

4.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

This section analyzes potentially significant impacts related to agriculture and forest resources that could result from implementation of the project, which consists of the 2021 General Plan Update (GPU), Housing Element Update, and Climate Action Plan (CAP). The analysis area covers the entire city of Moreno Valley (city) and the sphere of influence (SOI), which are collectively referred to as the Planning Area. Within the analysis, Concept Areas refer to those areas where the GPU proposes land use changes as shown on Figure 3-1. This analysis relies on secondary sources and farmland mapping data from the California Department of Conservation (CDC).

4.2.1 Existing Conditions

The Planning Area has a long history of agricultural use dating back to when Moreno Valley was originally settled in the 1850s. However, a variety of economic factors have caused farming to decrease substantially over recent decades. The high cost of land, the high cost of water and energy, fragmented ownership patterns, and market conditions limit the potential return on investment, which have combined to disincentivize the continuation of agricultural production within the Planning Area. Consequently, urban development has encroached on agricultural land within the Planning Area over time, and it is no longer a strong component of the city's economy.

The Conservation Element of the City's 2006 General Plan identified agricultural production as an interim use. Objective 4.1 of the 2006 General Plan states that while the City should "retain agricultural open space as long as agricultural activities can be economically conducted, and are desired by agricultural interests," the City should also "provide for an orderly transition of agricultural lands to other urban and rural uses" (Moreno Valley 2006a). Due to the anticipated continuation of economic factors that would disincentivize agricultural production within the Planning Area, the 2006 Final EIR determined that impacts to agricultural resources would be significant and unavoidable (Moreno Valley 2006b). Since adoption of the 2006 General Plan, agricultural uses have continued to decrease within the Planning Area. No land within the Planning Area is designated as Agriculture on the City's existing land use map, and remaining farming uses in the Planning Area are limited to intermittent farming activities north of State Route 60 (SR-60) in the northeast portion of the city.

4.2.2 Applicable Regulatory Requirements

4.2.2.1 Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The CDC, Division of Land Resource Protection, identified important farmland throughout the state through its Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). The FMMP is non-regulatory and was developed to inventory land and provide categorical definitions of important farmlands and consistent and impartial data to decision makers for use in assessing present status, reviewing trends, and planning for the future of California's agricultural land resources. The program does not necessarily reflect local General Plan actions, urban needs, changing economic conditions, proximity to market, and other factors, which may be taken into consideration when government considers agricultural land use policies. The FMMP periodically prepares *Important Farmland Maps*, which are a hybrid of resource quality (soils) and land use information intended to document the suitability of land for agricultural production.

