



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: April 10, 2024

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *AR*

FROM: Jane Mark, Planning Manager; Galli Basson, Planner III

SUBJECT: Hawthorns Historic Complex Partnership Project Update

The Board of Directors (Board) formed a Hawthorns Historic Complex Ad Hoc Committee (Committee) at the September 13, 2023 Board Meeting with the charge of assisting staff in refining exploratory ideas for the future use and management of the Hawthorns Historic Complex (Historic Complex) and drafting a vision and goals to guide this work. Planning for the Historic Complex is a separate effort from the public access planning work that is occurring for the rest of the Hawthorns property, which is being conducted as part of the Hawthorns Area Plan project. Since forming, the Committee has met four times, as described below.

Committee Meeting #1 – October 24, 2023

The Committee became familiar with the project background and held a tour of the Historic Complex. Discussions on the proposed vision, goals, and future uses were initiated.

Committee Meeting #2 – November 16, 2023

The Committee continued discussions on the Historic Complex vision, goals, and future uses as well as management ideas. The Committee also discussed interim improvements to the Historic Complex structures, future partnership opportunities, and expressed interest in meeting with a potential partner in Portola Valley, Jim and Patty White, with whom the District has engaged in previous discussions regarding reuse of the Historic Complex. The District was first introduced to Jim and Patty White in 2017 as interested and viable partners for the Historic Complex. They emerged after a prior and unsuccessful attempt to identify potential community partners through a 2014 Request for Letters of Interest (RLOI) solicitation.

Committee Meeting #3 – February 8, 2024

Committee members met with the Whites, who were previously interested in re-use of the Hawthorns mansion as a residential facility for adults with intellectual or developmental delays. Due to cost and permitting challenges in adapting the structures to meet their residential facility goals and timeline, the Whites shifted their residential project site to an adjacent property located at 4388 Alpine Road (known as Willow Commons) across Alpine Road from the Hawthorns property. They are currently under construction of a 13-unit residential facility.

As part of a future phase of development for the Willow Commons complex, the Whites are exploring programing space options for the residents and potentially additional residential units.

At the February 8, 2024, meeting, they expressed interest in partnering with the District on the potential re-use of the Lower Barn, a large 4,700 square feet, one-story structure with gabled roof and vertical board-and-batten siding, as a programmed community space. Programming is still conceptual but may entail use of the barn for arts and crafts. Discussions indicate an overlap of values and goals between the District and the Whites that could potentially be achieved through a partnership. In order for the Whites to meet internal deadlines for their planning efforts, they seek a commitment from the District within 9 to 12 months. A potential partnership to rehabilitate and reuse the barn may include both private funding to repair and prepare the barn for programming, and the operation of a long-term community program that would involve residents of Willow Commons and provide a larger public benefit.

Committee Meeting #4 – March 7, 2024

Committee members discussed a potential partnership with the Whites focusing on the Lower Barn, which is one of the four primary structures that contribute to the historic district¹. Given the complexity and cost to rehabilitate the structures in the Historic Complex for re-use, as well as past challenges to find viable partners, the Committee felt this partnership opportunity is worth pursuing and may lead to future partnerships with other entities for the other Historic Complex structures. Due to the 9 to 12-month timeframe needed for a commitment, the District would initially focus planning efforts on programming the Lower Barn, and the infrastructure and amenities needed to support the program (such as utilities, parking, and restrooms). Stabilization and clean up for the remainder of the Historic Complex (including other structures) would continue to move forward in fiscal year 2024-25. The District targets January 2025 for Board consideration of a potential partnership agreement with the Whites to move forward with re-use and improvements of the Lower Barn for programming space.

Next Steps

The District will focus initial planning efforts on the feasibility of re-using the Lower Barn for programming space and providing the infrastructure and amenities needed to support public use of the Lower Barn space. Staff will complete a high-level feasibility analysis to confirm the permitting and constructability of repairs and improvements to the Lower Barn before the District and the Whites consider negotiating the details of a partnership agreement. The focus of the analysis will include:

- Working with Peninsula Open Space Trust on the parameters of the Conservation Easement that may influence the Lower Barn's re-use potential.²
- Working with the Town of Portola Valley to identify the downstream permitting and approval process and potential challenges.
- Conducting key technical studies for accelerated site feasibility analysis such as engineering assessments, geotechnical investigations, zoning and code analyses, and cost estimates. Many of the recent studies completed for the Hawthorns Area Plan project can inform the site feasibility analysis.
- Refining programming ideas for the Lower Barn and associated support operational requirements or functions.
- Forwarding the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations for the vision and goals of the Historic Complex to the full Board for consideration of approval.

¹ A historic district, as defined by Knapp Architects in the October 2013 [Hawthorns Historic Structures Assessment](#) is defined as a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

² The Hawthorns Property is overlain by a Conservation Easement held by Peninsula Open Space Trust that establishes use restrictions for the property.

Staff will continue to work with the Ad Hoc Committee on the next steps and anticipate presenting the results of the accelerated site feasibility analysis and draft terms for a partnership agreement at a Board Study session in late 2024 and returning to the Board in January 2025 for a decision.

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