

Final Report of the 2006 Natural Resources Task Force

A Compilation of Issues and Recommendations
Regarding Natural Resource Related Policies and Practices
In the City of San Carlos

Prepared By
The Natural Resources Task Force
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1. Introduction

1.1. Task Force Mission

On 6/17/05, the City Council held a kickoff workshop for its Community Strategic Planning process (part of the “Sustaining the City of Good Living” effort), and identified a variety of desired outcomes for the process, including:

- Educating, informing, and being accountable to the community
- Finding ways to be “good stewards,” as defined by the community
- Thinking “outside the box”
- Establishing a good philosophical base for moving forward
- Being leaders and champions of (the City’s) vision in the region and beyond

The Planning process also called for the creation of citizen task forces to explore various issues, including a Natural Resource Task Force focused on various natural resource topics (e.g. conservation, recycling, open space, creeks). The mission of each task force, as defined by the Planning process, was to:

- Assemble general background information on its issue/topic
- Explore related existing City practices (or the lack thereof)
- Explore issue/topic best practices
- Identify related goals and priorities for the City Council to consider
- Develop policy recommendations related to the issue/topic
- Keep in mind:
 - The City’s current financial situation
 - A focus on recommendations viable over the next 5 years
 - Longer term advisory recommendations OK if deemed appropriate

1.2. Task Force Timeframe & Structure

The City kicked off the Natural Resource Task Force on 3/2/06 by hosting a meeting for some 15 or so interested citizens. At this and subsequent meetings the Task Force worked internally and with City staff to clarify how it would go about its business, including:

- Selecting a chairperson (Drew Shell)
- Laying out timelines and milestones to help the Task Force meet the City’s target of a final Task Force report and presentation in the May 2006 time frame
- Dividing into 3 subgroups in order to make best use of the time available to the Task Force:
 - Conservation & Natural Resource Management
 - Creeks & Watersheds
 - Open Space

Over the subsequent three months the Task Force and its subgroups investigated and developed a broad array of goals and recommendations. This report compiles the results of those efforts, and consists of four main sections (one general, and one for each subgroup), preceded by a brief summary. Each of the main sections includes clearly identified high level goals, suggested policies and actions to help achieve those goals, and additional background information and references intended to clarify the thinking behind the recommendations, or provide resources for further investigation.

In addition, as a means to facilitate its work, the Task Force created a website (www.krein.org/~shell/NatRsrc/) to capture and share information. This website is available to the City for reference, though it is recommended that the City copy the website since it is unclear how long into the future the existing site will be maintained and available.

1.3. Task Force Limitations

As mentioned above, the Task Force divided itself into three subgroups. These subgroups operated fairly independently, and each developed its own subgroup report. While an effort has been made to meld the results into a single, coherent Task Force report, it should be noted that some of the quirks of our “divide-and-conquer” subgroup approach may still show through in the form of overlap between the subgroups, dissimilar subgroup approaches or report structure, occasional redundancy, etc. We hope that the reader will look beyond such issues, and not allow them to detract from the overall impact of the report.

It should also be noted that efforts of the Task Force were limited by its brief, three month lifespan, as well as the limited availability of staff during budget-preparation season. As a result we were:

- Unable to consider *all* issues that might fall under the heading of “natural resources”
- Unable to exhaustively explore and address all the issues we *did* consider
- Unable to exhaustively explore existing City policies, ordinances, standards, etc.
- Unable to fully prioritize the recommendations presented here

Instead we endeavored to focus as much as possible on higher level goals, recommendations, and references that provide the City with an adequate starting point to move forward on the issues. It is our hope and anticipation that the City, with ongoing input from the community, will carry the process forward and:

- Identify which, if any, of the issues are already addressed in various City policies, procedures, or General Plan language
- Further explore, refine, and implement the recommendations as appropriate
- Continue to explore these and other issues in the future

1.4. Our Thanks

Finally, before getting into the meat of the report, the Natural Resources Task Force wishes to thank the City for seeking our involvement, and allowing us to provide meaningful input on how we want our City and community to look and act. This is a decidedly positive step, which we hope is the beginning of an ongoing process that will benefit all who reside in our “City of Good Living.”

1.5. Definitions

Some of the terms used in this document include:

CDFG, DFG	The California Department of Fish and Game
CEQA	The California Environmental Quality Act
CNDDDB	California Natural Diversity DatabaBase (maintained by CDFG)
The City	The City of San Carlos
The County	San Mateo County
LAFCO	The County body that reviews/approves annexations
NGO	Non governmental organization
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
SCGP	The San Carlos General Plan
Task Force	The Natural Resources Task Force
Workshop	The fall 2005 Natural Resources Workshop

2. Summary of Major Goals

Presented here is a brief summary of the major natural resource goals adopted by the Task Force. This is intended to give the reader an initial understanding of the scope and intent of Task Force recommendations, however a significant amount of the supporting information and recommendation details have, of necessity, been removed. To gain a full understanding of Task Force recommendations, the remainder of the report should be read in detail.

• **General Natural Resource Major Goals:**

- *Ensure that natural resource issues continue to receive adequate attention in the future, including the taking of concrete steps by the City to achieve natural resource related goals.*
- *Inform, educate, and involve the public regarding natural issues wherever, and to the greatest extent, possible.*
- *Seek and utilize outside resources and collaboration to maximize the efficiency and timeliness of achieving natural resource goals.*

• **Conservation & Resource Management Major Goals:**

- *Establish the City as a leading model of good conservation and resource management policies.*
- *Establish a Zero Waste Policy, including reduction of waste and safe disposal of hazardous materials.*
- *Maximize conservation of energy, water, and other natural resources, while minimizing pollution of air, water, and the environment.*
- *Reduce the use of hazardous chemicals for landscape management.*
- *Maximize the use of green building techniques for all public and private construction and remodeling.*
- *Maintain and expand the “Urban Tree Canopy.”*

• **Creek & Watershed Major Goals:**

- *Restore and preserve the natural character of creeks, riparian areas, and watersheds throughout the City’s Sphere of Influence.*
- *Approach management of creeks, riparian areas, and watersheds with an emphasis on entire watersheds as complex, interdependent regions where all decisions must be considered in light of their broader, cumulative impacts.*
- *Ensure a broad, deep, long lasting City commitment to restoration, preservation, and sound management of creeks, riparian areas, and watersheds.*
- *Maximize community awareness of and involvement in the restoration, preservation, and sound management of creeks, riparian areas, and watersheds.*

- **Open Space Major Goals:**

- *Maximize the amount of Open Space for Outdoor Recreation and Open Space for Preservation of Natural Resources within the City's Sphere of Influence.*
- *Ensure the public's ability to enter and enjoy open space within the City's Sphere of Influence.*
- *Maintain the character and integrity of natural resources within vacant and open space areas in the City's Sphere of Influence, including:*
 - *Preservation of wild lands in their wild and native state*
 - *Preservation of native species/habitat/vegetation types, and overall diversity*
 - *Preservation of creeks and riparian corridors*
 - *Preservation of views of such resources from surrounding areas*

3. General Natural Resource Considerations

In addition to the more targeted goals and recommendations developed by each subgroup, there were a few issues, of a more general nature, which came up repeatedly across *all* the subgroups. These broad, high level issues are presented here.

3.1. Major Goal #1: Ensure The Process Continues!

While the Task Force greatly appreciates the opportunity to provide our input to the City, there is also a high degree of anxiety and fear that our hard work will be in vain, and that this report will, after initial consideration, simply end up “on a shelf collecting dust,” with no real steps being taken by the City to achieve the stated goals or implement the recommended policies and actions.

Such feelings are reinforced by knowledge that, just seven years ago, the City initiated the “Quality of Life Community Forum process,” including the formation of a Quality of Life Steering Committee, which tasked a Sustainable Community Program Subcommittee with a mission very similar to ours. That Subcommittee, though still technically in existence, is now inactive. And its detailed 2001 “San Carlos Sustainable Community Program Work Plan,” featuring issues and recommendations similar to those in this report, has languished, with no clear indications from the City of the steps taken in response, let alone achievement of stated goals. The Work Plan was not even mentioned by the City as background for the current Task Force process, and was only discovered by Task Force members half way through the life of the Task Force.

In addition, while the General Plan and various City ordinances include positive language about a variety of natural resource topics, the practical reality is that such language often is forgotten, or simply waived, when it conflicts with development, economic, or political interests, to the overall detriment of the community and its quality of life.

It is clear that more must be done to ensure the issues raised in this Task Force report, in the 2001 Work Plan, and elsewhere, continue to receive attention and support. With that in mind, we put forth the following major goal:

Ensure that natural resource issues continue to receive adequate attention in the future, including the taking of concrete steps by the City to achieve natural resource related goals.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

3.1.1. Recommended Policies/Actions

- a) Review the 2001 “San Carlos Sustainable Community Program Work Plan” for additional information and recommendations regarding the issues covered in this report.
- b) Revive the Sustainable Community Program Subcommittee (revising its charter and membership as necessary), and task it with carrying the work of this Task Force forward, including:
 - Further refinement of issues and recommendations
 - Working with the City to implement recommendations via the General Plan, City ordinances/programs, practices/procedures of City staff, etc.
 - Investigation of additional issues not considered or adequately addressed in this report
- c) Fully support the recently approved Flooding, Land Use & Creeks committee.
- d) Evaluate this report and provide an official City response to the community evaluating the feasibility of, and timeframe for, implementing its recommendations. An initial response should be possible by early Fall 2006.
- e) Develop and implement action plans for the achievement of natural resource goals. These plans need not be done all at once, but may be done one after another, on a topic by topic basis, as

City resources allow. However continuous forward momentum and progress should be maintained.

- f) Fully enforce General Plan policies, City ordinances/standards, etc. This should include:
 - Adherence to the actual intent of policies, ordinances, and standards, especially when ambiguity or a “letter of the law” interpretation would weaken natural resource protections
 - Minimization of waivers, exemptions, and exceptions; these should be granted only in extreme circumstances, and where the general public good is clearly served
 - Always acting, and making decisions, with the general public good in mind
- g) Ensure that this report is presented to and/or reviewed by key City staff members (e.g. those in Planning, Building, Public Works).
- h) Ensure that the criteria for selecting new City employees and contractors include familiarity and adeptness with natural resource issues, policies, techniques, best practices, etc. This is especially important when filling leadership roles (e.g. Planning/Building director, Public Works Director, City engineers).

