

# Can City and Farm Coexist?

*The Agricultural Buffer Experience in California*

GREAT VALLEY CENTER

MODESTO, CALIFORNIA

## *Acknowledgments*

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The Great Valley Center is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to support organizations and activities that promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of California's Great Central Valley.

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## Introduction

CAN the City and Farm coexist? In California's Great Central Valley, one of the nation's fastest growing regions and heart of the Golden State's \$26.7 billion agriculture industry, this question is increasingly raised.

To farmers, the Valley is the landscape for the very real business of agriculture. But for suburban residents who find themselves living close to local farms by choice or circumstance, the normal operation of a modern farming enterprise – complete with the dust, noise and smells – is sometimes a source of tension.

This tension does not have to end in conflict. In fact, a wide range of land use tools are available to communities looking for options that accommodate both the interests of agriculture and suburban residents. The purpose of this workbook is to introduce one of those tools, the "Agricultural Buffer".

### THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORKBOOK

Agricultural buffers come in many forms. Whether it be a simple brick wall, a band of open space, or a linear park, *agricultural buffers are physical separations between residential and agricultural uses of land*. Their purpose is to find that middle ground whereby the farmer can continue to work his or her land without raising the ire of non-farming neighbors. At the same time, buffers are also designed to protect farms from the urban influences that can make farming more difficult than it should be.

By examining some recent experiences with agricultural buffers in California, this workbook's goal is to broadly explain the concept and examine some of the decisionmaking steps that have been key to successful implementation in other parts of the state. Rather than providing a one-size-fits-all solution, we opted to identify the key ingredients and methods that have proven effective.

As more Valley communities look closely at their long term development plans, the hope is that local planners, developers and leaders will be able to develop their own – and perhaps innovative – solutions as part of a comprehensive land use management plan.

# I *Is A Buffer Right For Your Community?*

It is no secret the Central Valley is growing. From Bakersfield to Los Banos to Redding, the demand for affordable housing has quickly changed much of this quiet agricultural region into a bustling population corridor that would have been hard to envision fifty years ago.

As most of the Valley's communities are centrally located in the midst of productive farmland, much of the region's new housing developments will likely find themselves abutting, or at least close to, a working farm operation. With the state projecting that the Valley's present population will steadily double to over 12 million by 2040 – some thought should be given on how to balance the needs of the region's most important industry with the expectations of its newest residents.

