



Strategic Initiative for Agriculture

- Mid-Project Update

Presented to the Solano County Board of Supervisors

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Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures

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Strategic Initiative for Agriculture

Economic Development Infrastructure Land Use

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- Serena Unger (Urban Rural Regional Strategies)
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Outreach & Engagement

- Robert Gould
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valley vision

Community Inspired Solutions



INNOVATIONS
collaboration with impact



Strategic Initiative for Agriculture

Objectives

Land Use: Assess current ag land use policies and make recommended updates recognizing agriculture as a business while also preserving working agricultural lands.

Infrastructure: Identify infrastructure needs required to support ag conservation and economic development.

Economic Development: Create an agricultural economic plan ensuring investment in a profitable and enduring future for producers, processors and supporting industries.



Strategic Initiative for Agriculture

Board Priorities

- A1** – Strengthen Right to Farm policies
- A2** – Support development of ag worker housing
- A3** – Create an agricultural economic development plan
- E2** – Update the County General Plan to identify potential areas for economic development within the jurisdiction of the County
- E3** – Assess infrastructure needs



Sustainable Ag Lands Conservation Program

Funds planning and land acquisition projects to protect agricultural lands at risk of conversion to other uses

- Promotes smart growth within existing jurisdictions
- Ensures viable open space
- Supports agricultural and tribal food systems
- Promotes biodiversity and soil health
- Helps sequester climate change-causing emissions





Grant Timeline

- Board of Supervisors approved grant pre-proposal – May 2023
- Board of Supervisors approved grant application – August 2023
- Strategic Growth Council approved grant request – December 2023
- Department of Conservation executed grant agreement – April 2024 (grant term April 2024 – April 2027)
- Contracted with Ag Innovations to assist with project outreach and meeting facilitation
- Contracted with Valley Vision to help build the land use policy, infrastructure and economic development components of the project
- Anticipate final report and recommendations: December 2026



Steering Committee

- Board of Supervisors Ag Vision Committee
 - Chair Mashburn
 - Supervisor Vasquez
- Ian Goldberg, County Administrator
- James Bezek, Resource Management Director
- Rich Seithel, LAFCO Director
- Nancy Nelson, Senior Management Analyst
- Ed King, Agricultural Commissioner



Food & Agriculture Committee

- Farmers
- Ranchers
- Solano Farm Bureau
- Suisun Valley Vintners & Growers Association
- Pleasants Valley Agricultural Association
- Campbells
- Superior Farms
- Solano Food System Alliance
- UC Cooperative Extension





Land Use & Infrastructure Committee

City Representatives

- Benicia
- Dixon
- Fairfield
- Rio Vista
- Suisun City
- Vacaville
- Vallejo

County Staff

- Planning Manger
- Health Service Manager
- IT/GIS Manager
- Water & Natural Resources Manager
- Engineering Manager

Other Stakeholders

- LAFCO
- Dixon, Solano, Suisun RCDs
- Solano Land Trust
- Solano County Water Agency
- Solano Irrigation District
- Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano
- Yolo-Solano AQMD
- Solano Transportation Authority
- Lystek
- UC Cooperative Extension



Progress to Date

- Public kick-off meeting – November 2024
- Steering Committee – 4 meetings
- Food & Ag Committee – 3 meetings
- Land Use & Infrastructure Committee – 2 meetings
- Food & Ag and Land Use & Infrastructure Committee – 1 joint committee meeting
- Multiple robust and informative individual stakeholder meetings
- Draft land use policy assessment and action plan
- Formulating and compiling preliminary infrastructure and economic development findings and considerations



Land Use Policy Assessment & Action Plan

Concepts

Guiding Growth & Agricultural Land Preservation

Objective: Curb urbanization of agricultural lands by reducing urban sprawl and promoting compact, city-centered development while also protecting agricultural land with policy and conservation tools.

- Develop “farms under threat” mapping criteria and scenarios
- Strategize agricultural mitigation program implementation measures
- Consider expansion of the ag reserve overlay
- Explore options for balancing housing needs and ag preservation with a transfer of development rights (TDR) program
- Review efficacy of the orderly growth ordinance in preventing ag land conversions and consider potential ordinance amendments and/or alternatives while balancing countywide economic goals
- Consider establishing a Solano County Division of Conservation



Land Use Policy Assessment & Action Plan

Concepts

Supporting Agricultural Viability

Objective: Support the growth of a robust agricultural economy with land use tools that maintain the agricultural land base and support food production as a commercial enterprise.

