



KINGS COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Greg Gatzka, Director

PLANNING DIVISION
Chuck Kinney, Deputy Director – Planning

Web Site: <http://www.countyofkings.com/departments/community-development-agency>

Notice of Preparation and Scoping Meeting

TO: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

FROM: Kings County
1400 W. Lacey Boulevard, Building #6
Hanford, CA 93230
Contact: Chuck Kinney, Deputy Director of Planning

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Jackson Ranch Specific Plan and Notice of a Public Scoping Meeting

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21165 and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15050, the Kings County (County) is the Lead Agency responsible for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addressing potential impacts associated with the project identified below. The County is preparing the environmental documentation for the proposed project to determine if approval of the discretionary actions requested and subsequent development would have a significant impact on the environment.

PURPOSE OF THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION: The purpose of this notice is: (1) to serve as a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, (2) to advise and solicit comments and suggestions regarding the scope and content of the EIR to be prepared for the proposed project, and (3) to serve as a notice of a public scoping meeting to be held by the County. The County, as Lead Agency, respectfully requests that any Responsible or Trustee Agency responding to this notice respond in a manner consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(b). Comments and suggestions should, at a minimum, identify the significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures that should be explored in the EIR, in addition to whether the responding agency will be a responsible or trustee agency for the proposed project, and any related issues raised by interested parties other than potential responsible or trustee agencies, including interested or affected members of the public.

The enclosed summary of the proposed project and its probable environmental effects is not an analysis of the project or its impacts. The project summary information is intended to provide said agencies, organizations, and interested parties with sufficient information describing the proposed project and the environmental issues that will be addressed in the EIR so that meaningful responses and comments can be provided.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD: The County welcomes input and comments regarding preparation of the EIR. The NOP is available for a 30-day public review period beginning **August 29, 2019**, and ending **September 30, 2019**. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, responsible and trustee agencies and other interested parties, including members of the public, must submit any comments in response to this notice **no later than 30 days** after receipt of the notice.

Copies of the NOP and accompanying Initial Study are available for review at the following locations:

- County of Kings, Planning Department, 1400 W. Lacey Boulevard, Building #6, Hanford, CA 93230
- All seven County libraries:

- Armona Community Branch, 11115 C Street, Armona, CA 93202
- Avenal Branch, 501 East Kings Street, Avenal, CA 93204
- Corcoran Branch, 1001-A Chittenden Avenue, Corcoran, CA 93212
- Hanford Branch, 401 N. Douty Street, Hanford, CA 93230
- Lemoore Branch, 457 C Street, Lemoore CA, 93245
- Stratford Branch, 20300 Main Street, Stratford, CA 93266
- Kettleman City Branch, 104 Becky Pease Street, Kettleman City, CA 93239

The NOP and accompanying Initial Study can also be viewed on the County's website at the following address: <https://www.countyofkings.com/home/showdocument?id=20523>.

RESPONDING TO THIS NOTICE: The County will accept written comments regarding this notice through the close of business on **September 30, 2019**. Please indicate a contact person for your agency or organization and send your written comments to Chuck Kinney, Deputy Director of Planning, of the County at the above address or by e-mail at chuck.kinney@co.kings.ca.us.

SCOPING MEETING: As a part of the NOP process, the County will conduct a public scoping meeting in order to present the proposed project and environmental process and to receive public comments and suggestions regarding the proposed project. The scoping meeting will be held on September 18, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors Chambers, in the Administrative Building No. 1, Kings County Government Center, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd., Hanford, California.

PROJECT TITLE: Jackson Ranch Specific Plan

PROJECT LOCATION: The area covered by the specific plan (Plan Area) is in an unincorporated area of the County, consisting of 425 acres adjacent to and west of Interstate 5 (I-5) at the Utica Avenue off-ramp. The Plan Area is approximately 70 miles northwest of the City of Bakersfield and 70 miles southwest of the City of Fresno. The nearest urbanized area to the Plan Area is Kettleman City, an unincorporated community of the County approximately 6 miles to the northwest. Figures 1, *Regional Location*, and 2, *Aerial Photograph*, show the location of the Plan Area within the regional and local contexts of the County.

As shown in Figure 2, Utica Avenue forms the northern Plan Area boundary, the southbound I-5 on-ramp forms the northeastern boundary, and I-5 forms the eastern boundary. A portion of the western Plan Area boundary abuts the California Aqueduct, and 25th Avenue bisects it from north to south (see Figure 2).