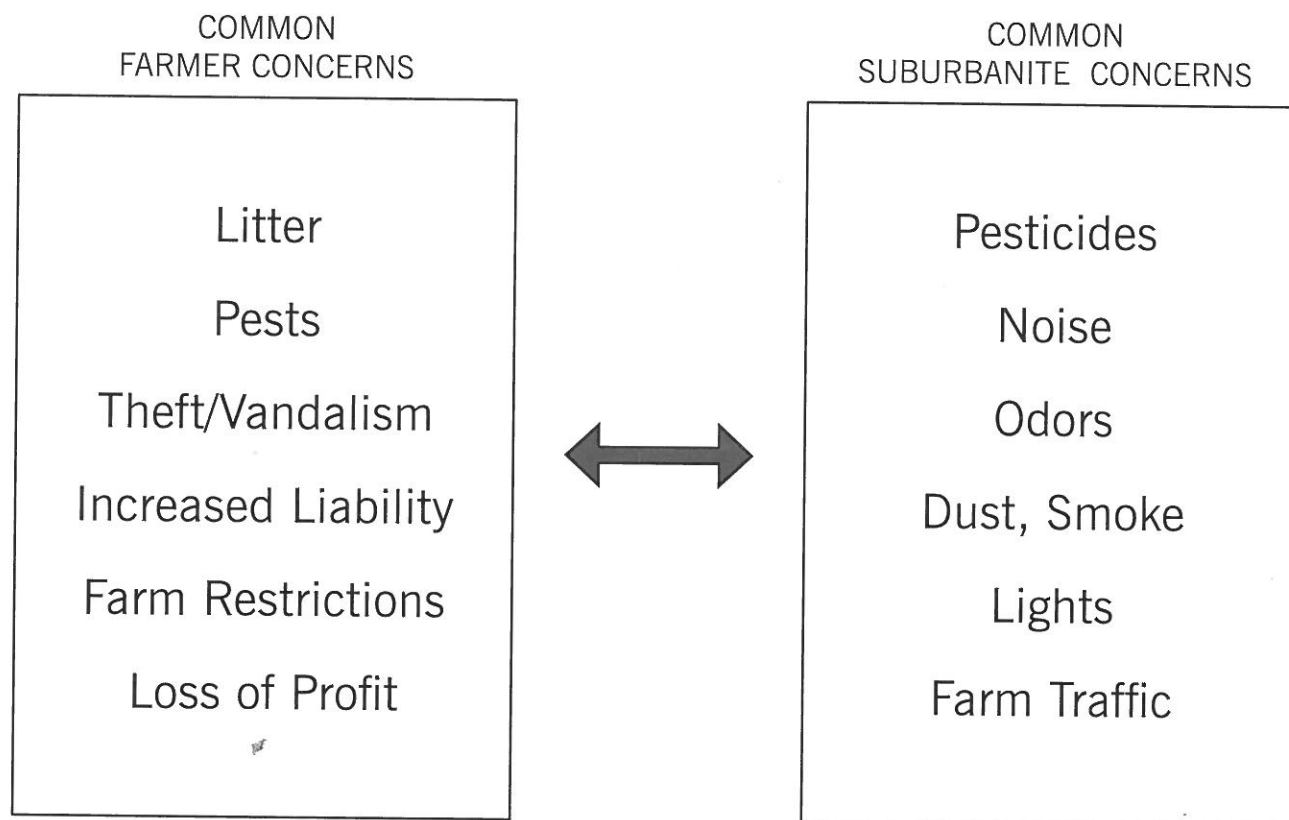
## PLANNING AHEAD FOR CO-EXISTENCE

Although new suburbanites may be initially pleased to find themselves adjacent to a farm's "open space," experience has shown that with the turning of the seasons, complaints about pesticides, noise, dust and other farming practices are often sure to follow. Likewise, farmers long accustomed to a relatively familiar farming neighbor, suddenly find themselves having to deal with the negative impacts (e.g., litter, dumping, trespassing) of having residences adjacent to his or her active farm.

In the process, farmers lose money and residents take their complaints to city hall. Absent a plan for co-existence, these problems only find resolution after the investment of time by local governments and agencies.

*By 2040, up to 12 million people will call the Great Central Valley home.*





#### REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS: NO “COOKIE-CUTTER” SOLUTIONS

The combination of concerns that is the source of tension between neighboring landowners will never be exactly identical. In fact, the different variables at each particular site – such as topography or commodity specific farming practices – are what make a “cookie-cutter” approach to developing solutions impossible.

Without a pre-made solution, planners are faced with the challenge of developing a package of answers that will address particular suburban and agricultural concerns and possibly anticipate future ones.

From the beginning, planners and practitioners must recognize that a concern with the occasional slow moving farming vehicle, for example, may not rise to the same level of importance of a pesticide use conflict. Is the complaint a simple nuisance, a cost issue, or is it a potential health or public safety hazard? Addressing the character and relative weight of each concern is critical, otherwise the “resolution” may end up satisfying no one.

*Assessing the specific expectations and concerns of both agricultural and suburban constituencies is a good first step in analyzing a local land use conflict.*

The charts below are a useful way to identify and prioritize potential issues at a particular site. Notice that the multitude of variables at each particular site are what make a cookie-cutter approach to buffer implementation impossible.

