

Hawthorns Area Public Access Working Group
Frequently Asked Questions
Hawthorns Area Plan

Updated October 2023

#	Question	Answer
1.	What kinds of amenities will be considered at the Hawthorns Area?	Future amenities to be provided at the Hawthorns Area will be considered in the next phase of the planning process, anticipated to begin in 2023. At minimum, Midpen will consider a public parking area, trailhead, and a trail system. Other potential site amenities include a vault restroom, signage, benches, and similar elements found at Midpen open space preserves.
2.	Have there been discussions about uses at the Hawthorns Area?	Future recreational uses at the Hawthorns Area will be considered in Phase 3 of the planning process as part of the Public Access Working Group’s efforts. The Working Group started in July 2023.
3.	Would public restrooms be allowed? Would they be connected to the sewer?	A public restroom would be considered at the Hawthorns Area. The Conservation Easement specifies “pit toilets” as an allowable component of the future parking area, aligning with the amenities Midpen provides at other open space preserves. The Conservation Easement restricts construction of new connections or extensions to the municipal sewer system.
4.	What are the limitations of the conservation easement?	Refer to Table 1 for a summary of allowed and prohibited uses at the Hawthorns Area as dictated by the Conservation Easement.
5.	Will the preserve be closed at night?	Once open to the public, the Hawthorns Area will be accessible during the same hours of operation as Windy Hill Open Space Preserve, which is open one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.
6.	What is the history of the Hawthorns Historic Complex?	In 2013, Midpen prepared a Historic Assessment describing the history of the Hawthorns Area, which is publicly available on Midpen’s webpage .

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7.	Would public access be allowed at the Hawthorns Historic Complex? How would public access be restricted to the Hawthorns Historic Complex if buildings are unsafe for visitors?	Public access to the Hawthorns Historic Complex will be dependent on the evaluation and disposition of the structures and long-term plans for the historic complex. Midpen is conducting a separate Hawthorns Historic Complex Structural Assessment Project to identify a range of feasible options for stabilization, repair, reuse and/or removal of these structures as well as cost estimates that would be presented to Midpen’s Board of Directors for review. Future plans regarding the availability or restriction of public access within the Historic Complex will be informed by the Structural Assessment process.
8.	Why is the Hawthorns Historic Complex project separate from the Hawthorns Area Plan?	Midpen is preparing the Hawthorns Area Plan and concurrently conducting the Hawthorns Historic Complex Structural Assessment Project as two distinct projects to provide Midpen with flexibility to evaluate potential opportunities for public access connections within the Hawthorns Area and Historic Complex. If Midpen’s Board decides to continue discussions regarding the long term uses in the Historic Complex, those discussions could continue outside of the project timeline to complete and implement the Area Plan.
9.	What would the Hawthorns Historic Complex be used for? Could it be used for a community space, housing, museum, or educational center?	Future uses at the Hawthorns Historic Complex are subject to the restrictions established by the Conservation Easement. Refer to Table 1 for a summary of allowed and prohibited uses at the Hawthorns Area, which includes the Hawthorns Historic Complex. In general, the conservation easement allows public open space operations as well as limited residential occupancy; however, commercial and revenue-generating uses are prohibited.
10.	Could the property be used as a horse boarding facility?	The Conservation Easement prohibits commercial development or uses at the Hawthorns Area, which would exclude use of the property as a horse boarding facility. Refer to Table 1 for summary allowed and prohibited uses at the Hawthorns Area, as dictated by the Conservation Easement.
11.	What is indigenous use of the site?	The Hawthorns Area exhibits evidence of Native American occupation and usage. Midpen is currently conducting archeological resource studies to further characterize the indigenous history at this preserve to avoid potential impacts to Native American cultural resources.

