

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Novato Recreation Commission to Vote on Community Garden Project

Novato, CA: The City of Novato *Recreation, Cultural and Community Services Advisory Commission* will vote on May 8 to determine if it will recommend that the Novato City Council support a new community garden at one of two proposed locations. A vote of support for the project would result in the Commission recommending that the city lease one of the two sites for a Novato Community Garden.

The upcoming vote is the result of a grassroots effort from a team of Novatoans who have worked to locate a site and generate support for a community garden over the past eighteen months. In January 2008, the group, the Novato Community Garden Committee (NCGC), presented a proposal to the City of Novato *Recreation, Cultural and Community Services Advisory Commission*.

The NCGC presented two site possibilities to the Commission, both of which are owned by the City of Novato:

- (1) Novato Boulevard at O'Hair Park on the west side of Dogbone Meadow Park. This site can accommodate about 80 garden plots and has water access. The NCGC estimates the project to cost \$45,000 to build. The NCGC is in the process of locating the necessary funds.
- (2) The Pell property located on South Novato Boulevard near the Highway 101 entrance. This site is situated in the open space to the left of the small Verizon building and can accommodate about 50 plots. This site has no water access, which the NCGC estimates would add an additional \$25,000. The Total cost for a garden at this site is \$65,000.

The Recreation Committee's vote on May 8 will determine its support for either, or both, of these locations. The public is welcome to attend the meeting at the Margaret Todd Senior Center on 1560 Hill Road at 7:00 PM.

The NCGC is comprised of members representing a variety of interests and professions, each with a unique perspective for advocating the importance of a community garden. Generally, the group's charter is based on a belief that community gardens provide spaces that allow people to reconnect with the land and the natural systems from which our food is grown. Community gardens also foster a sense of community, where neighbors meet neighbors and work together to nurture the garden space. The group also advocates the health and environmental benefits of a community garden.

"Just as a garden thrives on diversity, so too does a community," said **Donna West**, a NCGC member. West adds, "These garden spaces bring together people from diverse religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds, as well as people of different ages and abilities. "San Rafael, Larkspur, Mill Valley, San Anselmo, Fairfax and Point Reyes Station all have community gardens. Novato should too."

Strong support from leading county figures

NCGC has gained the support of a number of prominent professionals throughout the county. Following are quotes from some of these individuals in support of the garden:

According to **Fernando Agudelo-Silva**, Ph. D., Professor of Biology / Environmental Landscaping at College of Marin, "Sustainable community gardens are important for community development because they can be used to teach a wide variety of people the importance of a balanced life style that includes: gardening, fruits and vegetables in the diet, exercise, and connection to the land. Community gardens also build ties in the community and protect and help restore the environment."

Helge Hellberg, Executive Director of Marin Organic says that in addition to producing food, community gardens can "create community, and raise awareness about local agriculture and the connection between healthy soil and a healthy society. I cannot think of a better and more important use of a small plot of land."

Miguel Villarreal, Director Food and Nutritional Services, Novato Unified School District adds, "As we develop and grow school gardens, community gardens can provide further support and outreach. In addition to growing healthier foods, community gardens can grow healthier people."

Dr. Gail Altschuler, Medical Director of The Altschuler Clinic and NCGC member writes "I wholeheartedly support this project. What can be healthier for us than to work together in the sun and soil, in touch with the simple magnificence of whole healthy food. It is an antidote to what ails us, and the pleasures it provides are unobtainable in any other way."

The Novato Community Garden Committee is asking residents of Novato to show support in two ways:
(1) Write a letter to the *Recreation, Cultural Community Services Advisory Commission* and the *Novato City Council* and tell them you support the garden. The City's mailing address is: 75 Rowland Way, #200 Novato, CA 94945. Their emails: prcs@ci.novato.ca.us and novatocouncil@ci.novato.ca.us.
(2) Give financial support to help build the Novato Community Garden. For more info or call Veronica Valero at 415-897-2302 or go to www.novatolivewell.org/CommunityGarden.html.

The Community Garden Project is a sponsored project of [MarinLink](#), a California nonprofit corporation, exempt from federal tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended. Come help us build our community from the ground up!

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