Climate and Agricultural Preservation Plan

Technical Panels

Initial Findings –
Santa Clara Valley Farming Trends
Agricultural Support Programs

February 8, 2017
Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions
2. SALC / CAPP / Program Context
3. Meeting Objectives
4. Takeaways & Initial Findings
   1. Farming Trends in Southern Santa Clara County –
      * Agricultural Land Conversions, Agricultural Economy, Sub-regions
   2. Agricultural Support Programs from other regions
5. Discussion and next Steps
Introductions

- Share your
  - Name
  - Farm/ranch or organization
  - Where you are located
CAPP – Climate and Agricultural Preservation Program

* New Regional program for sustaining farming and farmland in Southern Santa Clara County
* County of Santa Clara & Open Space Authority

Funded by SALC Grant – Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation

* Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds / Strategic Growth Council
* Agricultural Land Preservation to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions
Two Year Program – 2016 – 2017
- November 2016 – Introductory Meeting

- February 2017 – Initial Findings – Santa Clara Valley Farming Trends and Agricultural Support Programs

- May / June 2017 – Draft Program

- September / October – Final Program
Initial Findings

• First Understand trends in Santa Clara Valley Farming
• Identify Resources and Challenges
• Build Future program based on Initial Findings

• Identify best practices and most applicable tools from other Agricultural Support Programs

• Trends in Farming and Farmland in Southern Santa Clara County—1984 to present
  • Farmland Conversions
  • Agricultural Economy
  • Sub-regional characteristics
  • Trends going forward
Southern Santa Clara County Agriculture - Then & Now

1984 Agriculture

* 40,000 acres in Farmland Production
* Gross Production Value of $139,451,505
* Top Value Crops –
  * Cut Flowers $26m
  * Nursery Crops $17m
  * Mushrooms $15m
* 11,600 acres in veg. crops
* 7,000 acres in fruit & nuts
* 26,888 acres field crops

2014 Agriculture

* 24,000 Acres in Farmland Production
* Gross Production Value of $279,162,600
* Top Value Crops:
  * Nursery $65m
  * Mushrooms $64m
  * Bell Peppers $19m
* 13,486 acres in veg. crops
* 2,700 acres in fruits and nuts
* 4,888 acres in field crops

1 This is a gross estimate based on State Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Data. The County Planning Department estimates that due to a change in mapping methodology used by the State after 1984 that this number is approximately 34,000, consistent with the Department’s estimate that approximately 10,000 acres of land was converted between 1984 and 2014 (Slide 8)
Agricultural Land Conversions 1984-2014

- 9,980 acres of agricultural land converted to other uses
- 4,225 acres (42%) due to city annexations
- 5,755 acres (58%) due to rural development
Agricultural Land Conversions

- Rate of Conversions peaked from 1998-2006
- Majority of Conversions in Gilroy, Morgan Hill and San Martin areas

City Annexations
- Majority Gilroy / Morgan Hill
- Peaked in 2000, decline since

The acreage numbers shown in these graphs do not correspond directly with the data shown in slide 8, as a different, but similar methodology was used for calculations. However, the graphs accurately portray the nature and trend of land conversions with respect to location and timeframe.
Agricultural Land Conversions

Rural Development

* Over 83% of rural conversions on parcels of 10 acres in size or less

* Majority of rural conversions in Morgan Hill and San Martin Area

* Majority single family homes on existing lots.
Agricultural Lands Today

- 24,000 acres cultivated farmland
- Additional 20,700 acres fallow or uncultivated
Changes in Agricultural Economy

- Increase in production value and efficiency - value per acre and employee
- Higher value crops, specialization
- Agriculture moving north to south

Figure 2. 1980 - 2013 Harvested Irrigated Acreage and Production Value per Acre

Figure 3. 1990 - 2013 Direct On-Farm Employment and Production Value per Worker
Farming - Resources & Challenges

