



URBAN AGRICULTURE IN THE GOLETA VALLEY

Environmental Defense Center

September 2014

Urban Farms Disappearing

This report focuses on the importance of protecting the few remaining parcels of agriculture within the urban boundaries of the Eastern Goleta Valley. "There are benefits to urban agriculture being located adjacent to homes, schools, transportation centers, etc. (e.g. local job creation, reducing the heat island effect, reductions in storm water runoff, and the health benefits of having fresh locally grown food available)."¹

Eastern Goleta Valley Community Plan

Santa Barbara County is updating the Goleta Valley Community Plan (GVCP). This plan informs decision making for development and the protection of land within the Goleta Valley. Originally adopted in 1993, many changes have been made to our community since then. This update will focus on the Eastern Goleta Valley to accommodate the changing needs of the community in that region.

The process started in 2008 with the formation of the Goleta Valley Planning Advisory Committee (GVPAC) to aid the Planning Commission in addressing the community's goals. From here, the Planning Commission approved modifications to the proposed plan as consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan. The Board of Supervisors has initiated the review of the environmental impacts of the update under the California Environmental Quality Act's (CEQA) environmental review process.

Public Participation : : : Protecting Farms

Now is the time to weigh in before critical decisions are made that will affect our local farms. The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) has been released for review and comment.¹ Supporting the Environmentally Superior Alternative—Alternative E—identified in the DEIR will help protect Goleta's urban farms.

"Some people have asked why preserving this tiny farm is so important. There is farmland everywhere, they say. But this effort is not just about this little farm. Fairview Gardens is emblematic of what has happened all over this country. Small farms are disappearing at a staggering rate: forty-six acres of prime farmland are being converted to nonagricultural use each hour."

- Michael Ableman
On Good Land, 1998



Patterson Ave / Highway 101: 1948 and 2000

In This Report

- Economic Benefits
- Environmental & Human Health Benefits
- Threatened Farms
- What Can You Do To Help?

Money spent at farmers' markets creates a multiplier effect when the farmer purchases local goods and services.



Multiplier Effect

"The economic multiplier from spending a dollar at a locally owned business, like a local farm, is estimated to be 2-4 times the impact of a dollar spent at a business owned outside the community."⁷ This multiplier results from the added local spending of urban farming businesses. A dollar spent at an urban farm in Goleta will be reinvested into Goleta for products necessary for farming. For example, a dollar spent on a box of blueberries from Givens' Farms will be used to help pay farm hands, rent equipment, or buy tools from the hardware store. Local reinvestment circuits created by this multiplier effect support the local economy.

Economic Benefits

Farm products grown in this region include vegetables, fruits, nuts, field crops, nursery products, livestock and poultry, seed crops, and much more. These products from the Goleta Valley are shipped around the world.² According to the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, agriculture in Santa Barbara accounts for almost \$2 billion in direct economic output.³ "In 2013, agriculture continued to be the County's single largest industry, and its revenues rank in the top 1 percent of all U.S. agricultural counties."¹ The money spent by the farms and their farm workers (a multiplier effect) accounts for an added \$1 billion in indirect output. **Local agriculture is a \$3 billion industry!**

Goleta Valley

Although these numbers reflect agriculture in the county as a whole, urban agriculture plays an integral role in providing economic benefits to the Goleta Valley. According to Santa Barbara County's 2002 report, *Goleta Valley Urban Agriculture*, **agriculture employs about one thousand people** or three percent of the population at the time.⁴ Urban farms provide additional economic value in their local sales to the community via direct-marketing at farmers' markets, farm stands, and through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm-box programs.

