



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-25-152
Meeting 25-31
December 3, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 1

AGENDA ITEM

Environmental Scan and Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives for Fiscal Year 2026-27

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Consider the results of the annual environmental scan and review, update if needed, and adopt the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives to guide the development of the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget and Capital Improvement and Action Plan.

SUMMARY

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (Midpen, District) annual strategic planning retreat provides the Board of Directors (Board) with an opportunity to set the overall course for the coming fiscal year at a broad policy level. During the retreat, the Board will review the 2025 Environmental Scan Report (Attachment 1) and consider the proposed FY27 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives (Attachment 2). This process ensures the organization is well-positioned to address emerging challenges and capitalize on new opportunities.

DISCUSSION

In 2011, the Board adopted a comprehensive Strategic Plan (R-11-96) to guide the District's long-term direction. Since then, the Board has annually reviewed and updated this plan to account for new opportunities and challenges in response to environmental scan considerations, ensuring ongoing successful implementation of the District's mission.

Environmental Scan Findings

Externally, the District will be challenged to cost-effectively accomplish its project priorities due to higher prices brought on by inflation and tariffs. Assessed valuation growth has slowed due to less demand for commercial office and development space, reducing the projected tax revenue growth and affecting future available funds for General Fund capital projects and expenditures. Changes in federal government leadership with the retirement of Rep. Pelosi may affect future support for District initiatives. Permitting struggles stemming from staffing reductions across numerous regulatory agencies pose significant risks to project timelines and outcomes. Although partnerships have been invaluable to complete numerous project priorities, several key public partners may be less likely to engage in near-term partnerships due to reductions in revenue and capacity. Conversely, Peninsula Open Space Trust remains a strong and active partner in accomplishing priority MAA projects, including land conservation purchases and trail/wildlife connectivity projects that align with their strategic plan. The greatest growth across our

surrounding communities is occurring most within senior and ethnically diverse populations, raising the importance for ADA/easy access trails as well as thoughtful, face-to-face outreach and education to cultivate new supporters. With the District expanding its knowledge base of local tribes, it is now possible to explore a long-term tribal engagement strategy that includes entering into Memorandums of Agreement with clear frameworks to guide future tribal collaborations and compensation for their time and contributions to support District projects. The rise in public interest and expansive input in District projects reinforces the importance of communicating our science-based decision-making for guiding the careful stewardship and protection of natural resources to help people understand, value, and support the District's conservation-driven approach and decisions.

Internally, the District will be well served in pursuing strategies to improve project efficiencies, as well as a disciplined focus on actions that further its core mission, including the Big Rock priorities, to support timely delivery of annual workplan projects and successful delivery of the Measure AA (MAA) commitments. Vetting new initiatives against the available capacity is also critical to avoid unintended workplan impacts. A new strategy for shifting the workplan to carry a higher percentage of MAA projects and the associated departmental support may also be prudent. New and updated organizational strategies and norms that promote greater employee engagement, creativity, problem solving, focused attention, and deeper connections will also support improvements in project delivery and operational efficiencies. Cybersecurity remains a high priority to safeguard sensitive information. Regular employee training is now necessary across all levels and all departments given the size of staff to promote consistent practices and use of internal tools and systems. Further electrification of the fleet will help the District meet its operational greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.

By addressing these challenges and capitalizing on emerging opportunities, Midpen will be well poised in the coming year(s) to fulfill its mission of land conservation, natural resource protection, and ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

Proposed Updates to the Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

After reviewing the 2025 Environmental Scan Report, the General Manager offers the following food for thought as the Board discusses potential edits to the Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives for FY27, with edits shown in tracked changes (additions in underline and deletions in ~~strike-through~~) (see also Attachment 2).

Under Goal 1:

Objective 1 - Continue implementation of the District's Vision Plan, with a focus on Measure AA-funded projects, and communicate progress on projects through reporting results and building partner relationships

Objective 2 - Build and strengthen diverse partnerships to implement and communicate a collaborative and science-based approach to regional environmental protection

Under Goal 2:

Objective 1 – Take a regional leadership role in promoting the benefits of open space and a land management approach that balances public access with natural resource protection

Objective 2 – Protect and restore the natural environment and maximize intact core habitat that is connected by and implement wildlife corridors to preserve healthy natural systems and biodiversity.

