

**City of McFarland
General Plan Update
Sustainable Agriculture
November 2020**



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BACKGROUND

Executive Summary

Sustainable Agriculture

The Sustainable Agriculture Element explores agriculture related legal requirements, examines current condition of agricultural lands including preservation of agricultural lands of statewide importance, soil conditions, harvested crops, and economic value of agricultural production. McFarland holds significant agricultural resources, including fertile soils that elevate many parcels in the region to the status of prime agricultural land. McFarland and its surroundings also hold significant agricultural lands of Statewide Importance.

Agriculture is one of the major economic sectors for the City of McFarland. Over the one and half decades from 2002 through 2017, for instance, the agricultural sector had an average of two-thirds of all jobs. The analysis of the existing condition reveals that there are 62 Williamson Act Parcels within the proposed sphere of influence (SOI), which suggests that the agricultural landowners are willing to preserve the lands without urban developments. Additionally, 55 parcels out of the 66 Williamson Act lands within the proposed SOI are found to be prime agricultural land, which have the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. Most of the agricultural lands within the SOI are also found to grow almonds and grapes, which are the top commodities of the City. These conditions suggest that the City has a great potential to further grow its agricultural industry. Therefore, it is important to provide appropriate balance between preservation of agricultural lands and urban development to ensure sustainable economic growth of the City.

Emerging directions for a Sustainable Agricultural Element include conservation of prime farmlands. Directions also favor consistency with the State of California's vision for Agriculture. McFarland must as well follow actions contained in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan that the Kern Groundwater Authority has developed for the "high priority" Kern Groundwater Subbasin.

17. AGRICULTURE

17.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the background to a Sustainable Agriculture Element. It first explores agriculture related standards or legal requirements. Then, the chapter examines current condition of agricultural lands and industry including preservation of agricultural lands, soil conditions, harvested crops, and economic value.

The Agricultural Element is related to the Land Use, Housing, and Conservation elements. According to the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research [OPR], (2017), the Land Use Element is required to identify agricultural lands whereas the Housing Element needs to plan for housing for agricultural workers. Lastly, the Conservation Element is required to identify open space including agricultural lands for preservation.

Agriculture is a major economic driver of the City of McFarland. During the one and half decades from 2002 through 2017, for instance, the number of jobs in the agricultural sector made up at least 50% (2002) and as much as 80% (2017) of all jobs in the City for an average of two-thirds of all jobs over the period. Therefore, many residents depend on the income from the City’s agricultural sector. In addition to economic value of agriculture, OPR (2017) asserts that agricultural lands can benefit cities by preserving the aesthetic qualities of the open space, maintaining physical separation between urban areas, and protecting biological resources. Therefore, it is imperative to provide appropriate balance between preservation of agricultural lands and urban development.

17.2 Standards and Legal Requirements

17.2.1 The Governor’s Office of Planning and Research General Plan Guidelines 2017

The OPR states that all the elements within the General Plan should be internally consistent. Additionally, OPR identifies the statutes that require certain elements such as land use, housing, and open space to recognize agriculture:

- *Land Use*: General location and distribution of land uses for open space, including agriculture, natural resources, recreation, and enjoyment of scenic beauty. [Gov. Code § 65302(a)]
- *Housing*: Analysis of whether inventory provides for a variety of housing types including housing for agricultural employees [Gov. Code §65583 (a) (3) and 65583.2]
- *Open Space*: Identification of any parcels of area of land or water that is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space including agricultural land [Gov. Code § 65560(b)]

The OPR has also made the determination that agriculture relates to other elements in the General Plan. It is common, therefore, to come across the subject of agriculture in the conservation, safety, and environmental justice elements of the General Plan.

17.2.2 California Agriculture Vision 2017

McFarland is crafting a vision for sustainable agriculture in the General Plan update to be consistent with the statewide vision, which states the following:

- *Authentic food* – the entire agricultural sector in the golden state cannot be manufactured and must be rooted in authenticity.
- *Healthy and sustainable food* – food is the foundation not only for health and wellness, but also for allowing people and societies at large to thrive.
- *Healthy People and Planet* – Californians take pride in their innovative, thriving California farmers and ranchers for their contributions to a healthy population and planet.

17.2.3 Williamson Act (California Land Conservation Act of 1965)

The Williamson Act or California Land Conservation Act aims to protect agricultural land through the creation of voluntary contracts between cities or counties and landowners in exchange for a 10-year agreement prohibiting new development on agricultural lands. These contracts reduce property taxes by basing assessments on the agricultural rather than the market value for physical development. The intent of the Act is to prevent unwarranted development on prime farmland and productive soils. Agricultural lands largely surround McFarland; the area’s unique soil quality is highly fertile and produces high crop yields. Because of this development, pristine or undisturbed habitats are nonexistent in the original grassland and shrublands. As the City continues to develop and expand, the preservation and effective utilization of high-quality productive soils remain important.

17.2.4 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (2014)

The California State Legislature passed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) at the height of the 2014 drought season as a consolidated package of three bills which include Assembly Bill (AB) 1739, Senate Bill (SB) 1168 and SB 1319. The SGMA enabled local control of groundwater resources while requiring the sustainable management of that groundwater resource as follows:

1. The SGMA requires the establishment of a local governance body called a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) to develop, adopt, and implement a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP).
2. The GSPs must establish management criteria to avoid undesirable results, identify potential actions to maintain or achieve sustainable groundwater management by 2040 or 20 years from the date of the adoption of the GSP, and document monitoring conditions.

The SGMA defines Sustainable management of groundwater as the “management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results” (California Water Code (CWC) Section 10721(v)). Undesirable results under the SGMA include the following:

- significant and unreasonable lowering of groundwater levels
- loss of groundwater storage and supply
- degradation of water quality
- land subsidence

- surface water depletion; and
- sea water intrusion.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) classified water basins throughout California as either “high” or “medium” priority under the SGMA. DWR classified the Subbasin covered by the Kern Groundwater Authority (KGA) as a “high” priority basin, which triggered the requirement to submit its GSP by January 31, 2020. Hence preparation of the KGA’s GSP by August 2019.