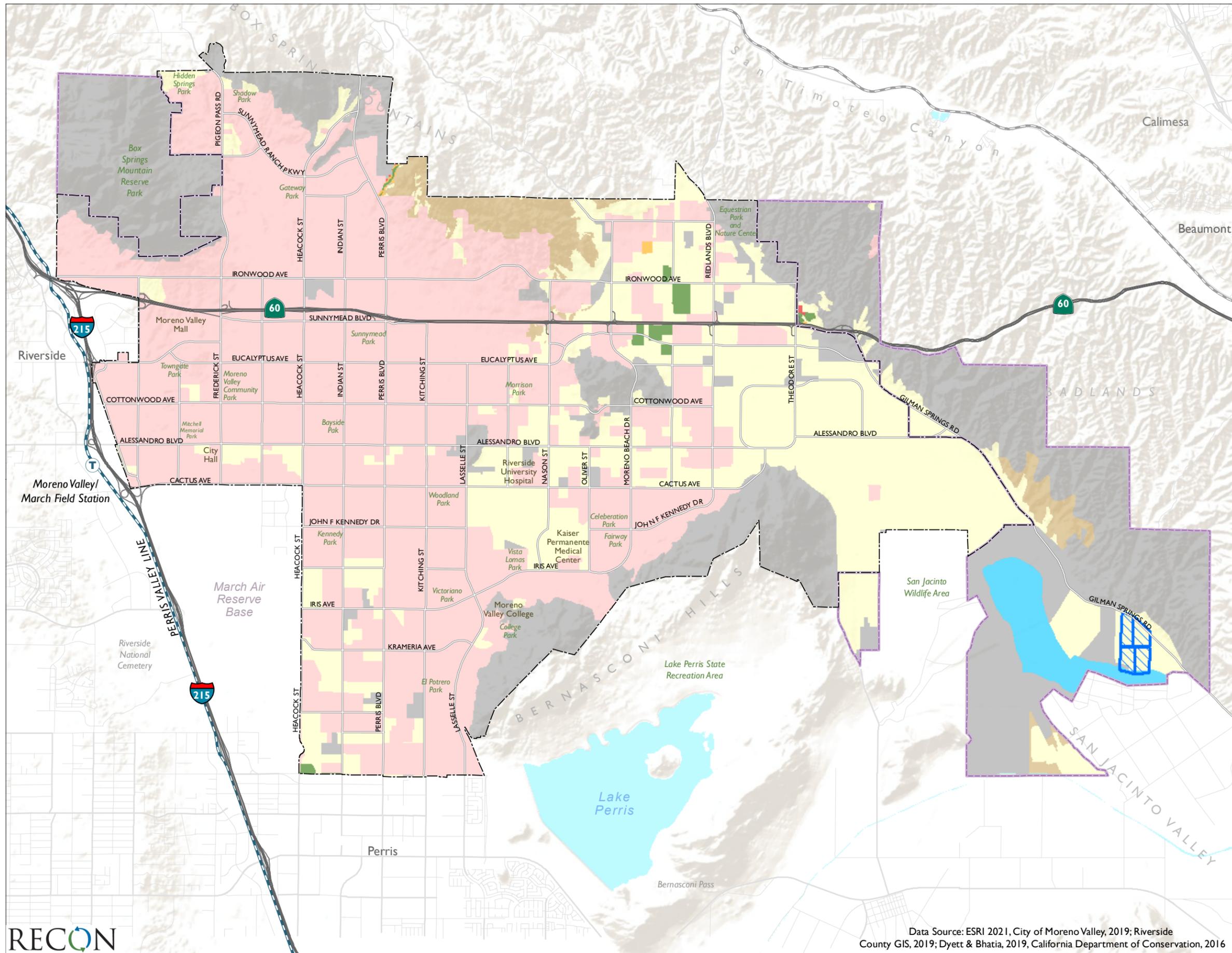
The last update for Riverside County that was completed reflects land use changes to agriculture, through the year 2016. Figure 4.2-1 presents the distribution of FMMP resources within the Planning Area. These include lands designated as Prime and Unique Farmlands, Farmland of Statewide and Local Importance, Grazing Land, Urban and Built-Up, and Other Land. A description of each of these categories is provided below.

a. Prime Farmland

Prime Farmland has the most favorable combination of physical and chemical features, enabling it to sustain long-term production of agricultural crops. This land possesses the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. In order to qualify for this classification, the land must have produced irrigated crops at some point during the two update cycles prior to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) mapping. The Planning Area contains approximately 157.0 acres of Prime Farmland.

b. Farmland of Statewide Importance

Farmland of Statewide Importance is similar to Prime Farmland; however, it possesses minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes and/or less ability to store moisture. In order to qualify for this classification, the land must have produced irrigated crops at some point during the two update cycles prior to NRCS mapping. The Planning Area contains approximately 8.0 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance.



- City of Moreno Valley
- Sphere of Influence
- Williamson Act Contract Lands
- FMMP**
- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Unique Farmland
- Grazing Land
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Water
- Urban and Built-Up Land
- Other Land

FIGURE 4.2-1
FMMP Important Farmlands

c. Unique Farmland

Unique Farmland is of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. Unique Farmland includes areas that do not meet the above stated criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, but that have been used for the production of specific high economic value crops during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high quality and/or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to current farming methods. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been farmed at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date. The Planning Area contains approximately 20.2 acres of Unique Farmland.

d. Farmland of Local Importance

Farmland of Local Importance is important to the local agricultural economy, as determined by the County Board of Supervisors and a local advisory committee. The County defines Farmland of Local Importance as land with the same characteristics as Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, with the exception of irrigation. The Planning Area contains approximately 9,688.6 acres of Farmland of Local Importance.

e. Grazing Land

Grazing Land is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities. The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres. The Planning Area contains approximately 1,098.7 acres of Grazing Land.

f. Urban and Built-Up Land

Urban and Built-Up Land consists of 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. The Planning Area contains approximately 19,208.7 acres of land designated as Urban and Built-Up Land.

g. Other Land

Other Land consists of 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 and borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and non-agricultural

land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land. The Planning Area contains approximately 12,036.7 acres of land designated as Other Land.

h. Water

Water consists of perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres. The Planning Area contains approximately 698.8 acres of land designated as Water.

