AGRICULTURAL LAND CONVERSION AND MITIGATION

Coyote Valley Specific Plan

Task Force Meeting

January 09, 2006

CITY OF SAN JOSE
CAPITAL OF SILICON VALLEY
10th Largest U.S. City

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Definition of Agricultural Land*

§ 21060.1. Agricultural land:

(a) "Agricultural land" means prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture land inventory and monitoring criteria, as modified for California.

(b) In those areas of the state where lands have not been surveyed for the classifications specified in subdivision (a), "agricultural land" means land that meets the requirements of "prime agricultural land" as defined in paragraph (1), (2), (3), or (4) of subdivision (c) of Section 51201 of the Government Code.

*California State Resource Code Division 13, Environmental Protection

San Jose 2020 General Plan
Natural Resources Goals and Policies

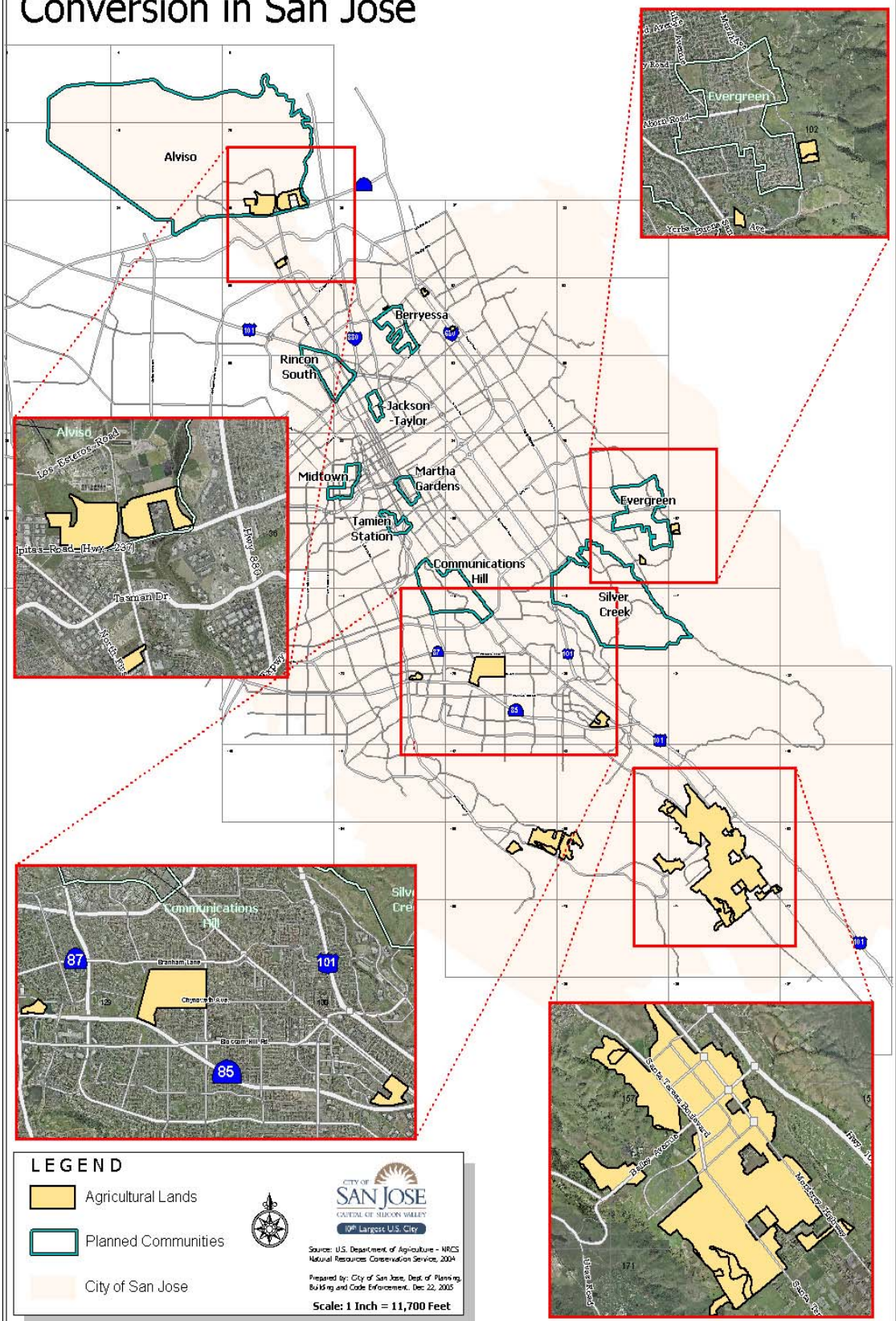
Agricultural Lands and Prime Soils Goal:

- Avoid the premature conversion of agricultural lands to urban uses.

Agricultural Lands and Prime Soils Policies:

1. Williamson Act contracts and other forms of property tax relief should be encouraged for agricultural lands in non-urban areas.
2. The City should promote the passage of legislation to establish Countywide or Statewide agricultural preservation programs, including the funding necessary for implementation of such programs.
3. Appropriate agricultural uses should be encouraged in hillside areas.
4. Preservation of agricultural lands and prime soils in non-urban areas should be fostered in order to retain the aquifer recharge capacity of these lands.

Potential Agricultural Land Conversion in San Jose



California Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (LESA)

The California LESA Model uses six different factors to rate the relative quality of land resources based upon specific measurable features. For a given project these factors are rated separately on a 100-point scale and subsequently weighted relative to one another and combined, resulting in a single numeric score. This overall project score is the basis for making a determination of the project's potential impact significance related to agricultural land conversion.

<u>Six Rating Factors:</u>

- **Land Evaluation Criteria**
  - **Land Capability**
  - **Soil(s) Quality/Type**
- **Site Assessment Criteria**
  - **Project Size**
  - **Water Resource Availability**
  - **Surrounding Agricultural Land**
  - **Surrounding Protected Resource Land**

City of San Jose Agricultural Land Impact Analysis Process

Step 1 - Is the site vacant (no urban development)?

- No (no further analysis required)
- Yes (proceed to step 2)

Step 2 - Is the site identified as Prime, Unique, or of Statewide/ Local Importance on the CA State Important Farmlands Map?

- No (no further analysis required)
- Yes (proceed to step 3)

Step 3 – Impact analysis using the CA LESA Model.

- Score < 39.0 (no further analysis required)
- Score > 39.0 (proceed to step 4)

Step 4 – Consider other unique project qualitative factors which may effect significance of the impact (i.e., LESA scoring guide, site access, surrounding uses, viability, etc.)

- Proceed to step 5

Step 5 – Identify level of impact significance.

- Less than Significant (no further analysis required)
- Significant Unavoidable (proceed to step 6)

Step 6 – Identify project appropriate mitigation.

Note: The only instance when agricultural mitigation could reduce the impact of conversion to a less than significant level, is if there is no "net" loss of agricultural land.

NEXT STEPS

- DEVELOP MITIGATION PROGRAM FOR CONVERTED AGRICULTURAL LAND(s)
  - Identify appropriate mitigation
  - Identify implementation techniques.
  - Identify process for ongoing management and monitoring program(s).