



## FACT SHEET

### FARM BUREAU ISSUES

#### GENERAL PLAN UPDATE INFORMATION

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#### BACKGROUND

A key stakeholder and member of the General Plan Update's Interest Group is the San Diego County Farm Bureau. As an important stakeholder, and in recognition of farming as a major industry in the County of San Diego, the County has evaluated specific issues raised by the Farm Bureau and has continued to coordinate with them to encourage farming in the County of San Diego. Three major issue on interest associated with the General Plan Update were raised by the Farm Bureau: 1) the Conservation Subdivision Program; 2) rural land use designations; and 3) an equity mechanism, which currently consists of developing a Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) Program.

#### CONSERVATION SUBDIVISION PROGRAM

The Conservation Subdivision Program being drafted by the County of San Diego is a tool developed to balance community character, environmental interests and development potential in a subdivision process, with one of the goals being the preservation of agriculture and open space. It will be implemented through a series of ordinance changes, primarily effecting the implementation of a Planned Residential Development or Lot Area Averaging projects. It is the intent of this proposal to include areas that agricultural land, as well as high value open space could be put into easements and preserved as production agriculture, while the remainder of a property could be subdivided for residential use.

The Farm Bureau has expressed their support of this Conservation Subdivision Program and concern with any conditions that may undermine or inhibit its implementation. This program is still being discussed with interested parties, including community groups, environmental groups and building interests. There has been general concern that policies in community plans or findings that require compatibility of development with community character may be at odds with other provisions of the program. DPLU has given careful consideration of the various community plans and determine that they will not undermine the implementation of the Conservation Subdivision Program.

Refer the Conservation Subdivision Fact Sheet for more information.

#### RURAL LANDS 80 AND 160

Concerns have been raised that the Rural Lands 80 and 160 densities are not conducive to entry level farmers with large parcels. Out of the two million acres within the County of San Diego, 147,000 of these acres are designated Rural Lands 80 (excluding the Desert Subregion) on the Planning Commission Tentatively Recommended Map. For comparison, 44,000 acres are designated Semi-Rural 4, 60,000 are Semi-Rural 10 and 62,000 are Rural Lands 20, resulting in a total of 166,000 acres which are given land use designations that the Farm Bureau considers more suitable for farming. The Rural Lands 160 designation is not used on the recommended map. The remainders of private lands are designed smaller lot Village, Semi-Rural or Commercial/Industrial uses.

Additionally, most of the Rural Lands 80 densities are applied to extremely rural areas that are not as conducive to farming or any such development, such as the Mountain Empire with 37,000 acres and the North Mountain Subregions with 58,000 that rely are entirely on groundwater, receive less recharge than many of the other unincorporated communities, and contain many steep slopes.

While these properties may have limited subdivision potential, and would remain with existing parcelization, if these properties did have the acreage required to subdivide the County would encourage the implementation of the Conservation Subdivision Program. In Rural Lands the goal for the Conservation Subdivision program is an 8 acre minimum parcel size, so a subdivision developed in this manner could preserve significant acreages of open space; preserve groundwater with large areas of undeveloped land as well as create smaller parcels that could be conducive to a small farm operation.

#### EQUITY MECHANISMS

The County of San Diego is in the process of developing an Equity Mechanism, as a separate part of the General Plan Update, with the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) Program. With this program, the County of San Diego is working with American Farmland Trust, a nationwide nonprofit dedicated to protecting farmland, and is in the final stages of negotiating a consultant contract.

Concerns have been raised the this program is not providing significant equity or credit for

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“downzoning” provided under the General Plan Update, however as the program is developed it has the flexibility to include additional priority and potentially credits for property with decreased residential density under the General Plan Update. The County is committed to working with the Farm Bureau in development of this program.

Refer the Equity Mechanisms Fact Sheet 5 for more information.