Table 4.2-1 presents the approximate acreage of each FMMP category within the Planning Area, while Figure 4.2-1 presents the distribution of each FMMP category within the Planning Area.

Category	City	SOI	Total
Prime Farmland	146.1	10.9	157.0
Farmland of Statewide Importance	2.7	5.3	8.0
Unique Farmland	19.3	0.9	20.2
Farmland of Local Importance	8,399.8	1,288.8	9,688.6
Grazing Land	746.9	351.8	1,098.7
Urban and Built-Up Land	19,184.2	24.5	19,208.7
Other Land	4,498.0	7,538.6	12,036.7
Water	0.3	698.5	698.8
TOTAL	32,997.3	9,919.4	42,916.7
SOI = sphere of influence			

4.2.2.2 California Land Conservation Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, better known as the Williamson Act (California Administrative Code §51200 et seq.), creates an arrangement whereby private landowners contract with local governments to voluntarily restrict land to agricultural or related open space uses. In return, restricted parcels are assessed for property tax purposes, at a rate consistent with their actual use, rather than potential market value, which saves landowners from 20 percent to 75 percent in property tax liability each year. Local governments receive an annual subvention of forgone property tax revenues from the state via the Open Space Subvention Act of 1971 (California Government Code Section 16140-16154). Initially signed for a minimum 10-year period, the contracts are automatically renewed each year for a successive minimum 10-year period unless a notice of non-renewal is filed, or a contract cancellation is approved by the local government. Review of CDC, Division of Land Resource Protection, Conservation Program Support mapping data determined that there are no parcels protected by Williamson Act Contracts within the city. Four contiguous parcels totaling 144.75 acres located within the southeasternmost portion of the sphere of influence are protected by a Williamson Act Contract.

4.2.3 Methodologies for Determining Impacts

The impact evaluation began with a review of the history of agricultural resource production within the Planning Area, and mapping the acreage of each FMMP category within the Planning Area. A review of existing Williamson Act Contracts within the Planning Area was also conducted. The proposed Concept Areas were then overlain on the existing FMMP and Williamson Act Contract data to determine the approximate maximum acreage of impact to existing resources within the Planning Area. This was followed by an evaluation of how proposed GPU goals would serve to either preserve or impact agricultural resources within the Planning Area.

4.2.4 Basis for Determining Significance

Thresholds used to evaluate impacts related to air quality are based on applicable criteria in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (California Code of Regulations Sections 15000-15387), Appendix G. A significant impact related to agriculture and forestry resources would occur if the project would:

- 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;
- 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; or
- 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.