"The year 2013 was the eighth year in a row that agriculture surpassed the one billion dollar mark ... and [has] a local impact, via the multiplier effect, in excess of 2.8 billion dollars and provides 25,370 jobs."¹

Across California

In California, between 1992 and 2002, the USDA found a **200 percent increase** in agricultural producers' revenues from utilizing such direct-marketing techniques.⁵ Additionally, the diverse processes and products of the county's agricultural lands provide stability by helping to buffer any local economic downturn. Over forty studies have found that having farmland nearby actually saves communities money.⁶ **Keeping agricultural lands in our community benefits the local economy.**



Beautiful Beets at the Santa Barbara Certified Farmers Market.

The Environmental & Human Health Benefits

The services provided by agricultural systems that cannot be comprehensively valued in traditional market terms can instead be presented in terms of environmental benefits and human health and well-being.

Ecosystem Services

Agriculture presents a myriad of services that enrich and replenish the natural processes vital to environmental health. The ecosystem services provided by urban agriculture also promote human health and well-being. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention defines “well-being” as a summation of mental and physical health, satisfaction, longevity, productivity, and social connectedness.⁸ Each ecosystem service, identified below, benefits local public health and well-being.

Fresh Food is Healthier

Urban agriculture in the Goleta Valley provides direct health benefits, as well. Because fresh produce is available every day of the week, one can eat nutritious produce every day. Fresh food is nutritionally better than foods that are picked early, ripened in trucks during transit, and shipped to supermarkets.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) identifies 12 specific ecosystem services.³ And to think, these are all available in the heart of the Goodland!



Wildlife Habitats

Provide habitats for resident and transient wildlife populations, especially with riparian areas and perennial vegetation.



Fuel Production

Agricultural lands produce renewable energy, for example solar, wind, and biofuels.



Nutrient Cycling

Store, transform, and cycle important nutrients in the soil such as carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus.



Soil Health

Well managed soils can sequester carbon, reduce erosion, prevent landslides, purify water, and deliver many other benefits.



Water Cycling

Unlike pavement, agricultural vegetation maintains soil moisture, enhances water storage, and reduces runoff.



Atmosphere Regulation

Soils, crops and surrounding vegetation affect local temperatures and precipitation while also sequestering greenhouse gases.



Biodiversity Conservation

Promoting a diversity of plants and animals can provide beauty, stability, disease prevention, and other benefits.



Pest Control

Agricultural lands provide habitat for raptors, beneficial insects, and other wildlife that help control pest populations.



Recreation & Cultural

Agricultural lands provide places for wildlife viewing, nature hikes, entertainment, education, and many other activities.



Pollination Services

Agricultural lands provide nesting habitat and floral resources for wild pollinators such as bees, bats, and birds.



Food Production

Agricultural lands provide nutrients and energy to sustain a growing global population.



Water Quality

Well-managed agricultural lands can reduce salinity and organic/inorganic constituents in surface and ground water.

Reduced Resource Consumption

Environmental benefits provided by urban agriculture include decreased resource consumption and consequently, less waste. Food grown and sold in the Goleta Valley, compared to imported food, requires less packaging, less transportation, less fossil fuel consumption, and less use of pesticides and fertilizers. That means less packaging goes to landfills, less carbon dioxide and other air pollution are emitted, and our lands and waters are less polluted by harmful chemicals.



Urban agriculture acts as a natural buffer limiting the pollution of our important resources.



Urban farms protect our natural resources and produce healthy people!

Satisfying the State Housing Mandates

Farms in the urban boundaries are well-kempt and exemplify the mutually beneficial relationship between urban and agricultural land uses. Unfortunately, the most prominent examples in Goleta Valley may be under the threat of development due to the need to provide adequate housing. Fortunately, there are two parcels under consideration for high density residential zoning that accomplish both goals of accommodating growing housing needs and preserving our diminishing urban agriculture. The Environmentally Superior Alternative (Alternative E) envisions development of only the MTD and Tatum sites, thereby satisfying the state housing mandates while eliminating the need to develop active farm sites. ¹

Unfortunately, some alternate sites have also been identified for potential development. These include the South Patterson Triangle, the Giorgi/South Hollister property and the Hodges/San Marcos Growers property. All three are actively farmed, and it is vital that they remain as farms to utilize the perfect growing conditions that exist in the Goleta Valley. To better understand the impacts of developing these alternate sites, they are profiled in this report.



