

R-25-168 Meeting 25-32 December 10, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 12

AGENDA ITEM

Beatty Area Parking and Trail Connections at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS Se Seuc



- 1. Direct the General Manager to negotiate with Santa Clara County the suitable improvements for shared use of Santa Clara County's Miller Point Parking Area to serve as the staging/parking area for the Beatty Area trailhead at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve, including a roadway crossing. Any improvements would be paid for and implemented by Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.
- 2. Direct the General Manager to pursue a new trail connection and trail loop off the Beatty Property that connects the Miller Point Parking Area to the larger Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve trail system.
- 3. Approve a funding contribution of \$650,000 to support the final design and construction of a portion (subset of Zone 1 – highest priority zone) of the Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project, located north of the Beatty property, to serve as a pilot for the newt crossing improvements.
- 4. Direct the General Manager to return to the Board of Directors at a later date if/when parking demand at the Miller Point Parking Area consistently exceeds capacity to determine whether expanded parking should be considered.

SUMMARY

The goal of the Beatty Parking Area and Trail Connections Project (Beatty Project), located off Alma Bridge Road, is to provide a public staging/parking area and connecting trail to the Priest Rock Trail in Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve. As scoped, this project meets two separate commitments: (1) a conservation easement condition made to Santa Clara County (County) affecting the underlying property that requires the trail connection, and (2) a Measure AA commitment to provide public access in the Cathedral Oaks area of Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (Preserve).

The Planning & Natural Resources Committee (PNR) reviewed several implementation options for the Beatty Project in April and October, 2025. The Committee recommended forwarding a preferred option for full Board consideration to pursue improvements and a shared use of Santa

Clara County's Miller Point Parking Area and a new trail connection and loop trail to connect the parking area to the Preserve trail system. PNR also recommends contributing funding to support the final design and construction of a portion (subset of Zone 1) of the Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project, located north of the Beatty property, as a pilot project that can inform future newt crossing improvements for the roadway.

BACKGROUND

In 2008, the District purchased the Beatty Trust property as an addition to the Preserve. The County contributed \$950,000 (R-08-14), or 50% of the purchase price. In exchange, the County received a conservation easement over the property that specifies a District commitment to build a trail connection linking Lexington Reservoir County Park with Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve via the Priest Rock Trail within 15 years of the easement recording (March 11, 2008). The County granted a subsequent five-year extension to the District to complete the trail connection by April 18, 2028.

The property is located on the easterly side of Alma Bridge Road and Lexington Reservoir, approximately two miles east of the Alma Bridge Road exit from Highway 17. It is surrounded by Lexington Reservoir County Park to the north, west, south and partially to the east. Lexington Reservoir County Park property is owned by Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water) and operated by Santa Clara County Parks (County Parks). County Parks also operates the Lexington Launch Ramp and parking area, Banjo Point parking area, and Miller Point parking area and picnic grounds located across Alma Bridge Road. Limited roadside parking is also available at the Limekiln Trail and Priest Rock Trail trailheads, though no roadside parking is designated by the County along the Beatty Property. San Jose Water Company land borders a portion of the property on the east (Attachment 1).

The Beatty Trust property is characterized by gently sloping terrain, oak woodlands, and several open level areas / meadows, and can be accessed via District Preserve Gates SA40, 41, and 42, as well as a remnant road cut and gate across from Miller Point. Several existing structures (including the Beatty House) and two wells are present on the site, along with remnant road cuts and relatively level grassland areas (Attachment 2).

Existing biological, historic, and cultural resources are predominately located in the southern portion of the larger property and include two unnamed drainages that flow to Lexington Reservoir, bat roosting habitat associated with the Beatty House structure, and woodrat nests in various locations around the property. There are no known sensitive resources in the larger open level area / meadow to the north of the Beatty House (Attachment 3).

In March 2021, the Board reviewed four alternatives and associated costs for the Beatty House structure (retaining as-is and installing secure fencing; stabilization; rehabilitation, and removal). Of these alternatives the Board elected to retain the structure in its current state and install security fencing around the perimeter of the house, which was completed in 2022.

Within this region, the District has been working collaboratively with partners to form a continuous greenbelt of permanently preserved open space by linking District lands with other public parklands. As part of this work, the District also contributes to regional trail connectivity, including the Bay Area Ridge Trail (Ridge Trail), which is a multiuse trail for hiking, biking and horseback riding. The Beatty Project aims to support regional trail connectivity by providing a

key staging area for visitors accessing the Ridge Trail via the Priest Rock Trail and to connect to other trails within the Preserve and/or head northwest toward the future Highway 17 trail crossing (managed as a separate project) to access trails west of Highway 17.

During the 2012 vision planning process, the public identified the Cathedral Oaks area as a priority for public access, now identified as Vision Plan Priority Action #22. The parking area and trail project is also part of Measure AA Portfolio #22 (Sierra Azul: Cathedral Oaks Public Access and Conservation Projects), which includes: "Develop multi-use trail... Develop parking... Install trailside amenities." The parking area was originally envisioned to include approximately 20 to 30 vehicle spaces, 4 to 6 horse trailer spaces, and a vault toilet.

The District first began working on the conceptual design of the Beatty Parking Area and Trails Connection Project in 2019. However, this project has been deferred numerous times to evaluate public concerns raised regarding newt mortality on the adjacent public roadway known as Alma Bridge Road, which is the accessway necessary to reach the Beatty Property. For a complete chronology of events, please refer to the report section titled *Prior Board and Committee Review*.

Since 2021, the District has taken numerous steps to understand the newt mortality issue along Alma Bridge Road by working with project partners, including the County and Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), to conduct a multi-year newt mortality study. This study found the need for and informed the development of a Feasibility Study and Alternatives Analysis / Basis of Design for roadway improvements to provide safe wildlife crossings along priority crossing zones. This work resulted in a separate wildlife crossing project titled Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project.

In 2024, informed by new findings and recommendations coming from the Alma Bridge Newt Passage Project, the District rescoped the previous conceptual design plans for the Beatty Parking Area. At a PNR Meeting on April 29, 2025, the committee initially recommended a phased approach to the project that would have begun with a seasonal permit-only parking lot on District land. This option included a funding allocation towards the portion of the newt passage improvements on Alma Bridge Road adjacent to the Beatty Property, referred to as Zone 2a (Attachment 4). At the meeting, PNR requested additional information to help confirm or revise this original recommended option. The additional requested information included revisiting the potential for sharing the County's Miller Point Parking Area and reevaluating the funding contribution for the Newt Passage Project improvements to potentially shift the funding to a roadway section within the highest priority zone (Zone 1).

