



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-22-45  
Meeting 22-10  
March 23, 2022

## AGENDA ITEM 8

### AGENDA ITEM

Hawthorns Area Plan – Approval of the Vision and Goals

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION *den*

Review and approve the Vision and Goals for the Hawthorns Area Plan as recommended by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee.

### SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) intends to develop a Comprehensive Use and Management Plan for the Hawthorns Area of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve (Hawthorns Area). At this March 23, 2022 Board of Directors (Board) meeting, the Board will consider approving the Hawthorns Area Vision and Goals as reviewed and forwarded by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee (PNR) at their November 16, 2021 meeting ([R-21-156](#)).

### BACKGROUND

The 79-acre Hawthorns Area, which is located within the Town of Portola Valley (Town), was gifted to the District in 2011 and is currently closed to the public in accordance with the Preliminary Use and Management Plan (R-06-53). In 2021, the District initiated a multiyear process to develop the Hawthorns Area Plan, which will be a Comprehensive Use and Management Plan to guide resource and land management activities and the introduction of ecologically sensitive public access on the property.

The planning process for the Hawthorns Area begins with the development of vision and goals, which establish an overarching direction for the future use and management of the property. At the August 24, 2021 PNR meeting ([R-21-112](#)), PNR committee members reviewed and commented on the draft vision and goals. At a subsequent November 16, 2021 PNR meeting ([R-21-156](#)), the PNR Committee incorporated their final edits to the draft language and recommended forwarding the vision and goals to the full Board for their consideration. At this March 23, 2022 Board meeting, staff will present the final vision and goals to the Board for approval.

#### Property Overview

The Hawthorns Area is bounded by Alpine Road to the west, Los Trancos Road to the east, and private property to the north and south. The property is accessible from driveways on Alpine Road and Los Trancos Road. Improvements to the Hawthorns Area include residential structures,

farm buildings, landscaping, and ranch roads. Some structures date back to the late 1800s, when a prominent San Francisco judge acquired the property and constructed a residence, carriage house, and several ancillary buildings near Los Trancos Creek. The cluster of buildings and structures near Los Trancos Creek is informally called the Historic Complex. The property also includes a modern residence and driveway from Alpine Road constructed in the 1950s.

#### Property Acquisition

In 2006, the Board accepted the Hawthorns property from the Woods Family Trust as the largest private land gift received by the District at that time. The Woods Family Trust generously donated their property to preserve it as public open space in perpetuity. The property officially transferred to the District in 2011 as the Hawthorns Area of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve.

The Hawthorns Area is subject to a conservation easement granted in 2005 by the Woods Family Trust to the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST). The conservation easement allows low-intensity recreational uses and related development that aligns with improvements typically offered on other District Preserves, such as unpaved trails, split rail fences, parking areas, and directional signage. Other forms of development and uses are generally restricted by the conservation easement.

#### 2014 Vision Plan

In 2014, the Board approved 54 priority actions in the Open Space Vision Plan that prioritized conservation and management efforts throughout the District. The Hawthorns Area is included under Vision Plan Priority #6: Windy Hill, which established the following actions specific to the Hawthorns Area:

*“Open Hawthorns Area, develop trails connecting to Portola Valley and Palo Alto trails. Explore partnerships to protect, restore, and interpret historic buildings. Improve habitat conditions in Los Trancos Creek.”*

The public supported this Vision Plan priority in 2014 when it voted for the passage of Measure AA, a \$300M general obligation bond to fund the top 25 Vision Plan Priority Actions. The total expenditure plan for the Windy Hill Measure AA Portfolio is \$12,740,000, of which approximately \$1.7M can be allocated to the Hawthorns Area.

#### Preliminary Use and Management Plan

At the time of property acquisition, the District prepared a Preliminary Use and Management Plan (PUMP) to establish land management activities. The Board adopted a PUMP for the Hawthorns Area in 2006 (R-06-53) and a PUMP amendment in 2012 (R-12-46). Since 2012, District staff have implemented a number of actions prescribed by the PUMP, including the following:

- Secured existing structures against trespass and vandalism
- Established an on-site employee presence
- Implemented a plan for wildland fire management and defensible space safety
- Conducted grassland restoration and invasive species management
- Evaluated long-term management options for the Historic Complex

The PUMP included a future action to study the feasibility of providing public access and connecting to existing trail networks.

