



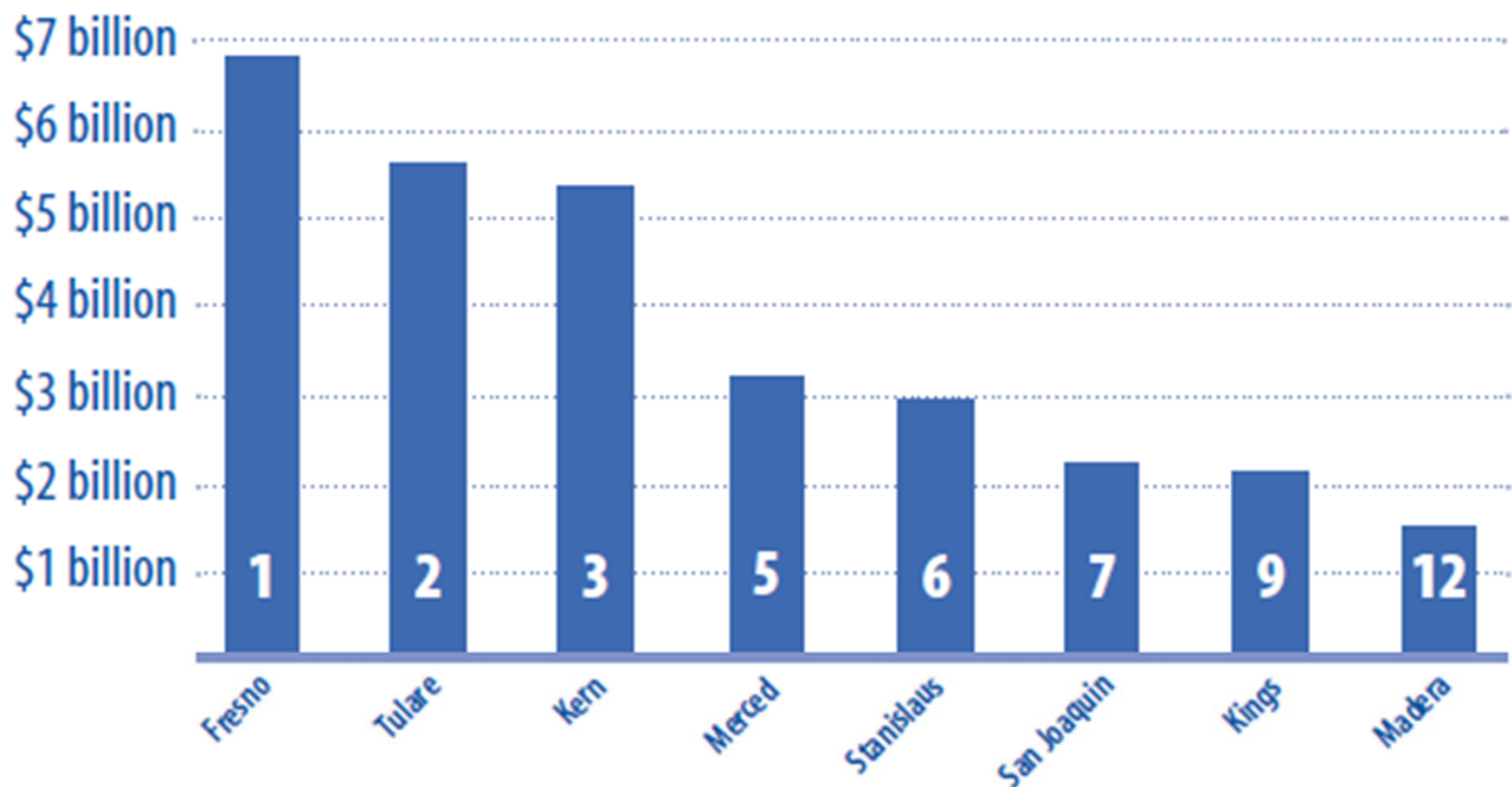
Sowing Prosperity
City of Fresno Farmland Preservation

Background



Figure A. Annual Value of Agricultural Production and Rank within California

Six of the nation's top 10 agricultural counties are located in the Valley, and the region's farmers produce more than \$30 billion worth of agricultural products annually.