EXISTING AND SURROUNDING LAND USES: Onsite land uses primarily consist of active and fallow agricultural land or rangeland, as shown in Figure 2. The agricultural production consists mainly of irrigated crops such as almonds pistachios, and stone fruits (apricots and plums); dry land grazing also occurs onsite. The Plan Area has historically been used for farming, and portions presently contain an orchard of almond trees near the end of their productive life expectancy. Other crops include pistachios, apricots, and plums. A portion of the Plan Area consists of disked lands formerly planted as orchards.

Surrounding land uses primarily consist of active and fallow agricultural land or grazing lands (see Figure 2). Major infrastructure surrounding the Plan Area includes I-5 to the east and the California Aqueduct to the west. Beyond the aqueduct are the Kettleman Hills.

EXISTING LAND USE DESIGNATIONS: The Kings County General Plan designates all parts of the Plan Area under General Agriculture-40 Acre. This designation is applied to rural areas of the County; it allows intensive agricultural uses that by their nature may be incompatible with urban uses. The County-designated zoning district of the Plan Area is General Agriculture-40 District (AG-40). This district is intended primarily for application to rural areas of the County, which are generally characterized by extensive and intensive agricultural uses of land.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND ELEMENTS:

Proposed Land Uses

The proposed project consists of development and implementation of the Jackson Ranch Specific Plan (Jackson Ranch or Specific Plan), which covers the approximately 425-acre Plan Area (see Figure 3, *Specific Plan Land Use Plan*). Jackson Ranch would serve as an innovative service and commercial center that will encourage economic growth while preserving the agricultural heritage of the region. As the halfway point between San Francisco and Los Angeles, Jackson Ranch offers a visible rest stop to the high volume of motorists who pass by annually. Upon completion, Jackson Ranch would be the only stop to offer food, lodging, a truck stop, and service stations within a 31-mile stretch of I-5, stretching from Kettleman City to the north to State Route 46 to the south.

A General Plan Amendment to change the General Plan land use designation of the Plan Area from General Agriculture-40 Acre (current General Plan land use designation) to Jackson Ranch Specific Plan is required to implement the Specific Plan. Under the Specific Plan, approximately 175 acres, or 41 percent of the Plan Area, would be changed from General Agriculture-40 Acre to Innovation Center (IC-JR), Commercial Thoroughfare (CT-JR) and Public (P-JR), which would allow arrangement of commercial, light industrial and public facility uses. Also, approximately 249 acres, or 59 percent of the Plan Area, is proposed to be changed from General Agriculture-40 Acre to Specialty Agriculture (A-JR). Approximately 56 acres of the 249 acres to be designated Specialty Agriculture would include an Air Strip Overlay, which would allow for the development of a potential future private air strip in the Plan Area. It is anticipated that active agriculture will continue in the Plan Area during and after the development of Jackson Ranch (see Figure 4).

A statistical summary of the Specific Plan's land use designations is provided in the following table. As shown in the table, a total of just under 2.5 million square feet of commercial space is planned for Jackson Ranch.

Jackson Ranch Specific Plan Land Use Statistical Summary

Land Use Designation	Acres	FAR	Maximum Building Sq. Ft.
Innovation Center (IC-JR)	119.1	0.45	2,334,597
Commercial Thoroughfare (CT-JR)	23.8	0.25	161,245
Public (P-JR)	5.0	—	—
Specialty Agriculture (A-JR)	206.9	—	—
Specialty Agriculture with Air Strip Overlay (A-JR)	55.5	—	—
Streets	14.6	—	—
Total	424.9	—	2,495,842

Note: FAR = floor area ratio; Sq. Ft. = square feet

Implementation of the Specific Plan would also require an amendment to the Kings County Development Code and Zoning District Map. Specifically, the Development Code Amendment is needed to add the Jackson Ranch Specific Plan by reference and the Zoning District Map Amendment is needed to change the zoning district from AG-40 to Jackson Ranch Specific Plan. The Development Code Amendment would state that the regulating code contained in the Specific Plan would serve as the regulatory plan (zoning, development, and design standards and guidelines) for all development projects in the Plan area.