- Review zoning ordinance and consider ways to modernize county code favorable to ag economic development
- Explore establishing an Agricultural Enterprise Support program
- Continue monitoring development of utility-scale dual-use solar (agrivoltaics) technologies



Land Use Policy Assessment & Action Plan

Concepts

Promoting Interagency Collaboration for a Comprehensive Regional Framework

Objective: Establish an ongoing commitment between the cities and the County to develop cooperative visions and plans that consider agricultural conservation as a regional priority while balancing growth.

- Consider forming an inter-agency planning group for coordinated housing and farmland preservation (i.e., Planning Collaborative)
- Explore options for coordinating spheres of influence to balance city growth, ag land preservation and economic development
- Explore options for coordinating with LAFCO to balance city growth, ag land preservation and economic development



Infrastructure

Concepts

Growth & Urbanization Pressures

Issues & Challenges

- Potential impacts to existing agricultural operations
- Increased demands on water, rural roadways/farm-to-market routes and energy supplies/capacity
- Shortage of farmworker housing

Considerations & Opportunities

- Determine impacts (existing and future) on water supplies, stormwater and wastewater flow, traffic/congestion, and roadway quality related to needs of agriculture/processing
- Explore conservation/open space partners to expand agricultural easements sell/lease farmland in parcels of 50 acres or less for new farmers
- Explore collaboration with cities to inventory publicly-owned parcels, develop a leasing program aimed at urban farms/gardens and new/beginning farmers



Infrastructure

Concepts

Food System & Community Support

Issues & Challenges

- Lack of middle of the supply-chain infrastructure - food hubs, mobile markets, shared kitchens, cooling facilities, light processing, etc.
- Land access is an entry barrier to new farmers
- Perceived burdensome regulatory processes for existing and new businesses, both smaller and larger growers and processors (*at local and State level*)
- Lack of markets that will pay a premium for locally grown food
- Lack of education/promotion to show importance of agriculture to the community



Infrastructure

Concepts

Food System & Community Support

Considerations & Opportunities

- Explore financing mechanisms for infrastructure development, such as targeted financing districts, at core locations such as the Dixon I-AS
- Consider supporting low impact agritourism activities (farm tours, farm-to-table dinners, open farm days) encouraging visitation without overburdening existing infrastructure and ag operations
- Explore zoning and permitting policies that are conducive to ag economic development and growth
- Assess agricultural processing needs and businesses attraction
- Build agritourism as an economic generator to strengthen sector
- Leverage partners like Spork Food Hub and the regional food hub network connecting smaller farmers to larger markets like schools, hospitals and food banks
 - Food Hubs are local or regional efforts to support local provision of goods (aggregation, processing, marketing and distribution)



Infrastructure

Concepts

Water

Issues & Challenges

- Proposed revisions to the Bay-Delta Plan impacting local water supplies
- Potential vulnerability to future groundwater declines
- Drainage capacity and management

Considerations & Opportunities

- Advocate for secure agricultural water supplies and deliveries
- Support and implement One Water objectives:
 - Coordination and partnerships
 - Wastewater capacity and management
 - Multi-benefit strategies and projects, e.g. groundwater recharge, drainage and flooding solutions



Infrastructure

Concepts

Transportation & Energy

Issues & Challenges

- Pedrick Road and other I-80 interchanges are bottlenecks for ag traffic moving across the county
- Rural roads have become commuter relief routes for I-80 congestion
- Seasonal flooding on some roadways
- Priority Conservation Area (PCA) funding has largely gone to open space/trail projects
- High power costs for farms and processors
- Lead time of PG&E hookups is lengthy



Infrastructure

Concepts

Transportation & Energy

Considerations & Opportunities

- Ensure access roads to transportation corridors (farm-to-market) are maintained and included in the County's Capital Improvement Plan
- Explore ag industry infrastructure needs at I-80 interchanges in coordination with the Solano County Highway Interchange Study
- Consider advocating for the Dixon I-AS to be designated as a Priority Production Area, as it is a unique ag support zoning designation
- Agritourism signage at key destination locations
- Conduct an assessment to address power needs of farms, food producers and communities
- Explore alternative energy strategies, such as biofuels, micro-grids
- Strengthen relations with PG&E to facilitate expediting priority projects



