

## 5.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

### 5.2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes the agriculture and forestry resource conditions in the Project region and potential impacts to agriculture and forestry resources as a result of Project implementation. The analysis in this section is based, in part, on the following documents and resources:

- California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
- *City of Perris General Plan 2030, Adopted 26 April 2005*
- *City of Perris General Plan 2030 Environmental Impact Report, Certified 26 April 2005*
- Perris Municipal Code

### 5.2.2 REGULATORY SETTING

#### 5.2.2.1 Federal Regulations

##### Forest and Timberland

The United States Forest Service (USFS) defines a forested area as "forest land" if it is at least one acre in size and at least 10 percent occupied by forest trees of any size or formerly having had such tree cover and not currently developed for non-forest use. Non-forest uses may include cropland, pasturelands, residential areas, and other land uses. Forest land includes transition zones which are those "areas located between heavily forested and non-forested lands that are at least 10 percent stocked with forest trees, and forest areas adjacent to urban and built-up lands." The majority of federal forest land is managed as the National Forest System.

"Timberland" is land owned by the federal government and designated by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection 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. Sections 51112 or 51113 (h) of the California Public Resources Code defines "Timberland Production Zone" (TPZ) is land used for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses.

##### Forest Plans

The USFS Land and Resources Management Plans (Forest Plans) describe the management of national forests. These plans apply only to federal lands under the administration of the USFS; they are not applicable to privately owned land within the national forest boundaries or privately owned land adjacent to the national forest boundaries. The following types of decisions are made in the Forest Plans:

1. Establishment of forest-wide objectives, with a description of the desired condition;
2. Establishment of forest-wide management standards;
3. Establishment of management areas and management prescriptions;
4. Establishment of lands suitable for the production of timber;
5. Establishment of monitoring and evaluation requirements; and
6. Recommendations to Congress of areas eligible for wilderness or wild and scenic river designation.

## Farmland Protection Policy Act

The purpose of the Farmland Protection Policy 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.

## Farmland Protection Program

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a federal agency within the United States Department of Agriculture, is the agency primarily responsible for implementation of the Farmland Protection Policy Act. The NRCS provides technical assistance to federal agencies, state and local governments, tribes, or nonprofit organizations that desire to develop farmland protection programs and policies. The NRCS summarizes Farmland Protection Policy Act implementation in an annual report to Congress. The Farmland Protection Policy Act also established the Farmland Protection Program and Land Evaluation and Site Assessment rating system.

The NRCS also administers the Farmland Protection Program, a voluntary program aimed at keeping productive farmland in agricultural uses. Under the program, the NRCS provides matching funds to state, local, or tribal government entities and nonprofit organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements. The goal of the program is to protect between 170,000 and 340,000 acres of farmland per year (USDA-NRCS, 2024). Participating landowners agree not to convert the land to nonagricultural use and retain all rights to use the property for agriculture. A minimum of 30 years is required for conservation easements and priority is given to applications with perpetual easements. The NRCS provides up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the easement being conserved (USDA-NRCS, 2024). To qualify for a conservation easement, farmland must meet several criteria. The land must be:

- Prime, unique, or other productive soil, as defined by the NRCS based on factors such as water moisture regimes, available water capacity, developed irrigation water supply, soil temperature range, acid-alkali balance, water table, soil sodium content, potential for flooding, erodibility, permeability rate, rock fragment content, and soil-rooting depth;
- Included in a pending offer to be managed by a nonprofit organization, state, tribal, or local farmland protection program;
- Privately owned;
- Placed under a conservation plan;
- Large enough to sustain agricultural production;
- Accessible to markets for the crop that the land produces; and
- Surrounded by parcels of land that can support long-term agricultural production.

### 5.2.2.2 State Regulations

## Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program was established in 1982 to track changes in agricultural land use and to help preserve areas of important farmland. It divides the state's farmland into different categories based on soil quality and existing agriculture, which are used to identify productive farmland and to analyze impacts on farmland. The various types of farmland identified by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program include Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, farmland of local importance, and grazing land. The highest rated important farmland is Prime Farmland.

