

## 3.3 Agriculture and Forestry

### 3.3.1 Introduction

This section describes the regulatory setting and affected environment for agriculture and forestry resources that are known to occur or have the potential to occur in the agriculture and forestry RSA and describes the potential impacts on those resources during construction and operation of the proposed Project. In particular, the agriculture and forestry resources analysis focuses on Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Williamson Act contract parcels, forest land, and timberland in the agriculture and forestry RSA where agriculture and forestry resources are most susceptible to change as a result of the proposed Project's construction and operation. This section also identifies the potential for cumulative impacts of the proposed Project on agriculture and forestry resources when considered in combination with other relevant projects.

### 3.3.2 Regulatory Setting

This section identifies the applicable federal, state, regional, and local laws, regulations, and orders that are relevant to the analysis of agriculture and forestry resources. This section also addresses the proposed Project's consistency with the regulations described herein.

#### 3.3.2.1 Federal

##### **Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a federal agency within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is the agency primarily responsible for implementation of the Farmland Protection Policy Act. The purpose of this act is to minimize federal programs' contribution to the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses by ensuring that federal programs are administered in a manner that is compatible with state, local, and private programs designed to protect farmland. NRCS provides technical assistance to federal agencies, state and local governments, tribes, and nonprofit organizations that desire to develop farmland protection programs and policies. NRCS summarizes implementation of the Farmland Protection Policy Act in an annual report to Congress. The act also established the Farmland Protection Program and Land Evaluation and Site Assessment.

#### 3.3.2.2 State

##### **California Department of Conservation**

The California Department of Conservation (DOC) provides services and information that promote environmental health, economic vitality, informed land-use decisions, and sound management of the state's natural resources. DOC administers and supports a number of programs that are designed to preserve agricultural land and provide data on conversion of agricultural land to urban use. These programs include, but are not limited to, the Williamson Act and the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP).

## California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act)

Commonly known as the Williamson Act, the State of California's Land Conservation Act of 1965 enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. In return, landowners receive a reduced property tax assessment based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. The Williamson Act Contract Enrollment Status Definitions are provided below:

- **Prime Agricultural Land.** Land which is enrolled under California Land Conservation Act contract and meets any of the following criteria (as set forth under California Government Code Section 51201):
  - All land that qualifies for rating as class I or class II in the NRCS land use capability classifications.
  - Land which qualifies for rating 80 to 100 in the Storie Index Rating.
  - Land which supports livestock used for the production of food and fiber and which has an annual carrying capacity equivalent to at least one animal unit per acre as defined by the USDA.
  - Land planted with fruit or nut-bearing trees, vines, bushes, or crops which have a nonbearing period of less than five years and which will normally return during the commercial bearing period on an annual basis from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production not less than two hundred dollars per acre.
  - Land which has returned from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production and has an annual gross value of not less than two hundred dollars per acre for three of the previous five years.
- **Nonprime Agricultural Land.** Land which is enrolled under California Land Conservation Act contract and does not meet any of the criteria for classification as Prime Agricultural Land. Non-Prime Land is defined as Open Space Land of Statewide Significance under the California Open Space Subvention Act (see California Government Code Section 16143) and may be identified as such in other documents. Most Non-Prime Land is in agricultural uses such as grazing or non-irrigated crops. However, Non-Prime Land may also include other open space uses which are compatible with agriculture and consistent with local general plans.
- **Nonrenewal.** Enrolled lands for which nonrenewal has been filed pursuant to Government Code Section 51245. Upon the filing of nonrenewal, the existing contract remains in effect for the balance of the period remaining on the contract. During the nonrenewal process, the annual tax assessment gradually increases. At the end of the 9-year nonrenewal period, the contract expires, and the land is no longer restricted.
- **Farmland Security Zone.** Enrolled parcels containing either Prime or Non-Prime agricultural land restricted by a 20-year contract pursuant to Government Code Section 51296.
- **Mixed Enrollment Agriculture Land.** Enrolled lands containing a combination of Prime, Non-Prime, Open Space Easement, or other contracted or enrolled lands not yet delineated by the county.

## Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

In 1982, DOC began coordinating with the USDA Soil Conservation Service in preparation and completion of Important Farmland mapping for California through the establishment of the FMMP. The FMMP created a greater level of mapping compared to the USDA Soil Conservation Service by modifying the federal criteria for use in California and incorporating irrigation criteria for farmland significance. The primary purpose of the FMMP is to monitor the conversion of California's agricultural lands. The DOC Division of Land Resource Protection works with landowners, local governments, and researchers to conserve California's farmland and open space resource based on information provided in FMMP.

Under the FMMP, DOC produces maps and statistical data use for analyzing impacts on agricultural resources. Agricultural land is classified according to soil quality and irrigation status. The maps are updated every two years through review of aerial photographs, a computer mapping system, public review, and field reconnaissance. FMMP categories are defined as:

- **Prime Farmland.** Farmland that has the ideal combination of physical and chemical features. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields and long-term agricultural production. 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 that is similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or lower moisture content. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Unique Farmland.** Land with lesser quality soils used for the production of the State's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated but may include land that supports non-irrigated orchards or vineyards, as found in some climatic zones in California. The land must have been used for crops at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Local Importance.** Land that is important to the local agricultural economy, as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee.
- **Grazing Land.** Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups with an interest in grazing activities.
- **Urban and Built-Up Land.** Land that is developed with structures that have been built to a density of at least one unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately six structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land supports residential, industrial, commercial, institutional, public administrative uses; railroad and other transportation yards; cemeteries; airports; golf courses; sanitary landfills; sewage treatment facilities; water control structures; and other developed uses.
- **Other Land.** 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 and borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Undeveloped and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

The DOC considers Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance collectively as Important Farmland.

### **Public Resources Code Section 21060.1**

PRC Section 21060.1 uses the FMMP to define agricultural land to assess environmental impacts. The FMMP was established in 1982 to assess the location, quality, and quantity of agricultural lands and analyze the conversion of such lands. The FMMP provides analysis pertaining to agricultural land use changes throughout California.

## **3.3.2.3 Regional**

### **Alameda County General Plan**

The Conservation Element of the Alameda County General Plan (1994) contains the following goals and objectives relevant to the proposed Project:

- **Goal:** To protect and maintain soils in Alameda County in such a manner to be beneficial to agricultural and open uses.
  - Objectives:
    - To conserve soil resources for agricultural productivity.
    - To preserve in agricultural use those areas of prime agricultural lands capable of producing a wide variety of valuable crops.
    - To guide urban development towards less productive land.
    - To join with the USDA Soil Conservation Service and Agricultural Agencies in development national criteria for resource management and land development.
- **Goal:** To protect and maintain the soil resources in Alameda County in such a manner as to be beneficial to all land users.
  - Objectives:
    - To set up rational land use and development guidelines to protect soil resources.
    - To set up rational land use and development guidelines to protect the soil resources in agricultural areas.
    - To set up rational guidelines to control non-point source pollution.
- **Goal:** To protect agriculture and agricultural lands.
  - Objectives:
    - To preserve agricultural lands.
    - To promote sound land use management on agricultural lands.
    - To identify lands with little or no agricultural value for urban development provided that they otherwise meet urban development criteria.

