

Green Valley Land Conservation Project Thirty-third Annual Report and Proposed 2024-25 Budget to the Solano County Board of Supervisors

Introduction

This document is the 33rd annual report since the establishment of the Green Valley Land Conservation project. In 1990, the City of Fairfield, County of Solano and residents of the rural Green Valley community finalized a unique agreement designed to foster the preservation of a viable agricultural base and maintain open space within Green Valley. In order to accomplish these goals, the Green Valley community voted to assess itself in order to generate funds for the acquisition of property and easements of open space and agricultural land, and, where necessary, to maintain the same. The City of Fairfield maintains the funds in a separate, interest-bearing account, and provides matching monies from a City-sponsored Mello-Roos tax district, the proceeds of which are to be used in the Green Valley area.

Purpose and Area Served

The purpose of the Green Valley Land Conservation Project is to preserve a viable agricultural industry and open space amenities within Green Valley. The service area for the Green Valley Project was set by the Green Valley settlement agreement and an agreement between the City of Fairfield, County of Solano and the non-profit Solano Land Trust (SLT), formerly known as Solano County Farmlands & Open Space Foundation. It is defined as follows:

“Beginning at the point where State Route 12 crosses the Napa-Solano County line, north and east along the Napa-County line to Suisun Valley Road, then south along Suisun Valley Road to Interstate 80, west to State Route 12, then west to the point of the beginning.”

The City and County have contracted with SLT to serve as trustee for the community in carrying out this project. Responsibilities include administrative functions reasonably related to the project purpose, and to hold title, easements, or less-than-fee interest in lands involved in the project area. The Board of Directors of SLT has established priorities based on advice from the Green Valley Landowners' Association as follows:

1. Floor of middle Green Valley,
2. Lands east of Green Valley and west of the floor of Green Valley,
3. More remote and rugged lands west, north and east of Green Valley, and
4. Other lands within the service area.

Tools for Conservation

The underlying concept of the project is voluntary cooperation. This is based on the assumption that the idea of agricultural and open space conservation coupled with available funding and the ability to pay market prices will prove attractive to landowners and they will participate voluntarily. All acquisitions by SLT require a willing seller. SLT does not have the right to use eminent domain proceedings to take property from unwilling sellers.

There are two categories of tools available to SLT to accomplish the Green Valley Project purposes, acquisition of fee simple interest and acquisition of conservation easements. Acquisition of conservation easements does not require public access to property. In addition, the property remains in private hands and on the tax rolls:

- *Fee Simple:* purchase of, or receipt of donation of, the fee title to land
- *Conservation Easement:* purchase of, or receipt of donation of, development rights to land

As part of the Green Valley settlement agreement, SLT expanded its Board to include two representatives of the Green Valley Landowners Association (GVLA). In September 2012, SLT revised its board structure to provide balanced representation of five groups, including public sector, agriculture, resource conservation, business community, and members-at-large. One of the at-large directors continues to be appointed by the GVLA board. The current GVLA representative is Mr. Roger Merrill.

Green Valley Activities in 2023-24

The primary accomplishments of the past fiscal year were in the following areas:

1. Acquisition Projects and Project Development

Patwino Worrtila Kodoi Dihi formerly Rockville Trail Preserve

The park development is nearing completion including an entrance road, parking lot and staging area, fences and gates, signage, shade, picnic area and trails. We are planning for a soft opening in late July and a ribbon cutting August 21st. Opening Day is scheduled for Friday, August 23rd. Solano County Parks will provide public access management and is actively supporting the park's development and preparation for opening.

Other Acquisitions/Projects

Brown fee transfer from County to SLT was completed in August of 2023. This action also completes the Cordelia Sky Hills Valley agreement between Solano County, Solano Land Trust and the Solano Transportation Authority and the spending of the Gorge Miller Federal Transportation Earmark funding. Solano Land Trust is now the owner of both the Brown and Souza properties located off I-80 and American Canyon Road. These properties are an expansion of Lynch Canyon and will be stewarded by SLT for habitat, wildlife, open space, agriculture and public access. The next step is to develop a public access plan that pulls the Lynch Canyon and the Lynch expansion properties (Brown and Souza) together into one management unit. That plan will be initiated this fall with the goal to finish in 2025.

2. Conservation Easement Monitoring

During the past year, Tracy Ellison, SLT's Conservation Director and Sarah Madsen, SLT's Transaction Specialist, monitored the Rowe conservation easement.

3. Coordination with GVLA

Roger Merrill is the GVLA representative on the SLT Board (since 2020), and he chairs the Project and Audit Committees. Solano Land Trust ED Nicole Braddock, Roger Merrill and GVLA Board President

Mary Burczyk communicate regularly about potential coordination and communication, especially regarding Rockville Trails/ Patwino Worrta Kodoi Dihi Open Space Park.

