



Frequently Asked Questions EcoCenter Campaign The Environmental Volunteers

1. What is the EcoCenter?

The EcoCenter will be the new home for the Environmental Volunteers. We like to call it “the ultimate recycling project” because it involves the restoration of an unused historic building that will have a new life as an environmental education center.

2. What is the background of the EcoCenter?

In 2004, the City of Palo Alto offered Environmental Volunteers the opportunity to renovate and use the iconic boat-shaped building, located inside the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve. The building had formerly been known as the Sea Scout House.

The unusual building had been designed in 1941 by local renowned architect Birge Clark, as commissioned by Lucie Stern, one of the premier philanthropists in Northern California. The building has been vacant for 15 years, subject to flooding, and on the verge of collapse.

The building is ideally situated at a key juncture along the 400-mile, nine-county Bay Trail that circles the entire San Francisco Bay.

The EV has committed to restore this historic landmark, beloved by hundreds of Bay Area residents who remember it as “the Sea Scout Base” which was situated, until the 1990s, near an active marina on the Bay. The EV has a contract with the City of Palo Alto that stipulates that if we restore and preserve the historic building, we will enjoy annual rent fixed at \$1. per year for at least forty years. The unanimous support of the City Council of Palo Alto, in addition to others like the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, has reinforced our conviction that we are making an investment in a new community asset that will have lasting impact.

3. Why is Environmental Volunteers creating the EcoCenter?

We believe it is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for our award-winning environmental education organization to move directly into an established nature preserve to advance our mission of inspiring environmental stewardship in our children.



For 36 years, the EV has provided hands-on natural science education to thousands of children, in classrooms and on field trips in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. The new EcoCenter will further strengthen Environmental Volunteers' commitment to interactive education, conservation and environmental stewardship in the community.

As part of this restoration project, we will be completing a "broken" piece of the San Francisco Bay Trail that, when completed, will provide an uninterrupted 400-mile path for hikers and bikers around the San Francisco Bay.

4. How will the EcoCenter benefit our community?

The EcoCenter will by create new opportunities to:

- Increase science literacy for more children
- Model sustainability and emerging green building practices with hands-on learning and demonstrations
- Provide more opportunities for volunteerism
- Create a new community gathering place while restoring a treasured historic landmark
- Complete a key juncture of the 400-mile Bay Trail encircling the San Francisco Bay
- Expand programs responsive to the needs of the community and changing environment

5. What is the EcoCenter Capital Campaign?

The EcoCenter Capital Campaign is a fundraising effort by the Environmental Volunteers to raise funds to restore the historic building and to create new programs for the community. The EcoCenter campaign has two components:

- \$3.2 million for the building (including historic restoration and construction)
- \$800,000 for new program development

Thanks to leadership gifts from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Bob and Jan Fenwick, and others, we have so far successfully raised more than \$2 million toward our total goal of \$4 million dollars.

6. What are your plans for the program development component of the campaign?

Beyond reaching more classrooms in the schools we support, we look forward to collaborating with peer science education and environmental organizations to develop programs at our EcoCenter for nature enthusiasts of all ages. We will work with local



established science educators to develop new programs that will complement and enhance our portfolio of science education programs and field studies.

Part of our restoration project includes the installation of a “Marsh-cam” that will feature a 24/7 look at the bay marshes and will link to new online science education materials that will raise greater awareness of the importance of preserving our environment across greater numbers in our community.

The building can become a community gathering place for lectures, photography and art exhibits, and community education programs.

7. What is the timetable?

Prior to the start of the EcoCenter campaign, four years ago, the EV’s Board of Trustees went through a very thorough evaluation process that reviewed and addressed the legal requirements and concerns of community, public and environmental organizations and governmental permitting agencies. The process also included engineering and design feasibility studies.

The construction timetable has been largely dictated by the seasonal limitations on construction in the nature preserve. The endangered Clapper Rail nests in the Baylands during a long breeding season from May to October, and no construction may take place during this period. The EV has affectionately adopted the Clapper Rail as a kind of mascot, as the project has become so closely linked to its terms.