- To support a concept of multiple use of agricultural and grazing lands as a means of preserving economic and environmental values of the land.

### **Alameda County Zoning Ordinance (Alameda County Code, Title 17)**

Alameda County includes areas identified as Zone A (Agricultural District). This zoning district protects existing agricultural uses and encourages a wide range of agricultural uses in non-urban areas. Certain nonagricultural uses, including privately-owned wind-electric generators, are considered conditional uses, and are permitted in a Zone A district if approved by the board of zoning adjustments.

### **Alameda County Right to Farm Ordinance (Ch. 6.28, §6.28.020 [2000])**

This ordinance is designed to promote public health, safety, and welfare, and to support and encourage continued agricultural operations in the county. A Right to Farm ordinance protects farmland by requiring disclosure to purchasers and users of the property next to or near agricultural operations of the inherent potential problems associated with living near actively farmed land.

## **3.3.2.4 Local**

### **City of Fremont General Plan**

The Land Use Element of the City of Fremont General Plan (2011) contains the following policies that are relevant to the proposed Project.

- **Policy 2-6.10: Sphere of Influence.** Advocate for open space conservation and resource protection in the unincorporated areas east of the Fremont city limits but within the city's sphere of influence. These areas should remain in agricultural and open space uses for the lifetime of this General Plan.

### **Fremont Zoning Ordinance (Fremont Municipal Code, Title 18)**

The City of Fremont includes areas identified as Zone OS (Open Space). This zoning district permits limited but reasonable use of open space lands while protecting the public health, safety and welfare from the dangers of seismic hazards and unstable soils; preserves the topography of the city that shapes it and gives it its identity; allows land to be used for agricultural production in its natural or as near natural state as possible; coordinates with and carries out regional, county, and city open space plans; and, where permitted, encourages the clustering of dwelling units in order to preserve and enhance the remainder of open space lands as a limited and valuable resource.

### **City of Hayward 2040 General Plan**

The Land Use Element of the City of Hayward General Plan (2014) contains the following goals and policies that are relevant to the proposed Project.

- **Goal NR-3:** Preserve, enhance, and expand natural Baylands, wetlands, marshes, hillsides, and unique ecosystems within the Planning Area in order to protect their natural ecology, establish the physical setting of the city, provide recreational opportunities, and assist with improved air quality and carbon dioxide sequestration.

- **Policy NR-3.3:** The City shall protect the rural character and utility of land in the East Hills Annex for grazing, agriculture, a regional park, or other open space uses by limiting subdivision of larger parcels.

### **City of Hayward Zoning Ordinance (Hayward Municipal Code, Chapter 10)**

The City of Hayward includes open space areas identified as Zone A (Agricultural District). This zoning district protects existing agricultural uses and encourages a wide range of agricultural uses. Certain nonagricultural uses, including hospitals and daycare centers, are considered conditional uses, and are permitted in a Zone A district if approved by the board of zoning adjustments (Section 10-1.2000 – Agricultural District [A]).

### **City of Newark General Plan**

The Land Use Element of the City of Newark General Plan (2013) contains the following goals, policies, or actions that are relevant to the proposed Project.

- **Goal HW-3:** Access to healthy, affordable food for all Newark residents.
- **Action HW-3.A – Urban Agriculture:** Review zoning provisions for urban agriculture and undertake revisions as necessary to remove any identified barriers.

### **City of Newark Zoning Ordinance (Newark Municipal Code, Title 17)**

The City of Newark includes areas identified as Zone OS (Open Space). This zoning district is intended for undeveloped park lands, wildlife habitat, and wetlands. Land within this zoning district is typically owned by public agencies. A limited number of recreational improvements such as trails and interpretive nature centers are allowed, however the intent of this district is to facilitate the restoration and enhancement of native habitat (Chapter 17.10 – Public and Semi-Public Districts).

### **City of Oakland General Plan**

The Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation (OSCAR) Element of the City of Oakland General Plan (1996) contains the following policies that are relevant to the proposed Project.

- **Goal OS-1:** A citywide open space system accessible to every Oakland resident which provides land for recreation, natural resource management, the protection of public health and safety, and visual enjoyment.
  - **Objective OS-1:** Resource Conservation Areas – To conserve and appropriately manage undeveloped areas in Oakland which have high natural resource value, scenic value, or natural hazards which preclude safe development.
  - **Action OS-1.3.3:** Conservation Easements – Establish a Standard Operating Procedure in the Office of Planning and Building which encourages the use of conservation easements on portions of privately owned properties which have significant aesthetic or environmental value.
  - **Objective OS-3:** Institutional and Functional Open Space – Establish a Standard Operating Procedure in the Office of Planning and Building which encourages the use of conservation easements on portions of privately owned properties which have significant aesthetic or environmental value.

- **Goal OS-3:** A beautiful city with open spaces, parks, and streets that create a positive, well defined civic image.
  - **Objective OS-9:** Landforms – To retain Oakland's natural features and topography wherever possible and recognize their important role in defining the character and image of the city and its neighborhoods.
  - **Policy OS-9.2:** Use of Natural Features to Define Communities – Use open space and natural features to define city and neighborhood edges and give communities within Oakland a stronger sense of identity. Maintain and enhance city edges, including the greenbelt on the eastern edge of the city, the shoreline, and San Leandro Creek. Use creeks, parks, and topographical features to help define neighborhood edges and create neighborhood focal points.
- **Goal CO-1:** Natural resources that are conserved and prudently used to sustain life, support urban activities, protect public health and safety, and provide a source of beauty and enjoyment.
  - **Objective CO-1:** Soil Conservation – To protect and preserve soil as a resource for healthy plant, animal, and human life.
  - **Policy CO-1.1:** Soil loss in new development – Regulate development in a manner which protects soil from degradation and misuse or other activities which significantly reduce its ability to support plant and animal life. Design all construction to ensure that soil is well secured so that unnecessary erosion, siltation of streams, and sedimentation of water bodies does not occur.

### **City of Oakland Zoning Ordinance (Oakland Code of Ordinances, Chapter 17.10)**

Chapter 17.10, Article II of the City of Oakland Zoning Ordinance, classifies agricultural and extractive use types, which protect the on-site production of plant and animal products by agricultural methods, and of mineral products by extractive methods. This classification also includes certain activities accessory to the above, as specified in Section 17.10.040.

### **City of San Leandro 2035 General Plan**

The Open Space, Parks, and Conservation Element of the City of San Leandro General Plan (2016) contains the following policies that are relevant to the proposed Project.

- **Goal LU-2:** Preserve and enhance the distinct identities of San Leandro neighborhoods.
  - **Policy LU-2.1:** Complete Neighborhoods – Strive for “complete neighborhoods” that provide an array of housing choices; easy access to retail stores, commercial services, and medical care; quality public schools; great parks and open spaces; affordable transportation options; and civic amenities.