4.2.5 Impact Analysis

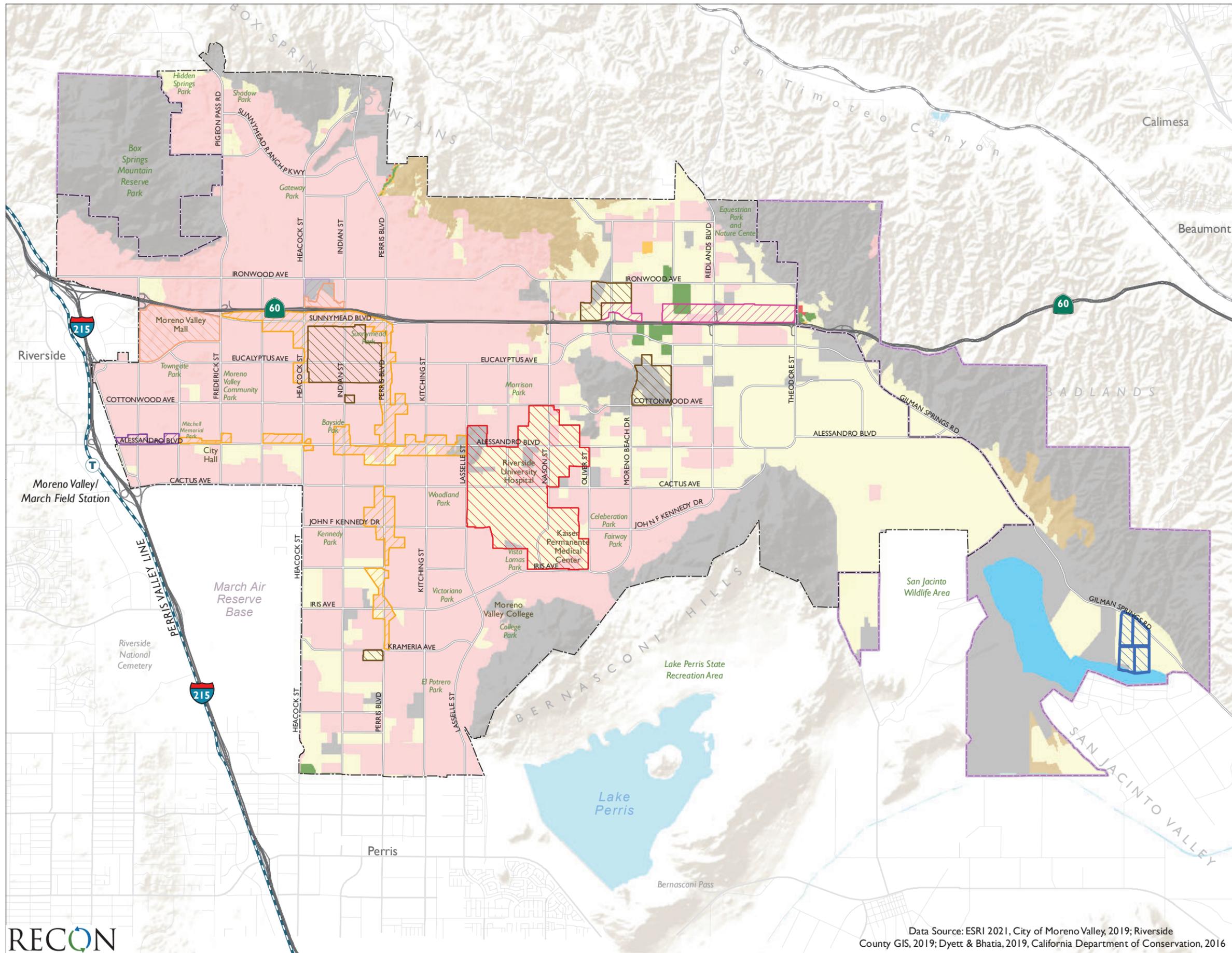
4.2.5.1 Topic 1: Important Farmland

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?

Implementation of development consistent with the GPU will result in the conversion of agricultural uses within the Planning Area to urban uses. As shown on Figure 4.2-2, the majority of the Planning Area is mapped as urban and Built-Up land. Pockets of Farmland of Local Importance are located within vacant lots in the urban area in addition to larger swaths of Farmland of Local Importance in the eastern portion of the city. A few areas of Prime Farmland are mapped in the northeast portion of the city near SR-60. Development under the GPU could result in conversion of these mapped Farmlands.

Like the proposed GPU, the 2006 General Plan does not propose any permanent preservation of agricultural land. The 2006 General Plan FEIR anticipated conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural urban uses, with some agricultural activities continuing as interim uses, as allowed under the City's zoning. While land outside of the Concept Areas may be subject to future development and conversion of Farmlands, this conversion was anticipated by the 2006 General Plan EIR. The land use changes proposed with the GPU are limited to the Concept Areas shown on Figure 4.2-2. The Concept Areas consist of clusters of vacant and underutilized land within the City limit. Table 4.2-2 presents the maximum approximate acreage of impact that would occur through development of the Concept Areas.

Table 4.2-2 Acreage of Maximum Impacts to FMMP Farmland within Concept Areas	
Category	Acres
Prime Farmland	15
Farmland of Statewide Importance	-
Unique Farmland	-
Farmland of Local Importance ¹	1,423
Grazing Land	2
Urban and Built-Up Land	1,528
Other Land	300
Water	0
TOTAL	3,267²
SOURCE: California Department of Conservation 2021. ¹ Since the City has not adopted a local definition for Farmland of Local Importance, mapping reflects the Riverside County definition of Farmland of Local Importance, dating back to before incorporation as a City. ² Totals may not add due to rounding	



- City of Moreno Valley
- Sphere of Influence
- Williamson Act Contract Lands
- General Plan Concept Areas**
- Mixed Use**
- Downtown Center
- Center Mixed Use
- Corridor Mixed Use
- Commercial/Office/Industrial**
- Highway Office/Commercial
- Business Park/Light Industrial
- Business Flex
- Residential**
- Residential Density Changes
- FMMP**
- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Unique Farmland
- Grazing Land
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Water
- Urban and Built-Up Land
- Other Land



