



GREEN FOOTNOTES

COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS www.GreenFoothills.org

STRATEGIC PLANNING ISSUE 2007

SPECIAL ISSUE!

Committee for Green Foothills
Strategic Plan
2007 — 2012





**COMMITTEE FOR
GREEN FOOTHILLS**

Committee for Green Foothills is a grassroots 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to establish and maintain land use policies that protect the environment throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara County.

Founded in 1962, Committee for Green Foothills is leading the continuing effort to protect open space and the natural environment of the Peninsula and Coast. Through grassroots education, planning and legislative advocacy, CGF works to protect and preserve our local natural resources, views and open space.

Committee for Green Foothills

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Board Members

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Sue LaTourrette, SECRETARY
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Wendee Crofoot, OFFICE MANAGER
Alan Bernstein, Finance Manager

Cover photo: View from the Stanford dish,
by Kathy Switky.

May, 2007



Dear Friends,

For 45 years, Committee for Green Foothills (CGF) has worked on behalf of you - our members and supporters - to preserve open space in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. Together with other dedicated groups and individuals, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that the natural areas of our foothills, bay and coast are preserved for present and future generations.

In 1962, in response to plans by Palo Alto to urbanize the city's western hills all the way to Skyline Boulevard, a group of 25 visionary citizens led by Pulitzer Prize winning author Wallace Stegner, Lois Crozier-Hogle, and Ruth Spangenberg, banded together to defend the foothills. Gary Gerard suggested the name "Committee for Green Foothills" which reflected the positive stance of being "for" environmental protection - an important outlook that continues to guide our work today.

Our founders understood that our natural heritage would slowly be destroyed through carelessness, indifference, and poor planning if no one spoke up for the intrinsic value of open space. Through the formation of CGF, they created a mechanism to work with elected officials, planning agencies, neighborhood groups,

and others to preserve our wild areas for solace, respite, recreation, and wildlife. In the four decades since, we have proven our effectiveness time and time again.

They had a vision, and a simple plan. Over the years, CGF's work has grown immensely in both geographic scope and complexity. This past year, CGF Board members and staff embarked on a strategic planning process to set a course for the next 5 years that would be responsive to the challenges we face today. This new Strategic Plan will allow us to respond to these challenges, while remaining true to the founding vision.

To more clearly communicate our goals and objectives to CGF members and supporters, we are sharing this Strategic Plan with you. This plan will serve as our guide as we continue to work strategically and effectively to protect the invaluable open space assets of our area. We value your continuing confidence in our work and your support for our endeavors.

Chris Powell

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

April Vargas

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

Committee for Green Foothills

Strategic Plan *2007 — 2012*

Committee for Green Foothills is a widely acknowledged leader in protecting the environment from unwise sprawl development. Focused on San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, we advocate for strong policies and regulations that protect open space and promote sustainable land use planning. We lend our voice, expertise, and knowledge to achieve our mission: to protect the open space, farmlands and natural resources of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties through advocacy, education and grassroots action.

Recently surveyed members, former board members and donors told us they value Committee for Green Foothills for our ability to:

- Vigilantly monitor emerging and ongoing local land use issues impacting the environment
- Move quickly and nimbly to address land use issues as they arise
- Take tough positions when necessary to protect our natural resources
- Provide high-quality, well-researched information to decision-makers, resulting in respect for our positions
- Deliver real environmental victories!

CGF accomplishes these victories by:

- Promoting sound land use policies and general plans that protect the environment
- Working to pass laws that protect open space, natural resources and agricultural lands
- Insisting that local governments uphold environmental regulations
- Monitoring development proposals and opposing those that are damaging to open space, natural resources and farmlands
- Promoting park and open space acquisitions and supporting adequate funding for maintenance and stewardship of public lands
- Collaborating with citizens, community groups and environmental colleagues to maximize our effectiveness
- Supporting well-planned urban infill as an alternative to suburban sprawl development
- Providing environmental education through our publications and informational forums
- Taking strategic battles to the voters or to court when all else fails



The first President of Committee for Green Foothills, Wallace Stegner – celebrated writer, Stanford professor, and passionate environmentalist – served not only as a galvanizing force for the public, but also as the most eloquent voice for the foothills.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