3.2. Major Goal #2: Public Awareness & Involvement

The Task Force acknowledges that the goals put forth in this report are in some ways quite aggressive and forward thinking. We feel this is both important and justified, since our City and community will not become what we hope it to be unless we have the courage and dedication to “dream big,” explicitly envisioning the reality we hope to achieve.

We also recognize that achieving the stated goals is not a given, that hard work will be required, and that community involvement in such efforts is critical to their success. Simply put, the stated goals cannot and will not be achieved without the support and involvement of an engaged and well informed public. With that in mind, we put forth the following major goal:

Inform, educate, and involve the public regarding natural issues wherever, and to the greatest extent, possible.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

3.2.1. Recommended Policies/Actions

- a) To the greatest extent possible, post natural resource related information, City policies/practices, and any other relevant documentation on the City’s website. This should include the General Plan, which is currently only available piece meal, by request and at significant copying cost.
- b) Engage the public through outreach and education (e.g. signage, handouts, workshops/seminars, volunteer programs, docent led activities).
- c) Regularly (perhaps annually) issue a City report on natural resource issues, goals, steps and actions taken, progress made, etc.
- d) During the upcoming General Plan revision process, ensure that public input, including this report, is actively sought, fully considered, and integrated into the Plan to the greatest extent possible.

3.3. Major Goal #3: Seek Outside Resources & Collaboration

While it is clear that broad City and community involvement will be required to achieve the goals put forth by the Task Force, it is also clear that we need not, and in fact should not, act in isolation. Many outside sources for information, collaboration, and even funding, are available. And though finding them may involve near term expense or staff time, the benefits of not “reinventing the wheel” are well worth that investment. With that in mind, we put forth the following major goal:

Seek and utilize outside resources and collaboration to maximize the efficiency and timeliness of achieving natural resource goals.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

3.3.1. Recommended Policies/Actions

- a) When revising City policies and programs, or undertaking new ones, always seek best practices, examples, and other information which may be available from other agencies, NGOs, community groups, or the like. This should include seeking such information from neighboring communities, the County, and other communities with similar characteristics, constraints, or goals.
- b) To the greatest extent possible, cooperate with other groups (e.g. public agencies, NGOs, community groups) to ensure that all are working in a coordinated and efficient fashion to achieve natural resource goals.
- c) Actively seek outside grants, donations, tax relief, or other sources of funding, to minimize City costs associated with achieving natural resource goals.

4. Conservation & Resource Management Subgroup

4.1. Subgroup Introduction

The Conservation and Resource Management subgroup of the Task Force focused on energy and water conservation, preservation and wise use of natural resources, environmental protection, and recycling and reuse of materials and products.

The Conservation and Resource Management subgroup was comprised of the following citizens:

- Suzanne Henderson Emerson
- Pat Bell
- Patricia Potter
- Margaret Desmond
- David Crabbe

4.2. Major Goal #1: Be A Model Of Good Conservation

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Establish the City as a leading model of good conservation and resource management policies.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

4.2.1. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall endeavor to be a model of good conservation and resource management practices.

4.2.2. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Create a full-time position of Natural Resources Manager, to develop and oversee implementation of policy.
- b) Implement a system to evaluate and quantify the City Government's impact on issues of conservation, resource management, and the environment.
- c) Review and expand the scope of the Sustainable Community Program Subcommittee (appointing additional members if necessary) to serve as a permanent citizen's advisory committee to aid the City with:
 - Developing and implementing conservation and resource management policies
 - Researching best practices
 - Researching available support and funding options
 - Presenting program and code proposals to the City
- d) Publicize City practices and policies that support good conservation and resource management. Publicity methods could include:
 - Postings at City parks
 - Postings on the City website
 - Inclusion in the Recreation Department's Recreation Activity Guide

- Press releases to local newspapers

4.2.3. Sources Of Additional Information

4.2.3.1. Establishing A Natural Resource Manager Position

- Santa Monica Environmental Programs Division (santa-monica.org/epd/index.htm)
- San Francisco Department of the Environment (www.sfenvironment.com/aboutus/)
- San Jose Environmental Services Department (www.sanjoseca.gov/esd/about_esd.htm)

4.2.3.2. City Monitoring Of Its Environmental Impact

- Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Guidelines: “a framework for reporting on an organization's economic, environmental, and social performance” (www.globalreporting.org/guidelines/2002/a08.asp)
- Public Agencies Supplement to GRI Guidelines (www.globalreporting.org/guidelines/sectors/public.asp)

4.2.3.3. Refocusing The Sustainable Community Program

- San Carlos Sustainable Community Program Work Plan, Feb 2, 2001
- United Nations Global Compact Cities Programme (www.citiesprogramme.org)
- Steps to Sustainability: Five Things Your City Can Do to Reduce Its Ecological Footprint, by Frank Gallivan, Sophie Mintier, and Dahlia Chazan, April 2005 (www.redefiningprogress.org)
- International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (www.iclei.org)

4.3. Major Goal #2: Zero Waste Policy

The Zero Waste International Alliance (ZWIA, www.zwia.org) defines a Zero Waste Policy as one based on the principle that in natural systems there is no waste. Under such a policy:

“... all outputs are simply an input for another process. It means designing and managing materials and products to conserve and recover all resources and not destroy or bury them, and eliminate discharges to land, water or air that do not contribute productively to natural systems or the economy.”

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Establish a Zero Waste Policy, including reduction of waste and safe disposal of hazardous materials.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

4.3.1. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall establish and adhere to a zero waste policy. This shall include modifying City processes, and encouraging similar modifications among residents and businesses, to:
 - Reduce excess consumption
 - Minimize unnecessary waste
 - Maximize recycling
- b) The City shall compost or chip, then reuse, non-noxious plant materials from City properties.
- c) In its purchasing processes, the City shall increase its purchase and utilization of renewable, recycled, or reused products. The City shall also consider the full life cycle of a product or material, including the ability for the product to be reused, repaired, or recycled back into nature or the marketplace after use.

- d) The City shall endeavor to dispose of unwanted materials in a manner that encourages their reuse or recycling.
- e) The City shall establish a recycling program for City departments and employees that exceeds the minimum legal requirements.
- f) The City shall encourage sustainable businesses to move into San Carlos.
- g) The City shall encourage, support, and reward local businesses that promote recycling and sustainable practices.

4.3.2. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Divert unwanted City materials to organizations that can use or resell them (e.g. charities, thrift stores, salvage yards like Whole House Building Supply in East Palo Alto).
- b) Consider alternative flooring methods that minimize waste and/or encourage recycling, including:
 - Linoleum flooring rather than vinyl
 - Recyclable carpet squares instead of non-recyclable carpet
- c) Use wood finishes that do not preclude wood recycling at a later date.
- d) Use plates and dinnerware that are reusable or recyclable (for example, cornstarch-based instead of Styrofoam).
- e) Create educational materials (e.g. literature, posters), or utilize existing educational tools (e.g. those produced by RecycleWorks), to help City residents recognize the importance of recycling, and purchasing renewable, recycled, or reused products.
- f) Expand the City's curbside waste/recyclables collection program with Allied Waste to include:
 - Composting of yard trimmings, including establishment of a composting facility in San Mateo County (currently this material is put in land fills or trucked out of county)
 - Separate composting of noxious weeds
 - Pickup and composting of residential and commercial food waste
 - Easier options for residential recycling, like weekly pickups and less sorting
 - Curbside collection of household hazardous waste (e.g. electronics, batteries, fluorescent bulbs, thermometers, spent fire extinguishers)
- g) Require recycling at public events, including making this a permit requirement.
- h) Review and revise the construction and demolition recycling ordinance to ensure its effectiveness, and to increase the waste diversion rate over time.
- i) Verify that City staff is responsibly disposing of City generated hazardous waste.
- j) Encourage businesses within City limits to have recycling plans that identify the types of waste they generate and how that waste will be disposed of.
- k) Encourage local businesses that sell items containing hazardous materials to take back those products for safe disposal.
- l) Require battery disposal receptacles in all stores that sell batteries.

4.3.3. Sources Of Additional Information

4.3.3.1. Zero Waste Policy

- www.grn.org/zerowaste/kit/briefing/principles1.pdf
- www.cityofpaloalto.org/zerowaste/zw_intro.htm
- www.newdream.org/procure/GovernmentProcurementOctober2002.pdf

4.3.3.2. City Purchasing

- www.newdream.org/procure/GovernmentProcurementOctober2002.pdf
- Integrated Waste Management Board's Model Procurement Policies list (www.ciwmb.ca.gov/LGLibrary/Innovations/Procurement/), including:
 - City of Vacaville Source Reduction and Recycled Content Purchasing Policy (www.ciwmb.ca.gov/LGLibrary/Innovations/Procurement/Vacavill.htm)
 - City of Exeter Recycled Products Procurement Policy (www.ciwmb.ca.gov/LGLibrary/Innovations/Procurement/Exeter.htm)

4.3.3.3. Food Waste Composting

- San Francisco, through Nor Cal Waste, has implemented a city-wide composting program. Residents are encouraged to place their kitchen scraps in a city-provided container that is picked up by the garbage company. This kitchen waste is delivered to a company who converts that waste to compost (within about four months). The compost is available to residents and the extra compost is sold to several vineyards. (www.sfrecycling.com/sfgreentoter.htm)
- IWMB overview: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/LGLibrary/Innovations/FoodWaste/

4.3.3.4. Miscellaneous

- Recycling at public events: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/LGLibrary/Innovations/SpecialEvent/
- Construction/demolition waste diversion: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/LGLibrary/Innovations/CnDRecycle/Planning.htm#Community

4.4. Major Goal #3: Conserve Resources & Reduce Pollution

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Maximize conservation of energy, water, and other natural resources, while minimizing pollution of air, water, and the environment.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

4.4.1. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall increase the energy efficiency of City-owned and City-operated buildings, and shall encourage use of less-polluting energy sources to heat and cool these buildings, such as:
 - Solar panels
 - Cogeneration facilities
 - Purchase of green power
 - Ice storage air conditioning
- b) The City shall encourage residents and building owners (through rewards, incentives, education) to increase the energy efficiency of existing homes and buildings, and shall encourage use of less-polluting energy sources to heat and cool homes and buildings.
- c) The City shall utilize less-polluting energy sources to power city-owned vehicles (e.g. hybrids, hydrogen, natural gas).
- d) The City shall encourage residents and businesses (through rewards, incentives, education) to use less-polluting energy sources to power their vehicles.
- e) The City shall encourage mass transit, and transit-oriented development.
- f) The City shall encourage carpooling by City employees, residents, and local businesses.

