



The Sustainable Advocate

Dedicated to the long-term health and vitality of our region

SSMC is an activity of the Tides Center

A Publication of Sustainable San Mateo County

February/March 2001



SSMC Chair Report

Ruth Peterson

SSMC and the Indicators Report are having quite an impact on our county! The County Board of Supervisors is developing a

document that engages citizens of San Mateo County in a shared vision for the County's future, and the *Indicators Report* was used in putting together the document. Several community meetings have been held for input on the document which includes ten commitments. These commitments are in line with SSMC's objectives, and we are most pleased to see this action.

Each one of these commitments will be measured for progress. Mary McMillan from the County Manager's office is heading this endeavor and she and Supervisor Jerry Hill met with our Steering Committee to ask for SSMC's input on the document, and more particularly, on the measures of progress. The document should be finalized soon and will hopefully influence policy makers and some of the cities whose general plans are up for review.

The 10 county commitments are:

People

1. Realize the potential of the county's diverse population
2. Provide equal access to educational opportunity
3. Ensure basic health and safety for all

Place

4. Offer a full range of housing choices
5. Redesign our built environment to increase vitality, expand variety and reduce congestion
6. Preserve and provide access to natural environment

Prosperity

7. Create opportunities for all households to participate in our prosperity
8. Sow the seed of our future prosperity

Partnerships

9. Have responsive, effective and collaborative government
10. Leaders work together across boundaries to preserve and enhance quality of life

We are pleased and delighted to see the County Supervisors embrace these sustainable objectives. We look forward to continuing and building on this relationship.

The Indicators Report is also distributed at the Progress Seminar. This event is sponsored by the Redwood City Chamber of Commerce and is held in Monterey (to keep people away from their offices—unfortunately, there are cell phones!) The seminar is always well done and well attended by public officials, business people and others in the non-profit sector.

This year, it will be held April 20-22, and the signature sponsor is AT&T. Saturday morning is devoted to sessions that highlight topics of concern to the county and this year will include regional transportation, water and power, and medical care. This will be the third year that Eleanor Anderson and I have attended the seminar. It has helped us to get to know other folks in the county and to better connect with them. Kim Gelfand, our executive director, will join us again this year, making her usual good impression on those she meets. We have a great time, and it is definitely a weekend well spent.

Sustainability is not a goal in itself. Sustainability is the climate or watchword or umbrella which needs to be the taken-for-granted but always-acknowledged presupposition in assessing any project. Does it foster economic vitality? Does it replenish or at least not diminish the environment? And does it lead to fairness/social equity? These are, above all, national security issues. "We must accept this commitment for the energy security of the United States, for the protection of our environment, and for the health of the American people and literally the world."

Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) minority whip of the U.S. Senate February 6, 2001

Hello from the Executive Director

Kim Gelfand

I want to share with you some of the excitement at SSMC since the release of our last newsletter!

We are continuing to develop relationships with other community interest groups and local political bodies. This demonstrates a proactive, collaborative approach to achieving sustainability both in San Mateo County and on a regional scale. Most recently, we met with Debra Bringelson, the Executive Director of SAMCEDA and the Peninsula Policy Partnership, and San Mateo City Manager, Arne Croce.

SAMCEDA has indicated an interest in working with SSMC to exchange data from each of our Indicator reports. Some of the issues measured in SAMCEDA's report are the same ones affecting sustainability that SSMC addresses. It is promising to see that San Mateo County organizations are working together to help make a difference to the community.



San Mateo City Manager Arne Croce has supported SSMC's Indicators Project from the beginning. When we met with him recently, he voiced an interest in having SSMC extend our Indicators research and data collection to neighborhoods in the city of San Mateo.

Meetings with Arne Croce, other city managers, and local community interest groups help us address the issues affecting the residents in our county. We welcome these opportunities to exchange views, including comments on the *Indicators Report*, not only with public officials but also with community members. Let us hear from you if you have ideas that you want to share.

