



The Sustainable Advocate

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

Sustainable San Mateo County September 2004

2004 Indicators Report Finds Mixed Progress

By Linda Bagneschi Dorrance

The 2004 Sustainable San Mateo County indicators report, published last spring, finds mixed progress in moving toward a more sustainable community, and highlights reasons for hope in some areas.

Particular problem areas include the county's high use of gasoline and energy, which contributes to global climate change and increases our dependence on foreign oil and vulnerability to price shocks. San Mateo County residents use 13 percent more gasoline per capita than the national average, and about three to five times more than residents in Germany and Japan. The county is also moving away from

education. For the first time in a decade, per-pupil spending in San Mateo County during 2001-02 was greater than state and national averages. As per-pupil spending has increased, countywide average results on the SAT-9 standardized achievement test improved 15 percent. Job losses subsided in 2003, and the unemployment rate remained steady at about five percent.

SSMC's annual sustainability indicators report tracks trends in the county's economic vitality, environmental health, social equity, and well-being. The report is widely distributed to elected officials, city managers, business and community leaders, and the media. The report is available online at sustainablesanmateo.org or by calling 650-638-2323.

Nominations Sought for Sustainability Awards

By Ricki McGlashan

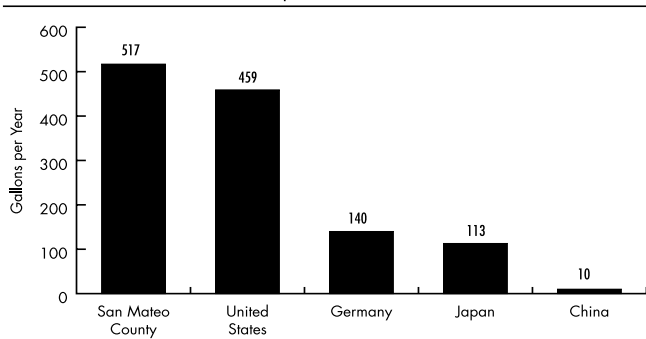
Want to draw attention to the best in our county and highlight the benefits of operating sustainably? Consider making a nomination for the 2005 Sustainable San Mateo County Awards. This is your chance to recognize, celebrate, and honor individuals, businesses, non-profits, and government organizations whose actions demonstrate a dedication to the long-term health and well-being of our county.

Again this year, in collaboration with the County of San Mateo and the AIA San Mateo Chapter, Sustainable San Mateo County will present a Green Building Award. Our goal is to inspire and support sustainable design in architecture and to recognize the designers, builders, and owners of green buildings in San Mateo County. More information on this particular award including the specific criteria and the application is available at RecycleWorks.org or by calling Jill Boone at 650-599-1433.

Each year the Sustainable San Mateo County Awards draws hundreds of county decision-makers and leaders who share a commitment to a sustainable future for San Mateo County. This year's dinner presentation will be February 24, 2005 at the Best Western Grosvenor Hotel in South San Francisco. A nomination form is included in this newsletter and invitations to the dinner will be mailed in January.



Per Capita Gasoline Use



Data sources: U.S. Energy Information Administration and Renewable Energy Policy Project.

sustainability in housing affordability, with 82 percent of households unable to afford the \$650,000 cost of a median-priced home in 2003.

The county fares particularly poorly on the "social equity" component of sustainability, with a wide and growing disparity in income distribution. The report finds significant differences in health, voter participation, energy and water use, unemployment, standardized academic test scores, and other factors among high- versus low-income residents. For example, the four most affluent cities consumed almost two to four times more natural gas and electricity per household than other cities in 2002.

The county appears to be moving toward sustainability in

Volunteers Needed for 2005 Indicators Report!

We need volunteers to perform research for our 2005 indicators report. If you have 10 to 15 hours to contribute over the next two to three months and enjoy doing research that benefits the community, please contact project coordinator and editor Linda Bagneschi Dorrance at epilinda@aol.com or 415-884-2600. We will provide you with research guidance and support, and you are free to work from home with flexible hours.

Food and Organic Waste Recycling is Expanding

Given San Mateo County's history of local success with recycling, it is no surprise that collection of recyclable food and organic waste is continuing to grow.

