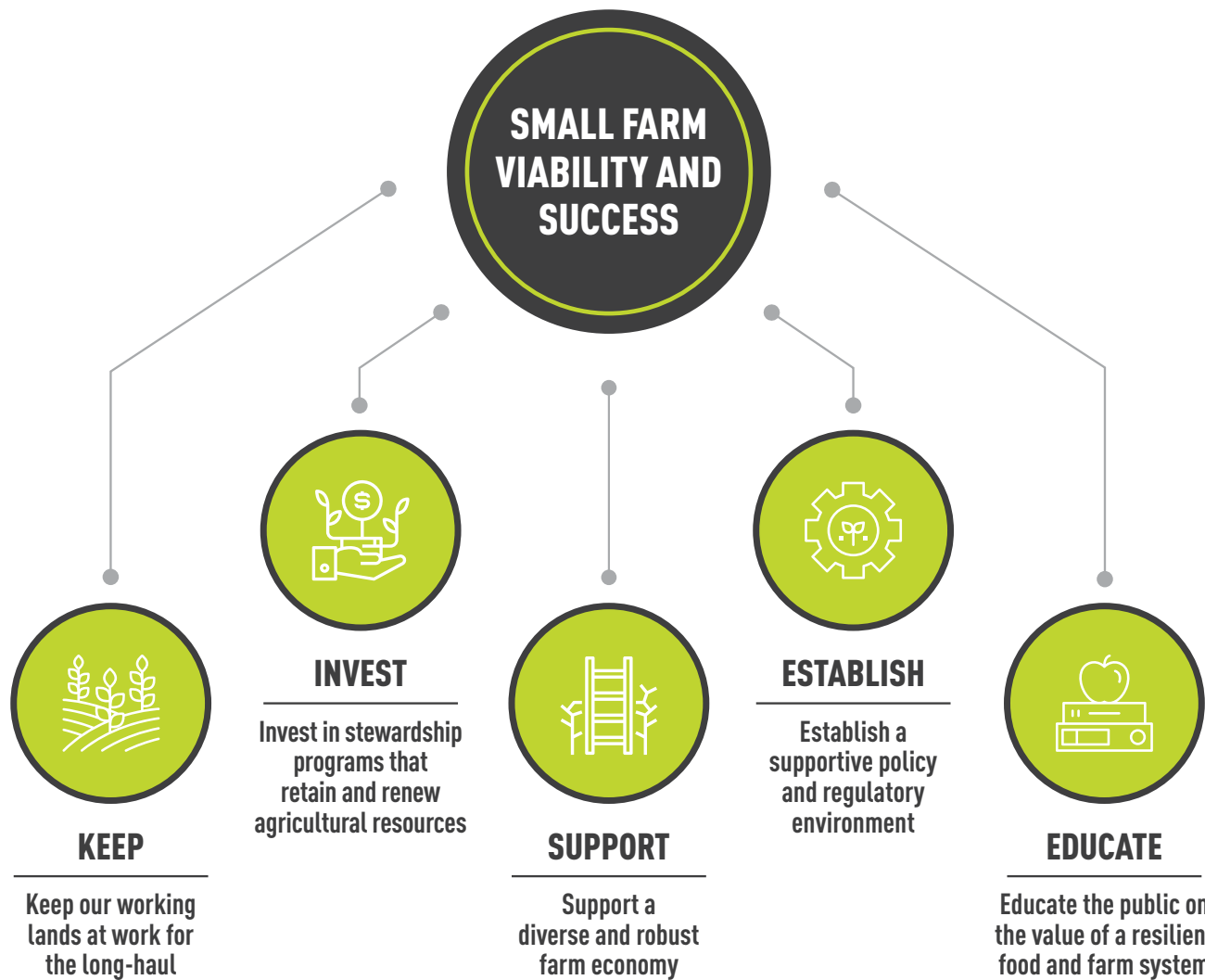


HOW DO WE GET THERE?

