

Hawthorns Area Plan: Frequently Asked Questions

#	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 the next phase of the planning process, anticipated to begin in 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 a half hour before sunrise until a 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 .
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.

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8.	Why is the Hawthorns Historic Complex project separate from the Hawthorns Area Plan?	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
9.	What would the Hawthorns Historic Complex be used for? Could it be used for a community space, housing, museum, or educational center?	<p>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.</p>
10.	Could the property be used as a horse boarding facility?	<p>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.</p>
11.	What is indigenous use of the site?	<p>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.</p>
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?	<p>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.</p>

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13.	Can the Hawthorns Area ever be developed? Can Windy Hill Open Space Preserve ever be developed?	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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 • Phase 3: Programming / Conceptual Planning: 2023 – 2024 • Phase 4: Area Plan / Environmental Review: 2024 – 2025 • Phase 5: Implementation: 2025+

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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?	Midpen may consider offering docent-led hikes in the future, which would be announced on the Hawthorns Area project website (openspace.org/hawthorns) and/or the Docent-Led Activities web page (openspace.org/events/guided-activities).
26.	Where would trails connect if parking was sited off Los Trancos Road?	Trail alignment options will be evaluated and proposed during the Programming/Conceptual Planning Phase of the project and presented to the Midpen Board of Directors for approval. Ultimate trail placement will be established in accordance with the public access and natural resource management goals established by the Hawthorns Area Plan.
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.

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.