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12.	What are the fire considerations at the Hawthorns Area? Is Midpen thinning the forests/woodlands on the property? Will fire plan/fuel reduction be open to public review before it's implemented?	In partnership with the Woodside Fire Protection District, Midpen is conducting ecologically sensitive vegetation management to reduce fuels as a component of Midpen's Wildland Fire Resiliency Program. Refer to Midpen's webpage for more information on this Program at http://www.openspace.org/fire . Wildland fire resiliency projects are developed and approved at public meetings by the Board of Directors during Midpen's annual budget and capital improvement and action plan development process.
13.	Can the Hawthorns Area ever be developed? Can Windy Hill Open Space Preserve ever be developed?	The majority of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve is <i>dedicated</i> open space. In accordance with California Public Resources Code 5500, dedicated property is permanently protected for park and open space uses. Midpen voluntarily eliminates its ability to sell or convey dedicated property except under narrow statutory exceptions. The Hawthorns Area is not dedicated open space at this time. However, it is subject to a Conservation Easement that limits allowable use and development of the property. Refer to Table 1 for an excerpt of the Conservation Easement, which establishes allowed and prohibited uses at the Hawthorns Area. Minor development, such as passive recreational trails and limited staging areas could be developed, pending approval from Midpen's Board and permits from the Town of Portola Valley.
14.	Who is doing the traffic study?	Midpen selected a consultant team consisting of Parisi Transportation Consulting and Mead & Hunt to conduct the traffic study.
15.	What is multimodal access?	The term <i>multimodal access</i> refers to a transportation corridor or facility that accommodates several modes of transport. In this context, multimodal access at the Hawthorns Area refers to the consideration of different strategies to encourage non-automobile transportation (e.g., pedestrian, bicycle, and/or equestrian trails, and transit) to the preserve.
16.	Will Midpen retain the on-site staff residence at 4411 Alpine Road?	At this time, the residence at 4411 Alpine Road will remain on the property.
17.	What is the timeline for each phase of the planning process?	<p>The tentative Hawthorns Area Plan timeline is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: Vision and Goals: 2021 – 2022 (complete) • Phase 2: Existing Conditions: 2022 – 2023 (complete) • Phase 3: Programming / Conceptual Planning: 2023 – 2024 • Phase 4: Area Plan / Environmental Review: 2024 – 2026 • Phase 5: Implementation: 2026 – TBD

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18.	Will Midpen plant native species at the Hawthorns Area?	The Hawthorns Area Plan will include ecological management objectives. Although specific goals have not been established yet, the Hawthorns Area Conservation Easement includes native vegetation restoration. Management priorities at the Hawthorns Area will align with the directives of the Conservation Easement. Refer to Table 1 for a summary of allowed and prohibited uses at the Hawthorns Area as dictated by the Conservation Easement.
19.	Is Midpen looking into easements on the creek?	At this time, Midpen is not considering additional easements on the property. However, Midpen has conducted a wetland delineation to characterize water resources at the Hawthorns Area to inform future management.
20.	Does the Hawthorns area have to be opened to the public?	Public access at the Hawthorns Area is a Midpen Board of Directors-approved Vision Plan Priority Project that was included in and funded through Measure AA, a bond measure that was approved by voters in 2014.
21.	How big of a parking lot is Midpen considering at any of the entry points?	Parking options at the Hawthorns Area will be determined during the Programming/Conceptual Planning Phase of the project. The placement and size of any future parking area will be informed by the outcomes of the traffic study, the property's site constraints, and the Conservation Easement. Refer to Table 1 for a summary of allowed and prohibited uses at the Hawthorns Area as dictated by the Conservation Easement.
22.	Would a trail be aligned along the perimeter of the meadow to preserve it?	Trail alignment options will be evaluated and proposed during the Programming/Conceptual Planning Phase of the project. Ultimate trail placement will be in accordance with the public access and natural resource management goals established by the Hawthorns Area Plan.
23.	What kind of restoration alternatives are being considered for the olive grove?	At this time, Midpen is characterizing existing conditions at the Hawthorns Area. Management goals, including any objectives for the olive grove, will be determined during the Hawthorns Area Plan process.
24.	Would Midpen consider a more natural parking lot surface as opposed to asphalt?	Any parking area at the Hawthorns Area will be constructed in alignment with the Conservation Easement. Refer to Table 1 for a summary of allowed and prohibited uses at the Hawthorns Area as dictated by the Conservation Easement.