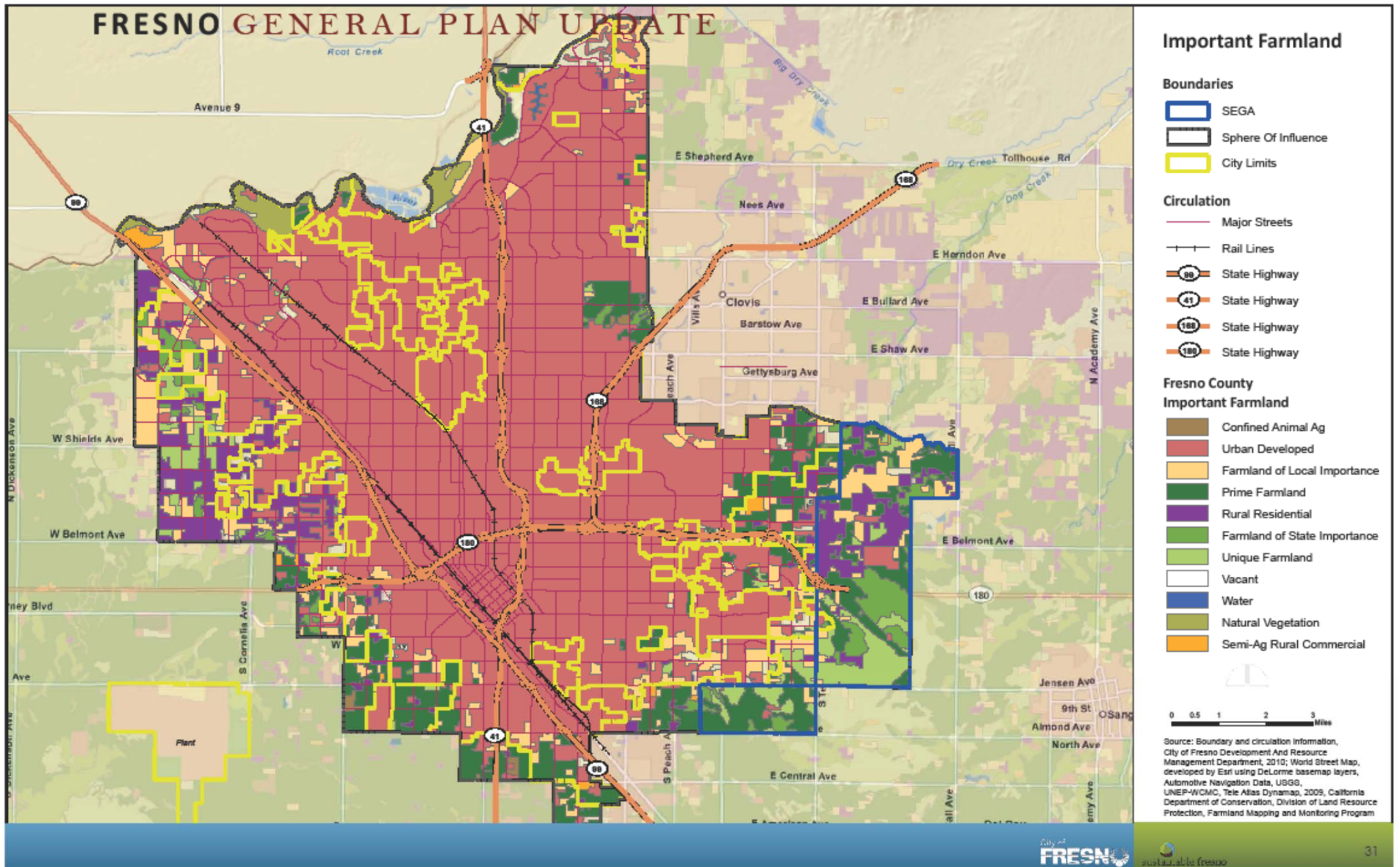


Source: California Agricultural Commissioners Crop Reports, 2011
Numbers on bars represent county rank within California.