Objective 3 – Lead by example to reduce the impacts of climate change: implement the Climate Action Plan to reduce operational emissions; ~~expand regional landscape resiliency through partnerships~~ establish the Strategic Plan for Adaptation and Resilience to Climate Change to expand resilience of District operations, regional landscapes, and sensitive populations of native species; and protect the capacity for long-term carbon storage of open space lands, ~~and climate change adaptation strategies to protect viable populations of local native species~~

Objective 4 – Work with fire agencies and surrounding communities to strengthen the prevention of, preparation for, and response to wildland fires for enhanced ecosystem resiliency and public safety through ecologically sensitive vegetation management and prescribed fire

Under Goal 3:

Objective 3 – Expand opportunities, including multimodal options and ADA/easy access trails and facilities, to equitably connect people to their public open space preserves and enhance the visitor experience in balance with the protection of natural resources

Under Goal 4:

Objective 1 – Provide the necessary resources, tools, training, staff facilities, and infrastructure, including technology upgrades, capacity building and safeguards to address cybersecurity threats and future natural disasters, and to support organizational effectiveness

Objective 3 – Evaluate new initiatives against the District’s mission, strategic goals and objectives, as well as internal capacity/workplan to confirm alignment, ~~and~~ state of readiness, and trade-offs

FISCAL IMPACT

None

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

None

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

On March 4, 2026, the Board will convene a second retreat, which will entail a detailed discussion and confirmation of the organization's priorities for FY27. These priorities will serve as the guiding principles for the subsequent development of the FY27 Budget and Action Plan.

Attachments:

1. 2025 Environmental Scan Report
2. FY27 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

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Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

2025 Environmental Scan Summary

Purpose

The purpose of the environmental scan is to gather information on external and internal environments to identify the most urgent challenges and opportunities facing Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen). The results of the environmental scan serve to inform potential updates to the Strategic Plan, which sets the directional course for the coming year(s) at a broad policy level.

I. Key External Findings

1. Economic and Labor Conditions

- Slowing Tax Revenue Growth.** Assessed valuation growth has slowed due to less demand for commercial office and development space, influenced largely by remote work and an increasing focus of giant Silicon Valley companies on AI-related infrastructure investments outside the Bay Area. Midpen can no longer count on tax revenue growth exceeding the cost of inflation by three percentage points, as has occurred over its first 52 years. This change will restrict the affordable amount of funds available under General Fund Capital, raising a new financial impetus to limit the number of GF Capex Projects that Midpen carries within its workplan.
- Potential Constraint on Goods:** Although supply chain issues have recently subsided (including vehicle deliveries), ongoing *uncertainty around trade policies and supplier behavior* still presents the potential for renewed disruptions in product availability and pricing. These disruptions could impact Midpen's ability to budget accurately and acquire goods promptly, affecting the schedule and cost of certain construction projects that depend on overseas supplies/materials, or if national supplies become overtaxed and in high demand.
- Inflation and Streamlining Smaller Procurements:** According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, prices in San Francisco, California have risen by 24.7% since 2018. Reflecting this rise in cost, a growing number of *professional services contracts* exceed the General Manager's \$53,000 purchasing authority (an amount that can only increase by 2% per year based on 2018 legislation, lagging well behind the inflation rate). To help streamline the purchasing process, the Governmental Affairs Program will pursue a legislative solution in 2026 to minimally increase the authorization limit to match the historic inflation growth since the last state code revision. A similar attempt made in 2024 alongside East Bay Regional Park District stalled due to issues with the larger proposed bill that included many other separate distinct legislative changes pursued by our partner. Attempts to establish streamlined contracts for low-cost *construction* services, such as for plumbing, fencing and electrical services, remains challenging due to state legal contracting requirements (e.g., state reporting and prevailing wage), causing smaller contractors to decline bidding on Midpen contracts.
- Streamlining Major Procurements:** Effective January 1, 2026, Midpen's enabling legislation will allow an increase to the General Manager's purchasing authority from \$50,000 to \$150,000, specifically for *materials, equipment, tools, and supplies* (excluding professional services and construction contracts). Although limited to tangible equipment and materials, the change will

