

San Carlos Green Backgrounder ***Overview, Accomplishments and Current Projects***

San Carlos Green Mission:

Inspiring a more environmentally conscious and sustainable San Carlos

About the San Carlos Green Task Force

Launched in May of 2007, the San Carlos Green Task Force is a citizens group collaborating with the city of San Carlos to explore and promote conservation and resource management best practices for the city, businesses, schools and citizens in order to inspire a more sustainable community and achieve a positive financial impact.

Activities include policy recommendations, community volunteer activities and educational programs regarding environmental conservation issues such as waste reduction, energy and water conservation, green buildings, climate change, sustainable landscaping and urban canopy.

San Carlos Green Task Force Initiatives

- Reducing Waste and Providing for the Safe Disposal of Hazardous Materials
- Increasing Energy and Water Conservation
- Fighting Global Warming
- Promoting Green Building
- Implementing Sustainable Landscaping and Maintenance Practices
- Enhancing the Urban Tree Canopy
- Participating in the City's General Plan Revision Process

The roots of San Carlos Green stem from the [2006 San Carlos Natural Resources Report](http://www.cityofsancarlos.org/gov/mayor_council/enhancing_the_city_of_good_living_initiative/natural_resources/default.asp) at http://www.cityofsancarlos.org/gov/mayor_council/enhancing_the_city_of_good_living_initiative/natural_resources/default.asp written by a group of dedicated and involved San Carlos Residents, three of whom are members of San Carlos Green. The report provides recommendations for action in three basic areas: Open Space, Creeks and Watersheds and Resource Conservation. It is the Resource Conservation charter that is behind the efforts of San Carlos Green.

Examples of Achievement and Service

Current Projects

Initiating efforts with the City on lowering carbon footprint

- Partnering with Sierra Club to drive Climate Action in San Carlos
- Initiated letter-writing and petition campaign to Mayor and City Council, requesting they:
 - Sign the Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement
 - Create a City Climate Action Task Force to develop a Climate Action Plan
 - Initiate a voluntary Green Building ordinance in 2008
- Building Community awareness about Global Warming and its effects

Leading campaign to restore the native landscape at Vista Park

- Working with San Carlos Parks & Recreation, Gachina Landscape Management, and more than 65 volunteers
- Ribbon cutting and Media Event was held on June 14 led by Mayor Lewis
- In 6 successful volunteer days:



- Irrigated landscaped areas with water efficient sprayers
- Planted more than 250 native plants and an abundance of wildflowers
- Weeded 90% of the landscaped areas
- Implemented two restoration plots on the meadow area to kill invasive grasses and plant native grasses and wildflowers.
- Installed interpretive signage to convey the benefits and characteristics of native plants
- Planned Activities include:
 - Restoration of the entire meadow in the Fall of 2008
 - Development of a local Community group to help maintain the Park
- As a result, Vista Park will:
 - Reduce the use of water and eliminate the use of chemicals
 - Act as a pollinator garden for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other species
 - Serve as a model for other parks in San Carlos and neighboring communities
 - Serve as an educational resource for local schools on native habitat, and to residents on sustainable gardening

Supporting Recycling Program at Tierra Linda School and the Charter Learning Center

- Bringing the Charter and Tierra Linda PTA, administration, and parents together with Allied Waste to develop a plan to improve recycling
- Increased mixed paper recycling has doubled from 4 large bins to 8-9 bins
- Recycling bins now in TL classrooms
- Charter 4th graders have taken on responsibility of manning bins at lunch and recess educating other students and reinforcing behavioral changes
- Model can be used at other schools in San Carlos

Driving Food Waste campaign for weekly pick up of organic waste for composting

- Building community support for program which can reduce waste stream by up to 20%
- Organizing an on-line petition supporting weekly pick up of organic waste
- Supporting critical need to improve San Carlos diversion rates currently at 42% city-wide
- Reduces carbon emissions produced by methane gas in landfills

Participating in General Plan Update process

- Participating in monthly General Plan Advisory Committee meetings to assure environmental issues are addressed in the General Plan update process
- Notifying residents with environmental interests of opportunities to participate in community scoping events for the General Plan update
- Assuring City staff is cognizant of the need to address climate change in the General Plan and supplying background information and recommendations for climate change initiatives

Developing an Urban Tree Canopy program

- Additional trees in the community cool the City in the summer, reducing the use of energy and absorb CO₂, further reducing our carbon footprint
- Planting trees in front yards of homes, particularly in areas where train noise and pollution are highest
- Working on establishing processes to work with the City, PG&E and the California Water Service to streamline approvals
- Future plans to influence approved tree list to contain more California native trees

Examples of Recent Achievements



Spearheaded efforts to win the Yahoo! “Greenest City Challenge” by inspiring residents to sign up on-line and pledge green action.

