

5.2. Agriculture and Forestry Resources

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state’s inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. **Would the project:**

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of State-wide 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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(c) 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))?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(e) 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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Significance criteria established by CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G.

5.2.1. Setting

The proposed Project is located in a developed area with no agricultural activity or forestry resources at or near the site. The Project site parcel and adjacent parcels to the east, south, and southeast are zoned General Commercial (CG) and other parcels in the vicinity are zoned as Public/Quasi Public (PQ), Planned Residential (RP), Single Family Residential (RS), and Open Space/Passive Recreation (OSPR) (City of Goleta, 2025). All adjacent parcels are designated as Urban and Built-Up Land under the California Department of Conservation (DOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) (DOC, 2022). The Applicant is requesting a rezone of the subject parcel from CG to Office Institutional (OI). The Project site parcel does not have a Williamson Act contract (DOC, 2024).

5.2.2. Regulatory Background

State

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). The DOC established the FMMP in 1982 to assess the location, quantity, and quality of agricultural lands and conversion of these lands to other uses. Every even-numbered year, FMMP issues a Farmland Conversion Report. FMMP data are used in elements of

some county and city general plans, in regional studies on agricultural land conversion, and in environmental documents as a way of assessing project-specific impacts on Prime Farmland.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) (formerly Soils Conservation Service), classifies notable agricultural lands as follows:

- **Prime Farmland:** Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical properties for the production of crops
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance:** Similar to Prime Farmland, but with minor shortcomings (e.g., steeper slopes, inability to hold water)
- **Unique Farmland:** Land of lesser quality soils, but recently used for the production of specific high economic value crops. Land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California

Williamson Act. The Williamson Act is intended to help preserve farmland by allowing counties 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 for a reduction in assessed property taxes. As stated in Section 51222 of the California Government Code, the minimum acreage requirement for individual parcels to enter into Williamson Act contracts is 100 acres.

Local

City of Goleta General Plan. The objectives of the City's General Plan agricultural and forestry policies are to preserve and protect agricultural lands, encourage future expanded agricultural production, and to protect, preserve, and enhance Goleta's Urban Forest. The following policies in the General Plan relate to the proposed Project (City of Goleta, 2006):

- **Policy LU 7.2 Purpose.** The Agriculture use designation shall identify land areas reserved for or used for agricultural production. The intent of this designation is to preserve lands used for agriculture, as well as lands with characteristics that make them suitable for agriculture, to meet the needs of present and future generations (Land Use Element, 2-22).
- **Policy CE 11.1 Agricultural Uses.** The City shall encourage agriculture and floriculture uses as part of its land use program, and expansion and intensification of agricultural activities (except for large-scale confined animal uses and the addition of structures that could reduce the productive capacity of soils) shall be supported (Conservation Element, 4-29).
- **Policy CE 11.2 Conversion of Agricultural Lands.** Conversion of agricultural lands as designated on the Land Use Plan Map (Figure 2-1) to other uses shall not be allowed. Lands designated for agriculture within the urban boundary shall be preserved for agricultural use (Conservation Element, 4-29).
- **Policy CE 14.2 Public Urban Forest Management.** Urban forests are recognized as a resource created and sustained for people. The urban forest is different from wildland forests in that it requires a higher level of management. The City considers the urban forest a valuable resource. As of 2005, it was estimated that the total number of trees situated within city street rights-of-way was about 7,500. The public portion of the urban forest shall be protected, preserved, and enhanced (Conservation Element, 4-34).

5.2.3. Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Thresholds of Significance

A significant impact to Agriculture and Forest Resources would occur if the proposed project resulted in any of the impacts noted in the above checklist. Additionally, according to the City of Goleta's *Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual* a project may pose a significant environmental effect on agricultural resources if it converts prime agricultural land to non-agricultural use or impairs the agricultural productivity of prime agricultural land.

Impact Analysis

(a) Would the project 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?

NO IMPACT. The proposed Project site and all the land in the vicinity are designated as Urban and Built-Up Land. The Project site is not designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Additionally, there are no areas adjacent to the Project site that have a Farmland designation. The Project would not result in any environmental changes that would result in or contribute to the conversion of any farmland to non-agricultural uses. Agriculture is not practiced in the immediate area of the site. The proposed Project would not result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use, therefore, there would be no impact.

(b) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

NO IMPACT. The proposed Project site is currently zoned General Commercial (CG) and the Applicant is requesting a rezone from CG to Office Institutional (OI); therefore, the Project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use.

The minimum acreage requirement for individual parcels to enter into Williamson Act contracts, as stated in Section 51222 of the California Government Code, is 10 acres. In addition, State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15206 does not regard the cancellation of less than 100 acres of land from Williamson Act to be of statewide, regional, or areawide significance.⁶ The Project site parcel is 2.1 acres and does not have, nor is eligible for, a Williamson Act contract (DOC, 2024). Additionally, none of the surrounding properties are subject to Williamson Act contracts, therefore, there would be no impact.

(c) Would the project 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))?

NO IMPACT. The proposed Project site is in an urban area and is not forested. The Project site and surrounding areas do not contain or support forested land. The proposed Project current zoning (CG) and future zoning (OI) would not conflict with zoning for forest land, timberland, or timber production, and therefore, there would be no impact.

(d) Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

NO IMPACT. As stated in (c), the proposed Project would not affect any forest land since the proposed Project site is located in an urban area that is not forested. There would be no conversion of forest land to non-forest use, and therefore, there would be no impact.

⁶ Section 15206(b)(3) states that projects of statewide, regional, or areawide significance include, "[a] project which would result in the cancellation of an open space contract made pursuant to the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act) for any parcel of 100 or more acres."

(e) Would the project 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?

NO IMPACT. As discussed in (a), (b), and (c), there is no Farmland, agriculture, or forestland along or near the proposed Project. The proposed Project would not result in changes in the environment that would result in the conversion to non-agricultural or non-forest uses, therefore, there would be no impact.

5.2.3.1. Impact Conclusions and Mitigation Measures

The proposed Project would not result in significant impacts to agriculture and forestry resources, and thus, no mitigation measures are recommended.