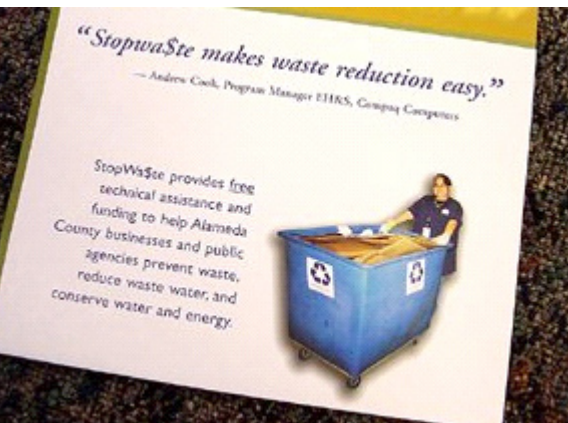


*The Faces of Sustainability series highlights how residents of the San Francisco Bay Area are making their community a better place to live, protecting their natural environment, and conducting business in ways that promote quality of life for subsequent generations.*



Bay Area Counties

Throughout Alameda County, cities, schools, businesses and the County are implementing sustainable practices in their day-to-day operations. These include practicing recycling and resource efficiency, producing organic foods, restoring creeks and natural areas, and constructing buildings that are powered by solar energy. In Berkeley, educational institutions are teaching students from elementary schools to college how to grow their own food in gardens and use less electricity. In West Oakland, the non-profit organization People's Grocery is increasing the public's access to farm-fresh produce. These accomplishments are making Alameda County a healthier, more sustainable place to live.

### **Alameda County**

Stop Waste is a partnership of the Alameda County Waste Management Authority (ACWMA) and the Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board. It campaigns to reduce waste and improve the environment and has increased the countywide recycling rate from 14% in 1990 to 54%

in 2000. Alameda County's new Source Reduction and Recycling Plan aims to increase that rate to 75% by the year 2010 through partnerships with public agencies and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). "The primary goal is to ground sustainability principles in manageable actions that Alameda County local governments can take to avoid the creation of unnecessary waste while conserving natural and financial resources." (ICLEI News, Winter 2004). The very successful Stop Waste campaign includes publicity such as TV commercials and press releases encouraging the public to conserve resources through "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle." The campaign received a Business Environmental Award from Acterra in 2002 for its work in Environmental and Sustainability Education. As part of the Stop Waste campaign, ACWMA provides grants to organizations for sustainability projects. Schools can apply for funding for recycling or food or yard waste reduction projects from an annual pool of funds of \$100,000 provided for this purpose. The "School Garden

## FACES OF SUSTAINABILITY: ALAMEDA COUNTY

Mini-grant” provides \$1,500 to plant gardens that incorporate composting and resource conservation. Businesses can apply for loans from \$10,000 to \$200,000 to reduce landfill waste through composting, recycling, and source reduction. Since its inception, Stop Waste has worked with over 500 businesses in Alameda County to reduce the quantity of pollution that they generate.

### Berkeley

In 1994, Berkeley initiated an Environmental Economy Program with twin goals of making the Berkeley business sector eco-efficient and developing new environmental businesses. “By installing energy retrofits in nearly all municipally-owned facilities and in many leased sites [the program has saved] the city over \$125,000 per year and ... over 1.3 million kWh energy per year.” Ecotimber International, Inc. in Berkeley is an exemplary eco-business, as it uses only sustainably harvested and reclaimed wood products.