17.2.5 Kern County Municipal Code & McFarland Local Policies

Kern County holds valuable land in preservation for agricultural use. The Kern County Municipal Code and the County General Plan detail these protections. Goals relate to agriculture including Goal 5 of McFarland’s current General Plan, which provides direction to “conserve prime agriculture lands from premature conversion”, keep agricultural uses on lands suitable for production, and thereby ensure economic stability. Planned annexation and rezoning indicate the placement of heavy industry and residential uses on certain agricultural lands. However, potential exists to reserve alternate areas for preservation of agricultural production. Prime agricultural soils and lands, including those highlighted in Map 17-1, represent a limited and diminishing natural resource. In addition, the loss of green space in the form of managed agricultural production means increased fire danger susceptibility, making productive farmland a mutually beneficial construct for all residents and workers in McFarland.

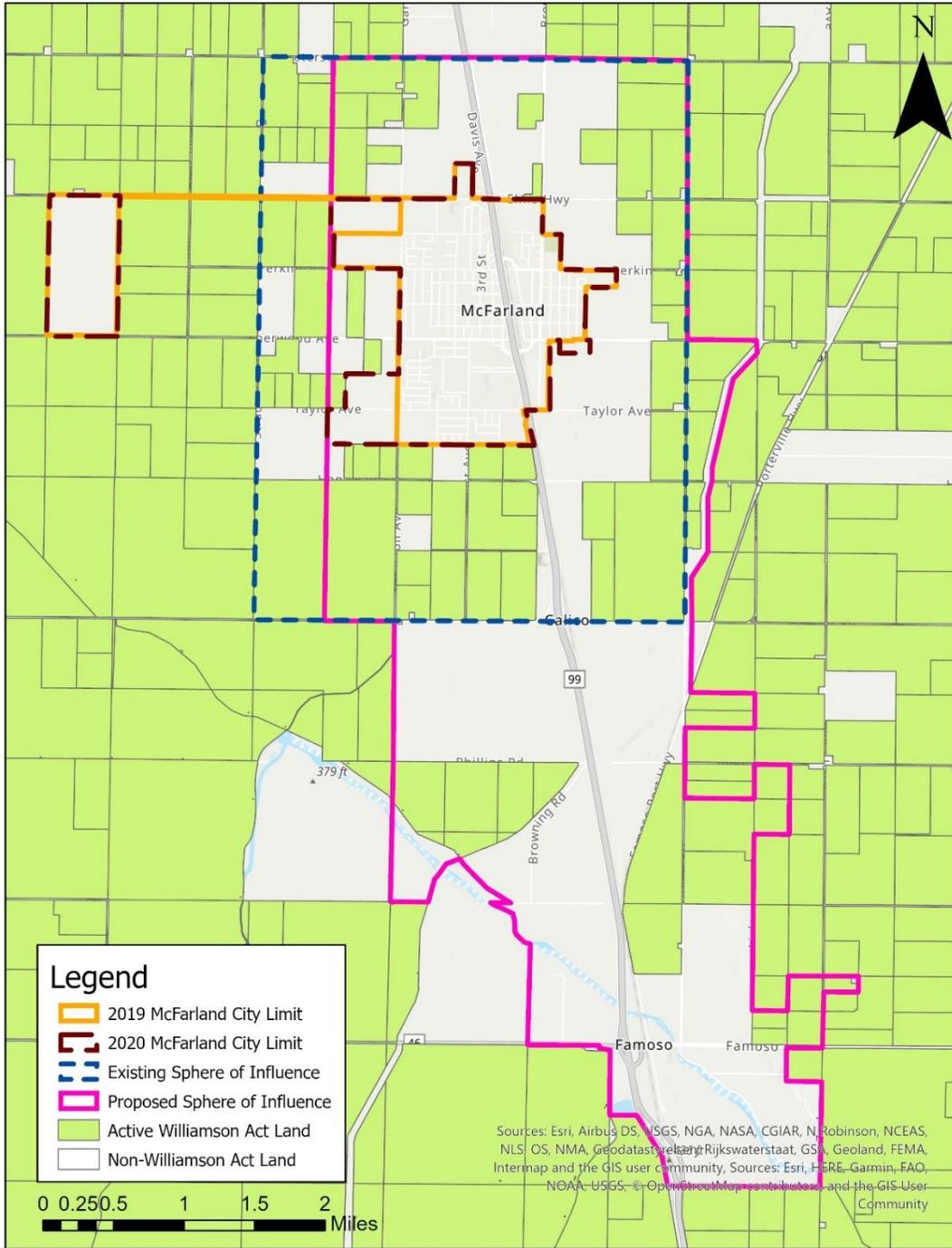
17.3 Existing Conditions

17.3.1 Williamson Act Lands

The Williamson Act of 1965 supplies relief from property tax to owners of agricultural and open space land in exchange for a 10-year agreement prohibiting new development. Parcels taxed by an assessor at their potential development value far outstrip agricultural tax brackets, meaning that farmers can continue their operations despite development pressure. Within the proposed SOI, there are 62 agricultural parcels preserved in agricultural operation and production under the Williamson Act. All parcels in Williamson Act status contain prime agricultural lands.

Map 17-1 depicts Williamson Act contracted parcels around McFarland, which engage tax relief measures designed to support agricultural production. These measures additionally bolster the managed greenbelt around the City, reduce fire risk, and supply food security for the region. These agricultural lands mostly consist of almond orchards and grape vineyards which are significant resources for the economic security of the region. The City’s agricultural backdrop additionally eases the visual profile of development and provides economic support. However, the agricultural fields can also become a constraint on urban development as OPR advises limited approval of projects on green fields within city limits and the SOI to preserve agricultural lands. Restricting these areas to agricultural use limits urban development but also ties McFarland residents directly to the dominant economic function of the land. Many employment opportunities in McFarland rely on agricultural uses in some form.