This fall, BFI will begin collecting food waste and organics from 250-350 commercial accounts in San Mateo County. The Commercial Organics Collection Program, developed by BFI and the South Bayside Waste Management Authority, is modeled after a very successful organics collection program in San Francisco, started in 2001 by Norcal Waste Systems. BFI's program targets businesses that generate significant quantities of organic waste materials such as vegetables, meat, poultry, fish, bakery goods, waxed cardboard, wooden crates, floral trimmings, tree trimmings, brush, leaves and grass. Whew! The participants are restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, corporate cafeterias, produce markets, bakeries, food banks, floral shops and nurseries, and schools. South San Francisco Scavengers, which serves South San Francisco,

Millbrae, Brisbane, and the San Francisco Airport, has also embraced this waste diversion strategy with a pilot program that started in July 2004. They are currently collecting food and organic waste from approximately 200 commercial sites in their service area.

Portola Valley and Woodside started the first food waste and organics collection program in San Mateo County in July 2002. In their program, food wastes and compostable organics are collected separately and composted. Some of the organics are used for biomass.

The first "commercial" food waste program in San Mateo County was started by the San Bruno Garbage Company (a subsidiary of Norcal Waste Systems) in October 2003. The program currently collects about 60 tons of compostables from 10 businesses.

BFI expects to collect about 11,000 tons of food waste and other organic material over the entire SBWMA service area in the first year, increasing to about 22,000 tons by the third year. The collected material will be composted at BFI's Newby Island facility in San Jose and the finished compost will be available free of charge to participating municipalities.

Goddess Does It Again

By Carol A. Tanzi, ASID

"Trash is simply a failure of imagination." That is not the case with the 4R Learning Center at Blue Line Transfer in South San Francisco. The Goddess of Garbage designed the downstairs entry with all recycled projects for the kids. The children can see how they can reuse Styrofoam, plastic, paper, mirror, glass, cardboard and metal to make things for themselves and their personal spaces. The upstairs houses the tutorial area to show the process of recycling and how it happens. Tours of the Material Recovery Facility and Learning Center are available for the public to learn about the 4R's. Call Barbara Bernardini, the Recycling Coordinator, at 650 589-4020. Who knows? You may even see the Goddess of Garbage.

How's Our Re- Organization Going?

By Clem Molony

We are very grateful to everyone who helped out with SSMC's strategic planning and committee reorganization earlier this year. Our February retreat in San Mateo, hosted by the dynamic Roz Koo, was very effective at getting our priorities re-aligned.

You'll recall it was decided that the Board should have two major management roles, guidance of SSMC's internal administration (the Management Committee), and guiding and tracking external programs (the Programs Committee). Here's an update on how that's going.

Internal: Ricki McGlashan is the chair of our new Management Committee. They are focusing on fund development, the efficient functioning of the Board, volunteer coordination, and the advisory council. They helped shape the hiring of our new Outreach Coordinator, funded by a \$15,000 grant from the San Francisco Foundation.

External: Ray Miller volunteered to start up the Programs Committee. As we got going, three subcommittees evolved: 1) the Indicators Report, 2) the Sustainability Awards program, and 3) a Communications Committee. Each group is meeting monthly, each has great momentum, and each is seeking new members (you?) interested in sharing your ideas. To learn more about volunteering, see our website at sustainablesanmateo.org.

Ray Miller did such a good job helping the subcommittees get rolling that the Board recently acknowledged that the Programs Committee is really no longer needed to watch over the three subcommittees. So, we voted to sunset the Programs Committee last month. Hooray for one less meeting and for Ray's volunteering to coordinate this evolutionary step.

Thanks, everyone, for working with us to maintain our County's quality of life. Keep up the good work as we proceed with our reorganization. Onward.



Chair Report

By Ruth Peterson

Our Staff is Growing!

Thanks to a grant from the San Francisco Foundation, we have hired an Outreach Coordinator, Shelley Kilday to help with publicizing our valued annual report, *Indicators for a Sustainable San Mateo County*. We will be able to print more copies of the report and get out the word on the importance of living sustainably. Shelley's home is in Menlo Park and she comes to us with an impressive background. She wrote an indicators report on Austin, Texas, for her master's paper. Her experience working with the Budget Office of the City of Austin and her later work in Boston at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government means that she needs little coaching. We feel very fortunate that our needs coincided so nicely with her talents and experience. She will be taking our sustainable message in the Indicators report out to various groups in the next few months.

