019) – Adopted FY20



## Midpen's Mission Synergy (Retreat #1 December 9, 2019) – Recommendations

	Midpen's Core Mission	Coastside Protection Mission	Strategic Goals (Proposed)	CIAP Programs
Land	Acquire & preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity	To acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space land and agricultural land of regional significance	1. <i>Promote, establish and implement a regional environmental protection vision</i>	Land Acquisition & Preservation
Natural Resources	Protect & restore the natural environment	Protect and restore the natural environment, preserve rural character, encourage viable agricultural use of land resources	2. <i>Protect the open space values of <u>natural and agricultural lands</u></i>	Natural Resources Protection and Restoration
Public Access	Provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education	Provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education	3. <i>Connect people to open space and a regional environmental protection vision</i>	Public Access, Education and Outreach
Assets & Org. Support	Underlined text indicates new language is proposed.		4. <i>Strengthen organizational capacity and long-term financial sustainability to fulfill the mission</i>	Assets and Organizational Support (formerly Infrastructure)