

**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT**

DATE: February 10, 2016

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Planning Staff

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Consideration of a request by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) to determine if acquisition of three privately-owned parcels (APNs 083-361-080, 083-361-110, and 078-290-050), comprising approximately 30 acres on Sears Ranch Road immediately west of unincorporated La Honda, for use as open space preservation, conservation grazing, and low intensity recreation conforms to the County General Plan.

County File Number: PLN 2015-00569

PROPOSAL

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District seeks a determination of whether its proposed acquisition of approximately 30 acres of a privately owned property in three parcels (APNs 083-361-080, 083-361-110, and 078-290-050), located on Sears Ranch Road and State Highway 84 immediately west of unincorporated La Honda, for use as conservation grazing, natural resource preservation, and low intensity recreation conforms to the County General Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission find and report that MROSD's proposed acquisition of APNs 083-361-080, 083-361-110, and 078-290-050 for use as conservation grazing and future integration into the adjacent La Honda Open Space Preserve for natural resource preservation and low intensity recreation conforms to the General Plan Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies, Soil Resources Policies, Visual Quality Policies, and Park and Recreation Resource Policies, and is consistent with the County's General Plan.

SUMMARY

The subject parcels are located on Sears Ranch Road and State Highway 84 immediately west of unincorporated La Honda. The property is adjacent to the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, and is characterized by open grazing land and dense forest cover, with a residence and ancillary structures served by well water

and a septic system on one of the parcels. The property is currently owned by a private land owner, and is intended after acquisition to be maintained in its current use as conservation grazing, with the ultimate intent of addition to the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, for natural resource management and low intensity recreation.

The acquisition of the properties by MROSD is consistent with: the Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies of the General Plan, which require the County to minimize adverse impacts on such resources, to prioritize managed use and protection of such resources, and to protect these resources; the Soil Resources and Visual Quality Policies, which require the County to minimize soil erosion, grading, and land clearing; the Park and Recreation Resource Policies, which encourage provision of passive park and recreation space in order to protect and preserve environmentally sensitive open space, and to design sites that accommodate recreation that minimize adverse impacts on natural environments. The proposed acquisition is, therefore, consistent with the County's General Plan

WG:pac – WSGAA0031_WPU.DOCX

**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT**

DATE: February 10, 2016

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Planning Staff

SUBJECT: Consideration of a request by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) to determine if acquisition of three privately-owned parcels (APNs 083-361-080, 083-361-110 and 078-290-050), comprising approximately 30 acres on Sears Ranch Road immediately west of unincorporated La Honda, for use as conservation grazing, natural resource preservation, and low intensity recreation conforms to the County General Plan.

County File Number: PLN 2015-00569

PROPOSAL

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District seeks a determination of whether its proposed acquisition of approximately 30 acres of a privately owned property in three parcels (APNs 083-361-080, 083-361-110, and 078-290-050), located on Sears Ranch Road and State Highway 84 immediately west of unincorporated La Honda, for use as conservation grazing, natural resource preservation, and low intensity recreation conforms to the County General Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission find and report that MROSD's proposed acquisition of APNs 083-361-080, 083-361-110, and 078-290-050 for use as conservation grazing and future integration into the adjacent La Honda Open Space Preserve for natural resource preservation and low intensity recreation conforms to the General Plan Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies, Soil Resources Policies, Visual Quality Policies, and Park and Recreation Resource Policies, and is consistent with the County's General Plan.

BACKGROUND

Report Prepared By: William Gibson

Applicant: Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Owner: Judith Wilson Trust

Location: Sears Ranch Road, immediately west of unincorporated La Honda

APN: 083-361-080, 083-361-110, and 078-290-050

Size: 29.4 acres (078-290-050, 9.22 acres; 083-361-110, 1.24 acres; 083-361-080, 18.9 acres)

Existing Zoning: Resource Management (RM)

General Plan Designation: Open Space

Sphere-of-Influence: N/A

Existing Land Use: Grazing, open space, rural residential

Water Supply: Parcel 083-361-080 is served by a well

Sewage Disposal: Parcel 083-361-080 is served by a septic system

Flood Zone: Zone X, Area of Minimal Flooding

Environmental Evaluation: A request for General Plan Conformity analysis is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and is not subject to environmental evaluation. Any future development proposed on the property would need to address relevant CEQA requirements.

Setting: The property primarily consists of open grazing land and dense evergreen woodland. Parcel 083-361-080 contains a 3,000 sq. ft. private residence and several ancillary structures.

DISCUSSION

A. KEY ISSUES

1. Basis for Acquisition

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District intends to purchase the property for eventual inclusion in the adjacent La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve. After purchase, MROSD intends to continue to use the property for conservation grazing, and to keep the property closed to the public until additional use planning is completed, with the intent of determining the property's potential for natural resource management and compatible public trail use as part of the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve.

2. Reason for General Plan Conformity Determination

Per California Government Code Section 65402, prior to any acquisition of property for public purpose, the acquiring agency must request a determination of the acquisition's consistency with the adopted General Plan.

