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## **5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**

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This section describes the agricultural resources in the Planning Area and the existing policies pertaining to these resources. Sources used to assess impacts of the Project include the General Plan Existing Conditions Report (City of Elk Grove 2016), the California Department of Conservation (DOC) Farmland Conversion Reports (2015), the DOC Important Farmlands Map (2017a) for Sacramento County, and the Soil Survey of Sacramento County, California (USDA 1993).

**5.2.1 EXISTING SETTING**

**FARMLAND AND SOIL CLASSIFICATIONS**

The two systems used by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to determine a soil’s agricultural productivity are the Soil Capability Classification and the Storie Index Rating System. The “prime” soil classifications of both systems indicate the absence of soil limitations, which if present, would require the application of management techniques (e.g., drainage, leveling, special fertilizing practices) to enhance production.

**SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION**

The Soil Capability Classification system takes into consideration soil limitations, the risk of damage when the soils are used, and the way in which soils respond to treatment. Capability classes range from Class I soils, which have few limitations for agriculture, to Class VIII soils, which are unsuitable for agriculture. Generally, as the ratings of the capability classification system increase, the desired yields and profits are more difficult to obtain. A general description of soil classification, as defined by the NRCS, is provided in **Table 5.2-1**.

**TABLE 5.2-1  
SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Definition</b>
I	Soils have few limitations that restrict their use.
II	Soils have moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or that require special conservation practices.
III	Soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require conservation practices, or both.
IV	Soils have very severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require very careful management, or both.
V	Soils are not likely to erode but have other limitations, impractical to remove, that limit their use largely to pasture or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat.
VI	Soils have severe limitations that make them generally unsuited to cultivation and limit their use largely to pasture, or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat.
VII	Soils have very severe limitations that make them unsuited to cultivation and that restrict their use largely to pasture or range, woodland, or wildlife habitat.
VIII	Soils and landforms have limitations that preclude their use for commercial plant production and restrict their use to recreation, wildlife habitat, or water supply, or to aesthetic purposes.

Source: NRCS 1993

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### Storie Index Rating System

The Storie Index Rating system ranks soil characteristics according to their suitability for agriculture from Grade 1 soils (80 to 100 rating), which have few or no limitations for agricultural production, to Grade 6 soils (less than 10), which are not suitable for agriculture. Under this system, soils deemed less than prime can function as prime soils when limitations such as poor drainage, slopes, or soil nutrient deficiencies are partially or entirely removed. The six grades, ranges in index rating, and definition of the grades as defined by the NRCS, are provided in Table 5.2-2.

**TABLE 5.2-2  
STORIE INDEX RATING SYSTEM**

Grade	Index Rating	Definition
1 – Excellent	80 through 100	Soils are well suited to intensive use for growing irrigated crops that are climatically suited to the region.
2 – Good	60 through 79	Soils are good agricultural soils, although they may not be so desirable as Grade 1 because of moderately coarse, coarse, or gravelly surface soil texture; somewhat less permeable subsoil; lower plant available water holding capacity; fair fertility; less well drained conditions, or slight to moderate flood hazards, all acting separately or in combination.
3 – Fair	40 through 59	Soils are only fairly well suited to general agricultural use and are limited in their use because of moderate slopes; moderate soil depths; less permeable subsoil; fine, moderately fine, or gravelly surface soil textures; poor drainage; moderate flood hazards; or fair to poor fertility levels, all acting alone or in combination.
4 – Poor	20 through 39	Soils are poorly suited. They are severely limited in their agricultural potential because of shallow soil depths; less permeable subsoil; steeper slope; more clayey or gravelly surface soil textures than Grade 3 soils, as well as poor drainage; greater flood hazards; hummocky micro-relief; salinity; or fair to poor fertility levels, all acting alone or in combination.
5 – Very Poor	10 through 19	Soils are very poorly suited for agriculture, are seldom cultivated and are more commonly used for range, pasture, or woodland.
6 – Nonagricultural	Less than 10	Soils are not suited for agriculture at all due to very severe to extreme physical limitations, or because of urbanization.

Source: NRCS 1993

### Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) was established for California in 1982 to continue the Important Farmland mapping efforts begun in 1975 by the USDA Soil Conservation Service (USDA-SCS) (now the NRCS). The intent of the USDA mapping efforts was to produce agricultural resource maps based on soil quality and land use across the nation. As part of this effort, the USDA-SCS developed a series of definitions known as Land Inventory and Monitoring (LIM) criteria. The LIM criteria classified the land's suitability for agricultural production; suitability included both the physical and chemical characteristics of soils and the actual land use. Important Farmland Maps are derived from the USDA-SCS soil survey maps using the LIM criteria.

Since 1980, the State of California has assisted the USDA-SCS with completing its mapping in the State. The FMMP was created in DOC to continue the mapping activity with a greater level of detail, which was achieved by modifying the LIM criteria for use in California. The LIM criteria in

California utilize the Soil Capability Classification and Storie Index Rating systems, but also consider physical conditions, such as a dependable water supply for agricultural production, soil temperature range, depth of the groundwater table, flooding potential, rock fragment content, and rooting depth.

