

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION**  
**MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**  
**MOUNT UMUNHUM PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS PLAN**  
**SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

**Introduction**

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) is issuing this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to announce that the District is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Mount Umunhum Environmental Restoration and Public Access Project. The District is currently in the process of gathering public input regarding the scope of the EIR. A public scoping meeting was held on December 9, 2010. Invitations to the scoping meeting were sent to all recipients of this NOP.

The purpose of an NOP is to solicit your input on issues and alternatives that should be addressed in the EIR. The District appreciates scoping input from public agencies and individuals in response to this NOP and to the prior scoping meeting. The project location and information, as well as the District contact name and address are provided below.

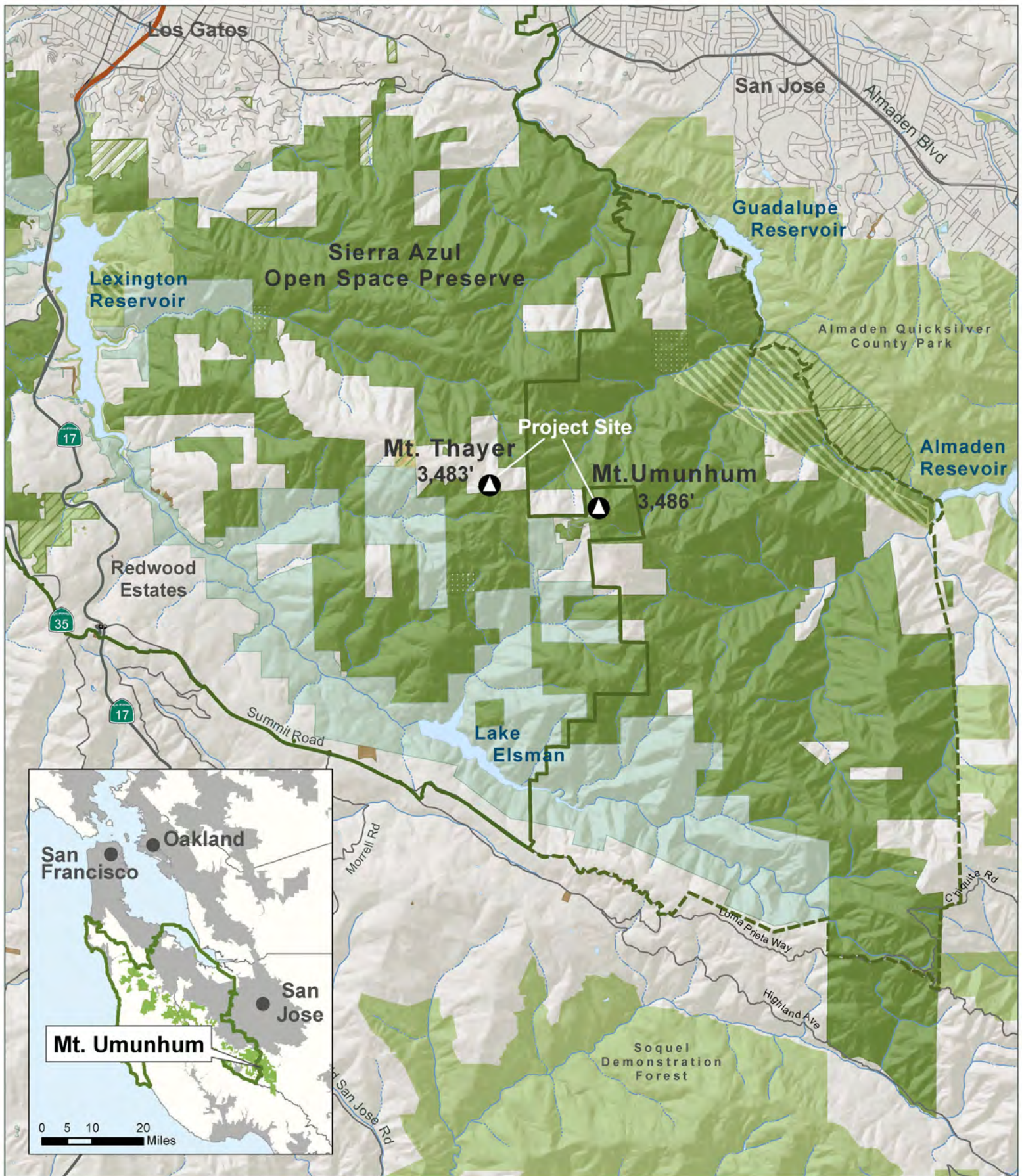
**General Information**

**Project Title:** Mount Umunhum Environmental Restoration and Public Access Project









**Lead Agency:** Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District  
330 Distel Circle  
Los Altos, CA 94022  
Contact: Meredith Manning, Senior Planner  
(650) 691-1200