## DISCUSSION

### Property Description

#### Natural Resources and Wildland Fire/Vegetation Management

The Hawthorns Area includes grasslands and oak woodland that transition into mixed evergreen forests along Los Trancos Creek, which flows year-round and meanders along the eastern edge of the Hawthorns Area. The Los Trancos Creek corridor supports a diverse community of plants and wildlife and provides spawning habitat for the threatened Central California Coast steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Remnants of an olive orchard occupy the hillsides west of Los Trancos Creek. Wildlife entering and existing the Hawthorns Area must travel across Alpine Road, Los Trancos Creek Road, or through surrounding neighborhoods to reach nearby open spaces such as Windy Hill Open Space Preserve, Arastradero Preserve, Palo Alto Foothills Park, Coal Creek Open Space Preserve, and Los Trancos Open Space Preserve.

Ongoing grassland management at the Hawthorns Area includes mowing of invasive yellow star thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*). The District's Natural Resources Department is working with contractors to perform grassland monitoring and inform timed mowing for invasive, non-native weeds to promote native plant generation. Volunteers also actively remove highly flammable French broom (*Genista monspessulana*), especially along roadways.

#### Cultural Resources

The Hawthorns Area was once the site of a year-round family residence, summer retreat, and small-scale agricultural operation. In 2013, the District retained Knapp Architects to prepare a [Historic Resource Study](#) for the Hawthorns Area, which concluded that the property is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district because it retains landscape features and structures that reflect the social, agricultural, and architectural history of San Francisco Peninsula estate property in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Elements of the historic district include farm structures, remnant landscaping, olive groves, fencing, unimproved roads, and four primary buildings located in a zone known as the Historic Complex: 1) a large barn, 2) a cottage, 3) the main house, and 4) a carriage house. A newer residence and asphalt driveway constructed in the mid-1950s and currently used as a District residence, while located within the Hawthorns Area, do not contribute to the historic district.

An archaeological survey conducted in 2018 determined that the Hawthorns Area contains sensitive Native American resources. District staff will coordinate with local tribal representatives to ensure appropriate protections for these resources and to solicit input on other elements of the Area Plan, including land management actions.

#### Scenic Resources

The Hawthorns Area landscape is largely comprised of grassland hillsides and scenic ridgetops that afford panoramic views of Portola Valley, the San Francisco Peninsula, the East Bay hills, and the Santa Cruz Mountains. Hillsides within the Hawthorns Area are visible from adjacent Town neighborhoods. Alpine Road, which borders the western property boundary, is a designated Scenic Corridor. The Town's 2001 [Alpine Scenic Corridor Plan](#) protects the natural beauty along Alpine Road and provides objectives and actions limiting development that would visually affect this corridor.

Alpine Road

Alpine Road is one of two major arterials through the Town and carries vehicle, bicycle, equestrian, and pedestrian traffic. According to the Town's 2003 General Plan [Trails and Paths Element](#), the following portions of Alpine Road adjacent to the Hawthorns Area are officially designated as part of the Town's publicly-accessible trail and path network:

- **Bicycle Route:** Alpine Road from Los Trancos Road to Saddleback Drive.
- **Bicycle Path:** On the north side of Alpine Road from Los Trancos Road to Portola Road.
- **Equestrian/Hiking Trail:** On the south side of Alpine Road from Los Trancos Road to Portola Road (see Alpine Road Trail, below).
- **Multi-Use Corridor:** On the south side of Alpine Road from Portola Road to Saddleback Drive (see Alpine Road Trail, below).

Alpine Road Trail

The Alpine Road Trail is a multi-use trail that travels along the south side of Alpine Road from Ladera to the Alpine Road / Portola Road intersection. This facility is frequently used by equestrians, hikers, cyclists, and children traveling throughout the community. Between Los Trancos Road and Saddleback Drive, the Alpine Road Trail is an unpaved path that meanders along the northern Hawthorns Area property boundary and is separated from Alpine Road by a vegetated berm. The Town has requested that the District and Town work together to realign and widen portions of the Alpine Road Trail adjacent to the Hawthorns Area. This planning process would incorporate the requested realignment as part of the trail development.

Trail Connectivity

The Town's Trails and Paths Element of the General Plan envisions a trail and path system throughout the Town that interconnects with conceptual trails for the Hawthorns Area. Local trail connection opportunities include the Alpine Road Trail and the Sweet Springs Trail. In addition, the Hawthorns Area may potentially contribute to regional trail connections with other nearby public open spaces, including Pearson-Arastradero Preserve, Foothills Park, Coal Mine Ridge Nature Preserve, and publicly accessible private lands such as the Stanford Dish Area.

