

Costanoa Commons

Annual Report 2016



*“Costanoa Commons Farm
means hope and opportunity.”*

Lori Iverson
garden volunteer
and special needs mom



“We Grow For Life”

VISION & MISSION

Costanoa Commons is an organic farm where people with disabilities, and others, grow healthy food and build community. As a new non-profit enterprise, Costanoa Commons envisions a nourishing, inclusive com-



munity. We are committed to our farm being a place of continual learning and growth. With a focus on accessibility to all, we hope to be a hub of farm-based activity in the urban core of our community. Whether it's about seed propa-

gation, planting food crops or perennials, composting, soil health, ecological education and stewardship, value-added production and sales, or other micro enterprise, Costanoa Commons offers opportunities to learn and **grow for life.**



FOUNDERS

Just like parents everywhere, Costanoa Commons' founders Philippe Habib and his wife, Heidi Cartan, want a bright future for their children. Unlike most parents, however, they have an additional challenge: how to help their developmentally and physically disabled son find a meaningful life independent of them. Simply stated, Philippe and Heidi share a common concern with others raising children with unique



support needs: how will their adult son thrive when their daily care and support are no longer possible? Inspired by the L'Arche and Camphill communities, our project founders are striving to meet this challenge by joining with others to build solutions. Today's reality is that there simply are not enough resources dedicated to this segment of our society to be confident in a bright future, especially for those with more

severe disabilities. Our founding families have joined forces to collaborate with individuals and organizations who share our vision of a more inclusive, integrated community. What people with developmental disabilities need for a bright future is no different than for all of us. What is different is what it takes to get there—more focused help, an environment that accepts diversity, resources to integrate into the community, and a belief that



WHAT IS A COMMUNITY FARM?

Costanoa Commons aspires to be a community farm where a diverse group of people, each with unique skills and experience,

together build a community farm's social capital. This helps to grow food, and social relationships through



recreation, ecological and agricultural education, and environmental stewardship.

to fulfill our mission. Community farms social capital collaboration grow healthy also builds relationships shared work,

Costanoa Commons will collaborate broadly with disability providers, educators, and farmers to make the most of our opportunities on this unique parcel"

**"Janie Whiteford
Board President**

HISTORY OF THE LAND

Costanoa Commons' farm parcel is approximately 4 acres of prime agricultural land located amazingly close to the city of Santa Cruz's urban core. Only $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from downtown and Pacific Avenue, our urban farm distance from the Tannery and borders the city's Pogonip Preserve. Originally inhabited by Native Americans, the area offered abundant resources and access to coastal oaks, fresh water, and ocean habitat. Pogonip Creek runs along the property and serves as a wildlife corridor for an array of animals, insects, and plants. Work has already begun to restore our land to its natural state where native species can flourish. Costanoa Commons recognizes both the responsibility and opportunity of ecological stewardship of such a unique natural environment.



is also walking distance from the Arts Center Open Space by native people. The property's edge is a wide riparian zone for a wide array of birds. Work has already begun to plant and animal

Purchased in 2015, our parcel had been in the Puccinelli family for three generations, since the late 1800's. Carrying on a long tradition of farming here, Ms. Puccinelli leased her farm field to various young farmers over the years, offering them a chance to hone their skills before moving on to larger ventures. Some, such as Blue Heron Farm and Dirty Girl Farm, are successful organic farms in the area today.

Building on this legacy, Costanoa Commons will also be a place where farm-based enterprises can be incubated and young people can learn new skills to carry forward as they move through

WHAT WE'VE DONE SO FAR

Getting off to a good start is important to any new enterprise. Though Costanoa Commons Inc. is a new organization facing typical start up challenges, much has already been accomplished. Incorporated in late 2014, Costanoa Commons is lead by a 6 member board of directors with extensive experience in community-based long term care for people with disabilities, city planning, and disability rights advocacy. Our Board understands that decisions made early in our planning process can have significant impact on our success for years to come.

Thanks to the tremendous generosity of our supporters, Costanoa Commons has been able to accomplish the following activities in the first 9 months since acquiring its farmland:

Contracted with a farm consultant for farm planning, including crop recommendations.

Purchased and erected deer fencing to secure garden.

Built a small greenhouse sized to start seeds for the farm.

Planted starter garden to test soil fertility and possible crop varieties.

Tended starter garden with six-eight regular volunteers.

Held first farm work day in May, 2015, attended by 75 volunteers.

Graded tractor road to provide beginning access across farm field.

Celebrated our beginning farm with a Bluegrass on the Farm event in June, 2015, attend-

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NEXT ON THE AGENDA...

Costanoa Commons aspires to be a social farm where a diverse group of people, each with unique skills and experience, come together to fulfill our farm's mission. Social farms build social capital. This collaboration helps to grow healthy food, and also builds social relationships through shared work, recreation, ecological and agricultural education, and shared environmental stewardship.

In a sense, a social farm is a hub of farm-based activity where different people can find meaning, enjoyment and productive engagement. By making a commitment to accessibility, our farm will open those



ADVISORY BOARD

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Board Members from top Left:

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