Infrastructure Plan

Jackson Ranch includes on- and offsite infrastructure plans that are necessary to accommodate development that would be accommodated by the Specific Plan, including plans for mobility, stormwater management, potable water, wastewater management, utilities (electricity, natural gas, and telecommunication services), and solid waste disposal.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: An Initial Study was prepared for the Specific Plan and accompanies this NOP. As substantiated in the Initial Study, potentially significant adverse environmental impacts associated with the Specific Plan are listed below. These topics will be addressed in the EIR.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agriculture and Forestry Resources ▪ Air Quality ▪ Biological Resources ▪ Cultural Resources ▪ Geology and Soils ▪ Greenhouse Gas Emissions ▪ Hydrology and Water Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land Use and Planning ▪ Noise ▪ Public Services ▪ Transportation ▪ Tribal Cultural Resources ▪ Utilities and Service Systems ▪ Mandatory Findings of Significance |
|---|---|

Unless new information identifying it as a potential impact is presented during the scoping process, the following topics will not be discussed further in the EIR as substantiated in the Initial Study: Agricultural Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, and Mineral Resources.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Aesthetics▪ Energy▪ Hazards and Hazardous Materials▪ Mineral Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Population and Housing▪ Recreation▪ Wildfire
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The existing conditions of the Plans and its surroundings will be used to set the baseline for the environmental analysis of the EIR. The EIR will examine all phases of the Specific Plan including planning, construction, and operation—it will address the short- and long-term effects of the Specific Plan's development phases on the environment. Where potentially significant environmental impacts are identified, the EIR will identify mitigation measures that may make it possible to avoid or reduce significant impacts, as appropriate.

The EIR will also include a discussion of the potentially significant cumulative impacts of Jackson Ranch when considered with other past, present, and reasonably-foreseeable future projects in the project area. Furthermore, in compliance with CEQA, the EIR will address a reasonable range of alternatives that are defined and analyzed on the basis of their ability to: 1) avoid or reduce any of the identified significant impacts of the project, and 2) feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project.

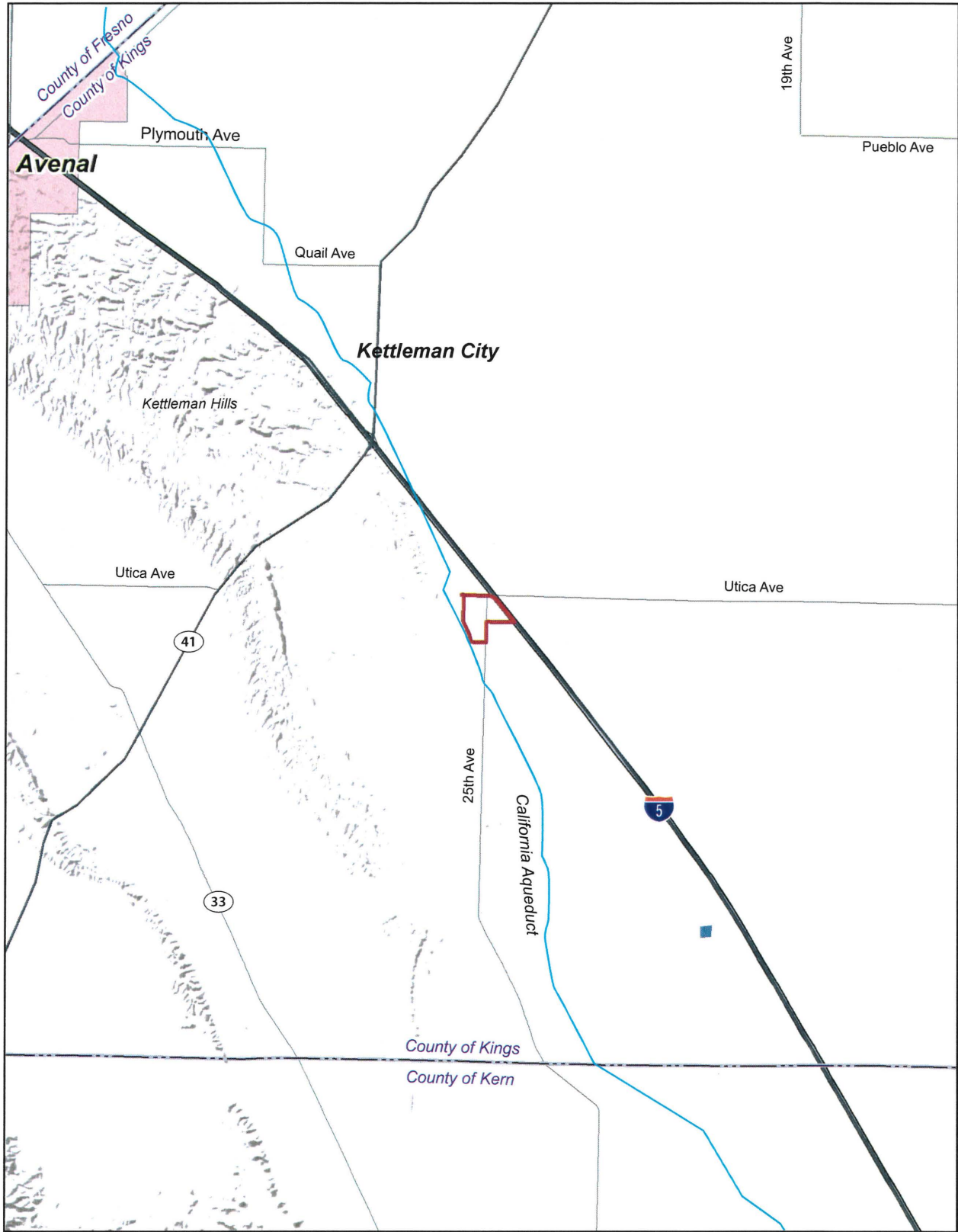
The following technical studies/reports will be prepared for the Specific Plan in support of and be included as appendices to the EIR:

- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Analysis
- Biological Resources Assessment Report
- Cultural Resources Assessment Report
- Noise and Vibration Analysis
- Traffic Impact Analysis
- Water Supply Assessment

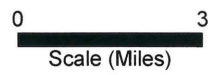
Attachments:

- Figure 1. Regional Location
- Figure 2. Aerial Photograph
- Figure 3. Specific Plan Land Use Plan

Figure 1 - Regional Location

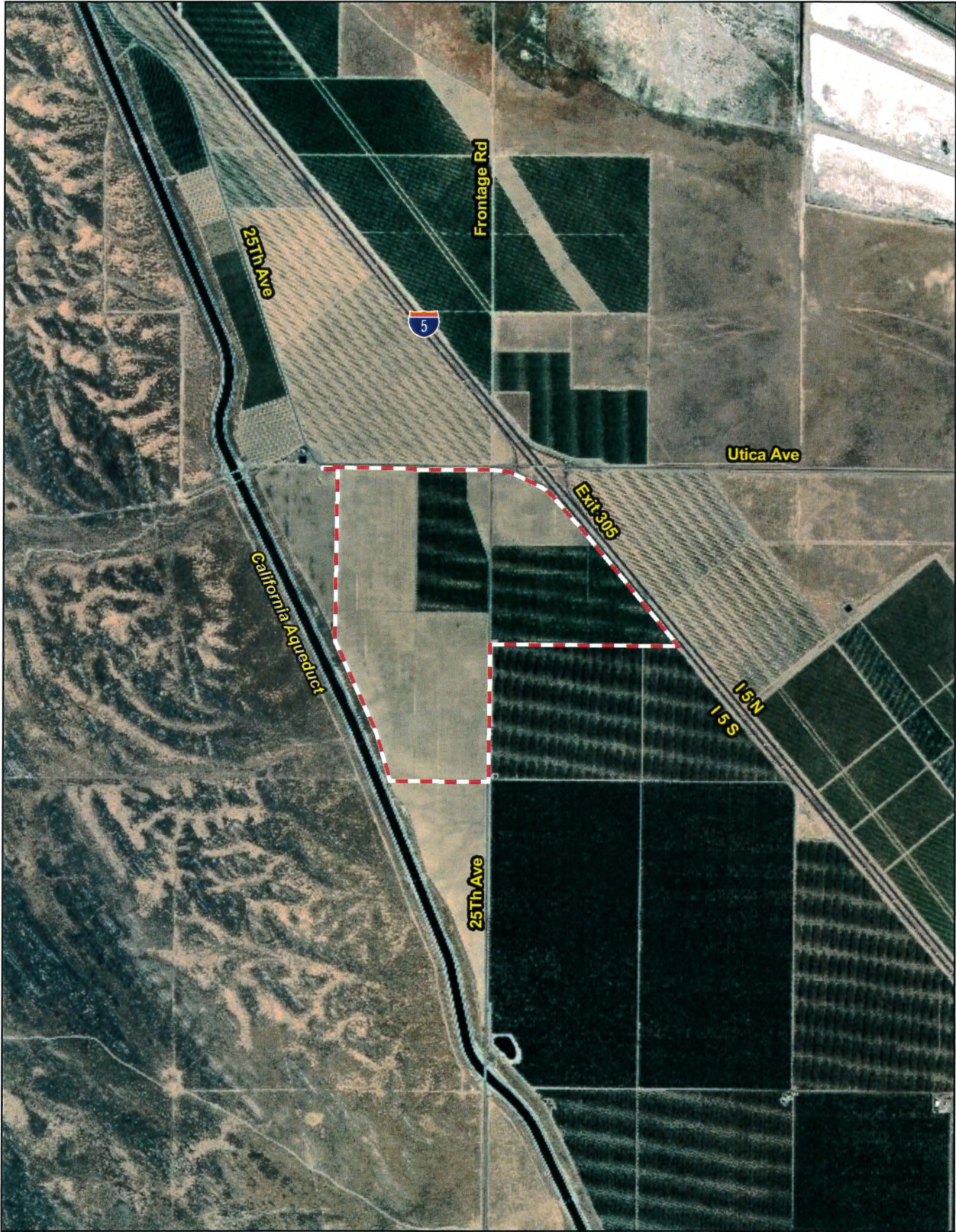


— Plan Area Boundary



Source: ESRI, 2019

Figure 2 - Aerial Photograph



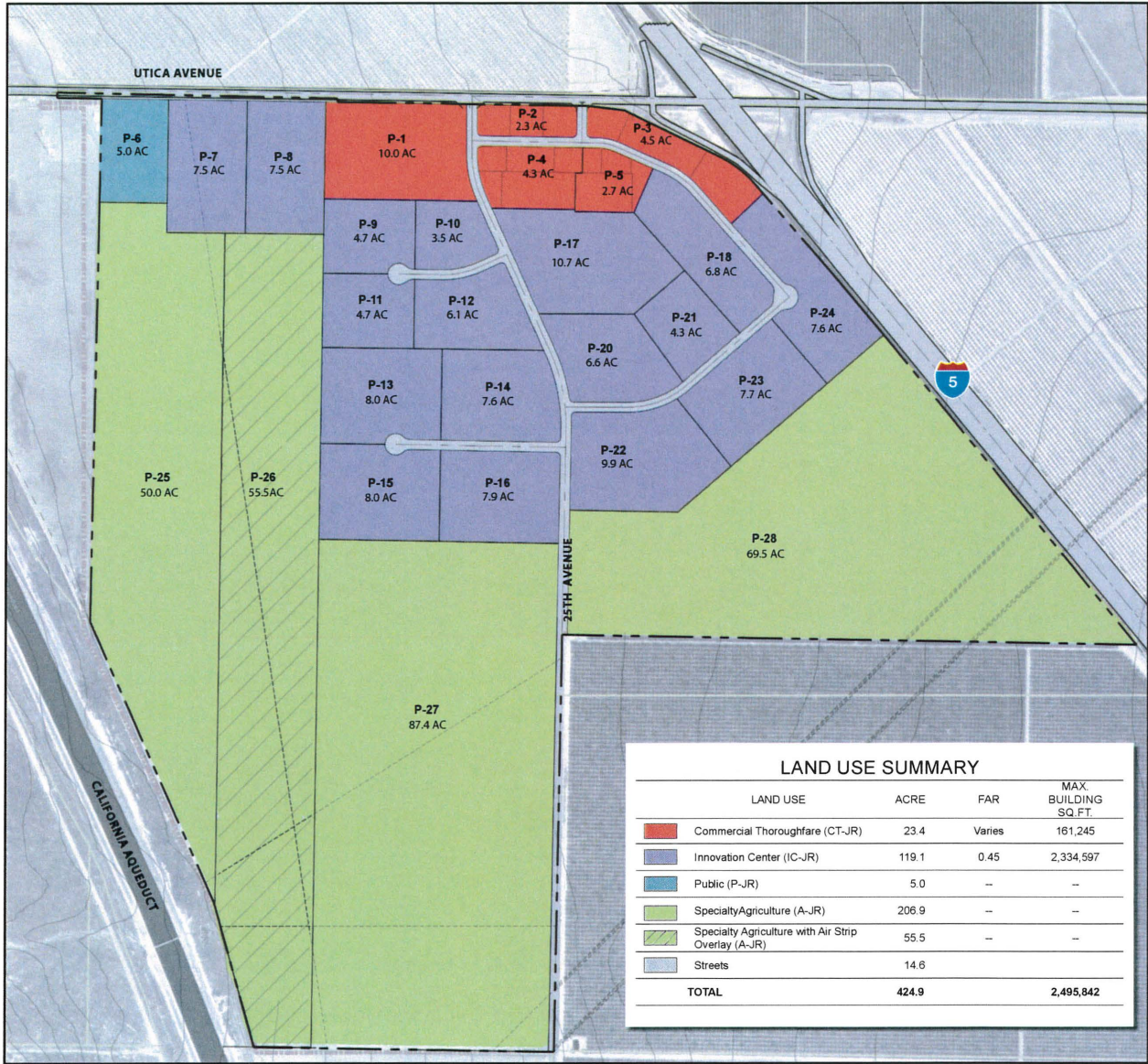
--- Plan Area Boundary

0 2,000
Scale (Feet)



Source: ESRI, 2019

Figure 3 - Specific Plan Land Use Plan



----- Plan Area Boundary