**Hawthorns Area Plan Process**

The following table outlines the proposed planning process for the Hawthorns Area Plan. This process would engage community members, District Board and staff, and the Town to identify long-term goals for habitat enhancement, resource management, public access improvements, environmental education, visitor amenities, and other land management activities. Refer to the March 1, 2022 PNR report ([R-22-29](#)) for additional detail and information on the planning process and associated public engagement opportunities.

#	Phase Title	Phase Overview	Public Engagement Opportunities
1	Vision & Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop vision &amp; goals</li> <li>• Refine planning process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual comment card</li> <li>• Board/PNR meetings</li> </ul>

#	Phase Title	Phase Overview	Public Engagement Opportunities
2	Existing Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey existing conditions</li> <li>• Prepare Opportunities &amp; Constraints Report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>• Site tours</li> <li>• Open house</li> <li>• Virtual comment card</li> <li>• Board/PNR meetings</li> </ul>
3	Programming / Conceptual Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify use &amp; management objectives and recommendations</li> <li>• Identify programmatic elements</li> <li>• Develop Conceptual Plan Alternative(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Public Access working group</li> <li>• Online surveys</li> <li>• Pop-up events</li> <li>• Virtual comment card</li> <li>• Board/PNR meetings</li> </ul>
4	Area Plan / Environmental Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare Area Plan</li> <li>• Approve CEQA findings and Area Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board/PNR meetings</li> <li>• Public/agency comment on CEQA document</li> </ul>
5	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design development, permitting, &amp; construction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBD (Town permitting process)</li> </ul>

## Vision And Goals

The proposed planning process for the Hawthorns Area Plan begins with the development of the vision and goals, which represent the overarching guidance for use and management actions on the property. The PNR reviewed draft vision and goals on August 24, 2021 and provided comments. On November 16, 2021, the PNR reviewed the revised vision and goals, suggested further refinements, and unanimously recommended forwarding the refined vision and goal statements (provided below) to the full Board for consideration.

District staff received 69 public comments regarding the Hawthorns Area between April 2021 and March 2022. Comments were received at PNR meetings and via a virtual comment card hosted on the project webpage. Public input informed the development of the vision and goals by identifying key topics and themes relevant to the Hawthorns Area.

### 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.

## FISCAL IMPACT

Review and approval of the vision and goals has no direct, immediate fiscal impact.

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio #6 Windy Hill: Trail Implementation, 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 Implementation, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership Portfolio Allocation:</b>	
<b>Total Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$12,740,000</b>
Life-to-Date Spent (as of 2/16/22):	(\$70,113)
Encumbrances:	(\$32,691)
Remaining FY22 Project Budgets:	(\$49,472)
Future MAA06 project costs (projected through FY25):	(\$95,796)
<b>Total Portfolio Expenditures:</b>	<b>(\$248,072)</b>
<b>Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>\$12,491,928</b>

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio #06 Windy Hill: Trail Implementation, 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 Implementation, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership Portfolio Allocation:</b>	
<b>Total Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$12,740,000</b>
Projected Project Expenditures (life of project):	
06-002 Hawthorns Area Plan	(\$248,072)
<b>Total Portfolio Expenditures:</b>	<b>(\$248,072)</b>
<b>Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>\$12,491,928</b>

## BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- May 18, 2021: PNR received an informational presentation on the proposed planning and public engagement process for the 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](#))

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

## CEQA COMPLIANCE

Developing the Hawthorns Area vision and goals is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act. Environmental review would occur in a future fiscal year upon Board approval of a draft Area Plan as the CEQA project description.

## NEXT STEPS

The following table outlines the tentative project timeline for developing the Area Plan. Pending Board approval of the Hawthorns Area vision and goals, staff will continue technical studies and public engagement to develop existing conditions and inform opportunities and constraints.