- Won 3rd in the Country, 1st in California prize of 5,000 Compact Fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) for the City to distribute to residents
- Drew media attention to City of San Carlos & San Carlos Green including:
 - Oakland Tribune
 - [Palo Alto Daily News](http://www.paloaltodailynews.com/article/2007-6-26-0626-sc-green)
<http://www.paloaltodailynews.com/article/2007-6-26-0626-sc-green>
 - [Red Orbit](http://www.redorbit.com/news/technology/980799/san_carlos_ranks_third_in_yahoo_green_campaign/index.html)
http://www.redorbit.com/news/technology/980799/san_carlos_ranks_third_in_yahoo_green_campaign/index.html
- Distributed all 5,000 bulbs to San Carlos Residents through Community programs and City outlets
- Raised awareness among local residents of the importance and impact of energy efficiency and other green action

Working with Solar City, championed the San Carlos Community Solar Program

- Exceeded 50kW goal with 80kW of solar power installed in the City in 21 homes
- Resulting in 1,600,000 lbs of avoided CO2 into our atmosphere
- Educated approximately 75 residents through community workshops
- Inspired additional kW of installed solar throughout the City
- Media attention included:
 - SF Examiner
 - The San Mateo Daily Journal

Motivated a comprehensive energy audit of all City operations through the Energy Watch Program

- Convinced City of San Carlos of the benefits of the free energy efficiency audit offered by ABAG and PG&E
- Results of audit are being examined and efficiency upgrades planned

Contribution to Quality of Life in San Carlos

San Carlos Green provides the community of San Carlos with a central place to learn, participate, and network around environmental issues and practices, community activity and City policy. Through outreach at local community events, San Carlos Green has distributed to San Carlos residents and businesses:

- Thousands of compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs)
- Hundreds of low-flow showerheads, low-flow faucet aerators, hose nozzles, and reusable shopping bags
- Literature to San Carlos residents regarding conservation issues including green remodeling, reduction in air pollution, environmentally-sensitive gardening, and proper household hazardous waste disposal.

Ways that this can improve the quality of life in San Carlos include:

- Educating the community on how they can contribute to a cleaner and greener environment while saving money and improving the health of our community.



- Improving City policy and general plan provisions with regard to such important assets as Green Building ordinances, integrated pest management practices and waste diversion strategies.
- Cooling (literally) the community through increased urban tree canopy, saving energy and reducing the City's carbon footprint
- Revitalizing our Parks with native landscapes eliminating chemical use, reducing water consumption, increasing pollination and supporting our natural habitat and wildlife populations.
- Encourage healthier and greener options for transportation, energy and water use, chemical use and recycling
- Increase waste diversion rates where the City has not achieved mandated State rates.

Partnering

To more effectively achieve its mission and ensure the sustainability of its success, San Carlos Green has collaborated with a number of disparate organizations:

- Climate Action: Sierra Club, Menlo Park Climate Action Task Force, City of San Carlos, Chamber of Commerce
- Recycling & E-waste: Allied Waste, South Bayside Waste Management Authority, Chamber of Commerce, Tierra Linda School, Charter Learning Center
- Sustainable Landscaping: San Carlos Parks and Recreation Department, Gachina Landscape Management Company, Crestview Park Homeowners Association, Acterra, California Native Plant Society, Master Gardeners
- Urban Tree Canopy: City of San Carlos
- Energy Conservation: Yahoo!, Solar City, City of San Carlos Operations, PG&E

Community Outreach and Impact

- Conducted educational community brainstorming session drawing 50+ people, getting community input and developed volunteer subcommittees
- Actively participate on the City's General Plan Update committee
- Actively participate on the San Carlos Chamber of Commerce Green Task Force
- Exhibit booths held at Home Town Days, Art & Wine Festival, Farmer's Markets
- Presentations to City Council, Parks & Recreation Commission, Chamber of Commerce
- Leading Composting workshops through San Carlos Parks and Recreation
- Leading Energy Efficiency workshops through San Carlos Parks and Recreation
- Provide informational resources through the SCG website
- Used as a model by the City of Belmont for a new environmental task force <http://www.belmont.gov/Upload/Document/D240003581/7A-CC-102307.pdf>
- City Council Liaison 10/06 – retirement in 2/08 – Mayor, Tom Davids
- City Council Liaison 2/08 – present – Omar Ahmad