Background

- Fresno is surrounded by high-quality farmland
- 13,219.67 acres within the Sphere Of Influence (SOI) categorized as Prime, Statewide, or Unique farmland
- 1990 to 2008: over 22,000 acres of County farmland converted to urban uses

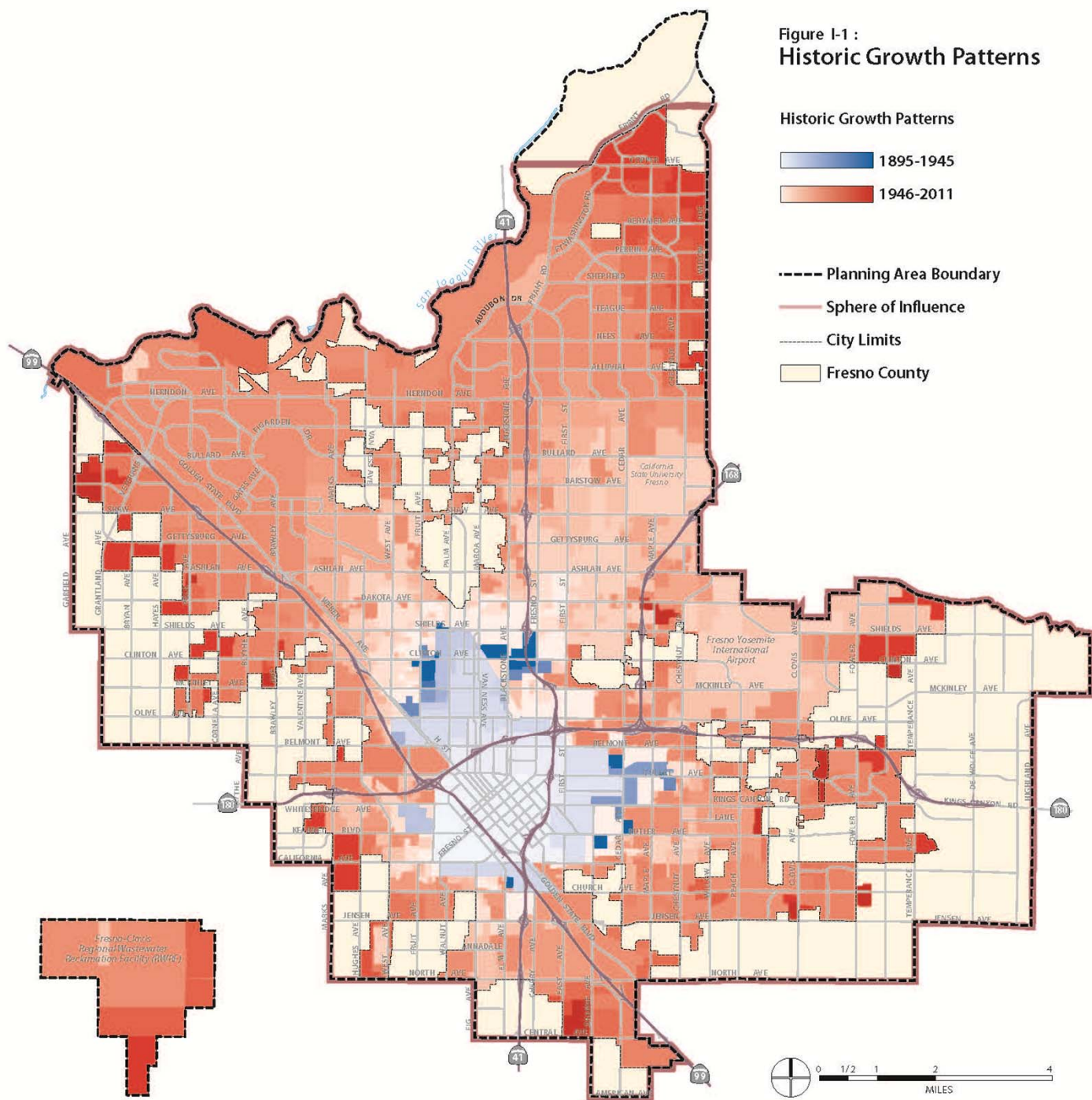
FRESNO GENERAL PLAN UPDATE



Background

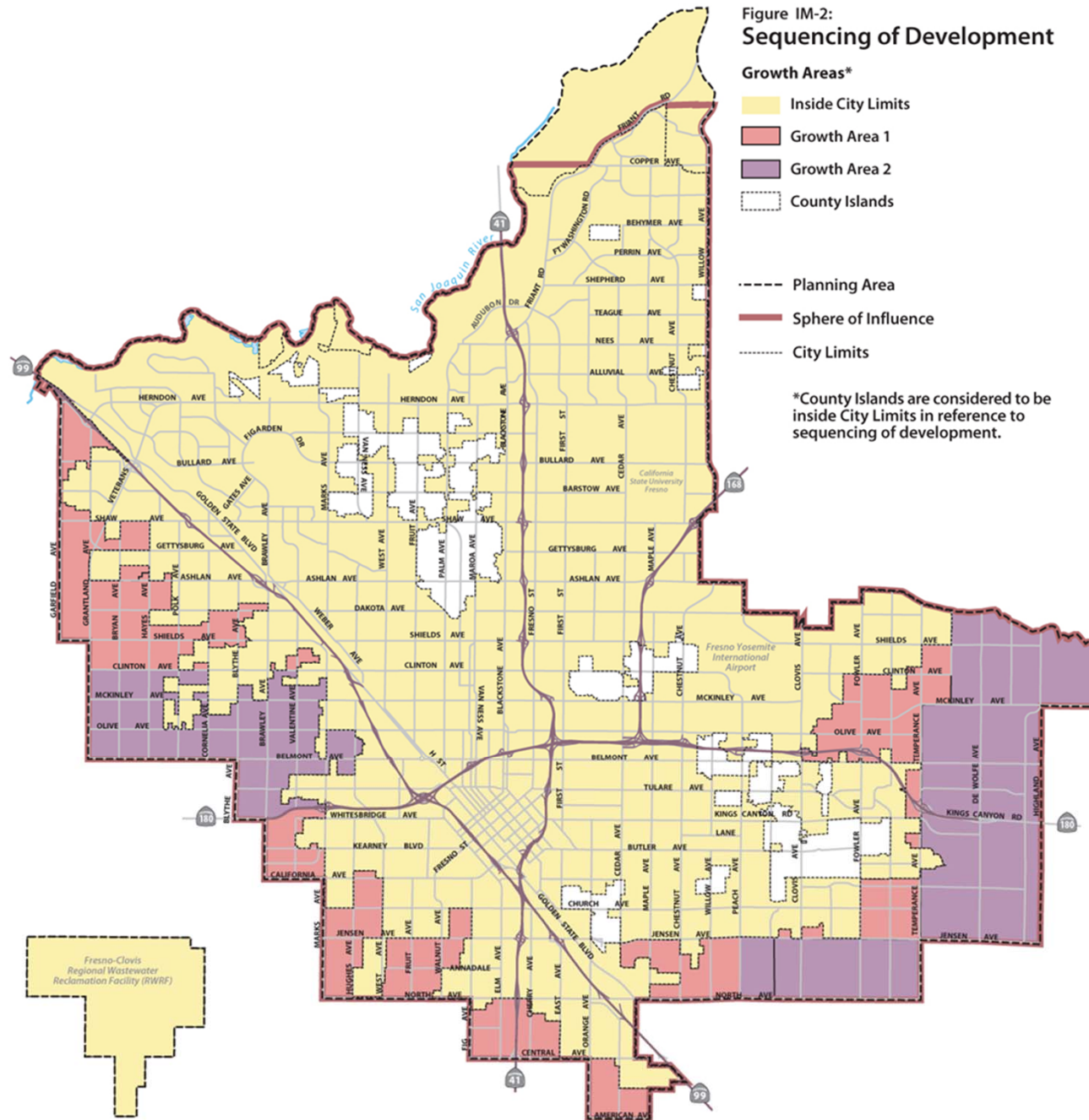
- Fresno has experienced prolific urban growth over the past 50 years