	A Cost Issue?	Nuisance?
Trespassing	_____	_____
Theft	_____	_____
Vandalism	_____	_____
Litter	_____	_____
Legal Liability	_____	_____
Food Safety	_____	_____
Pests	_____	_____
Restrictions	_____	_____
Work Interference	_____	_____
Water/Erosion	_____	_____

FARMER CHECKLIST

	Public Health?	Nuisance?
Pesticides	_____	_____
Pollen	_____	_____
Dust	_____	_____
Smoke	_____	_____
Noise	_____	_____
Bees, Flies	_____	_____
Odors	_____	_____
Trucks	_____	_____
Lights	_____	_____
Rodents	_____	_____

SUBURBANITE CHECKLIST

#### AGRICULTURAL BUFFER TYPES: ADJOINING OR GEOGRAPHIC?

If after considering the interests of all parties involved it appears a land use remedy would address the majority of concerns, the next step should involve deciding what type of buffer is most appropriate to the particular site.

Today there are essentially two classifications for the many types of agricultural/urban interface buffers. The first classification is where a development or a house is planned that will immediately *adjoin* agriculture upon construction. These types of buffers commonly take the form of a wall, street, setback, or perhaps some vegetation.

The second buffer classification includes examples that feature wide natural or planted areas or large permanent *geographical* barriers that are used to demarcate a formal or informal urban growth line.

When installed, it is quite possible that there may be agriculture on both sides for some time until the city is built out. As such, this type buffer has to be part of a comprehensive plan that will not allow growth beyond the buffer in order to be successful.

*Buffer Type No. 1: Installed barriers*

Walls, fences or commercial uses are examples of installed barrier buffers. Depending on their configuration, they can also effectively block out noise and access. Fences that are tight fitting to the ground will control the movement of certain pests, but are ineffective against burrowers such as pocket gophers, or climbers such as ground squirrels and rats.

Although high concrete barrier walls are fairly effective, they are not usually aesthetically pleasing unless specific design efforts are applied to overcome their drawbacks. Walls can also block the views that people enjoy, become targets for graffiti and create a feeling of claustrophobia.

Unsurprisingly, installed barriers such as warehouses or industrial buildings are not favored if they are junky, unattractive or poorly landscaped. Commercial and retail development were viewed positively, but again the exception being where the buildings are seen as unattractive or run down.

One might conclude that two factors are indicative of a buffer's acceptance, at least from the urban perspective: its aesthetic character and the quality of maintenance and landscaping.

*Aesthetics, such as maintenance and landscaping, are key to community acceptance and buffer success from the perspective of suburban residents.*



*A brick wall installed barrier buffer does not always address all concerns of farmers and suburbanites.*



*Buffer Type No. 2: Existing topographic features, roads, and canals*

The main advantage to using features such as roads or topography is that their preexistence causes minimum disruption to farming, and involves less cost at the implementation stage. But consideration of this type is most effective in the long-term, growth planning stage but before the subdivision development stage. Here are some features to note in your community:

- Hills, valleys, cliffs, natural berms or rises
- Water barriers: canals, lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, or flood plains
- Roadways and power line rights-of-way
- Airport runway or clear area
- Parking lots
- Designated greenbelt area in either natural state or “enhanced”
- Cemeteries

*Buffer Type No. 3: Building requirements or restrictions*

On occasion, special use types, building features or setback zoning regulations are used to create buffering effects between agriculture and residential land.

Some policy documents use the terms “setback” and “buffer” interchangeably. *A setback can be one type of buffer, but not all setbacks are buffers.* (See sidebar discussion on p. 13) In some communities this is accomplished by including minimum yard sizes for single dwellings in agricultural or rural residential zones. While yard setbacks provide some separation, it is not readily apparent what mitigating effects a 20’ – 50’ space can possibly have.

However, it is worth noting that large lot zoning is increasingly proving not to be a solution. One city manager mentioned that county and township planning officials should recognize that allowing low-density residential development in rural areas displaces farming as surely as other development, and is the worst kind of sprawl. More specifically, he noted that the use of in-between zoning (2.5-acre to 5-acre parcels) for buffers was ineffective because parcels that size are “too small to farm, too big to mow, and usually wind up being rural slums.” One possible remedial avenue suggested by a respondent was to investigate the viability of zoning transitions of ten acres or larger directly to half-acre or smaller.