Important Farmland Maps for California are compiled using the modified LIM criteria, as described above, and current land use information. The minimum mapping unit is 10 acres unless otherwise specified. Units of land smaller than 10 acres are incorporated into the surrounding classification. The Important Farmland Maps identify five agriculture-related categories: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land. Definitions for each Important Farmland classification are shown below, based on information from the DOC (2017a) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program web page.

### Prime Farmland

Prime Farmland is farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

### Farmland of Statewide Importance

Farmland of Statewide Importance is similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

### Unique Farmland

Unique Farmland is composed of lesser quality soils used for the production of the State's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include nonirrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been in agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

### Farmland of Local Importance

Farmland of Local Importance is land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee. Sacramento County defines its Farmland of Local Importance as lands that do not qualify as Prime, Statewide, or Unique designation, but are currently irrigated crops or pasture or nonirrigated crops; lands that would be Prime or Statewide designation and have been improved for irrigation but are now idle; and lands that currently support confined livestock, poultry operations, and aquaculture (DOC 2017b).

### Grazing Land

Grazing Land is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock.

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### Urban and Built-Up Land

Urban and Built-Up Land is land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.

### Other Land

Other Land is land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; strip mines; borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

### CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE TO THE SACRAMENTO COUNTY ECONOMY

In 2015, Sacramento County ranked twenty-fourth in total value of agricultural production out of 58 counties in California, with gross revenues from the sales of agricultural commodities of \$470 million (CDFA 2016). The leading products included wine grapes, milk, pears, poultry, and aquaculture (Sacramento County Agricultural Commissioner 2016). In 2017, 10,700 people in Sacramento County were employed in the farm industry, which represents approximately 1.1 percent of the County's total workforce (EDD 2017).

### SACRAMENTO COUNTY FARMLAND CONVERSION

One of the basic underlying premises of agricultural conversion states that the proximity of agricultural land to urban uses increases the value of the agricultural land, either directly through formal purchase offers or indirectly through recent sales in the vicinity, and through the extension of utilities and other urban infrastructure into productive agricultural areas. The conversion of Important Farmlands in Sacramento County from 2000 (the year of City incorporation) to 2016 is presented in **Table 5.2-3**.

In Sacramento County between 2000 and 2016, there was a decrease of nearly 25,000 acres of Prime Farmland and a more than 20,000-acre decrease in Farmland of Statewide Importance. In this same period, however, there was an increase of more than 24,000 acres of Farmland of Local Importance and a 64-acre increase in Unique Farmland. The increases are explained by several factors: the redistribution of farmland between categories; conversion of fallow land to irrigated cropland after a long drought; conversion due to land left idle for three or more update cycles; and new vineyards and corn production in the southeastern portion of the county. Nevertheless, as presented in **Table 5.2-3**, the total amount of agricultural land in Sacramento County decreased by nearly 9 percent during the period from 2000 to 2016 (DOC 2016a).

**TABLE 5.2-3  
FARMLAND CATEGORY SUMMARY – SACRAMENTO COUNTY (2002 TO 2016)**

Farmland Category	Acreage by Category									2000–2016 Net Acreage Changed	Average Annual Acreage Change
	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016		
Prime Farmland	115,389	112,037	110,278	106,667	104,366	97,477	93,916	91,568	90,691	-24,698	-1,544
Farmland of Statewide Importance	63,536	60,817	56,141	51,218	49,470	45,263	43,580	43,105	43,342	-20,194	-1,262
Unique Farmland	15,476	15,743	15,187	15,267	15,463	15,076	15,060	15,125	15,540	64	4
Farmland of Local Importance	33,530	37,924	39,873	41,960	43,819	53,929	56,981	58,852	57,910	24,380	1,524
Grazing Land	168,144	165,023	163,175	156,979	156,144	155,824	154,744	153,452	153,174	-14,970	-936
<b>Agricultural Land Total</b>	<b>396,075</b>	<b>391,544</b>	<b>384,654</b>	<b>372,091</b>	<b>369,262</b>	<b>367,569</b>	<b>364,281</b>	<b>362,102</b>	<b>360,657</b>	<b>-35,418</b>	<b>-2,214</b>

Source: DOC 2016a

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### PLANNING AREA CHARACTERISTICS

#### Production and Soil Conditions

The Planning Area contains a mix of agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, civic, and recreational activities. Within the current City limits, approximately 2,252 acres, or 9.6 percent, are in agricultural production. Much of the agricultural land is in the southern and eastern portions of the City, interspersed with rural residential areas, which are generally residences set on large rural lots, surrounded by active or inactive agricultural land. Agricultural activities include grazing, hay crops, irrigated pasture, row crops, and agricultural processing operations. Agricultural land used for growing hay is the predominant activity, accounting for 1,461 acres or nearly 65 percent of agricultural uses within the City. Within the Planning Area, approximately 9,699 acres, or 41.3 percent, are in agricultural production. With the exception of the City of Sacramento to the northwest of the Planning Area, the surrounding area is mostly rural residential and agriculture (City of Elk Grove 2016).