MTD Site (Housing Opportunity Site 1)¹

18 acres, containing Class II (prime) soils, under the ownership of the Metropolitan Transit District. Located along Calle Real near Turnpike Rd, the site was formerly farmed with walnuts and lemons, later replaced with row crops in the 1980's by Steve Musick. The row crops included tomatoes, watermelons, garlic, peppers, figs, cut flowers and other crops. In 1991, Musick started raising organically grown salad mix and spinach, producing as much as 2,000 pounds per acre each week. Weekly revenues from salad crops alone were **over \$3,000 per acre**. Since then, however, the fields have laid fallow.

The county has proposed a zoning update to allow for 20 units per acre on 10.2 acres while the remaining 6.8 acres would retain their agricultural zoning. The result is high density housing with the potential for one unit on the agricultural portion of the site. ^{1,4,10}



Tatum Site (Housing Opportunity Site 2)¹

Twenty-three acres, containing some prime soil, located behind the Hollister-San Marcos Agricultural Area. This site is owned by the Santa Barbara School District. Historically, the site supported an orchard, and currently 0.4 acres is used for agriculture. The Plan update would increase the residential density of the site from 5 to 277 units. ¹

The DEIR identifies the below sites for potential rezone and/or development. The Giorgi/South Hollister and Hodges/San Marcos sites are identified as alternatives, but the South Patterson Triangle is especially at risk, as a specifically identified Housing Opportunity Site. These sites are vital to preserving our urban agricultural lands and need to be protected from development.

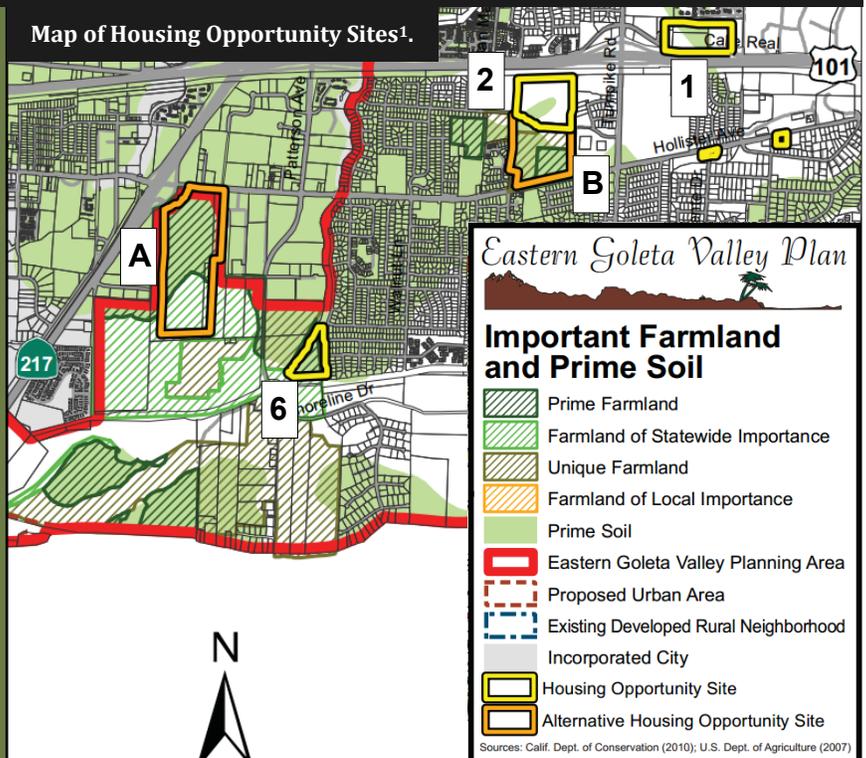
Housing Opportunity Sites

- 1) MTD
- 2) Tatum
- 6) South Patterson Triangle

Alternate Housing Sites

- A) Giorgi / South Hollister
- B) Hodges / San Marcos Growers

Map of Housing Opportunity Sites¹.