*The majority of complaints about agriculture come from “ranchettes” and isolated rural developments — not subdivisions on the city-edge.*

## Are “setbacks” the same as buffers?

Setbacks are building restrictions that require that a residence be built a certain designated distance away from agricultural land. Uses are sometimes restricted within the setback to low exposure uses, such as storage sheds, animal corrals, greenhouses and swimming pools.

Policies usually stipulate that the setbacks will be imposed on the non-agricultural side. This is consistent with the intent of protecting agriculture, and in protecting the rights of the person who was there first. It was not uncommon in the policies reviewed to provide for a reduced buffer width if landscaping is added as a screen.

Although not all the jurisdictions surveyed had buffer policies, virtually all had some reference to “setbacks”. Compared to the time and expense of implementing true buffers, setbacks are a simple alternative - especially since the cost of “maintenance” is passed on to the buyer of the property.

### **Do setbacks even work?**

A setback distance of 200’ was frequently cited within the policies reviewed, but there is no hard evidence that 200’ is the optimal distance, or that it even works.

The marked variation in setback distances from one jurisdiction to another suggests that the distances

selected by various counties have been arbitrarily selected and that there is a need for better efficacy data.

Until more information is available, the setback size discussion would be best served by considering the unique mix of topography, weather patterns, commodity and uses at the particular site.

### **Questions to consider**

In reading the policies, several questions come to mind:

What is a rational distance and who determines those numbers?

What scientific evidence supports the setback distances?

How are provisions made for exceptions and reductions, and who grants them?

Is the process open to too much pressure or subjectivity?

What is the advisability of allowing for transfer of the buffering requirement or dispensation for a fee?

How adequate is the language?

How is interpretation of non-specific requirements such as “reasonable” and “adequate” made?

*Buffer Type No. 4: Recreational or "value-added" areas*

Particularly where land values are high, there is an inclination to explore options to make use of the buffer area and to extend its functionality beyond just being dead space. Examples include jogging trails or recreational areas.

*Buffer Type No. 5: Organic farming and modified agricultural usages*

By modifying the type of commodity grown (e.g., organic) or style of farming, some have suggested that a type of "virtual buffer" can be created. However, in practice, restricting what a farmer grows is not a realistic solution unless he or she voluntarily changes his farming practice or commodity.

If a farmer can profitably convert to organic farming, it might address urban concerns over pesticides. But even though organic farming may be perceived as being more benign than conventional farming, many of the same "by-products" of conventional farming, such as dust and smells, would continue.

Certain types of crops that require minimal maintenance activity, such as avocado and citrus trees, if viable, can work as a buffering area between residences and more intensively farmed land.

In fact, one southern California Farm Bureau representative wryly noted that "non-farm neighbors love living adjacent to avocado groves [and citrus] and, in fact, realtors will advertise the fact."

*"Organic farming practices will not typically influence mitigation measures."*

County of San Luis Obispo, *Mitigating Agricultural Residential Conflict*, Jan. 1995.



*A Central Coast example of residences without the benefit of a buffer.*

## 2 *Building Community Support*

In preparing this workbook, three common themes emerged from the analysis of successful and unsuccessful implementations of buffers:

### 1. *Successful processes were inclusive*

Input was sought in the ways in which things are done and in which people are involved. Diverse community interest groups were contacted and listened to.

### 2. *The communities had defined agricultural principles*

What does it “mean” to live in a particular community? In communities with successful buffers, values and community culture instilled with an agricultural identity were instrumental in guiding decision-making. Community vision and uniqueness, and the degree to which those principles are felt and upheld by policy makers and the community or region is critical.

### 3. *The final policies were understandable*

Without clarity and consistency, the actual policies related to land use, growth, development and agricultural preservation are more likely to be subject to challenge.