DISCUSSION

In response to PNR requests, staff gathered and presented additional information to the committee on October 21, 2025, as described below:

Shared Use of the Miller Point Parking Area

PNR requested to revisit the potential for District visitors to use the County's Miller Point Parking Area to access the preserve. This adjacent facility is owned by Valley Water, operated by Santa Clara County Parks Department, and located along the Santa Clara County Roads and Airports Department (County Roads) right-of-way. In response, staff developed the following

framework for a potential partnership with the County to share the use and capital improvements of the Miller Point lot:

• Construct New Trail Connection from Miller Point, to be seasonally closed: The District would build a new trail connection from Miller Point to the Priest Rock Trail within Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve, enhancing public access and recreational opportunities for both the District and County Parks visitors. These improvements would fulfill the District's standing commitment to the County for building a trail connection.

A conceptual trail alignment has been identified that creates new opportunities for visitors to experience the various habitats and vistas of the Beatty property on an approximately two-mile-long trail segment before accessing the remainder of the preserve via the Priest Rock Trail (Attachment 5). It also appears feasible to implement an additional connector trail that more directly connects the Beatty Property to the Priest Rock Trail. This connector trail would create a secondary, shorter loop trail experience via the Priest Rock Trail with the addition of a half mile trail segment, providing another way for visitors to experience the Preserve. These trail improvements require an encroachment permit through Valley Water land and utilize an existing easement across San Jose Water Company lands. The new trail connections are anticipated to allow dogs on leash since the surrounding preserve and County Parks allow for this use.

The portion of the main trail alignment on the Beatty property would be seasonally closed during the winter to minimize potential impacts to newts during their annual migration to and from Lexington Reservoir. The District would also implement a new pedestrian crossing and any other warranted safety measures on Alma Bridge Road to connect the trail to Miller Point lot, which would become a County Roads facility since it will be located within the County's right-of-way.

• Shared Use of Miller Point Lot: Once the new trail and roadway crossing area are established, County Parks would allow District preserve visitors to park at Miller Point to access the new trail and preserve. This arrangement would roll over year-over-year and is not anticipated to require any change in the management of Miller Point lot under the County Parks agreement with Valley Water. County Parks would continue collecting fees from all visitors and is open to exploring an in-lieu fee from the District to offset this revenue if desired. However, any such program requires Board of Supervisors approval. Management of the lot by the District could also be considered, however, a seasonal closure of the lot is not supported by County Parks due to the need to maintain the current level of service to park constituents.

Should the Miller Point Parking Area consistently exceed its capacity from the proposed changes, the General Manager can return to the Board to determine whether expanded parking should be considered. At such time, the District can contemplate adding equestrian parking along with the expanded vehicular parking on the Beatty Property. Shared use of the separate Banjo Point Parking Area to the north of the Beatty Property could also be discussed with County Parks as an alternative to additional parking on District land, though this facility predominantly serves a private rowing club and boat house and would require a new trail connection through steep terrain to reach the preserve trail system.

Improve Existing Miller Point Parking Area: In exchange for the use of the Miller Point lot by preserve visitors, the District would implement one-time, targeted parking improvements to facilitate shared use of the lot. These improvements could include onetime repaying and restriping and can consider whether the layout could be improved to maximize parking spaces. Other potential improvements include ADA parking enhancements and the installation of an automatic gate. These improvements would be selected in coordination with the County to be consistent with their agreement with Valley Water and implemented according to County design and construction standards, including the proposed pedestrian crosswalk across Alma Bridge Road. These one-time improvements would be memorialized through a Letter of Agreement signed by the County Parks Director and District's General Manager without triggering an amendment to the County Parks agreement with Valley Water. In addition, the District would consider installing additional trailhead amenities on the Beatty property that can be accessed via the new trail connection, such as a new vault toilet restroom (to offset the need for increased maintenance of the existing portable restroom at Miller Point) and interpretive features to celebrate the cultural and natural resources of the area, including both the Beatty House and California newts.

County Parks, County Roads, and Valley Water have indicated that they are open to this proposal, though the specific improvements to be implemented at Miller Point are still to be determined. The County also stipulated that the capital improvements would need to be implemented at no cost to the County, and that the construction occur in the fewest number of phases possible to minimize impacts.

Reallocate Funding Contribution for Newt Passage Project Improvements

PNR also requested to explore the potential for reallocating the proposed funding contribution for the Newt Passage Project towards the highest priority zone (Zone 1) instead of the roadway portion that fronts the Beatty Property (Zone 2a). In response, staff coordinated with the Newt Passage Project team to develop and evaluate preliminary options for a 'Small Scale First Phase (SSFP)' of the project in Zone 1. Due to complexities associated with the surrounding topography and habitats, and the associated costs, it is not feasible for this SSFP to be a full pilot project/study for the project, but it is still expected to help test the efficacy of the proposed passage structures and incrementally reduce newt mortality until the overall project can be built.

All preliminary options are deemed feasible to implement and include the installation of wildlife fencing and a series of newt passage structures under the roadway (Attachment 6). These improvements would be in the Limekiln Gulch portion of Zone 1 where 'extremely high' newt mortality has been documented. The SSFP requires approximately 1-2 years and approximately \$1.5 million to design and construct, and staff have begun outreach to potential funding partners to supplement the District's contribution to the SSFP.

Revised Recommended Option for Board Consideration

Based upon all the additional information presented at the October 21, 2025 PNR meeting, a revised recommended option was selected by the Committee to forward on to the full Board for consideration. This revised option would implement the Project as follows (Attachment 7):

 Negotiate an agreement with Santa Clara County to determine suitable improvements for and shared use of Santa Clara County's Miller Point Parking Area to serve as the

staging/parking area for the Beatty Area trailhead at Sierra Azul Open Space preserve, including a new roadway crossing. Any improvements would be paid for and implemented by Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

- Pursue a new trail connection and trail loop off the Beatty Property to connect to the larger Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve trail system from across the Miller Point Parking Area.
- Contribute up to \$650,000 in funding towards the final design and construction of a portion (subset of Zone 1 highest priority zone) of the Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project, located north of the Beatty property, to serve as a partial pilot for the newt crossing improvements.
- Direct the General Manager to return to the Board of Directors at a later date if/when parking demand at the Miller Point Parking Area consistently exceeds capacity to determine whether expanded parking should be considered.