expedite the purchase of vehicles/equipment and benefit in-house construction projects requiring large purchases of gravel, steel pipes, lumber, prefabricated bridges, and other bulk/higher cost items. The General Manager will work with staff to prepare a Board recommendation for enacting this change within Board Policy 3.03, *Public Contract Bidding, Vendor and Professional Consultant Selection, and Purchasing*. Along with this change, there is room for additional efficiencies to support project delivery, including expanding the use of large, multi-year on-call contracts for wildlife consulting services (e.g., for protocol surveys, CEQA reviews), similar to what has recently been done for botanical consulting services. In addition, Midpen is setting up a system leveraging the 3-year Capital Improvement and Action Plan (CIAP) to identify the need for botanical surveys well in advance of project implementation, recognizing that botanical surveys are valid for up to five years, as well as surveying larger preserve areas. For wildlife surveys, which need to be done right before/during construction, the 3-year CIAP can also be leveraged to flag the need for wildlife surveys by the end of each calendar year to lock in consultant contracts/task orders for the subsequent spring/summer/fall seasons particularly in light of struggles to secure such services due to limited consultant availability.

- **Internal Recruitment and Retention:** The recent update to the compensation philosophy has strengthened recruitment and retention, which may be evidenced in part by the return of two former employees. With early indicators suggesting that the economy is slowly shifting towards higher unemployment rates (layoffs and fewer new job postings), the volume of job applications for vacant Midpen positions has grown. The average number of qualified applicants is also growing, albeit at a slower rate. On the retention side, Human Resources staff remains vigilant in taking note of resignations, including those prompted by external promotional opportunities. Meanwhile, Midpen's growing internship program continues to be a successful pipeline for entry-level employment while expanding departmental capacity and inspiring young professionals to consider a career in land conservation and/or public service.
- **Generational Shift and Succession Planning:** The generational mix of Midpen employees is beginning to show a growth in Gen Z and a continued decrease in the Baby Boomer generation. While the potential for a "silver tsunami" exists, retirement numbers have stayed steady year over year. In either case, Midpen is well served by continuing to emphasize succession planning, including strengthening the people management and communication skills of middle managers and supervisors.
- **External Staffing/Funding Impacts:** Certain local and state permitting agencies (e.g. Town of Portola Valley, California Department of Fish and Wildlife) are experiencing high levels of staffing shortages. Federal permitting agencies and partners are also facing funding cuts and furloughs (US Fish and Wildlife, FEMA, National Parks). Other important partners and permitting agencies may begin to experience capacity impacts from hiring freezes in response to budget deficits (San Francisco Public Utility District, Santa Clara County). These external impacts are/will affect Midpen's ability to move capital projects forward as permitting timeframes are extended and responsiveness slows down. Midpen will lean heavily on its programmatic/master permits, where possible, to seek permit clearance. Moreover, with the recent adoption of the State Building Code, Midpen will take the next steps to move toward self-permitting of at least certain discrete actions, such as restroom replacements and low trail retaining wall construction.