Map 17-1: Williamson Act Lands within and around the Sphere of Influence



Source: Kern County GIS

17.3.2 Prime Agricultural Lands

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines prime agricultural land as the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. These lands must also particularly allow permeation of air and water, important to plant growth at every stage. Map 17-2 shows that 55 out of 62 Williamson Act parcels within the proposed SOI function as prime agricultural lands. The remaining seven parcels are classified as unknown because the soil conditions in these areas remained untested or unclear as of December 2019. There are Farmland Security Zones (FSZ) outside of the proposed SOI, which are the areas of land that the City or County identified for entry into Williamson Act contracts.

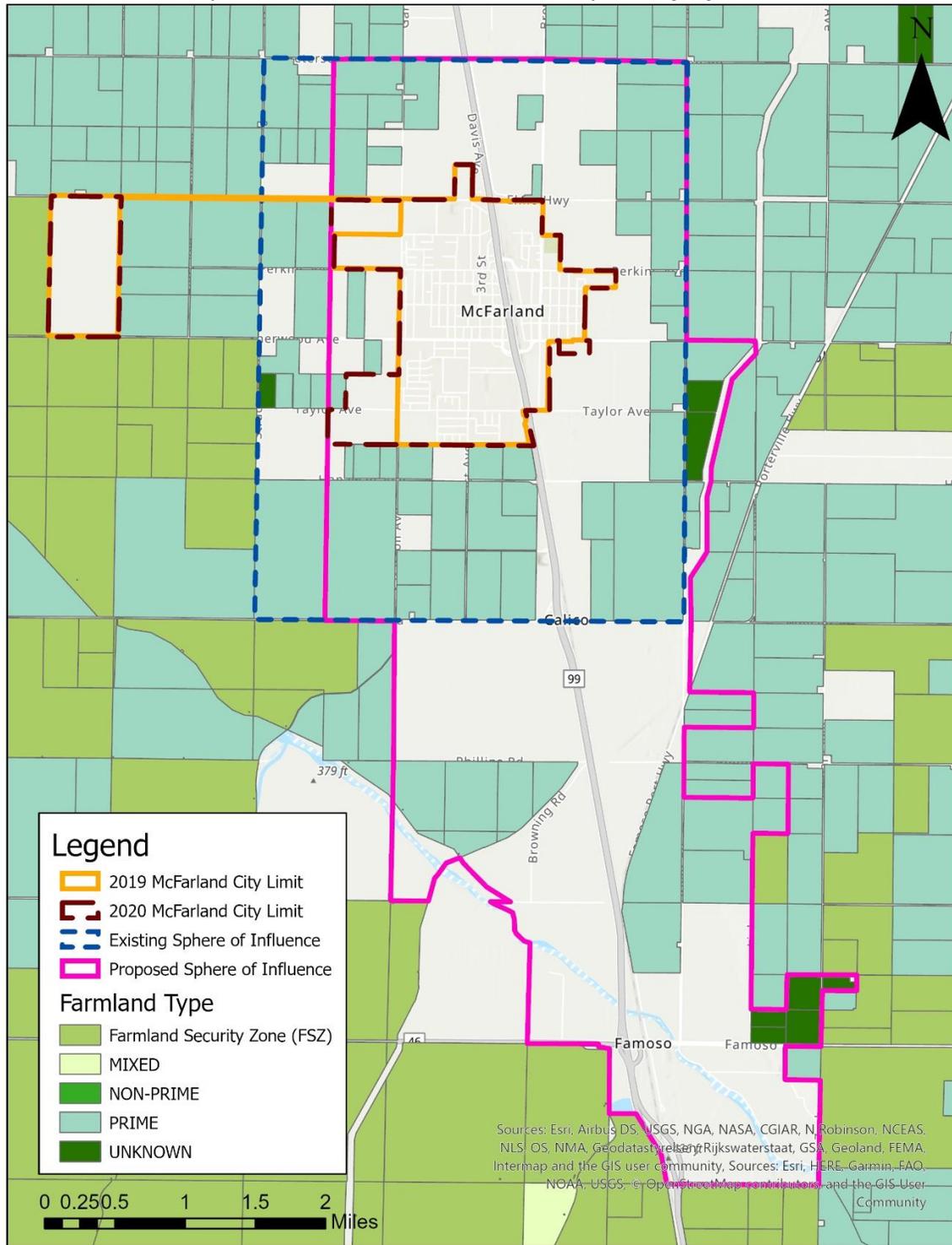
17.3.3 Soils

There are several high-quality natural soil types within McFarland's SOI that are ideal for farming. Map 17-3 shows the locations of the four soil types in the McFarland area, which include Wasco Sandy Loam, McFarland Loam, Delano Sandy Loam, and Kimberlina Fine Sandy Loam. Out of these soil types, McFarland Loam is the most abundant soil type present in and around the City. Its nutrients increase crop strength and harvest totals. The USDA subscribes the following characteristics to McFarland Loam: moderate permeability, slightly acidic to moderately alkaline pH levels, clay content ranging from 18% to 35%, and a gravel content ranging from 0% to 5%. All these indicators benefit crop growth in the region, further supporting the need for preservation of prime agricultural lands in the City and its sphere of influence.