3. Conformance with the San Mateo County General Plan

The proposed acquisition potentially involves the following General Plan policies, which are addressed herein.

a. Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies

- (1) Policy 1.22.a of the County General Plan requires that the County regulate land uses and development activities to prevent and, if infeasible, mitigate to the extent possible, significant adverse impacts on vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.
- (2) Policy 1.23 requires the County to regulate the location, density and design of development to minimize significant adverse impacts and encourage enhancement of vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.
- (3) Policy 1.24 requires that the County ensure that development will (1) minimize the removal of vegetative resources; and/or (2) protect vegetation which enhances microclimate, stabilizes slopes or reduces surface water runoff, erosion or sedimentation; and/or (3) protect historic and scenic trees.
- (4) Policy 1.27 requires that the County regulate land uses and development activities within and adjacent to sensitive habitats, and permit only land uses and development activities that are consistent with protection of sensitive habitats, including such uses as fish and wildlife management, trails and scenic overlook, and minimally necessary public service and private infrastructure.

Discussion: MROSD's Property Fact Sheet for the proposed acquisition describes the property as follows:

[...] Mature stands of mixed evergreen and oak woodlands are interspersed with open grassland over the majority of the property. Mature non-native plantings and fruit trees are found closer to the house. As part of the contiguous open

space that surrounds the property, the [...] property provides habitat for a variety of animal species, including mammals such as coyotes and bobcats. With tall trees and dense undergrowth, the property provides both forage and cover for smaller species. A wide variety of birds frequent this landscape and the multi-story tree canopy provides habitat for smaller species, as well as roosting sites for raptors that hunt on the adjacent Preserve.

[...]

The property is improved with a 3,000 sq. ft. single family residence, attached garage, Butler building, and other small ancillary structures typical for a rural property. The structures are in good condition and well maintained. The residence is served by a well, septic system, electrical service, and propane heating. The property is accessed by a driveway off of Sears Ranch Road.

[...]

The 29 +/- acres outside of the house/barn area are also in good condition, comprised of mixed evergreen woodlands and open grasslands. The grassland area of the property (approximately 20 acres) is currently grazed by the Wilson Cattle Company, which also holds the grazing lease with the District for the adjacent 300 acre Apple Orchard property that was acquired by the District in July 2015. Fences, ranch roads, and water sources for livestock are in good repair.

The property contains vegetative and wildlife resources, and provides habitat for various flora and fauna native to rural areas. The property may contain protected or sensitive habitats or species. However, MROSD has not proposed any developments on the property, or any changes to the conditions or uses of the property at this time. The proposal is limited to acquisition of the property, and any subsequent changes in use would be determined through a planning process, consistent with applicable County regulations. The acquisition in itself does not conflict with the General Plan's vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources. In addition, MROSD has indicated its intent to maintain this property for use as conservation grazing, open space, natural resource management, habitat preservation, and low intensity recreation. Such future uses are consistent with these General Plan policies. Any future planning and development of the site would require additional environmental

evaluation, consistent with the requirement pertinent to the proposed development, and would require such mitigation measures as determined by evaluation.

b. Soil Resources and Visual Quality Policies

- (1) Policy 2.17 calls for the County to regulate development to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation.
- (2) Policy 2.23 calls for the County to regulate excavation, grading, filling and land clearing activities to protect against accelerated soil erosion and sedimentation.
- (3) Policy 4.25.a calls for minimizing grading or earth-moving operations.
- (4) Policy 4.25.b requires blending graded areas with adjacent landforms through the use of contour grading rather than harsh cutting or terracing of the site.

Discussion: The proposed acquisition does not conflict with the General Plan Soil Resources Policies or Visual Quality Policies. MROSD is not proposing any land disturbance at this time. Any proposed future development would be subject to the County Grading Ordinance, which incorporates measures to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation. In addition, MROSD's intended uses for the property, as described above, are consistent with these General Plan policies.

c. Park and Recreation Resource Policies

- (1) Policy 6.10 generally encourages park providers to locate passive park and recreation facilities in rural areas in order to protect and preserve environmentally sensitive open space lands. This policy considers the following activities to be generally compatible with passive park and recreation facilities: camping, hiking, picnicking, horseback riding and nature study.

Discussion: The subject property is in the County's formally designated rural zone. The property is not currently used for recreation. MROSD has expressed the intent of maintaining the current conservation grazing uses for the immediate future, with the ultimate intent of integrating it into the adjacent La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve for natural resource management and compatible public trail use, after appropriate use planning. MROSD's required planning for these uses, as specified in its

Service Plan, includes measures entirely consistent with Policy 6.10.

- (2) Policy 6.14 calls for the County to encourage all providers to design sites to accommodate recreation uses that minimize adverse effects on the natural environment and adjoining private ownership.

Discussion: While MROSD has not formulated any specific development proposals, the general intended uses of the acquired property for habitat and natural resource protection, and only low intensity recreational uses, are entirely consistent with Policy 6.14 of the General Plan.

Acquisition of the parcel is consistent with the County General Plan.