In total, the NRCS Web Soil Survey identifies 38 soil types within the Planning Area (NRCS 2017). The San Joaquin soil series is the most prevalent in the Planning Area. Along with similar soil types, these account for nearly 85 percent of soils in the Planning Area (USDA 2015). The San Joaquin series is alluvium deposits from mostly granitic rocks. It has a breadth of characteristics that can vary from loam to clay, depending on soil depth. Typically, these soils are well- or moderately well-drained with medium to very high runoff potential and very slow permeability (City of Elk Grove 2016).

The soil capability classification, Storie Index rating and grade, and Important Farmland designation are presented for each soil type in **Table 5.2-4**. As shown, Planning Area soils include mostly Class III and Class IV soil capability classifications with Storie Index grades ranging mostly from poor to excellent.

**TABLE 5.2-4  
ON-SITE SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION AND STORIE INDEX RATING**

Soil Map Symbol and Name	Soil Capability Classification <sup>1</sup>	Storie Index Rating	Storie Index Grade	Important Farmlands Designation	Acres within Planning Area
111 Bruella sandy loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	I/III	68	2 - Good	Prime farmland if irrigated	822
112 Bruella sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes	II/III	65	2 - Good	Prime farmland if irrigated	40
114 Clear Lake clay, partially drained, 0 to 2 percent slopes, frequently flooded	IV/IV	22	4 - Poor	Prime farmland if irrigated and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season	51
115 Clear Lake clay, hardpan substratum, 0 to 1 percent slopes	II/III	25	4 - Poor	Prime farmland if irrigated	114
117 Columbia sandy loam, drained, 0 to 2 percent slopes	II/III	86	1 - Excellent	Prime farmland if irrigated	7



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Soil Map Symbol and Name	Soil Capability Classification <sup>1</sup>	Storie Index Rating	Storie Index Grade	Important Farmlands Designation	Acres within Planning Area
118 Columbia sandy loam, drained, 0 to 2 percent slopes, occasionally flooded	II/III	80	1 - Excellent	Prime farmland if irrigated	0
120 Columbia sandy loam, clayey substratum, drained, 0 to 2 percent slopes	II/III	77	2 - Good	Prime farmland if irrigated	54
121 Columbia sandy loam, clayey substratum, drained, 0 to 2 percent slopes, occasionally flooded	II/III	65	2 - Good	Prime farmland if irrigated	5
125 Corning complex, 0 to 8 percent slopes	NA/VI	28	4 - Poor	Not prime farmland	13
126 Corning-Redding complex, 8 to 30 percent slopes	II/III	68	2 - Good	Prime farmland if irrigated	12
134 Dierssen sandy clay loam, drained, 0 to 2 percent slopes	III/III	18	5 - Very Poor	Not prime farmland	35
135 Dierssen clay loam, deep, drained, 0 to 2 percent slopes	II/III	27	4 - Poor	Prime farmland if irrigated	17
137 Durixeralfs, 0 to 1 percent slopes	NA/VIII	27	4 - Poor	Not prime farmland	54
138 Durixeralfs-Galt complex, 0 to 2 percent slopes	IV/IV	12	5 - Very Poor	Not prime farmland	246
145 Fiddyment fine sandy loam, 1 to 8 percent slopes	NA/IV	11	5 - Very Poor	Not prime farmland	304
151 Galt clay, leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III/III	15	5 - Very Poor	Farmland of statewide importance	1,925
152 Galt clay, 0 to 2 percent slopes	III/III	14	5 - Very Poor	Farmland of statewide importance	733
153 Galt clay, 2 to 5 percent slopes	NA/III	15	5 - Very Poor	Farmland of statewide importance	50
154 Galt-Urban land complex, 0 to 2 percent slopes	NA/III	15	5 - Very Poor	Not prime farmland	12
158 Hicksville loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, occasionally flooded	II/III	61	2 - Good	Prime farmland if irrigated	90
164 Kimball silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	III/III	55	3 - Fair	Farmland of statewide importance	42
165 Kimball silt loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes	III/III	49	3 - Fair	Farmland of statewide importance	106
174 Madera loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	IV/IV	20	4 - Poor	Not prime farmland	38
175 Madera loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes	IV/IV	18	5 - Very Poor	Not prime farmland	16
176 Madera-Galt complex, 0 to 2 percent slopes	NA/IV	20	4 - Poor	Not prime farmland	171

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Soil Map Symbol and Name	Soil Capability Classification <sup>1</sup>	Storie Index Rating	Storie Index Grade	Important Farmlands Designation	Acres within Planning Area
197 Redding loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes	III/III	20	4 - Poor	Not prime farmland	123
198 Redding gravelly loam, 0 to 8 percent slopes	IV/IV	16	5 - Very Poor	Not prime farmland	1,720
208 Sailboat silt loam, drained, 0 to 2 percent slopes, occasionally flooded	II/III	64	2 - Good	Prime farmland if irrigated	35
213 San Joaquin silt loam, leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III/III	28	4 - Poor	Farmland of statewide importance	14,826
214 San Joaquin silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	III/III	28	4 - Poor	Farmland of statewide importance	4,531
215 San Joaquin silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	III/III	26	4 - Poor	Farmland of statewide importance	876
216 San Joaquin-Durixeralfs complex, 0 to 1 percent slopes	IV/IV	28	4 - Poor	Not prime farmland	822
217 San Joaquin-Galt complex, leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III/III	19	5 - Very Poor	Farmland of statewide importance	3,199
218 San Joaquin-Galt complex, 0 to 3 percent slopes	NA/III	27	4 - Poor	Farmland of statewide importance	1,933
219 San Joaquin-Urban land complex, 0 to 2 percent slopes	NA/IV	27	4 - Poor	Not prime farmland	590
221 San Joaquin-Xerarents complex, leveled, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III/III	28	4 - Poor	Farmland of statewide importance	678
238 Xerarents-San Joaquin complex, 0 to 1 percent slopes	III/III	38	4 - Poor	Farmland of statewide importance	238
240 Xerarents-Urban land-San Joaquin complex, 0 to 5 percent slopes	NA/III	38	4 - Poor	Not prime farmland	264

