

Sustainability Council of Ventura County

Equitable Society, Sound Economy, Healthy Environment

P. O. Box 7817 Ventura, CA 93006-7817
(805) 662-2432 SustainabilityCouncil.org

January 10, 2000

Dear friends,

Thank you for your past interest in the Sustainability Council and its programs. With the beginning of a new century (and a new millennium for many) we wanted to bring you up to date on the organization and its programs and invite you to become a supporting member.

For those who may not be too familiar with the organization, we have included a statement of its mission and how it is organized. As you will note we were formed in 1995 and became a non-profit corporation in 1997. During the past five years we have initiated and completed numerous programs and projects. Other projects are underway at this time, while still others are awaiting volunteer support from people like you before they are pursued. These are outlined in another attachment.

Many of you participated in an August conference on our grant-funded project to devise sustainability indicators. We are proud to report that that study by the Council and California State University at Northridge (CSUN) is proceeding and your input was a valuable contribution. A third attachment provides a summary of this specific program as well as a collation of the comments submitted.

We invite you become a member of the Sustainability Council and help us promote a sustainable future. We encourage you to visit our website for general information about the organization and announcements about sustainability issues. As a member, however, we hope to communicate with you via e-mail so that we can provide you with timely up-dates on events and Council programs. Not only will this be swifter, but it will also be environmentally responsible.

A final note. We understand that you may be sensitive about having your address, etc. given to other organizations. We promise not to share that information, but instead will use e-mail and our web site as a way of informing you about events and programs of other organizations.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors

Board of Directors: Robert Chianese - professor, Gail Pringle - ~~water district Bd.~~, Todd Collart - planner, Roma Armbrust - League of Women Voters, Paul Mattson - professor, ~~Debbie~~ West - teacher, Jerry Beckerman - businessman, Harry Gaskill - international relief worker, Jon Sharkey - city council member. **Advisory Board:** Dave Sargent - architect, Steve Kinney - economic development director, Ron Bortoff - Director Friends of the Santa Clara River, Scott Ellinwood - architect.

Debra

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January 10, 2000

Mr. Al Okuma
124 Westfield St.
Ventura, CA 93004

S A M P L E L E T T E R

Dear Al,

The Board of Directors of the Sustainability Council is seeking to expand the Board (Advisory Board) and would like you to consider joining in this capacity.

We believe yourinvolvement in architecture and design and most recently sustainable power programs through Southern California Edison... would be great asset to our organization. Having a representative from ...a major industrial company... would be valuable in that we believe that the composition of the Board should include people from a broad spectrum of interests and organizations that have a stake in a sustainable future.

Enclosed are some materials that outline the mission of the Council, how we are organized and what we have and hope to accomplish. We invite you to review these materials and give serious consideration to joining the Board of Directors. If you have questions, please contact me at 653-2520. If you are interested in joining the Board, we encourage you to attend a meeting with the Board to discuss the matter further.

Thank you for considering our offer. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Robert Chianese, for
The Board of Directors

SUSTAINABILITY COUNCIL OF VENTURA COUNTY

PURPOSE, GOALS AND ORGANIZATION

1-10-00

The Sustainability Council of Ventura County was formed in 1995 and incorporated in 1997 as a 501c3 non-profit organization.

Sustainability is the ability to meet our present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

To achieve a sustainable world requires the long term viability of interconnected social, economic and environmental systems. This can be best accomplished by promoting an equitable society, a sound economy and a healthy environment. Therefore...

Our mission is to bring about a sustainable world by promoting an equitable society, a sound economy and a healthy environment.

Pursuing this mission suggests that we encourage sustainable systems such as:

- An economy that is not dependant on people who spend more than they earn consuming finite resources;
- Democratic governments in which decreasing numbers of citizens participate;
- Fisheries that can survive to feed future generations;
- Societies whose members have increased rather than decreased access to basic human services;
- Stable population at replacement levels that do not exhaust the earth's resources.

We recognize that sustainability is not fixed state, but rather a continuing process in which each decision we make as individuals, organizations, communities, businesses, etc. can either move us closer to or further away from sustaining life on the planet.

A system is sustainable if it can persist for extended periods of time if not indefinitely. The system can be a society, an economy, a biological region, etc. Sustainable systems exist not by simply maintaining the status quo, but rather by constantly adjusting to changing conditions to reach a new temporary equilibrium. Change is always present because a given system is inexorably linked to other systems, each of which is adjusting to changes emanating from within and elsewhere. Change can be alternately slow and imperceptible or sudden and dramatic.

