



4: Agriculture Matters!

Together, we will strive to preserve agriculture and community character through community and civic support and available options that encourage and enable farmers, if they choose, to preserve agricultural land. Agriculture is an integral part of our heritage and identity, and also an important economic pursuit and way of life in Santaquin.

AGRICULTURE MATTERS! DISCUSSION

Utah is the second largest tart cherry producer in the nation, and Santaquin produces more tart cherries than anywhere else in the State. It is also famous for its apples. The City is a famous stop for travelers on Interstate 15 and US Highway 6. The City's greenhouses produce flowers sold in many local Utah stores. Santaquin has a long history of providing agricultural products locally and nationally, as dried tart cherries show up in trail mixes and as supplements. Residents value agriculture, consider it one of the reasons they live in the City, and want to see agriculture thrive into the distant future. Santaquin's geographical characteristics and soil conditions make growing cherries and other fruit especially viable. Development pressure and the difficulty of co-existing next to residential developments are compounded with many other concerns:

Lost water rights: when properties change hands water rights do not always continue; they are sold off separately. Lack of irrigation water may indicate that the property will not continue to be farmed.

Development pressure: rising land prices along the Wasatch Front compete with the desire to continue farming.

Lack of interest in farming: Often farmers consider the development of their land as their "retirement" plan. Orchards are disappearing across the State as development pressure increases and interest in farming decreases.

Need for more incentives: tools that have been employed across the Country could be helpful in Santaquin. A diverse array of incentives to continue agricultural uses could prevent farms



from developing by providing financial benefits in the short run. Farmers need more options.

Need for flexible zoning: it is uncommon in Utah to provide zoning that allows greater agriculture-related use in agricultural zones. Often zones are quite restrictive and limit options for farmers that could help incentivize them to stay. Options such as fruit and vegetable stands, on-site restaurants, allowances for temporary worker housing, regular tours, and retail sales are logical additions to create more flexibility for farmers.

Water availability: drought may impact the ability to expand farms and orchards. The increasing use of culinary water for landscaping may decrease the water available for irrigation. Existing irrigation practices that do not facilitate conservation are under the microscope on a Statewide basis. People are asking, *How will farming be affected by short and long-term drought conditions?* Drip irrigation systems to conserve water should be promoted where they can be effective. Santaquin City will continue to encourage all property owners to conserve water and will take steps to provide appropriate education.

AGRICULTURE PROTECTION STRATEGIES

There are techniques used all over the country that can slow or stop the transition of farms to other uses. These techniques often provide

incentives to farmers to continue farming and also often provide financial benefit. Santaquin's vision gives much of the farmland and orchards an agricultural designation. In these areas the goal is to permanently preserve agricultural land and use. Several agricultural protection techniques that may be useful follow.





AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION ZONES

These Utah State Law (§17-27a-403(2)(c))-authorized zones allow an agricultural property owner to request agricultural protection zone designation on a property. A property owner in with this zoning designation can veto any zone changes that might be applied to the property, at least for his/her particular property. It also requires the local jurisdiction to inform a landowner about adjacent potential development and suggests that the adjacent development should have a note on the plat about being located in an agricultural area. The intent is to assure that adjacent development is aware of agricultural practices such as spraying, or watering late at night, and this notice helps the new owners in the area to realize there may be everyday issues associated with an active farm that they should expect.

FLEXIBLE AGRICULTURAL ZONES

Enhance existing zoning to provide more opportunities for farmers and ranchers to market products on site; develop related retail outlets, restaurants, and tours; and to allow a specified amount of additional housing. Flexible agricultural zones help farmers provide more agritourism-based opportunities. Farmers' need for temporary worker housing could also be addressed via a zoning amendment, with the form that temporary

housing could take being an important aspect of flexibility in agricultural zones. Some communities have allowed tiny home villages or mobile homes, and then expanded allowances for a housing complex with smaller units.

