

## 3.1 Land Use and Agriculture

This section presents the environmental setting and evaluates the potential impacts on land use and agricultural resources in the Lemoore Planning Area from implementation of the proposed General Plan. Information related to population and employment projections and growth-inducing impacts is provided in Section 5.1 of this EIR.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

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#### PHYSICAL SETTING

Much of the existing land use pattern found in the Planning Area owes its origin to Lemoore's evolution as an agriculture center and subsequent transformation driven by the growth of Naval Air Station Lemoore and development in the Central Valley. The Downtown is characteristic of an older central business district, incorporating a mix of retail, public facilities and older residential neighborhoods. Further away from the City center, larger commercial, agriculture and newer residential neighborhoods can be found. Industrial land is located at two areas—along side the old San Joaquin Valley Rail Road and to the south of Iona Avenue. Land for community use such as parks and schools are distributed throughout the Planning Area in close proximity to residential neighborhoods.

#### Existing Land Use

The existing land use pattern in Lemoore is illustrated in **Figure 3.1-1** and summarized in **Table 3.1-1**. Agriculture/rural land is the most significant land use within the Planning Area, occupying 4,574 acres or 37 percent of the land. Vacant land is the second most prominent land use within the Planning Area, comprising 2,082 acres or 17 percent of the land. Of the residential category, Low Density Single Family Residential is the most significant, occupying roughly 1,146 acres or nine percent of the land. Most of it occurs within the incorporated area, however a few uses are just outside City Limits. Very Low Density Residential is the next most significant residential land use, comprising 399 acres. Other residential uses include 35 acres of Mobile Home Parks, 34 acres of Low Density Multi-family Residential, and 115 acres of Multi-family Residential.

The Downtown District, as delineated in the existing General Plan, is located in the area bordered by the railroad track, Hill Street, B Street, and Lemoore Avenue. It is surrounded by older residential neighborhoods, commercial and warehouse uses, and the San Joaquin Valley Rail Road. The major industrial and commercial land areas are located along SR-41. Industrial land only occupies 304 acres or two percent of the Planning Area.

**Table 3.1-1 Existing Land Use within the Planning Area**

| <i>Land Use</i>                                     | <i>Incorporated</i> |                | <i>Unincorporated</i> |                | <i>Total Planning Area</i> |                         |
|---|---------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
|   | <i>Acres</i>        | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Acres</i>          | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Total Acres</i>         | <i>Percent of Total</i> |
| Very Low Density Residential                        | 116                 | 2              | 283                   | 4              | 399                        | 3                       |
| Low Density Single Family Residential               | 1,081               | 20             | 65                    | 1              | 1,146                      | 9                       |
| Low Density Multi-family Residential                | 34                  | 1              | -                     | 0              | 34                         | 0                       |
| Mobile Home Park                                    | 25                  | 0              | 10                    | 0              | 35                         | 0                       |
| Multi-family Residential                            | 115                 | 2              | -                     | 0              | 115                        | 1                       |
| <i>Residential Subtotal</i>                         | <i>1,371</i>        | <i>25</i>      | <i>358</i>            | <i>5</i>       | <i>1,729</i>               | <i>14</i>               |
| Commercial  | 31                  | 1              | -                     | 0              | 31                         | 0                       |
| Commercial Services                                 | 20                  | 0              | 1                     | 0              | 21                         | 0                       |
| Retail  | 40                  | 1              | -                     | 0              | 40                         | 0                       |
| Auto Sales/Services                                 | 43                  | 1              | 6                     | 0              | 49                         | 0                       |
| Visitor Services                                    | 8                   | 0              | -                     | 0              | 8                          | 0                       |
| Professional Office                                 | 8                   | 0              | -                     | 0              | 8                          | 0                       |
| <i>Commercial/Office Subtotal</i>                   | <i>151</i>          | <i>3</i>       | <i>7</i>              | <i>0</i>       | <i>157</i>                 | <i>1</i>                |
| Industrial  | 298                 | 5              | 6                     | 0              | 304                        | 2                       |
| Warehouse   | 38                  | 1              | -                     | 0              | 38                         | 0                       |
| <i>Industrial Subtotal</i>                          | <i>336</i>          | <i>6</i>       | <i>6</i>              | <i>0</i>       | <i>342</i>                 | <i>3</i>                |
| Agriculture/Rural                                   | 158                 | 3              | 4,416                 | 65             | 4,574                      | 37                      |
| Parks/Recreation                                    | 287                 | 5              | 13                    | 0              | 301                        | 2                       |
| Open Space  | 8                   | 0              | -                     | 0              | 8                          | 0                       |
| Wetlands  | 132                 | 2              | 534                   | 8              | 667                        | 5                       |
| <i>Parks/ Open Space Subtotal</i>                   | <i>586</i>          | <i>11</i>      | <i>4,963</i>          | <i>73</i>      | <i>5,550</i>               | <i>45</i>               |
| Public/Institutional                                | 281                 | 5              | 16                    | 0              | 298                        | 2                       |
| Development Projects                                | 570                 | 11             | -                     | 0              | 570                        | 5                       |
| Vacant  | 1,059               | 19             | 1,024                 | 15             | 2,082                      | 17                      |
| Transportation, Communication, Utility and Drainage | 245                 | 5              | 41                    | 1              | 286                        | 2                       |
| Roads or Other Right-of-Ways                        | 832                 | 15             | 381                   | 6              | 1,212                      | 10                      |
| <i>Other Subtotal</i>                               | <i>2,987</i>        | <i>55</i>      | <i>1,463</i>          | <i>22</i>      | <i>4,449</i>               | <i>36</i>               |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>5,430</b>        | <b>100</b>     | <b>6,797</b>          | <b>100</b>     | <b>12,227</b>              | <b>100</b>              |

