

Agricultural Element Overview

Agricultural Advisory Board – June 3, 2019

- Agricultural Element is an optional element of the County's General Plan, which establishes the blueprint for development in the unincorporated area of Stanislaus County.
- The County's first Agricultural Element was adopted in April of 1992; in recognition of the importance of agriculture to our local economy.
- Primary purpose of the Agricultural Element has remained generally the same since 1992:

"To promote and protect local agriculture through the adoption of policies designed to achieve three main goals:

- Strengthen the agricultural sector of our economy.
- Conserve our agricultural lands for agricultural uses.
- Protect the natural resources that sustain agriculture in Stanislaus County."

- 2007 Update

- Planning staff worked on the update with a sub-committee of the Agricultural Advisory Board
- Identified the need for a comprehensive update to reflect changing trends and pressures facing agricultural areas, to redefine what is important to local agriculture as an industry, to update information within the document to make it "timeless", and to reflect the positive impacts agriculture has on our community
 - Recognize the introduction of vertical integration in the form of tiered uses
 - Adoption of a direct-marketing ordinance (produce stands/markets)
 - Adoption of antiquated subdivision ordinance
 - Removal of policies addressing financing capital improvements (better addressed by public sector), and cluster development which was felt to be counter productive in the effort to minimize impacts to agricultural lands
- April 2007 Update –
 - Five-year review period language added
 - Introduced agricultural buffers and setbacks
 - Retitled "food safety and use of chemicals" section to "food safety"
 - The term "agricultural viability" introduced in the discussion on parcelization of farmland and the potential to inadvertently result in the creation of ranchettes.
 - Introduced specific criteria for the review of lot line adjustments
 - Established criteria for development of a dwelling on newly created parcels
 - Clarified the definition of "Most Productive Agricultural Areas"
 - Identified a 1:1 ratio as appropriate for Agricultural Land Mitigation (Policy 2.13).
 - 1992 Policy 2.13 Language: "To the greatest extent feasible, the County shall require mitigation of the impacts of farmland conservation."
 - Recognized the need for cities to also establish agricultural conservation policies
 - Added and modified various definitions
 - April 17, 2007 – Board returned the update to staff and the Agricultural Advisory Board to address the following: 1) development of buffer design and maintenance guidelines, 2) comprehensive update of Williamson Act Uniform Rules, 3) review and update of the A-2 (General Agriculture) zoning district, 4) development and adoption of guidelines for mitigating the loss of agricultural lands, and 5) review issues related to viability of farmland operations