

## 5.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Based on Appendix G of the *State CEQA Guidelines* and comments received during the Notice of Preparation (NOP) public comment period, the focus of the following analysis addresses the Project's potential to: convert or rezone Farmland, forest land, or timberland; conflict with existing zoning for agricultural uses, Williamson Act contracts, forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned for timberland production; result in the loss of forest land or convert forest land to a non-forest use. Copies of all comment letters received during the NOP public review comment period are located in Appendix A of this EIR.

### 5.2.1 Setting

The Project site was used for dry farming in the 1930s; however, the site has been fallow and not used for farming since that time (CHJ(a), p. 1). The southeast portion of the Project site was used for rock crushing, sand stockpiling, and heavy equipment storage in 2008 (CHJ(a), p. 19). As shown on **Figure 5.2-1 – Designated Farmland at the Project Site**, the Project site does not contain any Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland as shown on the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.<sup>1</sup> (This program is discussed in Section 5.2.2, below.) According to the Department of Conservation, the Project site consists of Farmland of Local Importance, urban and built-up land, and “other land.”<sup>2</sup>

The dominant vegetation on the Project site is disturbed non-native grassland with an ephemeral drainage traversing the site from the northwest corner of the site trending south (AMEC(a), p. 1). The Project site does not contain any forest land or timberlands.

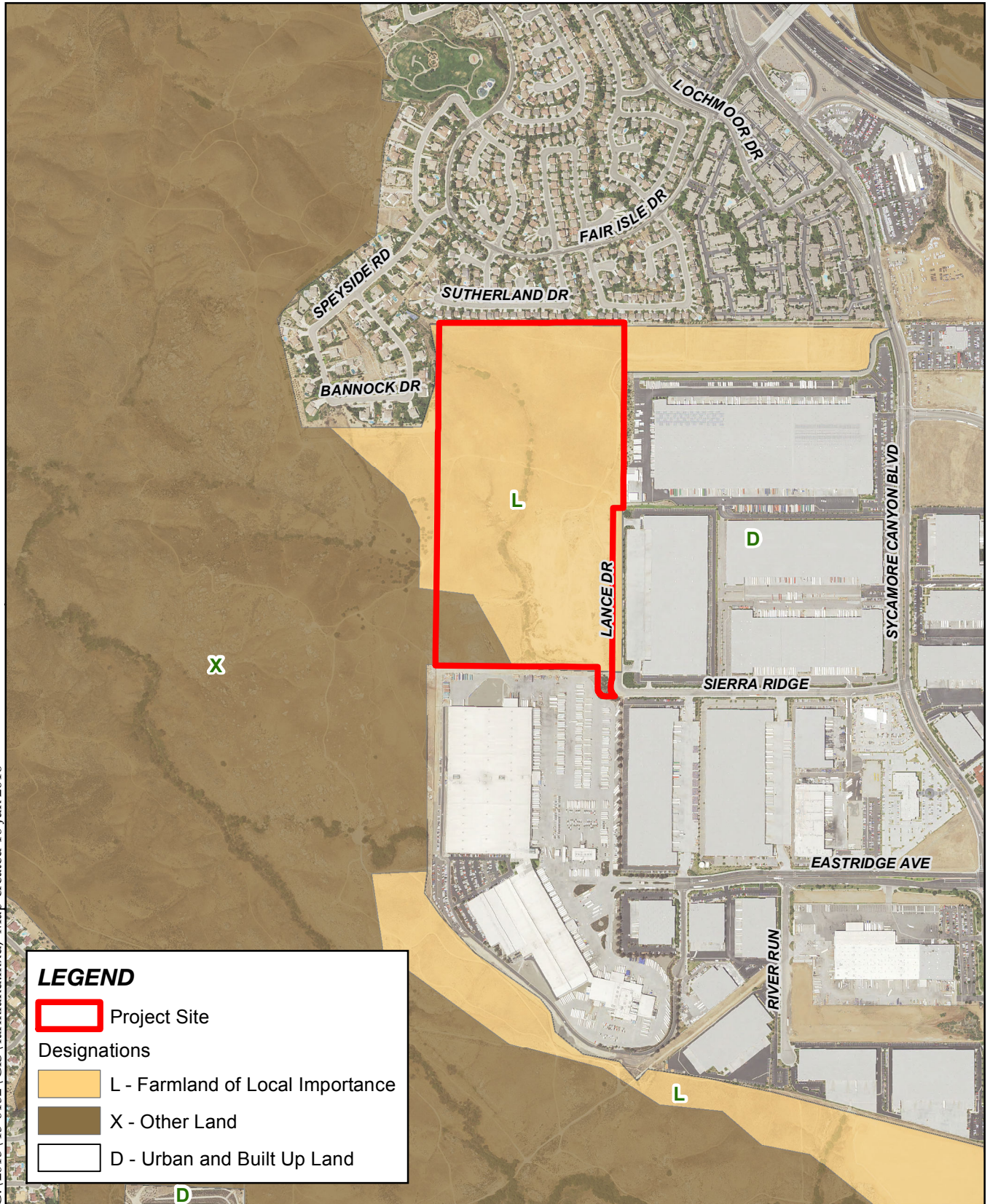
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<sup>1</sup> Figure 5.2-1 reflects 2012 Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) data for Riverside County, which was published by California Department of Conservation in February 2015. This is the most recent FMMP data available from the Department of Conservation.

