

Open Space Views

Vol. 33 ~ November 2022

SAN ANSELMO OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

MISSION

The SAOSC is a volunteer committee of the Town of San Anselmo. We exist to identify and preserve valuable open space lands, viewsheds, and trails located in San Anselmo and the greater Ross Valley.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jonathan Braun, Co-Chair
Stanley Radtke, Co-Chair
Kathleen Sanders, Treasurer
Daniel Krebs, Secretary
Brian Crawford
Peter Horn
Karin Ludwig
Mindy Stomp
René Voss
Paul Foxx
Henry Pratt

TO CONTACT THE SAOSC

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The Committee meets the third Wednesday of every month via Zoom. Agendas are posted at townofsananselmo.org. Please feel free to join us.

Bald Hill Summit, courtesy of Kevin Knowles

Saving Bald Hill & Upper Hawthorne Canyon: OUR OPPORTUNITY IS NOW!

For San Anselmo and the greater Ross Valley, 2022 will likely go down in our town's history as the year we made remarkable strides toward achieving our land-protection goals. After 35 years of hard and persistent work, not just one, but two purchase agreements have been put in place to permanently protect long-treasured lands.

Bald Hill is the backdrop of our community and the place where many of us head for a vigorous hike to take in the panoramic views, ever-changing weather, and spring wildflower displays. The mountain offers a satisfying escape from our fast-paced lifestyle.

Unknown to most people, the 60-acre summit and eastern face of Bald Hill is a private lot in the Town of Ross, zoned for large estate lots.

The San Anselmo Open Space Committee (SAOSC) recognized in the mid-1980s that the mountain could be developed and initiated a collaborative campaign with the Town of Ross to purchase the property in 1987. This led

to a funding measure put before voters in Ross and San Anselmo in 1990. Unfortunately, it missed the required

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Seminary Tower with Bald Hill, photo by Jonathan Braun

SAVING BALD HILL & UPPER HAWTHORNE CANYON

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two-thirds approval by only 180 votes.

In the intervening years we persisted and never gave up. A number of attempts were made to negotiate the public purchase of the land, without success, until now.

In 2021, when the owners put the property on the market, the Marin Open Space Trust (MOST) began negotiating a purchase agreement. We are thrilled to report that an agreement to purchase the land is now in place.

MOST plans to acquire the property and sell it to the Marin County Open Space District to become part of the existing Bald Hill Open Space Preserve. The Marin County Board of Supervisors recently approved the purchase of Bald Hill from MOST for \$850,000, but MOST's total purchase and project costs are projected at \$2.1 million.

MOST has launched a fundraising campaign to close the funding gap, and has a deadline of January 31, 2023 to raise all the funds. To date, generous private donors and the Tamalpais Conservation Club have donated to the project. The SAOSC will be contributing funds raised over many years for this purpose, and the Town of Ross will also consider a donation. But the project needs additional funding.

This is our opportunity to ensure that Bald Hill is forever protected as a public open space preserve! Please consider donating to the campaign (see donation

information on page 4 of this newsletter).

Upper Hawthorne Canyon is dramatically located in the ridge lands of San Anselmo, adjacent to Fairfax on the north side of the Ross Valley. The lower part of Hawthorne Canyon is a protected 22-acre open space preserve of pristine wooded hills, but the upper part of the canyon is privately owned. Many residents have always assumed the upper canyon was part of the Town's open space preserve.

In 1996, the owners of lower Hawthorne Canyon submitted development plans to the town and erected story poles. This development threat motivated the community to pursue preservation efforts. In 1999, with broad support, the Town of San Anselmo entered into an agreement to purchase these 22 acres. Through a lot of hard work, the Open Space Committee and Hawthorne Canyon friends and neighbors reached the \$590,000 needed to acquire this beautiful wooded open space, and lower Hawthorne Canyon became a town preserve.

However, the undeveloped 9.4-acre parcel directly above the preserve remained in private hands and has been a priority for acquisition since 1988. Late last year MOST began discussions with the owner, and in August 2022 entered into an agreement to purchase the property.

When combined with Lower Hawthorne Canyon and two

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Hawthorne Canyon, photo by René Voss

SAVING BALD HILL & UPPER HAWTHORNE CANYON

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adjacent Town-owned parcels, the completed open space preserve would consist of nearly 45 acres. The new addition would protect two important trails and access points. There are extraordinary vistas from the property with views to Mt Tamalpais, San Francisco, the Ross Valley, Mt Diablo, and beyond.

