



Planning and Development Department

Office of Long Range Planning

Transmittal Memo

DATE:	Wednesday, January 20, 2010
TO:	GVPAC Members
FROM:	Erika Leachman, Senior Planner
CC:	2nd Supervisorial District Office Derek Johnson, Director of the Office of Long Range Planning Vicki Parker, Deputy Director, Office of Long Range Planning Peter Imhof, Supervising Planner Lucy Pendl, Associate Planner
SUBJECT:	Distribution of Letter from EDC and info from GVPAC member Bonnie Freeman

On behalf of Brian Trautwein of the Environmental Defense Center (EDC) and GVPAC member Bonnie Freeman, please see the attached supplemental materials. Mr. Trautwein has requested distribution of a letter from the EDC and Ms. Freeman has requested distribution of her work on agricultural land use for GVPAC consideration during this evening's discussion and goal-setting pertaining to agricultural land use.

The attached packet contains the following items:

1. Letter from Brian Trautwein, Environmental Defense Center
2. Worksheet prepared by GVPAC Member Bonnie Freeman regarding existing documents relevant to agricultural resources.
3. Worksheet prepared by GVPAC Member Bonnie Freeman regarding goals for agricultural land use.

This transmission will be provided to you this evening in hard-copy format for your records.

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**Brian Trautwein, Environmental Analyst
Environmental Defense Center
January 20, 2010
Testimony to GVPAC re Agriculture in Goleta Valley**

Honorable Chair Olsen and GVPAC Members:

I am Brian Trautwein of the Environmental Defense Center. EDC is a public-interest non-profit environmental law firm which protects the environment through education, advocacy and legal action. I have lived in the Goleta Valley for 40 years.

While at UCSB at I studied the value of Goleta's farmland and it is some of the richest, most fertile farm land in the country. It has deep top soil in many areas – especially the valley bottoms and flatlands, and has one of the best climates in the country for a wide variety of crops.

This land should not be rezoned. Documents including Goleta Valley Outlook and Goleta Valley 20/20 identify the importance of Goleta's agriculture, the threats, and the need to preserve it. The Goleta Valley 20/20 plan is a foundational document to this committee's work and identifies the following standards for success:

1. No net loss of agricultural lands has occurred.
2. Policies are in place to enhance, promote and protect farming and agriculture lands.

In the future as gas prices likely rise, and transportation of food from abroad becomes less and less economically viable, local farmland will become increasingly valuable. As of now it is critical to save this farmland for the current and future well-being of Goleta Valley residents.

To rezone ag land, the County would have to make findings that the rezone is in the best interest and welfare of the community. While ag landowners may wish to cash out when community plans are updated, that is not in the public's interest. EDC is a public interest firm which looks at issues with the public's well being in mind. In this case, it is in the public's welfare to protect Goleta ag zoned lands because (1) they have great value as farmland to produce food for the local region, and (2) they have great value as open space and benefit the quality of life in Goleta.

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Goleta Valley Planning Advisory Committee re Agriculture in the Goleta Valley
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The SB County region could likely produce all its own food needs. Goleta's farmland is important and should be preserved as part of our region's breadbasket. The more food we can grow locally, the less we have to import, the less greenhouse gas pollution we are creating by importing produce from long distances – produce we can grow right here in Goleta. This is a third reason it is in the public's interest to maintain Goleta's agriculture lands: Producing local food is an important action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Goleta's ag-zoned lands are viable farmlands. Viability often comes down to the farming practices and the owner's interests. One landowner may call a land unviable farmland while another may turn that same land into an amazing farm.

Local food is becoming increasingly important. We should be preserving and incentivizing local agriculture through the GCP.

EDC opposes rezoning Goleta's farmland.

Thank you for your attention to EDC's comments.



PREPARED BY GVPAC MEMBER BONNIE FREEMAN FOR GVPAC CONSIDERATION, 1/20/2010

AGRICULTURAL LAND USE
SUGGESTED GOALS & TOOLS: 11-12-09 (revised 12-14-09)

VISION: Preserve and protect the best and most viable of the Goleta Valley’s agricultural lands.

