

NOTICE OF PREPARATION
BEATTY HOUSE REMOVAL AND SITE RESTORATION
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Date Published:	February 3, 2021
Project Title:	Beatty House Removal and Site Restoration
Project Location:	17820 Alma Bridge Road, Santa Clara County, CA
Lead Agency:	Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District 330 Distel Circle Los Altos, CA 94022
Contact:	Alex Casbara, Planner III acasbara@openspace.org
Review Period:	Wednesday, February 3, 2021 – Friday, March 5, 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) issues this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to announce preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Beatty House Removal and Site Restoration (Project). Midpen will prepare an EIR for the Project to satisfy the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and will serve as the lead agency for CEQA compliance. In accordance with CEQA Statute and Guidelines (Guidelines) Section 15082, the purpose of this NOP is to describe the Project, identify potential environmental effects, and invite interested parties to comment on the scope and content of the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15082[b]).

PROJECT LOCATION

The Beatty House is located at 17820 Alma Bridge Road in unincorporated Santa Clara County, approximately three miles south of Los Gatos and approximately two miles east of the Alma Bridge Road exit from Highway 17 (Attachment 1). The approximately 1.6-acre Beatty House area (Project site) is located adjacent to Alma Bridge Road and occupies portions of two Assessor's Parcel Numbers (558-36-011 and 558-36-012) in the western portion of the Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (Preserve).

The Preserve encompasses over 18,000 acres south of the Town of Los Gatos and east of Highway 17, and is comprised of grasslands, oak woodlands, and deep ravines that provide wildlife habitat and opportunities for public access. The Preserve is divided into four subareas: Kennedy-Limekiln, Mount Umunhum, Cathedral Oaks, and Rancho de Guadalupe. The Project site is in the Cathedral Oaks subarea along the western boundary of the Preserve.

According to the *Santa Clara County General Plan 1995-2010* and the *Santa Clara County Zoning Ordinance*, the Project site's land use designation is Existing Regional Parks and zoning designation is Hillside-Scenic Roads. The Project site is east of Lexington Reservoir and adjacent to Lexington Reservoir County Park, which is operated by the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Originally constructed between 1866 and 1877, the 1,440-square-foot, one-story Beatty House includes three bedrooms, one bathroom, a kitchen, and a living room. The home was last occupied in the mid-2000s and is in poor to fair condition due to lack of use and years of deferred maintenance.

The Beatty House sits atop a level site that descends sharply to the west toward Alma Bridge Road. The Project site's topography includes steep slopes with elevations ranging from 680 to 1,400 feet above sea level. The Project site contains oak woodland, chaparral, and annual grasslands, although these natural communities are disturbed due to former small-scale agricultural and grazing uses. An unnamed, natural-bottom creek located approximately 150 feet south of the Beatty House flows east-to-west and discharges into Lexington Reservoir. A second unnamed, natural-bottom creek located approximately 100 feet north of the Beatty House flows east-to-west and discharges into Lexington Reservoir.

Unpaved roadways connect the Project site to Alma Bridge Road at two access-controlled gates along the Project site's western boundary. An electrical line travels west-to-east along utility poles located immediately south of the Beatty House, and a detached gas meter is located immediately east of the Beatty House.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Midpen acquired the Beatty House in 2008 as part of an approximately 57-acre property purchase to expand the Preserve and increase regional trail connectivity. Santa Clara County contributed funds toward the property purchase in exchange for a conservation easement, which stipulates retention for public park and open space purposes in perpetuity.

In 2010, Knapp and VerPlanck Preservation Architects prepared a Historic Resources Assessment Summary Report to evaluate the Beatty House and associated outbuildings for historical significance. This report concluded that, although the Beatty House is not currently listed on federal, state, or local historic resource inventories, the Project site is eligible for individual inclusion on the California Register of Historic Resources for the following reasons:

- The property that includes the Beatty House is associated with the early social and economic development of the Alma Valley area and the pioneer community of Alma, which is now submerged beneath Lexington Reservoir.
- The Beatty House embodies the characteristic construction that was common for Western pioneer vernacular dwellings constructed in the 1860s, of which very few remain in the region.