### **San Leandro Zoning Code (Chapter 2.16)**

Title 12 – Base District Regulations, of the City of San Leandro Zoning Code, has identified and designated the Open Space (OS) District in order to provide a suitable classification for large public or private sites permanently designated for park or open space use; protect public health and safety by limiting lands, which are subject to flooding, slides, or other hazards to open space use, and allow the city’s Planning Commission and City Council to consider the most appropriate use of a site

following discontinuance of a large public or private open space use without the encumbrance of a base zoning district that may or may not provide appropriate regulations for development of the site.

### **Union City 2040 General Plan**

The Resource Conservation element of the Union City 2040 General Plan (2019) contains the following policy that is relevant to the proposed Project.

- **Policy RC – 1.1, Provide for a Variety of Open Spaces.** The City shall provide a variety of open spaces including open space for public use and enjoyment and for the protection of agricultural uses including grazing, wildlife habitats, and scenic vistas.

### **Union City Zoning Code (Municipal Code, Title 18)**

Chapter 18.48 of the Union City Zoning Code identifies and designates Agricultural (A) Districts to preserve lands best suited for agriculture use from encroachment of incompatible uses, to preserve in agriculture use land suited to eventual development in other uses, to prevent premature development of certain lands, including lands within the “flood plain,” which will eventually be appropriated for urban uses, until the installation of streets, drainage improvements, utilities, and community facilities makes orderly development feasible and possible. Change of zoning district from agriculture to any other zoning district shall only be made in general accord with the General Plan.

## **3.3.2.5 Consistency with Plans, Policies, and Regulations**

Section 15125(d) of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to discuss “any inconsistencies between the proposed Project and applicable general plans, specific plans, and regional plans.” Applicable plans, policies, and regulations were considered during the preparation of this analysis and were reviewed to assess whether the proposed Project would be consistent with the plans of relevant jurisdictions. The proposed Project would comply with all relevant federal, state, and local policies and regulations as they relate to agricultural and forestry resources.

## **3.3.3 Methods for Evaluating Environmental Impacts**

This section defines the RSA for agriculture and forestry resources and describes the methods used to analyze impacts on agriculture and forestry resources within the RSA.

### **3.3.3.1 Resource Study Area**

As defined in Section 3.1, Introduction, RSAs are the geographic boundaries in which the environmental investigations specific to each resource topic were conducted.

The RSA for agriculture and forestry resources encompasses the areas affected by the construction and operation of the proposed Project, which is defined as the Project footprint plus a 1,000-foot buffer to account for potential temporary construction impacts on agricultural and forestry resources. Figure 3.3-1 through Figure 3.3-11 depict the agriculture and forestry resources RSA.