- g) The City shall eliminate use of gas-powered landscape equipment (e.g. mowers, blowers) for City-operated properties, and shall encourage the reduction/elimination of such use by residents and businesses.
- h) For landscaping on City-owned property, the City shall install and maintain landscaping that limits water use (e.g. xeriscaping, drought-resistant plants, moisture sensors, drip irrigation, watering zones). The City shall also encourage residents and businesses (through rewards, incentives, education) to do the same.
- i) The City shall use recycled water wherever feasible.
- j) The City shall encourage (through rewards, incentives, education) installation of water-conserving plumbing fixtures and appliances in residential, industrial, and commercial buildings.

4.4.2. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Establish City planning guidelines describing types of solar panels allowed on roofs in public view. (Most photovoltaic panels and many hydronic panels are neat and attractive and should be allowed on exposed roofs. Some solar swimming pool panels may not be visually acceptable depending on type). Attractive exposed panels may inspire others to explore solar for their own homes.
- b) Educate residents about availability of PG&E rebates for purchase of energy-efficient appliances (e.g. distribute PG&E literature).
- c) Consider city rebates for installation of energy saving devices in existing homes (e.g. programmable thermostats, fluorescent lights).
- d) Publicize SAMTRANS and MTC routes, and hand out relevant literature.
- e) Educate the public to reduce long-term idling of vehicles, and reduce non-EPA-approved wood-burning fireplace use.
- f) Endorse, and take steps to implement, the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement (www.ci.seattle.wa.us/climate).
- g) Revise codes and ordinances to allow installation of recycled water systems for landscape watering wherever possible (both private and public).
- h) Consider establishing an incentive program to encourage replacement of City, commercial, and residential toilets and showerheads with low-flow fixtures.
- i) Explore the banning of tobacco smoking in outdoor public places.
- j) Explore policies and programs to limit noise pollution.
- k) Explore impacts of, and programs to limit, the "heat island" effect associated with paving and roofing.
- l) Explore impacts of tap water additives upon human health and the environment, and investigate actions and alternatives to address risks.

4.4.3. Sources Of Additional Information

4.4.3.1. Fostering Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy For Buildings

- State of California solar rebate programs
- Federal solar rebate and tax credit programs
- PG&E rebates for energy-conserving upgrades

4.4.3.2. Fostering Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy For Vehicles

- San Mateo County hybrid passenger car vehicle fleet

- Berkeley biodiesel vehicle fleet
- Sacramento electric vehicle fleet
- Bay Area Air Quality District (BAAQD)
- Local Businesses that already have energy-efficient fleets

4.4.3.3. Air Quality

- www.aqmd.gov/news1/2006/leafblowerexchangepr.html
- www.scorecard.org
- www.scorecard.org/env-releases/hap/ranking.tcl?fips_county_code=06081&comparison=st
- Santa Monica emission reduction ordinance (santa-monica.org/planning/transportation/abouttransmanagementtmo.html)
- Compilation of air/noise pollution issues associated with leaf blowers: www.nonoise.org/quietnet/cqs/leafblow.htm. Blower bans or restrictions have been adopted by several California cities, including Los Altos, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Sunnyvale, and Berkeley.
- Calabasas Comprehensive Second-Hand Smoke Control Ordinance (www.cityofcalabasas.com/secondhandsmoke.html)
- EPA Heat Island web site (www.epa.gov/heatisland)

4.4.3.4. Water Conservation, Recycling, Etc.

- Redwood City and Cal Water offer rebates to residents to install low-flow toilets and energy-efficient washing machines
- Recycled water programs in Daly City, Redwood City, and City of San Mateo
- South Bay Water Recycling Program (San Jose & Santa Clara, www.sanjoseca.gov/sbwr)
- San Mateo Countywide Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (STOPPP), "Bay-Friendly Landscape Guidelines: Sustainable Practices for the Landscape Professional" (www.flowstobay.org)

4.5. Major Goal #4: Reduce Landscaping Chemical Use

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Reduce the use of hazardous chemicals for landscape management.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

4.5.1. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall establish and adhere to an Integrated Pest Management System (IPM) for City properties.
- b) The City shall use natural, as opposed to chemical, fertilizers on City properties.
- c) The City shall manage and maintain Vista Park as a prototype for landscaping with California native plants and management with IPM.

4.5.2. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Establish protocols to consistently implement the IPM system.
- b) Establish a volunteer program to help in the maintenance of pesticide-free parks.
- c) Provide additional City support to maintain more pesticide-free sites (this may or may not be augmented by community volunteers).

- d) When using pesticides, ensure that the time of day of such use is chosen to minimize impact on beneficial insects.

4.5.3. Additional Information

4.5.3.1. Current City Efforts

Barry Weiss, Parks and Recreation Director, reports that the City has followed some Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices, including:

- Tracking monthly pesticide use, as required by the San Mateo County Agriculture Commissioner, and submitting a monthly report
- Physically or mechanically preventing or removing pests before resorting to chemicals, and selecting the least hazardous pesticide that will do the job
- Using the lowest effective rate of pesticide application, and applying pesticides when winds are low
- Considering the potential for contamination of waterways and storm drains, and leaving a buffer zone between the area being treated and any sensitive areas, such as creek banks

Mr. Weiss reports that the City has encouraged establishment of pilot projects and has established Vista Park as a pesticide-free site. This program is dependent upon community volunteers to help control weeds, replenish mulch, and donate and identify native plant species. However community support has significantly subsided, and we understand that chemical herbicides have been used due to insufficient volunteer weed-control efforts.

4.5.3.2. IPM

- Several bay area cities have adopted IPM for their public lands:
 - San Francisco (www.sfenvironment.com/aboutus/innovative/ipm/)
 - Sunnyvale (www.sunnyvale.ca.gov/200209/rctcs/02-363.asp)
 - Redwood City (www.redwoodcity.org/publicworks/trees/tree_pest_management.htm)
 - Santa Cruz (www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us/pw/ep/ipmpolicy.html)
 - Walnut Creek (www.ci.walnut-creek.ca.us/header.asp?genericId=3&catId=19&subCatId=558)
- From Santa Clara County:
 - Policy on pesticide use as only a last resort:
www.sccgov.org/portal/site/ipm/menuitem.244564f66e6d425580b558bb35cda429/?path=%2Fv7%2FIntegrated%20Pest%20Management%20%28PRG%29%2FResources%2FSanta%20Clara%20County%27s%20IPM%20Administrative%20Guidelines%20%26%20Procedures%2FSCC%20IPM%20%26%20Pesticide%20Use%20Ordinance
 - On-line collection of IPM best practices:
www.sccgov.org/portal/site/ipm/menuitem.244564f66e6d425580b558bb35cda429/?path=%2Fv7%2FIntegrated%20Pest%20Management%20%28PRG%29%2FResources%2FBest%20Practices
- The Pesticide Action Network has information on setting up IPM programs (415-981-7771, www.panna.org)

4.5.3.3. Establishing Volunteer Programs

- A volunteer program for IPM assistance could be modeled on the Tree City U.S.A. program (www.arboday.org/programs/treeCityUSA.cfm)
- Redwood City has a volunteer program and can provide guidelines for establishing such a program (www.redwoodcity.org/publicworks/trees/tree_planting_program.htm)

4.6. Major Goal #5: Maximize Green Building

“Green buildings”:

- Are energy and water efficient
- Are landscaped to conserve water
- Are built, remodeled, and maintained with renewable, recycled, or reused materials
- Reduce construction and demolition waste
- Improve indoor air quality

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Maximize the use of green building techniques for all public and private construction and remodeling.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

4.6.1. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall construct all new City buildings and remodels to meet “green” building standards.
- b) The City shall encourage all new private construction and remodels to use “green” building techniques.

4.6.2. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Review and revise codes so they do not discourage “green” building techniques.
- b) Provide incentives to residents and businesses for going “green” when building or remodeling. Possible incentives include:
 - Reduced permit fees
 - Quicker approval time
 - Increased square footage
 - Special recognition and awards
 - Reduced parking requirements for projects near transit
 - Cash incentives
- c) Train Planning, Building, and Public Works employees in green building, sustainable construction techniques and policies, and related topics. Actively recruit new employees who are already familiar with these concepts.
- d) Disseminate information on local sources for green building materials, such as:
 - Eco Design Resources (Quarry Road, San Carlos, www.ecodesignresources.com)
 - Whole House Building Supply (East Palo Alto, www.driftwoodsalvage.com/inventory/onhand.html)
- e) Establish an annual green building award.
- f) Establish an annual ecological home tour featuring homes:
 - Built or remodeled using green building guidelines
 - With organic and pesticide-free gardens
 - With solar energy systems

4.6.3. Additional Information

4.6.3.1. Current City Efforts

- According to City staff, the City has installed solar panels at the corporation yard, and upgraded the energy efficiency of some buildings by replacing older lighting, heating, ventilating, and air conditioning components with newer components.

- Some City staff have attended green building training seminars.
- A proposed green building policy was presented to the Planning Commission two or three years ago, but it was rejected.
- Planning staff have been referring residents to RecycleWorks for information on green building in the county.
- The City does have copies available of “San Mateo Countywide Guide – Sustainable Buildings” and the related checklist, but does not require that the checklist be filled out and returned to the City as recommended by RecycleWorks.
- Planning staff considers the upcoming update of the General Plan to be a good time to reconsider adopting a green building policy for city buildings.