- **Water** - Well managed regional water system versus other regions – need to maintain rates and access
- **Labor** – challenges with affordable housing in region and specifically seasonal labor.
- **Infrastructure** - Well developed regional packing, distribution, processing in some sectors (vegetables) but not others (orchard)
- **Urban Interface** – Commuters, complaints about spraying, dust, odors, new school notification regulations
- **Weather, Disease, Pests**
A Tale of Regions

* Coyote Valley
* Morgan Hill
* San Martin
* Gilroy
* Rangelands
Coyote Valley

- North Coyote in City, Middle / Lower Coyote in County
- Large lots in Middle / Upper Coyote
- Majority Field Crops – Hay – minimal long term investment
- Asian Vegetables, Nursery crops
- Interface with Commuter Traffic / Residential
- Question over future City annexation
Morgan Hill Area

- Smaller Parcels (most under 10 acres)
- Agricultural land conversions –
  - City Annexation
  - Rural Ranchettes (legal lots)
- Higher Land Values
- Urban / Rural Interface – Nuisance
- Agriculture Infrastructure– Chiala processing plant.
San Martin Area

- Rural Residential Community
- County General Plan – Priority not Agriculture
- Agricultural land conversions to rural ranchettes
- Some larger parcels with agriculture in southwest
- Examples of rural residential clusters with agriculture (Cordevalle / Martin)
Gilroy Area – Agricultural Preserve

- Large Lots - over 20 & 40 acres
- Majority of past agricultural land conversions – city annexations
- Lower property values, less land speculation and urban interface
- Integration with San Benito County Agriculture
- Good Infrastructure / Distribution – Vegetables – Uesugi Farms, Christopher Ranch
- Nurseries, Wineries
Agricultural Land Conversions
- Annexations peak by 2000, Cultivated lands stable since.
- **City Annexations** – Gilroy, Morgan Hill – slowed rate in past 10 years
- **Rural Development** – Majority existing legal lots of 10 acres or less in Morgan Hill / San Martin Area, legacy of prior land use policies

Agricultural Economy
- Increase in Specialization, Production Value, Efficiency – Vegetable Crops, Nursery, Mushrooms
- Agriculture moving north to south
- Difficulty in North – Higher land values, urban interface, smaller lots, less infrastructure
- Seasonal Agricultural Workers – limited housing – all coming from south / central valley
- Water – well managed – ongoing challenge – maintain supply and prices
Challenges, Resources & Opportunities

Challenges

* Pre-existing small lots Morgan Hill / San Martin Area- ongoing rural ranchette development
* Potential future city annexations in Coyote / Morgan Hill
* Urban / Ag interface challenges in North Valley – new school notifications
* Seasonal Agricultural workers
* Little direct local market access (farmers markets, schools)
* Little awareness of agriculture, food systems in North County urban areas
* Lack of local infrastructure for some crops (orchards)
Resources

* Specialization, efficiency in certain sectors with infrastructure support (packing, distribution, processing)
* Regional water availability – highly efficient water usage

Opportunities

* Increasing interest in local food / regional agriculture, new interest in farming
* Potential investment / farming of fallow lands (OSA)
Information still to come

- Mapping of Agricultural Viability
- Mapping of Land Conversion Threats, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Mapping of business as usual going forward (conversions)
- Economic development / Enterprise zone opportunities
- Co-benefits of Farming and Agricultural Lands –
  - Groundwater protection
  - Flooding
  - Habitat
Discussion

* Questions and reactions from the presentation
* Did we capture the dynamics in the County?
* What is missing?
* What is important to underscore?
Next Steps

* Summary of Feedback from the Technical Panels
* Draft Program – Climate and Agricultural Preservation Program
  * Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
  * Agricultural Enterprise Program
  * Land Use Tools (Zoning / General Plan)

* May / June – Review with Technical Panels
Thank You!!

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More information -
https://www.sccgov.org/sites/dpd/PlansOrdinances/Studies/Pages/SustainableAgLands.aspx