

3.2 Agricultural Resources

The following section provides an analysis of the potential significant impacts to agricultural resources that may result from implementation of the Project. A Soils of Statewide Significance Memorandum, dated April 18th, 2024, was prepared for the Project by Advanced Geotechnical Solutions, Inc, and is included as *Appendix F3* to this EIR. An NOP for the Project was released for public review on September 1, 2022 and an EIR Scoping Meeting was held on September 20, 2022. No comment letters regarding agricultural resources were received.

3.2.1 Existing Conditions

3.2.1.1 On-Site Agriculture Uses

Much of the information in this section regarding past uses of the Project site is based on the Questhaven Project Site Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (Phase I), included as *Appendix H* to this EIR. Historically, the Project site has remained undeveloped and vacant, with a brief period of agricultural uses taking place in the western area of the site between the years 1990 and 2005 to produce figs. Dry farming of this area is estimated to have been terminated by 2005.

3.2.1.2 Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation (CDC) established the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) in 1982 to carry on the “Important Farmland” mapping efforts initiated in 1975 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Soil Conservation Service (SCS). The intent of the USDA was to map and categorize the nation’s farmlands. The FMMP is a nonregulatory program providing a consistent and impartial analysis of agricultural land use and land use changes throughout California. Pursuant to the FMMP, agricultural resources are separated into the following categories: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance. The FMMP also includes Grazing Land, Urban and Built-up Land, Other Land, and Water, which are not considered agricultural resources. As noted in *Appendix F3* of this EIR, the Project site does not contain Huerhero loam soil or other Soils of Statewide Significance. The Project site contains no land that has been designated Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, Urban or Built-up Land, or Water.

Figure 3.2-1, *FMMP Farmland Map*, depicts the 2018 FMMP mapping data for the Project site and surrounding area using the categories described above. As shown, the Project site consists entirely of land designated as “Other Land”. The Other Land designation is not considered agricultural resources by the FMMP.

Other Land

Other Land is land which is 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 forty acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land. The entire Project site is designated as Other Land.

3.2.1.3 Surrounding Agricultural Resources

The Project site is surrounded primarily by open space areas to the south or areas recently developed with urban uses. Agricultural operations do not occur in the area immediately surrounding the Project site. The area surrounding the Project site are designated as Urban and Built-Up Land and Other Land by the FMMP. Land designated Unique Farmland exists approximately 1.1 miles to the southeast of the Project site.

3.2.1.4 Regulatory Setting

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act (Government Code section 51200 et seq.), was adopted as an incentive program to encourage the preservation of the state's agricultural lands. The Williamson Act allows local governments to contract with private landowners to limit the use of agricultural land for agricultural purposes. Pursuant to the Williamson Act, the parties may enter into a land conservation contract whereby a county or city agrees to stabilize the property taxes on qualifying lands in return for the landowner's guarantee to use the land for agricultural purposes or related open space use for a 10-year period. Unless a notice of nonrenewal is filed, the 10-year period of the contract is automatically renewed each year. The Project site is not subject to any Williamson Act contracts.

3.2.2 Analysis of Project Effects and Determinations as to Significance

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

A significant impact to agricultural resources would occur from the Project due to the following:

- The Project site has important agricultural resources as defined by the County's Local Agricultural Resource Assessment (LARA) Model; and the Project would result in the conversion of agricultural resources that meet the soil quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as defined by the FMMP; and, as a result, the Project would substantially impair the ongoing viability of the site for agricultural use.

Guidelines Source

The significance threshold for important on-site agricultural resources is based on the County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance, Agricultural Resources (County of San Diego 2007).

Analysis

As described above and noted in *Appendix F3* to this EIR, the soil types found on the Project site do not meet the soil-quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance as defined by the FMMP. As such, a LARA analysis is not required.

While the Project would preclude site from future agricultural use, the site is not considered an important agricultural resource per County Guidelines, and the site does not contain soils of high agricultural quality. Thus, pursuant to the above guidelines for the determination of significance, the Project impact to important agricultural resources is considered less than significant.