#### I. **PROCESS:** *Are you ready to be inclusive?*

Perhaps the most important part of buffer implementation boils down to an interpersonal issue: getting people to understand and appreciate other points of view and resolving or averting conflict between two or more diverse groups. This means having the right people at the table at the right time. Frequent and solid communication, or mutual engagement, between all parties, from the policy development phase to subdivision approval to buffer implementation, is an integral component of success, not a freestanding component.

For example, the California Coordinated Resource Management and Planning (CRMP) model is a resource planning, problem-solving and management process that allows for direct participation of everyone concerned with natural resource management in a given planning area.

The concept underlying CRMP is that coordinating resource management strategies results in improved resource management and minimizes conflicts among land users, landowners, governmental agencies and interest groups.

A healthy, inclusive process also requires:

*a. Community and stakeholder involvement*

If policy makers determine the relative strength of their community's commitment to preserving agriculture before any policies are written, later implementation of the policies will be easier. As such, it is important for counties and cities to genuinely seek constituent ideas and concerns in general plan updates. It is also incumbent on the farming community to show up at planning meetings to present their points of view and to hear others. Lack of support for agriculture may be an indication to buffer proponents to engage in further public education.

A collaborative process, though occasionally cumbersome and time consuming, will be better for the long-term success of the project. Planning departments need to work together to involve all stakeholders on projects that might be controversial, but even those that seem like a sure thing. Hidden conflicts can rise up when least expected, and exclusion creates animosity that is difficult to reverse.

Where developers are aware of the community culture and attitudes toward agriculture, projects fare better when those considerations are incorporated in their plans from the beginning, including provisions for effective buffers. Land use initiatives, ballot measures and suits brought about by special interest groups are sometimes the end result of insufficient dialogue earlier.

*b. Ongoing education and outreach*

Educational efforts need to be on-going on at least three fronts.

First, the communities need to have frequent communication from governmental agencies about the land use goals and values that guide jurisdictional policies and decision-making. Outreach efforts will reinforce commitment, and will also garner input that serves as an early indicator that sentiment is changing direction, which can then be promptly addressed. Dialogue is

*Exclusion, whether intentional or not, can lead to any number of later problems, from indifference to figurative sabotage.*

needed between government, residents and farmers.

Secondly, planners mentioned their needing to undergo on-going education in policy and land use issues, but especially in agriculture. In the course of their jobs they must make determinations and interpretations about agriculture, so *planners having a good understanding of agricultural processes and issues* is critical to their ability to make good decisions.

The third facet of education and outreach should be between the agricultural community and urban residents. The ideal is that through outreach and education, common values and appreciation for other perspectives are instilled. The goal is to move beyond and above an attitude of mutual tolerance to one of genuine appreciation.

Likewise, there are farmers who actively listen to nearby residents and implement practices that make them better neighbors. To increase understanding of agriculture, Southern California farmer A.G. Kawamura works with Farm Bureau tours, gives private tours, speaks to public groups and school children, organizes gleaning projects (re-harvesting a field to collect edible “seconds”) and works with hunger and nutrition projects.

*c. Is the discussion fact and science-driven?*

General buffer guidelines and implementation plans need to incorporate fact based, or science-based solutions. Arbitrary or unrealistic requirements, or those pushed by a vocal philosophical or political minority are more likely to suffer protests and appeals. The guidelines need to allow for flexibility without opening the door to exceptions that dilute them. Impartial fact and best practices rather than emotion or ideology should drive decision-making.

*d. Is there cross-jurisdictional cooperation and integrated regional planning?*

A clear result of this research is that counties and cities must have clear and effective processes for communicating and working with each other on agricultural protection, growth and buffer issues. The decentralization of California land-use planning makes two-way communication all the more important.

Comprehensive buffer guidelines alone do not prevent counties from suing cities over development. For example, Sutter County sued Yuba City over a subdivision’s buffer distances that did not follow County guidelines. While the suit was settled out of court, the improvements to City-County planning communication were implemented only after litigation.

