

5. Environmental Analysis

5.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) evaluates the potential for implementation of the proposed project to impact agriculture and forestry resources in the City of Brea and its sphere of influence (SOI).

5.2.1 Environmental Setting

5.2.1.1 REGULATORY BACKGROUND

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation classifies agricultural land through the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) of the Division of Land Resource Protection. The FMMP was established in 1982 in response to a critical need for assessing the location, quality, and quantity of agricultural lands and conversion of these lands over time. FMMP is a nonregulatory program and provides a consistent and impartial analysis of agricultural land and land use changes throughout California. FMMP produces Important Farmland Maps, which are a hybrid of resource quality (soils) and land use information. Data is also released in statistical formats that are compiled within the biennial California Farmland Conversion Report. The latest mapping date for the Orange County FMMP is 2016.

Prime Farmland. Prime farmland has the best combination of physical and chemical features and is 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 consists 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 cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

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

Urban and Built-Up Land. Urban and built-up land is 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. Common examples include residential, industrial, commercial, institutional facilities, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, and water control structures.

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

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acres. More than 40 acres of vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development is mapped as “other land.”

Water. Perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres.

Williamson Act Program

The Williamson Act, also known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based on farming and open space uses, not the full market value of the land.

The Department of Conservation assists all levels of government and landowners in the interpretation of the Williamson Act. The department also researches, publishes, and disseminates information regarding the policies, purposes, procedures, and administration of the Williamson Act. Participating counties and cities are required to establish their own rules and regulations regarding implementation of the act in their jurisdiction. These rules include but are not limited to enrollment guidelines, acreage minimums, enforcement procedures, allowable uses, and compatible uses.

City of Brea General Plan

Community Development Element

According to the City of Brea General Plan Community Development Element, Brea’s incorporated city limits, as of 2002, encompassed approximately 7,000 acres or 11 square miles. The community displays a balanced, complementary mix of residential neighborhoods of various housing types and densities, local and large-scale regional commercial businesses and centers, modern industrial uses in business park settings, schools, and public parks. Within the incorporated city limits of Brea, approximately 1 percent of land is under agriculture land use, and these properties are expected to eventually transition to other uses.

Community Resources Element

Goal CR-5: Provide a flexible and balanced open space and conservation plan.

- **Policy CR-5.3.** Develop and maintain strong relationships with local and regional environmental and conservation organizations.

County of Orange General Plan

Resources Element: Natural Resources Component

- **Policy 2, Agriculture.** To encourage to the extent feasible the preservation and utilization of agricultural resources as a natural resource and economic asset.
 - **Implementation Program 2:** Agricultural Preservation Program.

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- **Action.** Evaluate the establishment of an Agricultural Preservation Program to mitigate the long-term impact of agricultural preserve contract cancellations and to provide economic and technical assistance to County agricultural activities. Specifically, the program would establish a trust which could be used for grants, loans, research, and other appropriate items related to agricultural resources. The trust would be funded by contributions from agricultural preserve contract cancellation proponents.

Local Agency Formation Commission Guidelines

The provisions of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 set procedures for Local Agency Formation Commissions, or LAFCOs, throughout the state to review annexation applications. The act was adopted to:

- Encourage orderly development.
- Ensure that populations receive efficient and quality governmental services.
- Guide development away from open space and prime agricultural lands unless such action promotes planned, orderly, and efficient development

5.2.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Agricultural Uses

The project site contains 12.21 acres of prime farmland, 10.99 acres of farmland of statewide importance, and 16.45 acres of unique farmland, a total of 39.65 acres of special status farmland. Approximately 27.79 acres of this farmland are currently being used for agriculture. The existing nursery use (4.61 acres) is north of Lambert Road in grazing land. Figure 5.2-1, *Important Farmland Location Map*, illustrates important farmlands in the project site. Table 5.2-1 shows existing farmland types and acreage in the project site.

Table 5.2-1 Project Site Farmland Type

Farmland Type	Acreage
Prime Farmland	12.21 acres
Farmland of Statewide Importance	10.99 acres
Unique farmland	16.45 acres
Urban and built-up land	4.07 acres
Grazing land	97.36 acres
Other land	126.50 acres
Total	267.58 acres

Source: ESRI 2018.

Land Use Designations

The project site falls into Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Grazing Land. The project site is designated Hillside Residential and Low Density Residential by the Brea

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General Plan, and zoned HR Hillside Residential and R-1 Single-family residential. The project site does not include any properties under a Williamson Act contract.