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

A significant impact to agricultural resources would occur from the Project:

- The Project proposes a non-agricultural land use within one-quarter mile of an active agricultural operation or land under a Williamson Act contract and, as a result of the Project, land use conflicts between the agricultural operation or Williamson Act contract land and the proposed Project would likely occur and could result in conversion of agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use.
- The Project proposes a school, church, day care, or other use that involves a concentration of people at certain times within 1 mile of an agricultural operation or land under a Williamson Act contract and, as a result of the proposed Project, land use conflicts between the agricultural operation or a Williamson Act contract land and the proposed Project would likely occur and could result in conversion of agricultural resources to a nonagricultural use.
- The Project would involve other changes to the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of off-site agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use or could adversely impact the viability of agriculture on land under a Williamson Act Contract.

Guidelines Source

The significance thresholds for indirect impacts to agricultural resources are based on the County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance, Agricultural Resources (County of San Diego 2007).

Analysis

The Project site is not bounded by active agricultural operations. There are no Williamson Act contract lands within one-quarter (1/4) mile of the Project site. Land uses surrounding the site generally include urban residential development to the north, large open space area to the west and south, and previously developed land to the east where the San Marcos Landfill was previously located. Because the Project site is surrounded with developed areas or open space not used for farming, the development of non-agricultural uses on the Project site as proposed by the Project's design would not result in land use conflicts with agricultural operations or the conversion of agricultural resources to non-agricultural uses, and no significant impact would result.

The Project entails proposed residential uses that involve a concentration of people, however, these residential uses would not be located within one mile of an active agricultural operation or Williamson Act contract land, as there are no such lands located within the immediate Project vicinity. Therefore, no land use conflicts or resulting conversion of agricultural uses to non-agricultural uses would result due to the Project's proposed facilities, and no significant impact would result.

The Project proposes the development of urban uses on the Project site. The Project site is generally surrounded by large areas of natural open space, with existing residential development to the north of the Project site. Previously, a portion of the western area of the site was used for agriculture uses to produce figs; however, there are no active agricultural operations in the immediate vicinity of the Project that could be impacted by development of the Project site or that would be influenced to convert to a non-agricultural use. Due to the lack of active agricultural operations on the Project site or in its immediate vicinity, the potential to cause the conversion of off-site agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use or adversely impact the viability of agriculture on land under a Williamson Act contract is considered less than significant.

Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

A significant impact to agricultural resources would occur if the Project would:

- Conflict with a Williamson Act contract or the provisions of the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act).

Guidelines Source

The significance threshold for zoning and Williamson Act contract lands is based on the County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance, Agricultural Resources (County of San Diego 2007).

Analysis

No existing agricultural use exists on-site or in the immediate proximity of the Project site. Historically, a portion of the western area of the site was previously used for agriculture uses to produce figs; however, the agricultural operations in this area have ceased, and this area will be placed within a biological open space easement in addition to the biological open space easement located along the southwestern portion of the development. The nearest agricultural preserve is located approximately 2.5 miles southeast of the Project site. The nearest lands under Williamson Act Contract are located approximately 6.3 miles northeast of the Project site. Due to distance, no land-use interface conflicts would occur. Additionally, the Project provides for development of 76 single-family residential homes, recreation uses, and open space uses, which is compatible with the surrounding land uses. Therefore, the Project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act Contract

3.2.3 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The Project site and vicinity are within a coastal area climate zone, which is one of the few areas in California and the United States where off-season crops are grown. This climate zone has been subject to continued conversion of agricultural lands to urban development, and will continue to be subject to such pressures in the foreseeable future.

However, as discussed in the agricultural analysis above, implementation of the proposed Project would not result in impacts to agricultural resources. There are no significant agricultural soils on the Project site, the Project site is not subject to any Williamson Act contracts nor is the site adjacent to

lands under a Williamson Act contract. In addition, the Project site is not currently in agricultural production, nor is any of the land immediately surrounding the site. Because the proposed Project would not result in any significant impacts to agricultural resources or convert other land currently in agricultural use, it would not have a considerable contribution to cumulative agricultural resources impacts that may accrue from other projects in the region. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not result in a significant cumulative impact to agricultural resources.

