

2011 Environmental Commission Accomplishments

January, 2012

- Rebuilt 'Los Altos Environment' Website
 - Clear and separate link from home page, installed traffic counter
 - Updated and added numerous content pages as resource to community
 - Updated menu, established consistent branding/look & feel
 - 200 hits in first month, a 10X increase
 - No cost to City; work led by Linda DeMichiel, with contributions by all commission members
- Climate action plan/sustainability element
 - At start of year, presented EC-developed community GHG inventory to city; accepted by city council
 - During last spring/summer, developed and presented background research on 'sustainability elements' and 'climate action plans' to city staff
 - In the fall, assisted with RFP development and evaluation/selection of contractor to support CAP development process
- Co-sponsored community forum on water-efficient landscaping with CalWater
 - 35 attendees
 - EC partnership with CalWater; EC arranged logistics, hosted event, CalWater did postcard mailer, lined up content & presenters
- Solid waste management
 - Publicized initial 2010 results via article written for LATC
 - For downtown, reviewed single stream can vs. multi-stream, including outreach and education; championed new downtown receptacle rims 'Recyclables – Organics – Garbage OK – Contents Sorted Offsite'
- Expanded polystyrene
 - Per city council request, studied county RWRC recommendation to ban EPS
 - Made specific recommendations in January to put a ban in place, harmonizing various elements of Water Board's directions, and RWRC recommendations



GreenTown Los Altos has just announced two new energy saving initiatives!

1. Energy Assessment

GreenTown, partnering with High Energy Audits, Inc. is offering the use of web-based software to give homeowners a detailed online energy assessment. This \$50 value is being offered to the first 50 households in Los Altos with Smart Meters that sign up. This analysis identifies high energy uses, phantom energy uses and will help homeowners determine if they are good candidates for the Energy Upgrade California program. GreenTown considers this a pilot program that may provide useful information to the city as it tackles GHG reductions.

2. Solar Initiative

GreenTown, partnering with Bay Area Climate Collaborative SunShares, will select a well qualified solar panel vendor and with the leverage of our group purchase, obtain a highly competitive offer. Seven vendors have submitted proposals. SunShares and the selection committee, including three GreenTown members, will pick the winning candidate this week and the program will launch Feb. 27. GreenTown will reach out to Los Altos and Los Altos Hills with our contact lists, newsletters and news articles, and hold a community meeting March 21. The sign up deadline is May 28 and the installations will be complete by August 1.

Any support by the Environmental Commission and the city of Los Altos would be welcome and appreciated.

Gary Hedden
Feb. 13, 2012

Recommendations: There are numerous opportunities for Los Altos to improve creek awareness and quality

1. Provide a local “direct connection” to the creeks
 - Signs on bridges over creeks
 - Signs on all storm drains pointing out that they are for rainwater only and that the drain flows to local creeks, the bay, and your drinking water aquifer.
2. Ban Expanded Polystyrene takeout containers and single-use plastic bags
3. City implements green landscaping policies for its properties:
 - Organic fertilizers/herbicides/pesticides
 - Use at least 50% native plants in city-property plantings
 - Weather-based irrigation controllers
4. Review city’s implementation of the model water ordinance (AB1881) for effectiveness. effectively conserve water and reduce runoff? Does it apply to a significant % of landscaping work being done?
5. Review city’s Green Building Code with regard to water. Is it effective and does it apply to a significant % or remodels?
6. Review city’s implementation of SCVWD Guidelines and Standards for land use near streams. Does it effectively regulate creek-side landscaping?
7. Review water-related policies in General Plan Infrastructure Element – are they being implemented and are they effective?
8. Continue to support creek restoration in our parks to replace invasive plants and minimize erosion
9. Continue to monitor findings of quarry-related water discharges
10. Co-sponsor more classes such as Nov, 2011 Calwater class
11. Continue to enhance water stewardship information on the Environmental Commission’s website
12. Promote SCVWD rebates (e.g. Landscape Conversion & Irrigation Hardware Upgrade)



In addition, the forthcoming Climate Action Plan will raise awareness on the importance of conserving water, and as a byproduct, encourage reduction of irrigation runoff.