1993 Goleta Community Plan	2006 Goleta Visioning Comm Goals	2009 Workshop Goals	Bonnie’s Added Goals
Encourage preservation of viable Goleta agricultural lands	Agriculture is a vital element in the mix of land use and sustainable economic activity.	Reduce restrictions in the planning codes. Work with Public Works to get better access for farmers to get their tractors in and out of urban “pocket” farming plots.	Assist farmers and land owners in promoting sustainable agriculture and protecting viable farm lands for production in the Goleta Valley
To provide Housing Affordable to All Goleta Residents. To strive for a balance between jobs and housing. To provide a range of commercial and industrial uses which promote orderly economic development, and To protect Natural Resources	Protect agricultural lands from encroachment by residential and commercial development.	Assure long term access to locally grown and sold food (Lane, Givens, Fairview) Assure continued access to San Marcos Wholesale Gardens for our native plants, ornamentals and succulents.	Assist the community of Goleta Valley in increasing the production of foods for the common interest of sustaining local agriculture (food production)
Policy LUA-GV-1: Land designated for agriculture within the urban boundary shall be preserved for agriculture use, unless the County makes findings that the land is no longer appropriate for agriculture or there is an overriding public need for conversion to other uses for which there is no other land available in the Goleta urban area.	Promote opportunities for sustainable agriculture	Any prime soil agriculture areas be saved. All physical qualities of the land must be valued. Preservation of viable, usable agricultural land.	Review the two large blocks of agricultural land within the Urban Planning Area to determine the values of continued agricultural usage. * South Patterson * San Marcos/Hollister
Action LUA-GV-1.2: Parcels 65-040-41, 65-080-08,09,10,11,20 and 24 (San Marcos Hollister NW) should have a land use designation A-1-5 for the life of this Plan or for ten years from		Possible conversion of agricultural land to open spaces, parks, community gardens	Review the smaller MTD parcels of agricultural land within the Urban Planning Area to determine the values of continued of agricultural usage, or if another land use

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(Continued:)

1993 Goleta Community Plan	2006 Goleta Visioning Comm Goals	2009 Workshop Goals	Bonnie's Added Goals
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the adoption of this Plan, whichever occurs first. At that time, the County shall review these parcels to determine the agricultural designation is still appropriate. If not, medium to low residential designations consistent with surrounding land uses should be considered for all of the 65-080-parcels and a mix of commercial and medium to high density residential should be considered for parcel 65-040-41. All of the residential parcels should also be considered for inclusion in the County's Affordable Housing Program.

Action LUA-GV-1.6: The parcels as the South Patterson Agricultural Area, south of Hollister Avenue and west of Patterson Avenue (Figure 25) shall have a land use designation of A-1 for the life of this Plan or for ten years from the adoption of the Plan, whichever occurs first. At that time, County shall review this site to determine if the agricultural designation is still appropriate. If not, the County should consider the submittal of a Specific Plan for the eventual development of these parcels. This Action shall not preclude the identification of this site as a Transfer of development Rights receiver site as part of the county's TDR study.

designation could be considered (mixed-use)

County shall explore conversion of infill property to Community Gardens or parks

County shall explore conversion of specific Ag zoned properties to Community Gardens or Public Parks, if shown land is no longer viable

County shall explore new zoning (overlay?) for specific urban Ag lands that can no longer support the business of crops for profit.

Explore the possibility of converting known specific Ag zoned land that is adjacent to urban corridors that could be rezoned for a public benefit to create more access to work, recreation, and open spaces.

Allow South Patterson Block Ag landowners the opportunity to submit specific plans for conversion parcel by parcel basis, **and/or an area specific Comprehensive Plan.**

County shall explore new Parcel Specific Development Standards (in the South Patterson Block) **Comprehensive Plan**

EDRN (Existing Developed Rural Neighborhood Designation) Use for "Urban" designation (TOOL?)

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A diversified labor/service pool is available to support local agriculture

County shall take an active roll in finding parcels of land for small farming operations to encourage the production of intensive high-value crops for profit.

Assist farmers and land owners in promoting sustainable agriculture and maintaining viable vibrant farm lands and production in the Goleta Valley.

County shall re-designate a portion of the land at County Campus for the perpetual leasing of land for food production.

County shall amend Agricultural Policies to include standards that include ECONOMIC as well as soil quality measurements. (Thresholds)

TOOLS

- Farm Worker Housing
- Williamson Act
- Agricultural Conservation Easements
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)
- Deeper Buffer Zones
- Selective conversion of smaller or lower-priority farms to keep pressure off of the more important farm areas
- Increase density of residential development. Well-designed compact development among residents and urban planners could ease development pressure on farms and open space by using land more efficiently, dense development can significantly reduce traffic and air pollution.
- Do a Parks/Community Garden Overlay
- Work with local agencies already in place to create more home-grown gardens or community gardens
- Create a set of standards for measuring prime agricultural land at the local level (Vision)
- Promote home and infill gardens (Vision)

