

Q&A for Historic Complex Planning Process

Updated 01/15/2024

1. Why is the Historic Complex planning process separate from the planning process to develop the larger Hawthorns Area Plan?

There are multiple reasons why the Historic Complex planning process is separate from the Hawthorns Area Plan. First of all, the planning process for the Hawthorns Area Plan began much earlier, in 2021, and is much further along than the Historic Complex planning process that started in 2024. Moreover, the Historic Complex involves unique resources, opportunities, and constraints that are substantially different than those found within the rest of the Hawthorns property. As a result, the Historic Complex requires a more focused approach to addressing the future use and management for the numerous historic buildings in the complex. Nonetheless, the District recognizes that the Historic Complex is geographically part of the larger Hawthorns Area property, which is why one of the Board-approved goals for the Historic complex is to ensure that the specific uses and management actions for the complex appropriately integrates with and complements the Hawthorns Area Plan.

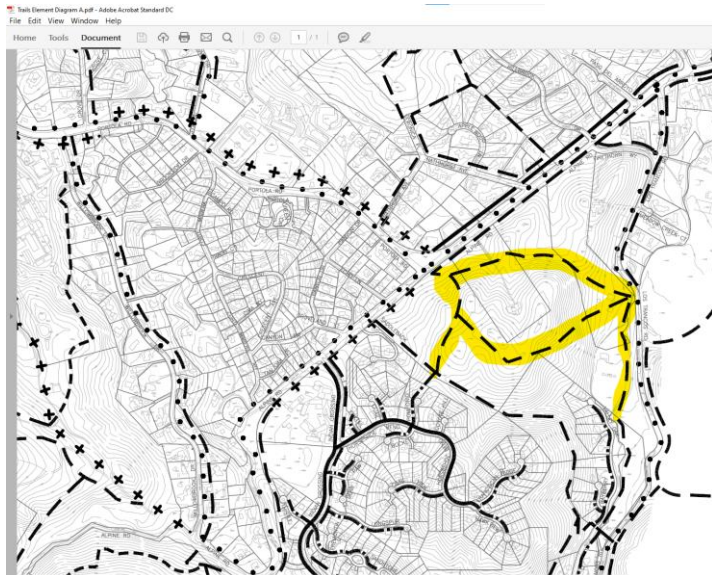
2. Why is there no Public Access Working Group (PAWG) for the Historic Complex?

The PAWG for the Hawthorns Area Plan focused on developing recommendations for ecologically-sensitive public access, including parking, trailheads, and trails within and trail connections outside of the larger Hawthorns Area, through a community engagement process. The Historic Complex has unique cultural and historic resources onsite, and decisions around their future use and management may depend on negotiations with potential partners and long-term partnership agreements. The Midpen Board of Directors must first provide policy guidance regarding future uses and rehabilitation of structures within the Historic Complex due to significant capital investment and long-term maintenance and operations that will have considerable financial implications for Midpen. The public will have the opportunity to engage in the use and management considerations for the Historic Complex by attending public Board meetings and submitting written and oral comments. Consideration of any specific decisions for the Historic Complex will occur at publicly noticed Board meetings. To be notified of future meetings, please submit your contact information by clicking the following link and scrolling to the Stay Informed input box: <https://www.openspace.org/what-we-do/projects/hawthorns-historic-complex>.

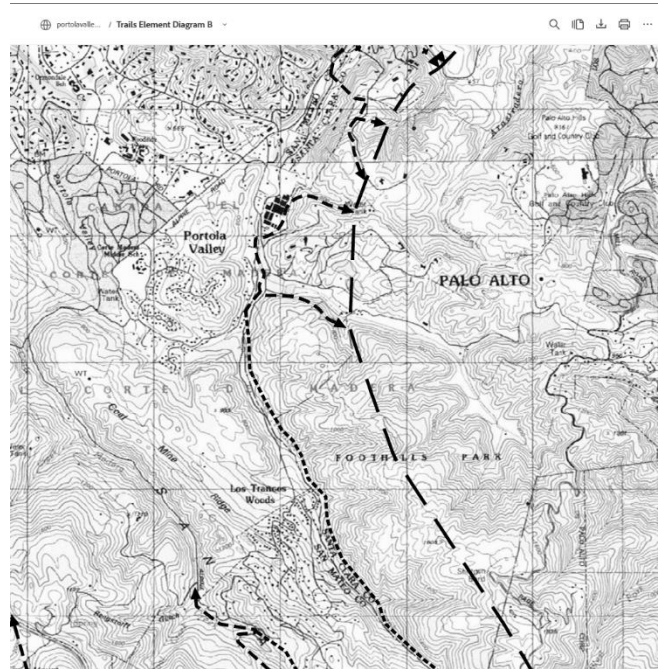
3. I am concerned about the Los Trancos Trail connection to Valley Oak Drive.