*Farm organization-led education programs can lead suburban residents to a greater appreciation of farming’s complex nature and a sense of connection to their food.*

To avoid future examples like the Yuba City example, some counties reported that they meet annually with the cities over previously approved projects to review the implementation and adjust procedures for continual improvement. This 360-degree communication, formal and informal, helps cement working relationships and leads to better policy implementation.

This cooperation and communication is not always easy. One out-of-state planner referred to “knock-down, drag-out fights” between the county and cities to develop a joint plan, but concluded the effort was worth it. Why? All were committed to coming out with a plan, including matching zoning codes, and the result has been that now the only occasional differences are over interpretation.

*e. Are all the issues on the table?*

Where controversy arises, it is important to recognize that the stated objections are not always the heart of the protests. For example, objections might be voiced about the implementation of a buffer, but the unstated motive is actually anti-growth sentiment. Cost could be raised as an objection, but perhaps the real issue is power or lack of trust.

Unless the underlying problems are addressed, superficial fixes and discussions around the stated topic will not be effective. A facilitated process among stakeholders is one way to dig deeper into identifying both the real issues and the solutions.

## 2. DEFINED AGRICULTURAL PRINCIPLES

Underlying principles, or values and beliefs must be present to successfully implement farmland protection, with a recognition that buffers are but one component of that larger picture. This study revealed some of the principles held by communities that consider farmland a key resource:

- The community bought into the value of agriculture and the importance of protecting it. The values of the community have been solicited, identified and publicized.
- Once the policies were put in place, they were supported.
- The jurisdictions can and do work together.
- The long-term benefits overrode short-term expediency.
- Both sides were accommodated.
- Managed growth is possible.
- There is no “one-size fits all” solution.
- Differences will occur, but can be and will be resolved.
- Commitment to staying at the table until a resolution is reached.
- Integrity and consistency lead to trust and open communication.



### *Signs of Support*

In those areas where preservation of farming appears to be a principle or value, it is often seen as a heritage and lifestyle issue as well as an economic issue. The emotion tied to it reflects its status as a value, something greater than just another feature or business in the area. Moreover, buffers are seen as one part of a larger effort to preserve agricultural land. The multiple ways of supporting agricultural preservation lend credence and power to the community's principles.

For example, the City of Redlands published "Redlands 2000", which promoted the concept of a "necklace of citrus groves" around the perimeter of the city. The report is credited with raising the consciousness of the community about its heritage of citrus groves sufficiently to pass a bond measure for orange grove protection.

In Placer County, the Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program was the result of extensive community input and it documents the area's concern for agricultural preservation. The words "heritage" and "legacy" connote a deep value, and illustrate the point being made here about the importance of the emotional commitment and foundation that drives and supports the policies.

There is no magic combination of protective regulations or perfect wording. The magic is in getting the community to agree on what it values. Interpretation of policies is how disputes occur. Having a common vision can help focus and guide interpretation. The stronger the value on preserving agricultural land, the less susceptible the planners and policy makers are to making exceptions.

*There is no magic combination of regulations or wording. The magic is getting the community to agree on what it values.*

### 3. CLEAR POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

It should be noted that formal inclusion of buffers in the land use planning process is a relatively new phenomenon. When study respondents were asked how long their buffer policies had been in effect, the average year of implementation was 1989, with a mean of 1991.

Notwithstanding their newness, the third key to success has been the strength of the policies and regulations. That is, the policies were driven by principles of protecting agriculture and taking the long-term view for what is best for the area.



The two aspects to address in policy development are 1) the content – the quality, foresight, specificity, enforceability, and 2) the degree to which all land-use planning and implementation is integrated.

Integration is important between documents (for example, zoning and subdivision ordinances closely follow the general plan), and also between neighboring jurisdictions.