Phase	Calendar Year
Vision & Goals	Spring 2022
Existing Conditions	2022
Programming / Conceptual Planning	2023
Area Plan / Environmental Review	2024
Implementation	2025+

## ATTACHMENTS

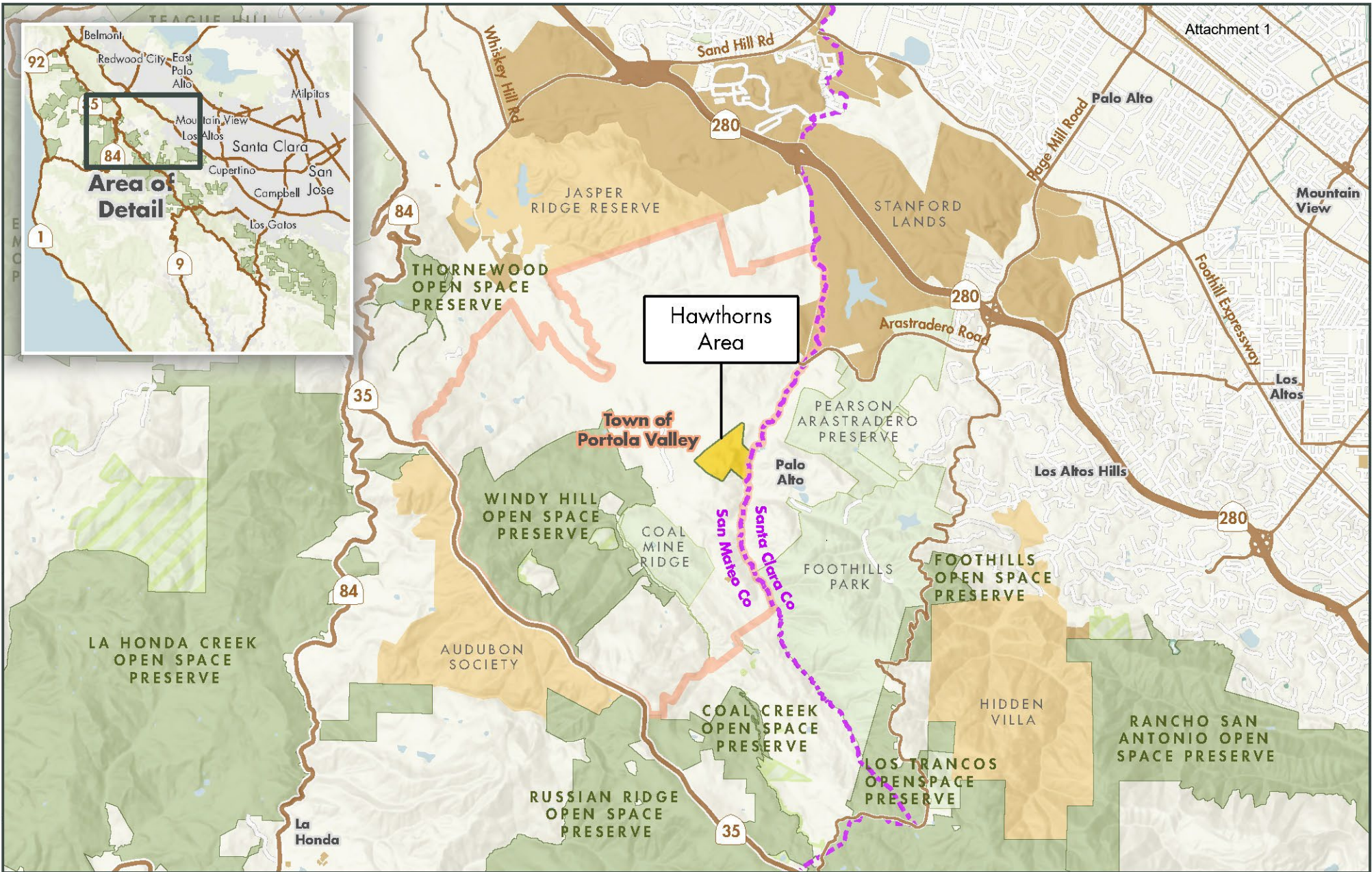
1. Regional Map
2. Local Map
3. Aerial Map
4. Town of Portola Valley Public Trail Network

Responsible Department Head:  
Jane Mark, Planning Department

Prepared By:  
Alex Casbara, Planner III, Planning Department  
Arianna Nuri, Planner I, Planning Department

Contact Person:  
Alex Casbara, Planner III, Planning Department

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Created By: acasbara



Hawthorns Area

Town of Portola Valley

### Hawthorns Area - Regional Map

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
|  Hawthorns Area        |  Land Trust          |  County Boundary              |
|  MROSD Preserves       |  Other Public Agency |  Portola Valley Town Boundary |
|  Other Protected Lands |  Private Property    |  |