Source: NRCS 2017

Note: 1. Irrigated/Non-irrigated

### Important Farmland

The Planning Area contains land classified by the FMMP as Important Farmland (see **Figure 5.2-1** and **Table 5.2-5**). There are 348 acres of Prime Farmland, 5,016 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 270 acres of Unique Farmland in the Planning Area. As shown in the figure, all 348 acres of Prime Farmland are located outside the current City limits in the West and South Study Areas. Most lands designated as Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique Farmland are located throughout the Study Areas, with approximately 627 acres located within the current City limits. Farmland of Local Importance and Grazing Land are not considered Important Farmland under CEQA.

**TABLE 5.2-5  
ACRES OF IMPORTANT FARMLANDS AND LOSS FROM PROJECT**

Type of Farmland	Acres of Important Farmland within Planning Area						Acres of Important Farmland in County (2016)	Total Acres Lost from Project	County Percentage Loss from Project
	Total	City Limits	North Study Area	East Study Area	South Study Area	West Study Area			
Prime Farmland	347.8	—	9.7	—	225.8	112.2	90,691	347.8	0.38%
Farmland of Statewide Importance	5,015.7	490.5	364.8	1,076.8	1,890.6	1,193.1	43,342	5,015.70	11.57%
Unique Farmland	269.9	136.8	28.1	94.9	10.2	—	15,540	269.9	1.74%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,633.4</b>	<b>627.3</b>	<b>402.6</b>	<b>1,171.7</b>	<b>2,126.6</b>	<b>1,305.3</b>	<b>149,573</b>	<b>5,633.40</b>	<b>3.77%</b>

Source: DOC 2016a

### Williamson Act Contracts

Under the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, local governments can enter into contracts with private property owners to protect land (within agricultural preserves) for agricultural and open space purposes. The Planning Area contains approximately 2,892 acres of agricultural land under Williamson Act contract. As shown in **Figure 5.2-2** and summarized in **Table 5.2-6**, approximately 272 acres are within the current City limits, with the remaining 2,620 acres located in the East, South, and West Study Areas.

**TABLE 5.2-6  
PLANNING AREA WILLIAMSON ACT LANDS**

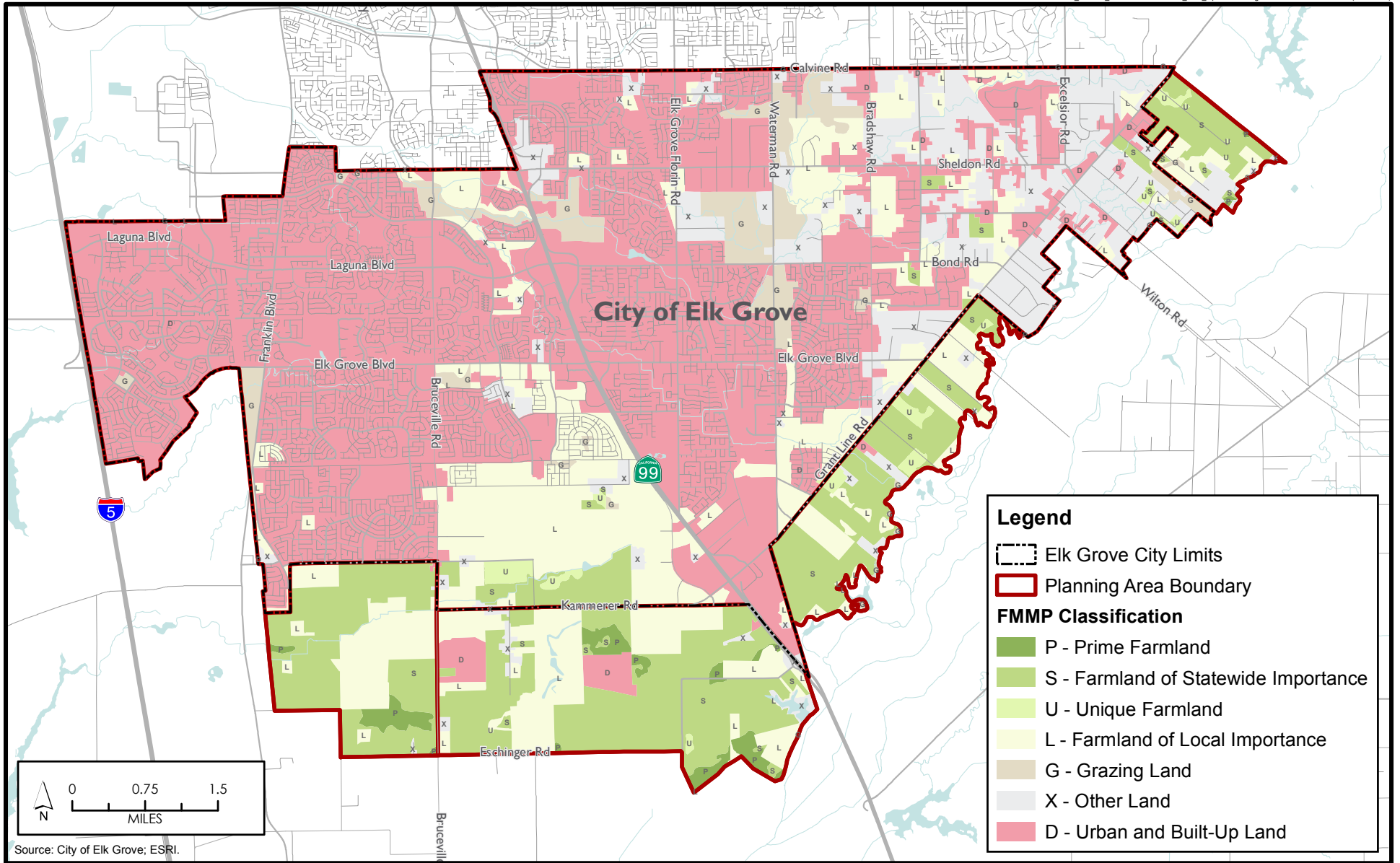
Type of Contract	Current City Limits	Study Areas				Totals
		East	South	West	North	
Non-Prime	—	246.3	195.2	134.7	—	576.2
Prime	272.4	641.2	884.6	329.7	—	2,127.9
Non-Renewal	—	22.0	165.7	—	—	187.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>272.4</b>	<b>909.5</b>	<b>1,245.5</b>	<b>464.4</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>2,891.8</b>