17.3.4 Crops and Economic Value

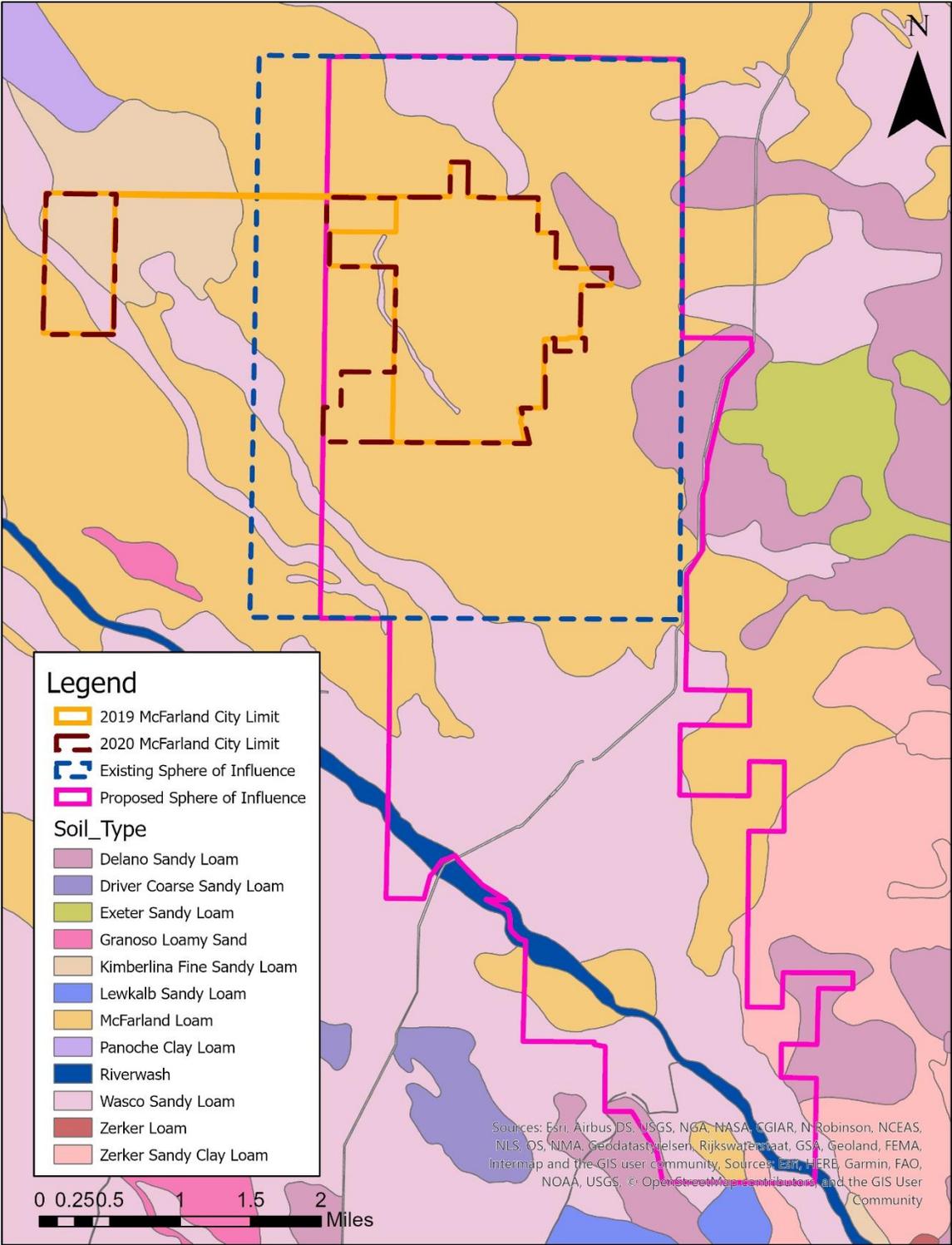
Table 17-1 from the 2018 Kern County Agricultural Crop Report shows the top twenty agricultural crops in Kern County. Together, the crops generated nearly \$7.2 billion in monetary value. The four top crops accounted for two-thirds of the total crops value. Grapes yielded the highest value of approximately \$1.5 billion (or 21%) followed by almonds (including by-products) with nearly \$1.2 billion (17%). The other top commodities included pistachios at 16% of the total dollar value, and the group of citrus, milk, carrots, and fruits at 15 percent of the total dollar value. Map 17-4 shows the locations of agricultural crops within and around the proposed SOI. Additional sources of agricultural revenue derive from industrial wineries, almond hulling plants, cotton gins, and fruit and vegetable packing sheds in the area. The availability of land for agricultural production with related business expansion over the past few decades continued to fuel growth of the City despite stagnant growth in other industries.