At its inception, CGF relied on volunteers and grassroots activists. As our scope of work and geographical interest increased, Pat Barrentine became our first employee whose job entailed managing the office as well as covering environmental issues in both San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, at a stipend-level salary (\$200/month). Subsequently, we hired two county Advocates and an Office Manager. In 2000, CGF hired its first Executive Director, Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, who professionalized its office operations, and was able to expand its staff, communications and outreach programs, thanks to very generous support from our donors. The exception to this trend towards paid staff positions has been our Advocate for San Mateo County, Lennie Roberts, who has held her job as a full-time volunteer since 1978. As Lennie transitions to Emeritus status in the future, we will seek new funding for her Advocate position.

Today, Committee for Green Foothills has a budget of \$350,000 and 4.25 full time staff (this includes our one volunteer employee). Our revenue is generated largely from private donor support. In Fiscal Year 2006-07, 67% of our income came from community membership and private donor support and 24% from special events.

Protecting Open Space

Many aspects of CGF's work have changed since our founding in the 1960s. Evaluating our successes and failures helps inform our strategies, goals and objectives for the future. Today, although significant areas of our region's open space lands have been protected, we have lost much of our agricultural heritage as well as environmentally important bay lands in the continuing struggle to balance the need for economic development and environmental protection.

Our challenges for the future are great, perhaps greater, than ever. CGF was founded to defend a critically important area – the Palo Alto foothills. Today, we must maintain vigilance over

into the greenbelt and encouraging people to commute to jobs from great distances. CGF will expand our advocacy efforts at the policy level to support the creation of sustainable, livable communities in existing urban areas by emphasizing compact infill development over suburban sprawl and protecting open space on the urban edge and in unincorporated areas of the two counties.

Finally, while today's growing concern over global warming did not confront CGF's founders, it is, in many ways, a land use issue. Increasing the density of our downtown and existing urban areas makes public transit alternatives more feasible and



Coyote Valley farmlands where San Jose proposes to build a new satellite town of 80,000. Photo by Ernie Gotein.

previously hard-won battlegrounds, while expanding our area of interest to include regions threatened by suburban sprawl, such as Coyote Valley and southern Santa Clara County.

While continuing to advocate for sound land use decisions, as we have in the past, we are now advocating for the protection of natural resources – including wetlands, streams, riparian corridors, forests, watersheds, wildlife and endangered species habitats. Our professional staff has grown and we have added the technical expertise we need to meet these advocacy challenges.

As our region's population grows, housing shortages caused by the jobs-housing imbalance drive up housing prices, placing additional pressure on decision-makers to expand housing

reduces dependence on the automobile. Preserving open land adjacent to San Francisco Bay reduces the amount of land at risk of flooding from sea level rise. Reducing impervious paved surfaces in our watersheds supports groundwater recharge and preserves precious drinking water in face of water shortages. Creating a connected and permanently protected network of natural open spaces provides necessary wildlife habitat that becomes more critical as our local climate changes. Maintaining the viability of local agriculture allows us to feed ourselves when transportation of foodstuffs from afar becomes too costly. Faced with such uncertainty about the future needs of the planet, our work to stop suburban sprawl development from overtaking sensitive natural areas and to preserve functioning natural systems may be our best local investment in the future.

Core Strategies

The following seven core strategies will implement Committee for Green Foothills’ goals and objectives for the next five years:

- 1 Prevent suburban sprawl from impacting farmlands, scenic views, and natural habitats in Southern Santa Clara County
- 2 Protect prime agricultural lands on the San Mateo County Coast
- 3 Preserve significant remaining open space and natural habitat areas throughout the two counties
- 4 Promote the establishment of sustainable land use and natural resource policies and plans to support our vision and mission
- 5 Increase the visibility of Committee for Green Foothills in order for the broader community to better understand the issues and support our work
- 6 Diversify our funding base in order to improve our financial sustainability
- 7 Address the transition from a long-time volunteer Advocate to a paid Advocate position for San Mateo County



Great horned owl nestlings.
Photo by Peter LaTourrette, www.birdphotography.com.



The mid-Peninsula section of the Santa Cruz Range...is the greatest single asset of the entire valley. It is scenic backdrop, protective watershed, air conditioner, and recreational retreat. Remove it, overbuild it, and the Peninsula cities lose all their quality."