Our third annual Town Hall event, co-sponsored by the College of Notre Dame, will take place April 19, in the beautiful, historic Ralston Hall on the college campus. We will release the fifth edition of SSMC's *Indicators*

Report. The Town Hall will host a forum on "Water Conservation and its Importance to the Health of San Mateo County." We are collaborating with Neil Marshall, PhD., biology professor, College of Notre Dame; Kathleen Logan, Dean of Admissions, College of Notre Dame; and Missie Emberton, District Secretary, Mid-Peninsula Water Conservation District; to develop an informative and useful program. The keynote speaker, Steven Ritchie, is the Director of Northern California Water/Waste Water business with URS Engineer Consultants in Oakland.

Discussions on water issues will cover business, agricultural, and residential consumers. Representatives from business and local government will share their strategies and successes at incorporating water conservation practices. There will also be information on existing federal and state regulations and related financial incentives and disincentives to good water practices.

Invitations will be sent out in March.



Town Hall for a Sustainable San Mateo County

College of Notre Dame, Ralston Hall, Belmont, California

April 19, 2001

Sponsored by

▲ **Sustainable San Mateo County**

a project of the Tides Center

▲ **College of Notre Dame**

Department of Natural Sciences and
Science and Medical Careers Club

▲ Fifth Annual Release of *Indicators for a Sustainable San Mateo County*:

A Report Card of Our County's Quality of Life

▲ **Water: Conserve and Protect**

Keynote address: Significance of Water Conservation
by Steve Ritchie, Director of Northern California
Water/Wastewater projects, URS Engineer Consultants

A Personal History of the Indicators Report

Our reporter interviewed Marcia Pagels, Founder of SSMC, about her experience in starting *Indicators for a Sustainable San Mateo County; An Annual Report Card of Our County's Quality of Life*.

Q: When and how did this project begin?

A: It began in late 1992, not long after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It was an outgrowth of my personal response to the Summit's Agenda 21, a plan for this century on sustainable development, which suggested that citizens monitor their own communities and regions. It took four years from the time I first envisioned producing an annual report to the publication of the first issue in early 1997. With like-minded friends, many associated with the Foundation for Global Community, we organized ourselves into a cohesive group. The group set me straight on one issue; this project would be a great beginning, but the organization would eventually need to encompass other projects as well. As indeed it has!

Q: Why was this annual report begun?

A: If we want a sustainable future, we need to understand current conditions in our county. The first report was a benchmark for tracking the county's progress in implementing sustainable practices. The data is provided for policy-makers and citizens alike to make their own judgments about what we should do.

Q: What were the steps in getting the Indicators off the ground?

A: First, we did a non-scientific survey of what ordinary citizens felt about his/her community. What were the pressing issues? One member of our Steering Committee, Eleanor Anderson, interviewed strangers in Kaiser Permanente's waiting rooms. Others interviewed neighbors and

various groups. At that time crime was number one on the list of concerns, but also important were air and water quality and traffic congestion.

Second, between 1993 and 1995 we conducted interviews with city and county officials and staff from public and private agencies to ask: 1) Would a report be useful? 2) What, from their perspective, would the best indicators be? 3) Where could data be found?

Some of those I interviewed were Sheriff Don Horsley; Tom Fitzpatrick, Assistant Superintendent of S.M. County Office of Education; Patrick Sanchez, Director of the S.M. County Parks and Recreation Department; Maureen Borland, Director of the S.M. County Human Resources Agency; Richard Navarro, Senior Vice President, United Way; Mitch Postel, Executive Director, S.M. County Historical Society; and Anne O'Leary, Executive Director, Hunger & Homeless Action Coalition of S.M. County.

Concurrently, we researched similar projects in other areas—Seattle WA, Jacksonville FL, and Pasadena CA. Using the best ideas from these pioneers, we put together an initial list of about 25 possible indicators. We sent it for review and comments to those we had interviewed and many others as well.

Q: What was the response?

A: For the most part people seemed to feel we'd done a good job in our selection of indicators. My recollection is that we had about 75 thoughtful and encouraging responses and one angry response. One person felt that action was needed, not more reports!

Q: You also held some workshops?

A: Yes. In the fall of 1995 we held two public review workshops where people gathered to discuss the

proposed indicators. We broke into groups and addressed two main points: 1) What should be added, or deleted, from our proposed list of indicators? and 2) Where could we get the information we needed to track them?