Source: Kings County Association of Governments, Dyett &amp; Bhatia, 2007.

## **Housing**

Since the last General Plan was adopted in 1992, Lemoore has been growing at a healthy pace, with both the population and number of housing units growing annually at approximately four percent. As of early 2007, there are approximately 7,860 housing units in the City.

Growth prospects are likely to be strong over the next 23 years, and near-term needs are being met by a number of residential and non-residential projects currently being constructed or under development review. In the pipeline for residential development are 20 housing projects, which together will create approximately 1,710 new housing units on 433 acres of land. These residential units are mainly single family homes and multi-family condominiums. Most projects are located at the north-east and western portion of the Planning Area where there is ample land suitable for residential use.

A total of seven non-residential projects are also in planning phases or under construction. When fully completed, they will create approximately 327,500 square feet of new commercial, industrial, and public space on 127 acres of land at an average floor area ratio of 0.09. These include a new Wal-Mart Super Center and West Hills College expansion at the western part of Lemoore, facilities for Coker Ellsworth, Chevron, Nelson Majors, Walgreens, Auto Zone, Velero Gas, a church for the Lemoore Church of the Nazarene, as well as other projects all over the city.

## **Agricultural Production**

Kings County is ranked 9th in California in agricultural production. The region contains rich soils, available water, and climatic conditions that allow farming activity. Agriculture is especially significant to the economy of California's Central Valley where it accounts for 21 percent of all income and 25 percent of all employment (University of California Agricultural Issues Center, 2000). In 2005, the value of agricultural products sold by Kings County totaled nearly \$1,407 million (California Agriculture Resource Directory, 2006). The leading commodities include milk, cotton, cattle, and pistachios.

Most of the outlying areas to the north, east and south of Lemoore are in agricultural use, consisting mainly of row crops. Dairies can also be found to the southern and eastern portion of the Planning Area, as shown in **Figure 3.1-2**. Lemoore is also home to two of the largest farm produce factories in the County – Leprino Foods and SK Foods. The former specializes in the production of cheese and milk products while the latter is a leading manufacturer of tomato products.

### ***Farmland Soils***

The California Department of Conservation classifies soils based on their agricultural potential into seven farmland categories:

- *Prime Farmland*. Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. The 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 similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. The land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- *Unique Farmland.* Land of lesser quality soils used for the production of the State’s leading agricultural crops. 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 cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- *Farmland of Local Importance.* Land of importance to the local economy, as defined by each county’s Board of Supervisors and a local advisory committee.
- *Grazing Land.* Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to grazing livestock.
- *Urban and Built-up Land.* Land occupied by structures or infrastructure to accommodate a building density of at least one unit and one-half acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel.
- *Other Land.* Low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry; water bodies smaller than forty acres and other land uses not falling into the other categories.