This revised option allows the District to move forward with the Beatty Project while also kick-starting a segment of the Newt Passage Project improvements. The Zone 1 improvements can bring in additional critical data and findings to inform the design for the remaining roadway improvements identified in the Newt Passage Project. The District has previously allocated significant investments in time and funding to the Newt Passage Project to better understand the newt mortality issue and has helped to identify potential solutions to protect the local newt population. A funding contribution to complete the Zone 1 roadway improvements aligns with the District's prior actions and with the goal of protecting local native species populations.

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact associated with the revised recommended option for the Beatty Parking Area and Trail Connections is presented in the tables below. The District currently has sufficient funding to complete the Beatty Project and to support initial improvements for the Newt Passage Project along Alma Bridge Road. The remainder of the Newt Passage Project will predominantly need to be funded by grants, private fundraising, and/or County or other partner funding.

The following table summarizes the estimated one-time costs associated with the project:

Ballpark Design & Construction Cost	Funding Source
Miller Point Improvements: 500k* Trail Connection & Amenities: 800k Portion Zone 1 Road Improvements: 650k** Midpen Contribution: 1.95M	Measure AA Capital Measure AA Capital General Fund Capital

^{*}Improvements to be determined. For the purposes of this estimate, it is assumed that improvements will be limited to repaying and restriping and other targeted improvements such as ADA enhancements or an automatic gate.

^{**} The District proposes to contribute up to 650k to this line item. Approximately 0.85M in additional funding will need to be secured through grants, private fundraising, and/or contributions from the County or other project partners to fund the pilot newt crossing improvements.

If the revised option is approved, County Parks will continue collecting fees from all visitors to the Miller Point lot.

The following table outlines that there are sufficient funds in the Measure AA Portfolio 22 Sierra Azul—Cathedral Oaks Public Access and Conservation Projects allocation to cover the cost of the revised option. It also outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 22 allocation, projected life of project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

MAA22 Sierra Azul—Cathedral Oaks Public Access and Conservation Projects Portfolio Allocation:		
Portfolio Allocation:	\$6,714,000	
Grant Income (through FY29):	\$517,701	
Total Portfolio Allocation:	\$7,231,701	
Projected Expenditures (Life of Project):		
22-001 Hendrys Creek Property Land Restoration	(\$513,343)	
22-003 Freudenburg Land Purchase	(\$540,587)	
22-004 Beatty Parking Area and Trail Connections*	(\$2,196,380)**	
22-005 Beatty House Site Security Improvements	(\$48,621)	
22-006 San Jose Water Lands	(\$720,178)	
Total Projected Expenditures:	(\$4,019,109)	
Proposed Portfolio Amount Remaining:	\$3,212,592	

^{*}Revised project estimates include MAA eligible work and previous year's actuals. Differs from adopted FY26-FY28 Capital Improvement and Action Plan projections.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

8/28/2019	Board Meeting: Board awarded a multi-year contract with LSA Associates, Inc., for environmental review services. Agenda Packet: 20190828 - Agenda Packet - Board of Directors (BOD) Meeting Minutes: 20190828 - Minutes - Board of Directors (BOD)	
1/14/2020	Meeting #1: PNR visited the property to familiarize themselves with the site, its tunities and constraints, and Project scope. PNR provided early feedback on am elements, such as the preferred access driveways, where to place parking, and nany equestrian trailer parking spaces to minimally provide, and asked staff to re the possibility of partnering with County Parks on the use of their Miller Point ng lot. PNR also requested information regarding ongoing newt mortality on Alma e Road based on concerns received from the Audubon Society. da Packet: 20200114 - Agenda Packet - Planning and Natural Resources (PNR)	
	Meeting Minutes: 20200114 - Minutes - Planning and Natural Resources (PNR)	

^{**} Includes 1.3M from Table 1 that is MAA eligible, as well as past actual eligible expenditures plus a contingency.

	
8/4/2020	PNR Meeting #2: PNR reviewed a reduced Project program/scope that scaled down the project to a small, 7 to 8-space seasonal permit lot. The permit lot and connecting trail would be closed during the rainy season when newts are known to seasonally migrate to and from Lexington Reservoir to breed. PNR recommended deferral of project to allow time for analysis of the newt population.
	Agenda Packet: 20200804 - Agenda Packet - Planning and Natural Resources (PNR) Meeting Minutes: 20200804 - Minutes - Planning and Natural Resources (PNR)
9/23/2020	FYI Memo to Board: Summarized the outcomes of the August 4, 2020 PNR meeting. PNR advised the General Manager to defer the Project until the District and stakeholders complete a population and mortality study (newt study) for the California newts (<i>Taricha torosa</i>) and rough-skinned newts (<i>Taricha granulosa</i> a) (R-20-104). In response to the memorandum, the Board requested to bring this item forward for full Board consideration.
	Agenda Packet: 20200923 - Agenda Packet - Board of Directors (BOD) Meeting Minutes: 20200923 - Minutes - Board of Directors (BOD)
1/13/2021	Board Meeting : The Board received a presentation on the Beatty Parking Area and Trail Connections Project Options and voted to defer the Project until completion of a newt study to incorporate its findings.
	Upon deferral of the project, District staff worked with the County to extend the agreement that required the District to construct the trail connection from the property to the Priest Rock Trail. This amended agreement now obligates the District to complete the trail connection by April 18, 2028. 5-2-0
	Agenda Packet: 20210113 - Agenda Packet - Board of Directors (BOD) Meeting Minutes: 20210113 - Minutes - Board of Directors (BOD)
4/29/2025	PNR Meeting #3: Informed by new findings and recommendations from the Newt Passage Project, PNR reviewed several updated options for the Beatty Parking Area project, including a phased approach that would begin with a seasonal permit lot and funding to complete a portion of the adjacent Newt Passage Project that fronts the property. PNR forwarded this option to the Board and directed staff to return with additional information regarding the potential for shared use of the Miller Point Parking Area with County Parks and alternate locations for the initial newt passage improvements.
	Agenda Packet: 20250429 - Agenda Packet - Planning and Natural Resources (PNR) Meeting Minutes: 20250429 - Minutes - Planning and Natural Resources (PNR)
10/21/2025	PNR Meeting #4: Informed by the additional requested information regarding the Miller Point Parking Area and alternate locations for the initial newt passage improvements, PNR reviewed and selected a revised recommended option for the Beatty Parking Area project to forward to the full Board of Directors for approval. This revised

option includes a phased approach that would begin with the trail connection and improvements to the Miller Point Parking Area and a funding contribution to complete a portion of the adjacent Newt Passage Project in the highest priority zone of the roadway improvements.

