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4.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

This section of this EIR describes the current agricultural uses of UC Davis and surrounding areas, and describes ways in which implementation of the 2003 LRDP has the potential to impact farmland, both directly and indirectly.

Public comments received in response to the Notice of Preparation raised issues related to the preservation of prime farmland west of SR 113, preservation of agricultural research lands, mitigation consistent with the City of Davis General Plan if agricultural land is converted, and indirect impacts of farmland conversion. All of these issues are addressed in this section. Comments regarding the Neighborhood Master Plan and its impacts on agricultural lands are addressed at a project-specific level in Section 2 (Volume III).

4.2.1 Environmental Setting

Because of its historic and economic importance, agricultural land has been subject to classification by both state and federal entities. Consequently, this section discusses not only the physical environment related to agricultural resources, but also provides background on governmental policies related to agricultural lands.

4.2.1.1 Regulatory Background

State Programs. The California Department of Conservation is charged with developing programs for the protection of the agricultural resources of the state. Because of their interest in agricultural open space protection and because significant portions of income and employment in many counties of California are derived from agriculture, local governments have also developed agricultural land protection tools in the form of general plan policies and zoning.

Based on data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the California Department of Conservation has developed a Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) to classify agricultural soil types based on their ability to sustain agricultural crops. Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines recommends this classification system for the evaluation of impacts on agricultural resources. The California Department of Conservation defines the following categories:

- ***Prime Farmland*** is land with the best combination of physical and chemical features for the long-term production of agricultural crops. This land can economically produce sustained high yields when treated and managed according to modern farming methods. The land must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- ***Farmland of Statewide Importance*** is land with a good combination of physical and chemical features but with minor shortcomings such as greater slopes or with less ability to hold and store moisture. The land must have been cropped at some time prior to the mapping date.
- ***Unique Farmland*** is land with lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural cash crops. This land is usually irrigated but may

include non-irrigated orchards. The land must have been cropped at some time prior to the mapping date.

- ***Farmland of Local Importance*** is pastureland and other agricultural land identified by the local jurisdiction as being important.
- ***Grazing Land*** is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock.
- ***Urban and Built-Up*** is land occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to one and one-half acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel.
- ***Other Land*** is land that does not meet the criteria of any other category.
- ***Land Committed to Non-Agricultural Use*** is existing farm and grazing land, and vacant areas, that have a permanent commitment for development.

The FMMP was created in 1982 and it updates maps every two years in response to a need to assess the location, quality, and quantity of agricultural lands to deal with the loss of important farmland to development. The mapping program is used under CEQA and other state laws (including Government Code Section 65561) to measure the impact of eliminating different kinds of lands on the production of food and other agricultural products.

The Williamson Act program, officially known as the California Land Conservation Act, was adopted in 1965. The California Department of Conservation administers this program, which allows land used in farming or ranching to be taxed at a rate based on the actual use of the land for agricultural purposes as opposed to its unrestricted market value. In return, the landowner commits to restricting use of the land to agricultural or open space for at least 10 years. Yolo and Solano counties currently offer Williamson Act programs, but lands currently owned by UC Davis are state lands and are not eligible for Williamson Act agreements. Yolo County currently has more than 400,000 acres of agricultural land in Williamson Act agreements (Landon 2003), and Solano County has approximately 264,418 acres in Williamson Act agreements (Boyle 2003).

Yolo and Solano County Programs. As a state entity, the University is not subject to municipal policies such as the County General Plans. Nevertheless, the University seeks to work cooperatively with the counties to ensure that where feasible, campus land uses and policies are consistent with local plans and policies for adjacent non-campus lands. Yolo and Solano County General Plans include goals and policies to protect and preserve agricultural resources.

The Yolo County General Plan Agricultural Element (updated November 2002) identifies an agricultural conservation ordinance that requires developers to permanently protect one acre of farmland for every acre of agricultural land converted to other uses. The County is establishing an Agricultural Conservation Easement Program so that developers can contribute an in-lieu fee for this conservation.