2. Community and Stakeholders

- Community Expectations and Stakeholder Groups:** While community engagement helps inform public agency work, the timelines for high-interest public access projects have grown significantly to comprehensively explore and address stakeholder interests and concerns. The following are two recent examples of these extended engagement efforts: re-evaluation of the Bear Creek Stables Repair Plan and identification of trail and parking options for the Hawthorns Area Plan. Although these types of efforts lead to tangible deliverables, the added process and subsequent delays ripple across the larger workplan and increase project/operational costs due to both inflation and added consultant services support and staff time. With the preparation of the 20-year Measure AA (MAA) project schedule to complete MAA commitments by 2044, these types of downstream impacts are concerning. In our effort to fully deliver on MAA, the number of annual non-MAA projects and initiatives needs to be reduced and contained, with added focus placed on MAA. If similarly high levels of public engagement continue to be desired, an even greater reduction in non-MAA projects is necessary to provide flex in the workplan for absorbing the extended engagement processes. A counter option is to modify the public engagement process to provide opportunities for quick and broad input through surveys/questionnaires and hold focus group discussions to have more lengthy discussions with up to 5-7 key individuals who represent diverse interests. This option would bring both focused and broad community input while containing the amount of time expended to expedite the project.
- Tribal Engagement:** Recently, Midpen has been allocating additional time and effort to gain helpful insights on how best to deepen relationships and meaningfully engage with local Native American tribes to further our land conservation, resource protection and public access goals. A key struggle is the limited capacity of tribal communities to pursue their priority goals and initiatives and separately respond to increasing external requests for partnerships and consultation. The lack of capacity creates a real conundrum: Midpen projects benefit from meaningful tribal input, yet their ability to engage is constrained and repeated requests further limit their capacity and can strain the relationship. Meanwhile, the larger public, partners, and grant funders likewise understand the importance of tribal relations, with growing expectations for Midpen to demonstrate positive action. Navigating these complexities requires cultural sensitivity and a thoughtful long-term strategy. In response, Midpen staff is preparing to enter into agreements that would facilitate working relationships between Midpen and local tribes and compensate the tribes for their time and contributions to Midpen projects.
- Demographic Shifts:** Constituency demographics has been changing in multiple ways over the last 30+ years. Per the Silicon Valley Index, the region's population continues to age, with an increase of 28% in the number of residents ages 65+ since 2013, while the number of children under 18 decreased by 14% over the same period. Also, the racial and ethnic composition of the local region has transformed greatly from 1990 to 2023, marked by a substantial decline in the White/Caucasian population share from nearly 60% to 30%, and a doubling of the Asian population to 39%. Meanwhile, the Latino/a population has remained relatively stable at around 25% since 2000 while the Black/African American share has declined from 4% in 1990 to 2% in 2023. These demographic shifts raise questions about the types of barriers that may now be more pronounced in limiting public access to preserves and meaningful connections with Midpen's mission such as transportation, ADA accessibility, cultural familiarity, and competing priorities. The value of intentional site planning to increase ADA accessibility and easy access trails/facilities for an aging population is growing, as is thoughtful outreach and education to cultivate new supporters. For example, the idea of an annual/biannual "Signature Public Event" and use of an Open Space Explorer interpretive van can be tools to expand our presence and

awareness among new audiences. Both tools also leverage the growing public demand for face-to-face interaction, which has rebounded strongly since the pandemic.

- Public Access Management and Resource Protection:** While public demand for open space access dropped from the COVID pandemic peak, the long-term visitation trend continues to rise as more residents seek outdoor recreational opportunities closer to home. The growth in visitation adds pressure for increasing the parking capacity where possible. Recreation trends are also evolving, with many mountain bicyclists switching to e-bike use, in part reflecting a growing aging population who use e-bikes as other power-driven mobility devices. This growth in numbers coupled with more agencies allowing general e-bike use on their trails is spurring new public inquiries about e-bike use on Midpen lands. User groups are also increasingly vocal in shaping trail designs, advocating for more trails and/or higher trail densities, and expanded dog access. At the same time, Midpen is challenged with carefully balancing public use with natural resource protection. Increasing demands for trails and public access heighten the need to identify and protect intact habitat and prevent fragmentation while working to connect regionally important habitat areas with wildlife corridors. Reaching the right balance between access and resource protection is made even more difficult today with climate change and increased development in the wildland-urban interface that are affecting the health and integrity of the sensitive habitats, plants and wildlife. Articulating the care necessary to protect the underlying natural resources is particularly important at this time to help people understand, value, and support Midpen's conservation-driven approach and decisions, as well as its distinction from park agencies.

3. Political and Regulatory Factors

- Local:** Working with local ordinances can prove challenging and time consuming to move Midpen projects forward. For example, in Portola Valley, the process to pursue a zoning code change to then obtain a conditional use permit for repairing and programming the Hawthorns Historic Complex are expected to take 5+ years, with no guarantee of the outcome, before any construction work can potentially commence.
- State:** The Climate Bond (Proposition 4) is expected to help fill in state funding gaps for conservation and land management work. This is likely to be crucial to funding the Highway 17 crossings projects. The passage of SB 131 included CEQA exemption language for public park-related projects that receive Prop 4 funding. This may create an opportunity to save money and expedite eligible projects. District staff are actively working to apply for Prop 4 funding with these benefits in mind.

California's Cap-and-Trade program has been reauthorized by the Legislature as part of the 2025 legislative session, providing a potential funding opportunity for the protection and stewardship of natural and working lands.

