



San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

December 12, 2016

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

Re: Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone application fees (December 13th Session)

Dear Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers:

On behalf of SPUR, I am writing to encourage you to keep the fees for Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone applications minimal. The key feature of the urban agriculture incentive zone that the Council recently established is that it encourages property owners to commit their land to urban agricultural use in exchange for a reduction in their property taxes. High application fees, like the \$1,540 currently proposed, will undercut the incentive by lessening the savings a property owner might see from putting their land under contract for urban agricultural use.

While we understand and appreciate the Planning Division's goal of recovering the costs it incurs in processing applications, we encourage you to adopt the option labeled "Alternative 2" in the staff memo – which would charge applicants for a flat intake fee for two hours of staff time. The Council can address concerns about the potential for escalating costs over time by having the Planning Division return to the Council with an updated estimate of staff time based on the first few months of experience processing applications.

As noted in the staff memo, the other jurisdictions that have passed Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones, including Sacramento, San Francisco and Santa Clara County have not sought to fully recover costs from applicants and impose fees less than \$100 for applications. These jurisdictions have recognized that most urban agriculture projects have small budgets and that for the city to gain the benefits intended from the incentive program, the barrier to entry for urban farming and city gardening projects must be kept low.

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