4.6.3.2. Green Building

- RecycleWorks (www.recycleworks.org) provides general information on green building, the LEED certified system by U.S. Green Building Council (www.usgbc.org), examples of green building here in San Mateo County, and other information on green building. It will also take you to the County’s “green building” policy, and to links to the policies in other nearby counties. These could serve as a prototype for a city policy.
- The “San Mateo Countywide Guide – Sustainable Buildings” produced by RecycleWorks (www.recycleworks.org). The city planning and building departments should keep copies on hand.
- Alameda County Waste Management Authority (www.stopwaste.org)
- U.S. Green Building Council (www.usgbc.org) for LEED certification programs and much more
- Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington (www.mrsc.org/subjects/planning/greenbuild) links to many green building websites.
- American Institute of Architects (www.designadvisor.org)
- Global Green (Mikhail Gorbachov's global initiative, www.globalgreen.org/greenbuilding)
- San Jose LEED guidelines (www.sanjoseca.gov/esd/natural-energy-resources/greenbuilding)
- San Diego requirement that LEED “Silver Level” rating standard be used for all new and significantly remodeled municipal buildings of more than 5,000 square feet (genesis.sannet.gov/infospc/templates/esd/commercial_programs.jsp)
- Pleasanton Ordinance No. 1873 (www.ci.pleasanton.ca.us/pdf/greenbldg.pdf)
- “Green Building Design and Construction” published by the State of California (www.ciwmb.ca.gov/greenBuilding). This includes a local government training program.
- City of Scottsdale, AZ (www.scottsdaleaz.gov/greenbuilding)
- PG&E “Pacific Energy Center”, with information on commercial building energy efficiency (www.pge.com/003_save_energy/003c_edu_train/pec/003c1_pac_energy.shtml)

4.6.3.3. Awards And Incentives

- Redwood City has a program in which residents may apply for the Mayor’s Beautification Award (www.redwoodcity.org/manager/news/2005/pr_beautificationawards05.html). San Carlos could do the same for Green Building Awards, one for commercial buildings and one for residences.
- A Portland website details “green building” grants, rebates, investment funds, and tax credits, most of which are provided by non-profit organizations, the state, or other non-city entities:
 - www.green-rated.org/incentives.asp?cat=1&md=commercial (commercial)
 - www.green-rated.org/incentives.asp?md=residential (residential)
- San Jose education and outreach programs (www.sanjoseca.gov/esd/natural-energy-resources/gb-ed-outreach.htm)

4.7. Major Goal #6: Enhance Urban Tree Canopy

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Maintain and expand the “Urban Tree Canopy.”

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

4.7.1. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall establish and implement a program (working with non-profit volunteer groups if possible) to plant trees at City facilities, public parks, and in public sidewalks and parking lots (including along El Camino).
- b) The City shall encourage residents and businesses to plant trees on their private property.
- c) The City shall provide better tree maintenance and give tree maintenance guidance to City staff and private property owners.

4.7.2. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Ensure that City planning codes require tree planting in private parking lots.
- b) Allocate adequate City staff to properly maintain existing trees.

4.7.3. Additional Information

- City Trees in Redwood City is a volunteer group formed in 2000 to work with the Redwood City Public Works Department to plant and maintain trees along Redwood City's streets, at schools, and on other publicly owned property (www.citytrees.org).
- Redwood City can provide guidelines for establishing a volunteer program (www.redwoodcity.org/publicworks/trees/tree_planting_program.htm).
- Canopy Trees for Palo Alto is a non-profit volunteer group that works with Palo Alto Public Works to plant and maintain trees along streets and in public parks (www.canopy.org).
- Tree City USA (www.arborday.org/programs/treeCityUSA.cfm) is sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. The organization provides direction, technical assistance, public attention, and national recognition for urban and community forest programs. Several cities in San Mateo County have become a Tree City U.S.A., including: Atherton, Burlingame, Daly City, Menlo Park, Redwood City, and San Mateo. To become a Tree City U.S.A., a community must:
 - Have a Tree Board (which can be comprised of community volunteers, under the auspices of a City Department)
 - Have a Local Tree Ordinance with annual work and action plans
 - Spend \$2 per capita per year (can include costs of city work crews)
 - Promote Arbor Day

5. Creeks & Watersheds Subgroup

5.1. Subgroup Introduction

The Creeks & Watersheds subgroup studied issues/policies relevant to creeks and watersheds within the City's Sphere of Influence, and developed suggestions on how best to preserve and manage such resources.

The Creeks & Watersheds subgroup was comprised of the following citizens:

- **Richard Izmirian** – Creek front property owner and fisheries activist
- **Barbara Patterson** – Member of Friends of Cordilleras Creek and San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, Creeks Subcommittee
- **Sam Herzberg** – Senior Park Planner, San Mateo County Parks Division; County staff liaison to Steering Committee of Fishery Network of Central California Counties (Mendocino to Monterey)

When exploring the various relevant issues, this subgroup kept the following concepts in mind:

- Creeks are valuable community assets, and should be protected, conserved, and restored for their hydrologic, environmental, botanical, wildlife, aesthetic, and auditory benefits.
- Creek and watershed issues and management should be approached in a manner which:
 - Is inter-disciplinary and inter-departmental
 - Is multi-jurisdictional
 - Encourages cooperation
 - Involves and educates the public
- Creek and watershed protections in the Municipal Code, Riparian Ordinance, and General Plan should all be updated, strengthened, and expanded, as past City actions have not adequately protected our creeks and watersheds.

5.2. Major Goal #1: Restoration & Preservation

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Restore and preserve the natural character of creeks, riparian areas, and watersheds throughout the City's Sphere of Influence.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

5.2.1. Recommended Revisions

- a) All relevant City documents, including the General Plan and any/all riparian ordinances and regulations, should be revised to add Belmont Creek to the list of creeks and watersheds within the City's Sphere of Influence.

5.2.2. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall preserve and enhance riparian areas in all its watersheds, including promoting native vegetation, and promoting the removal of non-native invasive plants.
- b) The City shall maintain a strong, enforceable Riparian Ordinance for all four of the City's creeks (Pulgas, Brittan, Cordilleras and Belmont) and their tributaries. Such an ordinance should include (but not be limited to):
 - Meaningful set-backs

- Prohibition of solid fences within the 25 foot setback from the top of bank (such fences prevent vegetation and wildlife from accessing the up lands)
 - Requiring of a permit for *all* retaining walls in or on the creek area
 - Best Management Practices (BMPs) for biotechnical bank stabilization
 - Erosion control
 - Vegetation management
- c) The City shall encourage property owners to replace fallen trees along waterways, to provide an upper canopy of vegetation. For such replacements, the City shall encourage the use of trees native to the area.
 - d) The City shall provide information and references on natural bioengineering of creek fronts to property owners who wish to stabilize their banks.
 - e) The City shall endeavor to preserve flood plains by acquiring lands in easement or fee title.
 - f) The City shall endeavor to daylight creek segments (i.e. restore culverted or buried channels to their natural state) wherever feasible.

5.2.3. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Completely revise and strengthen the 2003 Riparian Setting & Setback Regulation in order to develop a Riparian Ordinance that:
 - Covers all creeks and tributaries in the City
 - Is based on sound science and Best Management Practices
 - Fully adheres to existing policies as well as those recommended in this report
- b) Codify the Riparian Ordinance, and include its content within the Stormwater Management Plan to remove its enforcement from the discretion of the Directors of Public Works and Planning.
- c) Develop a strategy for preserving flood plains by acquiring lands in easement or fee title. This should include collaboration with other relevant agencies and NGOs, such as San Francisco Bay Joint Venture and the Bay Area Open Space Council.
- d) Establish incentives for residents to stabilize their banks in natural ways.
- e) Sponsor highly visible creek restoration demonstration projects, and use such projects to host public, on-site workshops on creek restoration topics and methods.
- f) Create bioswales (natural vegetated areas for water collection) and other bio-filtration systems, as required by NPDES permit, to cleanse run-off using landscaped areas before it enters creeks and SF Bay.
- g) Seek funding via grants for the removal of invasive plants and installation of native trees and shrubs.
- h) Investigate creation of Zones of Sensitivity adjacent to each creek. These zones would run from the top of bank to the upland areas, with definitions of habitat and acceptable usage being provided for each zone.
- i) Consider the creation of a public native plant nursery to grow native trees and shrubs for use in landscaping and restoration throughout the City's Sphere of Influence.

5.2.4. Background

5.2.4.1. General

The San Mateo Sustainable Communities report on Habitat Protection was used as a basis for discussion at the City's council/staff retreat in June 2005. This report stated:

"Biodiversity is the variety and number of native plant and animal species in a particular region. Robust native ecosystems are the best defense against pests and disease. They also help maintain

genetic diversity and support insects and birds vital to pollination. Natural areas provide more than habitat. They also are part of the water cycle, capturing rain and releasing it as fresh water and reducing flooding during heavy rains. Healthy plant communities provide climate moderation, absorb carbon, and produce oxygen.”

In addition, it stated:

“The number and diversity of birds are good indicators of an ecosystem’s health. Birds are a vital part of the food chain, acting as both predators and prey. A relatively stable bird population indicates an ecosystem in balance. A sustained increase or decrease in the populations of specific species can result from a variety of factors including habitat changes, a problem in the food chain, an environmental threat, disease or - in the case of migratory birds - problems elsewhere in their migratory range.”

In short, protection of habitat is essential for wildlife numbers and variety, water and air quality, flood reduction, etc.

5.2.4.2. Positive Examples

- a) The City does have an arborist on staff who advises residents on tree issues and consults on tree removals.
- b) A permit is required to remove a heritage tree.
- c) The City has created a partially native plant garden at Vista Park on Crestview.
- d) The Municipal Code encourages native and drought tolerant plants for landscaping.
- e) The City has supported the tree planting efforts of a local ReLeaf group in the past.
- f) The Belmont Creek culvert project at Industrial Way involves creek restoration efforts (e.g. removal of non-native Pampas Grass and planting of various creek compatible native plants) to mitigate for the necessary removal of native willows.