Threatened Farmland

South Patterson Triangle (Housing Opportunity Site 6)¹

Owned by Ron Caird and farmed by John Givens, this plot is attractive to developers due to its location adjacent to a residential neighborhood and its separation from the agriculture block by both the Maria Ygnacio and Atascadero Creeks. It is important to preserve this plot for precisely those reasons. The specific location of this property abutting the two creeks provides a natural buffer against polluted runoff entering the waterways and flowing to the ocean.

The Caird Triangle is currently used to grow onions and peppers, but Givens has farmed a variety of crops on the land and will continue to plant what best suits the market. Givens Ranch employs 70 people in high season to produce a variety of organically grown row crops including lettuce, broccoli, tomatoes, corn, squash, carrots and more.⁸ Givens stated that the land in the **Goleta Valley is “tremendously more productive”** compared to the other side of the mountains,” going on to say “it is way more valuable for ag.” Givens estimated that his plots located in the Goleta Valley are at least twice as valuable per acre as his farming operations in Buellton. This takes into consideration the higher price of rent in Goleta due to inflated land-values. Specifically, the rent Givens pays for the Caird Triangle is approximately “half of the income [of the property],” but, he says, “it’s worth it!”



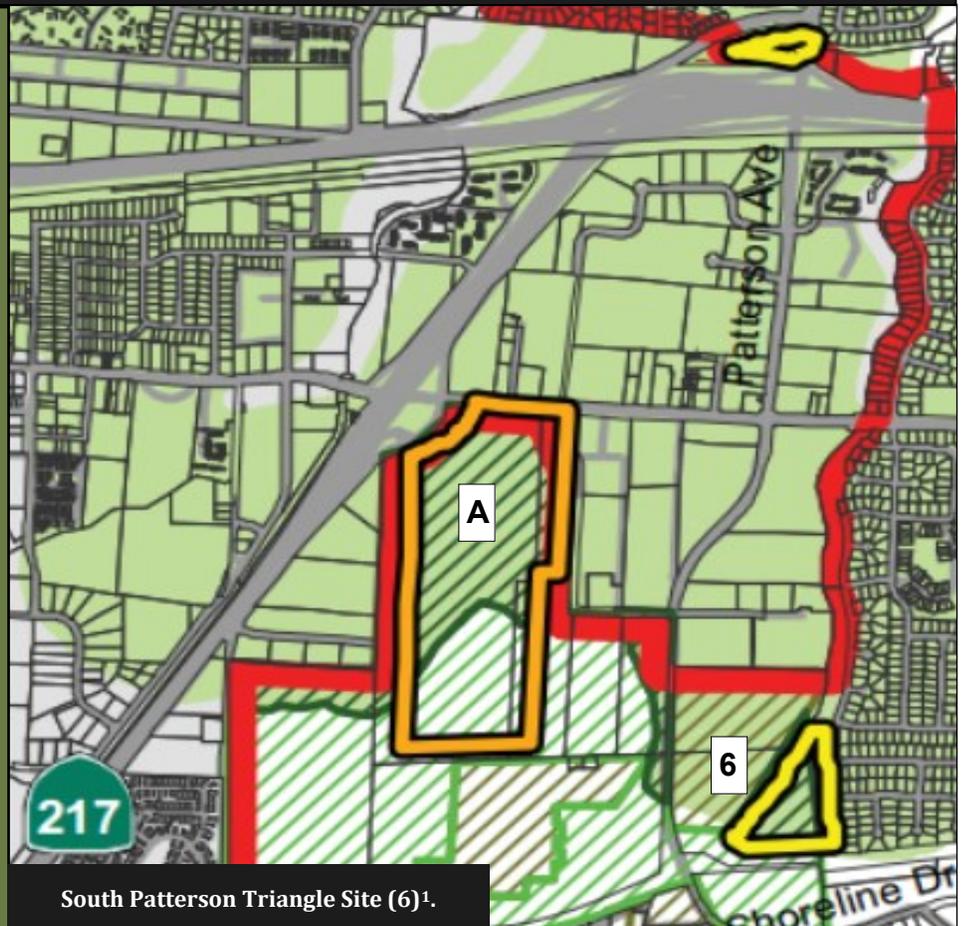
The disparity between agricultural production on either side of the Santa Ynez mountains can be attributed to the northern regions having less farm-friendly soils and climate, wildlife herbivory, and the growing season lasting only through the summer months. Goleta’s south facing slopes create fertile soil and moderate climate, allowing for year-round growing seasons.