The project was accepted by the Board in 2004, with the signing of a development agreement with the City of Palo Alto. The EV hired an experienced project manager and formed a team of experienced volunteers to help manage the project. We spent several years securing permits from more than a dozen agencies, and raising funds.

Groundbreaking is planned for Sept 14, 2008. Construction is projected to begin in October, 2008. The first phase of construction is intended to prevent further damage to the building. The building will be moved off of its current degrading foundation. A new foundation will be engineered and constructed and the building will be moved onto its new foundation. At this point the building will sit about 4' higher than it currently does which will prevent further tidal flooding of the building as well as guarding against future sea level rise. By February 1, 2009 when Phase One is complete, the building will be weatherized.

The second phase of construction will completely renovate and restore both the inside and outside of the building. The project will be completed and the facility opened by winter 2009.



8. Who owns the building after renovation?

The building will be owned by the City of Palo Alto and leased to the Environmental Volunteers, for a minimum of 40 years, at \$1. per year. We hold a signed contract that was unanimously approved by the Palo Alto City Council.

9. How will the EcoCenter serve the needs of the Environmental Volunteers?

The new location will enable Environmental Volunteers to raise its organizational profile in the community. Our current location at the Peninsula Conservation Center (PCC) has served the organization well over the years, but it is located in a building in an industrial park on a frontage road off of Highway 101, with no walk-by exposure. In contrast, the new location at the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve has thousands of visitors from all over the Bay Area each year. This will enable the organization to attract attention and recruit new volunteers to fulfill our mission. The restored piece of the San Francisco Bay Trail will literally cross the immediate front door of the EcoCenter. For the first time, we will be able to engage thousands of potential volunteers and supporters by virtue of our highly visible location.

Second, our new EcoCenter expands the space available for our team of staff members and volunteers to develop new programs, train volunteers and reach out to the public whom we serve.

10. But what about the costs? Are they rising? Isn't it going to be expensive to operate out of the EcoCenter?

Our rental costs will actually decrease at our new EcoCenter, thanks to the 40-year contract we signed with the City of Palo Alto. When compared to the expensive and rising costs of real estate in the Peninsula area, the locked-in rental fees of our new home represents a meaningful advantage that frees up resources that can translate into additional programs and impact for the community we serve. Additionally, the energy-efficient green building strategies that we are implementing in the construction of our EcoCenter will also help us to manage costs in the future.

Since beginning the campaign four years ago, the cost of building construction has risen but we are confident that the \$4 million campaign, supported by our experienced project team, will help us to complete the project on time and on the revised budget.

11. Aren't you right next to the Palo Alto Airport?



Our new EcoCenter is safely located on the Baylands Nature Preserve close to nature trails, the soon-to-be-completed Bay Trail and the Baylands Interpretive Center. You will pass the Palo Alto Airport on the way to our new EcoCenter. More than 40 government, safety and environmental agencies have reviewed and signed off on the feasibility and viability of the project. The Palo Alto Airport Association has been fully briefed on our plans and supports this project.

12. Who are involved on the project team?

The Feasibility Study Task Force included EV board members, Joyce Friedrichs, Bob McIntyre, Sally Tomlinson, and executive director, Allan Berkowitz. The Project Management Group (PMG) developed by the Board of Trustees includes volunteers Jerry Hearn, Project Management Group Chair, Bob Dodge, Jan Fenwick, Joyce Friedrichs, Stan Mantell, and Bob McIntyre. Maryanne Welton is the contracted project manager. The architect is Christopher Wasney, Principal at Cody Anderson Wasney Architects, Inc., a 15-person architectural firm founded in 1993 and located in Palo Alto. The general contractor is Rich Cody of Cody Brock Inc. Board's CFO, Robert McIntyre is responsible for the project's financial management. Robert McIntyre holds an MBA from Harvard Business School and spent nearly 30 years as the CFO of the Trust For Public Land, a national non-profit organization.

13. Can I learn about the project in more detail?

We invite you to contact our Executive Director, Allan Berkowitz, for project details. He can be reached at 650-961-0545 or allan@evols.org.