<sup>2</sup> “Other land” is 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, borrow pits, and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as other land.

G:\2015\15-0152\GIS\farmland.mxd; Map created 16 Jun 2016



Sources: CA Dept. of Conservation, FMMP, 2012;  
Riverside Co. GIS, 2015; USDA NAIP 2014.

**Figure 5.2-1 - Designated Farmland at the Project Site**

Sycamore Canyon Business Park Buildings 1 and 2 DEIR

## 5.2.2 Related Regulations

### Federal Regulations

There are no federal regulations regarding agriculture or forestry resources that are applicable to this Project.

### State Regulations

#### Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation's (DOC's) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) compiles important farmland maps utilizing data from the United States Department of Agriculture, National Resource Conservation Service, soil survey and current land use information. These maps categorize land use into eight mapping categories and represent an inventory of agricultural soil resources. It is important to note that CEQA's definition of "agricultural land" only includes Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique Farmland and does not include Farmland of Local Importance or Grazing Land. Through the FMMP, agricultural resources are separated into the following categories (GP 2025 FPEIR, pp. 5.2-4 – 5.2-5):

- **Prime Farmland:** Lands with the best combination of physical and chemical features and able to sustain long-term production of agricultural crops. This land must have been used to produce irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance:** Lands similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. This land must have been used to produce irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- **Unique Farmland:** Lands with lesser quality soils used to produce leading agricultural crops. Includes non-irrigated orchards or vineyards.
- **Farmland of Local Importance:** Lands of importance to the local agricultural economy, as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee.
- **Grazing Land:** Lands on which existing vegetation is suited to livestock grazing. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association and U.C. Cooperative Extension.

For purposes of reporting changes in land use as required for FMMP's biennial farmland conversion report, the DOC also categorizes land as Urban and Built-up Land or Other Land, which are defined as:

- **Urban and Built-Up Land:** Lands 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.

- **Other Land:** Lands 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, borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than forty acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

In Riverside County, Farmland of Local Importance is defined as lands that would be classified as Prime or Statewide Important Farmlands, but lack available water; dry land crops, such as barley oats and wheat, planted in 1980 or 1981; lands producing major crops for Riverside County, but are not Unique Farmland crops; dairylands including corrals, pastures, milking facilities, hay and manure storage areas if accompanied with permanent pasture or hayland of 10 acres or more; lands that have been identified by the County of Riverside as having agricultural land use designations or Williamson Act contracts; and lands planted with joboba that are under cultivation and are of producing age.

Because the Project site has not been used for farming for decades, the City requested the DOC change the designation of the Project site from Farmland of Local Importance to Other Land in 2008 and 2010. This requested change has not been processed by the DOC.

#### **California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act)**

The California Land Conservation Act (commonly referred to as the Williamson Act) was passed in 1965 to protect specific parcels of land in agricultural and open space use. The Williamson Act is a state policy administered by local governments. Local governments are not mandated to administer the act, and the local governments that do administer the act may adapt the program in order to achieve local goals and objectives. The Williamson Act allows agricultural landowners to enter into 10-year contracts with local governments that require continued farming or other qualifying activity, such as grazing, in return for lower property tax assessments during the life of the contract. Contracts are valid for an initial period of 10 years and automatically renew each year for a 10-year period, unless a property owner files a notice of non-renewal; however, local governments can establish initial contract terms for longer periods of time.

