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## **Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan Receives Top Award from American Planning Association California Chapter**

The Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan (Ag Plan) has been selected by the American Planning Association (APA) California Chapter as the winner of the statewide 2019 Innovation in Green Community Planning Award of Excellence. The award honors efforts to create more sustainable and green communities that reduce impacts on the natural environment and improves environmental quality.

Santa Clara County and the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, co-authors of the Ag Plan, were presented with the award at the 2019 APA state conference on Monday, September 16, at the Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront Resort in Santa Barbara, CA.

The Ag Plan, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in January 2018, is a strategic plan that provides a toolkit of policies and programs to curb the conversion of over 28,000 acres of viable farmland and rangeland to sprawl development. In the

past 30 years alone, Santa Clara County has lost more than 21,000 acres of its working lands to development.

“Our Ag Plan is unique in that it aims to comprehensively acknowledge and address the circumstances that lead to the loss of farmland,” said Senior Planner and Ag Plan Program Manager Michael Meehan. “It’s a planning document as well as a roadmap for regional resilience in the face of a dramatically changing climate—the interventions we’ve outlined will mitigate traffic increases and greenhouse gas emissions but also support a vibrant rural economy and opportunities for immigrant and new-entry farmers.”

“We realized that we simply could not lose any more of our precious agricultural land that provides economic diversity for the County and puts food on our tables,” said Santa Clara County Supervisor Dave Cortese. “And we knew we needed to protect the environment for generations to come.”

Supervisor Cortese served as co-chair with Supervisor Mike Wasserman on the County’s Agricultural Preservation Task Force, which met for seven months in 2018 to develop recommendations for the Board of Supervisors to implement the Ag Plan, which include the creation of an Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchasing Program.

“This collaborative effort between the County of Santa Clara and the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority demonstrates what can be accomplished when everyone works together,” Supervisor Wasserman said.

“We’re honored to receive recognition from the American Planning Association on this innovative regional planning approach that recognizes the importance of preserving agricultural and working lands to achieve the state’s ambitious climate goals,” said Andrea Mackenzie, General Manager for the Open Space Authority. “By partnering with local farmers, ranchers, and agricultural organizations, we can

protect our environment and create a more resilient future for Santa Clara County.”

In December last year, the Ag Plan was awarded the Governor’s Environmental and Economic Leadership Award for Ecosystem and Land Use Stewardship. The Ag Plan has also been recognized with an award by the Association of Environmental Professionals.

The development of the Ag Plan was supported in part by California Strategic Growth Council’s Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation program with funds from California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of cap-and-trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment.

“The Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan is just the kind of landmark regional collaboration we were hoping to foster, bringing together various stakeholders to figure out the best ways to fight climate change by protecting farmland at the edge of urban communities. This brings many benefits, including avoiding greenhouse gas emissions from what would have been more cars travelling long distances and storing carbon in productive agricultural lands,” said Louise Bedsworth, Executive Director of the California Strategic Growth Council.

To read the Ag Plan and find out more information, visit the [Ag Plan](#) webpage or call the Office of Supervisor Dave Cortese at 408-299-5030.