The first chapter, “Protecting Open Space,” uses tabulated data to reach several conclusions: (1) The level of unmet conservation needs is up (most data sets conclude in 2002); (2) Appropriated funds are down; (3) The amount of earmarked money is mixed, but not high; (4) Revenue from referendum bonds is increasing; and (5) Dependence on private foundations is up (more on this later.)

An interesting anecdote from this chapter concerns the 2002 vote in California for a $2.6 billion park and environmental bond issue. According to Los Angeles Times exit polling, 77% of black voters, 74% of Latinos, 60% of Asians, and 56% of whites supported the bond. “Three in four voters whose family income was less than $20,000 supported the measure—the highest percentage of any income group—and 61% of those with a high school education or less voted for the park bond, the highest percentage among education levels.” Perhaps we have been directing our campaign efforts at the wrong populations.

Chapter 2, “Financing State Land Conservation Programs,” describes the widely diverse efforts made by 10 selected states. These include lottery revenue, cigarette taxes, general revenue bonds, fees from environmental license plates, and small increases in property taxes.

The New Jersey story was most astonishing to me. New Jersey easily outpaces all other states in terms of population density, with more than a thousand people per square mile. Fully 40% of the state is already developed, up from 28% in 1977. Time to give up? Hell, no! Since 1961, state voters have approved nine referenda totaling $1.6 billion in support of open space. The long-term goal is to protect nearly 40% of the state’s area from development.

This chapter concludes with a paragraph sufficiently punchy that I included it in recent letter to my own state governor.

The lesson here is that lawmakers and voters alike need to elevate funding for land conservation to the same level of seriousness as funding for roads, water and sewer systems, and other infrastructure so that these land preservation programs survive during economic downturns. While funding for a new bridge or a widened highway can be delayed a year or two without major disruption, once a tract of land is bought, subdivided, and developed, it’s gone for good.

Chapter 3, “Financing Local Land Conservation Programs,” once again turns to eight different locations to describe how they dealt with problems as diverse as farmland preservation, park safety, trail systems and greenways in urban areas, and suburban sprawl.

Nitty-gritty Chapter 4, “Creating Local Conservation Funding,” emphasizes that the number of local programs increase if there are statewide programs that provide local grants to communities that have their own funding sources to leverage the state money.

Topics include, “To Campaign or Not to Campaign,” (with a 12-month step-by-step schedule), “Coalition Building,” “Polling,” and “Ballot Language.”

Chapter 5, “Conserving Land With Private-Sector Funding,” really rang my bell. I had no idea that the “Top 50 U.S. foundations awarding grants for the environment, ca. 2001” granted a total of $761,382,693 in that one year. The ‘top 50’ are listed, with location, grant amounts and numbers tabulated. Six key foundations are described, along with their objectives.

If you choose not to buy the book, here’s a freebie from the notes to Chapter 5: “To access more than 1700 statistical tables on foundations and their giving, visit the Foundation Center’s web site at www.foundationcenter.org/media/stats.html.”

There must be a foundation out there for each of us.

Chapter 6, “Financing Green Infrastructure: Smarter, More Cost-Effective Land Conservation,” makes an effective plug for a more strategic approach. In other words, open space should be planned and developed as a system. Topics include “Green Infrastructure versus Traditional Land Conservation,” “What Does Green Infrastructure Look Like?” with seven guiding principles, and twelve really good “Examples of Green Infrastructure.”

Greenway hubs, links, and sites are clearly