As shown on the latest western Riverside County Williamson Act map, published in 2012, while there are active and non-renewal Williamson Act contract lands within the City's Sphere of Influence, there are no Williamson Act lands within the City, and as such, no such lands within or surrounding the Project site (DOC WA).

#### **Public Resources Code Section 12220(g) – Forest Land**

Section 1220(g) of the Public Resources Code (PRC) defines forest land as:



*Land that can support 10-percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits.*

#### **Public Resources Code Section 4526 – Timberland**

PRC Section 4526 defines timberland as:

*Land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the board as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of a commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees. Commercial species shall be determined by the board on a district basis.*

#### **Government Code Section 51004(g) – Timberland Production**

Government Code Section 51104(g) defines timberland zoned as timberland production as:

*An area which has been zoned pursuant to Section 51112 or 51113 and is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber with compatible uses, as defined in subdivision (h).*

### **Local Regulations**

#### **Riverside General Plan 2025, Zoning Code (Title 19 of the Riverside Municipal Code), and Sycamore Canyon Business Park Specific Plan**

The GP 2025 contains objectives and policies to protect agricultural uses in the City. Appendix M of this DEIR summarizes the Project's consistency with the applicable GP 2025 policies. The GP 2025 objectives and policies for agricultural uses pertain to the Arlington Heights Greenbelt, Rancho La Sierra, and other agricultural lands in the City. Property within the Sycamore Canyon Business Park Specific Plan (SCBPSP) is designated as Farmland of Local Importance, Urban and Built-up Land, and Other Land. In addition, the City's Zoning Code permits agricultural uses under various zones. The SCBPSP was applied to the properties within its boundaries in April 1984. It also applied the Business Manufacturing Park – BMP Zone with the SP-Combining Zone to the properties. A few of the properties retained the Residential Agricultural Zone – RA-5. As part of the General Plan 2025 Program update, these were officially rezoned to BMP-SP. A thorough analysis of the loss of this zoning for agriculture was prepared as part of the General Plan 2025 Program EIR under Section 7.5.2 – Agricultural Resources and was illustrated in Appendix I (Site 4) of the EIR (GP 2025 FEIR, p. 5.2-24). Although these parcels were previously zoned RA-Residential Agriculture, the SP Combining Zone applies the requirements of the SCBPSP to this area. The SCBPSP does not allow the development of single-family residential properties or agriculture. As a result, the zone was changed from RA to BMP-SP – Business and Manufacturing Park and Specific Plan (Sycamore Canyon Business Park) Overlay Zones to maintain consistency with the SCBPSP (GP 2025 FEIR, p. 5.2-24). Therefore, because the City's GP 2025 designates the Project site for

Business/Office Park (B/OP) Open Space (OS) uses and agricultural uses are not permitted in the SCBPSP. None of the GP 2025 objectives and policies regarding agricultural resource preservation are applicable to the Project site. Therefore, because neither the Project site, nor surrounding area is being used for agriculture and due to the indirect influence of existing and proposed development within the Specific Plan, Project implementation will not contribute directly or indirectly to the conversion of agricultural resources within the City.

### **Proposition R and Measure C**

In 1979, City voters passed Proposition R: “Taxpayer’s Initiative to Reduce Costly Urban Sprawl by Preserving the City of Riverside’s Citrus and Agricultural Lands, Its Unique Hills, Arroyos and Victoria Avenue.” The two main features of Proposition R relate to: 1) preservation of agriculture through application of the RA-5-Residential Agricultural Zone to two specific areas of the City, and 2) protection of hillside areas through application of the RC Residential Conservation Zone to areas of the City based on slopes over 15 percent. The two areas of the City which were zoned RA-5 are: 1) the Arlington Heights Greenbelt; and 2) an area commonly known as the Arlanza-La Sierra Lands, a bluff top area above the Santa Ana River bordered by Tyler Street on the east and Arlington Avenue on the west. Because the Project site is not within any of the aforementioned areas, it is not affected by Proposition R.

Eight years later, City voters approved Measure C as an amendment to Proposition R, titled “Citizens’ Rights Initiative to Reduce Costly Urban Sprawl, to Reduce Traffic Congestion, to Minimize Utility Rate Increases and to Facilitate Preservation of the City of Riverside’s Citrus and Agricultural Lands, its Scenic Hills, Ridgelines, Arroyos and Wildlife Areas.” Measure C amended Proposition R by adding policies to promote agriculture. Measure C relates to the Arlington Heights Greenbelt, the Arlanza-La Sierra Lands and any areas designated for agricultural use in the then existing General Plan or Zoning Code. Because the Project site is not within any of the aforementioned areas, it is not affected by Measure C.