Map 17-2: Farmlands in McFarland's Sphere of Influence



Source: Kern County GIS

Map 17-3: USGS Soils

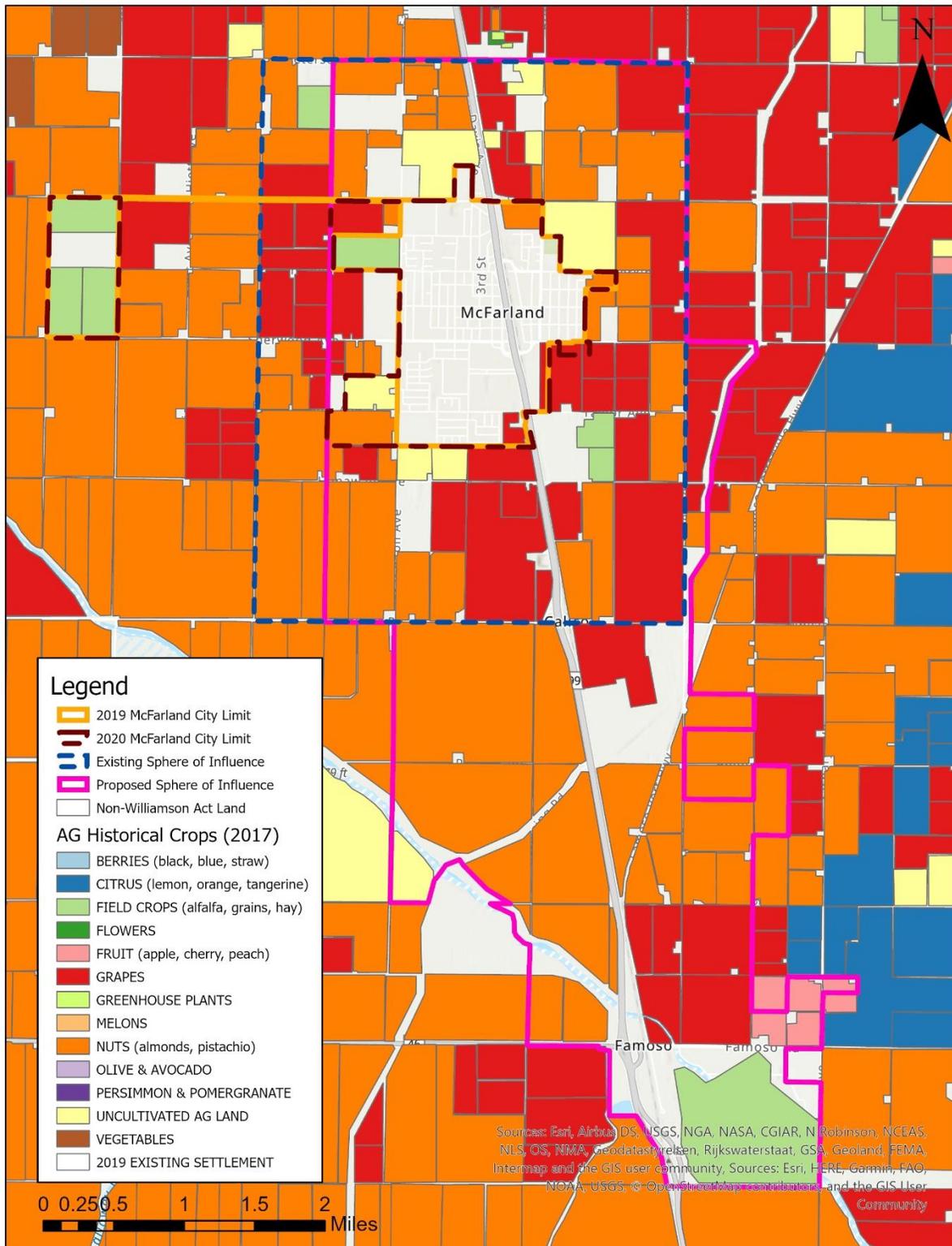


Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Table 17-1: Kern County Top Commodities, 2018

COMMODITY	VALUE	PERCENTAGE
Grapes	\$1,512,473,000	21.1%
Almond, Including By-Products	\$1,235,158,000	17.2%
Pistachios	\$1,143,972,000	16.0%
Citrus, Fresh & Processing	\$1,063,063,000	14.8%
Milk, Market & Manufacturing	\$591,895,000	8.3%
Carrots, Fresh & Processing	\$398,286,000	5.6%
Cattle & Calves	\$254,995,000	3.6%
Alfalfa	\$114,991,000	1.6%
Apiary	\$111,819,000	1.6%
Nursery, Fruit and Nut Trees & Vines	\$96,641,000	1.3%
Eggs & Egg Products	\$91,115,000	1.3%
Silage & Forage	\$87,538,000	1.2%
Potatoes	\$87,477,000	1.2%
Pomegranates, Fresh & Processing	\$74,019,000	1.0%
Garlic, Fresh & Processing	\$71,392,000	1.0%
Cotton, Including Processed Cottonseed	\$67,634,000	0.9%
Tomato, Fresh & Processing	\$51,792,000	0.7%
Bell Peppers, Fresh & Processing	\$41,674,000	0.6%
Onions	\$38,249,000	0.5%
Pasture, All	\$38,048,000	0.5%
Total	\$7,172,231,000	100.0%
<i>Source: 2018 Kern County Agricultural Crop Report</i>		

Map 17-4: 2019 Major Crop Types



Source: Kern County GIS data

17.4 Emerging Directions

Based on State mandates, observed conditions, and community feedback, emerging directions for agriculture include preservation of agricultural lands and groundwater. They also include balancing of the economic benefits of agriculture with urban development.

Studying the existing conditions revealed that there are agricultural lands under Williamson Act contracts within the proposed SOI. This indicates that as the City continues to develop, soil conservation and prime farmland should be considered in future planning endeavors.

Therefore, as Agricultural Vision (2017) suggests, it is imperative to ensure that agriculture has sufficient land, water, human capital, and access to the resources and legislative support to remain profitable and competitive. It is also important to recognize the vital role of agriculture in supporting sustainable California economic growth and in mitigating climate change through stewardship and resource conservation.

These calls further emphasize the need to recognize and adhere to the State mandate for groundwater sustainability. Agricultural practices in McFarland need to conform with the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) that the Kern Groundwater Authority (KGA) has developed for the “high priority” Kern Groundwater Subbasin. As part of the State mandate to manage and use groundwater without causing undesirable results, the GSP of the KGA proposed actions to fallow some portion of agricultural lands within Kern County in the face of impending water shortage.

17.5 References

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SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE POLICY

Executive Summary

Sustainable Agriculture

The Sustainable Agriculture Element is optional and addresses managed production and conservation of agricultural lands to sustain the role of Agriculture as a mainstay of the local economy while it contributes to the State economy. McFarland is host to many agricultural fields and Williamson Act parcels with high quality soils both within City limits and in the surrounding area. Since Agriculture is by far the largest industrial sector in the area, a separate optional Sustainable Agriculture Element is added to this General Plan update.

The abundant productive agricultural lands can hamper outward expansion via annexation. As McFarland continues to expand, the conversion of agricultural lands into residential and commercial uses and complimentary park space will become a large part of accommodating the City's projected growth. The Preferred Growth Alternative seeks to provide specific control at the planning level to both allow needed housing and commercial growth while also preventing "leap-frog" or unnecessary greenfield development. The goals, objectives, policies, and programs of the Sustainable Agriculture Element seek to preserve existing open spaces and agriculturally productive land while allowing for responsible conversion of land for needed housing and commercial development.