— CGF Founding President
Wallace Stegner



Pescadero Marsh. Photo by Lennie Roberts.

Goals and Objectives

ADVOCACY

Goal > *To focus our advocacy efforts where we can have greatest effect in protecting significant open space lands within San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties*

Objectives > *Reduce sprawl in San Jose and southern Santa Clara County*

- Maintain and strengthen “triggers” in the City of San Jose’s General Plan that will delay housing development within the 6,800-acre, largely agricultural Coyote Valley until most of the City’s infill opportunities have been exhausted and 5,000 jobs have been created within Coyote Valley
- Encourage San Jose to change zoning designations from housing to open space on remaining open space areas within its sphere of influence
- Protect the urban reserve established for Almaden Valley from unnecessary development
- Oppose development of the Sargent and Castro ranches, two landholdings totaling 13,000 acres near Gilroy and the Pajaro River
- Preserve prime farmland adjacent to Morgan Hill and Gilroy
- Maintain strong general plan provisions in the City of San Jose and Santa Clara County general plan updates that protect open space and reduce sprawl
- Support infill opportunities within the City of San Jose, such as on North First Street
- Work with the Local Area Formation Commission (LAFCo) to formulate and implement a strong agricultural mitigation policy in Santa Clara County
- Promote a strong Santa Clara County Habitat Conservation Plan to preserve ranchlands for potential habitat areas to mitigate for development
- Work with the agricultural community to better understand what is needed to maintain the viability of local farming, including conducting a Santa Clara County Farm Tour in 2008



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“Every green natural space we save, saves a fragment of our sanity and gives us a little more hope that we have a future.”

— Wallace Stegner



Farmer Joe Muzzi showing off his San Mateo Coast fava beans. Photo by Cheri Parr/Coastsider.com.

> *Protect San Mateo Coast farmlands*

- Work with the San Mateo Ag Futures Alliance and other groups to promote awareness of locally grown produce to help support and maintain the viability of local farming
- Support off-stream storage ponds that enable farmers to reduce their use of scarce stream water during the summer months
- Participate in collaborative planning efforts for the Pilarcitos Creek watershed

> *Preserve significant open space and natural habitat lands*

- Fight development plans for building on large remaining bay land properties and support their restoration
- Promote preservation of natural open spaces by local land trust and land management agencies
- Ensure Devil's Slide surplus lands are protected for recreational uses
- Promote well-managed public access to preserved lands and parks
- Continue working with the Santa Clara Valley Water District to ensure strong protections of streams and water bodies
- Work to preserve the historic public access to the open lands of Stanford University and protect Stanford open space lands from additional campus development

> *Advocate sustainable land use policies, plans, and ordinances*

- Defend land use policies that limit subdivision and lot line adjustments in Santa Clara County
- Review commercial timber harvest plans and work with reviewing agencies (i.e., California Department of Forestry, Department of Fish and Game, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board) to ensure watersheds and sensitive species habitats are protected
- Support enactment of a strong watershed protection ordinance in San Mateo County
- Work to enact limits on impervious surfaces within watersheds as part of the regional water quality waste discharge program
- Support policies that promote attractive, affordable, livable housing in downtown areas and along transportation corridors
- Continue to monitor and take action to ensure Stanford University's compliance with its General Use Permit

> *Litigation*

- Pursue existing litigation related to Stanford's General Use Permit and the location of the required public access trails
- Establish a litigation fund of \$50,000 to allow us to respond quickly when litigation is necessary to protect significant open space resources or uphold important environmental regulations



Groundbreaking for the Devil's Slide Tunnel. Photo by Barry Parr / coastsider.com.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Goal > *To increase educational programs and community outreach efforts to create more support for and engagement in our advocacy work.*

Objectives > *Educational Programs*

- Provide 2-3 educational programs annually for members and the general public on topics related to our advocacy to build greater public awareness of our work
- Use our website, newsletter, action alerts, brochures, and other materials as educational tools to inform our members and increase support on critical issues
- Prepare a Lands At Risk Map to illustrate priority areas for our advocacy work

> *Public relations and communications*

- Communicate and clarify our value to the community to attract new members and to differentiate ourselves from other environmental organizations
- Consider renaming the organization to reflect better the geographic breadth of the work we do beyond the “foothills”; announce the new name in conjunction with our 50th anniversary in 2012
- Create a new board committee to focus on outreach and communications