As federal regulations are removed and/or weakened, there is a movement at the state level to retain these prior protections through new legislation. AB-1319 (Schultz) Protected species: California Endangered Species Act, is an example.

Midpen's state delegation is expected to remain the same with little turnover anticipated in 2026, however, there is room and a need to build additional champions - particularly through local engagement. Senator Becker's recent increased engagement and support of Midpen's work is a good example of what may be possible with other delegation members in the year ahead. The

next state legislators in Midpen's delegation to term out will be Asm. Marc Berman (AD 23) and Sen. John Laird (SD 17) in 2028.

- **Federal:** At the federal level, reduced support for land conservation and environmental protections undermine the foundation on which Midpen's mission rests with potential new policies and legislation that can impact our program and project delivery. The recent retirement announcement from Speaker Nancy Pelosi (CA-11) will bring a significant change in Midpen's federal delegation and a need to cultivate a new relationship with her successor. Meanwhile, Midpen will benefit from continuing to stay in close communication with Congressperson Sam Liccardo to help champion Midpen interests as someone who represents the majority of Midpen lands, and in strengthening our relationship with Congressperson Panetta who holds the southern reaches within his district.

II. Key Internal Findings

1. Organizational Culture and Operational Workload

- **Core Values and Cultural Norms:** Staff deeply appreciate acknowledgement of their contributions, and seeking opportunities for recognition and celebration as part of the cultural norms remains important for high employee engagement, to reinforce core values and goals, and foster a positive work environment. The dedication and passion for the mission is strong across the organization and remains an important driver for recruitment and retention. With the growth in staffing since 2014 to deliver on Measure AA and manage new facilities, lands, and expand programs, as well as the hybrid work environment, it has become difficult for staff from different departments, offices, new hires, etc., to experience meaningful and effective opportunities for real connection on a regular basis. New strategies and norms that promote connection and in-person engagement are important for organizational health and cohesion, leading to greater engagement, creativity, and strategic problem-solving.
- **Focus on Core Work and Board-directed Priorities:** Although Midpen's culture of excellence, professionalism and competence contributes to the agency's strong reputation in comprehensively leading complex issues, it can entice Midpen to stray outside of its core mission. Moreover, given the funding and capacity reductions facing partner agencies, pressure for Midpen to fund or take the lead on peripheral priorities/non-core work will likely increase. Also, the combination of high staff responsiveness with individual Board members commonly expressing specific ideas and interests often creates internal confusion as to whether these interactions are directives, requiring a shift in focus or a new action. To help the organization stay focused on core work and Board-directed priorities, it is important to bring up new ideas and requests for action at the dais for the full Board to discuss and confirm a majority Board interest. In these instances, the General Manager will help raise the question for the full Board, speak to the potential implications/trade-offs, and provide guidance on how best to proceed.
- **Usefulness of the Big Rocks:** The "Big Rocks" project list has helped the Board, General Manager, staff, and public understand which annual workplan projects are of the highest priority. As such, the internal staff capacity and funding to implement the Big Rocks are of top priority and outweigh those of other projects on the workplan. As one example of how the Big Rocks helped to maintain alignment and focus on the priorities, the project manager leading the SFO Project (Big Rock) was alleviated in 2024 from also managing the Hawthorns Historic Complex Project when the latter required more time and effort. In this case, the Hawthorns Historic Complex Project was handed to another staff member to ensure a focused attention on the SFO

Project, which is currently running ahead of schedule. Maintaining a Big Rocks list and staying true to this list throughout each year will help ensure alignment to squarely focus on the highest priorities and avoid delays within our control that can significantly extend completion dates. Similarly, to stay true to the Big Rocks list, it is equally important to avoid unintentionally elevating new projects into this category that can otherwise undermine the value of the list. Moreover, projects on the Big Rocks list should remain on the list until they are fully completed to prevent delays in wrapping up these projects.