4. Open Space Planning Effort

SLT completed its Solano Natural Areas Protection (SNAP) Plan in 2015 to prioritize its agricultural and natural resource protection work in the future. The SNAP Plan will be a companion plan to SLT's Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan developed in 2002 that established priorities for protection of agricultural land in the county. Throughout the year there were continued efforts to identify those priority lands for landowner outreach and direct SLT's conservation work.

5. Agricultural Conservation Easement Planning

SLT completed an update of its Agricultural Conservation Plan for 2022, looking forward 20 years with goals and actions to conserve the county's high quality prime soils, clean and recharged water and support climate action practices for clean air and carbon sequestration. Staff and Consultant interviewed 21 landowners, producers, Ag Support Services, Land Conservationists, Government and consumers to learn what was impacting land uses and what could ag look like in 20 years. This plan will direct SLT Board and Staff in decision making related to Conservation Easements.

Over the past year, SLT continued to update data related to high priority agricultural lands in Solano County through the creation of the SNAP tool, including lands in the Green Valley area. This tool is used each time an application for land conservation with an easement agreement comes in or for consideration of a fee title purchase.

In FY 2023/24 SLT created the Agricultural Strategies and Climate Committees. These committees will support SLT staff and Board in making community informed decisions related to supporting the agricultural economy, ag land conservation and climate issues.

6. Additional Conservation Activities Taking Place in the Green Valley

Solano Land Trust continues to stay in communication with County Planning and residents in Middle Green Valley to discuss and advise on working with an accredited land trust to support the transfer of development rights and other project needs.

Green Valley Land Conservation Project – 2023-24 Financial Summary

The FY 23-24 financial summary for the Green Valley Open Space Maintenance District and the financial summary for the North Cordelia Facility District – CFD#2 are included as Attachment A. The proposed FY 24-25 budget for GVOS is summarized in Attachment B.

For further information regarding the Green Valley Land Conservation Project contact Nicole Braddock, Executive Director of Solano Land Trust, 198 Dobbins St., Suite A, Vacaville, CA 95688.

Attachment A.

**Solano Land Trust
Green Valley Land Conservation Project
GVOS Financial Summary FY23-24 (as of 6-20-2024)**

Green Valley Open Space Maintenance District (Fund 589)	
REVENUES	
Tax Receipts, 2023-2024	109,255
Interest, 2023-2024	17,235
Subtotal	126,490
EXPENSES	
Trust Project Expenses	14,638
Operations of Patwino Worrta Kodoi Dihi - Year 1	211,039
Solano County Collection Charges	1,093
City Engineer Report & Admin	3,400
City Finance/audit cost	1,807
Subtotal	231,977
ACQUISITION RESERVE FUND	
Fund Balance, July 1, 2023	963,188
Net Revenue, 2023-2024	(105,487)
Reserve Fund Balance, June 20, 2024	857,701
Operating Balance at end of year	10,000
Total Cash Balance Fund 589, June 20, 2024	867,701

**II. North Cordelia Community Facility District - CFD # 2 (Fund 326)
FY23-24 (as of 6-20-2024)**

REVENUES	
Tax Receipts, 2023-2024	568,582
Interest, 2023-2024	56,193
Subtotal	624,775
EXPENSES	
Trust Project Expenses	72,790
Operations of Patwino Worrlla Kodoi Dihi - Year 1	259,335
Park Construction Patwino Worrlla Kodoi Dihi	838,800
Solano County Collection Charges	5,686
City Finance/audit cost	6,773
Subtotal	1,183,384
ACQUISITION RESERVE FUND	
Fund Balance, July 1, 2023	3,163,062
Net Revenue, 2023-2024	(558,609)
Reserve Fund Balance, June 20, 2024	2,604,453
Operating Balance at end of year	10,000
Total Cash Balance Fund 326, June 20, 2024	2,614,453
Total Acquisition Reserve Fund from both funds, July 1, 2023	4,126,250
Total Acquisition Reserve Fund from both funds, June 20, 2024	3,601,485

Attachment B.

**Solano Land Trust
 FY24-25 PROPOSED GVOS BUDGET
 Green Valley Open Space Maintenance District
 Green Valley Land Conservation Project**

Green Valley Open Space Maintenance District (Fund 589)	FY2024-2025
REVENUES	
Tax Receipts, 2024-2025	116,748
Interest, 2024-2025	10,000
Subtotal	126,748
EXPENSES	
Trust Project Expenses	14,171
Solano County Collection Charges	1,200
Operations of Patwino Worrta Kodoi Dihi - Year 2	72,195
City Engineer Report & Admin	3,400
City Finance/audit cost	1,938
Subtotal	92,904
ACQUISITION RESERVE FUND	
Fund Balance, July 1, 2024	963,188
Net Revenue, 2024-2025	33,844
Reserve Fund Balance, June 30, 2025	997,032
Operating Balance at end of year	10,000
Total Cash Balance Fund 589, June 30, 2025	1,007,032