The content might also include incentives. The City of Oceanside recently developed a process whereby growers who wish to construct greenhouses or shade houses can get a waiver from the public hearing process on their permits if they build their structures at least 500' away from any property line. Conversely, fast-track incentives for development could promote the use of top quality buffers. The developer's costs to install a buffer could well be saved in time.



*This Stanislaus County farmer is making it clear to his new neighbors that farming is more than just pretty trees.*

### 3 *The Cost Concern*

FINDING ways to pay for buffers and deciding who will bear the costs of upkeep are two of the more challenging issues to resolve. Costs are a driving factor and can influence decisions that impact the effectiveness and suitability of the buffer. Therefore, the goal should be to first determine the best buffer, and then figure out the means, not vice versa.

The most important thing to remember is that a funding source needs to be identified for the expenses that come up (1) at the beginning of the project such as design and installation, and for those (2) that will continue through the life of the buffer such as upkeep and maintenance.

#### WHO PAYS FOR THE LAND?

The first consideration is who will pay for the land that is going to serve as the buffer. In virtually all policies reviewed, the responsibility and cost of installing the buffer was placed on the developer who proposed to locate adjacent to existing agriculture.

When building a new subdivision, the costs of installing a buffer are no different than any other costs the developer pays for rendering the land acceptable for housing. That could mean remedying poor soil stability, drainage, a grading situation, or providing a sound wall to dampen freeway noise. In short, a buffer is promoted as another aspect of infrastructure needed to make a site suitable for housing. These infrastructure costs are generally incorporated in the cost of the home.

## PUBLIC FUNDING OPTIONS

### *a) Prepaid*

Existing infrastructure has already been paid for. This is why roads, rights-of-way and canals are popular as buffers.

### *b) Specific tax or fee (sales or property tax, bond issue, or assessment)*

Buffers may be included in an open space district or park district if the jurisdiction passes a sales tax or bond issue to acquire and/or maintain them. Depending on state law, creating an assessment district is another avenue to pay for a buffer. The implication here is that monies are generated from a larger pool than just the homeowners at the specific development in question, presumably because of broader benefit.

### *c) Special purpose public monies*

Some buffer projects may be eligible for public grants, especially those where an agricultural/urban interface buffer qualifies as a conservation buffer. Conservation buffers can produce one or multiple environmental benefits, such as the protection or improvement of soil, air or water quality, improvement of fish or wildlife habitat, and demonstrate a commitment to land stewardship.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), through its Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), provides grants for environmental conservation. NRCS can also assist in referring to other Federal, State, or local government programs, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, or the California Farmland Conservancy Program.

### *d) General fund*

Monies can be used from a city or county general fund, depending on the health of the fund and the political will. Although not a realistic option for every buffer, general fund monies might fund a pilot or demonstration project as a catalyst to increasing the use of buffers.

### *e) Special legislation*

For a particularly unique setting, this may be an option. A Massachusetts planner described state legislation that allows a town to raise taxes by 5% (of the tax, not of the valuation) to fund land preservation. The concept raises interesting possible variations for California, although there is no such legislation currently pending.

## PRIVATE FUNDING OPTIONS

### *a) Foundations and Individuals*

A private non-profit community foundation or individual may have a particular interest in a project, or a project might fall under the foundation's funding priorities, such as preservation of open space or urban forest projects.

### *b) Landowner*

There may be unique instances where the landowner, either the farmer or the developer, finds advantage in donating an easement for a portion of his property for use as a buffer. In other words, the farmer voluntarily stops farming on that portion of his land that is to serve as the buffer, or the developer does not build on a portion of land, but also does not pass on the cost of that land to the homeowner.

## PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FUNDING OPTIONS

In this scenario, the developer pays for the land and development of the buffer (passing the cost on to homebuyers), and then deeds the buffer back to the city, or relinquishes the easement to the city. The city is responsible for maintenance, and recoups their costs through a property tax assessment on the subdivision homeowners, or from the taxpayers at large as part of the city's overall landscaping fee.

