



San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

November 7, 2016

Mayor Sam Liccardo and City Councilmembers
City of San Jose
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San Jose, CA 95113

Dear Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers:

On behalf of SPUR, I am writing in support of the proposed ordinance creating an Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone in San Jose (File No. PP16-119). For the incentive to be available to property owners in 2017, we understand the need to move this legislation forward without delay. With that in mind, we encourage the Council to pass the current ordinance as proposed. During the first year of implementation, we encourage the Council to track the impact of the ordinance and potentially explore ways to expand its reach.

As we highlighted in our 2012 report, *Public Harvest*, urban agriculture provides numerous benefits to cities. However, access to land and land tenure are significant obstacles to its expansion in the Bay Area. An Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone ordinance, by implementing state Assembly Bill 551 and allowing property owners in the unincorporated areas of the county to receive a property tax reduction in exchange for committing their land to urban agricultural use for at least five years, will help address both those obstacles by providing landowners with an incentive to allow urban agriculture projects on their land for set periods of time.

By passing this ordinance, San Jose would join the cities of San Francisco and Sacramento as well as Santa Clara County in establishing an urban agriculture incentive zone. There is great enthusiasm for creating additional opportunities for gardening and farming in the city, and this policy tool will help those projects looking for land. Going forward, we also encourage the Council to review which projects apply and take advantage of the incentive. With that information in hand, we think it may be worth expanding the criteria to allow parcels of 1-3 acres to be included for incentive contracts as well as adding language that would require projects to have a public interface.

The current proposal is an important first step in expanding opportunities for urban agriculture and we encourage the Council to pass it without delay.

We appreciate your consideration of SPUR's comments. If we can answer any questions or provide any additional information about our position, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Eli Zigas
Food and Agriculture Policy Director