Givens’ farms utilize a CSA system with food boxes prepared for pickup or delivery. But the real money, says Givens, comes from participating in farmers’ markets. Givens’ produce is available at every farmers’ market in Santa Barbara County, and he even sells in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

6 Acres
Prime Soil¹
Prime Farmland¹

South Patterson
Agricultural Block

Crops
Onions
Peppers
Blueberries



South Patterson Triangle Site (6)¹.

Threatened Farmland

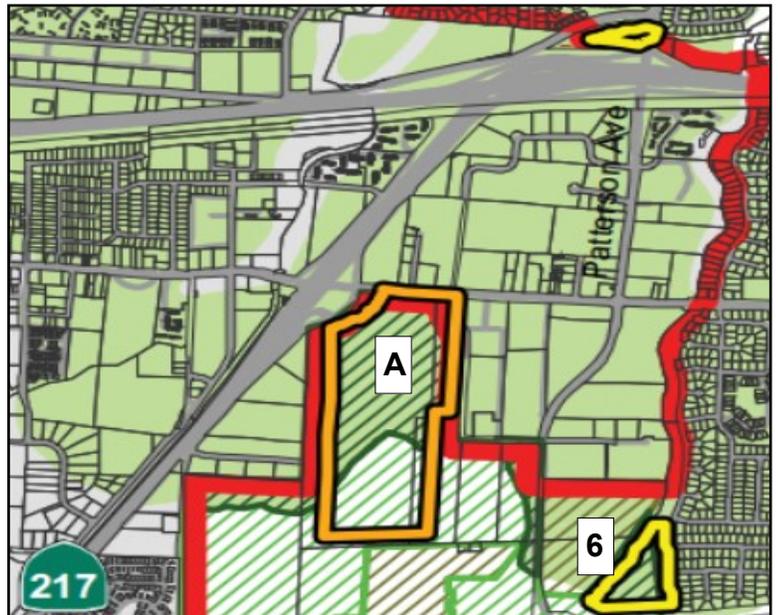
Giorgi / South Hollister Site

(Alternate Housing Site A)¹

The Giorgis have operated their sixty-five-acre orchard on the north side of the South Patterson agriculture block for many generations, with crops ranging from walnuts to lemons, and recently a new addition, avocados.

Some of the block is protected from development due to its location within the Santa Barbara Airport's designated approach zone, which limits residential development and the number of people who can live in the zone. However, approximately half of the land owned by Giorgi lies outside of the density limiting approach zone. This could lead to the rezone and development of about 30 acres to housing.^{1,4,9,10}

Identified by the gold rectangle, the Giorgi Parcel is under threat of rezone and development. Should the site be chosen for development, our community will lose another urban farm to urban expansion. We cannot afford to lose this highly productive site that has been farmed for many generations.



Giorgi/South Hollister Site (6)¹.



65 Acres
 Prime Soil¹
 Prime Farmland¹

Lemon & Avocado
 Orchards

Agricultural Preserve
 Potential¹

The airport approach zone does not protect the northern 30 acres.^{1,4,9,10}

Threatened Farmland

Hodges / San Marcos Growers (Alternate Housing Site B)

Directly abutting the Tatum site, the Hodges family leases this land to Randy Baldwin and John Lane.