> *Community Involvement*

- Reach out to minority communities to find common interests in land use and related environmental issues
- Use action alerts as a tool to mobilize volunteers and create more community involvement
- For anticipated ongoing major projects, create task forces to collaborate with other environmental groups and community leaders to more effectively advocate on behalf of environmental concerns
- Get to know community leaders in San Jose and southern Santa Clara County to increase local residents’ understanding and involvement with our advocacy efforts there
- Regularly publish volunteer needs on the website and newsletter and use other volunteer recruitment resources



April Vargas and Lennie Roberts talk with local residents about preserving the coast. Photo: Zoe Kersteen-Tucker.

FINANCIAL

Goal > *To increase our financial sustainability in order to support our advocacy work.*

Objectives > *Financial management*

- Conduct annual audit reviews
- Reduce the percentage of expenses going towards general administration

> *Fundraising*

- Stabilize the membership base by prioritizing renewal of lapsed donors and recruiting new members
- Grow the support for the organization through upgrading gifts of mid-level donors and more contact with major donors
- Use briefings by Advocates to connect donors more closely with our work

> *Special Events*

- Host “Lennie’s 30th anniversary party” in 2008 to celebrate this milestone and use this event to generate financial support for hiring a second paid Advocate position
- Raise a minimum of \$50,000/year from special events, including increasing corporate sponsorship

ADMINISTRATIVE

Goal > *To expand staffing resources in response to a future staff transition and consider other changes needed to meet core strategies.*

Objectives > *Staffing*

- Prepare for a future transition to a paid San Mateo County Advocate position by raising \$150,000 to support two years of costs
- Retain our volunteer San Mateo County Advocate in Emeritus status
- Consider advocacy needs in Santa Clara County and determine whether an additional position is needed to conduct community outreach in that area and/or consider ways to realign staff responsibilities to better fit the needs of the organization

> *Infrastructure*

- Consider opening an office in southern Santa Clara County, depending on financial feasibility and opportunities to co-locate with other groups
- Upgrade computers and software, including customized donor database; keep website current
- Archive historical information, preserve significant historical resources and project files

> *Planning, evaluation, and quality control*

- Develop annual work plans and priorities for advocacy, outreach and education efforts
- Evaluate outreach and advocacy strategies to determine how well they build membership
- Resolve the organization's legal name from the current "Green Foothills Foundation dba Committee for Green Foothills" before the dba expires in 2009.

GOVERNANCE

Goal > *Develop and maintain an effective, active, and informed Board of Directors whose governance and support roles help to achieve the program goals in this strategic plan*

Objectives > *Board Membership*

- Increase board diversity by recruiting new board members from underrepresented communities
- Maintain a balance of members from San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, while recruiting new members from southern Santa Clara County
- Apply a skills and experience matrix to identify board recruitment needs
- Recruit new members experienced in public relations and communications
- Create a process for re-engaging former board members, such as creating an emeritus board of directors, in order to keep their valuable contacts and expertise

> *Board Participation in Fundraising*

- Maintain a policy of 100% board participation in fundraising, with 100% giving and increased participation in new member recruitment and major donor solicitation
- Provide training to new board members
- Engage former board members in helping with donor solicitations

"All who look out at the hills in the morning... owe to the people of the Committee for Green Foothills many of the blessings that they see."

— Wallace Stegner

Measurements of Success

To track our progress in meeting the core strategies, goals and objectives laid out in this strategic plan, we would track the following measurements of success:

- 1 Successes, defeats, and partial victories related to advocacy objectives: how many battles were a win, lose or draw?
- 2 How many acres were preserved or protected through our successes and partial victories?
- 3 Number of participants in our educational programs
- 4 Number of members in our action alert program
- 5 Number of press articles mentioning CGF
- 6 Percentage of expenses going towards program costs
- 7 Number of active members
- 8 Number of new members
- 9 Organizational bottom line: total income, expenses and net for the year
- 10 Success in fundraising campaigns to create a litigation fund and to hire a paid advocate for San Mateo County



CGF members and young friends celebrating in the foothills, 1964. Photo: Hank Kranzler.



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