In Yolo County, the adopted goals of the County General Plan Agricultural Element include the following (Quad Knoph 2002):

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- Conserve and preserve agricultural lands in Yolo County, especially areas currently farmed or having prime agricultural soils and outside existing planned communities and city limits.
- Conserve, protect, and improve soil and water resources that support a variety of crops and products.
- Ensure the compatibility of land uses adjacent to agricultural operations, so that agricultural productivity is not substantially affected.
- Support and promote a healthy and competitive agricultural community and economy.
- Create sites for agricultural industry in order to meet demand for agricultural suppliers, laboratory research, field research, seed research, food processing, or other related activities.
- Provide opportunities for recreation, tourism, and associated support services in appropriate locations.
- Educate the public about the importance of agriculture in Yolo County.

The objective of the Solano County General Plan Agricultural Element is to:

- Preserve the County's high-quality soils and protect and maintain essential agricultural lands, including areas which possess unique characteristics for the raising of specialty crops.

Solano County has designated approximately 173,000 acres for intensive agricultural use, which is generally composed of highly fertile soils brought into intensive production through irrigation. In addition, approximately 135,000 acres have been designated for extensive agriculture lands, which include generally non-irrigated lands. The UC Davis lands in Solano County are considered intensive agricultural lands.

City of Davis Programs. Goals of the City of Davis General Plan Agricultural Element include the following:

- Maintain agricultural as an important industry around Davis.
- Encourage sustainable and organic forms of agriculture.

The City of Davis General Plan contains detailed policies, standards, and actions to guide the implementation of agricultural protection, including Ordinance Number 2008, commonly referred to as Measure J, which was adopted by citizen initiative in March 2000. Measure J requires a vote by Davis citizens to change agricultural or urban reserve land use designations to designations that allow development (City of Davis 2000). The City's current Farmland Preservation Ordinance requires developers to permanently protect one acre of farmland for every acre of agricultural land converted to other uses. The 2001 City of Davis General Plan calls for amending this ordinance to increase the mitigation ratio for loss of farmland from a 1:1 ratio to a 2:1 ratio. However, the ordinance has not yet been revised (Hiatt 2003). UC Davis, a state entity, is not within the City of Davis' jurisdiction and is not subject to the City's policies.

4.2.1.2 *Conditions at and Around UC Davis*

Figure 4.2-1 provides a map of the Yolo and Solano County Important Farmlands on the campus as designated in the California Department of Conservation FMMP. Williamson Act Contract lands adjacent to the UC Davis campus are illustrated in Figure 4.2-2. Existing land uses at UC Davis are illustrated in Figure 3-1.

Central Campus. The majority of central campus lands, approximately 795 acres, are designated as Urban and Built-Up Land in the FMMP. Approximately 35 acres are designated as Other Land and are used for Physical Education/Intercollegiate Athletics/Recreation or Teaching and Research Open Space. A portion of the central campus, approximately 70 acres, is designated as Prime Farmland and is currently used for Teaching and Research Fields or Community Gardens. This area includes the student farm, the developed Bowley Plant Science Teaching Center, and land near the south entry to the central campus.