- Informed Decision-Making:** In 2024, the overall workplan experienced a major disruption with the insertion of a ~5-month Ad Hoc Committee process to explore an additional long-term use and management option for Bear Creek Stables. Although the process successfully resulted in a community-driven option – one that staff further worked off from to prepare a second modified option, the effort required extensive resources from numerous departments that pulled away from other workplan priorities, impacting numerous project schedules. Bear Creek Stables thus became a de facto Big Rock given the need to reallocate and shift resources and further resulted in the removal of several ongoing and important MAA projects from the Big Rocks list for a year. The subsequent debriefing discussion about the process led to an important agreement to ensure that the full Board understands up front the likely implications of these types of redirections to inform their decisions on how to proceed. This careful weighing of trade-offs will also help the larger staff and public better understand the rationale for shifting direction and recalibrate expectations about the larger workplan.
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2. Training and Technology

- Employee Trainings:** Given Midpen’s growth and size, regular employee trainings in systems, software, policies, and procedures have become necessary to ensure consistent and efficient project and program delivery throughout the organization. An annual allocation of time, resources, and funding is necessary to prepare for, deliver, and attend trainings each year – an activity that was once primarily specific to field crews and rangers.
 - Cybersecurity:** Protecting against increasingly sophisticated cybersecurity threats to the organization's finances and data continues to be a concern. Midpen has implemented several robust systems and solutions to reduce risk exposure and position us for a more resilient future. However, ongoing vigilance, implementing cutting-edge safety measures and regular cybersecurity training remain critical.
 - Fleet Electrification and Infrastructure:** The state’s fleet electrification mandate and Midpen’s Climate Action Plan require significant investment in EV-charging infrastructure and coordination across departments to integrate emerging vehicle technologies into daily operations. This transition also presents opportunities to modernize fleet management systems, improve energy efficiency, and align Midpen’s operations with broader state sustainability goals. The recent decision by major car manufacturers to discontinue making large EV pick-up trucks may require some modification to the EV fleet plan. Designs for the new SFO and Coastal Office are incorporating EV solutions with a long-term view in mind. New parking areas are also poised to minimally include the underground infrastructure to allow for future EV charging stations (unless full build-out is already required as a permit condition).
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3. Partnerships and Program Delivery

- Partnerships:** Diverse partnerships with a broad spectrum of partners as Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), San Mateo Resource Conservation District, San Jose Conservation Corps and Valley Transportation Agency, have enhanced Midpen's project and program capacity and level of regional collaboration. These partnerships focus heavily on accomplishing actions that further Midpen's core work (land acquisition, fisheries restoration, fuels management, and trail and wildlife connectivity). POST, who has historically been Midpen's strongest partner, continues to maintain strong ties with the General Manager and across other levels of staff through their recent leadership transition and is well poised financially and organizationally to engage in critical partnership projects, including new land acquisitions and regional trail/wildlife connectivity projects that align with their strategic plan. Similarly, successful collaborations on forest health work have enabled us to implement large scale vegetation management work in the Los Gatos Creek watershed that would have otherwise taken nearly a decade to complete. However, changes in federal funding and the economy are impacting partners and may affect their ability to engage in interagency projects and/or contribute financially toward these efforts.
- Natural Resource Management:** With the growth of the capital improvement program and expansion of public access projects, additional support from the Natural Resources Department (NR) has been necessary to evaluate potential natural resource impacts and identify avoidance and mitigation measures. Consideration may be needed to shift more NR capacity to support Measure AA projects to meet the 20-year MAA schedule in the coming years, recognizing that such a shift requires a tradeoff with the number and pace of resource management projects. One way to help compensate for this tradeoff is to add/expand the restoration work associated with MAA projects, although this approach will likely not target the highest sensitive resource needs across Midpen lands.
- Climate Resilience:** Climate change continues to increasingly affect the region's ecology and natural communities. Midpen is developing a climate resilience plan that incorporates operations, personnel, and policies. The resilience plan, identified as the Strategic Plan for Adaptation and Resilience to Climate Change (SPARCC), will ultimately guide the inclusion of science-backed climate change adaptation and resilience measures throughout Midpen activities, projects, and programs. To maintain a strong organizational focus on MAA in the coming years, primary consideration should be given to identifying cost-effective SPARCC recommendations that can be folded into and implemented as part of the scope and/or design of MAA projects.
- Wildfire Resilience:** The expectations and need for environmentally sensitive vegetation management work remains high, and the workload continues to increase as new fuel treatment projects begin, and other earlier fuel treatment projects require periodic maintenance. Midpen field staff has grown in capacity, matching to date the ramp up in the vegetation management workload. The two crews focused on invasive plant management and fuels reduction work are annually working to balance the increased demands in both programs. Midpen's ability to further expand its fuel management work will need support from external grant funding and partnerships. The use of prescribed fire as a tool depends heavily on the lead participation of CalFire as the expert fire management agency to take on responsibility and liability for these events. Prescribed fire is therefore dependent on CalFire availability and readiness. Fortunately, CalFire recognizes the important role prescribed fire can play and has signaled their desire to partner on prescribed fire plans.
- Continued Land Acquisition.** The recent pick-up in open space land purchase opportunities over the last few years has arisen from individual circumstances and not from any particular