As shown in Table 3.1-2, the majority of agricultural lands in the Planning Area are classified as Farmland of Statewide Importance by the Department of Conservation. This type of farmland comprises approximately 5,770 acres or 47 percent of the Planning Area. Urban and Built-Up Land occupies the second most significant proportion of the Planning Area, comprising 4,630 acres or 38 percent of the Planning Area. Prime Farmland is the third most common land use, comprising 520 acres or 4 percent of the Planning Area. Other types of farmland are statistically negligible in Lemoore. Their geographical distribution is shown in Figure 3.1-2.

**Table 3.1-2 Farmland in Lemoore Planning Area, 2007**

| <i>Land Use Category</i>         | <i>Acreage</i> | <i>Percent of Planning Area</i> | <i>Acres in UGB</i> | <i>Percent of UGB</i> |
|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Prime Farmland                   | 519            | 4                               | 251                 | 3                     |
| Farmland of Statewide Importance | 5,767          | 47                              | 3,044               | 40                    |
| Farmland of Local Importance     | 68             | 1                               | 152                 | 2                     |
| Unique Farmland                  | 27             | <1                              | 15                  | <1                    |
| Grazing Land                     | 105            | 1                               | 17                  | <1                    |
| Urban and Built-Up Land          | 4,634          | 38                              | 3,508               | 46                    |
| Other Land                       | 1,107          | 9                               | 696                 | 9                     |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>12,230</b>  | <b>100</b>                      | <b>7,683</b>        | <b>100</b>            |

Source: Department of Conservation: Division of Land Resource Protection, Dyett & Bhatia, 2007.

Figure 3.1-1 Existing Land Use (Front)

Figure 3.1-1 Existing Land Use (Back)

Figure 3.1-2 Farmland (Front)

Figure 3.1-2 Farmland (Back)



### *Agriculture Protection Issues*

Between the years 2000 and 2004, over 6,000 acres or about 1 percent of all farmland in Kings County was converted to other uses. This conversion resulted in the loss of about 1,950 acres of Prime Farmland. The conversion does not mean all land was converted to urban use, as some may be re-categorized to other farm categories after being left idle for several update cycles. Despite the loss of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique Farmland saw net gains of 600 and 4,030 acres respectively between 2000 and 2004.

## **REGULATORY SETTING**

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The primary tool currently guiding land use decision-making within the City is the 1992 General Plan Land Use Element, with zoning regulations providing additional detail. Within the Downtown area, decisions on urban design and site specific land use also are guided by the 1993 Downtown Revitalization Plan. Development of land outside of Lemoore in unincorporated areas is guided by the Kings County 1993 General Plan and County zoning. These plans and regulations are described briefly below.

### **State Regulations**

*Williamson Act.* The California Land Conservation Act, better known as the Williamson Act, was enacted by the State Legislature in 1965 to preserve agricultural and open space lands. The Williamson Act program allows city governments to define compatible land uses for contract lands within their jurisdiction, as long as those areas are consistent with the principles of compatibility set forth in Government Code, Section 51238.1. The program permits property tax adjustments for landowners who contract with the County to keep their land in agricultural production for at least 10 years. These contracts are automatically renewed for 10-year periods until a non-renewal application is filed. The filing of a non-renewal application will start a 10-year phase out period in which the land will remain in agricultural or open-space uses. At the end of the period, the contract expires and the owner's land will revert to uses dictated by city zoning. If land is put into non-agricultural use before the 10-year phase-out period is complete, the County currently charges a 12.5 percent tax on the reassessed valuation of the property.

Within the Planning Area, approximately 5,900 acres of land are designated as Williamson Act land. These lands are made up of highly productive farmland, less productive farmland, and open space. A little over 2,000 of those acres are within the UGB, or about 35 percent of all Williamson Act land in the Planning Area.

*State Planning Law.* State law requires each California municipality to prepare a general plan. A general plan is defined as “a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning.” State requirements call for general plans that “comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency.” While allowing considerable flexibility, State planning laws do establish some requirements for the issues that general plans must address. The California Government Code establishes both the content of general plans and rules for their adoption and subsequent amendment. Together, State law and judicial decisions establish three overall guidelines for general plans:

- *The General Plan Must Be Comprehensive.* This requirement has two aspects. First, the general plan must be geographically comprehensive. That is, it must apply throughout the entire incorporated area and it should include other areas that the City determines are relevant to its planning. Second, the general plan must address the full range of issues that affect the City's physical development.
- *The General Plan Must Be Internally Consistent.* This requirement means that the general plan must fully integrate its separate parts and relate them to each other without conflict. “Horizontal” consistency applies both to figures and diagrams as well as general plan text. It applies to data and analysis as well as policies. All adopted portions of the general plan, whether required by State law or not, have equal legal weight. None may supersede another, so the general plan must resolve conflicts among the provisions of each element.
- *The General Plan Must Be Long-Range.* Because anticipated development will affect the City and the people who live or work there for years to come, State law requires every general plan to take a long-term perspective.