MOST needs to raise \$550,000 by June 15, 2023 to purchase the property, and the San Anselmo Open Space Committee plans to make a sizeable contribution.

But we need financial help from the community for a successful acquisition! (Please see donation information in this newsletter).

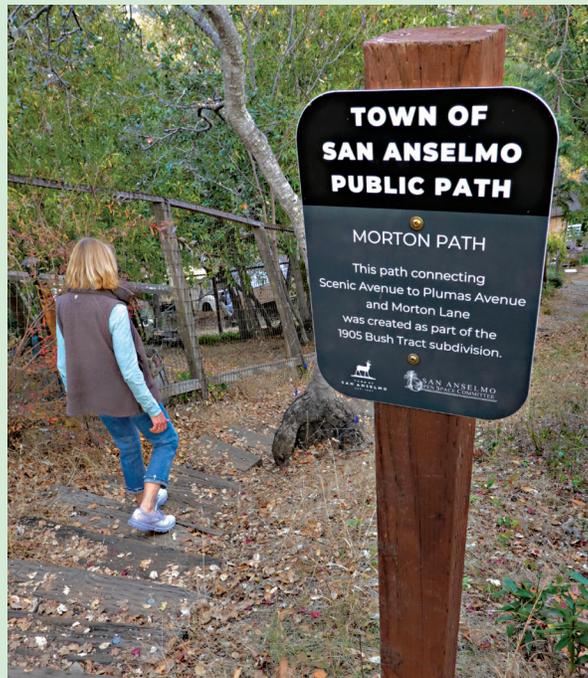


Sunset, Bald Hill, photo by Jonathan Braun

SAVING SAN ANSELMO'S STAIRS, LANES, AND PATHS

Your San Anselmo Open Space Committee is working on identifying, signing, and improving an extensive network of stairs, lanes, and paths (SLPs) in the town. These are town-owned areas between the parcels in many of the town's neighborhoods. As the town was developed, realtors wanted to sell the lots to people who worked in San Francisco. Marin had a fine train and ferry system that could reliably deliver people to the Ferry Building in an hour—what most people felt was a reasonable commute. But most of the new lots were high on the hills. When the developers drew up their plans, therefore, they left spaces between some of the lots for stairways, lanes, and paths to allow people to walk to the train stations. After the trains stopped running in 1941, many SLPs fell into disuse and became overgrown. They were being lost to public use. Most people were unaware they existed.

If these SLPs could be rehabilitated and signed as public paths, kids could use them as safe routes to school. People could walk between neighborhoods or to open space, reducing car use. And most importantly, they could serve



New SSLP, photo by Jonathan Braun

as emergency exit routes if the roads were blocked by a wildfire or earthquake. Your OSC decided to save what remained of the network of SLPs.

We identified more than 80 SLPs within the town limits. Then we went out to visit each one. Many had already been built over by adjoining homeowners. Others were simply impractical—they had never been developed and were now simply steep hillsides. Once these were eliminated, there were still 38 SLPs we thought could be opened up to again serve as pedestrian walkways or bicycle paths. Public Works estimated the cost of materials for each one.

We started with a small pilot project, signing the five bridges downtown. Then we assigned some paths to Scouts looking for a project to become Eagle Scouts. Sam Pinto and Dominic Trimble replaced steps and installed signs on two trails off Ridge Road. Work is ongoing on more such projects.

In the end, we want to add these improved SLPs to a new map of the town, incorporating our open space preserves, trails, paths, and bicycle routes. This map will be available online or could be distributed to residents and visitors.

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SAN ANSELMO OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE
Open Space Views

is produced as an informational service to the residents of San Anselmo and the Ross Valley, and is funded by contributions to the Open Space Committee. Articles and photos by Committee members.

or Current Resident



Bald Hill For Sale!



The San Anselmo Open Space Committee Fund

_____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$200 _____ \$500 _____ Other

*If you wish to designate your donation for Bald Hill or Upper Hawthorne Canyon please make a note on check.
All designated donations will go towards Marin Open Space Trusts' acquisitions of these two properties.*

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please make checks out to:
San Anselmo Open Space
Your gift is tax-deductible.

Please mail to:
San Anselmo Open Space c/o Town Hall
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San Anselmo, CA 94960