



## **Guidelines and Standards for Preparation of Real Estate Appraisal Reports 2025**

**All appraisals must be completed and signed by a State of California Certified Real Estate Appraiser who certifies that the appraisal is in compliance with the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (“USPAP”) as currently adopted by the Appraisal Standards Board of the Appraisal Foundation and consider guidance in USPAP’s Advisory Opinions.**

The primary appraiser responsible for developing the appraisal report must certify that they have inspected the subject property and comparable property data whenever physically possible. The following specifications are required for appraisal reports:

1. The title or opening pages must conform to Ag + Open Space’s Executive Summary format; see Executive Summary, Exhibit A.
2. Letter of transmittal summarizing important assumptions and conclusions, value estimate, date of value, date of report, etc.
3. Table of contents.
4. Assumptions and Limiting Conditions.
5. Description of the scope of work, including the extent of data collection and limitations, if any, in obtaining and analyzing relevant data.
6. Ag + Open Space defines Market Value (“MV”) as: “The most probable price which a property should bring in a competitive and open market under all conditions requisite to a sale, the buyer and seller, each acting prudently, knowledgeably, and assuming the price is not affected by undue stimulus.”

If an appraisal is conducted with the State of California as an intended user, or any other user whose conforming standards apply a different MV definition, then the appraiser shall address differences in MV definition and resulting price, if any, and explain findings.

7. Photographs of subject property and comparable data, including significant physical features and the interior of structural improvements if applicable and possible.
8. Copies of Assessor’s plat maps with the subject parcels marked and an assemblage of all contiguous Assessors’ parcels that depicts the ownership.
9. A legal description of the subject property if available.
10. For large, remote, or inaccessible parcels, provide aerial photographs or topographical maps depicting the subject boundaries. Assess and flag potential encroachments to the extent possible.

11. Ag + Open Space requires a five-year review of the subject property's history. Appraiser will address differences in appraised values, sale prices, listing prices, options, other agreements or facts that might indicate or affect use or value.
12. Discussion of any current Agreement of Sale, option, or listing of subject property. This issue requires increased diligence since state agencies often utilize non-profit organizations to quickly acquire sensitive-habitat parcels using Option Agreements. However, due to confidentiality clauses, the terms of the Option are often not disclosed. If the appraiser discovers evidence of an Option, or the possible existence of an Option, and the terms cannot be disclosed due to a confidentiality clause, then the appraiser is to cease work and contact Ag + Open Space. Current policy requires disclosure of any Option or Purchase Agreement.
13. Regional, area, and neighborhood analyses.
14. Market conditions and trends including identification of the relevant market area, a discussion of supply and demand within the relevant market area (or other areas of competition), and a discussion of the relevant market factors impacting demand for site acquisition or leasing within the relevant market area.
15. Discussion of subject land/site characteristics (size, topography, current use, zoning and land use issues, development entitlements, General Plan designations, utilities, offsite improvements, access, easements and restrictions, flood and earthquake information, toxic hazards, taxes and assessments, etc.)
16. Description of subject improvements, including all structures, square footage, physical age, type of construction, quality of construction, condition, site improvements, etc., if relevant to the value of the property.
17. Subject leasing and operating cost history.
18. Opinion of highest and best use for the subject property, based on an in-depth analysis supporting the concluded use. Such support typically requires a discussion of the four criteria or tests utilized to determine the highest and best use of a property. If alternative feasible uses exist, explain and support market, development, cash flow, and risk factors leading to an ultimate highest and best use decision. Ag + Open Space in its conservation easement assignments, requires a highest and best use analysis of the subject property for both the "before" condition unencumbered and "after" condition of the subject property when encumbered by the proposed conservation easement.
19. All approaches to market value applicable to the property type and in the subject market. Explain and support the exclusion of any usual approaches to value.
20. Map(s) showing all comparable properties in relation to subject property.
21. Photographs and plat maps of comparable properties.
22. In-depth discussion of comparable properties, similarities and differences, and comparisons and adjustments to the comparable data, and discussion of the reliability and credibility of the data as it relates to the indicated subject property value.