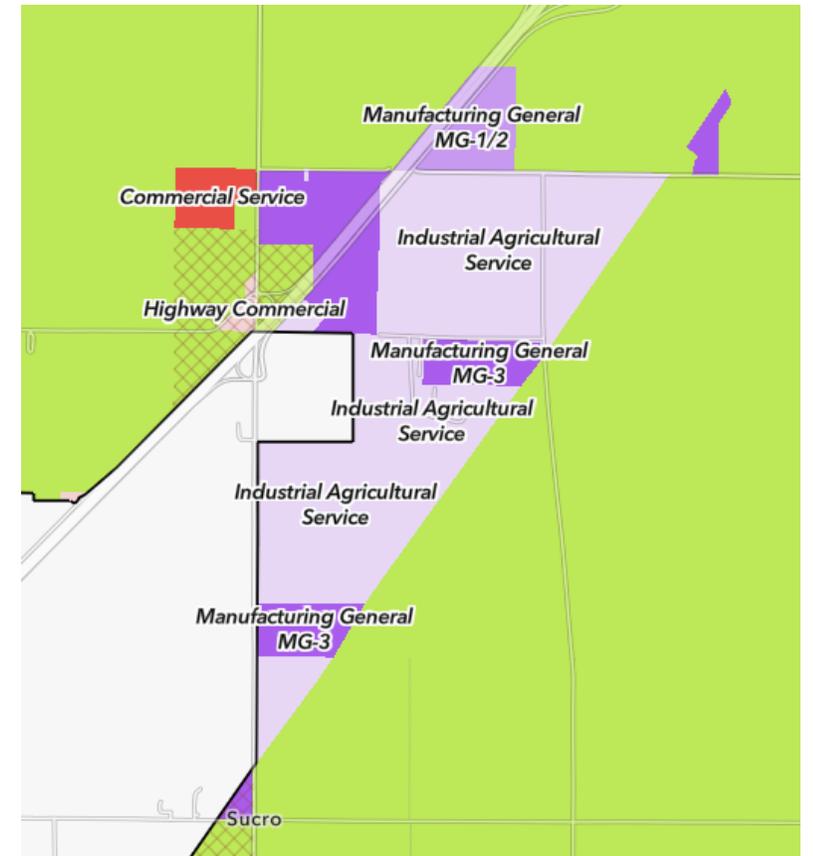
Economic Development

Concepts

Dixon Industrial-Agriculture Services (I-AS) district

Potential Opportunities

- Olive oil processing
- Animal slaughterhouse
- Hop pelletizing facility
- Bio-fuel supply
- Ag-tech demonstration site





Economic Development

Concepts

Local-Regional Ag-Tech Incubation – Explore potential opportunities for growing early-stage ag-tech startups by providing funding, mentorship and research facility resources that position Solano County for expanding ag-tech.

Potential Opportunities

- Identify interchange parcels which are suitable for ag industry support businesses as part of the overall Solano County Highway Interchange Study effort
- Farm business incubation (pilot study test plots, hoop houses, etc.)
- Grow UC Davis/UCANR collaborations (e.g., agri-tech, robotics, GIS, etc.)
 - Potential for locating “The Plant @ California” in Solano County

Biomanufacturing Infrastructure – Explore supporting production of biological products using living cells or organisms and agricultural feedstock.

Potential Opportunities

- Agriculture products (e.g., feed ingredients, plant-based meats)
- Bio-plastics
- Therapeutic alternative proteins used in medical disease treatment



Economic Development

Concepts

Multi-Functional Land Use – Consider adapting production agriculture land uses to provide multiple benefits simultaneously, such as food production, expanded market opportunities, energy generation, etc.

Potential Opportunities

- Ecosystem services (e.g., groundwater recharge, flood mitigation, open space)
- Supply chain support
- Agritourism, on-farm value added activities, direct-to-consumer sales
- Expand options for growing food and beverage processing businesses

Food Aggregation and Distribution – Consider supporting a mechanism for collecting, combining, and delivering food products from multiple producers to larger buyers or institutions.

Potential Opportunities

- Food hub system(s)
- Farm-to-school and institutional procurement (hospitals, prisons, food bank)



Economic Development

Concepts

Agri-Engineering Platforms – Consider supporting integrated business systems that apply engineering, technology, and data-driven tools to optimize and automate agricultural production and resource management.

Potential Opportunities

- Automation (e.g., drones, robotics)
- Precision agriculture (e.g., data driven ag, adaptive farm management, smart ag)

Food System Architecture and Logistics – Explore options for supporting efficient design, coordination and movement of food from production to consumption.

Potential Opportunities

- Cold chain infrastructure (i.e., refrigerated storage and transport)
- Circular economy integration (i.e., recycle food waste [bioenergy, compost, animal feed])
- Value-added on-farm mobile units (e.g., dehydration, fermentation or packaging for small farms for higher margin products)





Recommendation

Receive a presentation on the status of the Solano County Strategic Initiative for Agriculture.

Questions?