B. ALTERNATIVES

The alternative to a finding of conformity would be to find and report that the acquisition does not comply with the County's General Plan.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A request for General Plan Conformity analysis is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and is not subject to environmental evaluation. Any future development proposed on the property would need to address relevant CEQA requirements.

D. REVIEWING AGENCIES

County Counsel

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Recommended Findings
- B. Vicinity Map

WG:pac – WSGAA0032_WPU.DOCX

County of San Mateo
Planning and Building Department

RECOMMENDED FINDING

Permit or Project File Number: PLN 2015-00569 Hearing Date: February 10, 2016

Prepared By: William Gibson
Project Planner

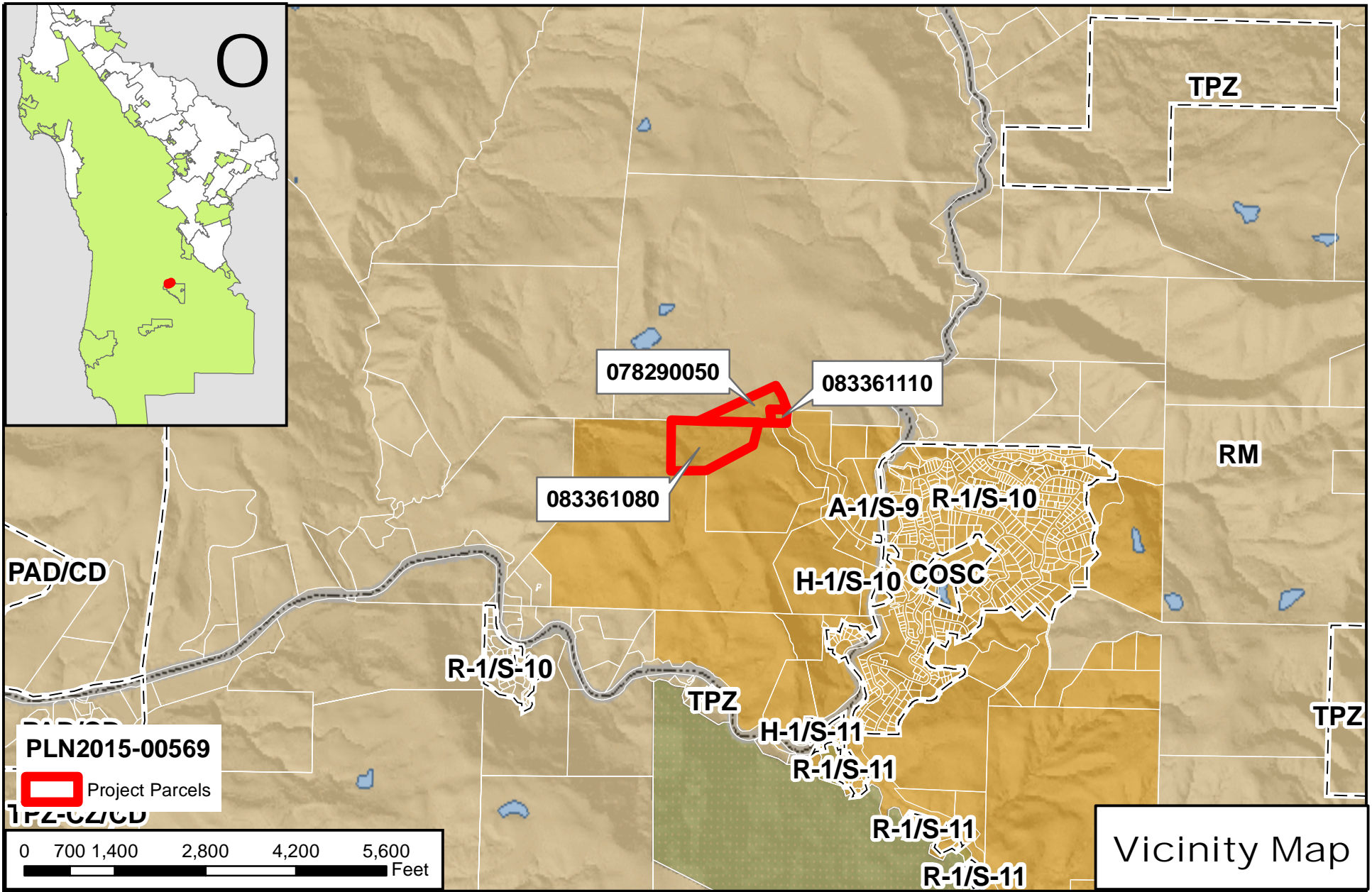
For Adoption By: Planning Commission

RECOMMENDED FINDING

1. Find and report that Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's proposed acquisition of APNs 083-361-080, 083-361-110, and 078-290-050 for use as conservation grazing and future integration into the adjacent La Honda Open Space Preserve for natural resource preservation and low intensity recreation conforms to the General Plan Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies, Soil Resources Policies, Visual Quality Policies, and Park and Recreation Resource Policies, and is consistent with the County's General Plan.

WG:pac – WSGAA0032_WPU.DOCX

F:\GP_Conformity\MROSD_Cunha\PLN2015-00569V\map.mxd



ATTACHMENT B