Because the continually changing mix of interactions between social, economic and environmental systems is so complex, a sustainable world cannot be fully described or designed. No simple formula guarantees a sustainable future. Rather, one daily makes the best choices possible from among limited options and strives to broaden future options. In this sense there is

only a series of better choices that produces more sustainable outcomes. The Sustainability Council commits itself to promoting decisions that lead to the most sustainable outcomes.

Choices favoring sustainable outcomes are consistent with fundamental “laws of nature” such as those associated with thermodynamics, chemistry and bio-diversity, but also in response to less understood “laws” governing human behavior such as Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs and total life-cycle cost accounting in economics. Since sustainable systems have evolved consistent with these laws, ignoring them will jeopardize the health of the system.

We promote sustainability as an organization by looking for opportunities in the community to educate the public and decision-makers about the importance of seeking sustainable solutions to problems and presenting practical examples wherever possible. We establish partnerships with businesses, organizations, governments and individuals also seeking a sustainable future. The projects we pursue are typically proposed by a small group of members with the agreement of the Council’s Board of Directors. We particularly seek projects that galvanize people into action that brings about long term change in the social, economic and environmental sectors and thus lead to more sustainable human and natural systems. We therefore see the Council as that of a catalyst for change.

Organizationally we are composed of volunteers. The Board of Directors typically numbers 12 to 15 and vacancies are filled by the Board. The Board strives to create a diverse membership comprised of people from various disciplines, backgrounds and vocations, who are of various ages, races, economic standings, and who reside in different geographic areas of the county. The organization is managed and administered solely by the Board. An Advisory Board, appointed by the Board of Directors, provides advice and assistance in meeting the organization’s mission and specific projects. General membership in the organization is open to any one who supports the mission of the organization. Dues are collected from all members of the organization, including the Board of Directors, to fund the activities of the organization and services to its members.

The Board of Directors meets regularly (typically monthly) to conduct the work of the Council. The meetings are informal and collegial, and rely on consensus and pragmatism to develop goals and implement specific tasks. This process requires patience, good humor, dedication, and the honest good will of one another. More importantly it requires a commitment to the Council’s mission and to principles that define sustainability. Board members also agree to attend meetings regularly, abide by the regulations governing boards of non-profit 501c3 corporations, and act in accordance with the organization’s by laws.

Board members do the hands-on work of advancing the Council’s mission. This includes producing events and conferences, helping organize affiliated groups, cooperating in research projects relating to sustainability issues, producing reports and papers, writing grants, being public advocates for sustainability, and doing the mundane job of maintaining the organization. The Board sets the Council’s agenda and makes sure it is running smoothly and in the right direction.

Meetings of the general membership are called as needed. We prefer that supporters spend their time engaged in meaningful, creative work, not regular meetings. In this regard we urge our members to participate in one or more of the Board initiated projects as part of a fluid team that assembles for such individual projects then disbands upon their completion. The Board encourages people to initiate their own projects advancing sustainability and asks only that if these projects are to be undertaken in the organization's name, that the project be first sanctioned by the Board.

As a 21st Century organization we intend to remain responsive to change and technological opportunities. We therefore strongly urge our members to participate via e-mail and our website (sustainabilitycouncil.org) as a matter of convenience and to promote rapid responses to challenges and opportunities. Doing so will also conserve valuable resources including the volunteered time of the Board of Directors and others engaged in work on behalf of the organization.

Anyone wishing to become a member of the Sustainability Council should look over the Council's list of accomplishments, current initiatives, and proposed projects. These can be found on our website along with an outline of the annual dues schedule. Alternately, you may contact us at (805) 662-2432 or by mail at P.O. Box 7817, Ventura, CA 93006-7817.

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE PROJECTS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY COUNCIL OF VENTURA COUNTY

January 2000

The following is a listing and brief description of the projects that the Council has been engaged in and hopes to pursue in the future. If you have any questions about them please feel free to contact us.

PAST PROJECTS

Nation-wide Town-hall Conferences on Sustainability - Co-hosted with the U. S. Navy two conferences on sustainability that were held at the Port Hueneme Naval Weapons Base in conjunction with a nation-wide satellite broadcast of a symposium organized by the President's Council on Sustainability.

Design Workshop - Sponsored a design workshop in Camarillo for the interpretive center planned for Mugu Lagoon.

Sustaining Dialogue Conference - Sponsored a conference on Sustaining Dialogue in Contentious Times at the Ventura County Government Center involving speakers from around the state who had been involved in community dialogs over the future of their communities.