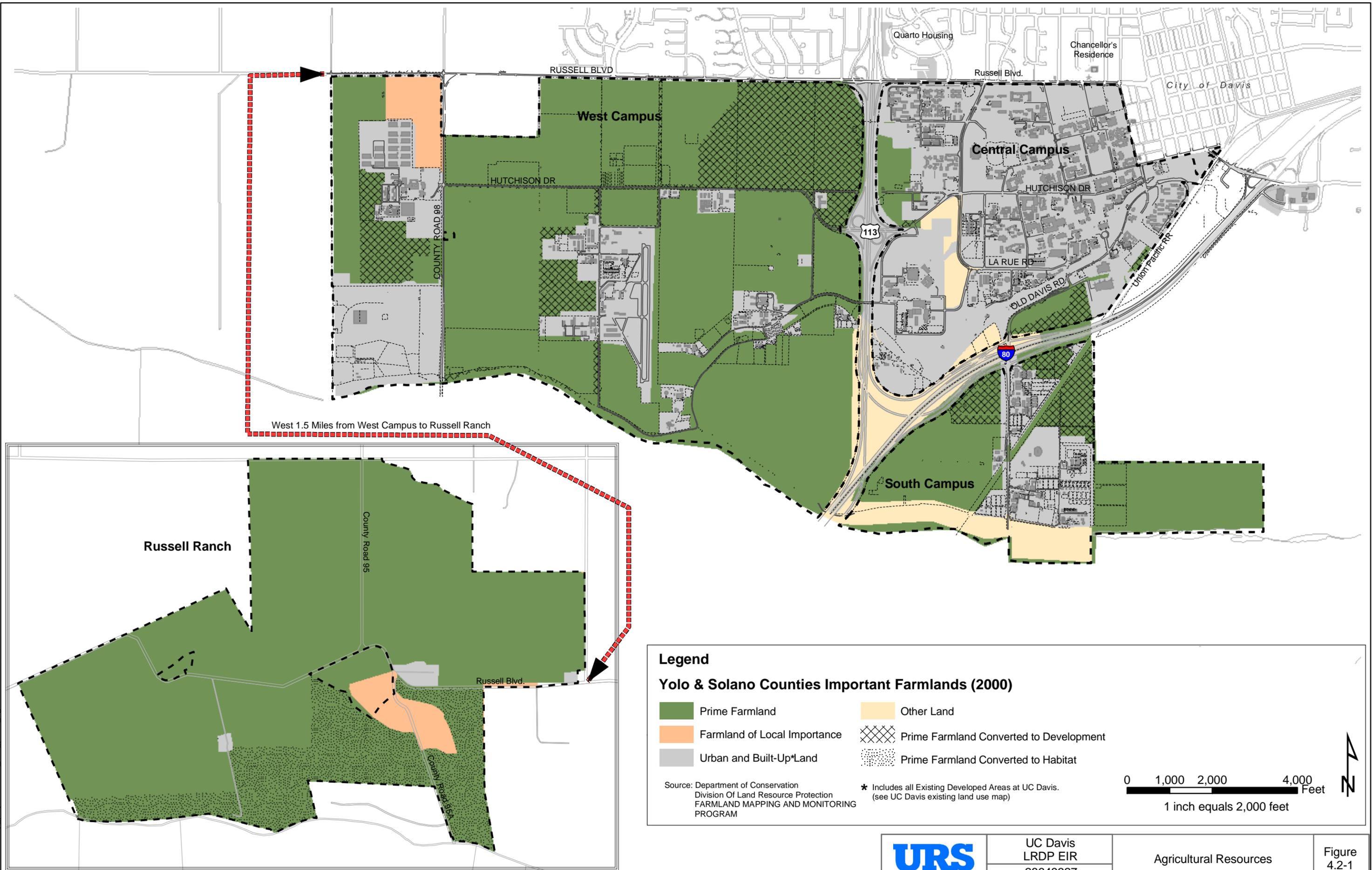
West Campus. Approximately 1,695 acres on the west campus are designated as Prime Farmland in the FMMP and are currently used for Teaching and Research Fields or Teaching and Research Open Space. The University Airport, UC Davis Landfill, California National Primate Research Center facilities and a small number of research building sites on the west campus are designated as Urban and Built-Up Land (approximately 450 acres). An approximately 50-acre area west of County Road 98, near the intersection of County Road 98 and Russell Boulevard, is designated as Farmland of Local Importance due to the different soil types.

South Campus. The majority of the south campus, approximately 360 acres, is designated as Prime Farmland. Most of this prime farmland is currently used for Teaching and Research Fields. Approximately 145 acres on the south campus are designated Urban Built-Up Land used for academic and support facilities. The remaining 80 acres are designated as Other Land, which is used for Teaching and Research Open Space in the Putah Creek Riparian Reserve.