Figure 3.3-1. Agriculture RSA: Extent 1

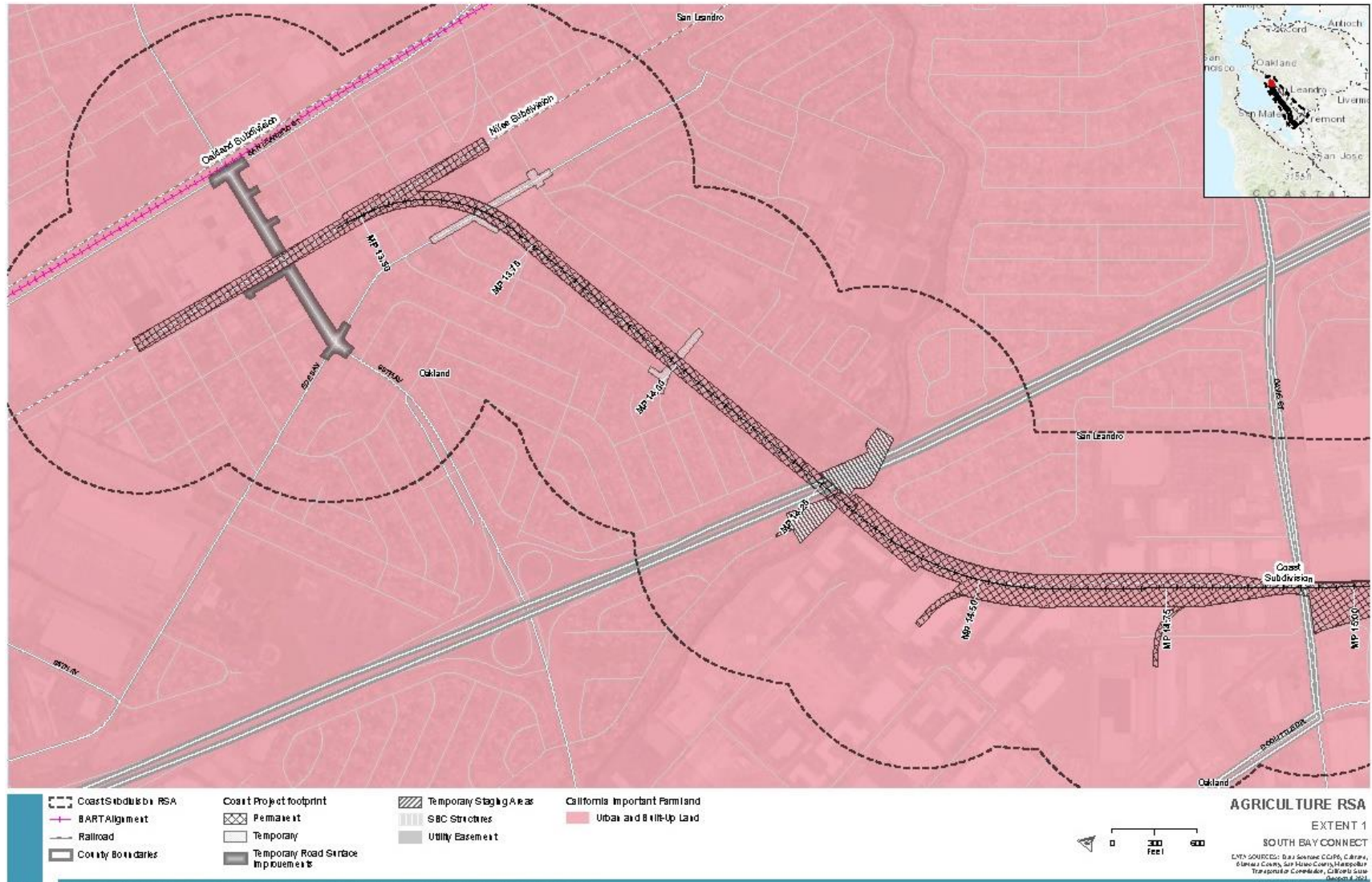


Figure 3.3-2. Agriculture RSA: Extent 2

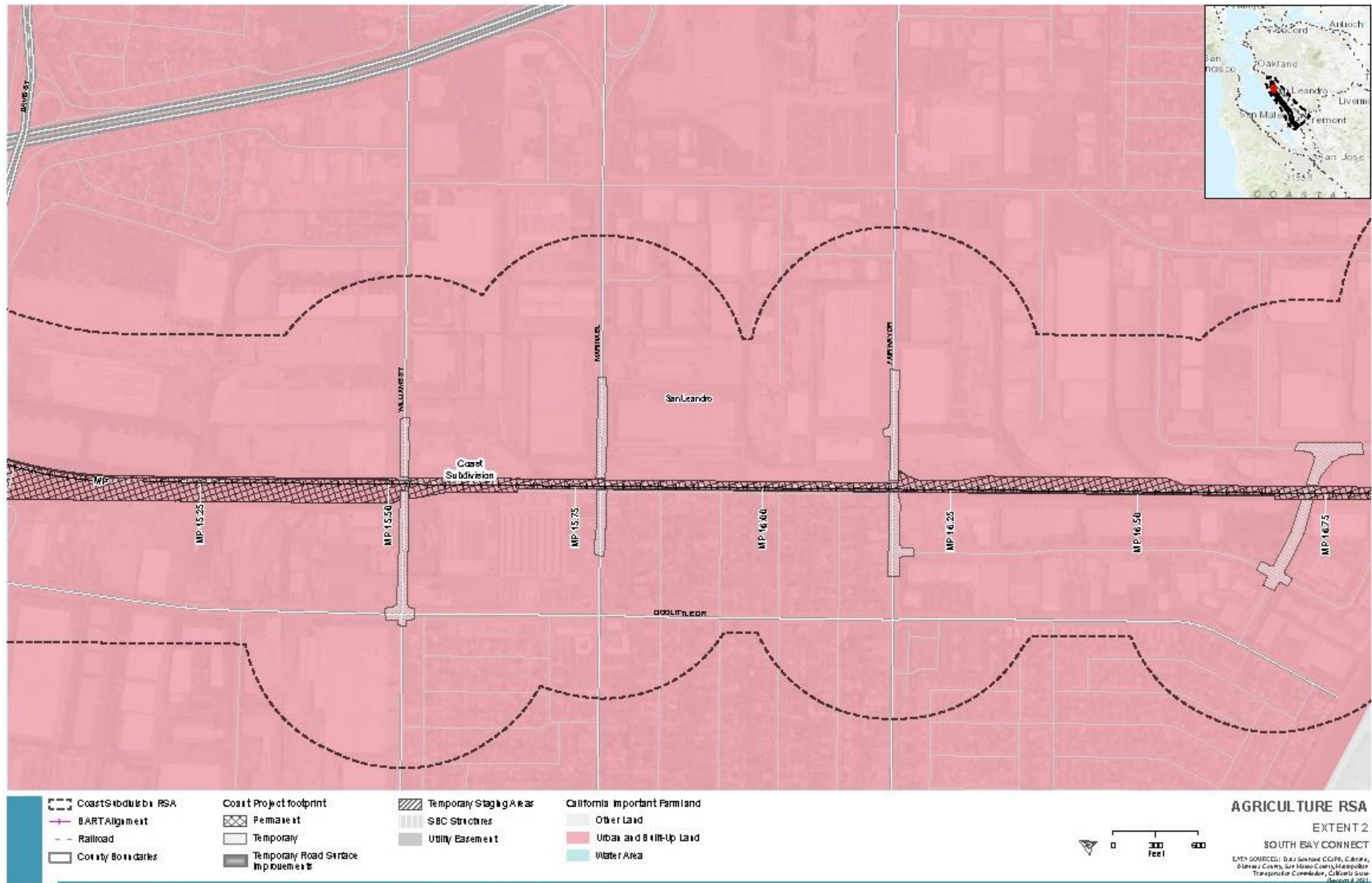


Figure 3.3-3. Agriculture RSA: Extent 3

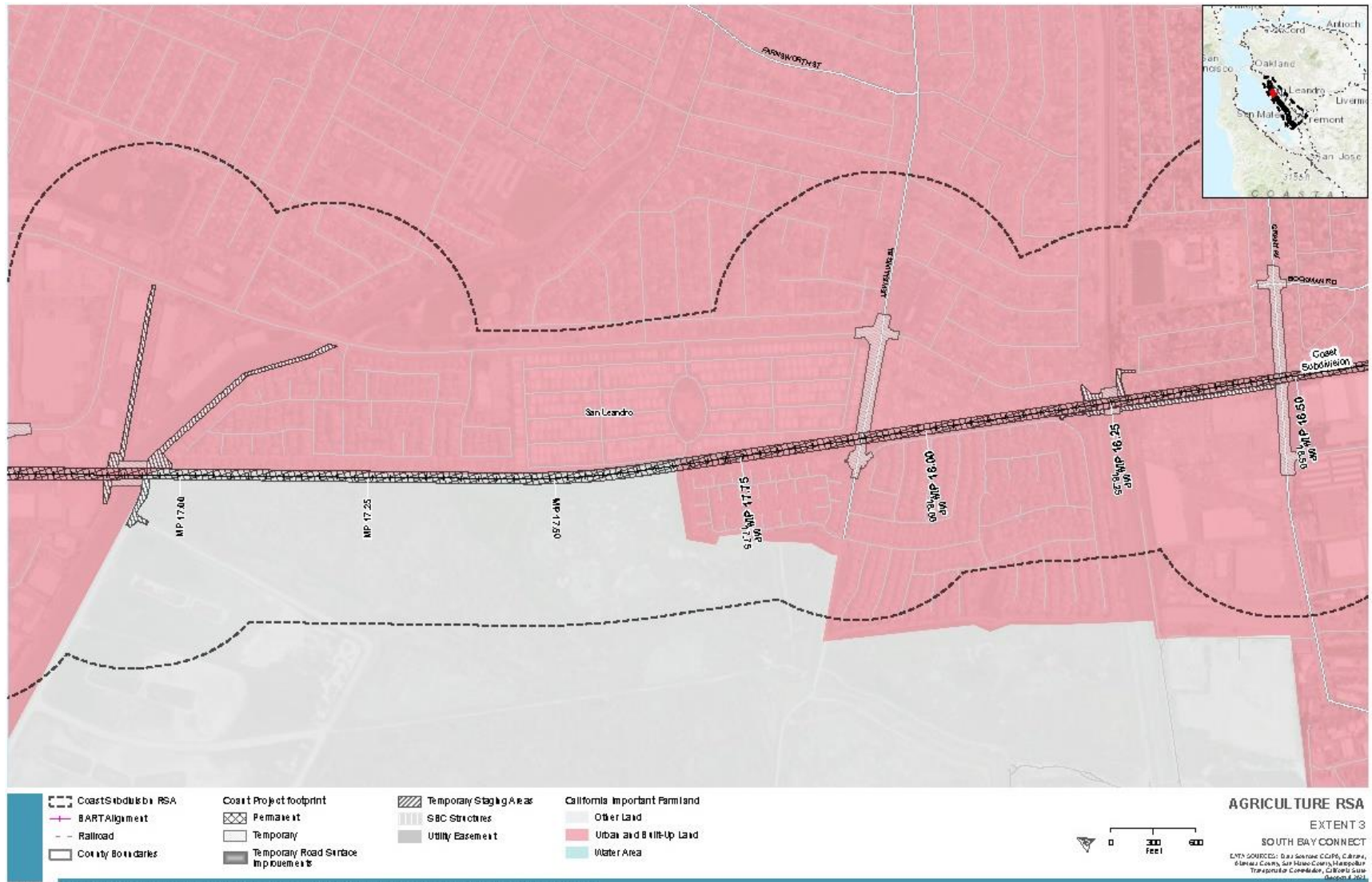


Figure 3.3-4: Agriculture RSA: Extent 4

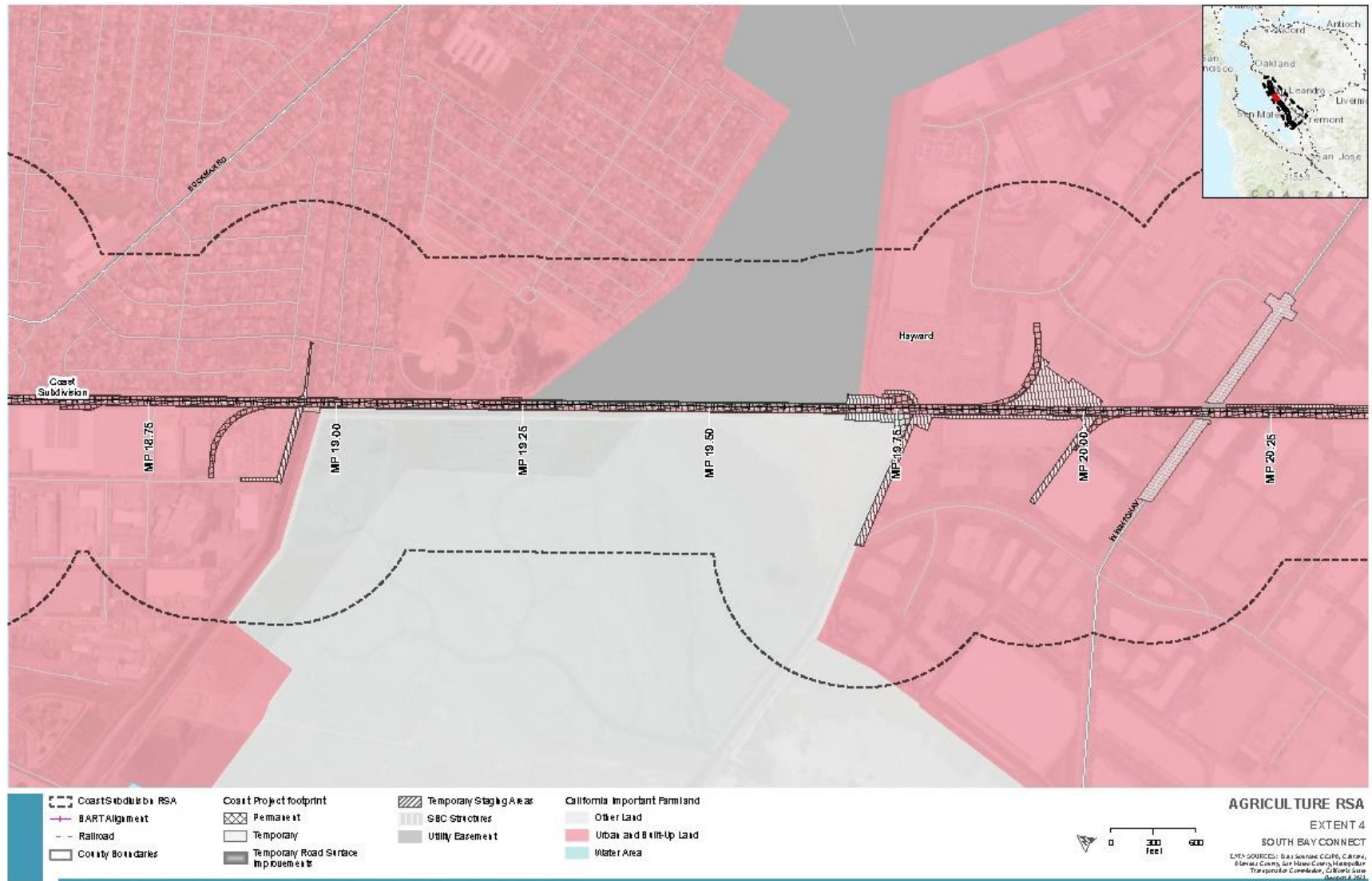


Figure 3.3-5: Agriculture RSA: Extent 5



Figure 3.3-6: Agriculture RSA: Extent 6

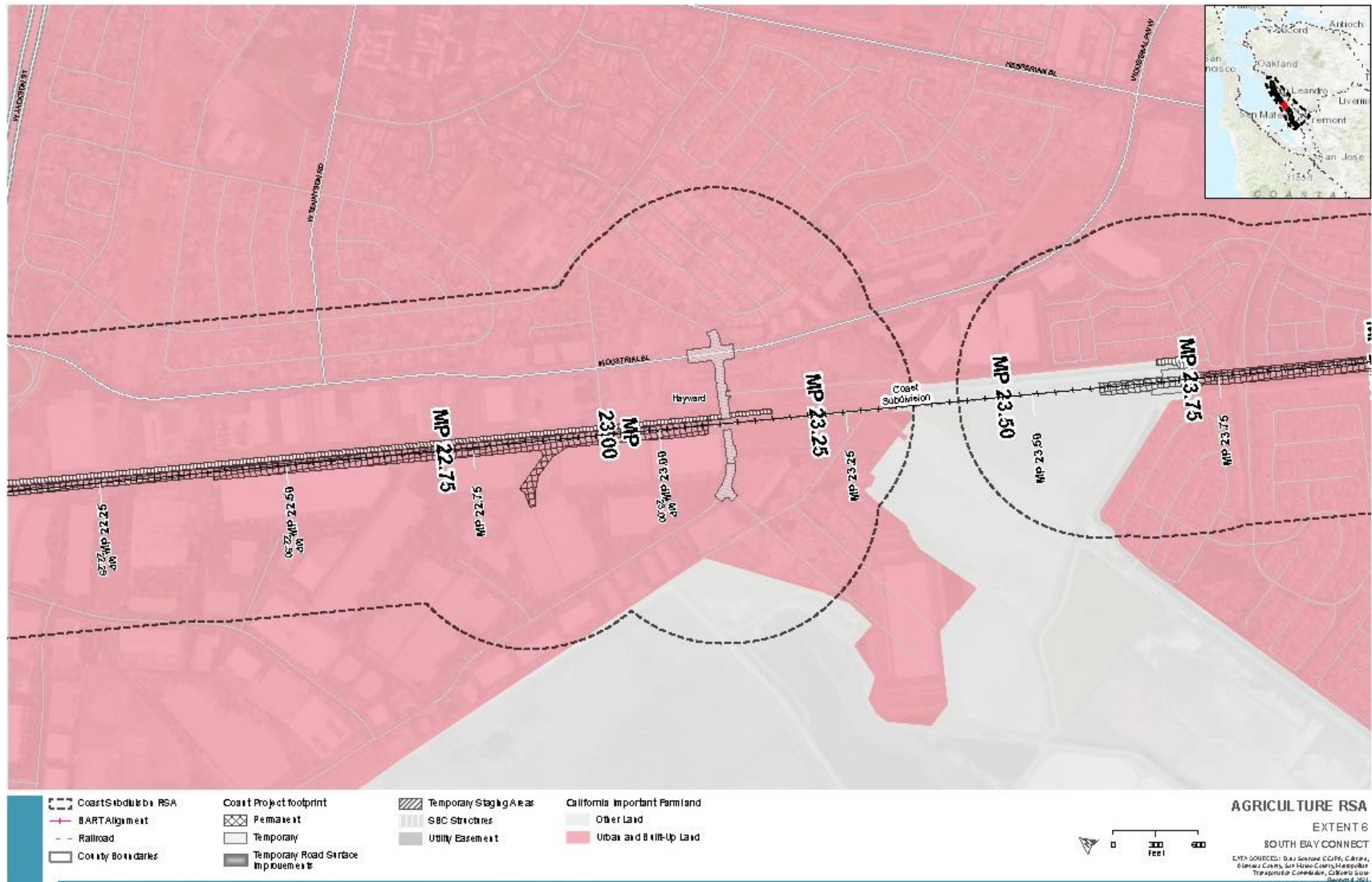


Figure 3.3-7: Agriculture RSA: Extent 7

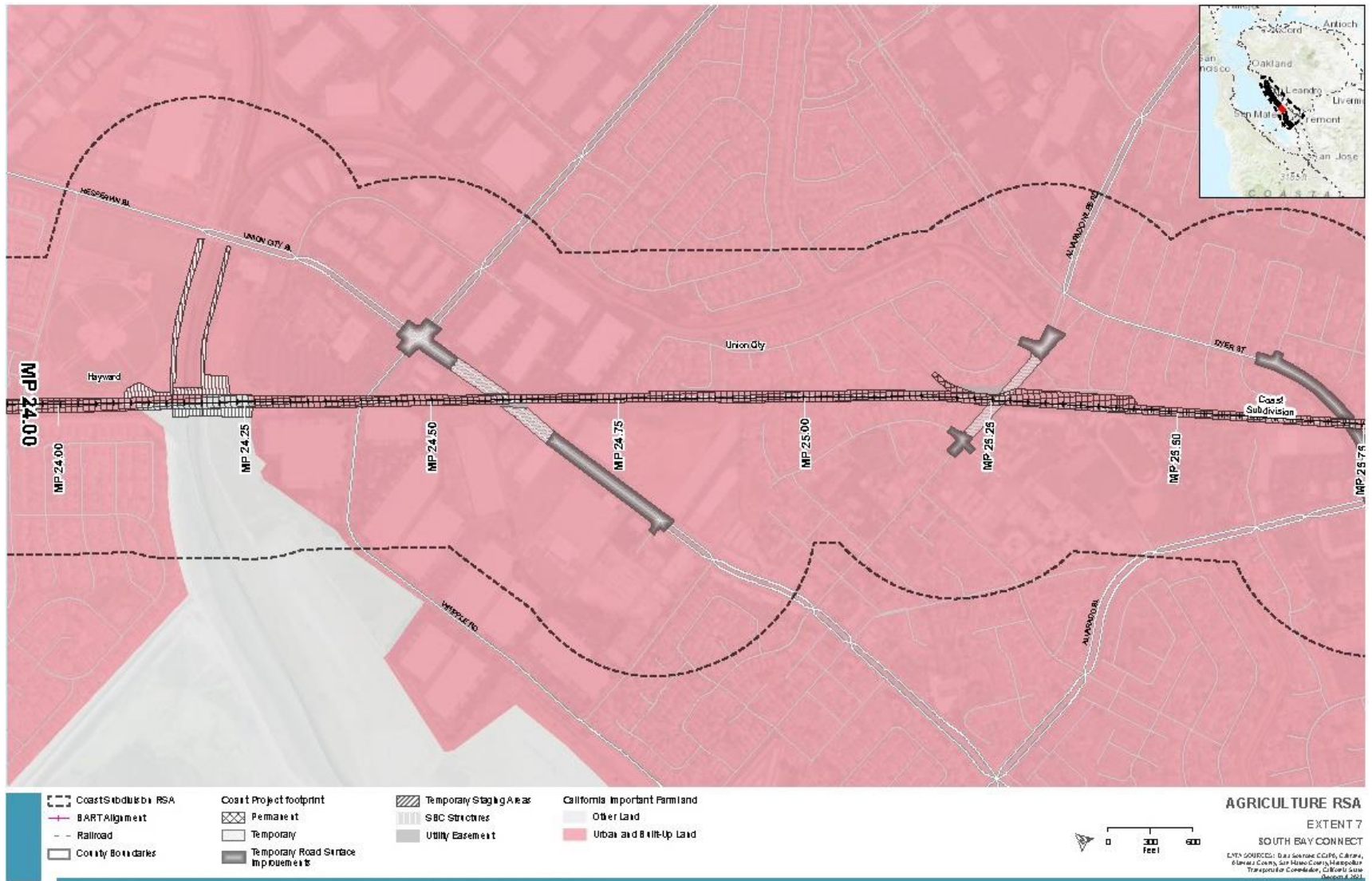


Figure 3.3-8: Agriculture RSA: Extent 8





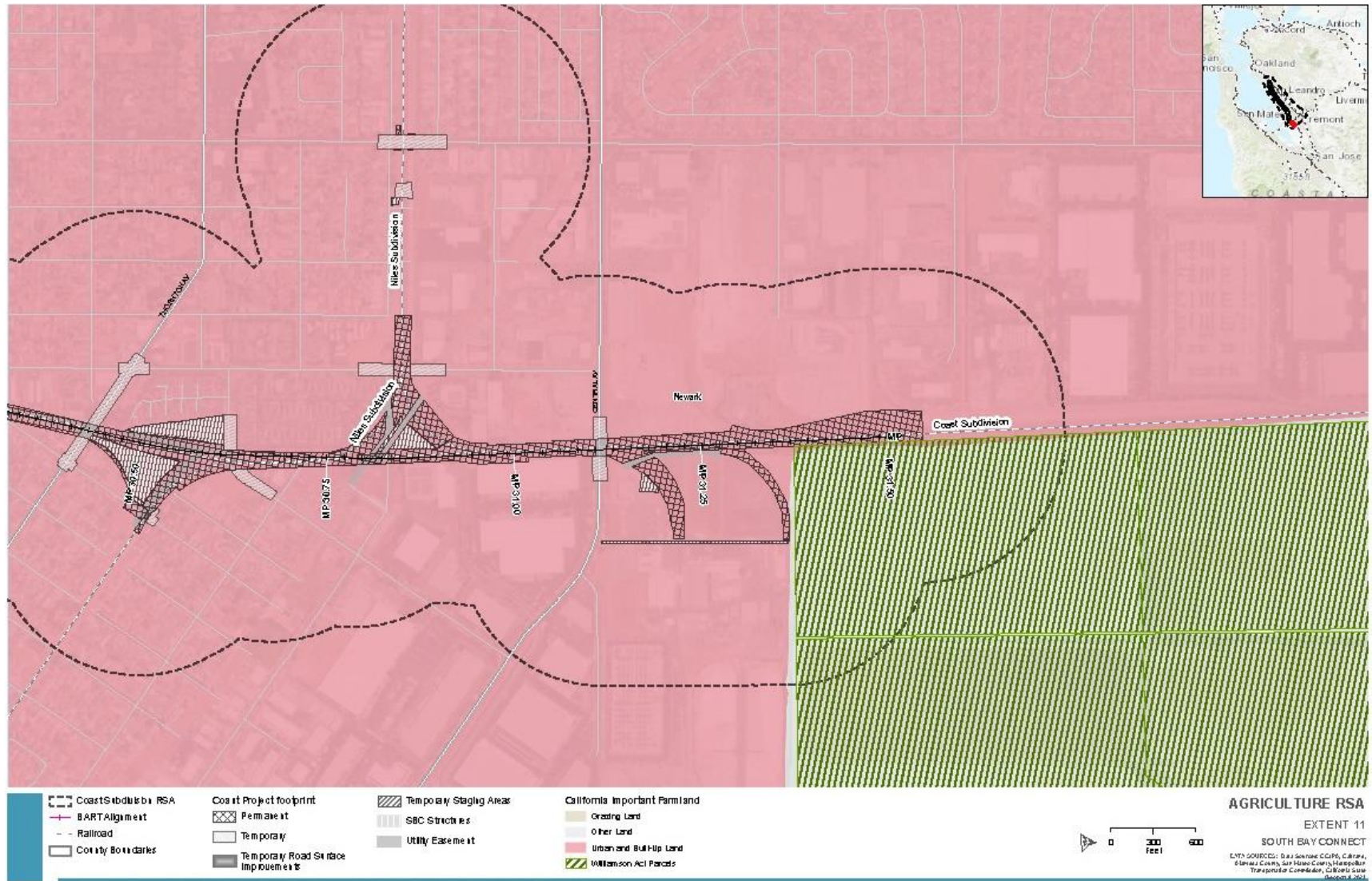
Figure 3.3-9: Agriculture RSA: Extent 9



Figure 3.3-10: Agriculture RSA: Extent 10



Figure 3.3-11: Agriculture RSA: Extent 11



### 3.3.3.2 Data Sources

This analysis of agriculture and forestry resources was based on a review of current land use types in Alameda County (Alameda County 2023b) and farmland classifications per the NRCS and the FMMP. Analysis also included reviewing farmland/agriculture data for Alameda County from the DOC Division of Land Resource Protection (DOC 2023a).

This information was used to determine the proposed Project's specific agriculture-related impacts, with particular attention to the potential conversion of farmland and/or forestland. The impact analysis below focuses on whether those impacts would be significant and if so, whether consistency with existing federal, state, and local regulations would avoid or minimize impacts.

### 3.3.3.3 CEQA Thresholds

To satisfy CEQA requirements, agriculture and forestry resource impacts were analyzed in accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. According to the CEQA Guidelines, CCR, Title 14, Section 15002(g), "a significant effect on