Energy Deregulation Conference - Sponsored a conference in Ventura with the Ventura Council of Governments on energy deregulation and its implications for local government and businesses.

Sales Tax Distribution Debate - Sponsored a debate in Camarillo between opposing parties on the issue of sales tax distribution and how it impacts land use decisions and relations between jurisdictions as they chase sales tax dollars with various retail projects.

Media Articles - Produced several articles and letters on sustainability issues that were published in the Ventura County Star and Los Angeles Times.

Agricultural Preservation Proposal - Developed an 8-Point Plan to systematically address the growing concern over the loss of farmland in the county. The County Board of Supervisors incorporated most of these points into "Measure A" on the November '98 county-wide ballot which passed overwhelmingly.

Moebi Awards - Devised and presented a hand-crafted award to an individual who it considered made an outstanding contribution to the cause of sustainability. This was John Krist, columnist for the Ventura Star who chronicled his 30,000 mile journey

around the country examining local communities' efforts at promoting sustainable solutions to problems they faced. **Contact the Star at (805) 650-2900 for possible reprints of articles.**

Faulkner House Group – Founded this Santa Paula based group, which has in turn spawned a consortium of individuals and organizations that now meet regularly to coordinate their research and educational projects dealing with land planning and agricultural preservation.

Sustainable Indicators Conference – Sponsored a public forum in Ventura with guest speakers and a hundred attendees was widely covered in the press and carried on radio. It kicked off the Council's grant to develop such indicators and produced quality input from the public.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

Sustainability Indicators Grant – The Council received a grant in association with Cal State University Northridge (CSUN), which will examine the sustainability of existing development patterns and development sustainability indicators. **Contact Bob Chianese at (805) 653-2520 if you are interested in this project.**

Greenbelt Forums – As a follow-up to Measure A, the Council is partnering with the League of Women Voters to hold public forums on behalf of the County Board of Supervisors that will explore the meaning and purpose of the various urban growth boundaries around cities in the county. **Contact Jon Sharkey at (805) 488-0363 if you are interested in this project.**

Faulkner House Group (FHG) – The FHG meets to explore issues of county-wide importance, such as the establishment of a "community issues form." **Contact Todd Collart at (805) 644-2923 if you would like more information on this group.**

Research/educational Consortium – This group continues to meet as some half dozen projects are worked on and new ones come on line. If you have a project underway or in the planning stages and would like to join in this cooperative effort **contact Todd Collart at (805) 644-2923.**

Moebi Awards – We are looking for candidates for our 1999 award(s). If you are interested in being involved in the awards program or have suggestions of people, programs, projects, businesses, etc. that should be considered for the award(s), please **contact Todd Collart at (805) 644-2923.** "Moebi" is for a moebius strip – an object with one continuous side and edge and 720 degrees of circumference.

"Smart Growth" Conference - We are co-Sponsoring with other organizations a "Smart Growth" conference in March 2,000. **Contact Jon Sharkey at (805) 488-0363 or the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District for more information (805) 645-1427.**

FUTURE PROJECTS

Directory of Business with Sustainable Products and or Services – There are many businesses that are currently models of sustainable practices in the way they produce their products and or services. We are probably not aware of them. They should be lauded for their efforts, but more importantly patronized so they can remain in business and expand their business. If you would like to work on this directory or have ideas to share, **contact Jerry Beckerman at (805) 643-3444.**

Web Master – The use of paper, envelopes and stamps to communicate with is not a sustainable practice. It is unnecessarily wasteful of resources since there is a better alternative. We hope you will all join us in a paperless organization by giving us your e-mail address and by helping us find a volunteer who would help us enhance and expand the Council's existing website. We need someone to help manage it and evolve it into "all that it can be." We would like it to be a place where we can post news of meetings, suggested readings, links to related websites, pending legislation and general news of the organization that would allow one to more easily be involved. We know the right person is out there, now you know we are looking for you. **Contact Paul Mattson at (805) 985-7068.**

Student Interns – Gain experience and perhaps earn college credit by being an intern with the Council. One could play a valuable role in the general development of the organization or with the various projects described herein. **Contact _____ at (805) _____**

Quarterly Forums – The issue of sustainability spans virtually all disciplines and professions. A public forum with invited speakers who could debate and discuss the issues would be a service to the entire community. Imagine a discussion between a representative of the Voluntary Simplicity movement and an economist. **Contact _____ at (805) _____**

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January 10, 2000

Dear Friends;

Subject: Sustainable Indicators Project Update

Thank you for your continuing interest in a sustainable future. Our August 24th "Quality of Life" conference on sustainable indicators was a great success. We had 60 people for dinner and 30 to 40 others joined us during the evening. We had elected officials or their representatives from three jurisdictions as well as business and environmental attendees. The press coverage was so good that we rated an editorial in the LA Times in the Sunday, August 29th edition.