trend. Therefore, the Real Property team will continue to focus on completing specific purchases envisioned in MAA plans, while responding to opportunistic projects as they arise.

III. Recommendations

Deliver on Measure AA (MAA) Commitments, Core Mission, and Annual Workplan by:

- Raising new ideas and requests for action with the full Board to discuss and confirm alignment with the core mission and MAA commitments.
- Making well-informed decisions regarding redirections or expansions of scope to fully understand the implications/trade-offs to the annual workplan, including Measure AA projects.
- Staying true to the Big Rocks throughout each year to ensure organization-wide focus on the highest priorities and avoid delays.
- Reducing the number of annual non-MAA projects and initiatives and adding greater focus on MAA projects.
- Shifting more Natural Resource capacity to support Measure AA projects to meet the 20-year schedule while scoping MAA projects to include/expand natural resource management work.

Improve Project Delivery and Operational Efficiency by:

- Considering modifications to the public engagement process that rely on surveys/questionnaires to solicit broad input and a small focus group representing diverse interests to capture more detailed input in an expedient manner.
- Expanding the use of large, multi-year on-call contracts for wildlife consulting services and other routine services.
- Leveraging the 3-year Capital Improvement and Action Plan (CIAP) to identify three years' worth of botanical survey needs, packing these in larger contracts and completing well in advance of project implementation.
- Leveraging the 3-year CIAP to better flag the need for wildlife surveys by the end of each calendar year to lock in consultant contracts/task orders.
- Pursuing a legislative solution to increase the General Manager's current \$53,000 authorization limit, minimally matching the historic inflation growth since the last state code revision, to expedite professional consulting services contracts.
- Leveraging new legislation allowing for an increase in the General Manager's purchasing authority from \$50,000 to \$150,000 for *materials, equipment, tools, and supplies* (excludes professional services and construction contracts).
- Continuing to pursue greater permitting efficiency and autonomy by formalizing self-permitting authorities for independent special districts.
- Pursuing new and updated organizational strategies and norms that promote greater employee engagement, creativity, problem solving, focused attention, and deeper connections.

Sustain and expand external advocacy and public awareness, support, and appreciation for Midpen's mission by:

- Reinforcing science-based decision-making to guide the careful stewardship and protection of the natural resources to help people understand, value, and support Midpen's conservation-driven approach and decisions.

- Clarifying Midpen's distinct conservation-focused mission compared to neighboring park agencies through consistent messaging.
- Demonstrating positive action in deepening relationships with tribal communities by developing a long-term tribal engagement strategy and entering into agreements that set the framework for future collaborations, including tribal compensation for their time and contributions to Midpen projects.
- Intentionally expanding ADA accessibility and easy access trails and facilities into preserve site planning work and capital improvement designs.
- Thoughtfully conducting outreach, engagement, and education by reducing known barriers, meeting people where they are, and expanding face-to-face interactions to cultivate new and diverse supporters.
- Expanding outreach to East/South Asian, Latino/a and senior community members to cultivate Midpen supporters.
- Continuing to cultivate champions across all levels of government to support land conservation, resource protection, and equitable access to nature.
- Expanding parking capacity where feasible and appropriate to facilitate access to preserves in balance with the use of Transportation Demand Strategies.

Protect natural resource integrity amidst multiple pressures and external impacts by:

- Carefully balancing the goals and interests of public use with natural resource protection.
- Identifying and protecting intact habitat, preventing harmful fragmentation, and connecting regionally important open space areas through land preservation and dedicated wildlife corridors.
- Completing and implementing the Strategic Plan for Adaptation and Resilience to Climate Change (SPARCC).