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25.	Would Midpen allow docent-led hikes before the preserve is officially open?	Docent-led hikes in the Hawthorns area are available on an approximately quarterly basis and can be found on the docent-led activities webpage, listed under Windy Hill Preserve. Due to site constraints, reservations are required. (openspace.org/events/guided-activities).
26.	Can the parking area be sited off Los Trancos Road?	The transportation consultant on the project conducted assessments, which revealed that Los Trancos Road does not meet the line-of-sight standards required by Caltrans for a commercial driveway. These Caltrans standards are commonly used by various jurisdictions, including Midpen, to guide the design and placement of parking area entryways. In contrast, Alpine Road offers sufficient line of sight, making it the recommended entry point for future public access, as advised by our transportation consultant. If a driveway were to be considered off Los Trancos Road, discussions would be required with the appropriate permitting jurisdictional agencies to confirm whether a driveway off this road is viable given that the property fronts Alpine Road, which does provide adequate lines of sight. In addition, there may be other considerations that preclude Los Trancos Road, including the final location and proximity to the preferred parking area location and potential impact concerns to uses and management of the Hawthorns Historic Complex.
27.	Is selling off pieces of the property, such as the Historic Complex, an option for Midpen?	The Conservation Easement prohibits subdivision of the Hawthorns Area, except for lot line adjustments and transference to a qualified agency for open space uses. Refer to Table 1 for a summary of allowed and prohibited uses at the Hawthorns Area as dictated by the Conservation Easement.
28.	What is the Public Access Working Group (PAWG)? Who are members of the PAWG? What is the PAWG meeting schedule?	More information about the Public Access Working Group (PAWG), members of the PAWG, and the group's meeting schedule can be found here: https://www.openspace.org/what-we-do/projects/hawthorns-public-access-working-group

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29.	What time are the Hawthorns meetings? Will they be on Zoom?	The tentative schedule for the Public Access Working Group (PAWG) meetings can be found on the project web page at openspace.org/hawthorns . Because the meeting dates and times are subject to change, we encourage you to check the schedule online regularly. To receive public notifications about the Public Access Working Group meeting times, please sign up at openspace.org/hawthorns . The PAWG meetings at Midpen Admin Office will be hybrid and offered on Zoom for members of the public to participate. Meetings on site will be held in person only. You can find details of the meeting agenda and packet at https://www.openspace.org/who-we-are/public-meetings . Regular meeting agendas will be posted a minimum 72 hours prior to the meeting.
30.	Can you encourage the Town to put all Hawthorns information on the Town calendar and to share information on Hawthorns meetings? Residents may want to attend meetings and they want to stay informed.	The project team continues to communicate with Town staff to share Midpen’s PAWG meeting information in the Town newsletter and through the Town’s communication channels. Note that Midpen’s project process and notification schedule are different from the Town’s and may not align with the timing of the Town’s newsletters or other communication methods. The project team therefore encourages all interested parties to sign up to receive project notifications directly from Midpen at openspace.org/hawthorns .
31.	Who are on the Town Ad Hoc Committee?	Refer to Table 2 for a list of seven members selected by the Town to serve on the Town Ad Hoc Committee. Membership is current as August 26, 2023, the date of the PAWG’s second meeting.
32.	What are the responsibilities of the Town Ad Hoc Committee? How will the Town Ad Hoc Committee be able to provide input? What are the next steps for the Town's Ad Hoc Committee members?	Refer to Table 2 for a description and a flowchart illustrating input opportunities for the Town Ad Hoc Committee.
33.	Are the Town Ad Hoc meetings open to the public?	The Town is administering the Town Ad Hoc meetings including how they are noticed and whether they are open to the public.