5.2.4.3. Issues

- a) The City does not have a plan for protecting and restoring the integrity of the natural creeks within the four watersheds in San Carlos.
- b) There is no defined reference to restoration as a policy or goal in the Riparian Ordinance.
- c) Several new construction projects are in the planning stages which, if approved, would reduce the amount and quality of natural creek habitat.
- d) Approvals by the City of hardened bank solutions for erosion, such as rip rap and cement sacks, lead to the loss of natural bank vegetation whose deep roots would normally hold soil in place and naturally stabilize creek banks. Loss of trees also decreases shading and cooling that is vital for aquatic life.
- e) Heritage tree status is determined solely by size, with no consideration of the special characteristics of the species involved.
- f) There is no policy to replace fallen native trees (e.g. oak, bay laurel, buckeye, elderberry). When trees fall, it is beneficial to leave them in place to decay and provide nutrients and protection for young plants. But in addition, it is beneficial to replant the tree to ensure the existence of a healthy riparian canopy.
- g) It is not uncommon for creek bank maintenance to involve the clearing of all under story plants and new sprouts, treating them as weeds. This nonselective removal of vegetation gradually eliminates various native shrubs, wildflowers and perennials, thus encouraging invasive weeds to move in. Furthermore, removal of bank vegetation increases bank erosion.
- h) There is no current outreach to residents along creeks to encourage restoration of creek banks and natural riparian vegetation. As a result, erosion and loss of trees and other vegetation will continue.

5.3. Major Goal #2: Adoption Of Watershed Approach

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Approach management of creeks, riparian areas, and watersheds with an emphasis on entire watersheds as complex, interdependent regions where all decisions must be considered in light of their broader, cumulative impacts.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

5.3.1. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall pursue a watershed approach and create a budget to conduct watershed assessments, studies, and plans. This may be an expanding, phased process, and should include (but not be limited to) things like:
 - A permeable surface requirement, to counter the increasing trend toward impermeable surfaces throughout the City
 - Review and revision of paved parking requirements, with the goal of reducing paving requirements, especially in creek upland areas
 - Acknowledgement of storm water impacts outside riparian zones due to human activities (e.g. paving, lawn chemicals, pesticides/herbicides)
 - Involvement of community volunteers wherever possible
- b) The City shall establish and maintain Watershed Management Plans for all four creeks/watersheds within the City (Pulgas, Brittan, Cordilleras and Belmont). Plan goals shall include:
 - Identification of all causes of flooding
 - Improvement of creek functionality
 - Improvement of water quality
 - Re-charging of groundwater
 - Reduction of stream flashiness (i.e. susceptibility to sudden runoff surges)
 - Improvement of dry season flows
 - Restoration of creek channels to original widths and shapes
 - Support for and enhancement of a natural riparian habitat
 - Encouragement of vegetative restoration
 - Preservation of a greenbelt
- c) The City shall approach rain water management and flooding as watershed-wide issues, and shall seek a broad array of solutions appropriate to the various zones throughout each watershed. Such an approach should include (but not be limited to):
 - Use of suitable natural materials and non-structural methods to reduce flooding
 - Use of a variety of distributed, less intrusive solutions rather than large, monolithic, and expensive ones
 - Study of rain water retention methods for application throughout the watersheds
 - Viewing rain water as a local resource rather than a nuisance
 - Encouragement of permeable paving (e.g. for new and replacement roads, parking lots, driveways, patios).
 - Selection of consultants familiar with the above techniques and approaches
- d) The City shall encourage and participate in multi-jurisdictional watershed management efforts wherever watershed issues abut or span jurisdictional boundaries. Such cooperation shall include such agencies as:
 - Belmont
 - Redwood City

- San Mateo County
- San Francisco Public Utilities
- Mid Peninsula Open Space District
- Caltrain
- Caltrans

5.3.2. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Commission and fund thorough hydrologic assessments of the four San Carlos watersheds, to provide the bases for sound Watershed Management Plans for those watersheds.
- b) Maintain and support the recently established Flooding, Land Use & Creeks (FLUC) committee until it has completed its work.
- c) Establish a permanent citizen's commission to set priorities and review funding for watershed management. Among other things, this commission would help ensure:
 - A watershed approach, rather than a project by project one
 - Wise, watershed-wide use of NPDES funds
 - Avoidance of the accumulation of incremental negative impacts
- d) Establish incentives for citizens to use permeable surfaces throughout the city.
- e) Review, and follow the example of, Redwood City's recent revision to its parking requirements, which resulted in reduced paving requirements.
- f) Establish demonstration projects to show residents various ways to retain and manage rain water on their property, including:
 - Gravel sinks - basins filled with gravel, into which rain water can flow and be absorbed
 - Water gardens - lowered areas of vegetation that collect rain for water tolerant plants
- g) Establish and maintain a Creeks & Watersheds layer in the City's GIS systems in order to fully map the City's four watersheds and associated creek channels and riparian areas. This data should be drawn from and/or reconciled with the STOPPP report that shows location and status of creeks and watersheds in the City. Detailed maps and watershed information based on this data should be:
 - Provided to all City staff
 - Made available to the public, upon request
 - Posted on the City's website
- h) Alert relevant neighboring agencies whenever projects within the City include creek issues that abut or span jurisdictional agencies, and request that neighboring agencies do this same.
- i) Investigate the creation of an emergency water storage tank, such as the one proposed by Menlo Park.
- j) Partner with agencies, NGO's, businesses, and residents to reduce flooding impacts by restoring natural creek channel capacities. This is especially relevant in low gradient areas where channelization, human induced siltation, and other factors combine to significantly reduce channel capacities.
- k) Evaluate and understand the importance of tidal areas and sloughs as parts of creek and tidal plain systems.

5.3.3. Background

5.3.3.1. General

- a) The existing policies regarding runoff and storm water management are contained in the latest version of the Stormwater Management Plan as required by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and regulated by Region 2 state water board.
- b) The city participates along with the other 19 cities within the county in STOPPP (the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program) by attending monthly Technical Advisors and Public Information meetings. The meetings are conducted by a county coordinator and are attended by a manager/consultant from the state water board. Generally the cities adopt the same policies with some being more stringent or particular to their own watersheds.
- c) Accumulated sediment, a major pollutant, contributes to reduced creek capacity, and overflow of banks during storm surges. Approval is being sought to dredge in four places along Cordilleras Creek, with costs being shared by San Carlos, Redwood City, and Caltrain.
- d) Property owners are assessed NPDES fees of \$20/year (as opposed to \$6/year under the County).

5.3.3.2. Issues

- a) There is nothing in the Open Space Land Use Policies relating to an overall approach to watershed planning.
- b) There is no specific Watershed Plan for assessing, surveying, and planning for the health and restoration of creeks in the City, and no single department is responsible for the management of creeks including public and private property.
- c) The lack of a robust, coherent watershed approach has resulted in a steady reduction of the amount and quality of natural habitat. The standard practice of reviewing each project as a separate entity has led to the fragmentation of creek side vegetation, habitat, and wildlife populations, and fails to adequately consider how proposed changes, especially the addition of hardscape, will affect upstream or downstream areas.
- d) There is no effort to avoid bank hardening solutions (e.g. rock rip rap, cement sacks) to reinforce creek banks, despite the fact that such hardening speeds water flow and leads to increased scouring and erosion of banks down stream. Examples of recent, significant failures of cement sack installations exist on both upper Cordilleras Creek and lower Pulgas Creek, even though both installations were approved by the City. And yet the current plan for a new Belmont Creek culvert is an expensive solution that relies on bank hardening.
- e) Historically, San Carlos has allowed the narrowing of creek channels (using bank hardening and vertical channel walls) to allow for increased level surface for property owners. For example, paved parking behind Bing Street businesses encroaches on the creek. Resulting flooding leads to an ever increasing financial burden on area businesses; several have moved away and buildings in the area are underutilized.
- f) Existing policies fail to adequately define or address runoff or the importance of permeable surfaces.
- g) The City does not have a coherent policy to prepare for or respond to flooding prior to or during flood events.

5.4. Major Goal #3: City Commitment To Creek Protection

The City is the first and most important defender of the environment. San Carlos is more important than the Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the Environmental Protection Agency. In her essay, "Are Our Creeks Just Real Estate?", Barbara Patterson writes:

“The first lines of defense for our local creeks are the city or county bodies which set protective ordinances, holding back developers’ wishes to use as much of the upland along the creeks as possible. Creeks have been crowded, channelized and culverted in order to make more flat space for parking. **The breakdown in protecting the creeks happens somewhere between city hall and the creek’s edge.**”

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Ensure a broad, deep, long lasting City commitment to restoration, preservation, and sound management of creeks, riparian areas, and watersheds.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

5.4.1. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall pursue and foster a cooperative environment regarding creek issues.
- b) The City shall coordinate efforts under one qualified manager to pursue integrated training of staff and facilitate good communication among Building, Planning and Public Works.
- c) In its employee recruiting efforts for Building, Planning, and Public Works, the City shall endeavor to find and hire candidates with expertise in current Best Management Practices for watersheds and creeks.
- d) When selecting consultants, the City shall endeavor to find, hire, and follow the recommendations of consultants who employ a more natural approach to design and planning.
- e) The City shall establish objective and scientific hydrologic, creek, and watershed protection criteria for staff to incorporate and apply when reviewing project proposals.
- f) The City shall strictly enforce the Riparian Ordinance and other creek protection rules, regulations, and policies, including:
 - Not granting exceptions, exemptions, or variances to such rules and policies
 - Not accepting into planning any projects which, by their design, will require exceptions, exemptions, or variances to such rules and policies
 - Prohibition of contractors using creek sides as staging areas for materials and equipment
- g) The City shall establish and maintain counter tools (i.e. materials available for handout or reference at the Building Department counter) to assist property owners whenever they apply for permits to alter creek banks. These tools should include:
 - Hand outs
 - Videos
 - Lists of websites
 - Lists of manuals and books

5.4.2. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Follow up on, and provide appropriate clarification and training to address, the problem stated by the Building department head that they “have no clue” about how to interpret and communicate the Riparian Ordinance to contractors.
- b) Provide ongoing training to Planning, Building, and Public Works staffs on:
 - Watershed management & restoration
 - NPDES requirements
 - The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (STOPPP)
 - Best Management Practices for creek, road, and trail maintenance

- c) Document, and work to prevent, the cumulative and compounding impacts of incremental creek encroachments allowed through variances, exceptions, exemptions and unauthorized alternations.

