

AB551: URBAN AGRICULTURE INCENTIVE ZONES ACT

KNOW THE FACTS IN SAN DIEGO

WHAT IS AB551: URBAN AGRICULTURE INCENTIVE ZONES ACT?

AB551 is a California bill passed in 2014 which aims to increase land access for urban agriculture through the use of vacant, privately-owned land. This allows landowners in urban areas to receive tax incentives for putting land into agriculture use. For landowners in San Diego County to benefit from this new state law, county and city jurisdictions must work together to designate approved urban agriculture incentive zones (UAIZ). You can help make this happen!

BENEFITS OF URBAN AGRICULTURE

Urban agriculture provides numerous benefits not only to those growing food, but also to the cities and neighborhoods in which it happens. City gardening and farming offers public benefits such as vibrant green spaces and recreation, education about fresh food and the effort it takes to produce it, ecological benefits for the city, sites that help build community, and a source of local economic development.

HOW UAIZ WORKS FOR LANDOWNERS

After the county and your city approves an UAIZ, you can apply through your city government to participate. You must agree to lease your vacant land for a minimum of 5 years for agriculture use. Your property tax will then be reassessed at a lower rate during the time you lease your land to individuals or groups for farming or gardening.

To qualify:

1. Vacant parcels of land must be between 0.1 and 3 acres
2. Land must be put into active agricultural use
3. Agriculture activity can be commercial or noncommercial
4. Land must be free of residential dwellings
5. Physical structures on the land must support the agricultural use of the site

LEARN MORE

UC Cooperative Extension: Guide to Implementing the Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones Act, <http://tiny.cc/r0ze2x>

Full text of the law: <http://tiny.cc/sx4e2x>

UNDERSTANDING THE TAX INCENTIVE

Properties participating in an urban agriculture incentive zone will be reassessed yearly based on the annual average per acre value of irrigated cropland in California. In 2014, this value was \$12,500 per acre.

For example, if your 1/2 acre vacant parcel in the City of San Diego is assessed at \$250,000, you pay approximately \$2,873* in annual property taxes. If your parcel is put into a 5 year urban agriculture lease, it will be reassessed to a value of \$6,050. The annual property tax is decreased from \$2,873 to \$71. *City of San Diego property tax rate in 2014 = 1.17901

WANT TO SEE AN UAIZ IN YOUR CITY?

1. Contact your elected officials to state your support.
2. Share this fact sheet with neighbors, friends, and other supporters of urban agriculture.
3. Contact the San Diego Food System Alliance to attend an upcoming community meeting.

CONTACT

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Visit us at www.sdfsa.org



POLICYMAKERS

AB551: URBAN AGRICULTURE INCENTIVE ZONES ACT KNOW THE FACTS IN SAN DIEGO

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WHERE ARE URBAN AGRICULTURE INCENTIVE ZONES PERMITTED?

State law permits UAIZ to only be established in “urban areas,” as defined by the US Census, with populations of 250,000 or more. This definition encompasses most of the major cities of California as well as their adjacent suburbs. Most areas of San Diego County qualify.

HOW UAIZ WORKS FOR LANDOWNERS

For landowners to participate in an urban agriculture incentive zone and receive property tax reductions, land must meet these qualifications:

1. Vacant parcels of land must be between 0.1 and 3 acres.
2. Land must be put into agriculture use.
3. Agriculture activity can be commercial or noncommercial.
4. Land must be free of residential dwellings.
5. Physical structures on land must support agriculture use.

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IMPLEMENTING UAIZ IN SAN DIEGO

The county, usually in conjunction with cities, must designate geographic boundaries of the zone. Local jurisdictions can create one large zone covering a broad geography or they can create multiple smaller ones. Additionally, local jurisdictions must create the administrative process for how to process and enforce UAIZ contracts between landowners and local government.

UAIZ is created by a 2-step process, requiring action by both county and cities. Either city councils or the county Board of Supervisors can begin the process. If started by a city council, the process requires an ordinance passed by the council and a resolution signifying the Board of Supervisors' approval. If started by the Board of Supervisors, the process requires an ordinance from the Board and a resolution signifying the relevant city council's approval.

In unincorporated areas, the creation of UAIZ *only* requires the passage of an ordinance by the Board of Supervisors.

LEARN MORE

UC Cooperative Extension: Guide to Implementing the Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones Act, <http://tiny.cc/r0ze2x>

San Francisco's UAIZ Application Packet, <http://tiny.cc/7zze2x>

Full text of the law, <http://tiny.cc/sx4e2x>