STEWARDSHIP OF THE ENVIRONMENT

BACKGROUND

For all of us on the Committee, this chapter sets the tone for everything that follows. It frames the discussion of how we hope to live in the Eastern Goleta Valley.

When we talk about stewardship of the environment, we are talking about two things that are inextricably linked: the natural setting that is the Eastern Goleta Valley and the way we humans live in it. The "environment" isn't just a remote beach or mountain creek. It is also life on our block…and at our local workplaces and schools.

The decisions we make in our daily lives have consequences for our environment that many of us don't even consider. The discussion of Global Warming is changing that for a number of people. It seems likely that the entire world will soon have to think about the effects we humans have on our planet. As a result, people will need to make some significant changes. As the committee began looking at our little part of the world, we realized we couldn't write about its future without considering how it fits into the larger context of this critical global situation.

The more we considered our community's role in the coming years, the more we recognized the opportunity and responsibility we have to be leaders. We can lead from our homes, our schools, our local businesses and our local government. We can be a community of engaged participants who embrace the role of environmental leadership for which the Santa Barbara area is noted. We can be a community of people who pursue our personal dreams in a way that respects our civic and moral responsibility to our neighbors and our planet.

In this chapter, we attempt to address large issues—the quality of our air and water, the condition of our physical setting, our scarce resources and how we use them—with suggestions big and small. They include things that ordinary people can do in their every day lives, as well as things that we feel businesses and our local government need to do.

There are some basic strategies for taking better care of the place we live. It's heartening to know that many individuals, businesses and government agencies are already fully engaged in this process.

To reduce greenhouse gases and other air pollution, we need to conserve energy and replace dirty energy sources with cleaner ones. Vehicles that run on gas and diesel, including the cargo ships in the channel, need to use cleaner fuel blends. Alternative forms of transportation, such as buses and bikes, become increasingly important.

Conservation of our precious supply of fresh water is critical. And to improve water quality, we need to be conscious of what we put down the drain at home, and what goes down the storm drains from our homes, businesses and agricultural activities.

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For our indoor health, and to conserve resources and energy, using green building techniques give us a way to build and remodel responsibly. Outside, we need to actively protect the workings of the natural world around us. And we need to recycle as many of the things we use as possible.

Most important, we need to *want* to do all of these things or they won't get done. The suggestions in this chapter are meant to give people a gentle nudge, or in some cases a shove, in the direction we need to go.

When we look at the Eastern Goleta Valley, we see a sprawling residential area, almost fully built out. There are pockets of agricultural activity and a limited amount of other commercial activity. All of this exists in a natural setting of mountains descending to a coastal plain and the sea.

Much of this residential and commercial sprawl covers over, or significantly impairs, a critical environmental function: the flow of fresh water in creeks from the Santa Ynez mountains, across the valley floor to the Goleta Slough and out to the Pacific. Most of us have a great appreciation for the natural beauty that surrounds us here. At the same time, many of us haven't had the chance to learn how the natural world struggles to function in the presence of our large-scale human development. The fragile creek systems in our midst, and the obliviousness of many of us to them, can be seen as emblematic of a worldwide phenomenon of humans busy in their daily lives and increasingly disconnected from the physical world around them. Fortunately for us, our creeks offer the Eastern Goleta Valley one of our greatest opportunities for positive change.

Watershed management, a new planning approach, is one way to look very comprehensively at the health of our interaction with the natural world. For the Eastern Goleta Valley, that means starting with our creeks. Because they flow through different political jurisdictions, past public and private land, and concern a variety of governmental agencies, creeks offer a unique forum for cooperation and coordination of efforts. They give us a focused way to look at some pressing problems, including degradation of our water supply, pollution of the ocean, soil erosion, and damage to native plants and wildlife. Creeks are living monitors of our efforts; we can see when we make things better. When the watershed, from the ridgeline to the beach, is healthy, the Eastern Goleta Valley is healthy. Watershed management is a process our Committee strongly endorses.

Beyond watershed management, we need to find other ways to capture people's imaginations. Creeks might do it for many; the on-going savings that come from "green" remodeling might do it for others. Cleaning up storm water run-off turns out to be particularly compelling for people who like to jump in the ocean. Finding these starting places is one of the most exciting and challenging parts of this whole process. We hope to see community-wide commitment to environmental stewardship in all of its forms—and some inspiring results.