the environment is defined as a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions which exist in the area affected by the proposed project." As stated in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064(b)(1), the significance of an activity may vary with the setting. The impact analysis identifies and analyzes construction (short-term) and operation (long-term) impacts, as well as direct and indirect impacts (see PRC Section 21065). The proposed Project would have significant agriculture and forestry resource impacts under CEQA if it would:

- a. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the FMMP of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.
- b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.
- 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)).
- d. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; or
- 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.

## 3.3.4 Affected Environment

### 3.3.4.1 Environmental Setting

#### Regional

The proposed Project is located in Alameda County, which encompasses 738 square miles with more than 200,000 acres designated for agricultural purposes (Alameda County 2023a). According to the Alameda County Development Agency, the county has a rich agricultural heritage and continues to contribute to California's \$30 billion agricultural industry.

Alameda County's agricultural production is dominated by five main commodities: fruit and nut crops (primarily grapes for wine production), livestock, field crops, nursery products, and vegetable crops (Alameda County Development Agency 2022). Despite continuing growth and development in urban portions of Alameda County in recent decades, much of the county's agricultural production is secure and growing, particularly in the nursery and viticultural (or wine-growing) industries, and in the production of certain fruit and vegetable crops, organic products, and products for farmers' markets (Alameda County Development Agency 2023). However, Alameda County has experienced farmland conversion in recent years with a net loss of 444 acres of agricultural areas reported between 2016 and 2018 (Table 3.3-1; DOC 2023b).

**Table 3.3-1. Alameda County Agricultural Land – Important Farmland and Grazing**

<b>Land Use Category</b>	<b>Total Acreage 2016</b>	<b>Total Acreage 2018</b>	<b>2016-18 Acres Lost (-)</b>	<b>2016-18 Acres Gained (+)</b>	<b>2016-18 Total Acreage Changed</b>	<b>2016-18 Net Acreage Changed</b>
<i>Important Farmland</i>						
Prime Farmland	3,392	3,277	165	50	215	-115
Farmland of Statewide Importance	1,128	1,125	9	6	15	-3
Unique Farmland	2,155	2,097	76	18	94	-58
Farmland of Local Importance	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>6,675</i>	<i>6,499</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>324</i>	<i>-176</i>
<i>Non-Important Land</i>						
Grazing Land	240,987	240,719	573	305	878	-268
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>240,987</i>	<i>240,719</i>	<i>573</i>	<i>305</i>	<i>878</i>	<i>-268</i>
<b>Agricultural Land Total</b>	<b>247,662</b>	<b>247,218</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>1,202</b>	<b>-444</b>

Source: DOC 2023b

**Agricultural Productivity**

The top five agricultural products in 2021 in terms of value were wine grapes, cattle and calves, miscellaneous fruit and nut products, and ornamental trees and shrubs (Alameda County Community Development Agency 2022). The 2021 total gross value of Alameda County's