Russell Ranch. The majority of Russell Ranch, approximately 1,530 acres, is designated as Prime Farmland. The remaining area is composed of approximately 38 acres of Farmland of Local Importance. Except for the Russell/Hamm Estate and a few agricultural support buildings (which are located within areas designated as prime farmland), Russell Ranch is currently used for agriculture and for large-scale agricultural and environmental research, the study of sustainable agricultural practices, and habitat mitigation

South Davis Research Park. Land owned by UC Davis and located along Research Park Drive in south Davis is designated as Urban and Built-Up Land.

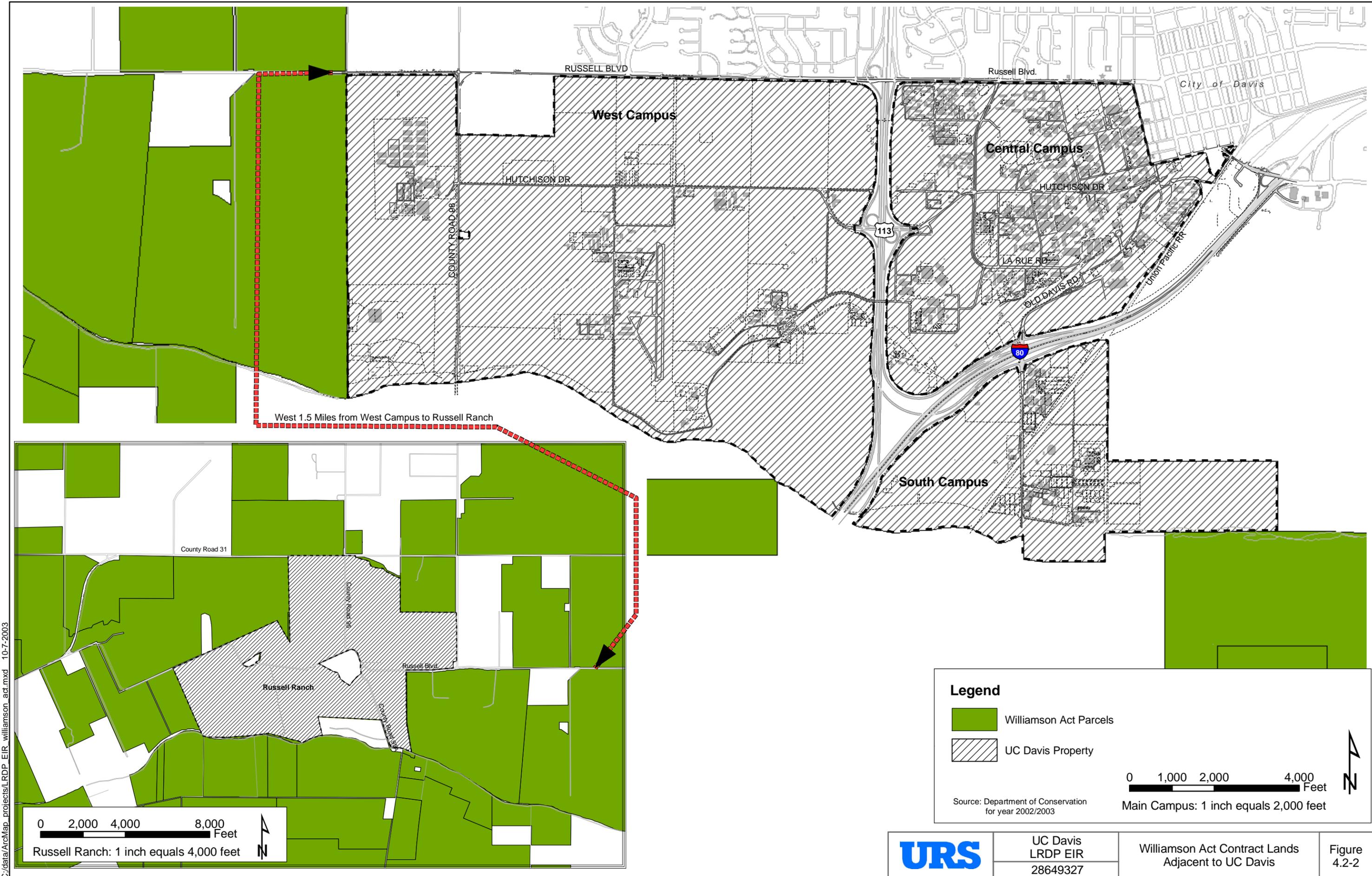
Land Adjacent to UC Davis. The land north and east of the central campus, and to the north of the west campus, is designated as Urban Built-Up Land and is within the City of Davis. The land to the east and south of the south campus, to the south and west of the west campus and surrounding Russell Ranch is primarily Prime Farmland and is in agricultural use.