In its conservation easement assignments, Ag + Open Space requires appraisers to examine and comment on comparative differences in conservation easements when examining and analyzing comparable sales in the "after" conserved condition, including a paragraph enumerating the conditions imposed by the conservation easement that are material to the appraisal's analysis.
23. Comparable data sheets and table. For comparable data sheets: 1) For sales, include information on grantor/grantee, sale/recordation dates, listed or asking price as of date of sale, financing, conditions of sale, buyer motivation, sufficient location information (street address, post mile, and/or distance from local landmarks such as bridges, road intersections, structures, etc.), land/site characteristics, improvements, source of any allocation of sale price between land and improvement, and confirming

source, where possible identifying confirming party and association by name. 2). For listings, also include marketing time from list date to effective date of the appraisal, original list price, changes in list price, broker feedback, if available, citing name and association with transaction where possible. 3). For leases, include significant information such as lessor/lessee, lease date and term, type of lease, rent and escalation, expenses, size of space leased, tenant improvement allowance, concessions, use restrictions, options, and confirming source, where possible identifying confirming party and association by name.

For comparable data tables, Ag + Open Space requires use of quantitative adjustments where possible and supportable. Quantitative adjustment percentages in the Executive Summary table shall be summed in gross and net value for each comparable sale. When using qualitative adjustments, the appraisal report is to be as specific as possible in explaining reasoning and proportioning.

24. Discussion of construction cost methodology, data source used, costs included and excluded, depreciation methodology, a discussion of accrued depreciation from all causes, and remaining economic life.
25. Copies of construction cost data including, section and pages of cost manual (date of estimate or date of publication of cost manual must be provided if not indicated on page), copies of cost estimate if provided from another source, and supporting calculations including worksheets or spreadsheets.
26. Include a copy of a recent preliminary title report (within the past year) as an appraisal exhibit and discuss the effect of title exceptions on fair market value. Ag + Open Space requires an itemized discussion of each title exception that has an impact on value or use, which discussion includes a review of underlying documents cited in the relevant title exceptions.
27. Implied dedication statement.
28. Reconciliation and final value estimate. Explain and support conclusions reached.
29. Signed Certification consistent with language found in USPAP.
30. On occasions where properties involve personal property, business interests, water rights, minerals, merchantable timber, vineyard, vineyard potential or other specialty agricultural crop, separate valuations may be necessary. If the appraiser determines that there are such property interests or rights requiring a separate valuation, the appraiser shall notify Ag + Open Space during the research phase. Ag + Open Space may choose to modify the appraisal request to include a separate valuation by an appropriate credentialed subject matter expert. In such cases, the appraisal package submitted to Ag + Open Space for review should include the real estate appraisal and a separate appraisal/valuation of the personal property, business interests, water rights, minerals, merchantable timber, vineyard, vineyard potential or other specialty agricultural crop by a credentialed subject matter specialist.
31. Ag + Open Space requires the appraisal report to include: a) Executive Summary as described above and in Exhibit A; b) preliminary title report; c) draft conservation easement; d) letter of engagement; e) such additional information as listed above in Ag + Open Space's Guidelines and Standards, f) and any pertinent source information or document that appraiser may use which inclusion will assist Ag + Open Space or the parties privy to the appraisal a more robust explanation and foundation for opinions and conclusions in the appraisal report. Information listed in "b – f" may appear as addenda to the appraisal report.

A + OS  
Appraisal Executive Summary

Name of Property:

Owner of Property:

Acreage:

Useable Acreage:\*

Zoning:

APN's:

No. Legal Lots / ACC's:

No. Legal Lots Retired:\*

Current Use:

Highest & Best Use:

Extraordinary Assumptions:\*

Hypothetical Conditions:\*

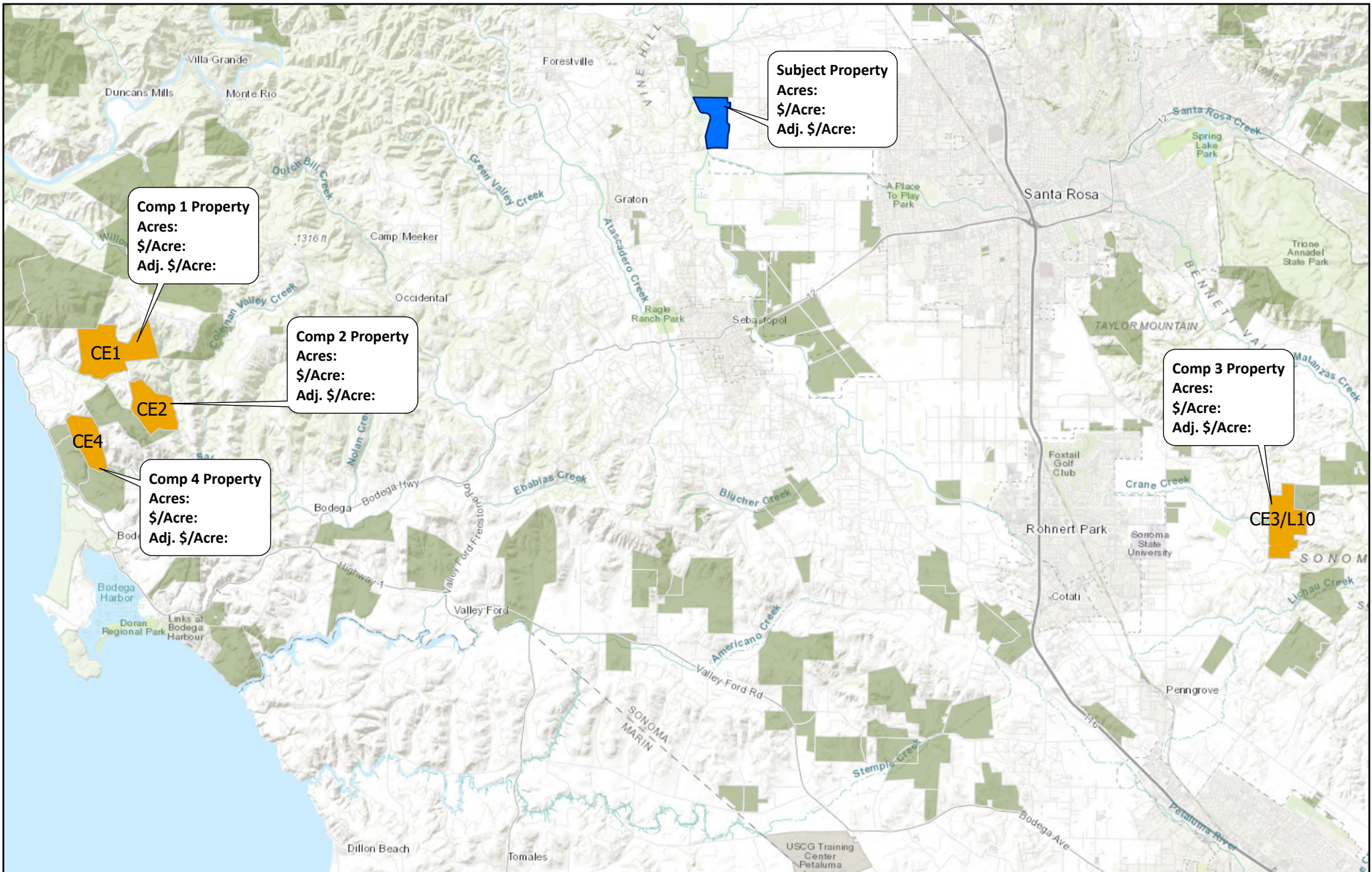
Date of Value:

Date of Report:

	Appraised Value Fee (Before Condition)	Appraised Value Fee Conserved (After Condition)	Easement Value
\$ Amount			
\$ / Acre			
Percent			
\$ / Useable Acre*			
Percent			

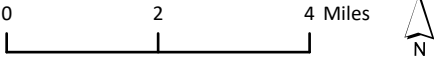
Comments on any special conditions / uses affecting value:

\* If applicable. If not applicable: NA



CE Appraisal Comp Map

SAMPLE Legend



# Your Comp Table Here

## TITLE

Include brief comments on adjustments, ranking, reconciliation in text box at bottom

Provide each comp table on its own page with map on front side as above, and comp table with reconciliation notes in text box at bottom on reverse side. Each comp table must have percentages (net and gross, if applicable) for adjustments made to transacted price. Comparable values must be expressed in \$/acre and / or \$/useable acre, if applicable for ease of comparison.

Title each comp table according to subject property relevance  
Fee Value, Conserved Value, Vineyard Value, etc.