
Citizens' Advisory Committee

Memo-24-09

Meeting SP 24-01

March 25, 2024

To: Citizens' Advisory Committee

From: Linda Kwong, Real Property Program Manager

Subject: Overview of Real Property Program and Update on the Open Space Authority's Land Holdings

REVENUE/COST

There is no cost or revenue associated with this item.

BACKGROUND

Land protection is foundational to the Authority's mission and allows for other key aspects of the mission to be implemented, including restoring and managing natural resources, conserving agricultural lands, and connecting people to nature through public access. Shortly after its founding in 1993, the Authority acquired its first property interest in 1995 as a gift from Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District on 20 acres near Summit Road, known as the La Point Scenic Easement. In 1999, the Authority made its first fee title acquisition in partnership with The Nature Conservancy through the purchase of 3,311 acres, which became the Palassou Preserve, located east of Gilroy in the Diablo Range. To date, the Authority has protected approximately 28,920 acres through acquisition of fee-title, conservation easements, and contributions to partnerships with other land conservation organizations.

DISCUSSION

Guided by the 5-Year Plan (1996) and the Santa Clara Valley Greenprint (2014), the Real Property Program is responsible for implementing the Authority's mission by conserving land for biodiversity, agriculture, scenic viewsheds, climate resilience, and public access through the acquisition of property interests. Acquisitions tend to occur opportunistically, and larger properties often require partnerships with other land conservation organizations such as the Peninsula Open Space Trust, Santa Clara County Parks, and Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency to leverage funds and pool resources. The Authority has also been very successful in obtaining grant funding from public and private grant funders to support its land acquisitions.

Currently, the Authority owns 16,839 acres in fee-title, holds conservation easements over 5,225 acres, and contributed to the protection of 6,856 acres by other land conservation organizations. 8,117 acres of the Authority's lands have been dedicated for open space purposes by the Authority's Board, including portions of Rancho Cañada del Oro, Sierra Vista, and Palassou Preserves.

In addition to acquiring property interests, staff monitors the Authority's conservation easements on an annual basis, following best practices set forth by the Land Trust Alliance. This monitoring helps ensure that the restrictions of the easement are upheld in perpetuity.

Staff presented an overview of the Authority's Real Property Program, the Authority's land holdings, how the Authority protects lands, and current priorities to the Board of Directors on February 22, 2024.

RECOMMENDATION

Receive an informational presentation on the Authority's Real Property Program, the Authority's land holdings, how the Authority protects lands, and current priorities.