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THE FUTURE

While the Eastern Goleta Valley is not a city, the GVC believes our community can aspire to, and achieve, goals reached by many forward-looking cities recognized yearly in a nationwide campaign known as "Cool Cities." The definition offered in the context of this initiative is: "A truly green city is one that integrates environmental sustainability into everything from its sidewalks to its commercial buildings. Its public transportation is affordable and extensive, it streets safe and pleasant for bikes and walkers. It invests in renewables and energy efficiency, protects open space, reduces waste and provides clean air and water and access to healthy food for residents of all economic classes."

This chapter discusses some of the things that, to us, distinguish a "truly green city": watershed management, conservation, green building, air and water quality and preservation of scarce resources. Other green city attributes will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

The future we see includes thriving creek systems, thousands more trees, clean beaches, active community participation in conservation and recycling, green belts, wildlife corridors, widespread use of green building techniques, renewable energy and high fuel efficiency vehicles. In this natural setting which we cherish, it includes all of us contributing to the environmental health of the planet as a whole. And, in the process, we will have become a "Cool City" without even being a city.

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Revision with comments as noted in GVC Writing Committee meeting 3 July

Vision Statement

> We are a community that embraces conservation, stewardship and consciously living within our resources. Change comes purposefully, and when we grow, we grow slowly, and in a manner that preserves the rural/suburban character of our neighborhoods.

Watersheds Master Goal: Preserve and improve the health of our watersheds; ridgeline to shore. Factors that contribute to watershed well-being include: water supply and quality, condition of creek banks, flooding, and the diversity of habitat, plants and animals.

General Steps to Achieve Master Goal

1. Integrate watershed level analyses into evaluations of development project impacts

2. Develop a watershed management plan for the Atascadero Creek Sub-Watershed

How Will We Recognize Success

1. Our residents recognize that natural boundaries and features must determine how we plan for our future, not political jurisdictions.

2. Watershed planning has become the standard for creating policy.

3. People understand that the health of our watersheds is a mirror of the health of our whole community

Goal #1: Insure an adequate water supply for current and future needs.

Steps to Achieve Goal

1. Establish and publish quantifiable goals for reducing water use.
2. Work with Goleta Water District (GWD) to promote water conservation through a public information program.
3. Provide incentives, to all customers, to increase on-site rain water storage and on-site gray water processing.
4. Collaborate with GWD and the Agricultural Commissioners office to encourage less water intensive crop types in the planning area.
5. Encourage use of reclaimed water for all County roadway landscaping projects, if available.
6. Collaborate with the Goleta Sanitary District (GSD) to broaden distribution of recycled water. And, require that new developments, and remodels, install dual piping landscape irrigation systems to use recycled water when it becomes available.
7. Retrofit all existing public agency facilities within the planning area with water conserving features within five years.
8. Develop emergency water use guidelines for use in times of drought.

How Will We Recognize Success

1. There will be adequate water for existing development and agriculture, even during times of drought.
2. Use of domestic and agricultural water will decrease as a result of conservation.
3. There will be increased use of reclaimed water.
4. There will be adequate water supply for any new limited and small development.

Goal #2: Maintain and improve water quality.

Steps to Achieve Goal

1. Require the use of pervious paving in all new development and remodels.
2. Provide incentives to encourage retrofitting of existing impervious surfaces to provide more water permeability.
3. Minimize grading, cut-and-fill and vegetation clearing.
4. Work with Project Clean Water staff to ensure that residents are educated about what they can do to protect and improve water quality.
5. Strongly discourage the use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides that are know to cause significant degradation to water quality.
6. Work with the County, non-profit agencies and property owners to schedule regular creek cleanups.
7. Install point source water filtering mechanisms, such as bioswales and mechanical filtering systems.
8. Develop a schedule and funding program to monitor water quality at selected beaches and creeks.
9. Work with area restaurants to insure they properly dispose of waste water.
10. Encourage replacement of septic systems and connection to sewer lines.