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34.	What timeline do you anticipate for the process described above?	<p>The tentative schedule that has been presented to the Midpen Board of Directors for developing the Hawthorns Area Plan is shown below. The project team has not yet identified specific meeting dates for Midpen Planning & Natural Resources Committee or Midpen Board of Directors, as these would be based on the progress made by the PAWG. When the project team has a better idea of when those would be, they would communicate with Town staff so that Town staff can coordinate with the Town Ad Hoc Committee members to set up their meetings. Please check Midpen’s Project webpage for updates on upcoming meetings: https://www.openspace.org/what-we-do/projects/hawthorns-area-plan</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="586 684 1479 806"> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="586 684 786 726">2021 - 2022</td> <td data-bbox="786 684 1479 726">Develop vision and goals for the Hawthorns Area</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="586 726 786 768">2022 - 2024</td> <td data-bbox="786 726 1479 768">Prepare Hawthorns Area Plan</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="586 768 786 806">2024 - 2025</td> <td data-bbox="786 768 1479 806">Conduct environmental review per CEQA</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2021 - 2022	Develop vision and goals for the Hawthorns Area	2022 - 2024	Prepare Hawthorns Area Plan	2024 - 2025	Conduct environmental review per CEQA
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35.	How long would it take for Hawthorns to be open to the public?	<p>The planning and environmental review process for the Hawthorns Area Plan is expected to take approximately five years. The project is currently in the third year. The implementation phase would initiate in the sixth year, after the environmental review phase is complete, and would involve design development, permitting, construction documentation, bidding and construction, which could span two or more years. The Town’s review and permitting process will influence the timeline and during each stage of the project, numerous unanticipated factors will likely come into play, which could potentially further delay the opening the property to the public.</p>						

Table 1 - Hawthorns Area Conservation Easement Prohibited and Permitted Uses*Prohibited Uses*

Subdivision, except for lot line adjustments and transference to a qualified agency for open space uses.

Commercial or industrial development or activity, including agricultural use.

Construction of additional buildings.

Activities that cause significant soil degradation, erosion, or pollution of aquatic features.

Tree removal, except as required for safety, fire protection, or resource management.

On-site dumping or disposal of waste, refuse or debris.

Installation of new utility systems or extension of existing utility system. (The repair, replacement, and relocation of existing utility systems may be allowed.)

Exploration, development, or extraction of minerals.

Commercial grazing.

Use of off-road or all-terrain vehicles, unless used on existing roads, paths, and trails for purposes of site management, public safety, or travel between improvements located on the property.

Commercial shooting or commercial shooting ranges are prohibited. Hunting or trapping of wildlife is prohibited, except to prevent damage to existing improvements or as necessary for resource management and public safety purposes.

Activities producing sustained noise levels in excess of 65 decibels as measured on trails surrounding the property, except for agricultural and landscaping requirement necessary for the repair, reconstruction, or relocation of existing improvements.

Storage or disassembly of inoperable vehicles.

Alteration of landforms by grading or excavation.

Activities that would degrade the property's scenic and natural character, such as clearing, stripping of native vegetation, grading, or storage of materials.

Draining, filling, dredging, clearing, or diking of wetland and riparian areas.

Alteration or manipulation of watercourses, or the creation of new water impoundments or watercourses, other than permitted agricultural and ecological enhancements.

Placement of signs or billboards, except to display the property's name and use as an open space area, or to control unauthorized use.

Golf courses, driving ranges, or sport courts.

Excavation, removal, destruction, or sale of archeological artifacts or remains, except as part of an authorized archeological investigation.

Allowable Uses

Reasonable measures for fire safety, erosion control, and tree removal for safety, fire protection, or resource management purposes.

Removal of non-native vegetation and restoration with native vegetation.

Maintenance and use of existing paved and unpaved roadways, passages, and trails.

Use, maintenance, and improvements to the existing spring and ground water system to service the property.

Passive recreational uses such as hiking, bicycling, and equestrian use.