Important and desirable indicators for which we found no sources for data included: 1) the level of charitable giving; 2) the amount of income necessary for basic needs; 3) the percent of people adequately covered by health insurance; 4) adult literacy rate; 5) businesses that use "green practices;" 6) energy consumption by sector; 7) the volume of waste being diverted from landfills; and 8) participation in the arts. The last three are now included in our reports. The first five are still not covered due to lack of data, but we hope to include them as information becomes available.

Q: Where does your funding come from?

A: We received an initial start-up grant just under \$10,000 from the Peninsula Community Foundation. With that we were able to hire an intern for about three months in the fall of 1996, who researched and wrote the indicators for which we found no volunteers. Julia Bott, whom I met over a spilled milkshake that ran from her Sierra Club booth to SSMC's booth at a Serramonte Mall Fair, became our first coordinator and editor. The first report was issued in March of 1997.

Since then funding has come from memberships and individual contributions, the county (\$5,000 per year), many of the cities (between \$750-\$1,500), a three-year grant from the San Francisco Foundation, and a \$5,000 grant from Peninsula Community Foundation.

I have attended city council meetings seeking funding of \$1,500 per city.

continued on page 4

The Business Task Force

Kim Springer, Chair

The BOTTOM LINE can benefit from using sustainability as a business guideline. The SSMC Business Task Force (BTF) has been working on several projects simultaneously, all directed at helping San Mateo County businesses to understand the advantages of using sustainability as a guideline for improving many aspects of business, including that very elusive "bottom line".

No business can find itself above the challenges we are all facing, especially when it comes to costs associated with energy usage. There are few better ways to improve profitability than an Environmental Management System (EMS) which creates new and imaginative energy conservation methods. Improvements in lighting, heating, hot water

usage, switching and heat exchanging techniques are all ways to save money immediately. An internal system can measure and track improvement in this area. Of course, there are many other areas where businesses can make sustainable improvements that increase the bottom line.

All of the BTF's current projects address lowering energy usage. Our soon-to-be-published Assessment Guide will enlighten businesses to a breadth of techniques aimed at improvement, including purchasing, employee training, upper management dedication, the importance of measurement, and many others. Our next forum, slated for early May, is aimed at Sustainable Buildings, their design and

construction. It will address, among other things, natural lighting and available energy-generating building materials. Another idea in the works is a monthly breakfast meeting for business leaders, where they can share successes, failures, concerns and challenges.

Whenever we add a new face and new experience to our task force, we find that new ideas and new paths for improving the programs we work on just seem to appear. This is an exciting time for the BTF, and we invite you to contact us to get the latest on our next meeting date and more information on its programs.

Please contact me, Kim Springer (Chair of the BTF), at kspringr@ix.netcom.com or by phone at (650) 572-7968.

Personal History, continued

This has been educational for me, and I hope for the councilmembers as well. City councilmembers responses have varied considerably. "Your request should be proportional to a city's population," was one comment, to which I replied, "Because we ask for \$1,500, this does not mean a smaller sum would be unacceptable. We cannot know a city's ability to respond." Councilmembers frequently asked what other cities give. Hillsborough and Atherton do not fund anything except city services, I'm told. Some less affluent cities such as Pacifica and Brisbane have supported us anyway.

Q: What staffing do you currently have for this project?

A: We have had a half-time coordinator/editor since the second edition in 1998. SSMC now has an Executive Director, who is our

Indicators coordinator/editor but has other duties as well.

Q: I understand that you use student volunteers as well as adults. How did this come about?

A: Additional researcher/writers are always needed. Through Carol Mink, a SSMC member, we've received the help of students of Wayne Phillips at Mills High School. The students gain the experience of seeing their efforts contribute to a worthwhile community project. Following that, we also contacted Stanford and found students in a community program who need to do research/writing as a course requirement. This too has proved to be a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Q: How does your *Indicators Report* differ from Joint Venture Silicon Valley's report?

A: Our report is the only many-issues

report covering our entire county. Joint Venture Silicon Valley's report covers primarily Santa Clara County, but also includes the lower half of San Mateo County, some of Santa Cruz County and the lower part of the East Bay. Many of the statistics are derived from Santa Clara County data. Their report is professionally done, while ours is almost entirely done by volunteers. Their base and interest is primarily business vitality. Ours is sustainability, which includes economic, social, and environmental vitality. JVSV's latest reports have also acknowledged and chronicled the need for more housing, relief from traffic congestion, improved education, and clean air and water. I think that business is finally understanding that businesses cannot thrive in a vacuum. In addition, the environment must be sustained and social needs met.