## Williamson Act Contracts

The California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) was passed in 1965 to protect specific parcels of land in agricultural and open space use. Landowners enter into 10-year contracts with local governments and in return receive lower property tax assessments. Williamson Act Contracts are self-renewing; the contracts automatically renew each year for an additional year. This continues indefinitely unless the County or the landowner files a Notice of Non-Renewal which then terminates the contract at the end of its term (9 years). When a Non-Renewal is filed by the landowner, the property tax assessment gradually reverts back to being computed upon full market value.

## Timberland

Section 12220(g) of the California Public Resources Code 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.

### 5.2.2.3 Local and Regional Regulations

#### City of Perris General Plan 2030

The City of Perris General Plan Conservation Element contains the following goal related to agriculture and forestry resources that are applicable to the Project:

- Goal I**                    Orderly conservation of agriculture lands to other approved land uses.
- Policy I.A**                Establish growth management strategies to ensure the proper timing and economic provisions for utilities, major streets and other facilities so that orderly development will occur.

#### Perris Municipal Code

**Chapter 19.74: Agricultural Preserve Procedures.** According to Perris Municipal Code Chapter 19.74, the City has authorization to designate suitable areas of the City as agricultural preserves by resolution of the City Council pursuant to the Williamson Act of 1965 (Government Code section 51200 et seq.) for the purpose of establishing agricultural and compatible land uses. The Chapter provides procedures on notices of nonrenewal and cancellation of agricultural preserves.

## 5.2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

### 5.2.3.1 Agricultural Resources

#### Regional

Natural resources in Riverside County and City of Perris include agricultural and grazing lands. In 2015, the County had approximately 132,183 acres of Prime Farmland, 42,096 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 37,726 acres of Unique Farmland (Riverside County, 2015). In 2020, the County had approximately 114,616 acres of Prime farmland, 43,768 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 30,526 acres of Unique Farmland (DOC, 2020).

## Local

Historically, approximately 52 percent of land within the City of Perris was previously or has been used for agricultural purposes. Existing farmland within the City is often used for dry farming or the production of sod, alfalfa, or hay. Many agricultural fields within the City have been out of production for a number of years or have been converted to other uses. The City of Perris General Plan recognized that the City would continue to transform into a more urbanized area, reducing the potential for agriculture and supporting economic activities in the City (City of Perris, 2005).

## Project Site

The Specific Plan Area was previously utilized for agricultural uses, but currently includes two single-family residences, remnants of two previously demolished single-family residences, vacant land, Val Verde Elementary School, and roadways. As shown in Figure 5.2-1, *Farmland Resources*, approximately 301.19 acres of the site are designated as Farmland of Local Importance, approximately 10.66 acres of the site is designated as Urban-Built Up Land, and approximately 46.43 acres of the site is designated as Other Lands by the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (DOC, 2022a).

### 5.2.3.2 Forest Resources

The Specific Plan Area is located in the city of Perris, a rapidly urbanizing region that generally contains dry, sparsely-vegetated terrain in the natural condition, and does not contain any forest resources (City of Perris, 2005). As shown in Figure OS-3a of the Riverside County General Plan there are no forest resources in the Project's vicinity under existing conditions (Riverside County, 2015).

## 5.2.4 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Appendix G of CEQA Guidelines indicates that a Project could have a significant effect if it were to:

- AG-1 Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.
- AG-2 Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.
- AG-3 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)).
- AG-4 Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.
- AG-5 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?