Lane uses the twenty-seven acres of prime soils on the east side of San Marcos Road to grow a large variety of strictly organic crops, including sweet corn, tomatoes, green beans, bell peppers, pumpkins, squash, lettuce, and the ever-popular strawberries.

Randy is the general manager of San Marcos Growers, a horticultural nursery of between 1800 and 1900 species. Many of these plants are fitted for Mediterranean climates around the world, including California natives and non-natives from South Africa, Australia, and the Mediterranean itself. Due to the incessant drought this season, succulents are a big seller at San Marcos Growers. Many residents are switching landscapes to better suit the dry climate. Approximately one quarter of the plants grown at his nursery are sold locally while the remainder are shipped across California.

When asked about the benefits of urban ag, Randy noted the local economic benefits of his operations but also underscored the importance of urban farms in providing jobs. His farm has provided long-term employment to 45 community members, many of whom have been on the farm for 30 years. Randy describes many threats to his operations, as well as to agriculture in the Goleta Valley on the whole. These threats include water issues as drought lingers, increasing fuel costs, and neighbor concerns over pesticides and other nuisances. The largest threat to urban farmland, however, is property values. The land is simply worth more if it is converted to residential or commercial uses. Randy mentioned strawberries as an exception to this rule on account of the high profitability of the much-loved berry.^{1,4}



John Lane (above) and Randy Baldwin (left) farm the San Marcos Growers property.



Hodges/San Marcos Gardens Site (B)¹.

27 Acres
Prime Soil¹
Prime Farmland¹
Unique Farmland¹

18 - 1900 Different
Species

Organic row crops
Sweet corn
Strawberries
Tomatoes
Green beans
Bell peppers
Pumpkins
Summer squash
Lettuce

Help EDC save our local farms!

We must protect and preserve
South Patterson Triangle Site
Hodges/San Marcos Growers Site
Giorgi/South Hollister Site

What Can You Do?

The biggest threat facing the active urban farms in our heartland is development. Balancing human development and environmental protection is a difficult task. Fortunately, there are opportunities for community members to participate in the decision making process.

Public Process

The DEIR process affords the opportunity to provide your feedback on decisions made about our urban farms. Make your concerns and questions known through verbal or written comment on the DEIR for the GVCP update. **The Deadline for comments is October 3rd, 2014. Support the Environmentally Superior Alternative—Alternative E—identified in the DEIR to help protect Goleta's active and vital urban farms.**

<http://longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/goleta/gcpeir.php>

Direct to Your Representatives

Relaying your values and opinions directly to your representatives, whether through community organizations or individually, gives clear guidance on what decisions and actions our officials should make. **Ask them to save our urban farms and support Alternative E.**

<http://www.countyofsb.org/bos/>

Consumer Power

Although oft-stated, the power of a dollar is under-utilized. Spending your dollar at local farm stands, farmers' markets, and looking for produce designated as "local" directly supports urban ag. Every penny urban farmers earn increases the total value of the farm, especially considering the risk of high-value, non-agricultural conversion of the land.⁷

SB Certified Farmers' Markets

- Saturday 8:30am-1pm, Downtown SB
- Sunday 10am-2pm, Goleta
- Tuesday 4pm-7:30pm, Downtown SB
- Wednesday 2:30pm-6:30pm, Solvang
- Thursday 3pm-6pm, Goleta & Carpinteria
- Friday 8am-11:15am, Montecito

Farm Stands

- Fairview Gardens: Daily, 10am-6pm
- Lane Farms: 308 Walnut Ln. Monday-Saturday 9am-6pm Sunday 9am-5pm 4950 Hollister Ave. Monday-Saturday 10am-6pm Sunday 10am-5pm
- Gladden & Sons: 5342 Hollister Ave. Monday-Friday 9am-7pm Saturday-Sunday 9am-6pm

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Funding for this project provided by:



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