### **Local Plans and Regulations**

*Kings County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).* LAFCO's were created in 1963 by the Knox – Nesbit Act and amended by the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. LAFCO's are responsible for coordinating logical and timely changes in local governmental boundaries such as annexations to cities. The Commission in Kings County is comprised of two City Council members from the four incorporated cities, two Board of Supervisors members and a public member chosen by the four City and County commissioners. The objectives of LAFCO are to encourage the orderly formation of local government agencies, preserve agricultural land resources, discourage urban sprawl, and provide a sphere of influence for each City and special district in the County.

*Lemoore General Plan (1992).* The 1992 Lemoore General Plan contains eight Elements: Land Use; Circulation; Public Utilities and Facilities, Housing Environment, Parks and Recreation, Noise Comparability, Safety, and Resource Conservation. The Housing element was updated in 2003 in a joint effort with the Cities of Avenal, Corcoran, and Hanford, and Kings County. The Land Use Element provides a land use framework for development within City limits, including the establishment of density standards for different land uses. The 1992 General Plan does not provide density standards for agriculture land uses.

The Land Use Element was updated in 2002 to include 1,400 acres of additional land annexed in 1997 and other new information. The 1992 General Plan, with the exception of the Housing Element, will be replaced by the proposed 2030 General Plan.

*Lemoore Downtown Revitalization Plan (1993).* The Lemoore Downtown Revitalization Plan describes land uses, urban design, financing and development strategies, and supporting policies designed to improve Downtown Lemoore. The overall objective of the Revitalization Plan is to facilitate the development, conservation and revitalization of the Downtown area. The Revitalization Plan serves as a bridge between the General Plan and individual development plans by providing specific regulations which are tailored to meet the needs of Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods.

*Kings County Year 1993 General Plan.* Adopted in 1993, the Kings County General Plan guides land use decisions in the unincorporated areas around the City of Lemoore. The Plan describes the desired location, distribution, and extent of land for such uses as agriculture, housing, recreation and natural resource areas through the year 2010. One of the main themes of its Land Use Element is to allow cities to annex lands to accommodate urban growth while protecting agricultural lands to ensure each City's Sphere of Influence remains unique.

## **IMPACT ANALYSIS**

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### **SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

A significant land use impact would occur with full implementation of the proposed General Plan if it would do one or more of the following<sup>1</sup>:

- Physically divide an established community;
- Displace substantial numbers of existing housing or people;
- Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project;
- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use;
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract; or
- Involve other changes which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

Changes in land use are not, in and of themselves, environmental impacts. Land use changes are impacts only relative to the prior use of the site (i.e., conversion of open space or farmland, an irreplaceable resource, or displacement of homes) or the surrounding usage and character (i.e., division of an established community).

### **METHODOLOGY AND ASSUMPTIONS**

The proposed General Plan Land Use Diagram was compared to existing land use conditions to determine whether implementation of the proposed Plan would trigger any impacts listed in the significance criteria. To calculate future land use development, the analysis assumed full buildout of the proposed Plan. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) programs were employed to quantify potential changes in land use due to the proposed General Plan. Farmland resource acreages were assessed based on the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), a biennial report and mapping resource on the conversion of farmland and grazing land. Using FMMP data, the proposed Plan was analyzed for potential conversion of important farmland, conflict with zoning designations, conversion of Williamson

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<sup>1</sup> For this and all other impact analyses to follow, the significance criteria listed are those from the CEQA guidelines that are applicable to the proposed General Plan and that are also best suited to be evaluated in the section. When a significance criterion is not evaluated in a section, but it is relevant to the proposed General Plan, it is evaluated in another, more relevant section (e.g. the CEQA land use significance criterion related to conflict with applicable habitat or natural communities conservation plans is not evaluated in the land use section but rather in the biological resources section of this EIR.)

Act contract lands, and other changes resulting from the Plan that will remove farmlands from agricultural production.