agricultural production was approximately \$55.2 million, which is a 25 percent increase compared to 2020 production (Alameda County Development Agency 2022). This observed overall increase was attributed to changes in cropping patterns, favorable growing conditions for wine grape production, and maturation of other new permanent crops planted in previous years.

### **Agricultural Preservation**

As discussed in Section 3.3.2, Regulatory Setting, the Williamson Act provides a mechanism for keeping agricultural land in productive agricultural use by providing tax incentives. In 2022, there were approximately 127,632 acres of Alameda County land enrolled in the Williamson Act Program. This is greater than the 127,447 acres enrolled in 2020 (DOC 2023c).

### **Forestry Resources**

Alameda County does not identify any current or planned future land use for forestry resources (Alameda County 2023b). Additionally, there are no lands within Alameda County zoned for or currently featuring timberland or timber production (CALFIRE 2023).

### **Local Setting**

The agriculture and forestry resources RSA includes the Ardenwood Historic Farm. The EBRPD has operated the Ardenwood Historic Farm as a fully functioning, turn-of-the-last century farm since 1985 (EBRPD 2024). The Ardenwood Historic Farm is identified as Prime Farmland and Other Land in the FMMP (DOC 2024). The Ardenwood Historic Farm has a City of Fremont zoning of OS – Open Space (City of Fremont 2024).

## **3.3.5 Best Management Practices**

As noted in Chapter 2, Project Alternatives, CCJPA would incorporate a range of BMPs to avoid and minimize adverse effects on the environment that could result from implementation of the proposed Project. BMPs are included in the proposed Project description, and the impact analyses were conducted assuming application of these practices.

