

EDITORIAL

Generous gift from Ghilottis saves Uplands

Supporters of the effort to purchase the 8.4-acre Laguna Uplands property received a very nice New Year's gift when the Ghilotti family deeded the property to the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation at the end of 1997.

The effort to purchase the property fell short of its goal last year when the Laguna Uplands Committee could not make a final option payment. Although the county Open Space District purchased the development rights in 1996, which prevented the 18-unit subdivision known as Palm Terrace from occurring, the ownership of the property still rested with the Ghilotti family.

The Uplands Project Committee will now be able to proceed with plans to eventually develop nature trails on the site, and link the property with the city's Laguna Park. It is a positive development in a saga that has been at times frustrating and difficult for the Uplands Project Committee.

The gift of this property is a tremendous gain for the city of Sebastopol and the future of the Laguna de Santa Rosa. It is another piece in developing a master park plan that will protect the Laguna's fragile ecosystem while enhancing the public's appreciation of its value as wetlands and critical wildlife habitat.

Special credit in keeping the project alive goes to Bill Haigwood and Juliana Doms, who initiated the original campaign to buy the Uplands property and refused to give up when the campaign fell short. The Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation deserves credit for sponsoring the successful negotiations.

And finally, a debt of gratitude is owed to the members of the Ghilotti family, whose gift will benefit generations of the future and protect Sebastopol's greatest natural resource.

— B.W.D.

Uplands gift should spur city into action

The gift by the Ghilotti family of the 8.4-acre Laguna Uplands property should provide some incentive to city leaders to provide the necessary funding for implementation of the Laguna Park Master Plan.

With the Uplands property now in the hands of the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation, it will provide a natural link to the city's planned Laguna Park, enhancing the value and public accessibility of both properties.

Next month, City Council officials will hear another request for \$78,000 to implement the Laguna Park Master Plan. The plan is now enhanced by the potential link with the Uplands property. The City Council would do well to imitate the wisdom and generosity of the Ghilotti family by doing its share to fund the Laguna Park plan.

— B.W.D.

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