To analyze the significance of each impact, the proposed General Plan goals and policies were considered to determine if significant physical impacts will still remain with General Plan buildout and full implementation of all policies.

## **SUMMARY OF IMPACTS**

The proposed General Plan will not create land use patterns that will impose a nuisance, hazard, or unhealthy condition upon adjacent uses. Planned uses are expected to be compatible with one another because General Plan policies establish requirements for compatible development, including buffering, screening, and performance standards. Implementation of the proposed General Plan also would not create a land use pattern that physically divides an established community, nor would it displace substantial numbers of housing or people. In fact, the new General Plan would accommodate additional housing and employment opportunities at appropriate locations.

Following General Plan adoption, zoning and other regulatory tools will be amended to conform to the adopted General Plan. As a result, there will be no foreseeable conflict with adopted policies, plans and programs of the City.

The only adverse land use impact is the potential conversion of agricultural land, which will affect prime agricultural soils and Williamson Act lands (agricultural preserves). Although there are policies in the proposed General Plan to reduce this impact, it will remain significant and unavoidable.

## **IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

### **Impact**

#### **3.1-1 Buildout of the proposed General Plan would convert substantial amounts of Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use. (*Significant and Unavoidable*)**

To allow the City to grow, some nearby agricultural land will need to be converted to urban uses over the next 23 years. While development will occur on vacant infill parcels, most of the new development will need to occur on existing agricultural land on the northern, western and southern edges of the City. As shown in Table 3.1-3, five categories of farmland will be affected by this change in land use. In all, approximately 2,800 acres of existing agriculture land is within the UGB and would be converted to urban uses at full buildout of the proposed General Plan. The vast majority, approximately 2,520 acres, of this agriculture land fall under the Farmland of Statewide Importance category. Small amounts of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land would also be converted. (Of the total agricultural land conversion, about 74 percent or just over 2,000 acres, are in Williamson Act contracts.)

Although the conversion of these agricultural lands is considered significant, it is important to note that the General Plan includes policies to prevent excessive agricultural land conversion, such as directing growth away from areas of Prime Farmland, focusing on opportunities on infill

development, establishing a UGB to encourage compact development, and only allowing annexations contiguous to developed land. Since the City is surrounded by agricultural lands, conversion of farmland is unavoidable in view of the City’s desire to grow beyond its current size.

**Table 3.1-3 Farmland Conversion with Proposed General Plan Buildout (acres)**

| Classification                   | Remaining after General |               | Net loss     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|
|                                  | Existing                | Plan Buildout |              |
| Prime Farmland                   | 519                     | 326           | 193          |
| Farmland of Statewide Importance | 5,767                   | 3,245         | 2,522        |
| Farmland of Local Importance     | 68                      | 7             | 61           |
| Unique Farmland                  | 27                      | 13            | 15           |
| Grazing Land                     | 105                     | 93            | 12           |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>6,490</b>            | <b>3,680</b>  | <b>2,800</b> |

Source: Department of Conservation: Division of Land Resource Protection, Dyett & Bhatia, 2007.

*Proposed General Plan Policies that Reduce the Impact*

LU-I-1 Establish an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) in the General Plan Land Use Diagram that limits the extent of urban development up to the year 2030.

*For purposes of this policy, “urban development” means development requiring one or more basic municipal services including, but not limited to, water service, sewer service, improved storm drainage facilities, fire hydrants and other physical public facilities and services. The General Plan reserves enough land to satisfy growth demand up to the year 2030.*

LU-I-2 Seek LAFCO approval of a Sphere of Influence (SOI) line that is co-terminus with the General Plan Urban Growth Boundary.

*The Sphere of Influence line will represent the ultimate edge of urban development in Lemoore through 2030, beyond which development will remain rural in nature and without urban services. This policy is intended to protect surrounding agricultural land, and promote compact development, and prohibit annexation outside the boundary.*

LU-I-3 Require contiguous development within the Sphere of Influence (SOI) unless it can be demonstrated that land which is contiguous to urban development is unavailable or development is economically infeasible.