ADHERENCE TO LARGE LOT ZONING

Many communities have 20 to 40-acre base agricultural zoning and may have the political will to keep such areas zoned that way. This is another way to limit housing growth in agricultural areas. A zone change proposal that is accepted can quickly erase this conservation technique.

FOOD HUBS/AGRITOURISM

One market-based concept to preserve agriculture is to form cooperative councils and, possibly, a food hub. A working group or council of orchard owners and a group for farmers and ranchers could work together to improve their collective marketing strategies, maybe build storage facilities for common use, possibly share equipment, establish local farmer's markets, entice and house seasonal labor together, and work on the educational aspects of this evolving business. Councils or food hubs could more easily address issues of mutual importance and become engaged with the government to assist in the continuation of farming in Santaquin.

OTHER TOOLS THAT CREATE OPTIONS FOR FARMERS

Voluntary tools such as rural residential clustering (RRC), transfer of development rights (TDR), and purchase of development rights (PDR), could be considered with enabling ordinances or partnerships with land trusts. Please see the appendix for descriptions of these tools.

STRATEGIES

 = priority strategy

1  Place additional effort on promoting the State enabled agricultural protection zones (§17-27a-403(2)(c)), which help to protect farmers from adjacent development and local zoning changes that impact their individual properties. The law requires the local jurisdiction to inform a protected landowner about adjacent potential development and suggests that the adjacent development should have a note on the development plat about being located in an agricultural area. This notice on the adjacent development plat(s) places adjacent property owners on notice concerning agricultural activities such as spraying, nighttime watering practices, machinery use, odors, and other agricultural activities that might be considered a nuisance by an adjacent property owner.

2  Because development pressure is increasing, explore providing farmers with more voluntary options and incentives to derive

HOW ARE RURAL RESIDENTIAL CLUSTERS DEVELOPED? (100-ACRE EXAMPLE) *(see appendix for more detail)*



Existing Condition:

Parcels feature historic farming operations, and owner is considering options for future development.



Conventional Development Pattern: 88 units

Underlying one-acre zoning employed to create standard subdivision with uniform lot sizes, eliminating agricultural uses.



75% open space | 25% housing
 124 units | 71 detached; 51 attached
 3 neighborhood parks
 40% density bonus

Rural Residential Cluster Alternative:

Clustered housing, flexible lot sizes and a density bonus enable a profitable project while permanently preserving remaining agricultural uses.

Image Source: Heber City General Plan



TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS *(see appendix for more detail)*

Development rights are voluntarily sold and transferred to another property, where increased development is desired. In most cases, a conservation easement is placed on the land from which the development rights are purchased, permanently precluding future development and ensuring long-term agricultural or other open space use.

In this example, four development units are transferred and built on property in the background. Farmland in the foreground is permanently preserved.



financial gain from agricultural land preservation (see appendix).

3. Consider flexible zoning that would allow for such options as on-site retailing, processing, restaurants, on-site worker housing, tours, and accommodations.

4. Support agritourism through a variety of programs including:

- Consistent promotional programs.
- By supporting the concept of a growers' organization within Santaquin to increase interaction and communication between farmers. Consider introducing the idea of creating a food hub, to accomplish mutual marketing, storage, education, and, possibly, equipment sharing. Such organizations can become a direct conduit to address farmers' issues and to interact with City government.
- Encourage an agritourism theme/brand that is clearly incorporated within all government and business programs.

5. Consider voluntary tools such as rural residential clustering (RRC), transfer of development rights (TDR), and purchase of development rights (PDR) that may help preserve agricultural land.

6. Consider encouraging water conservation practices through education, training, and

demonstration projects. Participate in a capacity and resource discussion for culinary and secondary water. Engage in the State's water optimization program to improve secondary water conservation practices. Coordinate with irrigation companies to assure the continued flow of water to all parts of the City.

7. Consider a growth strategy that emphasizes housing choice in the downtown area to relieve some development pressure on the working farms and orchards.