How Will We Recognize Success

1. The quality of all water sources (GWD supplied, wells, creeks etc.) will be improved.
2. The use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides will be significantly reduced.
3. Fewer septic systems will be in use.
4. Bioswales and weirs have improved storm water quality
5. The health of watershed habitats will significantly improve.

Goal #3: Insure that creek banks are stable

Steps to Achieve Goal

1. Minimize creek and riparian degradation and pollution by requiring any new development adjoining riparian habitat to have sufficient buffer zones.
2. Strengthen and enforce policies to protect areas providing important water quality benefits, areas necessary to maintain riparian habitat, and areas susceptible to erosion and sediment loss.
3. Limit disturbance of natural drainage features and vegetation.
4. Map and prioritize sites for restoration, bank stabilization and other property improvements by landowners, community groups and public agencies.

How We Will Recognize Success

1. Sediment loads will decrease in creeks.
2. Bank erosion will be minimized.
3. Pollution will be reduced

Goal #4: Provide adequate storm drains and eliminate flooding

Steps to Achieve Goal

1. Adopt and enforce a stromwater management plan.
2. Require Best Management Practices (BMP) for pre and post construction stormwater management in all new or redeveloped projects.
3. Develop a program to assist farmers in minimizing storm water run-off.

How Will We Recognize Success

1. Stormwater runoff decreases.
2. Flooding is minimized
3. Best Management Practices (BMP) are enforced.

Goal #5: Sustain and improve plant and wildlife diversity

Steps to Achieve Goal

1. Collaborate with government and non-profit agencies to enhance, protect and restore public and private riparian and wildlife corridors.
2. Educate and involve the public regarding habitat, plant and animal restoration opportunities on private property.
3. Build partnerships in cooperative conservation to address water quality and endangered species concerns.

How Will We Recognize A Success?

1. Riparian corridors are fully functional as wildlife habitat and connect the ridgeline to the shore.
2. There is a healthy balance in the wildlife population.
3. Habitat restoration has been funded, local projects are in place and effective development standards have been adopted to protect and enhance riparian corridors.
4. The permitting process for restoration has been streamlined and fish recovery projects are in place.

Conservation Vision Statement

We are a community that embraces conservation, stewardship and consciously living within our resources. Change comes purposefully, and when we grow, we grow slowly, and in a manner that preserves the rural/suburban character of our neighborhoods.

Goal: Require green building, use of clean renewable energy and resource conservation, to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

Steps to Achieve Goal

1. Develop Goleta Community Plan policies and permit processing timeframes and seek ways to require and promote green building techniques in new and remodeled buildings.
2. Provide maximum solar orientation in new residential and commercial development and remodels.
3. Avoid impairing the performance of existing solar energy systems when designing new development.
4. Design new commercial development or redevelopment to account for natural light and ventilation.
5. Educate home and business owners about the financial and environmental benefits of energy conservation.
6. Encourage developers to use the County's Innovative Building Review Program.
7. Require developers to meet or exceed California Energy Efficient Standards, through permit expediting procedures.
8. Adopt development standards that result in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) "silver" performance level as a standard for non-residential structures in the Planning Area.
9. Conduct and publish the results of energy audits on all publicly owned buildings.
10. Measure, document and publish the cost savings and life cycle costs of energy conservation techniques.
11. Encourage restaurants to use biodegradable packaging for any food taken off-premises.

How Will We Recognize A Success?

1. Green building techniques in are utilized in all new construction and remodels.
2. Use of photo voltaics and solar water heating is included in at least 20% of all new residential and commercial buildings.
3. Energy efficiency has increased significantly.

Air Quality Vision Statement

We are a community that embraces conservation, stewardship and consciously living within our resources. Change comes purposefully, and when we grow, we grow slowly, and in a manner that preserves the rural/suburban character of our neighborhoods.

Goal: Establish policies to ensure clean air.

Steps to Achieve Goal

1. Require use of best-available air pollution control technology for all new commercial sources and strict adherence to state air pollution and emissions standards.
2. Form a cooperative relationship with Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District to determine how to inform decision/policy makers to raise awareness of marine shipping emissions and promote the marine shipping retrofit program.
3. Provide incentives for local bio-fuel distribution.

How Will We Know a Success?

1. Federal and State Air Quality Standards are maintained.