

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

The programs and policies of the Open Space, Conservation, and Energy and Local Economy Elements of the 1987 Petaluma General Plan, as well as several policies from the proposed General Plan, describe patterns and 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 popularly 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 county if the landowner agrees to restrict use of the land to the production of commercial crops for a term of not less than 10 years. The term of the contract is 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 is taxed on capitalization of the income from the land, and not on the Proposition 13 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. How-

¹ California Farm Bureau Federation's, http://www.cfbf.com/issues/landuse/willamson_2003.cfm, accessed on May 31, 2006.

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

Policy Number	Policy
Exiting General Plan	
<i>Open Space, Conservation, and Energy Element</i>	
Policy 11	Within the context that growth will occur, strong efforts should be made to maintain surrounding agricultural and open space lands.
Policy 14	The City urges Sonoma County to discourage non-agricultural land uses in agricultural areas.
<i>Local Economy Element</i>	
Policy 25	Petaluma should recognize the importance of agricultural-related businesses to the City, to the subregion and to the region by supporting the continuation of agriculture and ag-related enterprises in and around Petaluma.
Proposed General Plan	
<i>Land Use, Growth Management, and the Built Environment Element</i>	
Policy 2-P-23	Support designation of land uses in the unincorporated area beyond the Urban Growth Boundary as rural, agricultural and/or open space.
Policy 2-P-25 (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 Sustainable Building Element</i>	
Goal 3-G-1:	Preserve Petaluma’s setting as an urban place surrounded largely by rural land uses and densities, agriculture and open space.
<i>The Natural Element</i>	
4-P-5	Continue to support rural land use designations and Agricultural Best Management Practices within the Sonoma County General Plan.

ever, the provision of service to the agricultural industry, especially in the equipment, transportation and wholesale trade sectors is a key feature of present-day Petaluma. 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

The project site does not have any active agricultural operations on site, nor is it subject to a Williamson Act contract since Kenilworth Junior High School has been on the site since 1958. There are no adjacent active farming operations, and the closest farmland is located over 2 miles away.

The Sonoma-Marín Fairgrounds are located adjacent to the proposed project site and are designed 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, 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.³

C. Standards of Significance

The proposed project would have a significant impact on agricultural resources if it would:

- ◆ Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the

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

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

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.

- ◆ Conflict with existing Williamson Act contract.
- ◆ 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

For the following analysis, both the existing and proposed General Plans were reviewed to determine whether there would be different conclusions under either Plan. Unless otherwise stated below, the following impact analysis and its conclusions would apply under the implementation of either General Plan scenario.

1. Project Impacts

The proposed project would not be located on or near any farmlands or Williamson Act lands. Thus, there would be *no impact* to farmland or lands subject to a Williamson Act contract.

In addition, since the project site is an infill site which has been historically used for urban uses, and the closest farmland is located over 2 miles away, the proposed project would not result in the direct conversion of farmland non-agricultural uses.

However, 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 project's residential and retail uses precluded the continued use of the fairgrounds for agriculture-related 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 of the project site will have to acknowledge the existing right of the fairground activities as part of leasing, or purchasing retail or residential space on site.⁴ The Option Agreement dated June 17, 2004 between 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 is *not anticipated to impact* the continued agricultural activities associated with the Fourth District Agricultural Association on the fairgrounds. Impacts due to incompatibility of land uses are further discussed in Section 4.9 (Land Use) and Section 4.10 (Noise).

2. Cumulative Impacts

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

The project would contribute to a cumulative impact if it contributed to the loss of agricultural resources in the region. As discussed above, since the project is an in-fill project on land that is not used for agricultural uses, nor are the adjacent land currently farmed, it will not directly or indirectly result in the loss of agricultural lands. In addition, the project would not affect the Fourth District Agricultural Association's ability to continue to support regional agricultural. Therefore, because the project itself would not impact agricultural resources, it would not contribute to a significant cumulative agricultural impact and there would be *no cumulative impact* related to agricultural resources.

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

E. Impacts and Mitigation Measures

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