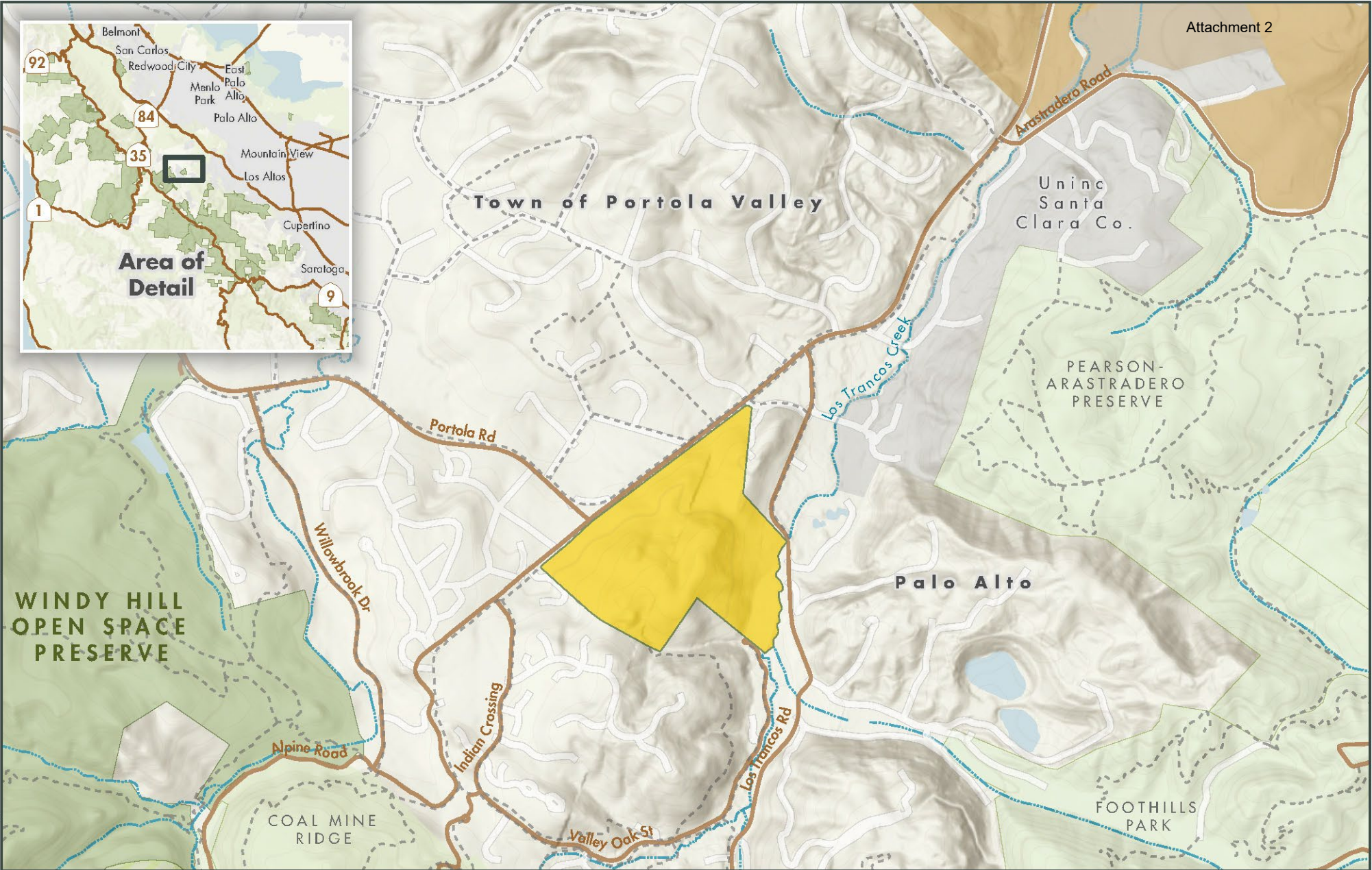
Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(Midpen)  
2/25/2022



While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.