Figure I-1 :
Historic Growth Patterns



Background

- Fresno has experienced prolific urban growth over the past 50 years
- And will continue to grow, accommodating ~425,000 more residents by 2050



Background

NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY

EDMUND G. BROWN, JR., GOVERNOR



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Managing California's Working Lands

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DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Managing California's Working Lands

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American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US

San Joaquin Valley Office
894 East Divisadero Street #201
Fresno California 93721

October 9, 2014

Background

- General Plan Policy RC-9-c:

Farmland Preservation Program. *In coordination with regional partners or independently, establish a Farmland Preservation Program. When Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance is converted to urban uses outside City limits, this program would require that the developer of such a project permanently protect an equal amount of similar farmland elsewhere through easement.*

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program Grant Timeline

- March 20: Staff submitted paperwork to the Department of Conservation
- April 9: Resolution presented. Council denies pending workshop
- May 14: Workshop and resolution hearing
- June 30: Strategic Growth Council approves selected grant proposals

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program Grant Proposal

- Purpose of the Proposal:
 - To secure funding to help the City of Fresno develop a Farmland Preservation Program (FPP)
- Purpose of an FPP:
 - To conserve farmland and promote agriculture

Farmland Preservation Programs

- What is a Farmland Preservation Program?
 - General Plan and Zoning
 - Market-Based Programs

Different Tools – Different Jurisdictions

Farmland Preservation Programs

- What other SJV jurisdictions have programs?
 - Clovis, Hughson, Lathrop, Manteca, Merced County, Reedley, San Joaquin County, Stanislaus County, Stockton, Tracy, Tulare, Visalia

Farmland Preservation Benefits


- When you invest in agriculture you invest in the economy
 - A 2011 study on the agricultural chain in California found that agriculture supports ~2.5 million jobs, and contributes more than \$300 billion to the state's economy
 - A UC Agricultural Issues Center study found that:
 - Every agricultural processing job is associated with 2.46 jobs in related fields
 - Every \$1 of farm production in the SJV adds \$1.89 to the local economy
 - Thus, Fresno County's annual ag production true impact exceeds \$6.9 billion and is valued closer to \$13 billion
- 150 food-related manufacturers in the city of Fresno
- A growing connection to the new tech-based economy

Farmland Preservation Benefits

U.S.

California's Centers of Technology: Bay Area, L.A., San Diego, and ... Fresno?

How would you build a high-tech center in a vast farming zone? You might start by applying tech solutions to farming problems of water use and sustainability in all forms.



ECONO INN MURAL
Artist: Josh Wigger & Mahan Heard
COMPLETED OCTOBER 2004

One of Fresno's downtown murals, this one on the Econo Inn. The "Mural District" headquarters of Blivise Industries is a few blocks away. (Creative Fresno)

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [v](#) [e](#) [p](#)

JAMES FALLOWS | MAR 14, 2015



Farmland Preservation Benefits

- Adherence to program policies could result in less-than-significant impacts under CEQA, helping to streamline development in greenfield areas

A Program by Fresno, for Fresno

Developing our own program gives us an opportunity to...

