SIERRA CLUB PRESENTATION

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Disclosures: Sierra Club - 36 years Money losing farmer – 38 years

Audubon Society – 30 years 3 acres macadamias, avos, +++

Reasons to Save Agriculture and Open Space Which includes Parklands

(Farm Bureau Brochure: Farms and Open Space)

1. Preserving local agriculture preserves availability of locally produced products.
2. Farms and open space help prevent urban sprawl and facilitate Smart Growth.

(SANDAG’s Regional Comprehensive Plan relies on a Policy of Smart Growth)

1. Smart Growth reduces traffic congestion, reduces waste of resources, and reduces infrastructure and service costs.
2. Preserving agriculture and open space reduces an area’s carbon footprint.

ASSUMPTIONS:

* Saving and Ag and Open-Space land is a Financial Problem
* Saving and Ag and Open-Space land is an Economic Problem
* Saving and Ag and Open-Space land is a Political Problem

The Financial Problem:

* Increasing expenses of operating a farm
  + Cost of water has increased 5 times since 1990 - $222 to $1,000 ac ft
  + Labor has increased
  + Increased cost of land
* Lower revenues
  + avocados and NAFTA
* The profitability of farming has declined

The Economic Problem:

* Consideration in changing ag land & open space land is a long-term problem, but owners think short-term
* Not all benefits of agriculture accrue to the owner = Externalities
* Not all costs of converting agricultural land to other uses accrue to owner
  + Community suffers an opportunity cost = other uses foregone
* Once ag land & open space is converted IT IS GONE

The Political Problem:

* Most Politicians are short-term thinkers
* Politicians need money to win elections
* Some Politicians don’t always make decisions with their constituent’s welfare in mind

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEMS:

Financial Solution:

* Some land owners are satisfied not to make a profit. They derive benefits from living in a rural environment. Mostly smaller land owners - hobby farms
* Some land owners want a return on their land. They want an income; they operate as a business
* The financial problem is that commercial farmers need to derive more benefit from farming than selling their land
  + Benefits include profit from operations and benefits of being a farmer
  + Many commercial family farms want to continue farming
* The solution to the Financial problem is to increase revenue or decrease costs
  + Farmers are always looking for more profitable crops and ways to increase revenues
  + The major costs are water and labor costs

Economic Solution:

* One solution to the economic problem is to internalize the externalities by subsidizing farm operations from which the community is benefiting.
* How? Reduced water rates for agriculture

Reduced property taxes for agriculture

* Allowing for expanded uses compatible with land designated as agriculture

E.g. Agri-tourism = any income generating activity conducted on a working farm or ranch for the enjoyment and education of visitors.

- On-farm direct sales - Outdoor recreation

- Educational activities - Bed and breakfast

- Wine tasting - Coffee tasting

- Special events - Animal Husbandry

City planners and Economic development officials have been working with agricultural land owners to expand compatible uses that increase income.

Political Solution:

* It is the most difficult of the problems to solve.
* Solution lies in electing officials that understand the problems of converting agricultural lands to other uses.
* If officials refuse to give up their short-term thinking, citizens can use the initiative process to place decision making in their hands.

North River Farms = an example of political malfeasance

* A request to change the General Plan Land Use designation from Agricultural to single family detached, medium density A, medium density B, medium density C, and high density.
* Proposes 720 homes on 177 acres (10 times what is now allowed)
* Conflicts with Smart Growth – not in a Smart Growth Opportunity Area
* Project site lacks adequate roadway, water, and sewer infrastructure
* Project worsens Oceanside’s jobs housing ratio
* Project’s residential portion is projected to produce a fiscal deficit of $199,627 per year in expense over revenues to provide services to the development.

ITS TIME TO SOAR!

If you want to volunteer, contact martinek@oceanside-soar.org

The best examples of citizen initiatives that preserve agriculture and open-space are the SOAR initiatives passed in Ventura County and Napa County. SOAR stands for: Save Open-space and Agricultural Resources.

This past November, SOAR initiatives were successfully passed by Ventura County and 8 Cities including: Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Oxnard, Santa Paula, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, and Ventura.

In response to our City Council’s indication that it is willing to change the City’s General Plan and allow intense development of open-space and agricultural lands, a group of citizens are beginning a campaign to pass a SOAR initiative.

The Oceanside SOAR initiative will be simple. It will require approval of a majority of voters in a special or general election for the Council to change the agricultural or open space sections of the General Plan.

SOAR will give Oceanside’s citizens the right to participate in land use decisions in agricultural and open space areas including parks, golf courses, and habitat areas.