



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

## PLANNING & NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

R-24-115  
September 17, 2024

### AGENDA ITEM 1

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Hawthorns Area Plan – Public Access Working Group Recommendations

#### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review and provide feedback on the Hawthorns Area Public Access Working Group's (PAWG) recommendations.
2. Support the next step of presenting the recommendations with any modifications requested by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee to the Portola Valley Ad Hoc Hawthorns Committee, Portola Valley Town Council, and Portola Valley Planning Commission for feedback before bringing the PAWG recommendations and Town and public input to a Study Session of the Board of Directors. If supported, this next step will be communicated to the Board of Directors in an FYI Memorandum.

#### SUMMARY

In 2023, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) Board of Directors (Board) formed the Hawthorns Area Public Access Working Group (PAWG), comprised of volunteer Ward Stakeholders and Interest Area Representatives as voting members and a Board Liaison and Town Liaison as non-voting members, to develop public access recommendations for the Hawthorns area of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve. The PAWG has concluded its work and is forwarding its public access recommendations to the Planning and Natural Resources (PNR) Committee for consideration. The recommendations include two parking area location options and a loop trail with trail connections to the Town of Portola Valley's (Town's) trails. The recommendations include bicycle, equestrian, dog-on-leash, and hiking access designations for each trail segment. Additionally, the recommendations are aligned with an existing conservation easement that overlays the property. The General Manager recommends that the PNR provide feedback on the PAWG's recommendations and support presenting the recommendations next to the Town (Ad Hoc Hawthorns Committee, Planning Commission, and Town Council) for additional feedback, prior to bringing the item to the full Board at a subsequent Study Session for review and input.

#### DISCUSSION

In 2021, the District initiated the Hawthorns Area Plan project, a multiyear phased planning process for the 79-acre Hawthorns Area property, located within the Town. The Hawthorns Area

is governed by a conservation easement granted to the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), under which the District operates. This easement allows low intensity, ecologically sensitive recreation and defines limits on potential future development of the property. Guided by the easement's requirements, the PAWG's recommended parking options are located around the perimeter of the site's improved area and are also across from an already developed section of the Alpine Road corridor. On June 28, 2023 (R-23-75), the Board formed the PAWG to collaborate with the District on exploring ways to introduce public access to Hawthorns. The District held seven meetings, including two onsite from July 2023 to June 2024, to help the PAWG develop their recommendations.

During the Hawthorns Area Plan Phase 3: Programming/ Conceptual Planning, District staff worked with the PAWG to develop conceptual plan alternatives for ecologically sensitive public access and enjoyment that are informed by the existing conditions and aligned with the following key Board-approved parameters.

#### *Board-approved Vision and Goals (Phase 1)*

##### Hawthorns Area Vision Statement

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

##### Hawthorns Area Goals

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

#### *Board-approved Public Access Framework (Phase 2)*

The PAWG received a Public Access Framework (PAF) (**Attachment 10**) developed during the existing conditions phase of the project that outlined specific natural resource and land management considerations related to public access. The PAF guided and informed the PAWG's exploration and evaluation of parking and trail options on the topics of natural resources (vegetation, wildlife, aquatic, wildfire resiliency), cultural resources (Native American resources, historic complex), aesthetic resources (viewsheds, scenic corridor), public access (public use, trail, driveways, parking, site amenities, signage), and operations and maintenance (gates and

fencing, staff residence, roads and trails, safety and security, utilities, environmental hazards, legal arrangements, partnerships).

### PAWG and Conceptual Planning (Phase 3)

Based on the PAF, natural resources protection has been a key focus throughout the PAWG process. At the December 16, 2023 meeting, PAWG members had a robust conversation on the various proposed driveway access points on Alpine Road and the extent of parking being introduced into the meadows. The District's Natural Resources staff provided a comprehensive analysis of proposed parking options 4 through 6, which are based on the District's Basic Policy and Resource Management Policies. This analysis played an important role in shaping the PAWG's final recommendations.

**Table 1** below provides a general overview of the PAWG meeting schedule, topics and agenda packet materials. For more details of the PAWG process, meetings, public comments, and recommendations, refer to **Attachments 1 through 9**.