**Project Location:** The project site is located within the Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve on the summits of Mount Umunhum and Mount Thayer, in the southern Santa Cruz Mountains, about 13 miles south of San Jose and three miles southeast of Los Gatos (see Exhibit 1, Site Map). The project site, originally owned and operated by the federal government as the Almaden Air Force Station (AFS) is part of the District's 18,000-acre Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve. The project site, which is owned by the District, is accessed by Mt. Umunhum Road, portions of which are under private ownership. The last two miles of the road are currently closed to the public and would require an access easement to permit public access to the site. Although the entire former AFS consists of 43.72 acres, the project site is limited to approximately 22.8 acres (refer to Exhibit 2, Project Area). The project site is located on the following Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 562-08-003, -004, and 562-09-050.

**CEQA Requirement:** This NOP is intended to satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), (Public Resources code, Division 13, Section 21000–21177), and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000–15387).



### Exhibit 1: Regional Map

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|  MROSD                                    |  Watershed Land                        |  MROSD Boundary            |
|  Other Protected Open Space or Park Lands |  Conservation or Agricultural Easement |  MROSD Sphere of Influence |
|  Nonprofit Land                           |  Other Public Agency                   |   |

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

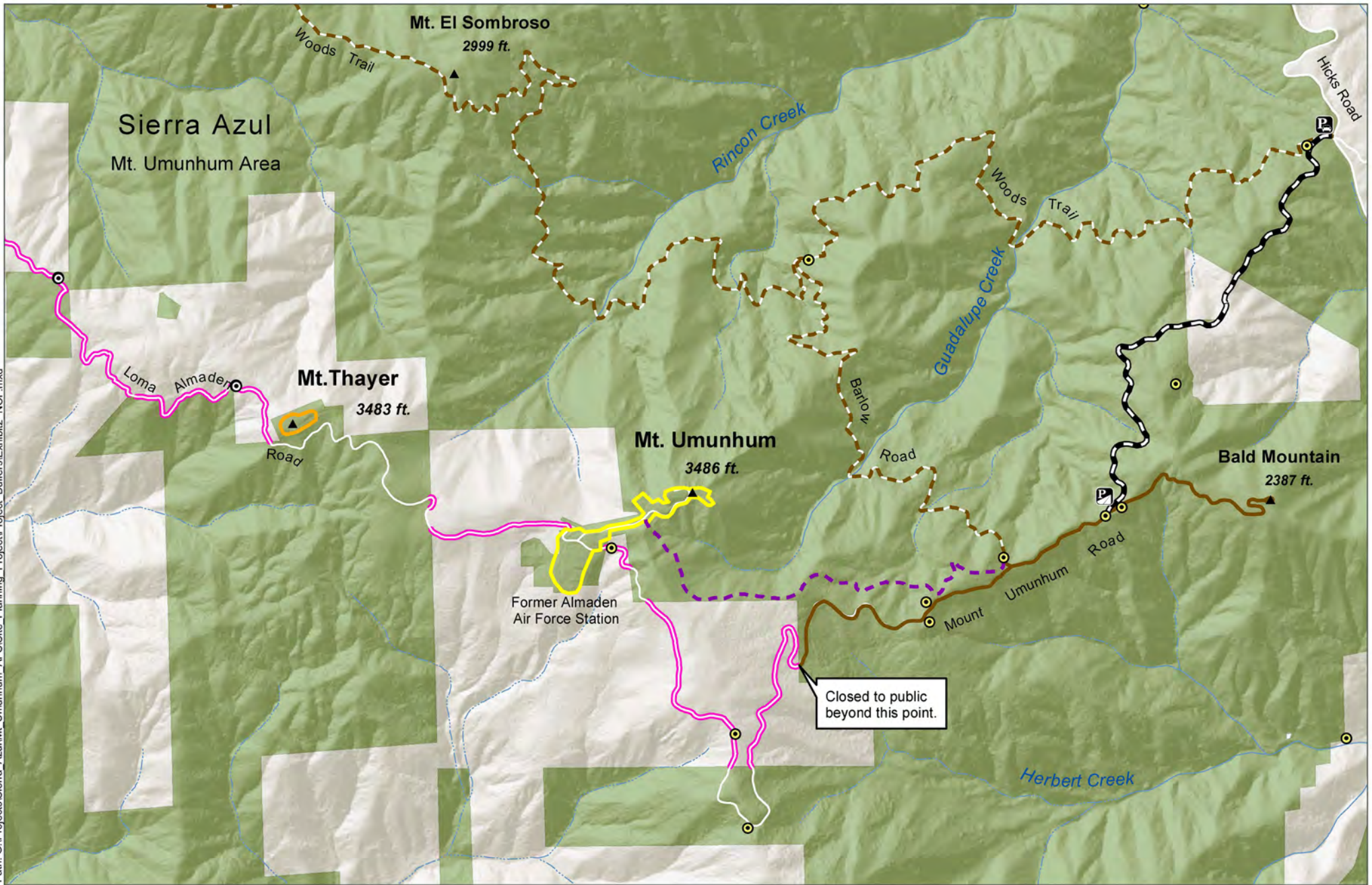
December 2010



0 0.5 1  
Miles



Path: G:\Projects\Sierra Azul\Mt. Umunhum\_AFS\Site Planning Project\Project\_Buffers\Exhibit2\_NOP.mxd



### Exhibit 2: Project Area

- Project Area**
- Mt. Thayer (2.86 acres)
  - Mt. Umunhum (19.89 acres)
  - Proposed Trail Connection

- Land Ownership**
- MROSD
  - Private Land: Public Access Easement Required

- Current Public Access**
- Gate
  - Private Property Gate
  - Hiking, Bicycling, Equestrian
  - Hiking, Bicycling, Vehicle Access
  - Hiking, Bicycling
  - Private Road

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

December 2010

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles



## **Potential Permits and Approvals Required:**

- ▲ MROSD Board of Directors: overall project approval
