



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-13-33
Meeting 13-07
March 13, 2013

STUDY SESSION AGENDA ITEM 1

STUDY SESSION AGENDA ITEM

Vision Plan Public Engagement Approach and Community Conversation Discussion

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JLQ", is written over the text of the General Manager's Recommendation.

Review and discuss the Vision Plan public engagement approach and Community Conversations protocol.

SUMMARY

In January 2013, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) Board of Directors (Board) endorsed the proposed Vision Planning process and the associated Communication, Engagement, and Public Participation Plan (CEPP) as an important component of the overall strategy to meaningfully engage the public in the visioning process and build support for the District. The first and second phases of the CEPP are currently underway. The purpose of this Study Session is to provide a status report on the project team's efforts to elicit the public's vision and aspirations for the future of open space in the District, and to directly involve the Board in the Community Conversations. As part of this Study Session, the project team will ask the Board members to share responses to the four Community Conversation questions listed within this report.

DISCUSSION

The Vision Plan process will focus the District's strategies to enhance regional collaboration, build public support, and enhance financial and staffing resources by identifying priorities for land conservation, resource management, and low-intensity recreation. A critical step is to clearly understand community, partner, and stakeholder interests, values, knowledge, and perspectives related to open space. Toward this end, the community engagement process includes the a series of partner, small group, and "person on the street" interviews, called "Community Conversations" to meaningfully engage the public in the visioning process and build understanding and support for the District.

What are Community Conversations?

Community Conversations are a flexible but consistent way to gather people's thoughts, ideas, aspirations, and values in a way that fosters two-way engagement, supports relationship-building, and complements scientific polling. District staff and public participation consultant Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC) will work with this engagement strategy in the second and third phases of the vision planning process (January – September 2013).

The conversations follow a “protocol” involving an introduction followed by a few simple open-ended questions that relate the participant’s hopes for the future to the District’s Vision Plan themes of:

- Healthy plants, animals and waterways
- Sustainable working lands
- Access to open space for exercise and education
- Beautiful scenery and interesting history

The introduction also refers to theme photographs (see Attachment 1) to focus and provide a framework for the dialogue. The questions are:

1. Keeping these open space themes in mind, what do you want the Peninsula, South Bay, and San Mateo Coast to be like in the future?
2. How might these open space themes contribute to the future you imagine?
3. Can you tell me more about why these things you have mentioned are important to you?
4. What are the most important actions that the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District or others could take to move us toward the kind of future you want?

The “conversations” will take different forms including in-person or telephone interviews, facilitated small group conversations (like a focus group), and online “town hall” discussions. The online discussions will use the Mindmixer web platform, which is effective in engaging technology-savvy members of the public and younger constituents.

During the study session, staff and PDC will facilitate a short Board Community Conversation based upon the four questions listed above. Staff will also provide a brief demonstration of the Vision Plan online town hall (Mindmixer web site) which is designed to closely parallel the interview experience.

Who will facilitate the Community Conversations?

College students from San Francisco and San Jose State Universities will receive training and support from PDC to facilitate and document community conversations throughout the region. As the process evolves, the District may also utilize staff, a select group of docents, and potentially, willing District partner organizations to conduct the interviews. These interviewers would also be trained by PDC and follow the same approach as the students.

When will the Community Conversations occur and who will participate?

Student-facilitated Community Conversations will begin in March 2013. Conversations will start with the Board, Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and District partners. Students will also attend community events (e.g. farmers markets, District outreach events) to conduct the interviews and respond to requests for individual or group interviews through May 2013. Between June and September 2013, PDC will monitor the pool of participants and target outreach to populations who have not been represented (e.g. geographic areas, interest areas, ethnic groups). Questions may also be adapted at this time to emphasize the particular themes needing further input.

How will input be documented and used?

Community conversation notes and quotes will be documented and stored electronically. Participants can remain anonymous or include their names, as quotes and themes are shared on the Mindmixer website. Responses to the Community Conversation questions will be reviewed

by MROSD, its Community Advisory Committee, and the Board of Directors. In the third phase of the Vision Planning process, the responses will be integrated with scientific analysis to shape major components of the Vision Plan, including the open space goals, and action selection criteria.

FISCAL IMPACT

Expenses necessary to conduct the public engagement activities identified herein are expected to remain consistent with the budget estimates presented at the January 15, 2013 Board Report (see R-13-10), which are accounted for in both the current FY2012-13 and proposed FY2013-14 budgets.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

Board Committee review was not needed for this item.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice was provided pursuant to the Brown Act. Notice was also sent to the Vision Plan interested parties list and to the Community Advisory Committee members.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

A status update to the Board does not constitute a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

NEXT STEPS

Trained interviewers will conduct the interviews and respond to requests for individual or group interviews through May 2013.

Attachments:

Attachment 1, Community Conversations photo postcard

Responsible Department Head:

Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Department Manager

Prepared by:

Sandy Sommer, Senior Real Property Planner

Contact person:

Sandy Sommer, Senior Real Property Planner



IMAGINE

the FUTURE *of* Open Space



Tell us how YOU imagine the future of Open Space



Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District would like your help in defining open space on the Peninsula, South Bay, and San Mateo Coast. Help us imagine a future that includes:

- Healthy plants, animals, and waterways
- Sustainable working lands
- Access to open space for exercise and education
- Beautiful scenery and interesting history



Comment on these and other themes that are important to you at <http://imagine.openspace.org> or obtain more information at www.openspace.org/imagine