### **Urban Forestry Policy Manual**

The City’s Urban Forestry Policy Manual is a guideline for the planting, pruning, preservation and removal of all trees in the City rights-of-way and recreational facilities. The manual does not apply to trees located on private property. Implementation of the proposed Project will not entail the removal of trees from the City’s rights-of-way.

### **5.2.3 Thresholds of Significance**

The City has not established local CEQA significance thresholds as described in Section 15064.7 of the State *CEQA Guidelines*. Therefore, significance determinations utilized in this section are from Appendix G of the State *CEQA Guidelines*. A significant impact will occur if implementation of the proposed Project will:

- (Threshold A) 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;

- (Threshold B) conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract;
- (Threshold C) 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));
- (Threshold D) result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; and/or
- (Threshold E) 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.

### 5.2.4 Project Design Features

Project design features refer to ways in which a project will reduce or avoid potential impacts through design. Because there are no agricultural or forestry resources on the Project site, the proposed Project does not include any features with regard to these resources.

### 5.2.5 Environmental Impacts before Mitigation

**Threshold A:** *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?*

The Project site includes approximately 68 acres of designated Farmland of Local Importance (see **Figure 5.2-1**). There is no designated Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance within the Project site, or in the immediately-surrounding area. While implementation of the Project will result in the conversion of approximately 68 acres of Farmland of Local Importance to a non-agricultural use, it should be noted that from a CEQA perspective, impacts to designated Farmland of Local importance are not considered significant and do not require mitigation. Moreover, as the Project site was historically utilized for dry farming in the 1930s and 1940's with possible sporadic agricultural use afterwards, it should also be noted that no agricultural production has taken place on the Project site in recent times, nor is this use permitted by the SCBPSP. Additionally, as previously discussed in Section 5.2.2 under the subheading Riverside General Plan 2025, to be consistent with the SCBPSP, approximately 195 acres within the SCBPSP area, which includes portions of the Project site, was rezoned BMP-SP – Business and Manufacturing Park and Specific Plan (Sycamore Canyon Business Park) Overlay Zones for consistency with the SCBPSP and the General Plan designation of IBP – Industrial Business Park now known as B/OP – Business Office Park and analyzed for manufacturing uses in the GP 2025 FPEIR. Because there is no Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance on the Project site (see **Figure 5.2-1**) and agricultural uses are not permitted within the SCBPSP area, there will be **no impact** with regard to Farmland Conversion resulting from Project implementation.

**Threshold B:** *Would the Project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?*

There are no existing agricultural uses on or in the vicinity of the Project site. As shown on **Figure 3-5 – Zoning Map**, the Project site is zoned Business and Manufacturing Park and Specific Plan (Sycamore Canyon Business Park) Overlay Zones (BMP-SP), which is one of four industrial land use zones in the City's Zoning Ordinance. The Project site and surrounding properties are not under any Williamson Act contracts. For these reasons there will be **no impact**.

**Threshold C:** *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))?*

As discussed under Threshold B, the Project site is zoned Business and Manufacturing Park and Specific Plan (Sycamore Canyon Business Park) Overlay Zones (BMP-SP). Because the Project site and surrounding areas are not zoned as forest land, timberland, or Timberland Production lands (see **Figure 3-5**), Project implementation will not conflict with such zoning. Therefore, **no impact** will occur in this regard.

**Threshold D:** *Would the Project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?*

Because there are no existing or designated forest lands on or near the Project site (see **Figure 3-4 – Land Use Designation Map**) implementation of the proposed Project will not result in the loss or conversion of forest land. Therefore **no impact** will occur in this regard.

**Threshold E:** *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 discussed above, the Project site and surrounding area does not include designated Farmland or forest land. The Project site is not located in an area with existing Farmland or forest land. Most of the surrounding developable land is already developed with business/manufacturing uses (see **Figure 3-2 – Location Map** and **Figure 5.1-1 – Surrounding Area**).<sup>3</sup> The Project site is not in proximity to any existing agricultural uses, because most of the existing agricultural uses in the City are southeast of Victoria Avenue on the south side of State Route 91 in the Arlington Heights Greenbelt. Other areas of agricultural uses are scattered throughout the City with concentrations located near Arlanza/La Sierra as well as the agricultural fields owned by University of California at Riverside, which are near the campus.