In instances where fee-based recreational use of the buffer space is acceptable, several options present themselves.

- The developer may sell land to private enterprise to build and run as a business.
- The developer deeds to a jurisdiction to build and operate, or to build and lease.

*In Monterey County, the Aromas Community Center Foundation bought a 17-acre parcel from a developer to turn into community baseball and soccer fields.*

*The parcel provides buffering between 1-acre home sites and strawberry fields on the other side.*

## PAYING FOR UPKEEP

A cost that is often overlooked is the cost of routine monitoring to follow up on maintenance, effectiveness of mitigation, design requirements and use restrictions that are stipulated in the subdivision or site plans. Depending on the type of buffer, financial support might mean periodic painting, litter removal, bank restoration, or plant care and replacement.

Once a buffer is in place, it needs to be either supported or self-supporting. A self-supporting buffer is one that requires no maintenance, or where the buffer is part of existing infrastructure and the maintenance is borne by an outside party, such as Caltrans or an irrigation district.

For effective monitoring, there needs to be scheduled oversight and a means to pay for it. The monitoring would most likely be the responsibility of the entity or jurisdiction that imposed the buffering requirements.

The use of volunteers, particularly from among the initial stakeholders, should not be overlooked. The California Coordinated Resource Management and Planning (CRMP) model described earlier uses stakeholder volunteers to monitor CRMP projects.



*This scenic buffer will require upkeep involving tree maintenance, weeding, paving and litter.*

## 4 *Your Next 5 Steps*

BUFFERS are just one part of the increasingly complex job of deciding how best to use our land resources, with an eye to the future.

But just as buffers need to be site-specific, how any particular area chooses to adapt or implement practices and ideas from this study will require customization. Which issues need work will differ from one area to another.

### 1. DETERMINE THE LOCAL NEED FOR BUFFERS

- Conduct an inventory of local complaints regarding edge issues. Assess the degree of severity, both in number and type of complaints.
- Inventory the types of near-city farming and what the likelihood of conflict is from that type of farming/crops.
- Determine if buffers have a role to play in the long-term growth strategies, and how that role might be strengthened.

### 2. DEFINE YOUR COMMUNITY'S PRINCIPLES RELATED TO AGRICULTURE

- Assess the strength of local will to maintain agriculture as an economic contributor.
- Conduct community forums to determine what the people value. What is their vision for the area?

### 3. EXAMINE YOUR PROCESS

- Identify and address or “heal” old wounds that are preventing or impeding progress.
- Analyze strengths and weaknesses of city/county/LAFCO interaction.
- Establish a buffer “team” to develop vision and process.

- Provide training – affective (team building, empathy for farming).
- Develop setback guidelines through a technical committee.
- Develop a technical-based rather than political-based appeal process.
- Develop a “land use dialogue group” that is cross-jurisdictional (city/county) and cross-interest (government/environment/development/agriculture).
- Alert statewide constituency groups of needed changes to state laws (CEQA, tax structures, etc.)
- Encourage agricultural awareness education. Work with appropriate groups to improve the public’s understanding of the importance and value of agriculture, as well as a better understanding of modern production methods.

#### 4. ADOPT AN EFFECTIVE POLICY

- Assess how well current policies and statutes address land use and effectively direct growth.
- Figure out how to “fill in” where current policies leave off (example: CEQA and EIR’s).
- Review General Plans of cities and county to evaluate for continuity, conflicts and opportunities for potential synchronization.
- Review policies for opportunities to “close growth gaps” left by old statutes.
- Review policy direction on rural residential development. Determine if it will be allowed, where it fits in, and how buffers can be improved.
- Determine if policies adequately include buffers as infrastructure.

#### 5. INVESTIGATE COST OPTIONS

- Explore local options for funding buffers as part of the necessary infrastructure.
- Examine creative funding options. Conduct some cost-sharing brainstorming.
- Correlate existing fee authorizations to applicability as funding mechanisms for buffers.