Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: July 25, 2018

MEMO TO: MROSD Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager

FROM: Lisa Bankosh, Planner III

SUBJECT: Alma College Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation Project

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SUMMARY

The Alma College Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation Project includes preservation of the 1909 Chapel and 1934 Library; hazardous materials abatement; demolition of select structures, and general site cleanup; rehabilitation of historic landscape forms, pathways, and planting arrangements using native plants; and installation of interpretive features and other visitor and operational amenities. Design plans are at the 60% level of completion, with an estimated construction cost of approximately $4.2 million. The Santa Clara County Historic Heritage Commission (HHC) will review a Landmark Alteration Permit for the rehabilitation project on August 16, 2018.

BACKGROUND

The former Alma College site is significant as a cultural landscape under Criterion 1 of the California Register for its historical parallels with the broader events of California history, including the Milling period (1850), Tevis Estate period (1906-1934), and Alma College period (1934-1969). The Alma College Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation Project (Project) seeks to implement a fiscally-sustainable cleanup and rehabilitation plan that allows the historic site's significance to be understood and safely enjoyed by the public. In 2017, the Board approved the Project as part of the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan (R-17-15) and approved a contract with PGA Design to develop designs and construction documents (R-17-86). The Board also examined the Project in detail at two meetings in 2016 (R-16-33; R-16-50).

The Rehabilitation Project (shown graphically as Attachment 1) adheres to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes. These standards define rehabilitation as "the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values". The compatible use for the Alma College Cultural Landscape is an open space preserve. Character-defining elements of each historic period that will be preserved or rehabilitated include:

Milling Period: Upper Lake

Estate Period: site spatial organization, including vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns, grassland terracing, retaining walls, mansion ruins (re-used as bat habitat), roman plunge/lily pond landscape form, site landscaping (interpreted with native species);

Alma College Period: Chapel, 1934 Library, Shrines, foundation/footprints of 1950 library, classroom, and dormitory.

DISCUSSION

Design Development (60%) plans and specifications for the Rehabilitation Project are now complete. The primary project elements addressed in the design include:

1. Hazardous materials abatement, site clean-up, and demolition of the garage upper level, classroom, and 1950 library (preserving the foundation "footprints" for interpretive purposes);
2. Mothballing the 1934 library and 1909 Chapel, stabilizing the Chapel porch to allow public access;
3. Rehabilitating historic terracing and landscape forms through grading; interpreting historic plantings with native species;
4. Restoring the historic circulation pattern and providing accessible routes for persons with disabilities;
5. Providing visitor and operational amenities, including interpretative signage and programming, benches and picnic tables, safety railings, patrol routes, and an emergency vehicle turnaround.

Santa Clara County Landmark Alteration Permit Process

The project site is listed as the "Alma College Complex" on the Santa Clara County Heritage Resource Inventory. Specifically, the classroom, 1950 library, 1934 library, chapel, and Upper Lake Picnic Area/Alcove are listed as contributing elements to the historic site. Although the Rehabilitation Project will retain two structures and numerous site elements, several buildings in poor condition are proposed to be removed or otherwise altered, requiring the County's Historic Heritage Commission (HHC) to review the project. The review process includes the following steps:

1. District submits a Landmark Alteration Permit application to County staff, who refer the application to the HHC for review; project is agendized by HHC for consideration at a regular monthly meeting;
2. District presents the project to HHC (tentatively scheduled for August 16, 2018). HHC receives public comment, deliberates, and either makes a recommendation to County staff to approve or deny the application, OR requests additional information/analysis, with a recommendation to be made at a subsequent meeting;
3. If the Landmark Alteration Permit is approved, the District will submit materials for both demolition and building permits. If it is denied, the District may begin an appeal process.

FISCAL IMPACT

Project implementation costs are eligible for Measure AA reimbursement. The 60% design-level cost estimate for project construction is approximately $4.2 million. This estimate is significantly lower than the 2016 concept design-level estimate of $7.4 million, due to

elimination of several high-cost items. Items eliminated include: stabilization of the site retaining walls (determined to be structurally sound), extensive interpretation of historic landscaping with native plantings (reduced scope), and extensive rehabilitation of the lily pond area (reduced scope).

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio #21 allocation, expenses to date, and remaining portfolio fund balance.

MAA 21 Portfolio Allocation – Bear Creek Redwoods Public Recreation and Interpretive Projects:	$17,478,000
Life-to-Date Spent (as of June 30, 2018):	$3,157,394
Total Encumbrances (as of June 30, 2018):	$937,197
FY2018-19 Portfolio Budget (Adopted June 13, 2018):	$8,271,568
Balance Remaining*:	$5,111,841

*May exclude contracts currently under consideration, future year project budgets, and grants.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

Rehabilitation of the former Alma College site was guided by committee and public input at three meetings of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee, including one neighborhood meeting, held in Los Gatos on April 29, 2015. In addition, the full Board received a presentation of the Rehabilitation Plan at its June 24, 2015 meeting, and reviewed the information on March 23, 2016 and May 11, 2016. The Alma College Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation Plan was approved by the Board as part of the larger Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan on January 25, 2017.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to pursue permits with the County of Santa Clara for the Rehabilitation Project. Permitting is anticipated to be complete within one year, with implementation of the Rehabilitation Project actions complete by 2021.

KEY ELEMENTS

- Rehabilitate and interpret the features that illustrate the layers of development and use of the property.
- Reinstate or rehabilitate historic plantings using evergreen shrub plantings on the path through the middle of the site, at the shrines, and in lieu of radial paths.
- Provide interpretive materials to narrate the cultural landscape components.
- Stabilize the 1909 chapel, and the 1934 library roof structure.
- Strengthen north retaining wall, minimally stabilize south retaining wall.
- Due to their position in relation to the San Andreas fault trace, remove the classroom garage, and the 1950 library.
- Provide visitor amenities.
- Establish parking for approximately 60 cars.
- Establish a regime of vegetation management.
- Plant garden areas with unirrigated wildflower and grass mixes for improved habitat.
- Plant with native species to convey the layout of other historical plantings.
- Seek a project partner or partners for the use of the rehabilitated building and gardens.

PARTNERSHIP ELEMENTS

- Rehabilitate chapel and library superstructure for reuse.
- Provide water, septic, and power to the rehabilitated chapel.
- Rehabilitate radial gardens near Upper Lake.
- Provide enhanced visitor amenities including flush toilets