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is. The Open Space District has a matching grant program to help local governments involved in open space preservation efforts.

"We have worked with other conservation buyers, but not with a community that is reaching into their own pockets," Swan said.

The fact that the Palm Terrace parcel was within the city limits and was approved for an 18-lot subdivision made it one of the higher-priced conservation easements, per acre, the District has purchased, said Swan.

The knowledge that the city of Sebastopol supported the community effort, although lacking the wherewithal to contribute to it, and the fact that development was imminent also made a difference to the Open Space District, Swan said.

This was recognized as an opportunity to preserve an ecologically sensitive piece of land and provide public access to proper-

ty with tremendous educational and recreational value to the community, Swan said.

Another unique aspect of the project proved to be the extent of cooperation with the effort from property owners DRL Investments (Diane, Richard and Linda Chliotti).

When the community fundraising effort fell \$337,000 short of the money they needed to complete the purchase on May 1, the Chliottis agreed to close escrow and carry a portion of the debt.

The Laguna Uplands Project is obligated to pay the property owners \$37,000 within 60 days, \$100,000 in six months and \$100,000 in 18 months with a final \$100,000 payment due in three years.

Vilms said she plans to raise the money to make the payments to the Chliottis through foundation and corporate grants.

If the Laguna Uplands Project

defaults on the loan payments the land would revert back to the Chliottis, but the conservation easement would remain attached preserving the property as open space.

After buying out partner George Young a few weeks ago, the Chliottis also agreed to lower the purchase price from \$1.5 million to \$1,350,000, said farmily spokesman Jim Chliotti.

"While we had a partner involved we had to keep the price at \$1.5 million," Chliotti said, but since the appraisal on the property came back in the \$1.3 million range, the family had considered giving the Uplands Project \$150,000.

"One we had bought out Mr. Young, we just reduced the sales price instead," he said.

Chliotti said his uncle's heirs are "taking a substantial loss on this transaction — in the hundreds of thousands of dollars," because the family is "just tired of fighting people. We are not

fighters and we are not developers. When my uncle bought this property (about seven years ago) he thought it was approved for housing, if he had known it was controversial he would not have become involved."

"This way everybody comes out winners," he added.

Vilms and Doms said the effort owes the Chliotti family more than money.

"For them to have such good faith in our intentions restores my faith in human nature," Doms said.

It is time now, she added, for the Laguna Uplands Project to "celebrate in some manner, and then to proceed to the "second phase," which will open the discussion about "the actual use of the land to the community at large ... through a large open process that will allow the best concept to come forward."