5.4.3. Background

5.4.3.1. Issues

- a) The Riparian Ordinance and General Plan include generally positive policies regarding the natural environment along creeks, in open spaces, and on private property. However there are few actual, demonstrated actions drawn from these policies. The Riparian Ordinance reads as a story of pleasant ideas, rather than a clear and precise document.
- b) None of the City's staff is fluent in native plants, ecosystems, or restoration science. The Planning Department is run by Neal Martin & Associates, a consulting firm which describes itself as only "general planners". Additional, secondary consultants are hired to do environmental planning, including writing Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents for new construction projects. In a city where hundreds of property owners live along creeks, in-house expertise is essential.
- c) The Public Works Department is run by Muktari Engineering, a consulting firm. As with Planning, Public Works regularly hires additional consultants to do environmental, hydrologic, and geologic engineering. This process generally results in shortsighted, project-by-project, bank hardening solutions to creek issues.
- d) The Building department head has indicated that they "have no clue" about how to interpret and communicate the Riparian Ordinance to contractors. Clarification from Planning and training of Building staff were supposed to occur, but it is not clear if that ever happened.
- e) Presently the Director of Public Works or the Director of Planning may grant exemptions to any of the conditions on the Conditional Use Permit (a part of the project approval process). This undermines the concept of using sound, objective criteria for the protection of our creeks and watersheds. As a result, politics and/or development interests are often given more weight than sound creek and watershed management practices.
- f) The City Council, Planning Commission, Planning Department and Public Works have approved several recent creek side projects which have involved exceptions to the Riparian Ordinance, and which would damage the creeks and the natural environment. Locals have had to join together to oppose City efforts to weaken the General Plan via these exceptions. As a result, many now feel the City does not properly value and protect natural resources in our community. Examples of projects with such exceptions are:
 - 800 Brittan
 - 400 Alameda de las Pulgas
 - The proposed Winding Way annexation
- g) City staff is supporting two additional creek side projects (9 Devonshire and 665 Prospect) which will require policy/ordinance exceptions, the removal of many mature native trees, and probable intrusion into and paving of the riparian zone. Both involve replacement of existing single family homes with condominiums, one of which will have 20 units and house 30 plus people and cars. Resulting human impacts on the creek, and paving of riparian and upland areas, will have extensive negative repercussions for the creek now and in the future.
- h) The City does not provide advice or counter tools to property owners regarding bank erosion or revegetation of creek banks. City policy should be more stringent than that of the Army Corp of Engineers so that hardscape installations (e.g. cement sacks, rip rap) are not allowed, due to adverse impacts to the creeks and to downstream property owners.
- i) Several local groups participate in joint activities such as Earth Day, Home Town Days and Creek Clean Up. However City interaction and support for such activities has only been modest. For example, the Sustainable City subcommittee sponsored an Earth Day event which was

announced but not officially supported by the City. Funds of that subcommittee were absorbed by the City.

5.5. Major Goal #4: Community Involvement

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Maximize community awareness of and involvement in the restoration, preservation, and sound management of creeks, riparian areas, and watersheds.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

5.5.1. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall provide public education programs to encourage wise stewardship within San Carlos watersheds, including:
 - Stream care
 - Invasive/exotic plant removal
 - Restoration using locally native plants
 - Pollution, herbicide and pesticide reduction
 - Maintenance of wildlife corridors
 - Negative impacts of feral and domestic cats on riparian dependant species
- b) The City shall encourage, participate in, and support local creek advocacy groups and watershed councils.
- c) The City shall promote community involvement in creek preservation and restoration activities through workshops, demonstrations, and other events.
- d) The city shall endeavor to establish nature trails and creek viewing areas along local creeks for all to enjoy.

5.5.2. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Co-sponsor the production of an attractive pamphlet for residents on creek habitats and their value to all City residents. A variety of sample pamphlets from other agencies (around 20 of them) are available to provide a starting point, including good examples from:
 - The City of San Luis Obispo
 - Marin County
 - The Santa Clara Valley Water District
- b) Participate in funding the reprinting of the Streamside Planting Guide, produced by Acterra and other local communities, for distribution to creek side residents.
- c) Provide educational information on the City website about our creeks, riparian areas, and watersheds, with an emphasis on their importance to the community.
- d) Collaborate with local groups and the community to create and install signs at creek crossings and creek viewing areas which:
 - Give the name of the creek and watershed
 - Provide interpretive information about creek and riparian habitat, and their importance to the community
- e) Collaborate with local groups and the community to label storm drains to indicate what creek they drain into, and that they drain to the Bay.

- f) Collaborate with local groups and the community to seek and secure grants and other funding for restoration and preservation projects.

5.5.3. Background

5.5.3.1. General

- a) Depth and breadth of community support for the natural creek environment is reflected by citizen support for, and membership in, many environmental organizations. There are thousands of citizens in San Carlos involved with groups like:
- **Sierra Club** – The local group has over eight hundred members, leads local hikes, helps build trails in local open spaces, and supports other local groups
 - **California Native Plant Society** – A science based organization which participates in several area conservation efforts, especially at Edgewood County Park & Natural Preserve
 - **Friends of Cordilleras Creek** – Made up of creek side residents and others who love the creek habitat
 - **Friends of Pulgas Creek** – A newly formed group along the same lines as Friends of Cordilleras Creek
 - **Audubon Society** – Supports habitat preservation for all our migratory and resident birds, many of which rely on riparian areas
 - **Girl Scouts** – The nine bay area GSUSA councils are creating a Watershed badge, and will be educating girls on the importance of creeks through field trips and other activities
- b) The Recreation and Parks Department has produced a pamphlet for the public which lists the native plants at Eaton Park along with a trail map.
- c) The City participates in some amount of outreach during the September Creek Cleanup Day (a statewide campaign to clean creeks before the first fall rains). Creek side households and property owners are sent informational and educational materials which encourage residents to clear trash from the creeks and leave it at curbside for pickup by the refuse company. Public participation in the program has been modest.
- d) The City does not have an ongoing process for interaction with the property owners and community regarding creeks.

5.6. Additional Background & Information Resources

5.6.1. Public Input From Natural Resources Workshop

On 12/13/05, the City hosted a Natural Resources Workshop to gather input regarding what is important to City Residents with respect to natural resources.

The major creek and watershed goals and issues raised at the Workshop included:

- Construct linear parks and trails along creeks
- Prevent new construction from covering/cementing creeks
 - Make no exceptions to creek protection ordinances
 - Place a moratorium on all development activities within riparian zones until a precisely defined and well enforced creek setback policy is established
 - Ban channelization and undergrounding of creeks
- Where possible, daylight creeks and establish natural, vegetated banks
- Clean up and restore polluted creeks
- Deal with flooding issues
 - Plan for flood zones
 - Plan non-structural solutions for flooding

5.6.2. City Policies & Documents

Sources for existing City policies, ordinances, and other relevant information include:

- City of San Carlos General Plan, September 1992, including Land Use Element pgs LU15, 17,18, 22
- Final Draft, San Carlos Riparian Settings and Setback Regulations, January 2003
- National pollution program (NPDES) policies across City Departments, as found in the 200_ Storm Water Management Plan
- 2005 flooding studies for Laurel Street and the White Oak area, by BkF Consultants
- Dredging and sedimentation studies for the lower reaches of Cordilleras Creek, by BkF Consultants
- The 2005 culvert plan for Belmont Creek at Industrial Way
- The San Carlos Citizen's Handbook

5.6.3. Relevant Concepts From Other Agencies

Relevant documents and information from other agencies include:

- **Watershed Maintenance Standards** for County Public Works and Parks, and **Staff Reports** on the State of Creeks in San Carlos, which comply with the NPDES program
- A report by EOA, Inc, on the status of natural versus altered, culverted and buried creeks within the county
- New **Regional Water Quality Control Board** creek setback requirements that are currently under development and will be required in all NPDES programs; a public review takes place April 25 in Oakland
- **Santa Clara County Water District** creek maintenance standards for property owners
- **Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program (STOPPP)** Integrated Pest Management Ordinance
- San Mateo County's **Watershed Protection and Restoration Coordinating Council**, which is a positive example of interdepartmental coordination
- The San Francisquito Creek Watershed Council, and San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority, which are positive examples of how to develop and implement coordinated watershed planning and management
- San Mateo County's **Watershed Protection Ordinance** (still under development), which merges habitat and storm water objectives in an integrated way

6. Open Space Subgroup

6.1. Subgroup Introduction

The Open Space subgroup studied issues/policies relevant to vacant lands within the City's Sphere of Influence, and developed suggestions on how best to preserve and manage such lands. Obviously this is a very broad topic, with a large body of issues and details. To make the best use of the limited lifespan of the Task Force, the subgroup focused primarily on the following areas:

- Review of current high level City policies and actions from the General Plan
- High level issues and policy/action recommendations, as identified by subgroup members and the Natural Resources Workshop

Our work was further guided by the self stated purpose of the Open Space & Conservation Element of the General Plan: "...to inventory privately and publicly owned open spaces, and to identify measures for preserving, conserving and managing open space" (pg OSC-1).

The Open Space subgroup was comprised of the following citizens:

- Bob Friday
- Cecily Harris
- John Hoffmann
- Drew Shell

6.2. Major Goal #1: Maximize Open Space

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Maximize the amount of Open Space for Outdoor Recreation and Open Space for Preservation of Natural Resources within the City's Sphere of Influence.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

6.2.1. Recommended Revisions

Open Space Land Use policies in the Land Use Element (pgs LU-18 to LU-19):

- a) In policy 2, change "neighborhood" to "public recreational", as use of such facilities is not necessarily limited to the local neighborhoods of those facilities.
- b) In policy 3, strike "and/or fees in lieu of dedication". New subdivisions consume existing open space and increase City population, so should set aside the additional lands necessary to compensate for those factors.
- c) In policy 3, change "two and one-half acres" to "four acres", so that such dedications actually satisfy the City's recreational open space acreage standard of 4 acres per 1000 population.
- d) In policy 4, after "100-year flood plains" insert ", riparian corridors, and closely associated upland areas". These additional areas are sometimes not covered by the 100-year flood plain, particularly in the western hillside areas, and the City's 2003 Riparian Setback document clearly identifies these additional areas as important for meeting the goals listed in this policy.
- e) In policy 8, strike "The City shall not annex the unincorporated Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve site." That site currently enjoys strong protections under MROSD, but should that situation change, the City should have the ability to consider all feasible options, including annexation, to ensure the site is preserved as open space.