- **Prioritize**
 - Define our own priorities
- **Incentivize**
 - Incentivize development in key geographic areas and industry sectors
- **Protect**
 - Protect our heritage and economy for future generations

A Program by Fresno, for Fresno

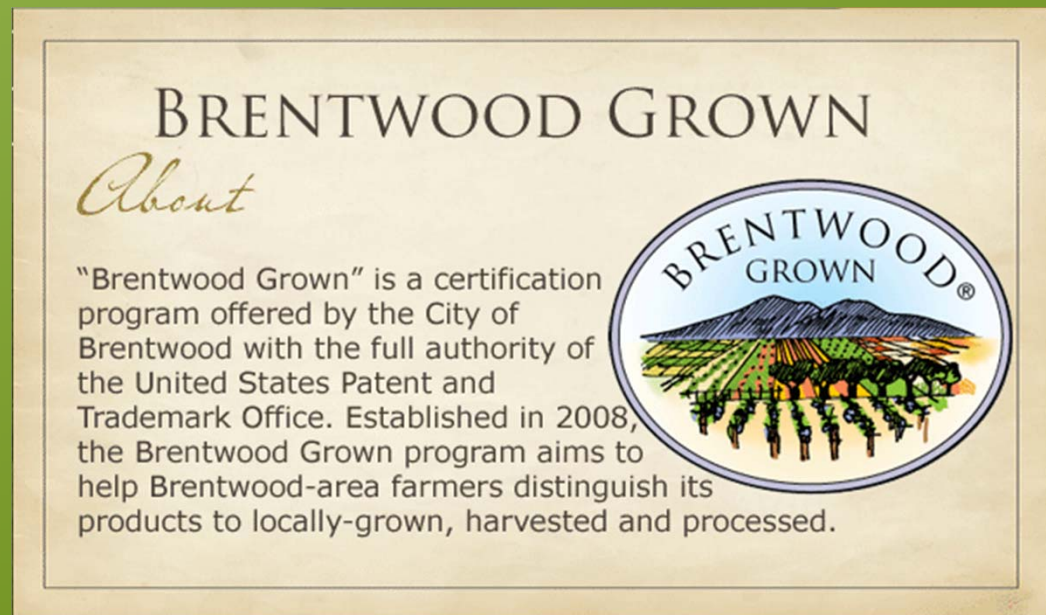
- If awarded, the grant can help us:
 - Establish a process to develop our own program designed to meet our unique needs
 - Collaborate with neighboring agencies to learn how our program can provide regional benefit

A Program by Fresno, for Fresno

- If awarded, the grant can help us:
 - Perform research to...
 - Take Inventory: Identify type, quantity, and quality of farmland
 - Examine Options: Identify a wide range of conservation options and perform economic analysis of such options
 - Deliver: Identify best practices for successful implementation, including establishing a proper timeline for program roll-out

A Program by Fresno, for Fresno

- Example of a tailor-made program:
 - The City of Brentwood utilizes program funds to invest in agricultural enterprise activities, such as marketing, agri-tourism, and business development.



A Program by Fresno, for Fresno

- That's why we want a *program*, not just a policy- so we can provide a holistic approach to *invest* in agriculture, provide more jobs, and strengthen our economy.