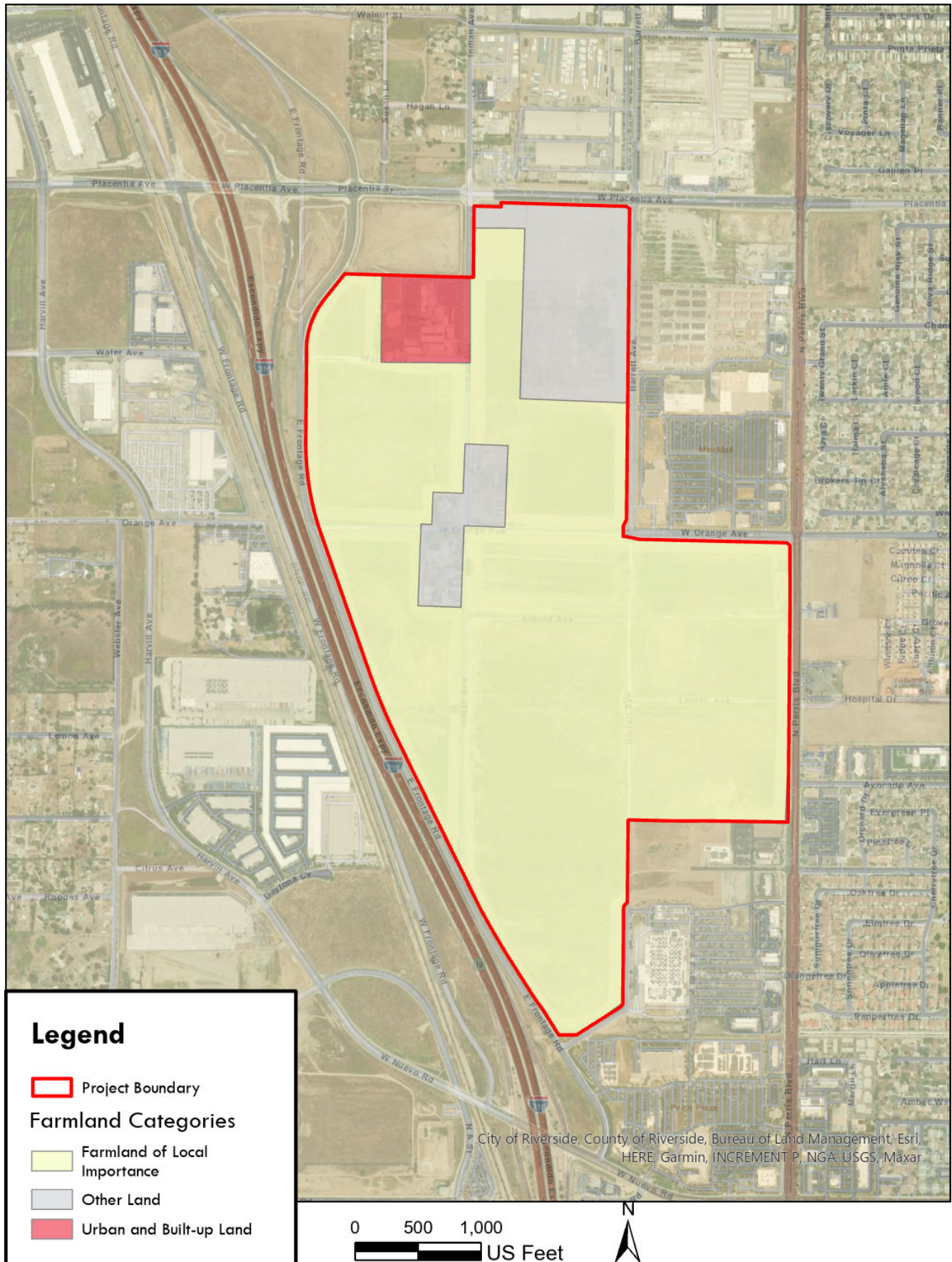
## 5.2.5 METHODOLOGY

Agricultural resources were assessed based on the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, which is a biennial report and mapping resource on the conversion of farmland and grazing land. Using this source, the proposed Project was analyzed for potential conversion of important farmland, conflicts with zoning designations, conversion of Williamson Act contract lands, and changes resulting from the proposed Project that could remove existing farmland from agricultural production.

Forest resources were assessed based on the City of Perris General Plan EIR and evaluation of the existing quantity of trees on or adjacent to the Project site. Using these sources, the proposed Project was analyzed for the potential conversion of forest land, conflicts with zoning designations for forest or timberland, and changes resulting from the proposed Project that could remove existing forest land or convert forest land to non-forest uses.

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# Farmland Resources



Harvest Landing Retail Center & Business Park Project  
City of Perris

Figure 5.9-1

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## 5.2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

As detailed in Section 3.0, *Project Description*, the proposed Project includes a Specific Plan Amendment to modify the existing land uses and development of the Project site pursuant to the proposed new land uses over two phases that are summarized below.