- f) In policy 9, strike "Limit uses in that corridor to those which are transportation oriented." The City should determine the *best* use for these lands, regardless of whether it be for transportation, open space, or some other purpose.

Open Space and Conservation policies in the Open Space & Conservation Element (pgs OSC-11 to OSC-12):

- g) In policy 1, strike the initial word "Private". The City goals put forth in the policy should apply to ALL open space areas, regardless of ownership.
- h) In policy 2, strike the trailing "as a regional park". The term "regional park" has connotations that may be incompatible with the MROSD's mission of preserving open space in its native state.

Other:

- i) Ensure that the Park And Open Space Inventory in the Open Space & Conservation Element (pg OSC-3) is complete and up to date (for example, Greenbriar/Dickson Court is now Eaton Park and Eaton Walking Trail).

6.2.2. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall increase the amount of ***permanently preserved*** open space in its Sphere of Influence through all appropriate and feasible means, including but not limited to:
 - Acquisition of vacant lands
 - Annexation as officially zoned Open Space
 - Securing of conservation easements on private vacant lands
 - Securing of trail easements on private vacant lands
 - Securing of scenic restriction agreements on private vacant lands (per section 7001 of the California Government Code)
 - Zoning of vacant lands within the City as Open Space
 - Pre-zoning of vacant lands outside the City, but within its Sphere of Influence, as Open Space
- b) The City shall endeavor to meet its standards for open space acreage based on population:
 - 4 acres of Open Space for Outdoor Recreation per 1000 population
 - 36 acres of local open space per 1000 population
- c) The City shall avoid the sale of City owned vacant properties simply to raise funds, and instead shall endeavor to utilize such properties as open space, or for other purposes that *require* the use of City lands. Where disposition is seen as necessary due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances, top priority shall be given to swapping such properties for other sensitive/desirable vacant lands, in keeping with the City's overall open space goals.
- d) The City shall endeavor to zone actual or potential open space lands within the City as Open Space.
- e) The City shall endeavor to pre-zone actual or potential open space lands outside the City, but within its Sphere of Influence, as Open Space.

6.2.3. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Establish (through citizen committees, cooperation with other agencies/NGOs, and/or other appropriate means) a unified vision for open space throughout the City's Sphere of Influence.
- b) Develop master plans for:

- A Devonshire Canyon Open Space (including unincorporated lands)
 - A Cranfield Avenue Open Space (including unincorporated lands)
 - Big Canyon Park (including expansion to encompass adjacent City owned vacant lands)
- c) Establish and maintain publicly accessible, up to date inventories of both City owned vacant lands, and privately owned vacant lands in the City's Sphere of Influence. These inventories should include:
- Size
 - Ownership
 - Zoning
 - Important natural resources
 - Existence of any restrictions, easements, or other protections
 - Permanency and defensibility of any protections that exist
 - Long term plans/goals for the property (whether actual or anticipated)
 - Desirability/potential for preservation as open space, and suggestions for how to achieve that
- d) Ensure that all lands identified in the Park And Open Space Inventory in the Open Space & Conservation Element (pg OSC-3) are zoned or pre-zoned as Open Space.
- e) Revise the City's annexation and outside sewer service agreement policies to explicitly eliminate loopholes that potentially allow development in open space areas at densities greater than allowed by Residential Land Use Policy 11.
- f) Place a moratorium on annexation and outside sewer service agreements in the western portions of the City's Sphere of Influence unless/until relevant City policies are revised and/or clarified to ensure they are properly interpreted and open space areas are properly protected.
- g) Establish incentives for private land owners to adopt conservation easements, or other suitable restrictions, to permanently protect vacant lands and open space (e.g. property tax relief, payment for easements, payment for scenic restrictions).

6.3. Major Goal #2: Ensure Public Ability To Use Open Space

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Ensure the public's ability to enter and enjoy open space within the City's Sphere of Influence.

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

6.3.1. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall endeavor to establish public access to open space lands throughout its Sphere of Influence. Such access shall be at levels appropriate to the character and conservation of the lands in questions. For example, on Open Space for Preservation of Natural Resources, access would typically be limited to trails, or appropriate conservation and restoration activities.
- b) The City shall endeavor to establish parks and publicly accessible open space such that:
- All residents live within 1/2 mile of Open Space for Outdoor Recreation
 - All residents live within 1/4 mile of publicly usable open space of some type

For these "proximity" goals, open space areas outside the City's Sphere of Influence may be taken into account.

6.3.2. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Establish, and include in the General Plan, a unified plan for a publicly accessible trail system throughout the City's Sphere of Influence. This plan should:
 - Incorporate the Trail Linkage Plan developed by the Ad Hoc Trail Committee
 - Include the design and installation of trail signage and system-wide trail maps
- b) Establish incentives for private land owners to grant trail easements, or other suitable access privileges, to permanently allow public access to vacant lands and open space (e.g. property tax relief, payment for easements).

6.4. Major Goal #3: Preserve Natural Resources

In keeping with City Council interests, public desires, existing City policies, and the standards put forth by other agencies, we put forth the following major goal:

Maintain the character and integrity of natural resources within vacant and open space areas in the City's Sphere of Influence, including:

- ***Preservation of wild lands in their wild and native state***
- ***Preservation of native species/habitat/vegetation types, and overall diversity***
- ***Preservation of creeks and riparian corridors***
- ***Preservation of views of such resources from surrounding areas***

To this end, we make the following recommendations.

6.4.1. Recommended Additional Policies

- a) The City shall endeavor to preserve wild lands in their wild and native state throughout its Sphere of influence.
- b) The City shall endeavor to preserve native species, habitat/vegetation types, and overall diversity throughout its Sphere of influence.
- c) The City shall endeavor to preserve the natural character and integrity of creeks, riparian corridors, and floodplains throughout its Sphere of Influence.
- d) The City shall endeavor to preserve the natural character and integrity of viewsheds that encompass open space and vacant lands throughout its Sphere of Influence.
- e) Where development or other activity would negatively impact rare, sensitive, or unique natural resources, the City shall endeavor to preserve those resources by giving higher priority to City policies that would limit said development or activity, than to other City policies that would potentially allow such development or activity.
- f) The City shall endeavor to reduce or eliminate the negative impacts of nonnative and/or invasive species on open space and vacant lands throughout its Sphere of Influence.
- g) The City shall endeavor to use native, drought-tolerant plants for all City landscaping activities.

6.4.2. Recommended Additional Actions

- a) Establish and maintain (in collaboration with other agencies where appropriate) publicly accessible, up to date inventories of notable natural resources on public and private lands throughout the City's Sphere of Influence. Such resources should include:
 - Rare/sensitive native species (including those considered locally rare)
 - Rare/unique features (e.g. heritage trees, unusual specimens, scenic features)
 - Creeks (including center of channel, top of bank, floodplain, and other creek parameters)

- Riparian corridors (including vegetation corridors and related upland areas)

Inventories should include:

- Resource locations, distributions, and numbers
 - Threats to the resource
 - Long term prognosis for the resource
 - Suggestions (on a per site bases where appropriate) for how to ensure the preservation of the resource
- b) Work with other agencies, NGOs, and citizens to establish programs to control/remove invasive species.
- c) Adopt sound, scientific principles in the review of environmental documents to ensure that preservation, mitigation, or other resource management efforts are based on sound science. For example, when conducting surveys or developing mitigation proposals, the City should seek the participation of, and adhere to policies and guidelines set forth by, relevant public agencies (e.g. Department of Fish and Game) or science based NGOs (e.g. the California Native Plant Society, the Audubon Society).
- d) Establish programs (in collaboration with other agencies where appropriate) to promote public education on the importance, conservation, and ecology of open space in the City's Sphere of Influence. These may include:
- On-site interpretive programs
 - On-site interpretive signs and displays
 - Interpretive brochures, field guides, and species checklists (printed and online)
 - Guided field trips for students and adults

6.5. Other Issues/Recommendations

In addition to the above recommendations, there are a number of issues which the Open Space Subgroup could not fully explore in the time available to us. We include such issues here, and strongly encourage the City to continue to explore ways to address them.

6.5.1. City Growth Limits

In the future, the City will continue to face challenges with respect to open space, housing, and various other issues. Population growth and urban/suburban sprawl will only make such matters worse. Various Bay Area communities have attempted to address such issues through the means of Growth Boundaries, Open Space zoning/pre-zoning, limitation of sewer hookups or other utilities, etc. San Carlos should consider such approaches as well.

6.5.2. Land/Fees For Development

The City currently requires dedication of park lands for new subdivisions. However this does not fully address the City's open space requirements, nor does it consider other types of development which also increase the burdens on our existing open spaces or our community as a whole. To address this, the City should consider other land dedication or fee requirements, including things like:

- Land, or fees in lieu of, for all residential development that increases City population
- Land, or fees in lieu of, for all commercial development, to ensure that businesses contribute to the well being of the community as well
- Raising the land/fees requirement to 36 acres per 1000 population, so that it satisfies the full City open space acreage target, not just the park acreage target.

6.5.3. Misuse/Abuse Of Open Space

Our existing open spaces are often subject to inappropriate activities, including but not limited to:

- Littering
- Smoking in wild areas
- Bicycling where that is not allowed
- Dog walking and/or dogs off leash where that is not allowed
- Failure to remove dog waste

Such activities damage our open spaces, threaten the wildlife, native plants, and other natural resources that rely on those open spaces, and negatively impact the ability of others to enjoy those open spaces. The City should work to find ways to minimize such misuse. Ideas include:

- Enforcement of existing rules/regulations
- Better signage regarding rules/regulations
- Public education/outreach
- Volunteer patrol programs

6.5.4. Arguello Park Master Plan

The existing master plan for Arguello Park has yet to be fully implemented. We recommend the City add the following action to the General Plan:

- Fully implement the master plan for park and open space uses at Arguello Park

6.5.5. Bay Trail

The Bay Trail network faces significant challenges in the area of the San Carlos Airport. The City should work with other relevant agencies/NGOs to identify solutions to this problem and ensure a safe and convenient route for the Bay Trail through the City's Sphere of Influence.

