

4.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

This section describes potential impacts from the proposed project on agricultural resources. The section also includes a description of the regulatory framework and existing agricultural resources.

A. Regulatory Framework

1. City of Petaluma General Plan

Certain programs and policies of the Land Use, Growth Management, and the Built Environment Element; Community Design, Character, and Green Building Element; and The Natural Environment Element of the General Plan provide guidance standards for preserving and enhancing agricultural resources in Petaluma. Relevant policies are listed in Table 4.2-1.

2. California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act)

The California Land Conservation Act, more commonly known as the Williamson Act, was passed in 1965 and adopted locally in 1968. Under the Williamson Act, an owner of agricultural land may enter into a contract with the local government wherein the landowner agrees to restrict use of the land to the production of commercial crops. Williamson Act contracts have terms of 10 or more years, and are automatically extended each year unless notice of cancellation or non-renewal is given. Certain compatible uses are also allowed on the property. In return, the landowner receives property tax assessments based on agricultural uses rather than full market value. There are currently more than 16 million acres enrolled in the Williamson Act in 54 counties in the State.¹

B. Existing Conditions

The role of agriculture in the City of Petaluma has changed as the city has grown. Agricultural production generally does not occur in Petaluma. However, the provision of service to the agricultural industry, especially in the equipment, transportation and wholesale trade sectors is a key element in Petaluma's economy. A goal of the City's General Plan is to retain businesses with a strong agricultural services component to maintain Petaluma's historic connection with regional agriculture.²

¹ California Farm Bureau Federation's, http://www.cfbf.com/issues/landuse/willamson_2003.cfm, accessed on May 28, 2008.

² City of Petaluma, 2002, *Existing Conditions, Opportunities, and Challenges Report*, Natural Environment, Executive Summary.

TABLE 4.2-1 **PETALUMA GENERAL PLAN 2025 POLICIES—AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**

Policy Number	Policy
<i>Land Use, Growth Management, and the Built Environment Element</i>	
Policy 1-P-24	Support designation of land uses in the unincorporated area beyond the Urban Growth Boundary as rural, agricultural and/or open space.
Policy 1-P-29 (C)	Encourage the County to continue to promote agricultural land use and to strictly limit further residential infilling on lands beyond the Urban Growth Boundary within the Petaluma Planning Referral Area.
<i>Community Design, Character, and Green Building Element</i>	
Goal 2-G-1: (C)	Preserve Petaluma’s setting as an urban place surrounded largely by rural land uses and densities, agriculture and open space.
<i>The Natural Environment Element</i>	
4-P-4	Continue to support rural land use designations and Agricultural Best Management Practices within the Sonoma County General Plan.

Source: City of Petaluma General Plan 2025, May 2008.

The project site does not encompass any active agricultural operations on site, nor is it subject to a Williamson Act contract in that the former Kenilworth Junior High School was constructed on the site in 1958. There are no active farming operations on adjacent parcels, and the closest farmland is located over two miles away.

The Sonoma-Marin Fairgrounds are located adjacent to the proposed project site and serve as a year-round public facility. The Fairgrounds are also the location of the Fourth District Agricultural Association. The Association is a State entity and the legal body governing the fair and Fairgrounds. The Association promotes agriculture through its annual fair with livestock shows and agricultural education, and by providing a space for regional agricultural producers to showcase their products. While there are no year-round agricultural activities on the fairgrounds, there is a possibility that a demonstration farm may be established on the Fairground’s property in the future.³

³ Tesconi, Tawney, Sonoma-Marin Fairgrounds. Personal communication with Catherine Reilly, DC&E, July 29, 2005.

C. Standards of Significance

The proposed project would have a significant impact on agricultural resources if it 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 an existing Williamson Act contract.
3. Involve changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

D. Impact Discussion

1. Project Impacts

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.

Since the proposed project would be located on an infill site that has been historically used for urban and institutional uses, the proposed project would not result in the direct conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses.

2. Conflict with an existing Williamson Act contract.

The proposed project would not be located on or near any farmlands or Williamson Act lands.

3. Involve changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

Implementation of the proposed project would change the uses surrounding the Sonoma-Marin Fairgrounds. Since the adjacent Fairgrounds indirectly support the continued success of agriculture in the region by supporting livestock shows and agricultural education, there would be an impact if the proposed project precluded the continued use of the Fairgrounds for these activities.

The project applicant has entered into an agreement with the Fairgrounds and the City of Petaluma to allow for continued access to the Fairgrounds from Kenilworth Street. Also, future users (tenants) of the project site will have to acknowledge the existing right of the fairground activities as part of leasing or purchasing on the project site.⁴ The Option Agreement dated June 17, 2004 be-

⁴ Janna Scott, Cassidy Shimko, Dawson, and Kawakomi. Personal email correspondence with Catherine Reilly, October 17, 2006.

tween the City of Petaluma and Regency Petaluma, LLC confirms this provision. The Agreement has been approved and is awaiting recordation.

As a result, the proposed project would have *no impact* in relation to the conversion of farmland, Williamson Act contracts or agricultural-supporting activities conducted at the fairgrounds or elsewhere.

2. Cumulative Impacts

A list-based approach has been used for this cumulative analysis. The analysis considers the development projects listed in Appendix E (Cumulative Projects) and whether this proposed project would have significant cumulative impacts on agricultural resources in combination with the cumulative projects.

The proposed project would contribute to a cumulative impact if it contributed to the loss of agricultural resources in the region. As discussed above, since the proposed project is an infill project on land that is not used for agricultural uses, or adjacent to land currently farmed, the proposed project will not directly or indirectly result in the loss of agricultural lands. In addition, the proposed project would not affect the Fourth District Agricultural Association's ability to continue to support regional agriculture through its activities at the fairgrounds. Because the proposed project itself would not impact agricultural resources there would be *no cumulative* impact related to agricultural resources.

E. Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Because there would be no impacts on agricultural resources, no mitigation measures are required.