Source: DOC 2016b

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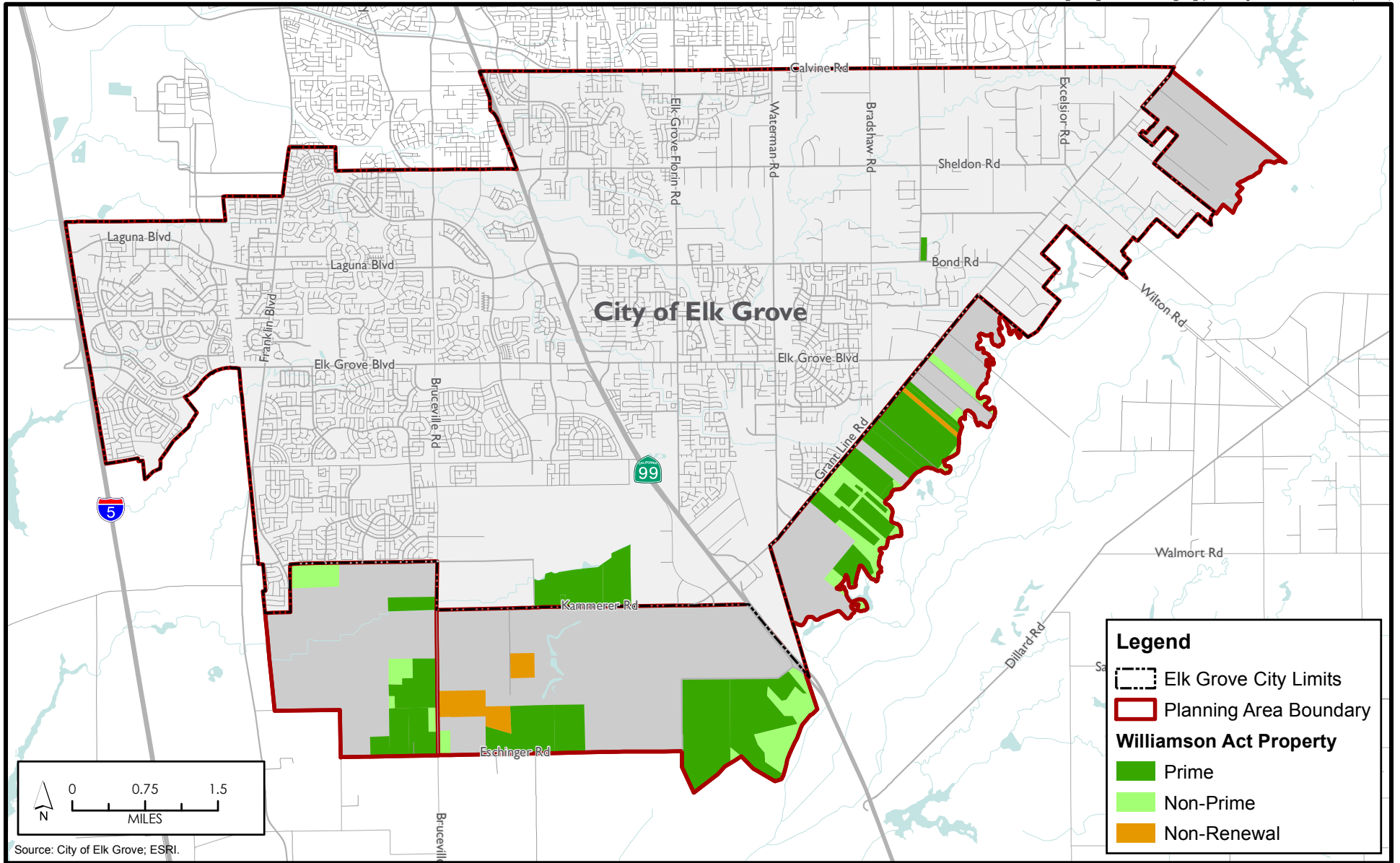