Los Altos Environmental Commission -- Draft Workplan Template 2012-13

Approved Projects & Projects for Approval

Goals Approved by City Council October, 2010		Goals
b. Projects 2011-2012		Progress Updates
1	Provide approved community education and outreach activities to achieve natural resource conservation for Los Altos. (Steve Anderson, Linda DeMichiel)	
a.	Deliver updated web site that is visually pleasing, navigates well, has relevant, current content, and ties into city look and feel. (Owner: Linda)	- Staff will continue to provide periodic reports on traffic to site, and a general website discussion item will be put on EC meeting agenda periodically to review content and news on main landing page.
b.	Provide approved public information forums for topics of interest to the public. (e.g Packard Building, Solar) (Owner: Steve)	- Will engage here when there are specific opportunities related to city programs or policies. One opportunity will be for interim review and input to upcoming Climate Action Plan development.
2	a. Investigate new education and outreach activities re watershed awareness and protection [NEW GOAL]	- Joe discussed potential for marking on all city storm drains -- stream specific, along the lines of what is going on storm drains downtown. Michael and J to follow up with staff on potential for incorporation of this as recommendation in the upcoming 'Storm Water Master Plan' being prepared by city staff. Done -- report by Michael. - include other potential topics such as creek signage. - Presentation materials developed by Joe to be linked to Environmental Website Jan 2012; also, develop approach and plan for related activities for potential incorporation into EC workplan.

3	Explore enhancements to further improve waste management in Los Altos. (Don Bray, Steve Anderson, Joe Eyre)	a. Monitor MTWS diversion rate for regularly scheduled pickups and event waste management. Look for ways to meet and exceed contracted diversion rate. (Owner: Don) b. Make results available to community, along w/ education on how they can help improve outcomes. (Owner: Steve) c. Work with MTWS to provide recycling and composting services for downtown shoppers. d. Help educate citizens as soon as new services are available. (Owner: Steve)	– February 2012: MTWS to present update on current diversion statistics, with a special focus on programs for improving commercial uptake of recycling and composting. Also, discuss guidelines around what's recyclable and compostable. vs. garbage; important for education, and clarification in terms of lining up EPS alternatives, etc. with what MTWS diversion program can handle. How do we reduce unidentifiable or unprocessable foodware, packaging etc? – Based on Feb 2012 MTWS statistics and degree of need, evaluate other opportunities for waste management downtown. Work with MTWS to identify specific projects. Explore working with LAVA and the Chamber to help educate downtown businesses on how they can increase diversion rates.
4	Work with Planning Services Manager to develop Sustainability element to Los Altos General Plan. (Joe Eyre, Don Bray, TBD)	a. The 2011 CIP includes funds for this project in July 2011. The EC will serve in an advisory and review role. (Owners: Joe, Don) b. Review draft Grant Application developed by City Staff	– Work to begin in March – Possible future application for project-specific support.

5.	Evaluate program options, and assist in implementing approved city programs for single-use plastic bags, expanded polystyrene	a. Continue to partner with Chamber of Commerce in visits with CVS Pharmacy and Walgreens to inquire about their re-usable bag programs. (Owner: Steve) b. Publicize results of reusable bag survey as appropriate. (Owner: Steve) (PARTIALLY NEW)	Environmental Commission will look at investigating potential recommendations, timing, and approach for bans on use of EPS, and single use plastic bags, as a possible work plan item for 2012/2013. EC subcommittee studying EPS met with Los Altos city engineer and staff to discuss perspectives on potential issues such as EPS ban enforceability, inspection, budgets, burden to merchants, etc.; It turned out that banning EPS is part of a new Water Board requirement, related to trash load reduction in storm water outflows. City staff has prepared detailed recommendations, including an EPS ban, to meet the Water Board requirements of 40% load reduction by 2014. After a thorough discussion the EC voted to support staff's 'Baseline Trash Load and Short-Term Trash Load Reduction Plan' as written, with two additional recommendations. Firstly, the EPS ban be made effective 1/1/13, consistent with the original RWRC recommendation, and secondly, that the EPS ban requires that replacement products are compostable or recyclable, consistent with the MTWS diversion program (also per the original RWRC recommendation).
6.	Continue to work to foster water conservation in Los Altos. (Linda DeMichiel, Chris Keller)	a. Continue to work with Cal Water to develop Los Altos specific baseline. (Owner: Chris) b. Incorporate water resource plans into broader "Climate Action Plan/Sustainability Element" above. (Owner: Linda)	Joe to follow up with Cal Water re data, which was to be made available by end of Q3 2011; latest update is that we will receive an official data request form in January 2012. TBD: Program presented to Council as part of Climate Action Plan (to include measures and initiatives related to water).
7.	Other Council goals as directed.	a. Investigate state requirements and funding opportunities for creek-clean up. (Owner: j) b.	By Mar 2011: Report from staff that annual creek cleanup is required by state in order to fulfill permits for storm drainage into creek. General Comment from Council: If any programs require funding, case must be presented in time for annual budget cycle.