

# AB 465

## Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act

Assemblymember  
**Phil Ting**  
19TH DISTRICT



### **SUMMARY**

AB 465 extends the sunset date by 10 years and makes minor programmatic revisions for the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone (UAIZ) program, which was created through legislation in 2013. This program allows local governments to provide reduced property taxes to owners of vacant, unimproved or blighted properties to engage in small-scale farming on this land.

The goal of the program is to promote locally grown, fresh produce that is healthier, tastes better and is less harmful to the environment than traditional grocery store produce. Turning blighted, vacant properties into beautiful, productive land improves urban neighborhoods, reduces crime and instills a sense of pride in the community.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone program is modeled after California's Williamson Act, a landmark program enacted in 1965 to preserve prime agricultural land that otherwise would be lost to development in rural areas. Another program, known as the Mills Act, offers similar tax incentives for the preservation of historic buildings.

According to local organizations engaged in food production, although there are vacant, blighted properties in urban areas that are not developable for a variety of reasons, land owners have little incentive to allow the land to be used for food production. Consequently, property that could be of beneficial use to the community is often instead an eyesore that is a magnet for litter and crime.

In 2012, the non-profit group Policy Link released a report, "Growing Urban Agriculture," that found that every dollar invested in urban agriculture returns \$6 worth of food to the community. Also, a 2008 study covering a 20-year period of community gardening in New York City concluded a \$503 million overall increase in tax revenue directly associated with public gardens' proximity to private properties.

The UAIZ authorizes local governments located in urban areas with a population of 250,000 (as defined by the US Census Bureau) to establish Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones. An owner of property in an Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone may enter a five-year contract with the local government under which the property must be used for food production. The property would then be assessed at a lower rate, thus reducing property taxes for the landowner for the duration of the contract. Local governments may also charge a fee to cover administrative costs to property owners in the program. Participation in an UAIZ is optional for local governments and property owners. The maximum size of properties under contract is capped at three acres.

During the first four years of the program, communities throughout the state have adopted UAIZ ordinances, including San Francisco, Sacramento, San Jose, and San Diego, with more areas expressing interest. The process of putting urban parcels under contract has been slow though. Stakeholders want the program to be continued so that more communities and interested landowners can participate in the program.

### **THIS BILL**

The Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone program is currently set to sunset on January 1, 2019. AB 465 extends the sunset date on this program until January 1, 2029, expands the eligible urban areas by reducing the population threshold to 50,000, and allows multiple contiguous parcels to be combined under one contract.

### **SUPPORT**

California Guild  
Pesticide Action Network  
SPUR

### **STAFF CONTACT**

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