**Table 1 – Hawthorns Area PAWG Meeting Schedule and Topics**

Date and Location	Topics
July 27, 2023 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. District Office	<b>Meeting 1: Kickoff</b> Established Working Group roles, goals, workplan, schedule, and operating procedures. Received public feedback. ( <a href="#">agenda packet</a> , <a href="#">meeting minutes</a> )
August 26, 2023 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Hawthorns Site	<b>Meeting 2: Site meeting</b> Conducted in-person site meeting and reviewed existing site conditions. Received public feedback. RSVPs were requested for planning logistics. ( <a href="#">agenda packet</a> , <a href="#">meeting minutes</a> )
October 26, 2023 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. District Office	<b>Meeting 3: Preliminary design discussion</b> PAWG discussed and provided input on draft parking and driveway design options 1 through 4, as well as internal connections, trailheads, trail uses, and local and regional connectivity opportunities. Received public feedback. Selected two co-chairs. ( <a href="#">agenda packet</a> , <a href="#">meeting minutes</a> )
December 16, 2023 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. District Office	<b>Meeting 4: Continuation of preliminary design discussion</b> PAWG continued discussion on initial conceptual design alternatives, including parking and driveway options 4 through 6, internal trail system and connections, trailheads, trail uses, and local and regional connectivity opportunities. Received public feedback. ( <a href="#">agenda packet</a> , <a href="#">meeting minutes</a> )
February 29, 2024 6:00 - 10:00 p.m. District Office	<b>Meeting 5: Continuation of December 16, 2023 design discussion</b> PAWG discussed updated conceptual design alternatives, including parking and driveway options 7 and 8, internal trail system and connections, trailheads, trail uses, and local and regional connectivity opportunities. Conducted informal voting and assessed initial recommendations on all public access components. Received public feedback. ( <a href="#">agenda packet</a> , <a href="#">meeting minutes</a> )

<p>March 24, 2024 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Hawthorns Site</p>	<p><b>Meeting 6: Site meeting and design discussion</b> PAWG reviewed and discussed conceptual parking design options 7 through 9a on site. Received public feedback. RSVPs were requested for planning logistics. (<a href="#">agenda packet</a>, <a href="#">meeting minutes</a>)</p>
<p>June 13, 2024 6:00 - 10:00 p.m. District Office</p>	<p><b>Meeting 7: Discuss and confirm recommendation</b> PAWG discussed design options 7 through 10 and finalized recommendations on conceptual trail alignment, trail uses, opportunities for regional trail connections, and conceptual parking alternatives to forward to the District’s PNR Committee and subsequently to the Board for consideration. Received public feedback. (<a href="#">agenda packet</a>, draft meeting minutes – refer to <b>Attachment 5</b>)</p>

## PAWG Recommendations

At the June 13, 2024 PAWG meeting, the voting results showed a consensus among the 13 voting members of the PAWG. The PAWG members raised topics for discussion as each voting item was brought up and indicated when clarifications or considerations related to their votes should be shared with the PNR. The final voting included the following public access components:

- Internal trail system
- Trail connections with surrounding Town trails
- Opportunities for regional trail connections
- Proposed trail uses within the Hawthorns Area
- Concept parking designs

The PAWG’s voting resulted in the following recommendations that are now before the PNR Committee for consideration. The PAWG’s recommendations below include information regarding their support and opposition to various public access elements within each category, as well as additional considerations the PAWG wanted shared with the PNR. For the detailed breakdown of voting results, see **Attachment 5A**. Refer to **Attachment 4** for numbering of trail segments and conceptual parking options.

### 1. Internal Trail System

- Support for internal loop trail alignment and spur trails (segments 2 – 9, 11, 12 and 13)
- Support for benches at all viewpoints. Bench A facing northeast, bench B facing northwest, and bench C facing northwest.