UC Davis
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Agricultural Resources

Figure
4.2-1



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RUSSELL BLVD

Russell Blvd.

City of Davis

West Campus

Central Campus

HUTCHISON DR

HUTCHISON DR

COUNTY ROAD 98

113

LA RUE RD

OLD DAVIS RD

Union Pacific RR

West 1.5 Miles from West Campus to Russell Ranch

South Campus

County Road 31

County Road 98

Russell Blvd

Russell Ranch

County Road 98

Legend



Williamson Act Parcels



UC Davis Property

Source: Department of Conservation for year 2002/2003

0 1,000 2,000 4,000 Feet

Main Campus: 1 inch equals 2,000 feet

0 2,000 4,000 8,000 Feet

Russell Ranch: 1 inch equals 4,000 feet



UC Davis LRDP EIR 28649327

Williamson Act Contract Lands Adjacent to UC Davis

Figure 4.2-2

4.2.2 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

4.2.2.1 *Standards of Significance*

The following standards of significance are based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. For the purposes of this EIR, the project would have a significant impact with regard to agriculture resources if it would:

- Convert prime farmland, unique farmland or farmland of statewide importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency to nonagricultural use.
- Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland considered prime, unique, or of statewide importance to nonagricultural use.

4.2.2.2 *CEQA Checklist Items Adequately Addressed in the Initial Study*

- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.

The 2003 LRDP identifies land use changes only for land owned by the University of California. The University of California is not subject to city or county zoning. Due to the specific tax-exempt status of the University of California, land owned by the University of California is not subject to Williamson Act land use/tax contracts. Accordingly, the 2003 LRDP would not conflict with existing zoning or with Williamson Act contracts. The 2003 LRDP Initial Study concluded that no additional analysis was required for potential impacts to Williamson Act contract issues (UC Davis 2002).

4.2.2.3 **Analytical Method**

To determine the total loss of agricultural uses and prime farmland under the 2003 LRDP, changes to existing land uses due to implementation of the 2003 LRDP were compared to the California Department of Conservation's Important Farmlands Map (see Figure 4.2-1). Three existing land use designations provide for agricultural use at UC Davis: Community Gardens, Teaching and Research Fields, and Agricultural Research Reserve. The existing Community Gardens areas would decrease by approximately 2 acres under the 2003 LRDP. Land currently designated and used as Teaching and Research Fields within the central, west, and south campus areas would be redesignated for other uses to accommodate anticipated development. The majority of Agricultural Research Reserve land at Russell Ranch would stay in agricultural use, including agricultural research, and would be redesignated as Teaching and Research Fields. Smaller Agricultural Research Reserve parcels at Russell Ranch would be designated as Academic/Administrative for a dairy and as Physical Education/Intercollegiate Athletics/Recreation for an equestrian center, both of which are considered agricultural uses. Another parcel at Russell Ranch would be redesignated as Teaching and Research Open Space for a habitat area, which would be a nonagricultural use, but is a use that would not destroy the prime characteristics of the soil. Conversion of land to nonagricultural uses would result in a loss of approximately 745 acres of agricultural land, which are considered prime farmland by the

California Department of Conservation. Approximately 330 acres of this land would be converted to habitat at Russell Ranch, which would not result in an irreversible loss of prime soil. Table 4.2-1 shows the distribution of this acreage within the campus.