Agenda Packet: <u>20251021 - Agenda Packet - Planning and Natural Resources (PNR)</u>
Meeting Minutes: <u>20251021 - Minutes - Planning and Natural Resources (PNR)</u>

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. In addition, Sierra Azul interested parties, agency partners, trail and environmental groups, and neighboring private properties along Alma Bridge Road were notified of the public meeting.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

CEQA review for the Beatty Project will be performed after Board acceptance of the recommended option that will provide the basis of the CEQA project description and subsequent completion of schematic site designs and related technical studies. Pursuant to Section 21080.56 of the California Public Resources Code, improvements associated with the Alma Bridge Road Newt Project are a separate project evaluated under CEQA and are covered under a Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects (SERP). The SERP has been approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and will allow expedited implementation of the improvements to Alma Bridge Road.

NEXT STEPS

If the revised option is accepted by the Board, staff will proceed with updating the technical studies for the project, which will inform the upcoming design development and environmental review process. Due to the amount of time that has passed since the project was initiated and changes to the geographic extent of the parking area and trail alignment, it is anticipated that several original technical studies for the project will need to be updated (botanical survey, Aquatic Resources Delineation, Tree Survey, and Biological Resources Assessment, Phase II Environmental Assessment (ESA) and Transportation Analysis).

The table below provides a tentative project schedule and key milestones for the project:

Milestones	Tentative Schedule*
Technical Studies & Design Development	Q3 FY26 – Q2 FY27
Environmental Review & Board Approval	Q2 FY27 – Q1 FY28
Final Design, Permitting, Bidding & Construction	Q4 FY27 – Q2 FY29

^{*}Staff will continue to refine the project schedule and attempt to initiate construction by April 2028, the current timeline established with the County to build the trail connection to the Priest Rock Trail.

Attachments

- 1. Beatty Property Site Map
- 2. Beatty Property Setting & Topography
- 3. Beatty Property Existing Resources
- 4. Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project Priority Zones

- 5. Beatty Property Conceptual Trail Alignments
- 6. Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project, Small Scale First Phase Diagram
- 7. Beatty Property Conceptual Diagram, Revised Option

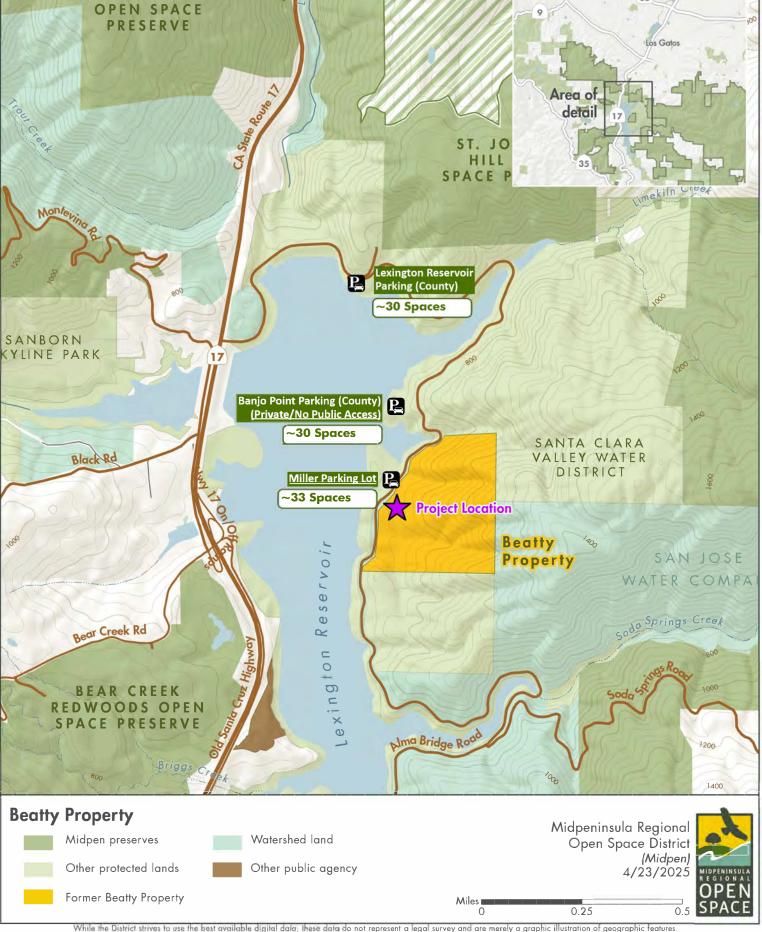
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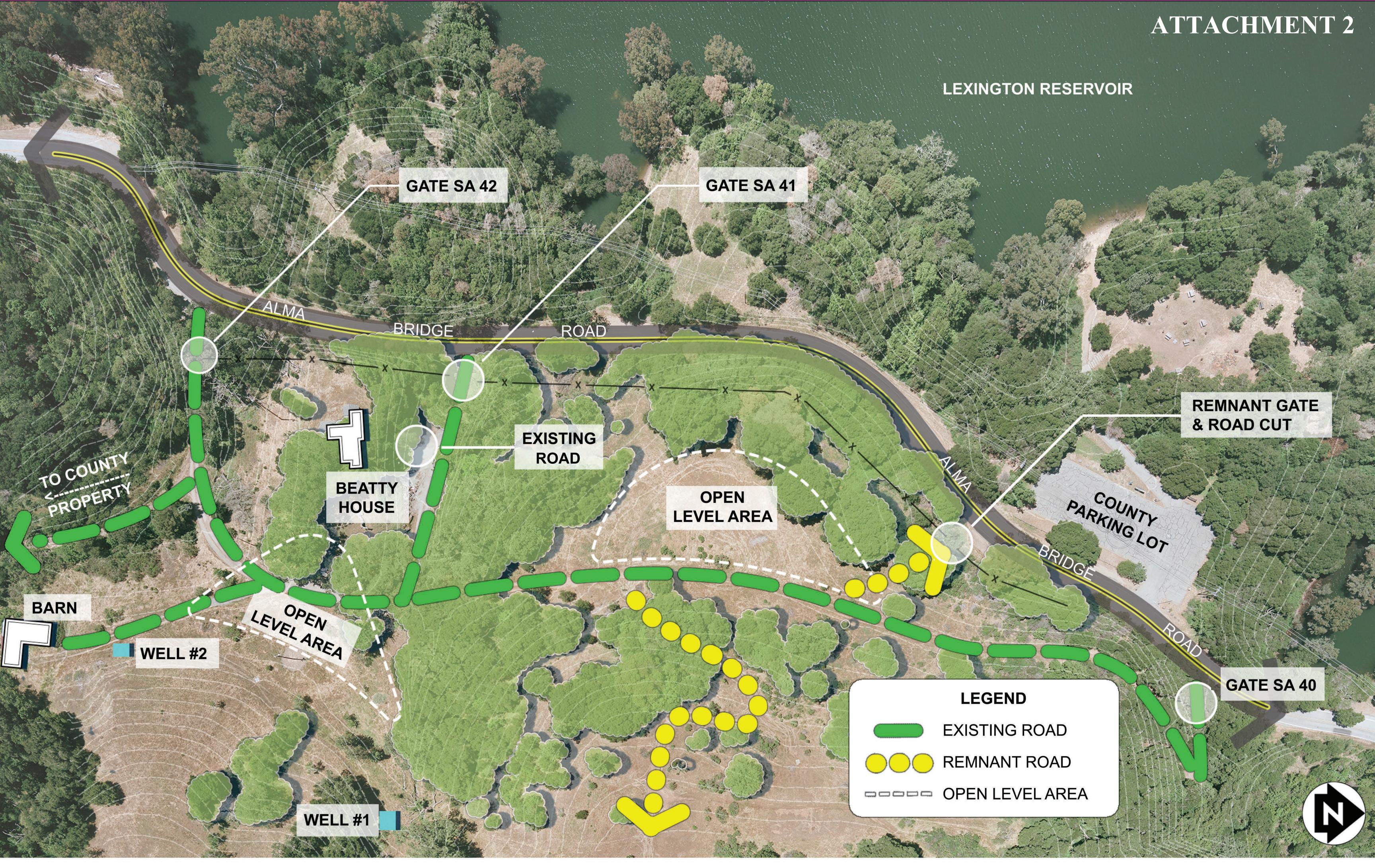
Scott Reeves, Engineering & Construction Department Manager