- ▲ Regional Water Quality Control Board: general construction permit
- ▲ Santa Clara County: demolition, grading, and building permits
- ▲ Bay Area Air Quality Management District: register all portable equipment permits with BAAQMD; notify BAAQMD of all demolition activities 10 days prior to occurrence of activity.

## **Project Background**

Mount Umunhum and the mountainous terrain that surrounds it have a long history of human use. Although early-history references to the specific site have not been found, it is well documented that the Mount Umunhum area figured strongly in the lives of the indigenous peoples who resided in the region. Mount Umunhum has most likely been part of the world view of many generations of ancestral Native Americans, as reflected in the name of the mountain: the word *Ummun* in the Ohlone dialect translates to "hummingbird," a creature that figured in their creation story that took place on a mountain top. Historic settlements in the Austrian Gulch area, just west of Mount Umunhum, are also well documented.

In the late 1950s, the United States government procured Mount Umunhum to build the Almaden AFS, a US Air Force early warning radar base that operated from 1958 to 1980. The base was constructed as part of the North American Aerospace Defense Command to keep watch over northern California's airspace during the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War, and as a result of advancements in satellite technology, this and other radar base sites became obsolete. The official "inactivation" date of the facility was June 30, 1980. In June 1982, control of the property and improvements was transferred to the General Services Administration (GSA). The District purchased the 44-acre base in April 1986 from the GSA for then fair market value of \$260,000.

The District acquired the former Almaden AFS and all remaining facilities at the site with the ultimate intent to restore the area to a natural condition and provide public access. While a portion of hazardous materials was cleaned up by the federal government, other materials, particularly lead-based paint and asbestos containing material used on buildings, fell outside the original federal cleanup program in which it was placed. The District has recently been working with community, state, and federal leaders to obtain federal funding to complete the cleanup, and federal funds were committed this past year (2010) toward clean up of remaining hazardous materials. The District approved the structure abatement project in August 2010, which is scheduled to be complete by summer 2011.