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### Hawthorns Area - Local Map

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Hawthorns Area        |  Other Public Agency |
|  MROSD Preserves       |  Private Property    |
|  Other Protected Lands |  Unincorporated Area |

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(Midpen)  
2/25/2022



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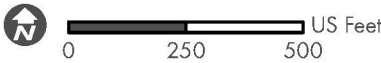
Attachment 3

### Hawthorns Area - Aerial Map

 Hawthorns Area

 Building

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(Midpen)  
2/25/2022



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### Town of Portola Valley Public Trail Network

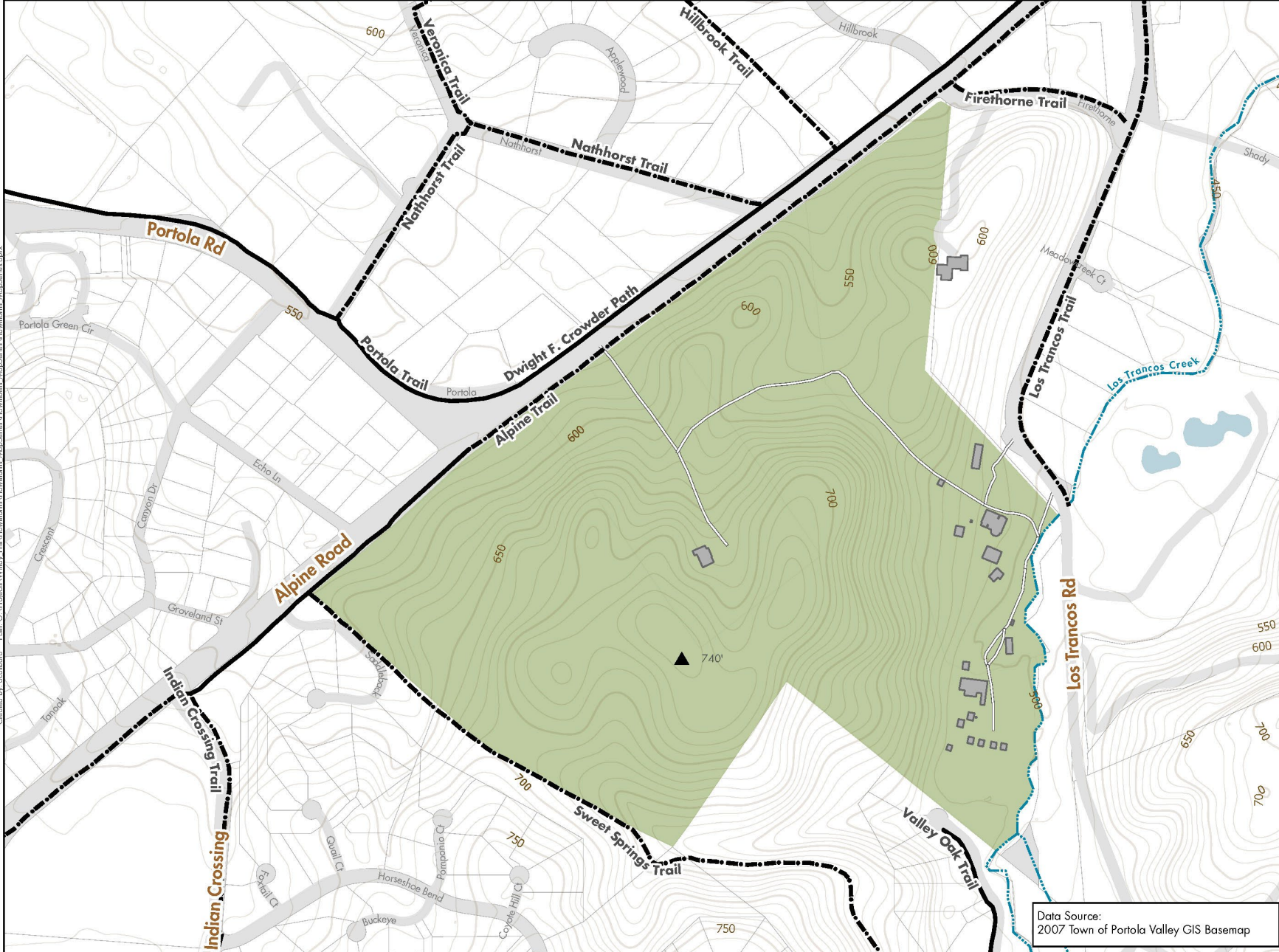
Hawthorns Area

Building

#### Trail use type

Equestrian &  
Pedestrian Trail,  
Dogs On Leash

Bicycle, Equestrian,  
& Pedestrian Trail,  
Dogs On Leash



Data Source:  
2007 Town of Portola Valley GIS Basemap



While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.

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