Urban Agriculture
Incentive Zones (AB551)
Outreach Packet
for Community Advocates

San Diego Food System Alliance
http://www.sdfsa.org/

URBAN AGRICULTURE INCENTIVE ZONES
GROW FOOD IN YOUR CITIES
AB551 Materials Included:

1. Fact sheet for community members
2. Fact sheet for elected officials
3. Talking points for approaching elected officials
4. Letters of support for community advocates
5. Letters of support for growers
6. Letters of support for land owners
7. Contact list of elected officials
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 Systems Alliance to attend an upcoming community meeting.

**CONTACT**

Elly Brown, Director
San Diego Food Systems Alliance
elly@sdfsa.org
Visit us at www.sdfsa.org
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 officials must work together to designate approved urban agriculture incentive zones (UAIZ). You can help make this happen!

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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.

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

CONTACT
Elly Brown, Director
San Diego Food Systems Alliance
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AB551 UAIZ TALKING POINTS

FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER OR ADVOCATING ORGANIZATION/BUSINESS

WHAT:
AB551 UAIZ provides tax incentives to private land owners in urban areas to lease their land to growers, farmers, and/or gardeners for agriculture use.

BACKGROUND:
AB551 is a state law that has been adopted in City of San Francisco, Santa Clara County, City of Sacramento, and many other cities in California are exploring this currently. We highly recommend our elected officials to take action on this now so the people of our City can begin to enjoy the benefits expanded urban agriculture offers.

BENEFITS:
Urban agriculture is an important part of improving healthy food access, stimulating economic development, transforming and beautifying neighborhoods, and it provides jobs and educational opportunities.

PROCESS & ACTION:
We have a number of supporters already in favor of seeing UAIZs established in San Diego County. The County is now in the process of drafting a Resolution. We know there are a large number of vacant lots available throughout the city, many of which if turned over to agriculture production, could help deal with our urban blight and build community connectedness.

Unless the law will be changed, this policy will sunset by 2023. This means owners will need to form a contract by Dec 31, 2018. I encourage you to vote for and adopt the Ordinance as early as possible to allow landowners to take advantage of the program.

Please contact the San Diego Food System Alliance for more information to help implement AB551

FROM A URBAN FARMER/GROWER/GARDENER

WHO:
I’m an urban farmer in (INSERT NEIGHBORHOOD). I grow (INSERT A FEW TYPES OF PRODUCE ITEMS FOR EXAMPLES). I’ve been growing food for (INSERT # OF YEARS).

WHY/BENEFITS:
I grow food because (INSERT WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT IT OR WHY IT’S IMPORTANT TO YOU). The food I grow goes to (INSERT WHERE FOOD ENDS UP, E.G. DONATED, SOLD AT FARMERS’ MARKETS, ETC.) Urban agriculture is an important part of improving healthy food access, stimulating economic development, transforming and beautifying neighborhoods, and it provides job and educational opportunities.

HOW:
Securing land is really challenging for small urban farmers like me. Being able to take advantage of a 5 year lease would help me invest in my production because I would know I have the time needed to cultivate and reap the rewards of my labor.

ACTION:
If you vote to set up urban agriculture incentives zones throughout the city, I would look forward to connecting with landowners to take on an urban farming lease. Thank you for your time.
FROM A PRIVATE LANDOWNER

*If currently lease land for farming:*

**WHO:**
I own land in (INSERT NEIGHBORHOOD NAME). My land is currently being leased to and/or I’m donating the right to use my land to (INSERT NAME OF FARMER(S) OR URBAN AGRICULTURE GROUP), and have done so for (INSERT NUMBER OF YEARS)

**WHAT/BENEFITS:**
This farming endeavor makes a positive impact for the neighborhood because they’re growing fresh and healthy food for community residents and the lot has become a beautiful green space that makes the property and entire block look very appealing.

**ACTION:**
If you vote to establish urban agriculture incentive zones-- that would definitely give me the further motivation to sign a longer lease to the folks growing on my property. I understand I would have to lease my land for at least 5 years under the new law. Thank you for the opportunity to share this important information with you.

*If considering leasing land for farming:*

**WHO:**
I own undeveloped land in (INSERT NEIGHBORHOOD NAME). Since I’m currently not using my land, I would be happy to lease it to someone who wants to make good use out of it by growing food.

**WHAT/BENEFITS:**
Getting a little relief on my property tax is the kind of incentive I would appreciate to allow others the ability to lease my land for agriculture use. I understand I would have to lease my land for a minimum of 5 years. I would be happy to lease my land to urban farmers because I know urban agriculture provides a lot of benefits for the city, my neighborhood, and the surrounding businesses. I bet everyone would appreciate seeing a little more healthy green spaces around here.

**ACTION:**
Please vote to establish urban agriculture inventive zones so landowners like me and urban farmers can begin to benefit just like others are in cities throughout California. Thank you for the time to share my thoughts.
Dear (insert name of elected official)

I am writing to you today to ask you to adopt and implement AB551: Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act. This policy supports the people of (insert city name) ability to thrive in an improved food system focused on the environment, economy, equity, and education. As you may know, 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.

I urge (insert name of city) to move quickly to establish an urban agriculture incentive zone. State law permits urban agriculture incentive zones 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.

Urban agriculture provides numerous benefits not only to those growing food, but also to the counties, cities, and neighborhoods where 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.

Please contact the San Diego Food System Alliance for more information to help implement AB551. www.sdlsa.org

Thank you,

Name
LETTER OF SUPPORT TEMPLATE: GROWER

Name
Address
Date

To Whom It May Concern:

As an urban farmer, I highly encourage (insert name of city) to join several other cities in California by implementing AB551 to create urban agriculture incentive zones (UAIZ). Access to land, particularly access to small parcels in urban areas, is an incredibly tough barrier to overcome for small farmers across the nation. AB551 creates a useful tool to support an important part of improving healthy food access, community economic development, neighborhood beautification, and job opportunities. Urban farming is not only an innovative approach for twenty-first century food production practices, but it also serves as a critical tool in educating urban consumers about the local food shed and system.

I am very interested in taking on an urban farming lease as soon as (insert name of city) implements AB551.

Thank you,

Name
Name of Garden or Farm
Phone Number or email
To Whom It May Concern:

As an owner of an undeveloped property in (insert city name), I urge you to implement AB551: Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act (UAIZ). There are many small vacant lots such as mine throughout San Diego County, and owners have few incentives to allow gardeners/farmers to cultivate for agriculture use. Establishing urban agriculture incentive zones in (insert name of city) can provide thousands of dollars in property tax savings, and increase the likelihood property owners like me will consider allowing our land to be used for growing food.

Urban agriculture provides many benefits to city residents including: education about fresh, healthy food and the effort it takes to produce it; environmental benefits for the city; community-building; vibrant green spaces and recreation; and a source of economic development, including increased neighboring home values.

I am very interested in considering an urban farming lease as soon as AB551 is implemented.

Thank you,

Name

Phone Number or email

Address