**Table 4.2-1
Changes in Land Use Designations Affecting Agricultural Lands**

Campus Area	Existing Agricultural Designations	Proposed Nonagricultural Designations	Loss Under the 2003 LRDP (acres)	
			Prime Farmland	Non-Prime Farmland
Central Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Gardens Teaching and Research Fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roadway Parking Academic/Administrative–High Density Research Park–High Density 	30	0
South Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching and Research Fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic/Administrative–Low Density Research Park–High Density Parking Support 	70	0
West Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching and Research Fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighborhood Designations Academic/Administrative–High and Low Density Research Park–Low Density Teaching and Research Open Space 	315	0
Russell Ranch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agricultural Research Reserve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching and Research Open Space 	330 ^a	35 ^b
TOTAL			745 acres	35 acres

^a Prime farmland lost at Russell Ranch would be used for habitat which would not destroy the prime characteristics of the soil.

^b The 35 acres of non-prime farmland lost at Russell Ranch are designated as Farmland of Local Importance.

4.2.2.4 2003 LRDP Impacts and Mitigation Measures

LRDP Impact 4.2-1: Growth under the 2003 LRDP would convert approximately 745 acres of prime farmland (as defined by the State Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program) on campus to nonagricultural uses.

Significance: Significant

LRDP Mitigation 4.2-1: Prior to conversion of prime farmland to nonagricultural uses under the 2003 LRDP, the campus shall preserve approximately 525 acres of prime farmland either at the Russell Ranch, within

the area designated for Teaching and Research Fields, or on the Kidwell and McConeghy parcels for agricultural purposes (including agricultural teaching and research). The campus will preserve prime farmland at a one-to-one (1:1) mitigation ratio for prime farmland converted to developed uses and a one-third-to-one (1/3:1) ratio for prime farmland converted to habitat at Russell Ranch.

Residual Significance: Significant and unavoidable

Under the 2003 LRDP, the campus could convert approximately 745 acres of prime farmland to nonagricultural uses. Of this total, approximately 415 acres would be converted to developed uses and approximately 330 acres would be converted to Teaching and Research Open Space for habitat at Russell Ranch.

Recognizing that future growth of the campus would entail the loss of prime farmland, in developing the 2003 LRDP the campus planners attempted to minimize farmland losses. The relevant objectives of the 2003 LRDP include:

- Cluster related facilities geographically; integrate agricultural and environmental field research and teaching uses.
- Promote compact and clustered new development, using infill where possible.

Infill is encouraged in the 2003 LRDP through clustering related facilities, maintaining a compact and accessible academic core, and increasing density within the Academic/Administrative–High and Low Density areas. These objectives preserve agricultural lands by focusing new facilities within Urban Built-Up areas such as the central campus. This type of physical planning for development is consistent with the agricultural objectives/goals of the City of Davis and Yolo and Solano counties.

Although much of the new development under the 2003 LRDP would occur as infill and would be clustered, the 2003 LRDP would result in the conversion of agricultural lands to nonagricultural lands. To mitigate this impact, UC Davis shall implement LRDP Mitigation 4.2-1. This would preserve approximately 525 acres of prime farmland either at Russell Ranch, within the area designated for Teaching and Research Fields or on the Kidwell and McConeghy parcels for agricultural purposes (including agricultural teaching and research). This preservation would mitigate at a 1:1 ratio for prime farmland converted to developed uses (preserving 415 acres) and a 1/3:1 ratio for land lost to habitat (preserving 110 acres). The reduced mitigation ratio for conversion to habitat addresses the loss of agricultural activity from this land, but recognizes that this land's prime soil characteristics would not be permanently and irreversibly changed but after would be protected. In addition, although the land would not be used for agriculture, there would not be an adverse environmental impact, but rather a biological benefit from providing protected habitat and protecting the characteristics of the soil.