### *Phase 1 Development*

Within Phase 1, the Project would construct and operate a 139.89-acre business park with seven buildings including a parcel hub, high cube warehouses, and light industrial buildings that would total 1,727,579 square feet; construct and operate a 22.16-acre shopping center with buildings totaling 250,457 square feet; and construct and operate a 167,060-square-foot big box store on a 24.33-acre site with a 12-pump gas station and two fast-food restaurant parcels for two restaurants that would each be approximately 5,500 square feet.

In addition, during construction of Phase 1 the Project would implement street improvements on Indian Avenue, Orange Avenue, Frontage Road, Perris Boulevard, Barrett Avenue, Harvest Landing Way, and Private Drive A; install drainage infrastructure improvements in Perris Boulevard, Barrett Avenue, Orange Avenue, Indian Avenue, and Private Drive A; implement sewer line improvements in Perris Boulevard; implement water lines improvements in Barrett Avenue, Orange Avenue, Frontage Road, Walmart Supercenter Drive; and install a new water well for landscaping irrigation in the proposed drainage basin. Construction and operation of the Phase 1 development is analyzed at a project-specific level within this section.

### *Phase 2 Buildout*

The proposed amended Specific Plan buildout of the Phase 2 development area without inclusion of the overlay area would allow up to 3,659,693 square feet of warehouse, light industrial, and/or manufacturing uses under the Multiple Business Use designation, at a maximum floor area ratio of 0.75. Development of the 10.66-acre overlay area would include approximately 348,262 square feet of warehouse, light industrial, and/or manufacturing uses under the Multiple Business Use designation. Total development within the Phase 2 area, including the overlay area, would include up to 4,007,955 square feet of building area.<sup>1</sup> The analysis within this section assumes that construction would begin in 2026 and be completed by 2030, thereby overlapping with operation of Phase 1 developments. Construction and operation of the Phase 2 buildout is analyzed at a project-specific level within this section.

**IMPACT AG-1: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT 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.**

### *Specific Plan Area*

**No Impact.** The State of California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program is responsible for producing maps for analyzing impacts on the state's agricultural resources. California's agricultural lands are rated based on soil quality and irrigation status. For CEQA purposes, the

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<sup>1</sup> The Phase 2 buildout square footage of 4,007,955 SF was based on the gross acreage of parcels within the Phase 2 area prior to roadway dedications. After roadway dedications, the maximum allowable development within Phase 2 would actually be 4,001,748 SF. However, for purposes of providing a conservative analysis, a buildout of 4,007,955 SF was assumed.

following categories qualify as “Farmland”: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land.

As discussed above, approximately 301.19 acres of the site is designated as Farmland of Local Importance, approximately 10.66 acres of the site is designated as Urban-Built Up Land, and approximately 46.43 acres of the site is designated as Other Lands. The Specific Plan Area is partially developed and does not contain any existing farmland. Per Section 21060.1 of the CEQA Guidelines, Farmland of Local Importance is not considered Farmland. No surrounding areas are designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. Per Section 21060.1 of the State CEQA Guidelines, Farmland of Local Importance is not considered Prime, Unique, or of Statewide Importance. Because there is no Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance at the Project site, no impact would occur.

**IMPACT AG-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH EXISTING ZONING FOR AGRICULTURAL USE, OR A WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACT.**

*Specific Plan Area*

**No Impact.** The Specific Plan Area is not under an active Williamson Act contract (DOC, 2022b). Therefore, the Project would not result in the cancellation of a contract and impacts related to a Williamson Act contract would not occur.

Approximately 6.9 acres of land to be annexed into the Harvest Landing Specific Plan is zoned Light Agriculture (A1). The rest of the amended Specific Plan Area is either currently zoned as Public (P) or various zoning designations within the existing Harvest Landing Specific Plan. According to Perris Municipal Code Section 19.20.010, the Light Agriculture (A1) zone is intended to provide for existing agricultural uses and act as a holding zone or interim designation until a property can be developed consistent with the City’s General Plan. The parcels zoned Light Agriculture (A1) have a current General Plan land use designation of Business Park (BP). Furthermore, none of these parcels are currently utilized for agricultural activity or operation, including but not limited to, the cultivation and tillage of the soil, dairying, the production, cultivation, growing, and raising of livestock, fur bearing animals, fish, or poultry, and any practices performed by a farmer or on a farm as incident to or in conjunction with such family operations, including preparation for market, delivery to storage or to market, or to carriers for transportation to market. The zone change included as part of the proposed Project would allow the zoning onsite to match the intended land uses. In addition, no agricultural activities have recently occurred onsite and the site has been planned for Business Park (BP) uses by the City of Perris General Plan.

