



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-24-30
Meeting 24-07
March 13, 2024

STUDY SESSION AGENDA ITEM 1

AGENDA ITEM

Study Session to Receive Early Feedback on Parking Area Design Guidelines

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Review and provide feedback on draft elements of the Parking Area Design Guidelines, including overarching values and typologies.

SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) is developing Parking Area Design Guidelines as a framework for ensuring appropriate open space and natural/rural aesthetic character and design elements are integrated into District preserve parking areas. Staff is working with CSW/ST2, a multidiscipline design and landscape architecture firm, to develop these guidelines and is seeking Board of Directors (Board) confirmation and feedback on proposed overarching values, typologies, and list of design elements to inform the final draft of these guidelines.

BACKGROUND

Parking is a key component of public access to District preserves. A parking area serves as a gateway to the preserve and provides a transitional zone between urban/suburban areas and natural open spaces. The District has historically provided, with a few exceptions, relatively small gravel parking areas at preserve trailheads. As District preserve visitation has grown over time, the demand for more and larger parking areas has increased. The passage of Measure AA in 2014 allowed the District to shift part of its focus toward expanding public access opportunities across its 27 open space preserves, including adding new parking areas and expanding existing parking areas to adequately accommodate visitation levels.

In the last 15 plus years, new building codes have emerged necessitating the addition of various engineering and design elements to address regulatory requirements pertaining to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and stormwater management under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). Most recently, the District has also been incorporating transportation demand management (TDM) strategies as part of parking area designs to include new elements such as carpool lots and real-time parking information systems to manage parking demand.

All of the various factors and requirements described above are affecting the aesthetic design of District parking areas and have raised Board interest in defining Parking Area Design Guidelines

to ensure that new and future parking designs incorporate a natural open space aesthetic quality reflective of the District's conservation and environmental stewardship values and mission.

In response, the District retained CSW/ST2, a multidiscipline design and landscape architecture firm for assistance in developing the parking area design guidelines. The consultant team includes the lead designer for the District's Mount Umunhum Public Access and Environmental Education Project completed in 2017. The consultant's scope of work includes working with staff to assemble District values, typologies, and considerations, which influence parking design; drafting a Parking Area Design Guidelines document; assisting staff with presentations to the Board and the public for input on the draft document; and incorporating Board and public comments to develop a final Parking Area Design Guidelines document.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this work is to develop a framework for incorporating an appropriate open space and natural/rural aesthetic and design character to District preserve parking areas. The design guidelines will be centered on the District's two mission statements and align with the five Board-approved Vision Plan Goals (see Attachment 1).

The design guidelines will go beyond basic technical design principles and focus on the character qualities that reflects the District's open space lands and conservation values. With this goal in mind, CSW/ST2 has proposed draft parking area values and typologies to inform the development of more detailed design guidelines. A **typology** is a systematic classification of landscape types based on attributes that describe properties of interest, such as ecosystem or cultural characteristics. Staff is seeking Board feedback on numerous elements prior to further developing the guiding document as highlighted below in *italics*.

a. Parking Area Values

The Board is asked to review and confirm these draft overarching values to inform the development of the parking area design guidelines.

As facilities designed to provide public access to District preserves, parking areas present an interesting challenge between meeting the mobility practicalities and needs of vehicle-based public access and the desire to promote the environmental sensitivities inherent in preserving, protecting, and restoring natural and cultural lands. With thoughtful and purposeful design, parking areas can successfully highlight the District's mission and values while meeting the basic intent and requirements of a parking area by incorporating the following values:

- **Respect the Natural Landscape and Cultural Setting.** Limit ecological and local neighborhood impacts, balance the requirements of development and public access with opportunities to utilize principles and methods of land preservation, restoration, and the appreciation of natural and/or rural landscapes.
- **Establish a transition zone.** Parking areas serve as the public's transitional spaces between the surrounding urban/suburban areas and the natural open space preserves. Minimize the visual impact of parking areas on the land. Design parking areas and trailheads to be visual gateways to the open space preserve that help transition visitors into the natural/rural environment.
- **Exhibit a Sense of Place.** Express a consistent District design ethos across all preserves while highlighting local environmental and cultural context. Parking area

and trailhead design serves to provide visitors with a visual/experiential understanding of the District's values and mission, and where possible, celebrate the unique attributes of the preserve.