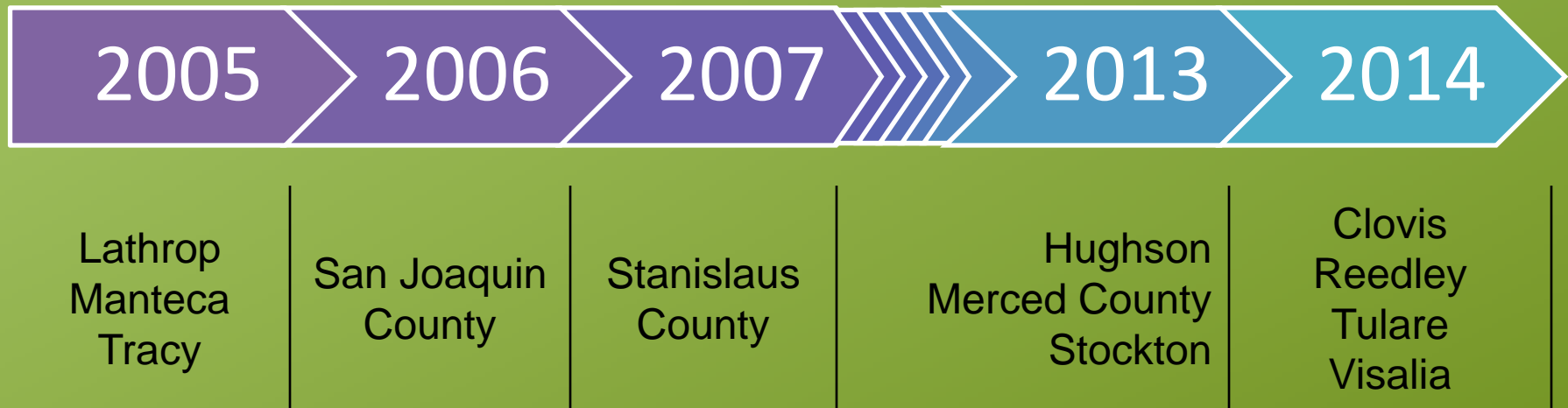
A Program by Fresno, for Fresno

- Who will be involved?
 - Key stakeholders (farmers, property owners, building industry, elected officials, etc.)
 - Who will help form the scope and selection of the consultant
 - Council will approve the consultant, and will ultimately vote on the program

Considerations and Questions

- Why should the City develop a program if the County and surrounding cities aren't?
 - Not an *either/or*, but a *both/and* issue
 - When our region is prosperous, our city is prosperous
 - When our City supports regional goals, we are more competitive for funding opportunities
 - Supporting agriculture supports our economy
 - The City would invite County representatives to participate on the Advisory Council
 - Final adoption of a policy and program should be done in concert with surrounding jurisdictions

SJV Programs and Policies Adopted



Considerations and Questions

- Will this increase the cost of housing?
 - A study done for Yolo County found that under various scenarios involving easements, a 1:1 requirement would total less than 1% of the market value across all development types
 - If awarded the grant, part of our research will include identifying what the impact of various preservation options would be for the City

Considerations and Questions

- Will this increase the cost of farmland?
 - Development projects are spread out over time, so it's unlikely there would be a “rush” on ag land conversion that would inflate costs

Considerations and Questions

Are we legally required to do this?

- A response from the Department of Conservation:

The primary question raised regarding mitigation is whether the State requires the City to have a farmland mitigation policy as part of its General Plan. A strict technical interpretation to this question is no. However, as stated in the Department's comment letters, if the impacts are not addressed at the General Plan level, each project that has farmland conversion impacts coming forward will need to address mitigation during the CEQA process. This has the potential to cause confusion and risk as proposals for mitigation will vary, and could be interpreted as not being an equal process by applicants.

Related to the question about requirements for a farmland mitigation policy is what actions might occur if the City did not adopt such a policy. The Department was also asked if it would take action against the City for failure to approve a mitigation policy in the General Plan. The Department's perspective is that it is much more productive and effective to focus efforts on collaboration with local governments, through the types of planning processes the City is engaged in. However, the Department's perspectives would not provide assurance to the City as CEQA litigation could be filed by many parties, including those who may sense that overarching policies regarding support for agriculture and farmland are being applied unevenly. There are a series of recent rulings that have upheld agricultural land mitigation policies and programs in California, including those that require the placement of conservation easements on similar properties to those being lost to conversion.

Considerations and Questions

- Do we need to do this now?
 - The City could choose to delay in developing a farmland preservation policy and program. However, to the extent we want to be ready for greenfield development in Growth Area 1 as the market rebounds, the City will need to have a policy and program in place unless the Council would prefer to require developments to individually address farmland conversion in their proposals and indemnify the City.

Considerations and Questions

- Can we quickly put a policy in place without involving a longer process?
 - Yes. However, the Administration takes farmland preservation very seriously and wants to ensure a thoughtful approach to preserving our agricultural-based economy and, therefore, recommends a focused process to ensure we have evaluated all creative options to supporting agriculture before permanently converting it to urban development.