Linda Bagneschi Dorrance continues with us as the Project Coordinator of the Indicators report. Linda was partially funded last year with a grant from the Peninsula Community Foundation, and we have had rave reviews on the new look of the report. Linda has had several years experience with similar reports and is 100% dedicated to sustainability. Marcia Pagels, our founder, was the prior Coordinator and continues to act as an advisor to Linda.

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Sustainable San Mateo County
177 Bovet Road, Sixth Floor
San Mateo, CA 94402

650-638-2323

650-341-1395, fax

sustainableanmateo.org

Ruth Peterson, Chair

Marcia Pagels, Founder

Our Administrator, Judy Williams, has been with us since last November and has done a great job of keeping track of the paper work, phone calls and finances amid a constant flood of special requests. She manages all of us and our different personalities with great aplomb. She rarely says no to any task and is constantly looking for other ways of helping us. We uncover new talents of hers on a daily basis.

I am heartened by the growing awareness of the need for sustainable actions in our society. According to a global warming article in a recent Newsweek magazine, more companies are limiting their air pollution and finding that it increases profits. Randy Hayes, who helped set up the City of San Francisco's Environment Department, and is the founder of Rainforest Action Network, has been hired by the City of Oakland to head its Sustainable Oakland Initiative. So, there are a few rainbows around us. With any luck, we will slow down the damage we have done to our planet.

Building Green

By Jill Boone

Last February, the RecycleWorks Green Building Program published the *San Mateo Countywide Guide to Sustainable Buildings*, developed by a countywide committee to encourage us all to build green. The free book is available in 17 of the 21 jurisdictions and also from RecycleWorks (RecycleWorks.org). In addition, the committee developed a checklist for towns and cities to use in their permitting process. The checklist provides a way to track the "green" aspects of projects and inspires people to read the Guide and consider new ideas.

The first town to adopt use of the checklist was Portola Valley who is building their own green building for their new town offices. The architecture firm that they selected, Siegel and Strain Architects (siegelstrain.com), is well known for their integrated green design. Larry Strain was a speaker at the SSMC green building forum several years ago. Portola Valley has also developed a

green building page on the town website (portolavalley.net/building) and has distributed the Guide to several architects.

Other cities and towns have had different levels of commitment: some have asked for presentations to their building commissions, some just have responded well to the availability of the guide for their use, and some just can't seem to get started. Would you like to participate in green building efforts in the county? Call SSMC at 650-638-2323 to help us with this important work.

Green Dollhouse Project

By Jill Boone

An imaginative leap at a Green Building Committee meeting became a fun and creative project for SSMC. The Green Dollhouse Project



consists of three parts: a competition for design students and professionals (2004), an exhibit at Coyote Point Museum (2005), and a traveling exhibit to other places in the U.S. (2006). The competition is in full swing, with entry applications due by October 15, 2004 and green dollhouses due December 15, 2004.

Want an easy way to help out with this creative project? There are several levels at which you can contribute and you,ll become a Green Dollhouse "neighbor" or "community leader." We also need storage space for a year for the dollhouses. For more information, visit greendollhouse.org.

This is a fun, unique project, and we are looking for volunteers. The project team consists of people from SSMC, RecycleWorks, SF Design Center, Sunset Magazine, Coyote Point Museum, Topos Architects, iKorb Web Design, and others. For more information, contact Judy Williams at advocate@sustainableanmateo.org or (650) 638-2323.

YES:

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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

- Benefactor \$1,000
- Sustainer \$500
- Sponsor \$150
- Regular \$35
- Senior/Student \$15
- Additional donation
\$ _____

I want to contribute time
as well as financial support:

- Help with presentations
- Help the Indicators Project
- Help with the Sustainability Awards
- Help promote sustainability through
other actions or projects
- Send me a copy of the *2003 Indicators Report*



Return this form with check made out to:

SSMC, 177 Bovet Road, Sixth Floor, San Mateo, CA 94402

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