5.2.2 Thresholds of Significance

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if the project would:

- AG-1 Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency to non-agricultural use.
- AG-2 Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.
- AG-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)).
- AG-4 Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.
- AG-5 Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

5.2.3 Plans, Programs, and Policies

There are no applicable plans, programs, and policies related to the proposed project.

5.2.4 Environmental Impacts

5.2.4.1 IMPACT ANALYSIS

The following impact analysis addresses the thresholds of significance. The applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after the impact statement.

Figure 5.2-1 - Important Farmland Location Map
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Source: ESRI, 2019

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Impact 5.2-1: The proposed project would convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance—as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency—to nonagricultural use. [Threshold AG-1]

The project site contains farmland identified as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) totaling 39.65 acres. Of the 39.65 acres of Farmland, 27.79 acres are being used for agricultural purposes, and other areas include annual brome grassland, roads and pads, filaree fields, and upland mustards. Implementation of the proposed project would convert all of the Farmland and existing agricultural uses to nonagricultural use. However, the City of Brea General Plan designates this area Hillside Residential in the land use map, and it is zoned HR Hillside Residential. Therefore, conversion of agricultural use to nonagricultural use was already planned and approved by the City—the City already expected agricultural properties to transition to other uses over time. The General Plan identifies 1 percent of the City’s planning area as agriculture use and does not provide any goals or policies protecting agricultural uses. Impacts would be considered less than significant.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: Less than significant impact.

Impact 5.2-2: The proposed project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract. [Threshold AG-2]

The project site is currently zoned R-1 Single-Family Residential and HR Hillside Residential; it is not zoned for agricultural use or subject to Williamson Act contract. Conversion of the project site to Brea 265 Specific Plan would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use. No impact is anticipated.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: No impact.

Impact 5.2-3: The proposed project would not 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)), and would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to nonforest use. [Thresholds AG-3 and AG-4]

The Public Resources Code (PRC Section 12220) defines forest land as land that can support 10-percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits. PRC Section 4526 defines timberland as land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the board as experimental forest land, which is available for and capable of growing a crop of trees of a commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees.

The project site is currently zoned R-1 Single-Family Residential and HR Hillside Residential. There is no forest land or timberland in the project site (GLA 2018). Therefore, implementation of the proposed project

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would not cause rezoning of forest land or timberland, and would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to nonforest use. No impact is anticipated.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: No impact.

Impact 5.2-4: The proposed project would not involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use or conversion of forest land to nonforest use. [Threshold AG-5]

The project site is currently zoned R-1 Single-Family Residential and HR Hillside Residential; it is not zoned for agricultural use or subject to a Williamson Act contract. Conversion of the project site to Brea 265 Specific Plan would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use. No impact is anticipated.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: No impact.

5.2.5 Cumulative Impacts

The area considered for cumulative impacts for this project is the County of Orange. Although Orange County was once a rural county supported primarily by an agricultural economy, agriculture steadily declined over the years and no longer has a significant presence in the county. The decline can be attributed to urban growth, rising cost of irrigation water, agricultural land tax rates, labor costs, etc. that led to increased production costs, making it economically unsustainable. The project site is currently zoned R-1 Single-Family Residential and HR Hillside Residential by the City of Brea, indicating that the project site is already planned and approved for nonagricultural uses. Although the proposed project would result in the loss of 39.65 acres of Farmland, 27.79 acres of which are currently being used for agricultural purposes, transitioning of these lands to nonagricultural uses has already been planned and approved by the City. Without the proposed project, the project site would still be developed with nonagricultural uses. Therefore, the proposed project would individually have a less than significant agricultural and forestry resources impact without mitigation. When combined with other cumulative development projects, the proposed project would contribute to overall decline of agricultural lands in the county. However, because the project site is not held in agricultural preserve and the County and the City planned for residential uses, cumulative impacts of the proposed project would be considered less than significant.

5.2.6 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

The following impacts would be less than significant: 5.2-1, 5.2-2, 5.2-3, and 5.2-4.

5.2.7 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

5.2.8 Level of Significance After Mitigation

No significant unavoidable adverse impacts to agricultural resources have been identified.

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5.2.9 References

Brea, City of. 2003, August 19 (adopted). General Plan.

<https://www.ci.brea.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/61/General-Plan?bidId=>.

California Department of Conservation (DOC). California Important Farmland Finder.

<https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/CIFF/>.

Orange, County of. County of Orange General Plan, Resources Element.

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