*The City desires to prevent leapfrog development where development skips over available land to outlying and isolated areas. Contiguous development will reduce sprawl, safeguard agriculture land, and reduce the cost of extending services.*

CD-I-1 Establish an open country character for new development facing the countryside along Marsh Drive, the Lemoore Canal, and portions north of West Glendale Avenue, Belle Haven Drive, Industry Way, Idaho Avenue, Jackson Avenue, and other areas generally illustrated in figures 3-1, 3-2, and 3-3 of the General Plan, to demarcate the urban edge. This will be accomplished by:

- Enforcing a 50 foot minimum setback requirement on new development along these roads (see figures 3-2 and 3-3);
- Creating a 30 foot wide landscaped buffer within the public right-of-way or landscape easement (see figures 3-2 and 3-3);
- Planting multiple layers of trees closely for visual impermeability, and using drought resistant indigenous trees where appropriate;
- Providing only minimal street lighting, at a rate that is 50 percent of comparable City standard;
- Prohibiting the use of solid walls along these edges (all fences must be visually permeable); and
- Ensuring the scale and character of development does not overwhelm the surroundings by stepping down building heights at the edges.

PU-I-10 Require that developers of agricultural land to be annexed to the City offer the water rights associated with this land to the City.

COS-I-1 Protect lands designated for Agricultural/ Rural/ Conservation uses with appropriate zoning consistent with the General Plan.

COS-I-2 Identify a secure funding mechanism for the purchase of conservation easements to support farmland preservation and a green space buffer on County land surrounding the Lemoore Planning Area, with particular emphasis on land east of the City.

*There are several ways to obtain funding for farmland conservation easements, including but not limited to, development impact fees, transfers of development rights (TDRs), tax allocations/appropriations, or bonds. Each tool has strengths and weaknesses and the options must be evaluated to choose the best one for Lemoore. Implementation will necessitate cooperation with the County, usually in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and would also benefit from guidance through applicable land trust organizations such as the American Farmland Trust or the California Council of Land Trusts.*

COS-I-3 Work with the County to evaluate the need for and feasibility of creating a County Farmland Trust or Open Space District to negotiate open space transactions, hold easements, pursue local open space and farmland preservation policies.

*A land trust or open space district would be a voter-established entity with authority to hold and manage lands for farmland preservation and conservation purposes. Donation of easements to a land trust or open space district may validate easements for tax purposes.*

COS-I-7 Work with Kings County to preserve State-designated Prime Farmland, retain agricultural use designations and encourage the continuation of farming activities outside the City.

*See also farmland conservation policy recommendations under Open Space.*

- COS-I-8 Require developers to prepare detailed stormwater run-off analyses and mitigation plans for any new development adjoining existing Prime Farmland, grassland or wetlands.
- COS-I-9 Require developers to inform subsequent buyers of potential continued agricultural production and the lawful use of agricultural chemicals, including pesticides and fertilizers adjacent to the new development site.

*A “Right to Farm” acknowledgement will be required of all purchasers of lots adjacent to farmland.*

### ***Mitigation Measures***

Conversion of agricultural land to urban use is not directly mitigable, aside from preventing development altogether. In order to minimize the cumulative impact of converting prime agricultural lands, beyond the mitigation already provided in the proposed General Plan policies identified above, the City could require developers requesting annexation of Prime Farmland to secure conservation easements elsewhere on agricultural land of similar quality to that within the proposed development sites. Although this mitigation measure would not reduce the amount of Prime Farmland converted under the proposed General Plan, it would help ensure protection of remaining Prime Farmland.

### **Impact**

- 3.1-2 Buildout of the proposed General Plan will conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use and result in the conversion of lands under Williamson Act contract to urban use. (Significant and Unavoidable)**

At full buildout of the General Plan, just over 2,000 of the existing 5,900 acres of Williamson Act lands within the Planning Area would be converted to urban use. As shown in Figure 3.1-2, most of these areas are located near the southwest portion of the City, where a mix of low density residential housing, a commercial center, and a Business, Technology, and Industrial Reserve are proposed. However, development in the Business, Technology and Industrial Reserve will only begin when at least 75 percent of the planned development north of SR-198 has occurred.

As noted in Impact 3.1-1, the conversion of agricultural land to urban use is unavoidable in the long term given the City’s current rate of growth. To mitigate development impacts, the proposed General Plan includes policies to channel development away from Prime Farmland. These policies include establishing an UGB, promoting the transfer of development rights, developing buffers around the urban edge, and protecting agriculture land through zoning.

### ***Proposed General Plan Policies that Reduce the Impact***

Policies LU-I-1, LU-I-3, COS-I-1, COS-I-2, COS-I-3, COS-I-7, COS-I-8 and COS-I-9 listed under Impact 3.1-1 will help to reduce this impact.

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