3.2.4 Significance of Impacts Prior to Mitigation

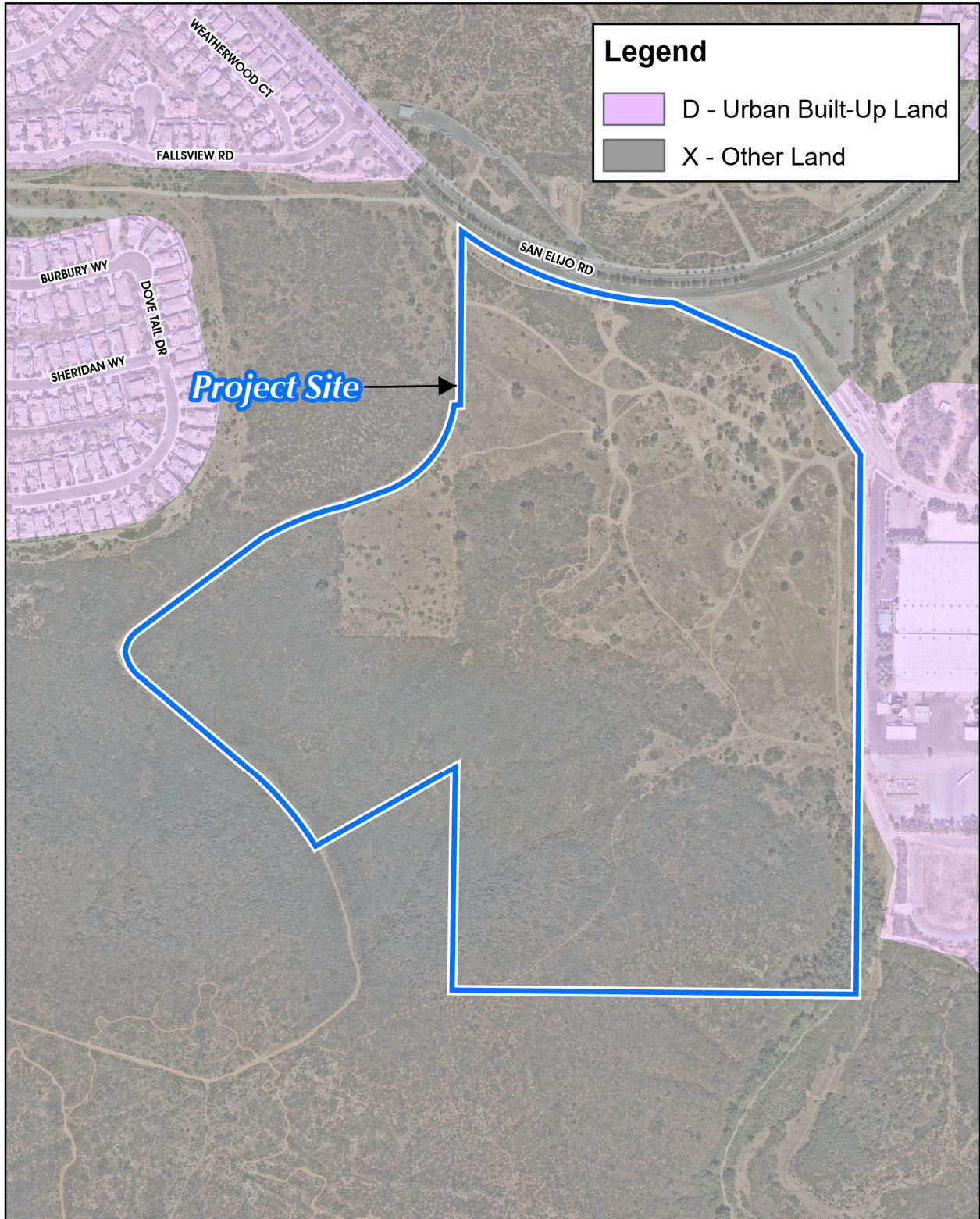
Based on the above analysis, implementation of the Project would not result in any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to agricultural resources.

3.2.5 Mitigation

As discussed above, implementation of the Project would result in less-than-significant impacts to agricultural resources.

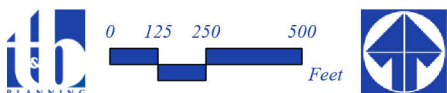
3.2.6 Conclusion

As described above, the Project site was found not to be a significant agricultural resource pursuant to County Guidelines. There are no on-site soils that meet the designation for Prime Farmland or Statewide Importance soils. The Project site and immediate surrounding vicinity are not subject to any Williamson Act contracts. In addition, the Project site is not zoned for agricultural uses. No agricultural operations currently occur on-site or in the immediate vicinity of the Project site. Therefore, implementation of the proposed Project would result in less-than-significant impacts to agricultural resources.



Source(s): Esri, Nearmap Imagery (September 2022), FMMP (2018)

Figure 3.2-1



FMMP Farmland Map