### 2. Trail Connections with Surrounding Town Trails and Pathways

- Support for connections to Alpine Trail (segments 1, 10 and 14)
- Opposition to connection to Sweet Springs Trail by Saddleback Drive (segment 15)
- Suggestion to re-evaluate and decide whether to build connector trail to Sweet Springs Trail after monitoring trail usage following the preserve's opening (segments 16 and 17)\*
- Additional considerations to share with PNR:

- Adjust the western end of loop trail segment 3 to be positioned further away from Portola Valley Ranch, if feasible
  - If there is any connection to Sweet Springs Trail, desire to move it farther northwest and away from Pomponio Court Trail that currently connects to Sweet Springs Trail
3. Opportunities for Regional Trail Connections Beyond Town Trails
- Support for future regional trail connection to Los Trancos Trail
  - Support for future regional trail connection to Arastradero Preserve and Foothills Nature Preserve
4. Proposed Trail Uses
- Support for hiking, dogs-on-leash, equestrian use, and bicycle use on internal loop trail, spur trails and connections to Alpine Trail (segments 1 – 14)
  - Support for hiking, dogs-on-leash, and equestrian uses only on connections to Sweet Springs Trail, if any of the connections are built – opposition to bicycle use (segments 16 and 17). Although not recommended, if Segment 15 is pursued, the PAWG also opposes bicycle use on this segment.
  - Additional considerations to share with PNR:
    - Allowing bicycle use on the Alpine Trail segments that currently don't allow bicycles, that connect to the proposed connector trails (segments 10 and 14), requires Town approval
5. Conceptual Parking Designs (for details of conceptual parking design process, see **Attachment 2**)
- Support for both conceptual parking options 9 and 10, with a greater level of support for option 10
  - Support for an upper limit of 50 parking spaces
  - Support for a phased approach, if feasible
  - Additional considerations to share with PNR:
    - Attaching PAWG assessment of conceptual parking design options with the preferred conceptual parking options 9 and 10 (**Attachment 5C**).

\*Note: further evaluation of the allowable trail uses of the connecting Sweet Springs Trail and the feasibility of implementing Segments 16 and 17 is needed. Therefore, through a majority vote, the PAWG recommends a ***phased approach*** for Segments 16 and 17 whereby these segments would be reevaluated as part of a future phase, after Hawthorns is opened to the public and the interior trail usage and connecting Sweet Springs Trail uses can be further evaluated.

The PAWG worked diligently and respectfully to fulfill its charge over the year-long process. They gathered, considered and generated a substantial amount of information, including new parking area options for the overall PAWG evaluation. Ultimately, this group, representing both local and regional constituencies of the entire District, developed a strategic approach for providing low intensity and ecologically sensitive public access to the Hawthorns property.

## FISCAL IMPACT

The recommended action has no immediate fiscal impact. Implementation schedules and cost estimates for planning, design and construction will be developed at later date once the Board reviews and approves the elements of the public access plan for the Hawthorns Area. This information will then be used to inform the development of future annual Budgets and Action Plans.

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio #06 *Windy Hill: Trail Improvements, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership* allocation, costs-to-date, projected future project expenditures and projected ending balance at the portfolio level.

<b>MAA06 Windy Hill—Trail Improvements, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$12,740,000</b>
Life-to-Date Spent (as of 08/12//24):	(\$417,971)
Encumbrances:	(\$152,706)
Remaining FY25 Project Budgets:	(\$75,955)
Future MAA06 project costs (projected through FY28):	(\$309,113)
<b>Total Portfolio Expenditures:</b>	<b>(\$955,745)</b>
<b>Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>\$11,784,255</b>

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio #06 *Windy Hill: Trail Improvements, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership* allocation, costs-to-date, projected life-to-date project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

<b>MAA06 Windy Hill—Trail Improvements, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$12,740,000</b>
Projected Project Expenditures (life of project):	
06-002 Hawthorns Area Plan	(\$955,745)
<b>Total Portfolio Expenditures:</b>	<b>(\$955,745)</b>
<b>Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>\$11,784,255</b>

## PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- **May 18, 2021:** Planning and Natural Resources Committee (PNR) received an informational presentation on the proposed planning and public engagement process for the Hawthorns Area Plan and provided input and guidance. ([R-21-65](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **August 24, 2021:** PNR reviewed the proposed draft vision and goals and provided input and guidance. ([R-21-112](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **November 16, 2021:** PNR reviewed the revised vision and goals and draft public access working group strategy and provided further refinements. PNR unanimously recommended forwarding the refined vision and goal statements to the full Board for consideration. ([R-21-156](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **March 1, 2022:** PNR reviewed the proposed planning and public engagement process to develop the Hawthorns Area Plan. ([R-22-29](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **March 23, 2022:** Board reviewed and approved the Vision and Goals for the Hawthorns Area Plan. ([R-22-45](#), [meeting minutes](#))

- **July 13, 2022:** Board approved the award of contract with Parisi Transportation Consulting to provide transportation planning services for the Hawthorns Area Plan ([R-22-81](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **March 21, 2023:** PNR reviewed the Existing Conditions/Opportunities and Constraints Report, Existing Transportation Conditions Technical Memo, Public Access Framework, and the Public Access Working Group composition and formation strategy. ([R-23-35](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **April 26, 2023:** Board reviewed and approved the Existing Conditions/Opportunities and Constraints Report, Existing Transportation Conditions Technical Memo, Public Access Framework, and the Public Access Working Group composition as well as recruitment and formation strategy. ([R-23-44](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **June 21, 2023:** Board interviewed ten candidates by the Hawthorns Area Ad Hoc Committee and select six individuals to fill the Interest Area Representative seats on the Hawthorns Area Public Access Working Group. ([R-23-69](#), [no meeting minute taken for the interviews](#))
- **June 28, 2023:** Board Appointed members to serve on the Hawthorns Area Public Access Working Group. ([R-23-75](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **August 9, 2023:** Board approved the award of contract with CSW|ST2 to provide preliminary site plan and conceptual design services for the Hawthorns Area Plan. ([R-23-78](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **February 14, 2024:** Board approved the amendment of contracts with Parametrix (transportation consultant, formerly Parisi Transportation Consulting) and PGAdesign (PAWG facilitator). ([R-24-17](#), [meeting minutes](#))

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

## CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act. Environmental review for the Hawthorns Area Plan is anticipated to occur in a future fiscal year, pending Board approval of the public access elements to include as part of the CEQA Project Description. Environmental review would begin once the project description is further defined and approved by the Board.

## NEXT STEPS

If supported by the PNR, the General Manager will direct the District project team to present PAWG's recommendations to the Town Ad Hoc Committee, Town Council, and the Planning Commission for feedback. This would be followed by a presentation to the full Board of Directors of both the PAWG recommendations and Town feedback at a future Study Session. At a public meeting following the Study Session, the Board will make final policy decisions informed by input from the PAWG, PNR, Town, key stakeholders and the public to determine which options to incorporate into the final Hawthorns Area Plan and advance to the environmental review phase per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

**Tentative Project Timelines**

<b>Calendar Year</b>	<b>Hawthorns Area Plan Phase</b>
2023-2025	Develop Programming and Conceptual Planning, Public Access Working Group and Board approval
2025-2026	Prepare Hawthorns Area Plan
2026-2027	Conduct CEQA environmental review
2027-TBD	Implementation (design development, permitting, bidding and construction)

**Attachments**

1. Hawthorns Area PAWG - Draft Recommendations Report and Summary of Process
2. Hawthorns Area Concept Parking Design - Draft Summary Report
3. Hawthorns Area Transportation Study
4. Hawthorns Area Concept Trail Design
5. June 13, 2024 Draft PAWG Meeting #7 Summary
  - A. PAWG Meeting #7 Voting Results
  - B. PAWG meeting #7 Photographs of Voting
  - C. Summary of PAWG Assessment of Conceptual Parking Design Options
6. Public Comments and PAWG Communications Summary
  - A. Written Public Comments
7. PAWG Workflow and Public Engagement Opportunities
8. Planning Projects within Hawthorns Property
9. PAWG Individual Assessment of Concept Parking Design Options
10. Hawthorns Area Public Access Framework

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