In case you were unable to attend, we had three speakers discussing a range of issues relating to sustainability, followed by a lively audience discussion of possible sustainability indicators. This energetic exchange was not aired on KCLU radio, but the opening remarks of the three keynote speakers were.

The list of suggestions collected during the evening are attached so you can review the wide range of ideas and concerns that the participants brought to the conference. Based on our initial work in the area of indicators, we know that most of the suggestions are not indicators per se, but are rather topical areas that the public believes should be assessed using some sort of indicators. Because our grant is intended to delve into the effects of urban growth control strategies on the development of sustainable systems, land use issues will be an important part of the work. However, the suggestions by participants at our August event revealed that there are other considerations that must be taken into account if we are to have a fuller view of what constitutes sustainable future.

We found the public input very useful as we move forward with our grant project with CSUN. Our assessment of the suggestions found that they could be grouped into four broad areas that are outlined below.

Civic Engagement - This emerged as the most popular category, receiving over ten specific suggestions of areas we should monitor or correlate. The general concern was for improving quality time activity with other members of the community in public spaces, parks etc., in order to provide opportunities for personal enrichment, social interaction, and political discussion and organization. The strength of the interest in civic engagement was a surprise and seems to reflect a

maturing of the community's interests in creating a place to live with others.

Ecological Footprint – This area collects many standard ecological indicators – such as water quality, pesticide use, alternative transportation, “total cost” concerns – and bundles them under a large category that measures the total impact of a community on its environment.

Education – Education that focuses on sustainability itself was the concern here, with both formal and public education needing to be monitored and implemented in order to insure that people understand the definition and application of sustainable strategies for their communities.

Housing – This concern is chronic as Ventura County experiences both a widening gap between upper and lower income groups and fewer affordable housing units – a threat to both economic and social justice.

Where do we go from here? Our grant officially begins in March of 2000. The Council wanted to get a running start on the complex issue of quality of life indicators and so we started with the conference discussed above. We held a strategy session in early November with four professors from CSUN who are directly working on the grant, two grad students from Claremont who are specializing in sustainable indicators, the manager of Santa Monica’s sustainability programs and a representative from the League of Women Voters.

The varied perspectives were very helpful in understanding the complexity of the issue and the need to simplify and clarify the output of the grant study so it will have the greatest impact once released. In addition to the project steering committee, the grant team is represented on a consortium that is composed of nearly a dozen interest groups that are engaged in related research and education projects. This consortium of interests is also expected to provide valuable input.

We plan to have additional public forums and meetings with focus groups to guide the grant project. We want to remain in contact with those of you who have expressed an interest in the sustainability indicators project. Please write us, leave a phone message, or contact us at our website (sustainabilitycouncil.org) if you are interested in following our indicators grant. Please provide your e-mail address so we can keep you informed of our progress and how you can be involved in the process.

Thank you for your interest in the Council’s projects.

The Board of Directors.

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A n n u a l M e m b e r s h i p F u n d

T h a n k y o u f o r y o u r g e n e r o s i t y

The Sustainability Council is a non-profit organization whose mission is to bring about a sustainable world by promoting an equitable society, a sound economy and a healthy environment.

Contact us at our website, phone or P.O. Box
P. O. Box 7817 Ventura, CA 93006-7817
(805) 662-2432 sustainabilitycouncil.org

MEMBERSHIP SCHEDULE

\$15 - Student or Senior

\$100 - Sponsor

\$30 - Friend

\$250 - Sustainer

\$50 - Supporter

\$500 - Life Member

*Benefactor
Sustainer
Benefactor*

Your valued annual contribution goes to fund the basic needs of the organization for such things as a phone, P.O. Box, stationary, postage, website; and our on-going programs.

Your contribution to this 501c3 non-profit organization is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Sustainability Council of Ventura County Equitable Society, Sound Economy, Healthy Environment Annual Membership Fund

Name(s) _____ Phone/FAX _____
First _____ Last _____

Address _____ e-mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Enclosed is \$_____ for my annual membership as a: Student or Senior, Friend, Sponsor,
 Supporter, Sustainer. I wish to be a Life Member

Memberships are payable to: The Sustainability Council of Ventura County

Your phone no. and street and e-mail addresses will not be shared with others, but we will send you notices of relevant events and programs offered by other organizations.

Business card

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Sustainability
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