Midpen evaluated the Beatty House for conversion into a field office for Midpen staff. However, the lack of water for fire suppression and potable uses rendered the structure uninhabitable. Although there are two wells on the property, one does not meet health and safety standards and the other has insufficient water quantity and exhibits substantial contamination. Moreover, municipal water and sanitary sewer services are not available at the Project site. Due to the costly infrastructure improvements needed to convert the Beatty House into a viable field office, this potential use was withdrawn from consideration. On April 20, 2020, the Midpen Board of Directors directed the General Manager to remove the Beatty House and restore the underlying natural resource values.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Project would achieve the following objectives, in alignment with Midpen's mission:

- Remove physical hazards to ensure public safety and potentially support future interpretive uses
- Improve ecological qualities at the Beatty House site and immediate surroundings
- Provide focused interpretive and educational opportunities associated with the former Beatty House, consistent with open space values
- Enhance natural visual character and scenic qualities
- Implement a fiscally sustainable Project

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The Project would entail removal of the Beatty House and implementation of habitat enhancements to reflect native ecology. No public access facilities would be constructed as part of this Project. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b)(4), Midpen will identify feasible measures to mitigate to the greatest extent possible any adverse changes in the historic significance of the Beatty House, which is eligible for individual inclusion on the California Register of Historic Resources. A statement of overriding considerations would be required if impacts cannot be sufficiently mitigated.

POTENTIAL PERMITS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED

- Midpen Board of Directors: Project approval
- Regional Water Quality Control Board: general construction permit
- County of Santa Clara: demolition and grading permits
- Bay Area Air Quality Management District: register all portable equipment permits with BAAQMD; notify BAAQMD of all demolition activities 10 days prior to occurrence of activity.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIR will describe direct and indirect environmental impacts associated with the Project and will identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts. The EIR will focus on significant or potentially significant impacts to the following resources:

- Biological Resources: Impacts to sensitive species during construction activities.
- Cultural Resources: Impacts to a historic building that is eligible for listing on the California Register of Historic Resources.

CEQA allows a lead agency to limit detailed discussion of environmental effects that would not be potentially significant (PRC Section 21100, CEQA Guidelines Sections 15126.2[a] and 15128). Thus, an Initial Study will accompany the EIR to screen other environmental resources and describe why the Project would not result in significant effects to the following topics:

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|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Aesthetics | • Hydrology & Water Quality |
| • Agriculture & Forestry Resources | • Land Use & Planning |
| • Air Quality | • Mineral Resources |
| • Energy | • Noise |
| • Geology & Soils | • Population & Housing |
| • Greenhouse Gas Emissions | • Public Services & Recreation |
| • Hazards & Hazardous Materials | • Transportation |

- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities & Service Systems
- Wildfire
- Mandatory Findings of Significance

ALTERNATIVES TO BE EVALUATED IN THE EIR

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will describe a reasonable range of alternatives that are capable of meeting most of the Project objectives but would avoid or substantially lessen significant effects resulting from the Project. The EIR will also evaluate a No Project Alternative and will identify alternatives that were considered but rejected as infeasible by the lead agency.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

All comments on environmental issues received during the public comment period will be considered and addressed in the EIR. Midpen will accept written or emailed comments submitted by Friday, March 5, 2021 to the following address:

Alex Casbara, Planner III
 Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
 330 Distel Circle
 Los Altos, CA 94022
 Via email: acasbara@openspace.org

Comments provided via email should include *Beatty House Removal and Site Restoration NOP Scoping Comment* in the subject line, and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the email.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Midpen will host a public scoping meeting to inform stakeholders about the Project and solicit input regarding environmental topics and alternatives to be evaluated in the EIR. The scoping meeting will occur during the Midpen Board of Directors meeting scheduled for Wednesday, February 24, 2021. In accordance with public health orders, all Midpen board meetings are held via Teleconference only. The meeting may be viewed online and links to the meetings will be posted with each agenda at the following website: <https://www.openspace.org/about-us/board-meetings>.

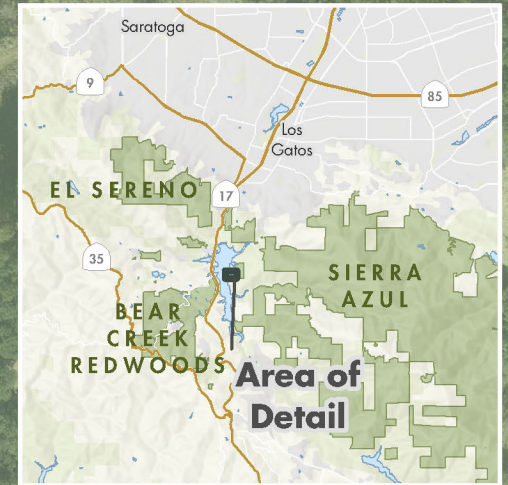
ATTACHMENT 1

Lexington Reservoir

Alma Bridge Road

Beatty House

SIERRA AZUL
OPEN SPACE
PRESERVE



Beatty Property Site Location

-  MROSD Preserves
-  Building
-  Unpaved Seasonal Road

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
11/20/2020



Feet
0 100 200

While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.