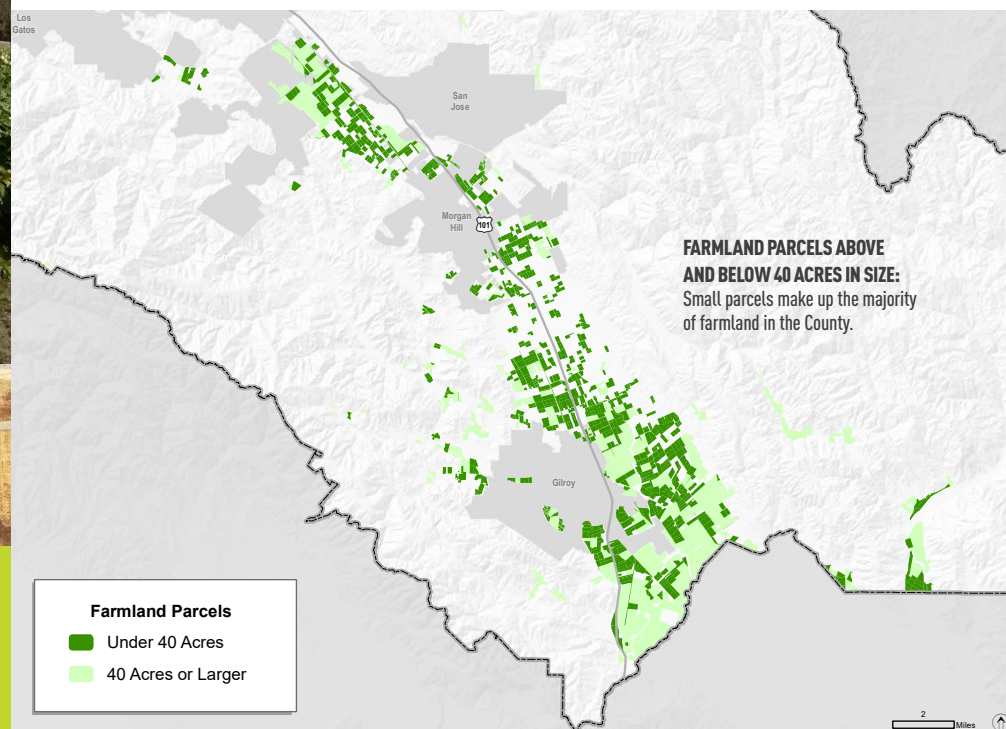
The vast majority (83%) of our remaining agricultural parcels are 40 acres or less and together they account for more than half (51%) of our remaining farmland acres. The simple majority (52%) of our remaining agricultural parcels are 10 acres or less. These parcel sizes are best-suited for small farm businesses that sell diverse crops to regional markets. These properties are also well-suited as an entry point for farmers starting new small businesses, those who are looking to gain experience and grow their operations incrementally over time. However, small agricultural parcels are at particular risk for conversion to other land uses because their prices are based on their speculative value for development. As a result, farmland in Santa Clara County is especially vulnerable; the smaller parcel sizes common here exacerbate the trend toward farmland loss taking place nationwide.

LAY OF THE LAND

The paradox of farming at the urban edge—which places it in closest proximity to the majority of consumers—is that our most productive farmland has the highest market value for non-farm uses. Santa Clara County has lost more farmland than any other Bay Area county over the last 35 years. The agricultural valley from San Jose city limits to south of Gilroy continues to be one of the region's most vulnerable to farmland loss. In addition to sprawl development pressure and rising land prices, there is another critical component that factors into the future of agriculture in Santa Clara County: property size.



TAKING THE NECESSARY ACTIONS TO ENSURE THAT SMALL FARMS PERSIST IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY WILL REQUIRE AN ENDURING PUBLIC COMMITMENT AND INNOVATION WORTHY OF SILICON VALLEY.





SMALL FARMS, BIG POTENTIAL: GROWING A RESILIENT LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

BUILDING A VIABLE SMALL FARM SYSTEM IN THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY

The Santa Clara County Food System Alliance is a collaborative of stakeholders concerned with issues of healthy food access, agricultural production, and food distribution in Santa Clara County.

As our county grapples with farmland preservation, it is important to recognize that agricultural landscapes that are ecologically rich and culturally meaningful cannot exist without farming and ranching. To preserve the productive small-parcel farmland in and around our cities, we must prioritize and plan for farming livelihoods.



- FARMERS**
Mentor and lease small plots to new-entry farmers. Plan for farmland succession. Take advantage of incentive programs.
- POLICYMAKERS**
Fund programs that preserve vulnerable farmland and incentivize the public co-benefits of agriculture.
- LOCAL RESIDENTS**
Buy local farm products. Heed the Right-to-Farm, mind the ag around you, and slow down for farm equipment on the road.
- FARMLAND OWNERS**
Take advantage of financial incentives to keep your working lands at work and regenerate the health of your soils.
- SERVICE PROVIDERS**
Advocate on behalf of small farms and ensure they have equitable access to resources.

PUBLIC VALUE OF SMALL FARMS

While individual farmers bear the costs and risks of running an agricultural operation, well-managed farmland provides public benefits that are widely distributed in the surrounding areas. Not only do farms contribute to the food supply and local economy, they also provide open space, opportunities for education, and many ecological services—such as flood control, groundwater recharge, pollinator habitat, fire hazard mitigation, and carbon sequestration. When farmland is converted to non-farm uses, sold to investors with plans for future development, or priced too high for farmers to purchase or rent, agriculture and its associated benefits suffer. While agricultural benefits are significant, they are largely indirect and often go unnoticed by county residents. The fate of our remaining farmland concerns all county residents because of farming’s contribution to the health of Santa Clara County’s residents, economy, and environment.

- RESILIENT URBAN FOOD SUPPLY
- LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY
- CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION
- ECOLOGICAL SERVICES
- FOOD ACCESS AND HEALTH
- SENSE OF PLACE



AFTER SYNTHESIZING MANY CHALLENGES THAT FARMERS IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY FACE, ESPECIALLY SMALL-SCALE AND NEW-ENTRY FARMERS, THIS REPORT DESCRIBES THREE MAIN PATHS TO MAKE THE AREA MORE HOSPITABLE TO FARMING AND TO INCREASE THE VIABILITY OF SMALL FARMS HERE.



INCREASE

Increase farmers’ access to affordable land with secure tenure.



DEVELOP

Develop a supportive environment for agriculture, one that provides the systems and resources farmers need to thrive and that educates citizens on the value of working lands at the urban edge.



EXPAND

Expand and diversify regional markets for local farm products.

Supporting viable farm systems is a multi-dimensional process that involves social, economic, and political systems.”