**Figure 5.2-1**  
FMMP Important Farmlands

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Source: City of Elk Grove; ESRI.



City of Elk Grove  
Development Services

**Figure 5.2-2**

Williamson Act Properties

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## 5.2.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

### STATE

#### California Environmental Quality Act

Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21060.1(a) defines agricultural land as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland, as defined by the USDA land inventory and monitoring criteria, as modified for California.

#### Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (the Williamson Act) enables local governments to form contracts with private landowners to promote the continued use of the relevant land in agricultural or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are based on farming and open space uses instead of full market value. Local governments receive an annual subvention (subsidy) of forgone property tax revenues from the State via the Open Space Subvention Act of 1971.

The Williamson Act empowers local governments to establish “agricultural preserves” consisting of lands devoted to agricultural uses and other compatible uses. When such preserves are established, the locality may offer agricultural landowners the option of annually renewable contracts that restrict the land to agricultural use for at least 10 years. (The contract is in effect for 10 years following the first date upon which the contract is not renewed.) In return, the landowner is guaranteed a tax rate based on the land’s value as agricultural/open space use, rather than its development potential.

Cancellation of a Williamson Act contract involves an extensive review and approval process, and the landowner may be required to pay a fee of up to 12.5 percent of the property value. The local jurisdiction approving the cancellation must make either one of the following findings:

- The cancellation is consistent with the purposes of the California Land Conservation Act (Section 51282[a][1] of the California Government Code).
- The cancellation is in the public interest (California Government Code Section 51282[a][2]).

To support a finding that the cancellation of a Williamson Act contract is consistent with the purpose of the California Land Conservation Act, all of the following subfindings must be made:

- The cancellation is for land on which a notice of nonrenewal has been served in accordance with Section 51245 of the California Government Code.
- Cancellation is not likely to result in the removal of adjacent lands from agricultural use.
- Cancellation is for an alternative use that is consistent with the applicable provisions of the city or county general plan.
- Cancellation will not result in discontinuous patterns of urban development.
- No proximate noncontracted land is both available and suitable for the use to which it is proposed the contracted land be put, or development of the contracted land would

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provide more contiguous patterns of urban development than development of proximate noncontracted land.

To support the finding that the cancellation of a Williamson Act contract is in the public interest, both of the following subfindings must be made:

- Other public concerns substantially outweigh the objectives of the Williamson Act.
- No proximate noncontracted land is both available and suitable for the use to which it is proposed the contracted land be put, or development of the contracted land would provide more contiguous patterns of urban development than development of proximate noncontracted land.

### LOCAL

#### City of Elk Grove Municipal Code

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors passed a Right-to-Farm Ordinance on July 10, 1990. This ordinance was subsequently adopted by the City upon Elk Grove's incorporation in July 2000. Municipal Code Chapter 14.05, Agricultural Activities, is intended to ensure that agricultural operations conducted in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards are allowed to continue. This chapter requires that residents of property located near properties designated for agricultural use be notified that these agricultural uses are encouraged, that accepted agricultural practices may continue, and that efforts to prohibit, ban, restrict, or otherwise eliminate established agricultural uses will not be favorably received. It also includes notification and mediation procedures for cases in which agricultural activities are not being conducted in a reasonable manner, or when an operator is not using currently acceptable methods in the agricultural operations of the farm.

### 5.2.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The impact analysis provided below is based on the following CEQA Guidelines Appendix G thresholds of significance. A project is considered to have a significant effect on the environment if it will:

- 1) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Important Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use.
- 2) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.
- 3) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g)).
- 4) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

- 5) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use.

### METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of potential agricultural impacts of the proposed Project was based on review of available data from the DOC FMMP and Williamson Act Program as well as the proposed Land Use Diagram and General Plan policies. There is no forest land in the Planning Area, so standards of significance 3 and 4 are not addressed.

### General Plan Policies and Standards

The proposed General Plan contains the following policies and standards for managing future development in the City to protect agricultural lands.

**Policy NR-1-8:** Encourage development clustering where it would facilitate on-site protection of woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, stream corridors, scenic areas, or other appropriate features such as active agricultural uses and historic or cultural resources under the following conditions and requirements. Except as otherwise provided, clustering shall not be allowed in the Sheldon Rural Area.

- Urban infrastructure capacity is available for urban use. If clustering is allowed in the Rural Area, those properties shall be exempt from providing urban water and sewer connections in accordance with the policies of the Sheldon/Rural Area Community Plan (see Chapter 9).
- On-site resource protection is appropriate and consistent with other General Plan policies.
- The architecture and scale of development are appropriate for and consistent with the intended character of the area.
- Development rights for the open space area are permanently dedicated and appropriate long-term management, with funding in perpetuity, is provided for by a public agency or another appropriate entity.