Strengthen organizational capacity and resources by:

- Leveraging as much as possible as Proposition 4 grants to support and streamline Midpen projects.
- Offering regular trainings on systems, applications, procedures and policies for consistent and efficient project and program delivery.
- Emphasizing ongoing vigilance, implementing cutting-edge safety measures and scheduling regular trainings to thwart cybersecurity threats.
- Investing in EV-charging infrastructure to meet state sustainability goals, improve energy efficiency, and modernize the fleet program.
- Continue pursuing diverse partnerships to accomplish actions and projects that further Midpen's core work.
- Pursuing additional grant funding and partnerships to expand fuel management work.

###



FY27 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 – Promote, establish, and implement a regional environmental protection vision with partners

Objective 1 – Continue implementation of the District’s Vision Plan, with a focus on Measure AA-funded projects, and communicate progress on projects through reporting results and building partner relationships

Objective 2 – Build and strengthen diverse partnerships to implement and communicate a collaborative and science-based approach to regional environmental protection

Objective 3 – Take a leadership role in advocating for environmental protection goals by building and strengthening relationships with legislators and other elected officials

Objective 4 – Preserve and connect open space and agricultural lands of local and regional significance

Goal 2 – Protect the positive environmental and biodiversity values of open space and agricultural lands

Objective 1 – Take a regional leadership role in promoting the benefits of open space and a land management approach that balances public access with natural resource protection

Objective 2 – Protect and restore the natural environment and maximize intact core habitat that is connected by and implement wildlife corridors to preserve healthy natural systems and biodiversity

Objective 3 – Lead by example to reduce the impacts of climate change: implement the Climate Action Plan to reduce operational emissions; expand regional landscape resiliency through partnerships establish the Strategic Plan for Adaptation and Resilience to Climate Change to expand resiliency of District operations, regional landscapes, and sensitive populations of native species; and protect the capacity for long-term carbon storage of open space lands, and climate change adaptation strategies to protect viable populations of local native species

Objective 4 – Work with fire agencies and surrounding communities to strengthen the prevention of, preparation for and response to wildland fires for enhanced ecosystem resiliency and public safety through ecologically sensitive vegetation management and prescribed fire

Objective 5 – Support the viability of sustainable agriculture and protect the character of rural communities

Goal 3 – Connect people to open space and agricultural lands, and a regional environmental protection vision

Objective 1 – Engage the public in realizing the benefits and responsibilities of a regional environmental protection vision to further the District’s achievements in protecting open space and agricultural lands

Objective 2 – Implement diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies to build and strengthen partnerships, increase broad and inclusive public outreach and engagement, engage tribal groups in the District’s work, and instill DEI values across all levels of the organization

Objective 3 – Expand opportunities, including multimodal options and ADA/easy access trails and facilities, to equitably connect people to their public open space preserves and enhance the visitor experience in balance with the protection of natural resources

Objective 4 – Develop strategies to reflect the diverse communities we serve in the District’s visitors, staff, volunteers, and partners.

Goal 4 – Strengthen organizational capacity and long-term financial sustainability to fulfill the mission

Objective 1 – Provide the necessary resources, tools, training, staff facilities, and infrastructure, including technology upgrades, capacity building and safeguards to address cybersecurity threats and future natural disasters, and to support organizational effectiveness

Objective 2 – Effectively and efficiently deliver Vision Plan projects and priority initiatives by implementing recommendations in the updated 2023 financial and operational sustainability model to guide operational growth and areas of focus, and facilitate project momentum

Objective 3 – Evaluate new initiatives against the District’s mission, strategic goals and objectives, as well as internal capacity/workplan to confirm alignment, and state of readiness, and trade-offs

Objective 4 – Remain financially sustainable by preparing for, pursuing, and ensuring discretionary funding opportunities and partnerships

Objective 5 – Ensure large operational and capital expenses, including land acquisitions, associated public access and land management costs, are evaluated within the long-term financial model and remain financially sustainable

Objective 6 – Ensure the District remains competitive in the labor market and able to recruit, develop, and retain diverse and talented staff to implement the mission. Pursue opportunities to enhance professional development training and career ladders to strengthen our organizational capacity and succession planning efforts