No BMPs for agriculture and forestry resources are included in the proposed Project.

## **3.3.6 Environmental Impacts**

This section describes the potential environmental impacts on agriculture and forestry resources as a result of implementation of the proposed Project. Lettering shown within title for each environmental factor below correlates with CEQA Statute and Guidelines, Appendix G table lettering and numbering.

### 3.3.6.1 (a) Would the Project convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

#### No Project Alternative

**No Impact.** Under the No Project Alternative, the Capitol Corridor passenger rail service between Oakland and San Jose would not be relocated from the Niles Subdivision to the Coast Subdivision. Improvements proposed for the Coast Subdivision would not occur. Capitol Corridor passenger trains would continue to operate based on current routes with no changes to rail connectivity or operational efficiency. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would not result in impacts or changes to existing agriculture or forestry resources.

#### Proposed Project

##### Construction and Operation

**No Impact.** The majority of the proposed Project improvements would occur within or adjacent to the existing UPRR ROW. The proposed Project would implement track improvements, grade crossing improvements, bridge crossings, and new or extended sidings. In addition, the proposed Project would have at-grade crossing work that would include safety improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists as well as ADA compliance improvements. Outside of UPRR ROW, the proposed Project would construct a new passenger rail station adjacent to the existing Ardenwood park-and-ride facility, along the Coast Subdivision. To support the anticipated increase in rail service as a result of the new station, a parking facility would be constructed that would accommodate overflow parking at the existing Ardenwood Park-and-Ride facility. The proposed parking facility would be constructed within an industrial area and adjacent to industrial and commercial land uses.

To implement the proposed Project, additional ROW acquisitions (both full and partial), as well as temporary construction easements would be needed. However, as shown in Figure 3.3-1 through Figure 3.3-11, none of the proposed Project improvements would occur within land identified as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Therefore, the proposed Project would have no impacts associated with the direct conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance.

### 3.3.6.2 (b) Would the Project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

#### No Project Alternative

**No Impact.** Under the No Project Alternative, Capitol Corridor passenger trains would continue to operate based on current routes with no changes to rail connectivity or operational efficiency. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would not result in impacts or changes to existing zoning for agriculture use or a Williamson Act contract.

## Proposed Project

### Construction and Operation

**No Impact.** As shown in Figure 3.3-1 through Figure 3.3-11, none of the proposed Project improvements would occur within agricultural lands identified as Zone A under Alameda County Code, Title 17, or lands under the Williamson Act contract. Land use mapping (Alameda County 2023b) shows that the Coast Subdivision is located within lands zoned as industrial and primarily parallel areas identified as residential, commercial, parks/open space, industrial, and mixed use. The nearest farmland to Project activities is the Ardenwood Historic Farm, which is located immediately adjacent to the Coast Subdivision (Figure 3.3-9). With a zoning of open space, the Ardenwood Historic Farm is not zoned for agriculture use despite being designated as Prime Farmland.

As shown in Figure 3.3-11, lands under Williamson Act contracts also parallel the Coast Subdivision near Central Avenue in Newark; however, these parcels will not be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposed Project. Therefore, the proposed Project would have no impact on a Williamson Act contract property or conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use.

### 3.3.6.3 (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))?

#### No Project Alternative

**No Impact.** Under the No Project Alternative, Capitol Corridor passenger trains would continue to operate based on current routes with no changes to rail connectivity or operational efficiency. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would not result in impacts or changes to existing zoning for forest land or land zoned as timberland.

#### Proposed Project

##### Construction and Operation

**No Impact.** The RSA does not currently include areas designated or zoned for timberland production or other forestry-related uses and is not in a designated Timberland Production Zone. Therefore, the proposed Project would have no impacts on forestry.

### 3.3.6.4 (d) Would the Project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

#### No Project Alternative

**No Impact.** Under the No Project Alternative, Capitol Corridor passenger trains would continue to operate based on current routes with no changes to rail connectivity or operational efficiency. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest uses.



## Proposed Project

### Construction and Operation

**No Impact.** As described in Section 3.3.6.3, the RSA does not include areas currently designated or zoned for timberland production or other forestry related uses and is not in a designated Timberland Production Zone. Implementation of the proposed Project would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. Therefore, the proposed Project would have no impacts associated with the loss or conversion of forest land.

### 3.3.6.5 (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?

#### No Project Alternative

**No Impact.** Under the No Project Alternative, Capitol Corridor passenger trains would continue to operate based on current routes with no changes to rail connectivity or operational efficiency. Therefore, no impacts associated with conversion of farmland and forest land to non-agriculture or non-forest use would occur.

#### Proposed Project

##### Construction and Operation

**No Impact.** As discussed earlier, implementation of the proposed Project would not result in the conversion of forest land to non-forest use, as there is no forest land located within the RSA. The RSA contains areas identified as Prime Farmland, Grazing Land, and Williamson Act lands. Prime Farmland is adjacent to the Coast Subdivision (Figure 3.3-9) in Fremont. Grazing Land and Williamson Act land are adjacent to the Coast Subdivision near Central Avenue in Newark (Figure 3.3-11). However, none of the proposed Project improvements would occur within agricultural lands.

The majority of the land surrounding the Coast subdivision is urbanized and built out, and the majority of the rail improvements proposed are located within the existing UPRR ROW. For improvements outside of the existing UPRR ROW, such as the new passenger rail station adjacent to the existing Ardenwood Park & Ride facility, such improvements would occur on non-agricultural lands. None of the proposed Project improvements would result in impacts to farmland at the Ardenwood Historic Farm. Although there are lands identified for agricultural use within the RSA, implementation of the proposed Project is not anticipated to result in changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use.

## 3.3.7 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures for agriculture and forestry resources are required for this project.

### **3.3.8 Cumulative Impact Analysis**

The proposed Project would not impact agriculture and forestry resources. Because no impacts are anticipated, a cumulative impact analysis is not warranted for agriculture and forestry resources.

### **3.3.9 CEQA Significance Findings Table**

Table 3.3-2 summarizes the agriculture and forestry resources impacts of the proposed Project.

**Table 3.3-2. Agriculture and Forestry Resources Impacts Summary**

Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Incremental Project Contribution to Cumulative Impacts	Mitigation	Level of Significance with Mitigation Incorporated	Incremental Project Cumulative Impact after Mitigation
<b>(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</b>	NI	NCC	N/A	NI	NCC
<b>(b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract</b>	NI	NCC	N/A	NI	NCC
<b>(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))</b>	NI	NCC	N/A	NI	NCC
<b>(e) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use</b>	NI	NCC	N/A	NI	NCC

**Table 3.3-2. Agriculture and Forestry Resources Impacts Summary**

Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Incremental Project Contribution to Cumulative Impacts	Mitigation	Level of Significance with Mitigation Incorporated	Incremental Project Cumulative Impact after Mitigation
<b>(f) 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</b>	NI	NCC	N/A	NI	NCC

Notes: LTS = Less than Significant Impact, NI = No Impact, N/A = Not Applicable, SI = Significant Impact, S/M = Significant Impact but Mitigable to a Less than Significant Level, CC = Cumulatively Considerable, NCC = Not Cumulatively Considerable.

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