## **Site Description**

The project site consists of a complex of former military buildings and associated facilities (including driveways, parking lots, storage buildings, as well as other base structures and technical facilities). Among these is a large, five-story high, massive concrete structure, formerly used as a podium supporting an 85-ton radar dish. The dish was removed before the District purchased the property. The buildings have been abandoned for 30 years, and due to the passage of time, vandalism, and extreme weather conditions, the structures are severely dilapidated. Ornamental landscaping species have become established and the main access road, interior roads, parking lots and infrastructure have deteriorated. The main site access road, Mt. Umunhum Road, begins at Hicks Road and continues for approximately five miles to the entrance of the former Almaden AFS near the summit. The road is held in various ownerships and its physical condition varies. Obtaining public easement rights or ownership of the road is needed to allow full public access, including the ability to drive, to the summit. Potential new trail connections could link existing Preserve trails to the summit and are part of the proposed plan for public access.

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## Description of Proposed Project

### Project Elements

The facilities, trails, and access features proposed for Mount Umunhum were designed to promote memorable, meaningful experiences for people of all abilities and, where possible, provide ADA accessibility. Proposed site elements, shown in Exhibit 3, will accommodate hikers, equestrians, bicyclists, hang gliders, and vehicles at or near the summit. The District is considering potential off-site landing locations for hang gliders. Paved roads, unpaved trails, and viewpoints would provide diverse destination points for social interactions and quiet solitude. Interpretation of recent and historic cultural activity and ecology would be emphasized via self-guided interpretive trails, signs, and/or cellular phone audio tours. Special permitted activities (such as geocaching, and night activities such as astronomy) and docent-led tours would be offered similar to those at other Open Space Preserves, and would be phased in as funding allows.

Note that while the full range of the opportunities for public enjoyment at Mount Umunhum are described, individual components may be phased in as funding, property ownership and other constraints allow. Also, the project is expected to be further refined based on the findings of the environmental review and as new data is collected, and yet remain within the range of opportunities described in this document.

The proposed project would restore the elevational summit of Mount Umunhum as close as practical to original, pre-construction topography and improve the habitat with native plants. Seating would be included among this habitat restoration and would be oriented to views. A ceremonial space marked with the four cardinal directions would provide a peaceful place for contemplation. Adjacent to the peak, a summit court is expected to provide paved passenger and emergency vehicle turnaround, ADA-accessible parking and seating. A short, ADA-accessible interpretive trail and second viewpoint/ceremonial space would emphasize views, as well as the site's natural, Native American, and military cultural history. A trail network would guide visitors around the site separately from vehicles and connect to regional trails. A stairway would connect the upper parking area to the restored summit.

Potential minimal amenities includes two paved-surface and one gravel-surfaced overflow parking areas, benches, picnic tables, vault toilets, a dedicated 911 callbox, hitching posts, bicycle storage, and non-potable water, for horses and fire protection, contained in an onsite large-capacity water tank. Additional amenities such as wind and shade protection, easy-access rustic campsites with non-potable water, a visitor center, and increased trail connections, towards the Lexington Basin, and connection to the existing Woods Trail (part of the Bay Area Ridge Trail) may be phased in over time as funding, property ownership and other constraints allow. An access and loop trail at Mount Thayer may be added if a public access easement on intervening private land is acquired, and would be designed to minimize impacts on neighboring landowners. Finally, the feasibility of shuttle service to the summit will be evaluated, including a potential expanded staging area in the vicinity of Jacques Ridge.

Three options are currently being considered for the former radar tower near the summit of Mount Umunhum: 1) the concrete structure would (once structurally repaired and sealed to prevent public access inside) remain in its current configuration on the project site; 2) the tower structure would be mostly removed, leaving the foundation of the former tower as a monument (walls would be neatly saw cut); or 3) the tower structure would be removed entirely, leaving only the subsurface foundation, and the original elevations would be restored and habitat improved with native plants. The DEIR will analyze all three of these options at an equal level of analysis.

