

## **Joint Statement towards a Sustainable, Healthy Willits**

Willits is a great place to live for many reasons – a strong sense of community, creative talent of all kinds, and surrounding natural beauty, to name just a few. We want to protect and enhance these qualities and meet the challenges of the future by choosing positive change for Willits.

Economic, demographic and environmental trends concern many in our community. Issues such as climate change and fossil fuel (coal, petroleum, natural gas) depletion have many concerned about the security of essential goods, such as food. Nearly all of the basics we depend upon are shipped here from elsewhere. The growing gap between rich and poor strains social services, such as health care, and lowers the overall quality of life. Loss of jobs has eroded our economy, making it difficult for locals to purchase a home and for our youth to find long-term employment. As a result, most high-school graduates leave town and don't return, causing the fragmentation of families and friendships.

In light of these facts, we have come to see that we need to “localize” our economy. This means that we will produce more of the things we need here in Willits. It takes advantage of the great American value of self- and community-reliance that is so strong here. We can begin with the essentials. A focus on localizing food and energy production will be an excellent start. The solutions are in returning to small, local community enterprises.

Local food and energy systems would require us to tap into the vast wealth of knowledge and ingenuity in our area. We can create many new businesses that serve our common needs. In doing so, our youth would find many avenues to express their creativity, which benefits all of Willits. Our rural landscape would be enhanced by thriving farms that grow livestock and crops, from potatoes and grains to summer and fall vegetables. Renewable energy and non-polluting transportation systems would give us a quieter, less expensive, and more dependable set of services, while providing an array of interesting employment.

The key to making this transition will be harnessing and developing our human and financial capital. Fortunately, our natural resources, such as forests, fields, rivers and aquifers, are ample and can be enhanced if understood and managed wisely. We call upon the people of Willits to learn about why and how we can reorganize our economy, and then add your ideas towards creating a place that is even more beautiful, healthy and secure. In the coming months, a series of

community events, news articles, reports and forums will provide opportunities to learn more about these challenges and solutions. The organizations signed below are committed to this exciting and ultimately rewarding process. We look forward to hearing from the community.

Signed by:

City of Willits, Mayor Tami Jorgensen, Aug. 24, 2005

Willits Chamber of Commerce, Director Lynn Kenneley, Aug. 24, 2005

Willits Economic Localization, Jason Bradford, Aug. 29, 2005

North Coast Opportunities, Inc., Board Chair Randy Johnson, Sept. 7, 2005

Willits Action Group, Community Coordinator Cyndee Logan, Sept. 7, 2005

Mendocino County Youth Project, Executive Director Karin Wandrei, Sept. 7, 2005

Renewable Energy Development Institute, President Phil Jergenson, Sept. 8, 2005

Workforce Investment Board, Chair Marty Lombardi, Sept. 14, 2005

WEST CO Board, Chair Anne Molgaard, Sept. 14, 2005

Rotary Club of Willits, President Louis A. Celaya, Sept. 22, 2005

Frank R. Howard Foundation, President Margie Handley, Sept. 22, 2005

Mendocino Land Trust, Director James Bernard, Sept. 23, 2005

Boys and Girls Club of Willits, President Eric Glassey, Oct. 11, 2005

Nuestra Alianza de Willits, Executive Director Clint Kelley and Treasurer Rigoberto Haro, Feb. 2, 2006

Mendocino County Supervisor, 3<sup>rd</sup> District, Hal Wagenet, May 1, 2006