Prepared by / Staff Contact:

Mark Brandi, Senior Capital Project Manager, Engineering & Construction

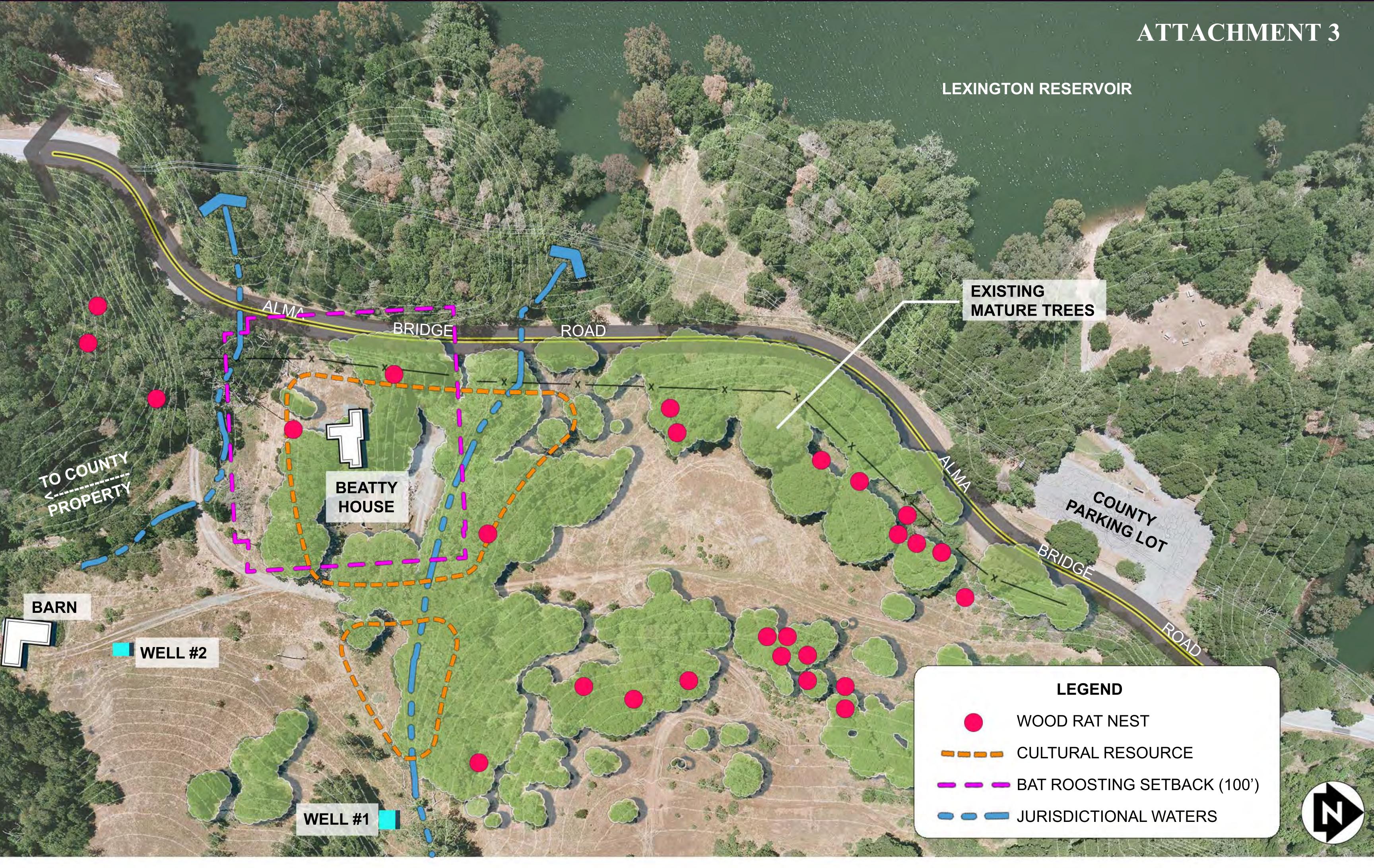
ATTACHMENT 1 Campbell Saratoga EL SERENO 85 OPEN SPACE PRESERVE Los Gatos Area of detail HILL SPACE mekiln Cleek **Lexington Reservoir** Parking (County) 30 Spaces SANBORN KYLINE PARK 17 Banjo Point Parking (County) (Private/No Public Access) Path: G:\Projects\Sierra_Azul\Beatty\TrailEasement\Beatty\Beatty P -30 Spaces SANTA CLARA VALLEY WATER Black Rd DISTRICT Miller Parking Lot 33 Spaces Project Location Beatty servoir SAN JOSE **Property** WATER COMPA Φ Bear Creek Rd B exington BEAR CREEK REDWOODS OPEN SPACE PRESERVE Alma Bridge Road Created By; flopez 1200 000 1400 **Beatty Property** Midpeninsula Regional Midpen preserves Watershed land Open Space District (Midpen)