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- Schools and other public institutions give purchasing priority to local produce
- Encourage and support ways that allow agriculture to maximize its flexibility to ensure profitability (Vision)
- Reevaluate the size standard for minimum, viable agriculture zoned parcels in suburban settings (Christina)
- Set standards for home and community gardens that encourage safe, organic growing methods.
- Provide training seminars to home gardeners for the use of biological pest controls and organic growing methods, including low water usage
- Work with water agencies to ensure efficient utilization and protection of the local water supply (Vision)
- Create and enhance incentives to keep agricultural lands in agriculture (Vision)
- Avoid land use incompatibility by requiring that any new development adjoining the agricultural parcels have sufficient buffer zones (Vision)
- Work with public land trusts to identify and procure development rights and conservation easements on productive land (Vision, Bonnie shortened)
- Provide adequate housing for farm workers (Vision+B shortened)
- Develop policies that encourage the use of unique, clean and cost-effective biological pest control and fertilization methods. (Vision)
- Review/rewrite Policy LUA-GV-4 “Sensitive land uses” to create standards for mixing some usage of clean, organic agriculture in conjunction with schools, senior facilities and other institutions that may have a benefit to these facilities and the health of those who inhabit therein.
- “S” permit determined by Specific Use Regulation (**winery**) to include **Community gardens**. (SB County Land Use & Dev. Code)
- Do an updated study of the soil designations listed in the Coastal Act for Agriculture.
- Enforce Farm Protection Act (Sandy Lejune, Fairview)
- The Right-to-Farm Ordinance shall be updated to incorporate a Dispute Resolution Policy that will provide a neutral forum for resolving farming operations conflicts. (Christina McGinnis)
- County Thresholds to be updated to include more definitions (Craig M.)
- Create set of standards for “viable” or “productive” land use that includes economic as well as soil quality measurements.

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EXISTING SOURCES FOR PROTECTION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND IN THE
GOLETA VALLEY

COASTAL ACT

Review excerpted requirements as provided by Christina McGinnis on Jan. 7, 2010

COASTAL ZONING ORDINANCE, ARTICLE 11 OF CHAPTER 35, SANTA BARBARA
COUNTY CODE

Purposes:

1. Protect, maintain, and where feasible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Coastal zone environment and its natural and manmade resources.
2. Assure orderly, balanced utilization and conservation of Coastal Zone resources taking into account the social and economic needs of the people of this county and of the State.
3. Maximize public access to and along the coast and maximize public recreational opportunities in the Coastal zone consistent with sound resource conservation principles and constitutionally protected rights of private property owners.
4. Assure priority for coastal-dependent and coastal-related development over other development on the coast.
5. provide a definite plan for development so as to guide the future growth of the County within the Coastal Zone.
6. Protect the character and stability (social and economic) of agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial areas.

Exemptions:

1. Lands held in trust by the Federal Government, its officers or agents. (condensed)
2. New or expanded thermal electric generating plants ,electric transmission lines under the jurisdiction of the Calif. Energy Resources Conservation and Dev. Commission. (shortened)
3. Any development proposed or undertaken within any state university or college (Public Resources Code Section 30519)
4. Repair and maintenance undertaken by county of which BOS is governing body. (condensed)

ENVIRONMENTAL THRESHOLDS AND GUIDELINES MANUAL

AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT

Goals I, II, III, IV, V,VI

Basically strives to protect Ag land by policies and goals that encourage production and supportive services as well as retaining portions of Ag land if there is conversion.

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LOCAL COASTAL PLAN (LCP)

Policies 8-1 through 8-10 basically define criteria for assigning agricultural land use designations and criteria for allowing conversions of Ag designated land and protection of large parcels of Ag land.

Defines findings which must be made for approving a land division in AG I or AG II.
EIR reviews criteria

METHODOLOGY IN DETERMINING AG SUITABILITY AND PRODUCTIVITY

The weighted point system is utilized to assign relative values to particular characteristics of a site's agricultural productivity (e.g. soil type, water supply, etc.). Where the points from the following formula total 60 or more, the following types of projects will be considered to have a potentially significant impact:

A division of land which is currently considered viable but would result in parcels which would not be considered viable using the weighting system.

A Development Plan, Conditional Use Permit, or other discretionary act which would result in the conversion from agricultural use of a parcel qualifying as viable using the weighting system.

Discretionary projects which may result in substantial disruption of surrounding agricultural operations.

The Agricultural Threshold is weighted toward physical environmental resources rather than economics. This emphasis is in keeping with CEQA's emphasis on physical environmental impacts and not social or economic impacts (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15131). Given high land values in the County and the subdivision and turnover of agricultural lands in some areas of the county, agricultural production on some lands may be economically marginal. Because of these factors, economics is considered primarily a planning issue and will not be addressed in environmental documents.

The following determination of agricultural land value is divided into nine components which are weighted according to their estimated resource value. These nine areas are:

-Parcel size, -Adjacent Land Uses, -Water Availability, -Comprehensive Plan Designation, -Agricultural Preserve Potential, -Existing Land Use, -Soil Classification, -Agricultural suitability, -Combined Farming, -Operations

GOLETA COMMUNITY PLAN

POLICY LUA-GV-1: Land designated for agriculture within the urban boundary shall be preserved for agricultural use, unless the county makes findings that the land is no longer appropriate for agriculture or there is an overriding public need for conversion to other uses for which there is no other land available in the Goleta urban area.

POLICY LUA-GV-2 New development adjacent to agriculturally zoned property shall include buffers to protect agricultural operations.

POLICY LUS-GV-4 In consideration of conversion of any agricultural land within the urban boundary to urban uses, the county shall first consider smaller, more isolated parcels with greater urban/agricultural conflicts prior to larger blocks of agricultural land.