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<sup>3</sup> The Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park is not considered developable land.



**Figure 5.2-1 – Designated Farmland at the Project Site** shows Farmland at the Project site as according to the DOC’s current 2012 FMMP data for Riverside County, which was published by DOC in February 2015. As shown on this figure, the Project site consists of Farmland of Local Importance, urban and built-up land, and “other land.” Moreover, the site is generally surrounded by urban and built-up land and other land.

As such, implementation of the proposed Project, which is consistent with the Sycamore Canyon Business Park Specific Plan, will not involve other changes in the existing environment that could result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to a non-forest use. In addition, the City has responded to the Department of Conservation requests for needed changes to their map prior to the publication of the new 2008 and 2010 maps. However, the changes requested have not been processed and are not reflected on the 2012 map. Therefore, **no impact** will occur in this regard.

### 5.2.6 Proposed Mitigation Measures

An EIR is required to describe feasible mitigation measures which could minimize significant adverse impacts (State *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126.4). Implementation of the proposed Project will not result in any potentially significant impacts to agriculture and forestry resources, and therefore, no mitigation measures are necessary.

### 5.2.7 Environmental Impacts after Mitigation Measures are Implemented

No mitigation measures are necessary because implementation of the proposed Project will result in **no impact** to agriculture and forestry resources.

### 5.2.8 References

In addition to other documents, the following references were used in the preparation of this section of the DEIR:

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| AMEC(a)   | AMEC Foster Wheeler Environment & Infrastructure, Inc., <i>Sycamore Canyon Business Park Warehouse Project Biological Assessment and Western Riverside Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan Compliance Report</i> , June 24, 2015 (Appendix C.1)   |
| CGC 51104 | State of California, <i>California Government Code</i> . (Available at <a href="http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=gov&amp;group=51001-52000&amp;file=51100-51104">http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=gov&amp;group=51001-52000&amp;file=51100-51104</a> , accessed November 5, 2015) |
| CHJ(a)    | CHJ Consultants, <i>Report of Geophysical Investigation, Proposed 950,000 Square Foot Distribution Center, Sycamore V Project, Riverside, California</i> , May 14, 2014. (Appendix E.1)   |
| DOC FMMP  | California Department of Conservation, <i>Important Farmland Categories</i> . (Available at <a href="http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/mccu/Pages/map_categories.aspx">http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/mccu/Pages/map_categories.aspx</a> accessed May 11, 2016.)   |

- DOC WA California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Conservation Support Program, *Riverside County Williamson Act FY 2008/2009, Sheet 1 of 3*, published 2012. (Available at [ftp://ftp.consrv.ca.gov/pub/dlrp/wa/riverside\\_w\\_08\\_09\\_WA.pdf](ftp://ftp.consrv.ca.gov/pub/dlrp/wa/riverside_w_08_09_WA.pdf), accessed May 26, 2015.)
- GP 2025 City of Riverside, *General Plan 2025*, certified November 2007 with subsequent amendments to various elements. (Available at <http://www.riversideca.gov/planning/gp2025program/general-plan.asp>, accessed May 26, 2015.)
- GP 2025  
FPEIR City of Riverside, *General Plan 2025 Program Environmental Impact Report* (SCH# 2004021108), certified November 2007. (Available at <http://www.riversideca.gov/planning/gp2025program/>, accessed May 26, 2015.)
- GP 2025  
FPEIR,  
Appendix I City of Riverside, *General Plan 2025 Program Environmental Impact Report* (SCH# 2004021108), *Appendix I Designated Farmland Table and Maps*, certified November 2007. (Available at [http://www.riversideca.gov/planning/2008-0909/FPEIR/Volume\\_3/Appendix\\_I.pdf](http://www.riversideca.gov/planning/2008-0909/FPEIR/Volume_3/Appendix_I.pdf), accessed June 15, 2016.)
- PRC 12220 State of California, *Public Resources Code Section 1220*. (Available at <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=prc&group=12001-13000&file=12220>, accessed November 5, 2015.)
- PRC 4526 State of California, *Public Resources Code Section 4526*. (Available at <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=prc&group=04001-05000&file=4521-4529.5>, accessed November 5, 2015.)