INTRODUCTION

...to try to save for everyone, for the humble and indigent as well as the well-off, some of the health that flows down across the green ridges from the sky, and provide for the recreation, health, and refinements of spirit that are still available to any resident of the valley who has a moment, and the wit, to lift up his eyes unto the hills. —Wallace Stegner

OPEN SPACE:

• In a land area that is allowed to remain in or return to its natural and other persons. The Board shall be
unaffected by the validity of any action taken by the District.

The District's mission is:

To acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land, to protect and restore the natural environment; and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

OBJECTIVES

1. Open Space Land Preservation: The District seeks to purchase or otherwise acquire interest in the maximum feasible area of strategic open space land within the District's Service Area boundaries of cities that have regionally significant open space parcels of critical interest to the District. The District actively strives to acquire open space through gift and matching gifts of land with the understanding that: Other creative open space preservation techniques are employed and utilized when possible.

The District desires to acquire open space from willing sellers. Eminent domain will be used only in strict compliance with the District's eminent domain policies:

• “The District does not want to use eminent domain as a means of purchasing land unless the property concerned is an open space parcel of critical importance or is under some dire emergency, such as immediate destruction of natural resources, or clearing for development purposes. Even under such urgent circumstances, however, eminent domain would still be used only as a last resort. The District would continue its acquisition as to objective in purchasing the land.”

2. Open Space Management: The District seeks to ensure that the higher priorities of acquisition and development efforts, the ability to plan and implement trails, parking, restrooms, mapboards and signs, and identification and mitigation of potential safety hazards.

Because of the District's commitment to maximum open space preservation efforts, expenditure guidelines will be established for the amount of funding available for recreational improvement projects and restoration activities.

Agricultural, residential, and other limited revenue producing uses of the land may limit public access in certain areas. Where appropriate, access may be provided on a permit basis.

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Adopted by the Board of Directors on March 10, 1999

MISSION STATEMENT

The District’s mission is:

To acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity; protect and restore the natural environment; and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

OPEN SPACE:

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The District is intended solely for the guidance of the Board of Directors on March 10, 1999. Adopted by the Board of Directors during regular business hours Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.

NOTE: The public may obtain policy documents by contacting the District office during regular business hours Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.

These policies are intended solely for the guidance of the Board in the exercise of its discretion and are not intended to give rise to private rights or causes of action in individuals or other persons. The Board shall be the final arbiter as to any questions of interpretation of these policies. It is not the purpose of these policies to amend or repeal any legal requirements. Failure to comply with these policies shall not affect the validity of any action taken by the District.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's ox or thy neighbor's sheep. —Exodus 20:17

Strategic Emphasis

The District's uses its available resources primarily to acquire or otherwise preserve land outside the Urban Service Area boundaries of cities that has regionally significant open space value and that might be lost to development if the District fails to act.

The District's goal is to acquire lands within its own boundaries and to develop plans that will make such lands available for public use. The District will consider the following: 

- Location
- Size
- Access
- Existing development
- Public demand

Open Space Acquisition

c. The District acquires land most often through fee simple interest (inseparable ownership). Options and installment purchases may be employed to this end.

To conserve funding for preservation, the District may seek to preserve open space without outright ownership of the land. The District may act as a land bank through acquisition of less than fee interest to accomplish the same results with less immediate expenditures of the District's funds. Examples include acquisition of a remainder interest following a life tenancy, open space, conservation, or scenic easements, and purchase and leaseback arrangements. The District actively strives to acquire open space through gift and matching gifts of land with the understanding that: Other creative open space preservation techniques are employed and utilized when possible.

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Master Plan, Regional Open Space Study

d. To guide the District's open space preservation efforts, the District produces a master plan and a regional open space study. The master plan sets forth guidelines for District acquisitions and shows the relative desirability of potential open space land acquisitions. The regional open space study shows the general extent of lands and public access improvements existing and under consideration to complete the District's greenbelt mission. Both documents are subject to periodic review and modification by the Board of Directors after public hearings. The regional open space study is subject to periodic technical updates. Both documents are submitted to the counties, cities, and other conservation-oriented local, state, and federal agencies and organizations for review and comment in order to encourage coordination with their planning and policies.

2. Open Space Management: The District follows management policies that ensure proper care of the land, that provide public access appropriate to the nature of the land, and that are consistent with ecological values and public safety. Policies

Resource Management

a. The District protects and restores the natural diversity and integrity of its resources for their value to the environment, and the public, and provides for the use of the preserves consistent with resource protection. Public Access and Constraints

b. The District provides public access to the open space lands for low-intensity recreational use. The District's highest priority is acquiring land to complete the greenbelt and to protect natural resources on open space land. Public access will be provided gradually to ensure that the higher priorities of acquisition and resource protection are maintained.