**Policy AG-1-2:** As appropriate, protect agricultural lands from conversion.

**Policy AG-1-3:** Recognize the right of existing agricultural uses to continue as long as individual owners/farmers desire. As appropriate for the neighborhood, allow for buffers or feathering of lot sizes where appropriate between farmland and urban uses. Additionally, continue implementing the City's Right to Farm regulations and property title disclosures to notify prospective buyers of agricultural activities in the area.

**Standard AG-1-3.a:** Notify prospective buyers of property adjacent to agricultural land through the title report that they could be subject to inconvenience or discomfort resulting from accepted farming activities pursuant to provisions of the City's right-to-farm regulations.

**Policy AG-1-5:** Protect agricultural lands from future risk of conversion by requiring mitigation of the loss of qualified agricultural lands at a 1:1 ratio.

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**Policy AG-1-6:** Limit the siting of projects with land uses that might result in conflicts near existing agriculture due to noise, air quality, or odors.

### PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### **Conversion of Agricultural Land/Loss of Important Farmland and Conflicts with Williamson Act Contracts (Standards of Significance 1 and 2)**

**Impact 5.2.1** Implementation of the proposed Project would allow for new development in areas of the Planning Area that are designated Important Farmland and/or under Williamson Act contract. This impact would be **potentially significant**.

The Planning Area includes lands classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland (see **Table 5.2-4** and **Figure 5.2-1**). The proposed Project would allow for development to occur in these areas, which could result in the conversion and permanent loss of up to 5,633.4 acres of Important Farmlands. The conversion of this land would reduce the amount of Important Farmland in Sacramento County by approximately 3.8 percent. **Table 5.2-6** summarizes the total amount of each specific type of Important Farmland in the Planning Area and each Study Area and how many acres would be lost with General Plan buildout.

In addition to conversion of Important Farmland, the proposed Project could result in conflicts with active Williamson Act contracts. As shown in **Table 5.2-6**, there are approximately 2,892 acres within the Planning Area subject to Williamson Act contracts, with approximately 272 acres located within the current City limits and the remaining 2,620 acres spread throughout the East, South, and West Study Areas. The proposed Project would allow for development to occur in these areas, requiring nonrenewal or cancellation of the associated Williamson Act contracts. This urban development may impede the ability for the landowner to farm their land according to the Williamson Act contract and therefore be in violation of that contract.

#### Existing Laws, Procedures, and Proposed General Plan Policies That Provide Mitigation

Because the timing of future development applications is unknown, contract cancellation requests would be submitted as development applications are received and in conjunction with tentative map approval, subsequent project-specific CEQA review, or other entitlement actions. The project applicant(s) for contracted parcels would apply to the City for contract cancellation; as a result, the actual determination of consistency with the statutory consistency requirements would be made by the Elk Grove City Council, as Sacramento County would succeed to the contracts upon annexation of the relevant parcel. The City would be required to make findings pursuant to Section 51282 of the California Government Code by determining whether the cancellation is consistent with the California Land Conservation Act or in the public interest. Portions of the lands under Williamson Act contract are located in the 100-year floodplain, beyond the County's Urban Services Boundary and Urban Policy Area.

The proposed Project includes Policies AG-1-2 and AG-1-3, which are intended to protect farmland from conversion. In addition, Policy AG-1-5 requires mitigation of the loss of qualified agricultural lands at a 1:1 ratio.

#### Conclusion

While proposed General Plan policies would discourage the premature conversion of farmland, they would not prevent conversion of Important Farmland and per Policy AG-1-5 would not

provide CEQA-compliant mitigation and would still result in the overall loss of farmland from current levels. Therefore, this impact would be **significant and unavoidable**.

### Mitigation Measures

No additional feasible mitigation available beyond compliance with existing laws and procedures and proposed General Plan policies.

### **Conflicts Resulting in Conversion of Farmland to Nonagricultural Use (Standard of Significance 5)**

**Impact 5.2.2** Implementation of the proposed Project would place urban land activity types adjacent to primarily agricultural land activity types, which may impair agricultural production and result in land use compatibility conflicts. This would result in a **less than significant** impact.

There is the potential for issues related to compatibility between agricultural activities and future suburban and urban activities. From the perspective of the occupants of future residential uses, adjacent agricultural land activity types may result in nuisances and perceived hazards, such as concerns over pesticide, herbicide, and fungicide use on adjacent properties, odors, dust, noise, and slow-moving vehicles.

Agricultural production could be adversely affected by restrictions on pesticide, herbicide, and fungicide use, conflicts with agricultural equipment and vehicles, trespassing and pilferage, noise and odor complaints, and littering of fields. These potential conflicts can individually or cumulatively decrease the efficiency of farming operations, causing production costs to rise and make farming less appealing, which could induce farmers to convert land to urban uses. As such, the Project may result in significant impacts due to the impairment of productivity and land activity type conflicts.