BEATTY PARKING AREA

SETTING + TOPOGRAPHY

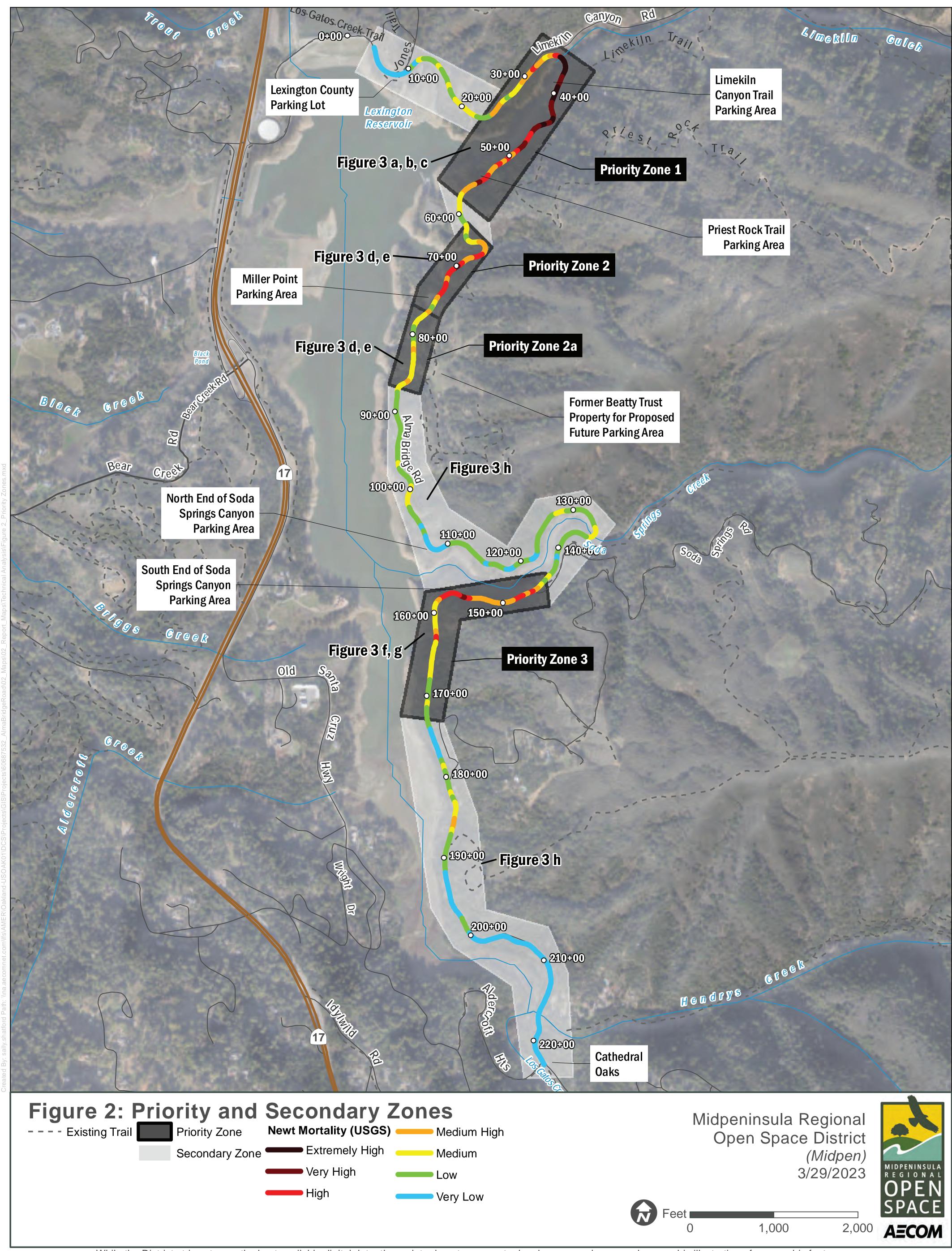


BEATTY PARKING AREA

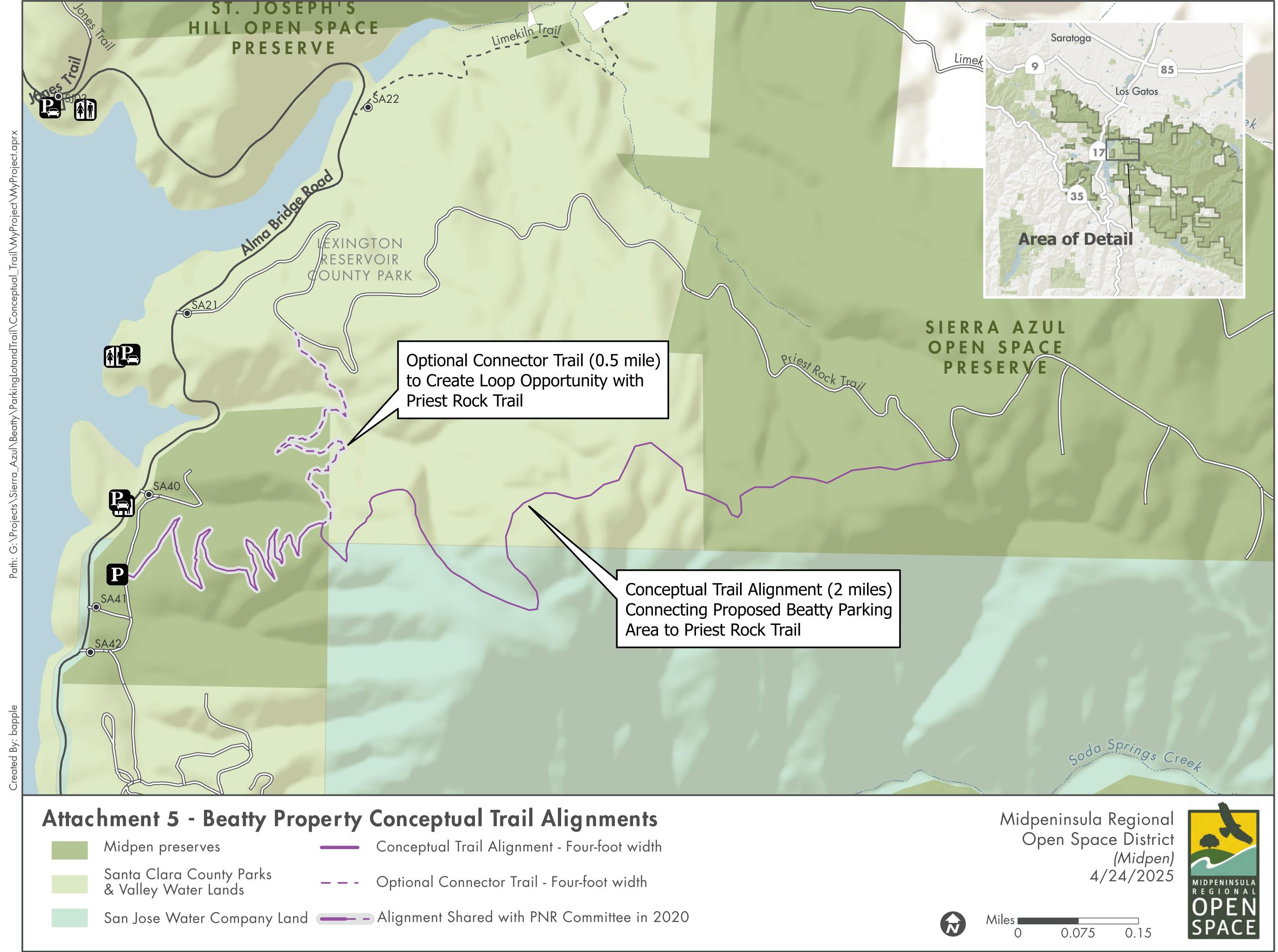
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