# MOUNT UMUNHUM ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS PLAN

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Concept Plan

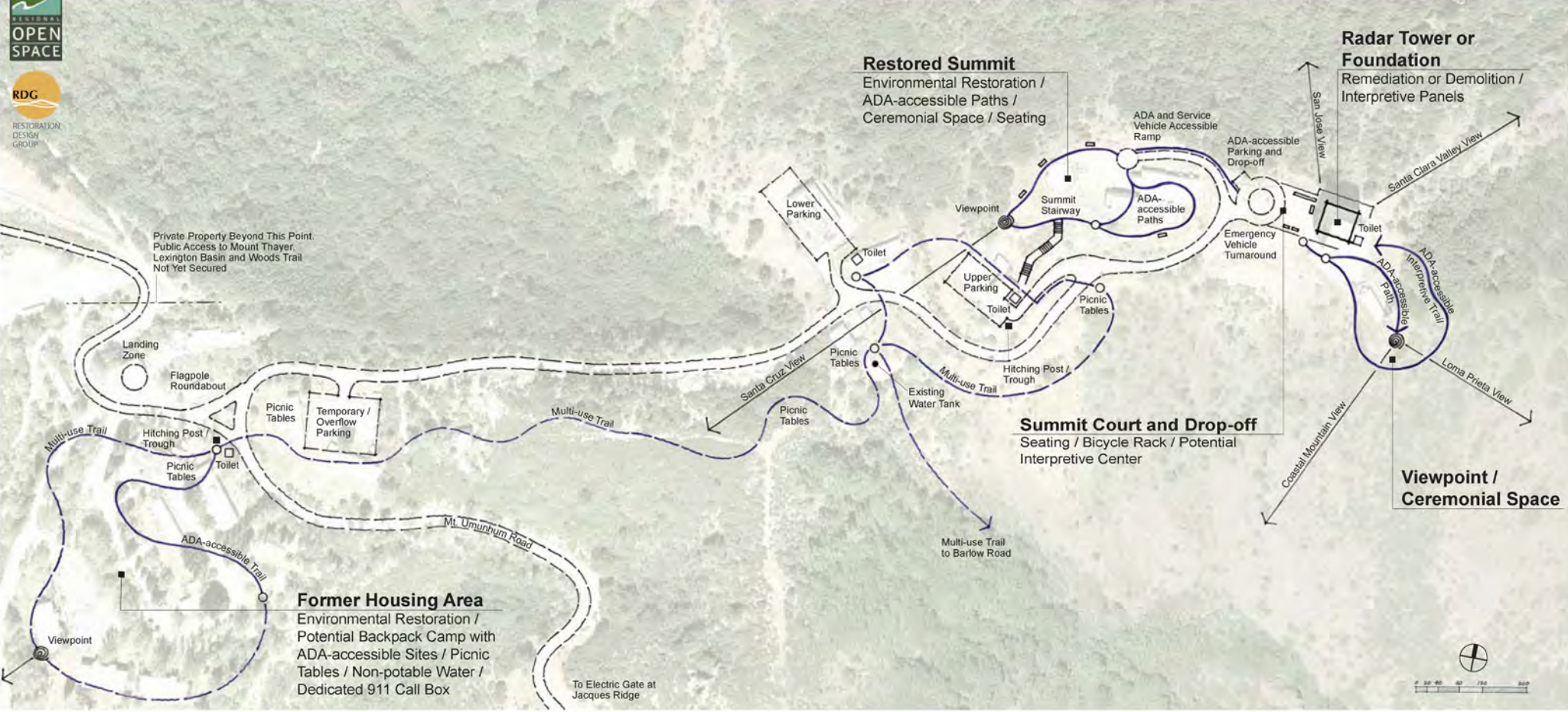


Exhibit 3: Concept Plan

The five miles of Mt. Umunhum Road that provide access to the site from Hicks Road require minor repairs and safety upgrades including resurfacing, replacement of existing guard rails, and cleaning of drainage features. Once repaired, Mt. Umunhum Road would provide paved, two-lane vehicular access from the intersection of Hicks Road at the Jacques Ridge parking lot. An electric gate would be installed at Jacques Ridge and an “iron ranger” fee collection system may be located either at this gate or at the summit parking area. Off-site environmental impacts associated with the roadway repairs and safety upgrades will be evaluated in the DEIR.

## **Public Access Phasing**

Public access to Mount Umunhum may be phased in conjunction with individual site elements. This phasing scheme was developed in response to stakeholder, staff, and general public input, and refined by the District’s Ad Hoc Committee, and provides access to the summit as quickly as possible while simultaneously allowing deliberative planning and sustainable site development.

Special docent-led shuttle tours may bring participants to the summit in passenger vehicles following remediation of hazardous materials; hiking, biking, equestrian use, hang gliding and permit parking may begin following safety upgrades to Mt. Umunhum Road, the main access to the summit; full vehicle access may begin following resurfacing of Mt. Umunhum Road.