Element Goals

Sustainable Agriculture

- Goal AG 1. Protected agricultural resources.
- Goal AG 2. Sustainable development practices.
- Goal AG 3. A robust agricultural economy that coexists with urban development.
- Goal AG 4. Authentic, healthy, and sustainable food production for healthy people and planet.
- Goal AG 5: A healthy and competitive agricultural industry
- Goal AG 6: Stable agricultural uses at the edges and beyond McFarland's urban service area
- Goal AG 7: Freedom to manage agricultural operations in an efficient, economic manner with minimal conflict with non-agricultural uses
- Goal AG 8: Convenient and accessible co-location of agriculture-related support uses in agricultural production areas
- Goal AG 9: Adequate supply of farm worker and farm family housing
- Goal AG 10: Available alternative resources for agricultural production
- Goal AG 11: Rapid and efficient agricultural permit processing procedures

19. SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

19.1 Introduction

The Sustainable Agriculture Element is to assure protection for existing open and agriculturally productive lands, while allowing for responsible conversion of open space land for needed housing and commercial development during the future development of McFarland. The Sustainable Agriculture Element recognizes agriculture as an industry which produces and processes food, fiber, plant materials, and livestock. The purpose of the element is to establish policies to ensure the stability and productivity of the agricultural lands and industries in and around McFarland. The intent of the Element is to provide guidance, policies, and programs for decisions on agricultural lands, to promote and protect the future needs of the agricultural industry, and to encourage the maintenance of a healthy agricultural sector within the area’s economy.

McFarland hosts agricultural fields and Williamson Act parcels with high quality soils on the edges of City limits and in the surrounding area. When it becomes necessary to convert any land under agricultural use into residential and complimentary park space to accommodate the City’s growth careful steps are to be taken to continue to give priority to agriculture.

The Sustainable Agriculture Element has overlaps and remains consistent with other elements of the General Plan. It interacts primarily with agriculture-related policies of the Land Use, Conservation, Open Space, and Housing Elements.

The goals, objectives, policies, and programs of the Sustainable Agriculture Element seek to preserve passive open spaces and agriculturally productive lands consistent with the State of California vision to preserve production of authentic rather than manufactured food and to guarantee healthy and sustainable food supply to assure a healthy population and planet.

19.2 Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs

Goal AG 1: Protected agricultural resources

Objective AG 1.1: Protect prime farmland from non-agricultural development

Policy AG 1.1.1: Give priority to agricultural uses in agricultural areas.

Program AG 1.1.1.1: Maintain up to date mapping of lands within the City’s Sphere of Influence under Williamson Act Contracts.

Program AG 1.1.1.2: In the agricultural zone district, allow agriculture to continue if properties under Williamson Act contracts are annexed into the City.

Program AG 1.1.1.3: Adopt a Right-to-Farm ordinance.

Program AG 1.1.1.4: Promote education of new homebuyers and other residents identifying the potential issues of living next to active agricultural operations

Objective AG 1.2: Protect passive open space resources.

Policy AG 1.2.1: Encourage economically sound development of natural resources.

Program AG 1.2.1.1: Protect open space through Williamson Act and conservation easements, prioritizing areas for continued production by 2025, and committing to easements by 2030.

Program AG 1.2.1.2: Work with the McFarland Park and Recreation District to conduct a facilities conditions assessment to help prioritize the needs for passive open space.

Program AG 1.2.1.3: Encourage prioritization in completion of the most cost-effective improvements.

Policy AG 1.2.2: Use sustainable open space management practices.

Program AG 1.2.2.1: Encourage practices that reduce the strain on the hydrological infrastructure.

Program AG 1.2.2.2: Encourage practices that reduce wastewater demand on the flow-limiting wastewater pipe under Highway 99.

Program AG 1.2.2.3: Enact open-space zoning, such as exclusive agriculture zones, large-lot zones, and overlay zones for hazard areas, to be consistent with this plan.

Goal AG 2: Sustainable agricultural development practices

Objective AG 2.1: Balance physical development with agriculture preservation and production

Policy AG 2.1.1: Assess potential impacts of development on agricultural lands.

Program AG 2.1.1.1: Evaluate project impacts on neighboring agricultural lands when approving new developments

Program AG 2.1.1.2: Evaluate Williamson Act contracts within and near City limits and evaluate alternative soil conservation land uses on Prime Farmlands.

Program AG 2.1.1.3: Prioritize the procurement of non-Williamson Act agricultural lands for annexation.

Objective AG 2.2: Grow McFarland's economy through strategic use of soils.

Policy AG 2.2.1: Maintain healthy and productive soils

Program AG 2.2.1.1: Disseminate educational information to farmers on best management practices related to crop rotation to ensure long term yield and soil quality.

Program AG 2.2.1.2: Adopt a community composting program to help support healthy soils.

Program AG 2.2.1.3: Evaluate the prospects of reducing monocultures to reduce soil degradation.

Objective AG 2.3: Assess carbon sequestration opportunities

Policy AG 2.3.1: Research the acquisition of land for carbon sequestration

Program AG 2.3.1.1: Work with subject-matter experts to analyze carbon sequestration potential and seek funding for a pilot program.

Program AG 2.3.1.2: Assist farmers with procuring anaerobic digesters using state cap-and-trade funding to develop new sources of compost for carbon sequestration efforts.

Goal AG 3: A robust agricultural economy that coexists with urban development.

Objective AG 3.1: Coordinate agricultural education and assistance for farmers and farmworkers.

Policy AG 3.1.1: Use agricultural resources efficiently.

Program AG 3.1.1.1: Encourage water-saving measures and user education in McFarland and sphere of influence to reduce water use in farming.

Program AG 3.1.1.2: Encourage development in vacant and under-utilized areas within the built environment before expansion into green fields.

Program AG 3.1.1.3: Dedicate open spaces as part of the sustainable development process.

Program AG 3.1.1.4: Cooperate with regional, state, and federal agencies to advance crop rotation education.

Policy AG 3.1.2: Prepare for McFarland's water needs.

