

Agricultural Cluster Development (ACD) Summary

The ACD concept is designed to create additional density for residential subdivision while minimizing impacts to remaining agricultural acreage through permanent agricultural easement and cooperative management on non-Williamson Act contracted lands. The following summary describes the County's effort to enact an ACD concept which was ultimately not successful.

An ACD program can be one alternative to traditional large parcel subdivisions that are often denied due to impacts to agricultural production or loss of agricultural land, or inconsistencies with the Agricultural Element of the Comprehensive Plan. ACD is intended to benefit both the property owner (by providing a mechanism to maintain agricultural production through development of non-agricultural uses), the County's agricultural industry (by preserving resources necessary to sustain this important business sector), and the community at large through preservation of agricultural and open space.

During draft ACD Ordinance development, some agriculturalists and property owners in the County conceptually supported the ACD Program while expressing concern that specific provisions in the draft ordinance did not address their needs. Staff recommended implementation on a pilot program basis. A voluntary public-private partnership enabled interested property owners to receive preliminary environmental review of proposed projects on their site. Pilot projects were developed for Mission Oaks Ranch in the Santa Ynez Valley and Rancho Todos Santos in the San Antonio Valley west of Los Alamos.

The Rancho Todos Santos ACD pilot project would have maximized residential and non-residential development with a Development Cluster Area and included a mix of on-site agricultural uses (cultivated agriculture and grazing). The Mission Oaks Ranch ACD pilot project included development of 47 residences and two common area equestrian lots on approximately 130 acres and the retention of 3,747 acres in an agricultural easement.