The University would use one of two possible mechanisms to preserve the prime farmland: (1) the campus would create an overlay on the designated 525 acres as an agricultural preserve on Russell Ranch and/or at the alternate off-campus sites. The LRDP overlay would clearly identify the types of uses that would be allowed and those that would not be allowed on these lands, and would require that an LRDP amendment with Regental approval would be necessary to make any modifications or revisions to this designation any time during the timeline of the 2003 LRDP

or after. An amendment of the 2003 LRDP would require review under CEQA. Alternately, (2) the campus would record an agricultural conservation easement/deed restriction for the agricultural preserve site(s) with the county clerk, and establish procedures in the 2003 LRDP to inform future campus planners of the agricultural easement and the development restrictions on the identified lands. The preservation will be timed to occur before any farmland is converted to nonagricultural uses under the 2003 LRDP.

Although UC Davis would conserve 525 acres of prime farmland, this would only prevent the future loss of prime farmland and would not replace the prime farmland converted to development due to the 2003 LRDP. Once buildings or paved areas are constructed on prime farmland, the underlying soils are no longer available for agricultural activities. Theoretically, replacing lost agricultural land could be accomplished by removing existing on-campus development from prime farmland or by purchasing developed land off campus and converting it to agricultural land (assuming the underlying soils are considered prime). The feasibility and expense involved in either of these options would preclude this approach. Therefore, this impact is considered to be significant and unavoidable.

Section 5 Alternatives (Volume II) provides information on alternatives to the proposed 2003 LRDP that would reduce impacts to prime farmland, including the Reduced Enrollment Growth Central Campus Infill and the No Neighborhood/No Research Park alternatives.

* * *

LRDP Impact 4.2-2: Development allowed under the 2003 LRDP could result in changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature could result in the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use.

Significance: Less than significant

LRDP Mitigation: Mitigation is not required.

Another potential concern with respect to agricultural land and the development under the 2003 LRDP is the potential for development to indirectly result in the conversion of agricultural land. Specifically, this concern relates to the possibility that on-campus land use changes could increase development pressures or cause land use conflicts that would result in additional conversion of agricultural uses to nonagricultural uses on campus or non-UC lands near the campus.

As discussed above under LRDP Impact 4.2-1, the 2003 LRDP promotes compact and clustered new development and infill where possible. Most of the increased need for academic space on campus would be served using lands on the central campus. On the south campus, new development areas are also clustered around existing developed areas. On the west campus, although the NMP would be located on farmland, the LRDP locates this development as close as possible to the central campus and adjacent to existing residential development in the City of Davis.

The 2003 LRDP would establish limits for development on agricultural land and would encompass all campus-required conversion of agricultural land through 2015-16 to minimize ad hoc conversion of agricultural land over the life of the LRDP. In addition, UC Davis would provide a buffer, a minimum of 100-foot wide and wider where appropriate, between residential

areas in the NMP and agricultural areas. This would help reduce pressures on adjacent agricultural activities that could be caused by proximity to new development.

None of the redesignations of land uses on campus are expected to exert development pressures or cause conflicts with agricultural activities on adjacent non-UC land, mainly because bordering non-UC lands to the north of the campus are within the City of Davis and are already developed with urban uses. Lands to the south and west of the main campus are in unincorporated Yolo and Solano counties and are not served by essential utilities and services, making their conversion to other uses a difficult and unlikely process. Furthermore, these lands are designated for agriculture in the county general plans, and the plans contain numerous policies that discourage the conversion of farmland. For all of these reasons, the potential for conversion of off-campus land to urban uses is considered to be low, and the impact is considered less than significant.

* * *

4.2.2.5 *Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures*

LRDP Impact 4.2-3: Cumulative development would result in the conversion of prime farmland, unique farmland, and/or farmland of statewide importance to nonagricultural use.