Socially conscious businesses in Berkeley are successfully working toward sustainable ends. The restaurant Chez Panisse has a commitment to sustainability and uses food from farmers, ranchers, and winemakers who practice sustainable agriculture. The Chez Panisse Foundation sponsors the Edible Schoolyard program, educating children throughout California about “slow food,” healthy eating, and sustainable

farming. Its first grantee was The Edible Schoolyard at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in 1996. The school started a garden that teaches students about other cultures and traditions while making food. Lessons have included frying chapati in conjunction with a lesson on India and baking bread traditionally used on the Mexican Day of the Dead altars. The Edible Schoolyard project has since spread throughout the Berkeley school system, and now every public school in Berkeley has a garden on campus. Alice Waters, founder and owner of Chez Panisse, is currently working with the Berkeley Unified School District to implement a program starting in 2006 in which healthy, organic food will be served for lunch as a way to combat obesity and improve health. “Food that is economical and nutritious and delicious also gives another outcome, which is a nurtured human being,” says Waters, who considers nutrition as important as physical education and health care.

Berkeley schools are going beyond gardens to educate their students about sustainability. Berkeley Montessori Elementary-Middle School Campus, which opened on February 27, 2004, is a “green school” that features solar panels, conservation of electric lighting by automatically dimming lights based on the brightness of natural sunlight in the room, natural building materials, and an organic garden.



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## FACES OF SUSTAINABILITY: ALAMEDA COUNTY

### University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley)

UC Berkeley is a leader not only in higher education but also in sustainability. The University has an “Education for Sustainable Living” program consisting of “a series of 15 guest lectures by world-renowned authors, environmentalists, and progressive thinkers and an associated discussion section” and is integrated with four other UC campuses. Both the general public and UC Berkeley students take part in the lecture series, which encourages community involvement on campus. According to Hillary Lehr, one of the organizers of the project, Education for Sustainable Living has inspired students at UC Berkeley to be active in advancing sustainability. Participants are recycling and consuming organic food, as well as establishing an eco-friendly office product database for procurement officers. The UC Go Solar! Campaign, which was organized by the California Student Sustainability Coalition, was a predecessor to the Education for Sustainable Living program and persuaded the UC Regents to use clean energy and follow green building standards. This demonstrates the impact that educating students in sustainable practices can have.

### Oakland

Oakland’s local government has made impressive strides in making its operations more sustain-

able. The Oakland Sustainable Development Initiative uses the “3 E’s” as a guide: Environment, Economy, and social Equity. Since 2000, Oakland has comprehensively integrated sustainability principles into its policies and management of its departments, including economic development, education, real estate, and community. The Oakland Indicator Project has been working since 1999 to address economic, environmental, and social issues, as well as community-building within the context of sustainability. The city government’s 10K Initiative has achieved its goal of 10,000 new residents in downtown Oakland, so that more people live closer to their jobs and to each other.

In November 2003, Oakland’s Mayor Jerry Brown hired the city’s first sustainability director, Randy Hayes, who served for three years. Presently the position is held by Carol Misseldine. This office has spearheaded and coordinated sustainability activities for the city.

Several other programs outside of Oakland’s municipal government create job training and opportunity while minimizing impact on the environment. Oakland’s Youth Employment Partnership Inc. teaches job skills to economically disadvantaged youth through environmentally responsible projects. They have worked together with Berkeley’s EcoTimber to deconstruct the Naval Supply facility in West Oakland,



*Education for Sustainable Living has inspired UC Berkeley students to be active in advancing sustainability.*



reclaiming \$500,000 worth of lumber that trainees have put to use for many purposes, including furniture and flooring for homes, offices, and stores.

The People's Grocery serves West Oakland to give its residents access to affordable, healthy, organic food and to promote sustainability, economic well-being, and social justice. The Grocery also provides jobs for community youth and features a truck, the Mobile Market, that drives through the neighborhood. Through this service, people who otherwise might not have access to farm-fresh produce and nutritious, affordable snacks can purchase them. In 2005, People's Grocery was the chair of the Oakland Food Policy Council.

The David R. Brower and Ronald V. Dellums Institute for Sustainable Policy Studies at Merritt College provides curriculum on sustainability and a partnership with the community. The college has built the Environmental Center Self-Reliant House to show that sustainable homes can be functional and attractive to ordinary homeowners. The Self-Reliant House has allowed students and faculty to demonstrate how sustainable design can be incorporated into existing homes. The Merritt College Environmental Program offers classes in a variety of subjects, including ecological design and green building, habitat restoration, and nature study. The Environmental Program also

partners with projects to improve green building and watershed restoration in Alameda County.