*For public and private school
teachers and administrators*

Sustainability Institute

**A workshop for K-12 teachers
and administrators**

*Sponsored by
Sustainable San Mateo County
Hosted by the College of Notre Dame*

Sustainability gets real in the classroom

Saturday, March 24, 2001

**College of Notre Dame
Ralston Avenue, Belmont**

featuring

**Dr. Esther Rice, Professor Emerita
Cal State Hayward
Environmental Education Masters Program Founder**

**Registration: 8 am
Plenary Speaker: 8:30 am
Workshops: 9 am to 4 pm
Networking lunch**

Workshop topics include: Water Quality, Watersheds, Energy, Sustainable Economics, Community Sustainability, School Gardens and Earth Day Action.

Curricula and lesson plans will relate the interdisciplinary issues of sustainability to subject matter and will be correlated with established standards. Social science and natural science programs will be offered for elementary and high school teachers. Middle school teachers will be offered natural science sessions.

Fee: \$15

To register, call Kim Gelfand at 650-638-2323

*Additional financial support provided by
Central San Mateo League of Women Voters and
California Urban Environmental Research and Education Center*

Education Task Force

Carol Kittermaster, Chair

The **SSMC Sustainability Institute**, a workshop for public and private school teachers and administrators in grades K-12 who want to include concepts of sustainability in their classrooms, will be held on Saturday, March 24, 2001, at the College of Notre Dame.

We are fortunate to have as our speaker Dr. Esther Rice, Professor Emerita, Cal State Hayward, where she founded the Environmental Education Masters Program.

Programs for elementary, middle school and high school relate to economics, natural and social science and environmental sustainability. Curricula and lesson plans that relate the interdisciplinary issues of sustainability to subject matter are correlated with established standards. Social science and natural science programs will be offered for elementary and high

school teachers. Middle school teachers will be offered natural science sessions.

Workshop topics include: Water Quality, Watersheds, Energy, Sustainable Economics, Community Sustainability, School Gardens and Earth Day Action.

We are also gathering materials—curricula, lesson plans, literature and handouts—for our resource table. Additional help is needed. Suggestions for presenters or materials are welcome. Funding is definitely a priority! With additional funding we will be able to offer honoraria to the presenters and have free handouts.

The coordination team includes Terry Lyngso, Joan Holtzman, Tom Fitzpatrick, Debby Kramer, Leonora Sea, Kim Gelfand, Vic Graff, Judi Steele, Bill Lee and Carol Kittermaster.

Marketing and media outreach will be our next focus. We welcome anyone who would like to join the Education Task Force to finalize this event or be involved in future endeavors. Please contact Carol Kittermaster at 650-593-3362.

- SSMC VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES!**
1. *Data-entry (we have a Mac)—2-3 hours per week*
 2. *Publicity/Media—3-5 hours per month*
 3. *City liaisons: Attend some council/planning meetings in his/her city and act as a communicator to the SSMC steering committee*
 4. *Grant writing assistance—4-6 hours per month*
 5. *Website updates—5 hours per month*

Building an Energy Revolution from the Bottom Up

by Dr. Michael Closson, former Earth Day Network Program Director

Clean energy was chosen as the Earth Day 2000 theme because energy relates to a whole array of critical environmental problems—global warming and climate change, acid rain, smog, surface and ground water contamination, oil spills on land and sea, radioactive contamination from nuclear accidents, habitat destruction, and species decline and extinction. Energy is one of those cross-cutting issues. The following is part 2 of remarks by Dr. Closson made at the SSMC Town Hall meeting last spring.

Promote Green Buildings and Energy-Efficient Practices City-Wide.

Cities can significantly alter local energy use by influencing the way buildings are constructed and remodeled. Building elements such as site orientation, landscaping, construction materials, insulation, windows, heating and air conditioning, and waste management all can be altered to enhance a building's environmental performance.

The Sustainable Advocate

1. Austin, TX, has a comprehensive green building program including a green building code that many communities are starting to emulate.