Significance: Significant

LRDP Mitigation 4.2-3: Implement LRDP Mitigation 4.2-1.

Residual Significance: Significant and unavoidable

CEQA Section 15355 defines cumulative impacts as those impacts stemming from the sum of the proposed project's impacts when added to those from all other closely related, reasonably foreseeable projects. The relevant set of reasonably foreseeable development projects would consist of all of the development anticipated under the 2003 LRDP plus development anticipated in the vicinity of the campus (areas of the City of Davis and unincorporated Yolo and Solano counties) through the 2003 LRDP planning horizon of year 2015-16.

The unincorporated areas of Yolo and Solano counties adjacent to the campus are mostly designated Prime Farmland under the FMMP and are in agricultural use. The Yolo and Solano County General Plans include goals to preserve their agricultural lands. Both counties provide Williamson Act programs and closely scrutinize proposals to convert agricultural land. As stated earlier, Yolo County has an agricultural conservation ordinance that requires developers to permanently protect one acre of farmland for every acre of agricultural land converted to other uses, and the County is establishing a program so that developers can contribute an in-lieu fee for this purpose. As of July 2002, 4,629 acres have been protected under agricultural (and habitat) conservation easements held by the Yolo Land Trust (Yolo Land Trust 2003). Furthermore, Yolo County has an open space agreement with the cities in the county that urban development will occur within city boundaries. Therefore Yolo County does not supply municipal services to unincorporated areas.

Solano County does not have a requirement for mitigation for agricultural land conversion, but it has a Right to Farm ordinance. This supports farmers by reducing pressure from neighbors to stop farming activities. In addition, Solano County has an Orderly Growth Initiative, which

requires a citizen vote to approve agricultural land conversion. Like Yolo County, Solano County does not provide municipal services to unincorporated areas.

The conversion of unincorporated agricultural lands in Yolo and Solano counties surrounding UC Davis is not expected because they are not served by municipal services and these counties support agricultural conservation.

The majority of undeveloped land in the City of Davis planning area has soils that are designated as Prime Farmland under the FMMP. The City of Davis also has a Farmland Preservation Ordinance, which requires developers to permanently protect one acre of farmland for every acre converted to other uses. Nonetheless, development proposed under the City of Davis General Plan Update (2001) could result in the conversion of approximately 450 acres of prime farmland through 2010 (Jones & Stokes, 2000). Additional conversion of agricultural land could occur beyond the City's current planning horizon through 2015-16. The loss of approximately 745 acres of prime farmland on the UC Davis campus in combination with the conversion of prime farmland anticipated under the City's General Plan represents a significant adverse impact.

The preservation of prime farmlands is the responsibility of various public agencies and is not under the jurisdiction of the campus alone. The general plans for the City of Davis and Yolo and Solano counties contain land use policies that designate agricultural land uses around the City of Davis planning area (see Section 4.2.1.1). These policies encourage the preservation of agricultural land and development within city limits in urban areas. The policies attempt to reduce the impacts of urban development on continued future agricultural productivity. However, these policies cannot mitigate the permanent conversion of prime farmlands to a less-than-significant level.

UC Davis would mitigate for the loss of prime farmland on campus under the 2003 LRDP by conserving 525 acres of prime farmland at Russell Ranch in compliance with LRDP Mitigation 4.2-3. This preservation would mitigate at a 1:1 ratio for prime farmland converted to developed uses (preserving 415 acres) and a 1/3:1 ratio for land lost to habitat (preserving 110 acres) although the prime soil characteristics of the protected habitat would also be protected. Although this would prevent future loss of prime farmland, it would not replace the agricultural land lost due to 2003 LRDP development. Because agricultural conservation programs can help minimize future conversion but do not replace lost agricultural lands, and reconversion of developed lands to agricultural uses is considered infeasible, the cumulative loss of prime farmland is considered to be a significant and unavoidable impact.

* * *

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