### **Creek Restoration**

All over Alameda County, community groups such as the Alameda Creek Alliance and the Friends of Five Creeks have been active preserving endangered watersheds. The Alameda Creek Alliance, started in 1997, focuses on protecting steelhead trout and salmon to ensure they are self-sustaining. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission has recently been working with fish advocates to partially remove the Sunol and Niles dams, located between Fremont and the town of Sunol, to facilitate the migration of the steelhead trout. The Friends of Five Creeks, (Codornices, Village, Marin, Middle, also known as Blackberry and Cerrito) plant native species, lessen erosion and flooding, and educate the public. By restoring creeks to their native state, the groups increase awareness of the importance of the creeks to the area's ecological health.

### **Green Building**

Alameda County groups have also been active in creating homes for low-income residents using green building principles. The East Bay Habitat for Humanity's development in Livermore is integrating green building techniques to include sustainability and energy efficiency features. Construction

*The Mobile Market gives people who otherwise might not have access to farm fresh produce and nutritious, affordable snacks the opportunity to purchase them.*

## FACES OF SUSTAINABILITY: ALAMEDA COUNTY

began in August 2004 and will continue until 2007, providing homes for 22 low-income families. Each housing unit will be equipped with a solar electric system to reduce fossil fuel dependence. East Bay Habitat for Humanity has been building green since 2002, when four homes in the Fruitvale district of Oakland were constructed. Builders use materials such as durable cement floor siding and natural linoleum that lasts four times longer than sheet vinyl, recycled paint for the exterior, and a photovoltaic system which produces energy for the home using solar panels. East Bay Habitat for Humanity also recycles 85% of all construction waste, which is 34% more than the City of Oakland requires. The goal of building green homes is to preserve resources now and in the years to come.

Pleasanton's Shacklee Corporation, a retailer in nutrition, personal, and home care products, has a mission of "Living in Harmony with Nature®." In 2000, the corporation relocated to a sustainable building called the Hacienda Campus. The building uses recycled and recyclable fibers in its carpeting, its extensive daylighting reduces energy consumption, and the sustainably harvested wood flooring allows for subterranean

temperature regulation. The goal throughout the Shacklee Corporation is to "meet and exceed local and internal energy conservation regulations." The shift towards green building in many construction projects helps to prevent excessive energy use, saving money and environmental resources in the long term.

### Conclusion

Alameda County has an abundance of sustainability initiatives underway in its educational institutions, businesses, local governments, and non-profit organizations. The county has become ecologically healthier as well as a more economically and socially vibrant place to live. These programs improve life in the community and increase consciousness of preserving our natural resources.

### Sustainability Resources in Alameda County

Refer to the following selected information resources to learn more about sustainability in Alameda County.

#### Alameda County's Official Website

<http://www.acgov.org/>

**Alameda County Waste Management Authority:** <http://www.stopwaste.org>

**Alameda Creek Alliance:** <http://www.alamedacreek.org>

#### Chez Panisse: Our Commitment to Sustainability:

<http://www.chezpanisse.com/commit.html>

#### City of Oakland Sustainable Development:

<http://www.oaklandnet.com/government/ceda/revised/planningzoning/Sustainability/default.html>

**Edible Schoolyard:** <http://www.edibleschoolyard.org>

**Friends of Five Creeks:** <http://www.fivecreeks.org>

**International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives:** <http://www.iclei.org/>

**Merritt College Environmental Program:** <http://www.merritt.edu/~envst>

**People's Grocery:** <http://peoplesgrocery.org>

**Sierra Club:** <http://www.sierraclub.org>

**Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities:** <http://www.bayareaalliance.org>

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