FIGURE 4.2-2
FMMP Important
Farmlands Impacts

Development within the Downtown Center Concept Area would impact land mapped as Farmland of Local Importance, in addition to a few lots scattered among the Corridor Mixed Use areas. Although these areas were anticipated for development under the 2006 General Plan, a majority of the land remains vacant and available for agricultural use. As a result, implementation of the GPU could result in a significant impact to Farmland in these areas. As detailed in Table 4.2-2, approximately 1,423 acres of Farmland of Local Importance would be impacted within the Concept Areas. Additionally, future development within the Highway/Office Commercial Concept Area north of SR-60 would impact up to approximately 15.0 acres of Prime Farmland, which is farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long term agricultural production. Although this portion of the Highway/Office Commercial Concept Area currently is not within agricultural production, conversion of these soils designated as Prime Farmland to urban uses would be considered a significant impact. Furthermore, development throughout the city, including areas where no land use changes are proposed, would have the potential to convert land designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland to non-farming uses.

4.2.5.2 Topic 2: Agricultural Zoning and Williamson Act Contracts

Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract?

As the City does not have any exclusive agriculture zones, the project would not conflict with zoning for agricultural use. Although the project does not include any rezoning at this time, future rezoning is anticipated to bring the zones into consistency with the General Plan. Therefore, impacts related to changes to existing zoning would be less than significant. As described in Section 4.2.2.2 above, four contiguous parcels totaling 144.75 acres located within the southeasternmost portion of the sphere of influence is protected by a Williamson Act Contract. The project does not propose any land use changes on or in proximity to the Williamson Act parcels. Therefore, the project would not impact any properties protected by a Williamson Act Contract.

4.2.5.3 Topic 3: Forest Zoning

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])?

The City does not possess any zoning classifications for forestland, timberland, or timberland production zones. No impact would occur.

4.2.5.4 Topic 4: Forest Land

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

The Planning Area does not possess any forestland. No impact would occur.

4.2.5.5 Topic 5: Indirect Conversion

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?

As described in Section 4.2.1 above, the City does not have any lands designated as Agriculture and there is limited active farming remaining in the city, although some intermittent farming activities may still occur north of SR-60 in the northeast portion of the city. Within this area, the proposed Highway/Office Commercial Concept Area north of SR-60 would be located adjacent to Farmlands of Local Importance where interim agricultural uses may still be occurring. Additionally, the GPU would extend the Highway/Office Commercial designation north into existing R1 designated lands, which could further accelerate agricultural conversion beyond the existing 2006 General Plan. Future development with the Highway/Office Commercial Concept Area would generally be compatible with the interim agricultural uses since they do not include a residential component. However, future development could accelerate conversion of agricultural land due to the introduction of a higher intensity land use. As previously discussed, the 2006 General Plan EIR anticipated conversion of all agricultural land uses to urban and rural uses. Furthermore, the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element (OSRC) of the GPU includes the following to support preservation of agricultural resources.

Goal

OSRC-1: Preserve, protect, and enhance natural resources, habitats, and watersheds in Moreno Valley and the surrounding area, promoting responsible management practices.

Policies

OSRC.1-1 Retain the maximum feasible amount of open space and agricultural land in areas outside the city surrounding Moreno Valley, recognizing its habitat value as well as its contribution to the local economy, quality of life, healthy air quality, and community character.

OSRC.1-6 Where agriculture exists within the City limits, allow uses to continue until urban development occurs on these properties and support appropriate commercial activities (i.e. horse stables, agritourism) in rural areas in and around Moreno Valley.

Nonetheless, implementation of the project would intensify uses within the Planning Area in a manner that would further reduce the feasibility of agricultural production. Furthermore, the continued development of land under the land use designations that would remain unchanged could also indirectly affect the feasibility of agricultural production through urbanization.

4.2.6 Cumulative Analysis

4.2.6.1 Topic 1: Important Farmland

The project would result in the continued decline in important farmland, which is consistent with trends in the broader region. It is anticipated that the amount of important farmland throughout Riverside County would continue to decline over time as population growth and subsequent development would continue to convert important farmland to non-agricultural uses. Therefore, the project would contribute to a cumulatively significant impact on important farmlands.

4.2.6.2 Topic 2: Agricultural Zoning and Williamson Act Contracts

The project would not result in direct impacts related to agricultural zoning or Williamson Act contracts, and therefore would not contribute to a cumulatively significant impact.

4.2.6.3 Topic 3: Forest Zoning

The City does not possess any zoning classifications for forestland, timberland, or timberland production zones, and therefore would not contribute to a cumulative impact.