Therefore, the Project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract and no impact would occur.

**IMPACT AG-3: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT 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)).**

*Specific Plan Area*

**No Impact.** The Specific Plan Area is located in an urbanized area of the City. There is no forest land or forest resources on or in proximity to the City of Perris. Additionally, the Specific Plan Area is not designated or zoned for forest or timberland or used for foresting. As such, development of the proposed Project would not 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 Govt. Code section 51104(g)) and no impact would occur.

**IMPACT AG-4: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN THE LOSS OF FOREST LAND OR CONVERSION OF FOREST LAND TO NON-FOREST USE.**

*Specific Plan Area*

**No Impact.** The Specific Plan Area is located in an urbanized area of the City. There is no forest land in the vicinity of the City of Perris. Therefore, development of the proposed Project would not cause loss of forest land or convert forest land to non-forest use. No impacts would occur to forest land or timberlands.

**IMPACT AG-5: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT 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.**

*Specific Plan Area*

**No Impact.** As detailed previously, buildout of the proposed Project would not facilitate the conversion of farmland within the Project vicinity to non-agricultural use. While the Project would convert a portion of the site from a zoning of Light Agriculture (A1) to Harvest Landing Specific Plan, the parcels currently zoned for agricultural uses have a General Plan land use designation of Business Park (BP) and have not been recently utilized for agricultural purposes. There are no existing agricultural activities currently onsite or in the surrounding area. Development of the Specific Plan Area would not convert Farmland to other uses. Additionally, the areas surrounding the Specific Plan Area are designated by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program as Urban-Built Up Land or Farmland of Local Importance. There is no State-designated Farmland within the vicinity of the site.

There is no forest land or forest resources on or in proximity to the Specific Plan Area. Additionally, the Specific Plan Area is not designated or zoned for forest or timberland or used for foresting.

Therefore, buildout of the proposed Project would not result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest use and no impact would occur.

## 5.2.7 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

### **Agricultural Resources**

The cumulative study area for agricultural resources for this Draft EIR is the County of Riverside as these resources are regularly assessed on the countywide level as part of the State's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. Throughout the County, numerous development projects exist that would result in the additional conversion of agricultural land, including Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance, to non-agricultural uses, such as the proposed Project. As discussed above, agricultural use in the County has declined over the last several decades as the result of urban expansion and economic conditions. Consequently, the County and incorporated cities within the County, such as the City of Perris, have set forth goals and policies to protect agriculture within their individual General Plans. Notwithstanding, the County and incorporated cities within the County continue to plan for growth, including in the vicinity of the City of Perris. The Project meets the City of Perris's goal to increase employment opportunities. There are no existing agricultural activities currently onsite or in the surrounding area and the Project would not result in the conversion of Farmland and the Project site is not designated as State Farmland. Therefore, the Project would not cumulatively contribute to the conversion of Farmland.

## Forest Resources

The cumulative study area for forestry resources is the County of Riverside. There are no forest resources or woodland vegetation within the immediate vicinity of the Project site and limited lowland woodlands within the peripheries of the City. As discussed, Project implementation would not directly impact forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production. Therefore, the Project would not cumulatively contribute to forest resource impacts. Thus, cumulative impacts related to forest resources would not occur.

### 5.2.8 EXISTING REGULATIONS

None.

### 5.2.9 PROJECT DESIGN FEATURES

None.

### 5.2.10 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE BEFORE MITIGATION

Impacts AG-1, AG-2, AG-3, AG-4, and AG-5 would have no impact.

### 5.2.11 MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation measures are required.

### 5.2.12 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

No impacts associated with agriculture and forestry resources would occur and no mitigation measures are required.

### 5.2.13 REFERENCES

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