Regional trail connections are not a part of the Historic Complex planning process – instead, regional trail connections are an element of the larger Hawthorns Area Plan. As an acknowledgement to the Town of Portola Valley’s desire for regional trail connections through and beyond Midpen-owned lands (see screenshots below), the Hawthorns Area PAWG has included mention of a potential future connection from Los Trancos Road to Valley Oak Drive as part of their public access recommendations. This connection is aligned with the Town of Portola Valley [Trails and Paths Element \(Trail Plan Diagram A and Trail Plan Diagram B\)](#) of the [General Plan](#) (see excerpts below). Note, however, that Midpen would not independently implement a trail over property where we do not hold public access rights. If this alignment is pursued in the future, the Town of Portola Valley would need to be the lead agency.

Midpen's role would be to coordinate with the Town to support, where appropriate, their efforts to connect Town trails with Midpen trails.



Highlighted excerpt of Town's [Trail Plan Diagram A](#) showing desired trails through Hawthorns



Excerpt of Town's [Trail Plan Diagram B](#) showing desired regional trail connections

4. Will there be a parking lot at the Historic Complex with access through Los Trancos Road?

A small and limited permit parking lot is planned for the Historic Complex to accommodate ADA-accessible parking and for operational needs to facilitate programs and maintenance of the Historic Complex with access from Los Trancos Road. The main parking lot planned for the property, with an entrance off Alpine Road, will provide parking for general public parking for the Hawthorns Area.

5. Why are you only focusing on the Lower Barn? What is the future use of the mansion, other buildings, the olive orchards, and trails?

Midpen is exploring a potentially viable partnership with a local Portola Valley resident to rehabilitate the Lower Barn. Midpen anticipates that initiating a public-private partnership for rehabilitation and programming of the Lower Barn may generate more interest and activate additional partnerships to support the capital costs for rehabilitating other historic buildings. The success of rehabilitation partnership for the Lower Barn will provide a proof of concept for other structures.

In the interim, Midpen is pursuing a first phase of stabilization repairs for the mansion, cottage, and garage as well as cleaning debris from the surrounding site. Implementation of these items is anticipated to start in spring 2025.

The timing to plan the future use and management of the rest of the Historic Complex, including the olive orchards and public access from the rest of the Hawthorns Area, will be determined by Midpen's

Board of Directors during the annual Capital Improvement and Action Plan (CIAP) and Budget process where Midpen prioritizes projects to be included in a three-year CIAP.

6. What is Midpen’s approach to conducting environmental review (CEQA) of activities at the property?

The Hawthorns Area Plan is approaching a state of readiness when the Midpen Board of Directors will be able to consider approving a CEQA project description to initiate environmental review for public access in areas other than the Historic Complex.

Midpen does not yet have specific plans for the entirety of the Historic Complex site but will include programmatic guidance as part of the Hawthorns Area Plan’s environmental review process.

7. When does the public get to participate in the considerations for the Historic Complex?

Midpen has created an interested parties list for the Historic Complex to notify interested members of the public of future public meetings on the item. To be added to this notifications list, please submit your contact information by clicking the following link and scrolling to the *Stay Informed* input box: <https://www.openspace.org/what-we-do/projects/hawthorns-historic-complex>. In addition, Midpen staff are planning to hold neighborhood meetings to meet with the local community, answer questions, and receive additional feedback. Midpen staff held neighborhood meetings in Portola Valley at the beginning of the Hawthorns Area Plan process and received useful input from community members, and will do the same for the Historic Complex.

8. Is the Historic Complex a Measure AA project and what is the funding status?

The Hawthorns Area is included in Measure AA Portfolio #06 – *Windy Hill Trail Improvements, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership*. In addition, an endowment fund came with the property as part of the transfer to Midpen. As of September 25, 2024, there is \$1,557,063 left in the Endowment Fund and \$12,315,366 left in the Measure AA Fund Portfolio. Note that a portion of the remaining Measure AA funding is allocated for capital projects in other areas of the Hawthorns Area Property and for the larger Windy Hill Open Space Preserve.

9. Is the potential Lower Barn Partnership looking at connecting the structure via trail to the rest of the Hawthorns Area? And would the barn be accessible to the public?

The potential Lower Barn Partnership is focused on exploring opportunities to rehabilitate and program the barn; this partnership is not currently related or connected to the proposed trails at the Hawthorns Area. However, as part of the goals of the partnership project, Midpen is exploring opportunities for members of the public to participate in the programs that might be offered within the Lower Barn in a focused approach that is compatible with programming and the limited amenities on site. Separately, the public would be able to see the Historic Complex, including the Lower Barn, through scheduled Midpen docent-led hikes.

10. How are you coordinating with the Town of Portola Valley?

Midpen staff are continuously coordinating with Town staff and if the project is developed further, approvals would be sought from the Town and public outreach to Town residents would occur at that stage.

11. Is the Lower Barn project consistent with the property's Conservation Easement?

Initial discussion with Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), who holds the Conservation Easement, indicates this project is consistent with the Conservation Easement. As the partnership concept becomes more defined, Midpen will continue to consult with POST to review proposed uses to ensure alignment with the conservation values of the Conservation Easement.

12. What about fire protection since the site is located in a wildland-urban interface?

Midpen will continue to coordinate with the Woodside Fire Protection District on the use and management of the Historic Complex. Regarding the partnership concept for the Lower Barn, Midpen anticipates the need for sprinklers, fire alarms, a fire hydrant, and other measures to facilitate protection of the structures as well as the fire resiliency of the property.

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