Program AG 3.1.2.1: Cooperate with regional, state, and federal agencies such as Drought.gov and the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) to accurately understand the water demand.

Program AG 3.1.2.2: Cooperate with agricultural industry stakeholders in the City and its Sphere of Influence to promote drought readiness measures.

Program AG 3.1.2.3: Adopt water-wise landscaping at public facilities and parks to reduce demand.

Program AG 3.1.2.4: Showcase drought tolerant landscapes, for instance, with model water-efficient landscapes in public parks, that private citizens could emulate to help encourage broad adoption.

Policy AG 3.1.3: Pursue programs that value agriculture as both a resource and identity.

Program AG 3.1.3.1: Encourage dissemination of educational materials to residents on local agricultural resources.

Program AG 3.1.3.2: Encourage provision of literature and programs in English and Spanish for resident education.

Program AG 3.1.3.3: Encourage assessment of the impact of proposed developments on agricultural production and natural resources in annexation zones.

Policy AG 3.1.4: Protect open space wherever possible.

Program AG 3.1.4.1: Preserve open space in agricultural production and conservation easements where possible.

Program AG 3.1.4.2: Encourage preservation of open space through Williamson Act or other tax-based incentive programs designed to reduce property tax burden on productive farmers.

Program AG 3.1.4.3: Encourage adoption of open space easements to reduce risk and provide a public benefit where safety concerns such as floodable area and pipeline and transmission lines are present.

Policy AG 3.1.5: Designate passive open space of agricultural lands through direct dedication, in lieu fees, or similar measures during the development process.

Program AG 3.1.5.1: Encourage open space dedication commensurate with the number of units proposed either through direct dedication or in lieu fees for major subdivisions of 4 or more parcels.

Program AG 3.1.5.2: Encourage access easement dedication or in lieu fees for minor subdivisions of 3 parcels or fewer.

Program AG 3.1.5.3: Develop a capital improvement process for funding new passive open spaces.

Goal AG 4: Authentic, healthy, and sustainable food production for healthy people and planet

Objective AG 4.1: Maintain and improve authentic and healthy food production

Policy AG 4.1.1: Promote limited use of pesticides

Program AG 4.1.1.1: Encourage adoption of tolerance levels for pesticide residues in foods

Policy AG 4.1.2: Increase nutrition quality of crops

Program AG 4.1.2.1: Encourage creation of educational programs that teach farmers on increasing nutritional quality of crops

Program AG 4.1.2.2: Encourage funding of agricultural related research to increase quality of crops

Objective AG 4.2: Advocate distribution of healthy foods

Policy AG 4.2.2: Make healthy farming products accessible to the community

Program AG 4.2.2.1: Encourage farm-to-school programs to provide healthy food to students

Program AG 4.2.2.2: Promote establishment of farmers' markets for residents to easily access locally grown crops

Objective AG 4.3: Promote sustainable agricultural practices

Policy AG 4.3.1: Reduce air, water, and climate pollution

Program AG 4.3.1.1: Coordinate with Kern County Air Pollution District to limit practices that produce air pollutants

Program AG 4.3.1.2: Encourage dissemination of information to farmers on irrigation methods and best management practices

Program AG 4.3.1.3: Promote city-wide adoption of alternative energy

Program AG 4.3.1.4: Encourage the education of farmers on integrated pest management to keep pests under control while minimizing use of chemical pesticides

Policy AG 4.3.2: Build and maintain healthy soils

Program AG 4.3.2.1: Support and provide incentives to rotate crops for soil improvement.

Goal AG 5: A healthy and competitive agricultural industry

Objective AG 5.1: Encourage promotion and marketing of agricultural products grown or processed in the McFarland area.

Policy AG 5.1.1: Promote a wide variety of promotional and marketing activities of McFarland-grown and processed products.

Program AG 5.1.1.1: Permit marketing of products grown or processed in the McFarland area within agricultural use areas.

Program AG 5.1.1.2: Avoid permitting of facilities which generate or handle significant amounts of hazardous material on agricultural lands.

Objective AG 5.2: Bolster the local food economy.

Policy AG 5.2.1: Encourage and support farms and ranches, both large and small, that are seeking to implement programs that increase the sustainability of resources, conserve energy, and protect water and soil in order to increase the viability of diverse farm sizes and types.

Program AG 5.2.1.1: Support expansion in opportunities for farm workers.

Objective AG 5.3: Support agricultural businesses seeking to use organic practices

Policy AG 5.3.1: Recognize the benefits that a flourishing organic sector can provide.

Program AG 5.3.1.1: Support the activities that promote sustainable and organic agricultural production.

Program AG 5.3.1.2: Encourage the exploration of possibilities for production of diverse agricultural products.

Goal AG 6: Stable agricultural uses at the edges and beyond McFarland's urban service area

Objective AG 6.1: Limit intrusion of urban development into agricultural areas.

Policy AG 6.1.1: incentivize long term agricultural use

Program AG 6.1.1.1: Maintain the urban service boundaries to protect agricultural lands at the urban fringe for continued agricultural production.

Program AG 6.1.1.2: Limit extension of urban services such as sewer beyond the urban service boundaries until deemed necessary.

Objective AG 6.2: Reduce economic pressure for conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural use.

Policy AG 6.2.1: Minimize the influence of speculative land transactions on the price of farmland

Program AG 6.2.1.1: Use voluntary purchase or voluntary transfer of development rights programs to limit intrusion of residential development into agricultural lands.

Program AG 6.2.1.2: Support maintaining the maximum amount of land in parcel sizes that farmers are willing to lease or buy for agricultural purposes.

Policy AG 6.2.2: Minimize the impact of residential parcels on adjacent agricultural operations

Program AG 6.2.2.1: Cluster development parcels to locate lots close to existing residences

Program AG 6.2.2.2: Use natural features such as ridge tops, creeks, and groves of trees to separate parcels from the farming areas wherever practical in areas where clustered subdivision is permitted.