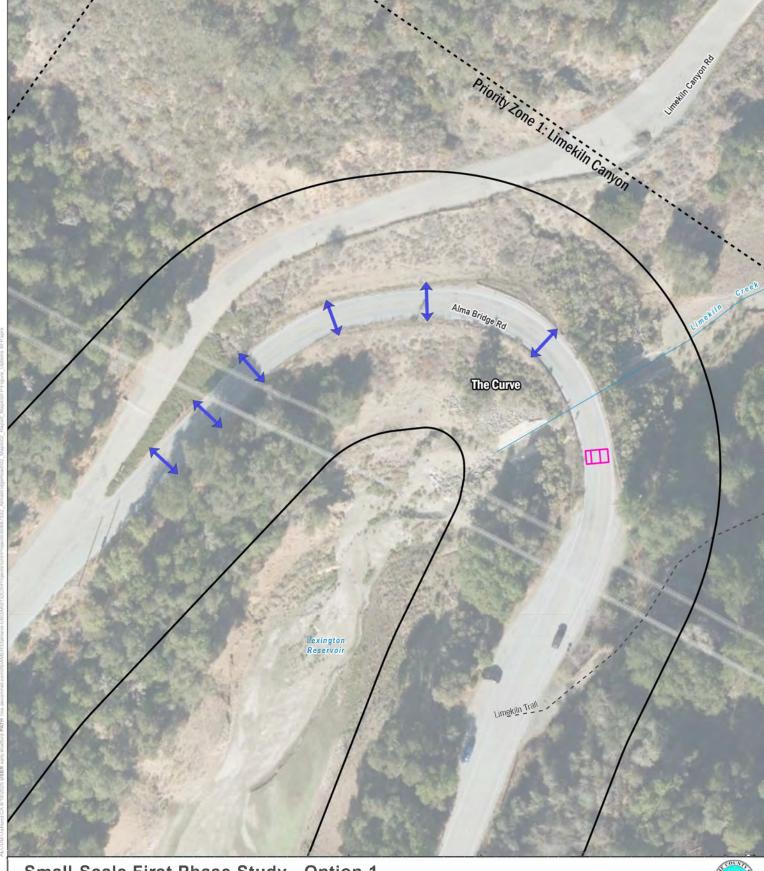
ATTACHMENT 4

Note: This attachment has been extracted from the *Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project Feasibility Analysis* report (AECOM, 2023). The figure numbers referenced below do not apply to this Committee/Board Report.



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.





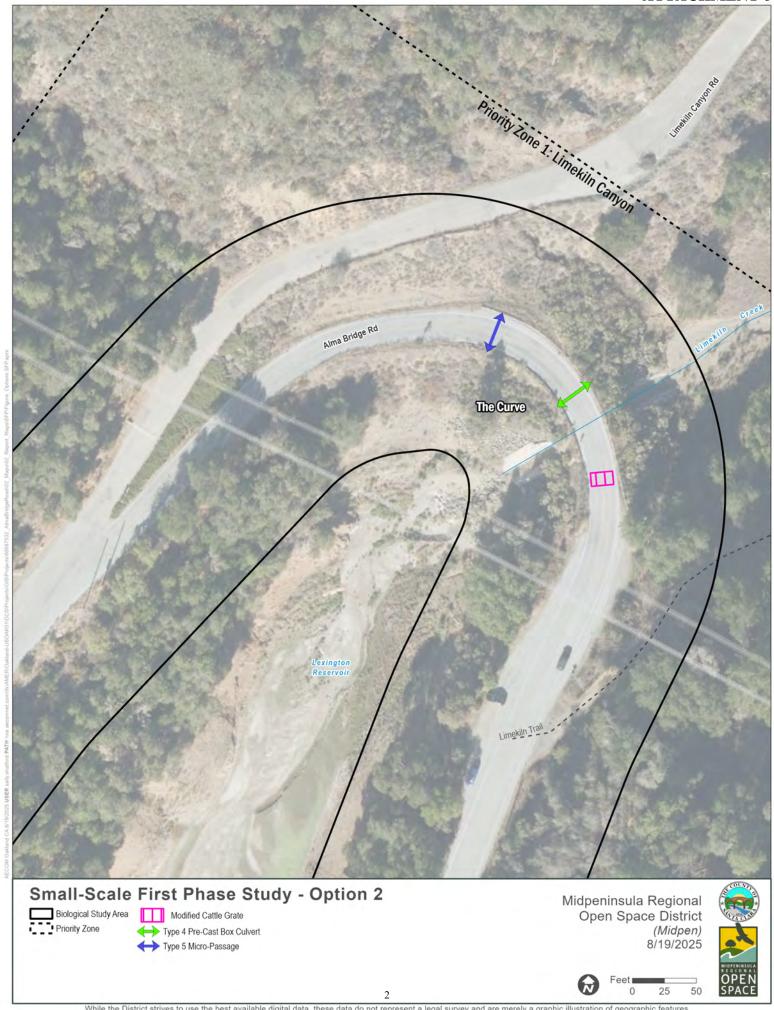
Small-Scale First Phase Study - Option 1