- **Address Sustainable Construction and Maintenance Practices.** Protect financial and staff resources by designing for sustainable construction and maintenance requirements while ensuring that materials, colors, and textures selected reflect and are compatible with the natural setting.

b. Design Approach

The Board is asked to confirm that all the major typologies are captured below.

This section will include special considerations on how to respect and complement the land's physical, visual, and cultural integrity when designing parking areas within the specific natural and cultural landscape typologies listed below.

i. Natural Landscape Typologies

- Forests
- Grassland & Chaparral
- Coastal & Baylands

ii. Cultural Landscape Typologies

- Agricultural Lands - ranches and farms, both historical and working
- Cultural and Archeological Sites - includes tribal cultural sites and former settlements of historic interest

c. Design Guidelines

The Board is asked to confirm that this list captures all the elements of interest.

1. Color Schemes and Textures
2. Material Selection
3. Accentuating Unique Vistas; Overlooks and Viewpoints
4. Natural Resource Protection and Enhancements
5. Grading and Drainage (includes cut and fill, swales, culverts, piped conveyance)
6. Placement of Utilities
7. Parking Capacity, Overflow Parking, Phased Construction
8. Entry Road Layout (alignment, vertical and horizontal curves, widths, sightlines)
9. Parking Layouts (includes 90 degree parking spaces, angled parking, parallel parking, single/double loading, one and two-way movement, through-route or turnaround)
10. Equestrian Pull-Through or Reverse Parking
11. Drop-off and Transit Stops
12. Turnarounds and EV Access
13. Parking Area Surfacing and Parking Space Delineation
14. Edge Restraints and Wheel Stops
15. Parking Area Shoulders
16. Fire Safety Measures
17. Signage (regulatory, directional/wayfinding, interpretive, kiosks)
18. Entry Markers/Signage
19. Restrooms
20. Structures (shelters, maintenance buildings)

21. EV Charging Stations
22. Trailhead Area and Universal Access (ADA) Surfacing
23. Furnishings (such as benches, picnic tables, bike storage, dog waste stations)
24. Fencing, Gates, Screening, Buffers, Barriers
25. Soils and Mulch Import
26. Planting and Irrigation
27. Deer Fencing
28. Boulders, Rip Rap, Placed Logs
29. Site Walls (stone/concrete/timber)
30. Digital Parking Capacity Signage/Counters
31. Permit Parking
32. Use of Environmentally Friendly (“Green”) Elements (such as permeable concrete and recycled/reused materials)

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommendation.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

This item has not been previously reviewed by the Board or Committee.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Discussions of design guidelines at the policy level does not constitute a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

Based on Board feedback, staff will work with the consultant to incorporate comments from the Board and continue to develop the parking area design guidelines. Staff plans to return to the Board for approval of the final guiding document in April 2024.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Mission Statements and Vision Plan Goals

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Prepared by / Contact person
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Mission Statements and Vision Plan Goals

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District mission is:

“To acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.”

Within the Coastside Protection Area, the mission expands as follows:

“To acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space land and agricultural land of regional significance, protect and restore the natural environment, preserve rural character, encourage viable agricultural use of land resources and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.”

The 2014 Vision Plan Goals approved by the Board of Directors encompass the following:

- Outdoor Recreation and Healthy Living:
 - Provide accessible open space lands for recreation and outdoor exercise in nature.
- Cultural and Scenic Landscape Preservation:
 - Conserve the area’s scenery and rich history; provide places for escape and quiet enjoyment.
- Healthy Nature:
 - Take care of the land, air, water and soil so that plants and animals thrive and people can receive nature’s benefits.
- Connecting with Nature and Each Other:
 - Provide opportunities for people to learn about and appreciate the natural environment and to connect with nature and each other.
- Viable Working Lands:
 - Provide viable working lands that reflect our agricultural heritage and provide food and jobs.

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