4.2.6.4 Topic 4: Forest Land

The Planning Area does not possess any forestland, and therefore would not contribute to a cumulative impact.

4.2.6.5 Topic 5: Indirect Conversion

The project would result in the continuation of development pressures that would indirectly reduce the feasibility of agricultural production, which is consistent with trends in the broader region. It is anticipated that indirect conversion of farmland would increase throughout the region due to population growth and subsequent development. This continued growth would result in land use conflicts that could indirectly impact agricultural resources and economic pressures that would be a disincentive to the continuation of agricultural production within the region. Therefore, the project would contribute to cumulatively significant impacts related to the indirect conversion of potential farmland to non-agricultural resources.

4.2.7 Significance of Impacts before Mitigation

4.2.7.1 Topic 1: Important Farmland

Implementation of the GPU would impact Prime Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance within proposed Concept Areas. Furthermore, the continued development of properties under the land use designations that would remain unchanged would also have the potential to convert additional land designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland to non-farming uses. Although the conversion of Farmland was anticipated and evaluated under the 2006 General Plan EIR, some vacant FMMP designations remain that could be converted to non-agricultural uses, which would be considered significant.

4.2.7.2 Topic 2: Agricultural Zoning and Williamson Act Contracts

No conflicts with agricultural zoning would occur as the City does not have any exclusive agriculture zones and the project does not include any rezoning. Additionally, the GPU does not propose any land use changes within or adjacent to a Williamson Act Contract. Therefore, impacts related to agricultural zoning and Williamson Act Contracts would be less than significant.

4.2.7.3 Topic 3: Forest Zoning

No Impact would occur. No mitigation would be required.

4.2.7.4 Topic 4: Forest Land

No Impact would occur. No mitigation would be required.

4.2.7.5 Topic 5: Indirect Conversion

Implementation of the project would intensify uses within the Planning Area in a manner that would reduce the feasibility of agricultural production. Furthermore, the continued development of land under the land use designations that would remain unchanged could also indirectly affect the feasibility of agricultural production through continued urbanization. Therefore, the project would potentially result in indirect conversion of potential farmland resources to non-agricultural uses, which would be considered a significant impact.

4.2.8 Mitigation

4.2.8.1 Topic 1: Important Farmland

Feasible mitigation that would meet the objectives of the project does not exist to mitigate direct and cumulative impacts to important farmland to a level less than significant. While enrollment in Williamson Act Contracts would serve to preserve such resources, these contracts are voluntary, and the City could only encourage property owners to participate in the program. Furthermore, property owners would have the option not to renew contracts, which would mean that any protection under the program may only be temporary. The project, like the 2006 General Plan, does not propose any permanent preservation of agricultural land, but allows agriculture as an interim use prior to development. Thus, preservation of agricultural resources would not be feasible as it would be inconsistent with General Plan goals and EIR project objectives.

4.2.8.2 Topic 2: Agricultural Zoning and Williamson Act Contracts

Impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

4.2.8.3 Topic 3: Forest Zoning

No Impact would occur. No mitigation is required.

4.2.8.4 Topic 4: Forest Land

No Impact would occur. No mitigation is required.

4.2.8.5 Topic 5: Indirect Conversion

Feasible mitigation that would meet the objectives of the project does not exist to mitigate direct and cumulative impacts related to indirect conversion of potential farmland non-agricultural uses to a level less than significant. While enrollment in Williamson Act Contracts would serve to preserve such resources, these contracts are voluntary, and the City could only encourage property owners to participate in the program. Furthermore, property owners would have the option not to renew contracts, which would mean that any protection under the program may only be temporary. The project, like the 2006 General Plan, does not propose any permanent preservation of agricultural land, but allows agriculture as an interim use prior to development. Thus, preservation of agricultural resources in order to avoid agriculture interface conflicts and conversion pressure would not be feasible as it would be inconsistent with General Plan goals and EIR project objectives.

4.2.9 Significance of Impacts after Mitigation

4.2.9.1 Topic 1: Important Farmland

No feasible mitigation is available. Impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

4.2.9.2 Topic 2: Agricultural Zoning and Williamson Act Contracts

Impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

4.2.9.3 Topic 3: Forest Zoning

No Impact would occur. No mitigation is required.

4.2.9.4 Topic 4: Forest Land

No Impact would occur. No mitigation is required.

4.2.9.5 Topic 5: Indirect Conversion

No feasible mitigation is available. Impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.