## **Staffing**

The plan will allow phasing of design elements as funding and staffing allows and will likely require additional staff to carry out the design elements as described. One additional administrative staff is estimated to be necessary to perform increased workload to manage docents, permitting, and volunteer activities, and two additional ranger and one maintenance field staff are estimated to be necessary to add patrol and maintenance needs for this site to the existing requirements of the surrounding preserve.

## **Construction**

Project construction will be implemented in several phases. Phase I, anticipated to begin in Fall 2011, includes above- and below-ground structural demolition on Mount Thayer and the summit area of Mount Umunhum, and aboveground demolition of all structures in the former housing area of Mount Umunhum. Demolition is anticipated to take approximately 6-12 months to complete with a maximum on site presence of a 50-worker demolition crew. Safety and structural upgrades to the radar tower, if it remains, would also take place during Phase I. These upgrades would involve a 10-worker crew for up to three months.

Phase II of the Project, with an anticipated start date of Fall 2013 (if adequate funding is secured), includes landform and habitat restoration and construction of minimal visitor amenities on the Mount Umunhum summit area, construction of a connector trail to the existing trail network, as well as safety upgrades to and resurfacing of Mt. Umunhum Road. Restoration and construction on the summit area is anticipated to span two to three years and will involve heavy earth-moving equipment and ground disturbance throughout the project area footprint, all of which is currently developed or severely disturbed. It is anticipated that this work would be completed by small crew of District staff, as well as volunteers. Construction of the 1.2-mile long, five-foot wide connector trail segment would occur entirely within undisturbed chaparral and would involve a small crew of District staff for up to three months. Finally, off-site safety upgrades and resurfacing Mt. Umunhum Road would likely involve a small crew for up to three months.

Phase III of the Project may start in 2017 if adequate funding is secured and involves construction of two paved parking lots, installation of a multi-use trail, and below-ground demolition and restoration of the former housing area.

## Goals and Objectives

The goal of the project is to establish a fiscally sustainable visitor destination that aligns with the District’s mission by balancing public access, enjoyment, and education with environmental restoration. This goal will be achieved through the following objectives:

- Create a destination that is accessible to and accommodates a broad range of user groups and introduces new visitors to open space.
- Remove or permanently cap physical hazards and restore the native landscape and habitat for wildlife as much as possible.
- Provide minimal visitor amenities that complement and highlight the world-class views and open space experience.
- Provide ample, rich, and diverse trail experiences for hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians.
- Highlight the rich natural and cultural history of the site through self-discovery and focused interpretive and educational opportunities.

## Potential Environmental Effects

The EIR will evaluate the potential direct and cumulative environmental impacts associated with construction and implementation of the proposed Mount Umunhum Environmental Restoration and Public Access Plan. The DEIR will evaluate specific environmental issues among this list of potential environmental issues:

- |  |                                  |                              |
|--|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ▲ Geology and Soils                      | ▲ Hydrology and Water Quality    | ▲ Traffic and Transportation |
| ▲ Hazards and Hazardous Materials        | ▲ Visual Resources               | ▲ Air Quality                |
| ▲ Agricultural and Mineral Resources     | ▲ Land Use                       | ▲ Climate Change and Energy  |
| ▲ Cultural and Paleontological Resources | ▲ Population and Housing         | ▲ Noise                      |
| ▲ Biological Resources                   | ▲ Public Services and Recreation | ▲ Growth Inducement          |
|  | ▲ Utilities                      | ▲ Cumulative Impacts         |

## Alternatives to be Evaluated in the EIR

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will describe a reasonable range of alternatives to both of the proposed projects that are capable of meeting most of the projects’ objectives, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the projects. The EIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the lead agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. The EIR will also provide an analysis of the No Project Alternative.

## Opportunity for Public Comment

Interested individuals, groups, and agencies may provide the District with written comments on topics to be addressed in the EIR for the project. Because of time limits mandated by state law, comments should be provided no later than 5:00 p.m. on **January 12, 2011**.



Agencies that will need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed project should provide the District with the name of a staff contact person. Please send all comments to:

Meredith Manning, Senior Planner  
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District  
330 Distel Circle  
Los Altos, CA 94022  
(650) 691-1200  
Email: [mt.um@openspace.org](mailto:mt.um@openspace.org)