2. Scottsdale, AZ, has specially designed building codes (e.g. overhangs and reflective shingles) for its desert environment.

3. Claremont, CA, requires solar water heaters on all new residences.

4. Glendale, CA, has a "Business Energy Solutions" program that conducts audits of large electric customers' energy consuming systems and makes recommendations for energy efficiency improvements.

5. Burlington, VT, makes free energy saving retrofits (e.g. insulation) on homes in the city. Nearly 8,000 homes in the city of 38,000 people have participated in the program which saved 735 tons of CO₂ and \$160,000 on energy bills last year.

6. Oakland, CA's Earth Day 2000 project is a "Neighborhood business energy efficiency saturation plan" that will provide energy audits and consultations to small

businesses in several districts. It is seeking funding to help the businesses cover the up-front costs of instituting the recommended energy efficiency measures.

7. Miami and Dade County, FL, provide rebates to companies that institute energy efficiency measures based on the amount of carbon they have prevented from entering the atmosphere.

8. Sacramento, CA's Municipal Utility District, has a program to design and construct 2,500 new energy efficient homes and another program to promote the sale of 8,000 energy-efficient refrigerators.

9. Chicago, IL, has a "Rebuild Chicago" program that provides free energy audits to commercial and industrial facilities. The city reimburses companies up to 50% of the cost of energy reducing retrofits. During the last year, the program avoided 8,065 tons of CO₂ emissions.

We will publish more of his ideas in future issues of this newsletter.

February/March 2001

Letter to the Editor

ENERGY CRISIS

I have an idea which may not cure our immediate energy problem, but will, I believe, contribute to a long term leveling off of electric usage.

The proposal is that San Mateo city and county building departments add a new requirement prior to approval for permits of commercial properties, hotels and office buildings. It would require the developer to fit any new structure with photo voltaic cells sufficient to produce all of its needed energy. This means that both San Mateo County and the state as a whole would gain each time a "sustainable" building was approved as opposed to adding to the problem by approving new structures that will increase the need for more power plants.

This is a perfect time for a measure of this sort to go forward. The state is in a crisis situation. Acting in this way, San Mateo County would be in a coveted civic leadership role.

Further, all cities within the county should comply with this same "sustainable" plan in all of their new buildings. For example: the new Police Headquarters proposed on Delaware Street, San Mateo should be energy self-sufficient as well as other public facilities now in planning review.

Yours Truly,
Pat Lapp

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Opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of SSMC, its members or funders.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

RecycleWorks.org

Got an old computer, refrigerator, small household appliance, hazardous waste, or other item you'd like to dispose of in a sustainable manner? Try the County of San Mateo's RecycleWorks information service at www.RecycleWorks.org or 1-888-442-2666. The site is loaded with helpful info.

Volunteermatch.org

Want to do some volunteer work? Check out www.volunteermatch.org. You will find opportunities in a wide variety of fields. They range from Advocacy/Human Rights, Animals, Arts and Culture, Board Development, Children/Youth, Computers/Technology, Crisis Support, Disabled, Homeless/Housing, Environment, ETC., ETC., ETC.

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• **YES:**

• I want to support the efforts of **Sustainable San Mateo County**

• by becoming a member.

• Name: _____

• Address: _____

• City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

• Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

• Benefactor \$1,000

• Sustainer \$500

• Sponsor \$100

• Regular \$35

• Senior/Student \$15

• Additional donation \$ _____

• I want to contribute time as well as financial support:

• Help with presentations

• Help the Indicators Project

• Work with the Business Task Force

• Work with the Education Task Force

• Help with the Sustainability Awards

• Help promote sustainability through other actions or projects

• Send me a copy of the 2000 Indicators Report

• Return this form with check made out to:

• Tides Center/SSMC

• 177 Bovet Road, Sixth Floor

• San Mateo, CA 94402

• **All Contributions are tax deductible**

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Sustainable San Mateo County's Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars!

- | | |
|----------|--|
| March 24 | The Education Task Force, Sustainability Institute |
| April 19 | Sustainable San Mateo County's Town Hall,
co-sponsored by the College of Notre Dame |
| April 19 | Formal release of <i>Sustainable San Mateo County's 2001
Indicators Report</i> |
| May | Sustainable Business Forum for Developers, Property
Owners and Architects |



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