6.5.6. Variety Of Park And Open Space Types/Uses

In addition to the traditional playground/playfield parks on one hand, and "wild land" open spaces on the other, the City should consider a broad array of intermediate types/uses during park and open space planning, including but not limited to:

- City gardens (i.e. gardens landscaped for their botanical character)
- Community gardens (i.e. volunteer maintained vegetable/flower gardens)
- Dog parks, dog play areas, and dog walking areas
- "Medium-impact" areas (i.e. areas where people can enjoy open space without the noise/crowding of playgrounds, but without having to hike into the wild)
- Viewshed areas (i.e. areas like Vista Park, where people can enjoy views of our natural, local open space areas).

6.5.7. Potential Recovery Of Property Tax

While some methods for protecting open space might result in reduced property tax revenue for the City, state law provides for potential recovery of some of that revenue under the Open Space Subvention Act. We encourage the City to investigate the potential application of this act to help reduce the potential financial impacts of open space preservation.

6.5.8. Airport

The Open Space & Conservation element of the General Plan describes the clear zones around the San Carlos Airport as open space. While the legal and safety aspects of these zones are obvious, the Task Force has struggled to understand how the zones actually function as, or contribute to, open space. They are certainly open, cleared areas, but no explanation is given as to why they would be considered a form of green space, wildlife habitat, or the like. Since these lands are off limits to the public, and must remain cleared, they would seem more akin to things such as private lawns, which are not considered open space from the standpoint of the General Plan. Given this confusion, we suggest that the City restrict General Plan discussion of the airport clear zones to the Land Use and/or Circulation elements, and remove such discussion from the Open Space & Conservation element.

6.5.9. Terminology

There is notable confusion regarding the terminology used to describe various types of vacant lands. For example:

- The General Plan uses the phrase “open space” to encompass all vacant lands, regardless of ownership or use. But to some members of the public, this phrase more naturally applies to just a subset of that, such as wild, public lands. And elsewhere the City itself capitalizes “Open Space” to refer just to that subset of vacant lands actually zoned as open space.
- The term “park” is variously used to mean: A medium- or high-impact area with playgrounds or playfields; a low impact, relatively wild area; or something somewhere in between.
- The General Plan refines the meaning of its terms by creating long phrases like “Open Space for the Preservation of Natural Resources”. While more specific, such terms are difficult to use in discussion, and often not intuitive to the public.

We encourage the City to try to find clearer, more easily understandable terminology to use when discussing these various land types. We understand this is a challenging issue, as we ourselves were unable to fully develop a recommendation in this area. Some of the ideas discussed were:

- Use “unimproved” or “undeveloped” for private vacant lands. Use “open space” for public vacant lands intended for low impact use and resource preservation. Use “improved” or “developed” for public lands intended for medium impact recreation (e.g. walking paths, picnic areas, public gardens). Use “park” for public lands intended for medium or high impact recreational use (e.g. playgrounds, playfields).
- Replace the general, broad use of “open space” with the term “green space”.
- Use “wild lands” rather than “open space” when describing vacant lands intended for resource preservation.
- Use “low impact”, “medium impact”, and “high impact” to distinguish between the various types of human access/use of vacant lands.

6.6. Background & Supporting Information

6.6.1. City Goals for Sustaining the City of Good Living

On 6/17/05, the City Council held a kickoff workshop for its Community Strategic Planning process, as part of the “Sustaining the City of Good Living” effort. At this workshop, Council Members were asked to list their top priorities for ensuring the sustainability of the City. It should be noted that:

- The **single most frequently listed item** among the Council Members was “Parks, recreation, and open space”.

- Of the 7 areas highlighted with respect to the topic of “Sustaining natural resources”, over half were related to open space:
 - Greening
 - Creeks
 - Conservation
 - Ratio of green to paved space

On 7/5/05, the Council held a follow up to the 6/17/05 meeting to further refine its plans and goals. In the area of Land Use, goals included:

- Anticipation of future needs, including (among other things) recreation
- Enhancement of existing neighborhoods and public spaces
- A focus on sustainability for open space and parks

In the area of Natural Resources, goals included:

- Enhancement of the local environment, creeks, and open space

6.6.2. Public Input From Natural Resources Workshop

On 12/13/05, the City hosted a Natural Resources Workshop to gather input regarding what is important to City Residents with respect to natural resources.

When asked to identify the City’s “important natural resources”, open space was one of the most frequently and consistently mentioned items. Specific areas of importance under the topic of open space included:

- Wildlife
- Native vegetation
- Views
- Trees
- Parks
- Wild lands and trails
- Creeks and riparian corridors

The greatest threats to open space in our City were identified as:

- Development and sprawl, including:
 - Encroachment into wild lands, and creek/riparian corridors
 - Lack of a coherent, community wide plan/vision for open space
- Habitat fragmentation
- Air and water pollution
- Nonnative, invasive species

The top citizen goals for open space in our City were identified as:

- Acknowledge and preserve what we have!
 - Don't sell/dispose of it, because it's all we have left
 - Revise annexation policies to ensure strict limits on growth in remaining open space areas
 - Adhere to existing environmental and open space laws, regulations, policies (both state and local), rather than working around them
 - Require mitigation/restoration for ALL development
- Preserve sensitive natural resources, including rare species
 - Inventory relevant natural resources
 - Control/eliminate invasive species
- Establish trail access to open space for public enjoyment/appreciation
 - Use easements where necessary

6.6.3. Notes On Existing City Policies

6.6.3.1. Open Space Acreage Targets

The Open Space & Conservation Element of the 1992 General Plan states (on pg OSC-3) ABAG derived targets of:

- 4 acres of recreational open space (e.g. developed parks) per thousand population
- 36 acres of local open space per thousand population

While these targets are described in the General Plan as “City standards”, they are not implemented in any specific policy or action statements.

The 1992 General Plan gives a 1990 City population of 26,167, leading to a target of 105 acres of recreational park land. At that time, total acreage for existing and future recreational open space was 90 acres, or 15 acres below City standards. Little has been done to increase this inventory since that time.

By 2000 the City population was 27,718, and ABAG projected an increase of 1400 by 2005, for a current projected population of ~29,120. This is an increase of ~3000 since 1990, and increases the recreational open space target by 12 acres. As a result the city is now some 27 acres behind on its recreational open space target (over 20%).

Similarly, the 1992 General Plan listed a local open space target of 940 acres. At that time the City claimed to meet that target, but only did so by including lands outside the City’s Sphere of Influence (e.g. Edgewood Park, SF Watershed), and lands not open to the public (e.g. SF Watershed, Hetch Hetchy Aquaduct corridor). By instead looking just at truly local open space, i.e. that within the Sphere of Influence, the City was actually some ~300 acres behind the local open space target in 1992. Given the projected 2005 population, this deficit has increased by yet another ~110 acres, but only ~80 acres of additional private open space has been dedicated since 1992, for a net current deficit of ~330 acres (over 30%). And even using the lax definition of “local” open space assumed by the 1992 General Plan, which led to a questionable total of ~950 acres, the City still would have a current deficit of ~20 acres of local open space.

Finally, it should be noted that as population pressures increase, these deficits will likely continue to grow unless action is taken by the City to establish additional open space areas.

6.6.3.2. Annexation

Residential Land Use Policy 11 of the Land Use Element (pg LU-7) defines minimum lot size requirements for the City. However the 2001 revision of City annexation policies introduced loopholes that potentially allow annexation/development of, or sewer service agreements to, lots with sizes well below policy 11 standards. Misinterpretations of these revised policies have led to proposals for overly dense development in sensitive, wild areas in the western hills and canyons.

Furthermore, City annexation policies indicate that annexed areas must be served by roads meeting City standards. Again, misinterpretations of these policies have led to proposals for development in remote and sensitive areas of the western hills and canyons which are not served by roads meeting City standards.

Alone or collectively, such policy misinterpretations lead to continuing sprawl, and the ongoing loss of what little potential open space remains within the City’s Sphere of Influence.

6.6.4. Miscellaneous Items

6.6.4.1. Threat Of Sprawl

The Greenbelt Alliance, which monitors open space and greenbelt issues in the Bay Area, recently released its “At Risk Report 2006” (www.greenbelt.org/resources/reports/atrisk_2006/index.html). This report identifies some 2000 acres of open lands in San Mateo County that are consider to be at high risk of loss to sprawl development within the next 10 years. These high risk lands include the entire Cranfield Avenue area, and over 23 acres in Devonshire Canyon. When contacted for more

information, Greenbelt Alliance confirmed that additional Devonshire Canyon lands, such as the Winding Way site, are also considered to be at high risk, but are too small to show up on their map of at risk lands.

6.6.4.2. Invasive Species

The negative impacts of non-native, invasive species are becoming widely recognized. Organizations such as the California Native Plant Society, San Mateo County Parks, Mid Peninsula Open Space District, and others are all working to address this increasingly important issue.

6.6.4.3. Parks And Open Space Increase Property Values

While parks and open space areas may generate lower direct property tax revenues than developed areas of similar size, it should be noted that such reductions are offset to some degree due to the increase of surrounding property values. This is clearly seen in the higher home prices in the western hills and canyons, where many homes are adjacent to open areas and/or have views of such areas. Our own public service TV channel, cable 27, reinforces this with one of its public service announcements: "Parks and recreation increases property values".

6.6.4.4. Natural Vegetation Increases Public Safety

Natural vegetation is widely acknowledged to absorb water, prevent erosion and siltation, and stabilize slopes. Therefore our open spaces provide significant benefits to public safety, particularly with respect to flooding, creek health, and landslides.

6.6.4.5. Open Space Enhances Public Health

Various studies have established the importance of the natural environment to the health and well being of individuals and communities. For example, a recent University of Essex study concluded that both the viewing of and interaction with natural environments reduces blood pressure and significantly improves mood and self-esteem.