

TO:

City of Santa Cruz  
809 Center Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Santa Cruz Seaside Company  
400 Beach Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060



**SUBJECT: Preservation of the Beach Flats Community Garden**

*Dear Seaside Company management, Mayor Don Lane, and City Council members,*

We, the undersigned Santa Cruz County organizations and businesses, wish to bring to your attention our urgent concerns regarding the fate of the Beach Flats Community Garden. We have learned that the Seaside Company does not intend to renew the City's lease on the land when it expires on November 13<sup>th</sup>, and plans instead to remove the majority of the garden space in order to convert it for other Company uses beginning December 1<sup>st</sup>.

For over two decades, the Beach Flats Community Garden has flourished as a world-class exemplar of urban agriculture, a site for transmission of traditional knowledge, a much-needed community gathering place, and a verdant oasis in a high-density urban setting. Every square foot of the garden is thoughtfully utilized and maintained with care and pride by the gardeners.

Family heirloom seeds and expert knowledge of subsistence farming techniques, carried by first-generation immigrants from Latin America, form the foundation of the garden's remarkable productive capacity. The garden functions as a subsistence resource for many families of the low-income Beach Flats neighborhood, providing a dependable supply of healthful, organic, and culturally relevant food at no cost to the recipients. Some of the herbs and food crops tended by the gardeners can be found nowhere else in Santa Cruz.

The garden also serves as an outdoor classroom where less experienced gardeners, youth of the community, and college students alike receive hands-on instruction from the garden elders. The ample open space at the garden provides a relaxed, unique environment for workshops, community meetings, and social interaction. Neighborhood children enjoy visiting the safe and inviting "food forest," where they are able to connect with the land and learn about natural systems from a young age.

The Beach Flats Community Garden stands as a cultural pillar and an asset of incalculable value to the Beach Flats neighborhood and the Santa Cruz community at large. The proposed removal of a majority

of the present garden space would dramatically reduce the functionality of the garden as a community resource. Relocation of individual gardeners or fragmentation of the space runs contrary to the garden's communal ethic and would erode the unique nature of the garden as a hub for sustainable urban farming, skill-sharing, cultural preservation and community building.

We are grateful to the Seaside Company and the City for facilitating the existence of the garden up until now. At this time, we are writing to respectfully urge you to engage in dialogue with City staff, the gardeners, and community members in order to find a solution that addresses the Seaside Company's needs while preserving the Beach Flats Garden space in its current footprint. Loss or diminishment of this unique and irreplaceable resource would be widely felt in the Santa Cruz community and it is our sincere hope that this loss can be averted through respectful communication and collaborative problem solving. Thank you for your consideration,

*The undersigned organizations and businesses:*

*Coalition to Save the Beach Flats  
Community Garden*

*California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)*

*Community Agroecology Network*

*Santa Cruz Sierra Club*

*Gabriella Cafe*

*Route 1 Farms*

*Center for Agroecology and  
Sustainable Food Systems (CASFS), UCSC*

*Pie Ranch*

*Day Worker Center of Santa Cruz County*

*Santa Cruz Community Food Forest*

*Live Oak Grange*

*Santa Cruz Indigenous Solidarity*

*Sin Barras*

*Groundswell Farm*

*Community Mobile Vet*

*Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County*

*Islah Reparations Project*

*Pajaro Valley Loaves and Fishes*

*Safe Strawberry Monterey Bay Working Group*

*Resource Center for Nonviolence*

*Santa Cruz Community Health Centers*

*Barrios Unidos*

*Slow Food Santa Cruz*

*Santa Cruz Climate Action Network*

*Casalegno Family Farm*

*Oswald Restaurant*

*Food What?!*

*Redwood Nonviolence Community*

*Santa Cruz County Community Coalition  
to Overcome Racism (SCCCOR)*

*Teresa's Gourmet Foods*

*UAW 2865 UC Student-Worker Union*

*Project Pollinate*

*Old House Farm*

*Palestine-Israel Action Committee (PIAC)  
Santa Cruz*

*Lonely Mountain Farm*

*Department of Environmental Studies,  
San Jose State University*