Construction of unpaved trails or paths for non-motorized uses.

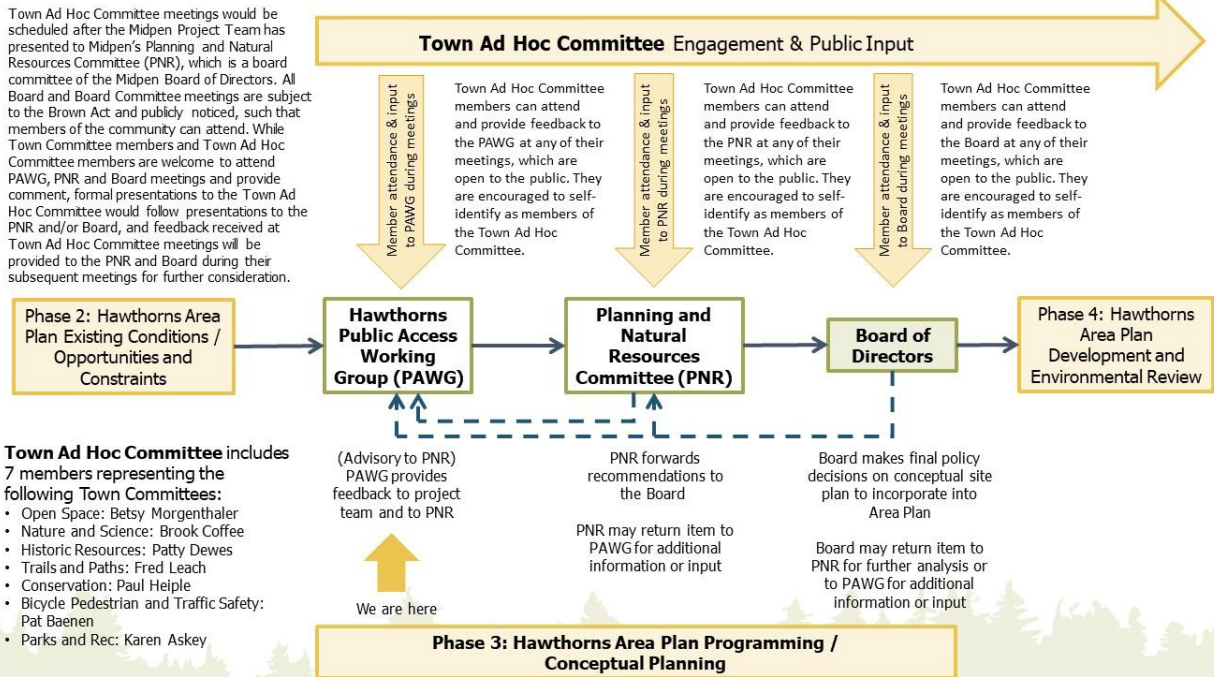
Use, occupancy, repair, reconstruction, or replacement of existing buildings and improvements directly related to the public open space operations of the property owner.

Construction of a limited staging area (gravel parking lot, pit toilets, wood rail fencing, trail markers, etc.) to facilitate public access and recreational uses.

Table 2 – Town of Portola Valley Ad Hoc Committee Members and Opportunities for Input

Working Group Workflow and Town Ad Hoc Committee Involvement and Input Opportunities

Town Ad Hoc Committee meetings would be scheduled after the Midpen Project Team has presented to Midpen's Planning and Natural Resources Committee (PNR), which is a board committee of the Midpen Board of Directors. All Board and Board Committee meetings are subject to the Brown Act and publicly noticed, such that members of the community can attend. While Town Committee members and Town Ad Hoc Committee members are welcome to attend PAWG, PNR and Board meetings and provide comment, formal presentations to the Town Ad Hoc Committee would follow presentations to the PNR and/or Board, and feedback received at Town Ad Hoc Committee meetings will be provided to the PNR and Board during their subsequent meetings for further consideration.



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