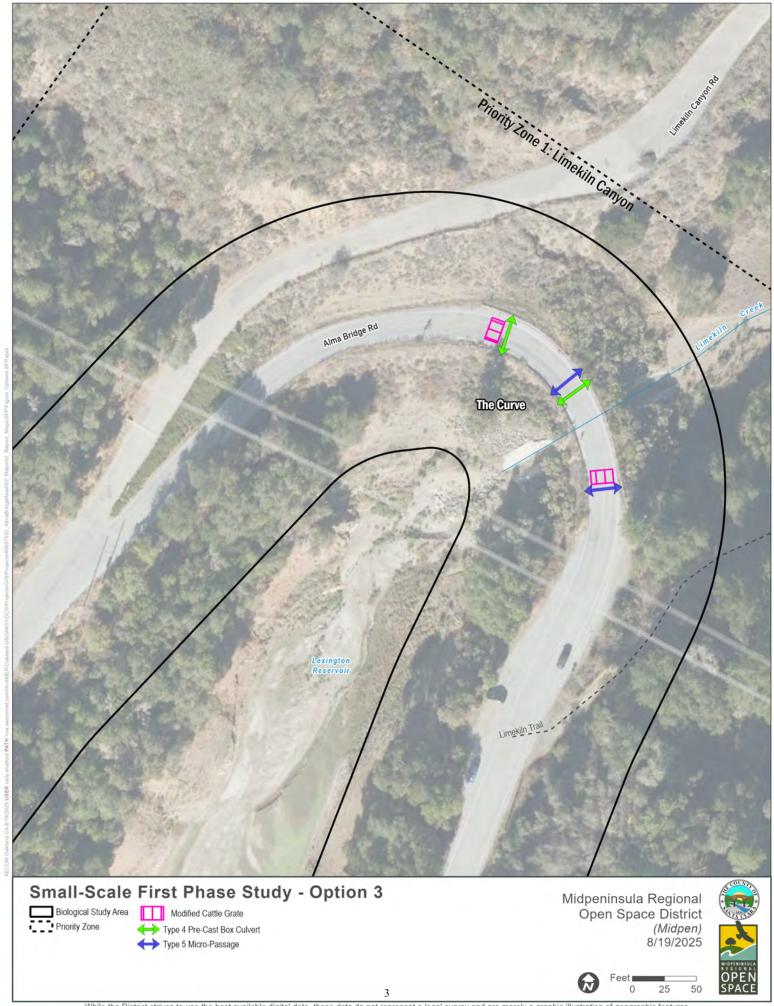




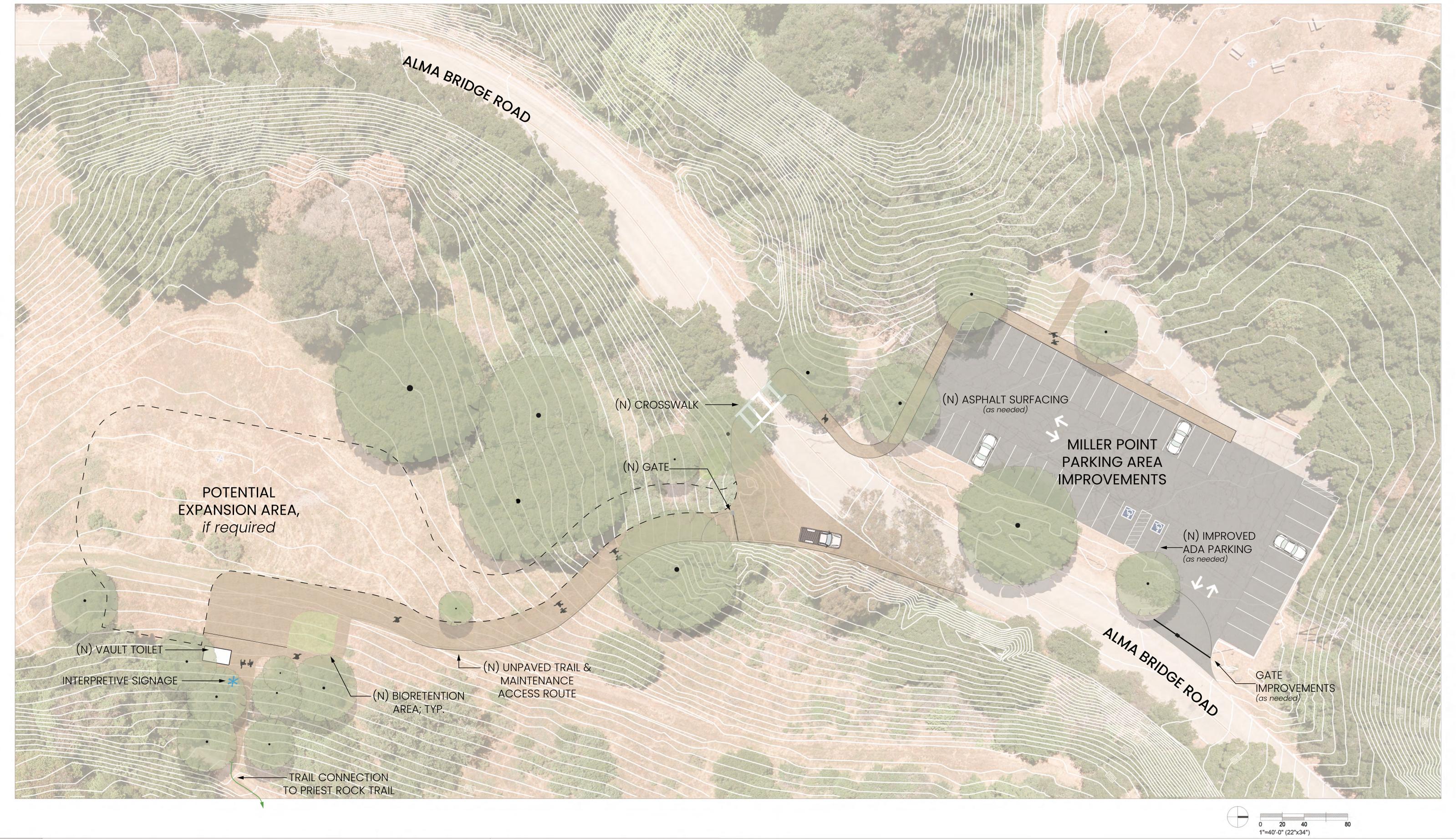








ATTACHMENT 7





MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

SCALE:1"=40'-0" DATE: 12/02/2025