Developing facilities and managing public use activities while protecting natural resources and providing for public safety may require limits on access to some open space lands. Areas found to be vital wildlife or plant habitats are designated as refuge areas, and in those areas access will be severely restricted. In addition to protection of sensitive natural resources, factors that may delay or limit access include the carrying capacity of the land, geologic features, restoration efforts, the ability to plan and implement trails, parking, restrooms, mapboards and signs, and identification and mitigation of potential safety hazards.

Because of the District's commitment to maximum open space preservation efforts, expenditure guidelines will be established for the amount of funding available for recreational improvement projects and restoration activities.

Agricultural, residential, and other limited revenue producing uses of the land may limit public access in certain areas. Where appropriate, access may be provided on a permit basis.
The District strives to provide public access to its lands to encourage, regardless of place of residence, physical abilities, or economic status (See Access Plan for Persons with Disabilities).

Recreational Use and Improvements

The District monitors and manages its preserves to provide a safe environment for visitors and neighbors.

Cultural Resources

Historic structures and sites will be considered for protection by the District where they are associated with lands acquired for overall open space values. Due to the high cost of evaluating, managing, and restoring such facilities, the District depends on grant assistance, public private partnerships, and outside assistance to support these activities. Sites are evaluated for their historical and cultural resources prior to any new use or improvement which might impact the site. Archaeological resources are evaluated, protected, and made known to the public as appropriate to facilitate their observation.

Agriculture and Revenue-Producing Use

The District supports the continued agricultural use of land acquired for open space as an economic and cultural resource. Agricultural land use is regulated to provide a safe environment for visitors and neighbors. The District may support and encourage community gardens, non-profits, and other conservation-oriented groups in their efforts to urge other agencies to take action which will help accomplish the purposes and goals of the District.

Advocacy

In order to better plan, acquire, and operate a region-wide open space preserves and trails, and to further cooperate in this effort with other jurisdictions, and remove and prohibit all uses that do not meet the criteria of open space by other governmental agencies. The District may support and encourage community groups, non-profits, and other conservation-oriented groups in their efforts to urge other agencies to take action which will help accomplish the purposes and goals of the District.

4. Public Involvement: The District educates and makes clearly visible to the public the purposes and actions of the District, and also provides information and input to the District’s decision-making process and other activities.

Volunteerism

Through its volunteer programs, the District encourages active public participation in the maintenance, restoration, and protection of its natural resources. In addition, the District provides training and assistance in basic research, and providing cultural, historical, and environmental education opportunities to the public.

3. Inter-Agency Relationships: The District works with and encourages private and other public agencies to preserve, maintain, and enhance open space.

Participation

b. The District participates in the public review processes of land use plans of other agencies and development procedures that affect the District’s mission.

c. The District encourages and engages in its joint projects to maximize the opportunities for preservation of open space. Examples include inter-agency land management agreement, and joint acquisition, improvement, or resource management projects.

Research

d. The District supports the development of scientific knowledge about natural and cultural resources and management techniques through cooperative arrangements with educational and scientific institutions, and by supporting research, evaluation, protection, and improvement decisions. Such studies shall not unreasonably restrict public access or significantly impact the environment.

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3. Administration: The staff administers the affairs of the District on behalf of the public so as to maximize the accomplishment of the goals and objectives of the District within existing financial constraints.

FOOTNOTES:
1. Open Space Acquisition Policies, Pgs. 1
2. Open Space Acquisition Policies, Pgs. 2-4
3. Open Space Acquisition Policies, Pgs. 2-4
4. Land Acquisition Policies, Pg. 3, Item 14
5. Market/Prune Open Space Acquisition Policies, Pg. 6
6. Land Acquisition Policies, Pg. 3
7. Land Acquisition Policies, Pgs. 5-10
8. Policies Regarding Use of Eminent Domain, Ordinance No. 86-1
9. Revenue Management Policies
10. Research Management Initiative
11. Average Seven Percent Growth Guideline for District Operating Expenditures and Annual Budget
12. Resource Management Policies
13. Land Acquisition Policies, Pgs. 3, Item 14
14. Staff Policies
15. Good Neighbor Policy, District Land Use Regulations
17. Resource Management Policies, Crude 10 and 11
18. Wants Your Acquire Policy, District Land Use Regulations
20. Public Notification and Good Neighbor Policies
21. Neighborhood Policy, Public Notification Policies, District Land Use Regulations
22. District Land Use Regulations
23. Public Resources Code, Section 7537