### Agricultural Chemical Usage

Current and future agricultural practices in and adjacent to the Planning Area would involve the use of restricted and nonrestricted pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides. These materials could be applied through either manual application and/or aerial spraying.

### Agriculture Odors

Agricultural odors may be of concern to some in the Planning Area and are primarily related to dairy farm operations. Odors associated with dairy farm operations are generated by cattle grazing and the breakdown of manure. These processes typically result in the generation of hydrogen sulfide, methane, and ammonia. Fertilizer and pesticide use in agricultural areas can also generate noticeable odors.

### Regulations and Standards and Proposed General Plan Policies That Provide Mitigation

Agricultural properties are protected pursuant to Chapter 14.05 of the Municipal Code, provided farming activities are properly conducted in accordance with City standards. Policy AG-1-3 allows for buffers or feathering of lot sizes between farmland and urban uses to reduce potential impact and property title disclosures pursuant to Municipal Code Chapter 14.05.

## 5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

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Currently, the Sacramento County Department of Agriculture and Measurements regulates and imposes limitations on the use of all restricted materials as part of the conditions for obtaining a use permit. Based on State law and County policy, permit limitations would include, but are not limited to, not allowing chemicals to drift to adjacent properties (Food and Agricultural Code Section 12972), limiting chemical application to periods when the pesticides are least likely to affect adjacent land uses, and requiring buffers for some restricted chemicals. The County of Sacramento issues the permit conditions for restricted chemicals on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration surrounding land uses and the chemicals being applied. There is no single buffer distance that is applied to all chemicals. For instance, nonrestricted materials, such as Roundup and other chemicals commonly found in the household, do not require a permit for application.

### Conclusion

Future development could result in the siting of residential activities directly adjacent to ongoing agricultural operations. However, agricultural buffers and transition areas can reduce conflicts between urban and agricultural activities. Separating agricultural from urban activities can help reduce the actual or perceived impacts on residents (spray drift, noise, odor, dust) and on agricultural operations (theft, trespass, restrictions on farming practices). Depending on their design, buffers can also provide associated visual, recreational, and wildlife habitat benefits. Policy AG-1-3 allows for buffers or feathering of lot sizes between farmland and urban uses to reduce potential impact and property title disclosures pursuant to Municipal Code Chapter 14.05. In addition, the land plan for the Project features buffers along the urban edge of the East, South, and West Study Areas to help minimize potential conflicts. Thus, while there is the potential for agricultural activities to occur in proximity to future development, implementation of Chapter 14.05 would ensure that development of the proposed Project does not substantially impair agricultural productivity off-site. This impact would be **less than significant**.

### Mitigation Measures

No additional mitigation required beyond compliance with proposed General Plan policies and applicable Municipal Code sections.

## 5.2.4 CUMULATIVE SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

### CUMULATIVE SETTING

With the exception of the urbanized City of Sacramento to the north, the Planning Area is surrounded by rural residential and active agricultural land. Because conversion of fertile agricultural land is a regional issue, the cumulative setting for this analysis is Sacramento County.

### CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### **Cumulative Loss of Agricultural Land (Standards of Significance 1 and 2)**

**Impact 5.2.3** Implementation of the proposed Project would ultimately result in the conversion of Important Farmland and the cancellation of Williamson Act contracts. This loss would contribute to the cumulative loss of farmland in the region. The loss of such farmland from the proposed Project would contribute to a **cumulatively considerable** and **significant and unavoidable** impact.

As discussed above, there was a decrease of nearly 25,000 acres of Prime Farmland and more than 20,000 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance in Sacramento County between 2000 and 2016, and cumulative development in the County would continue the trend of conversion of agricultural land to nonagricultural use, despite required mitigation for the loss of farmland. This is considered a significant cumulative impact. Future development in the Planning Area associated with Project buildout would contribute to the ongoing conversion of farmland in Sacramento County to urban uses by converting up to 5,633 acres of Important Farmland to nonagricultural uses. The Project, in combination with the adopted land use plans of Sacramento County and other neighboring jurisdictions, would result in the conversion of Important Farmland, including land under Williamson Act contract, to urban uses. The loss of such farmland resulting from implementation of the proposed Project would contribute to a significant cumulative impact.

Proposed General Plan Policy AG-1-5, which requires mitigation for the loss of qualified agricultural lands at a 1:1 ratio, would ensure the protection of an amount of agricultural land equal to that converted. However, because the mitigation only requires protection of farmland and as a way to limit future development and does not prevent the direct loss of farmland as a result of a specific development project, General Plan policies would not prevent such conversion from occurring and the proposed Project would still contribute to the loss of Important Farmland in the County. Therefore, the impact would be **cumulatively considerable and significant and unavoidable**.

### Mitigation Measures

No additional feasible mitigation available beyond compliance with existing laws and procedures and proposed General Plan policies.

As noted above, proposed General Plan Policy AG-1-5 requires mitigation for the loss of qualified agricultural lands at a 1:1 ratio, which would ensure the protection of an amount of agricultural land equal to that converted by development in the Planning Area. However, even with implementation of General Plan Policy AG-1-5, agricultural conversion would still occur and the proposed Project would still contribute to the loss of Important Farmland in the County. No further mitigation is available to reduce the Project's contribution to the loss of Important Farmland.

## 5.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

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