Program AG 6.2.2.3: Place agricultural easements on residual farming parcels at the time that subdivisions are developed where clustered subdivision is permitted to the extent allowed by law.

Program AG 6.2.2.4: Add regulations to the development code to restrict the size and extent of non-agricultural development on agricultural lands.

Goal AG 7: Freedom to manage agricultural operations in an efficient, economic manner with minimal conflict with non-agricultural uses

Objective AG 7.1: Apply agricultural land use categories mainly to areas or parcels capable of the commercial production of food, fiber, and plant materials, or livestock.

Policy AG 7.1.1: Assure that the primary use of any parcel within the agricultural land use category is agricultural production and related processing, support services, and visitor-serving uses.

Program AG 7.1.1.1: Encourage the establishment of agricultural production as the highest priority use on agricultural parcels.

Objective AG 7.2: Protect agricultural operations

Policy AG 7.2.1: Favor protection of the maximum amount of farmable land with buffers

Program AG 7.2.1.1: Encourage the establishment of physical separation of 100 feet to 200 feet at the interfaces of agricultural and residential land uses using topographic features, groves of trees, water courses, landscaped berms, or similar features in creating buffers.

Objective AG 7.3: Apply the provisions of the Right to Farm Ordinance to agricultural lands.

Policy AG 7.3.1: Recognize provisions of existing State nuisance law (Government Code Section 3482.5) in administration of guidelines for agriculture

Program AG 7.3.1.1: Encourage newer uses or applications to mitigate anticipated conflicts with existing agricultural activities.

Goal AG 8: Convenient and accessible co-location of agriculture-related support uses in agricultural production areas

Objective AG 8.1: Facilitate agricultural production by allowing uses, such as processing, storage, bottling, canning, and packaging, and agricultural support services related to the primary agricultural production in the area.

Policy AG 8.1.1: Ensure that agriculture-related support uses on agricultural lands are only allowed when demonstrated to be necessary for and proportional to agricultural production on site or in the local area.

Program AG 8.1.1.1: Encourage the addition of facilities that process agricultural products on agricultural lands.

Program AG 8.1.1.2: Define "agricultural support services" as processing services, maintenance and repair of farm machinery and equipment, veterinary clinics, custom farming services, agricultural waste handling and disposal services, and other similar related services.

Program AG 8.1.1.3: Approve support uses that are subordinate to on-site agricultural production and would not adversely affect agricultural production in the area.

Program AG 8.1.1.4: Determine “subordinate” status from the portion of the site, extent of structures, and relative number of employees devoted to the service in comparison to agricultural production on the site.

Program AG 8.1.1.5: Apply criteria in determining sustainability of related uses to include potential traffic impacts of uses, amount of water uses would draw from the same aquifer of area wells, and potential detrimental effect of uses on the rural character of the area.

Goal AG 9: Adequate supply of farm worker and farm family housing

Objective AG 9.1: Permit farm family housing units in addition to the number of dwellings allowed on farmlands.

Policy AG 9.1.1: Permit permanent employee housing in addition to permitted housing density according to the needs of sectors in the agricultural industry.

Program AG 9.1.1.1: Encourage farm operators to provide sufficient housing in addition to housing permitted by applicable density for permanent and seasonal agricultural employees and for family members to maintain agricultural production activities.

Program AG 9.1.1.2: Locate agricultural employee housing where it promotes efficiency of the farming operation and has minimal impact on productive farmland.

Program AG 9.1.1.3: Assist nonprofit organizations or agencies in their efforts to establish programs to provide safe and adequate housing for farm workers.

Program AG 9.1.1.4: Allow clustering of agricultural employee housing on a portion of a parcel or a noncontiguous parcel under the same ownership to assure units are close to the primary use.

Program AG 9.1.1.5: Work with lending institutions to develop ways to finance housing construction without encumbering the entire farm and without requiring subdivisions.

Program AG 9.1.1.6: Permit housing for seasonal workers as needed to serve the agricultural industries of the area.

Goal AG 10: Available alternative resources for agricultural production

Objective AG 10.1: Continue participation in the Williamson Act and Farmland Security Zone programs.

Objective AG 10.2: Establish voluntary programs for purchase and transfer of development rights.

Objective AG 10.3: Encourage the use of recycled water

Policy AG 10.3.1: Assure that the quantity and quality of recycled water is appropriate for the intended use.

Program AG 10.3.1.1: Promote the agricultural reuse of recycled water in a manner which would be economically beneficial to agriculture

Program AG 10.3.1.2: Establish wastewater irrigation districts

Objective AG 10.4: Encourage formulation of programs and evaluate alternative funding sources which offer financial incentives to the farm owner to reduce reliance on subdivision and sale of land to raise operating capital.

Goal AG 11: Rapid and efficient agricultural permit processing procedures

Objective AG 11.1: Simplify and shorten the decision-making process on permits for operations on agricultural lands.

Policy AG 11.1.1: Establish procedures and standards in the Development Code to distinguish those agricultural uses and activities which may be approved by administrative action and to expedite the processing of permits for agricultural and agriculture-related uses.

Program AG 11.1.1.1: Allow concurrent processing of multiple permits for agricultural facilities.

Program AG 11.1.1.2: Provide and expedite permitting assistance to the agricultural industry.

Program AG 11.1.1.3: Streamline permitting for temporary use permits for farmworker housing if the requirements of all appropriate agencies are met.

Program AG 11.1.1.4: Maintain provisions for agriculture exempt structures, subject to limitations on the size, occupancy and use of such structures.

Program AG 11.1.1.5: Work with the County to revise City and County codes and design guidelines for parking, impermeable surfaces, lot coverage, etc. for discretionary agricultural support uses on agricultural lands to reduce or minimize urban style improvements and requirements for agricultural lands.

End: Extract of Sustainable Agriculture Element

All materials in this extract are integrated into the appropriate sections of the full updates of the Background Report (Volume 1) and Draft 2040 General Plan (Volume 2) of the McFarland General Plan update project.