

County of Santa Clara

2021 Rural Zoning Updates

The County Department of Planning and Development is conducting Zoning Ordinance amendments across rural base zoning districts (Exclusive Agriculture, Agricultural Ranchlands, Hillside, Rural Residential).

The update consists of three main components:

- a) Simplifying and streamlining the permit process for agriculture supportive uses;
- b) Aligning development in agricultural areas with County policies; and
- c) Replacing “local-serving” provisions with objective development standards.

These amendments are intended to:

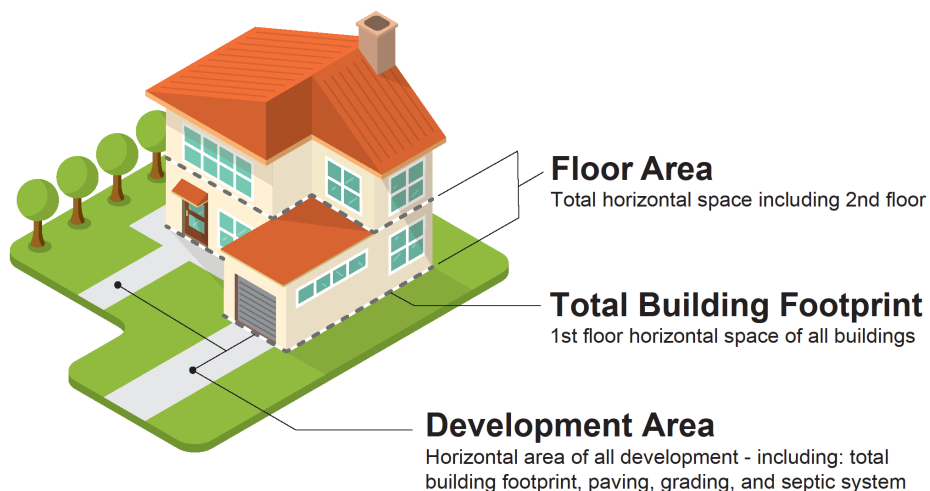
- a) Further the County’s policy goals for continued agricultural viability;
- b) Keep the rural areas rural by limiting non-compatible uses; and
- c) Remove “local-serving” provisions that are difficult to understand and implement.

FAQs

Q: What is “local-serving” and what are rural development standards?

A: “Local-serving” is how the County currently regulates the size, scale, and intensity of certain types of rural development. Rural development standards are objective thresholds applied clearly and equally to all rural development. Below is an illustration of three different types of development standards under consideration. Such land development standards would be implemented in the form of maximum caps, for example: “Development Area per parcel not to exceed 1 acre or 15% coverage in total.”

Example of Potential Development Standards



Q: What would the new category of *Agriculture Supportive Uses* include and what would change for agricultural operations?

A: *Agriculture Supportive Uses* would include agriculturally-related activities like farm sales, processing facilities, tasting rooms, and farm or ranch event facilities. Facilities directly ancillary to an agricultural operation, like barns, would not fall under this category. New wineries would fall under this category and would no longer be regulated by the number of cases of wine being produced. This new category would effectively streamline permitting for all *Agriculture Supportive Uses* and those under a certain square-footage could be permitted administratively at the staff level.

Q: How might non-agricultural development (including new estate homes) be limited in agricultural areas?

A: New development in the *Exclusive Agriculture* zoning district that is unaffiliated with agriculture could be limited by: (a) buffering from adjacent agricultural lands; (b) allowing new residences on lots over a certain acreage only when accessory to agricultural lands; or (c) allowing only new uses that are directly ancillary to or supportive of agriculture.

The County is looking for feedback on considerations such as:

- Whether smaller parcels should be exempt from rural development standards.
- Whether some or all agricultural structures in agricultural areas should be exempt from rural development standards.
- Whether the size of new single-family homes should be limited to mitigate the development of estate homes incompatible with agricultural areas.
- Whether certain rural uses that are smaller in size should be streamlined to receive administrative approval by staff, rather than approval through a public hearing.

For more information, to submit a written question or feedback, or to be added to the informational mailing list regarding this project, please visit: tinyurl.com/SCCRZU