

5.2 Agricultural Resources

5.2.1 Methodology

The following discussion is based upon information contained in the City of Brea General Plan – Community Resources Element; The County of Orange General Plan – Natural Resources Component; and the State of California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.

5.2.2 Setting

PROJECT SITE CONDITIONS

La Floresta Village Site

The majority of the La Floresta Village site is currently vacant. A 21.3-acre area adjacent to Rose Drive is, however, planted in row crops. This area has been tenant farmed and planted in a variety of field and row crops in the past, as well as citrus orchards. The area is zoned Mixed Use (MU-II), as is the remainder of the La Floresta Village site. The General Plan also designates the site for Mixed Use II (MU-II).

Agriculture has long been considered an interim land use in this location, with the expectation that the entire site would at some time be converted from its past industrial use to mixed urban uses, as are incorporated in the proposed project.

Birch Hills Site

The majority of the Birch Hills site is occupied by the golf course and related facilities. No agricultural uses exist in this site. Prior to the golf course, the site was developed with industrial land use.

REGULATORY SETTING

Both Sites

City of Brea General Plan: Community Resources Element

The Community Resources Element, Parks and Open Space component does not address the topic of agricultural resources since there is limited undeveloped land in the City. The Parks and Open Space Plan does not designate any area for agricultural preservation, as shown on Exhibit 5.11-1 – General Plan: Parks and Open Space Plan (page 5.11-5).

State of California, Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The purpose of the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program is to provide data to decision-makers for "use in assessing present status, reviewing trends, and planning for the future of California's agricultural land resources." According to Orange County Important Farmland Map (2004), the La Floresta Village site is designated as unique farmland. This category "consists of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date."

Designation on the Farmland Mapping program does not imply any policy designation or restriction of land use.

Birch Hills Site

Birch Hills Specific Plan

The Birch Hills site is the subject of a Specific Plan adopted by the City in September 1995. The plan covers the golf course site as well as what has since become Brea Union Plaza and a parcel located to the southwest on Imperial Highway. The Specific Plan designated the majority of the golf course area for Low Density Residential use. A 7.5-acre park site was also planned. The Birch Hills Specific Plan does not designate any portion of the Birch Hills site for open space or agricultural preservation.

5.2.3 Thresholds of Significance

The following criteria are extracted from the most recent update of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the Environmental Checklist Form pertaining to Agricultural Resources. Would the project:

- *Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?*
- *Conflict with or obstruct zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson act contract?*
- *Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use?*

Evaluation conducted in the Initial Study (contained in Appendix A) identified potentially significant policy impacts relative to the conversion of Unique Farmland as shown by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. Issues related to zoning/Williamson Act conflicts and other changes that could result in the conversion of farmland were found "Not Applicable" to the La Floresta Development Proposal, and are not further addressed in this EIR.

Impacts to agricultural resources could also be considered significant if aspects of the project were found to be inconsistent with applicable plans and policies, as outlined in the preceding sub-section. Thus the following threshold is added:

- *Substantially conflict with applicable plans and regulations as presented in Section 5.2.2 under Regulatory Setting.*

5.2.4 Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

CONSISTENCY WITH APPLICABLE PLANS AND REGULATIONS

Both Sites

No City policy plan, program, or ordinance designates either of the project sites for agricultural land use. Although a 21.3-acre portion of the La Floresta Village site is shown on the Orange County Important Farmland Map as "Unique Farmland," inclusion in the State Farmland Mapping program does not imply any policy designation or restriction of land use. The City of Brea intends to seek removal of the parcel from the Orange County Important Farmland Map. No impacts or conflicts with applicable plans and regulations have been identified that would be considered a significant impact.

Level of Significance: Less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: None are required.

Level of Significance after Mitigation: Not applicable.

LOSS OF "UNIQUE FARMLAND"

Both Sites

Neither development site is prime agricultural soil or designated as an agricultural preserve by the Williamson Act or zoned for agricultural purposes. The project sites are generally surrounded by urban/suburban development, with the exception of the east boundary of the La Floresta Village site along Rose Drive. Some areas to the east beyond existing flood control channels are in agricultural use, and are designated as Open Space in the Land Use Element of the City of Brea General Plan.

The La Floresta Village site contains a 21.3-acre area that has been utilized for agricultural purposes as noted in preceding discussion. This parcel is not designated for Open Space or agricultural use, and its cultivation has always been considered an interim land use by the City of Brea. Continued agricultural use on the parcel would not be compatible with the intensified development planned on the La Floresta Village site. The parcel in question is small and isolated from any other agricultural uses remaining in the City of Brea and the region. No pressure for conversion of other "farmland" or of an agricultural resource is anticipated to occur due to implementation of the proposed projects. Consequently, the conversion of this parcel to urban use is not considered a

significant impact. The City of Brea will seek removal of the parcel from the Orange County Important Farmland Map.

Level of Significance: Less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: None are required.

Level of Significance after Mitigation: Not applicable.

5.2.5 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts to agricultural resources are considered in the regional context of the County of Orange because the City of Brea and the north half of Orange County in general are essentially nearly totally urbanized, with only limited remnant agricultural parcels scattered through the area. The County of Orange General Plan, Resources Element - Natural Resources Component (April 2004) has been examined for statistical information presented below, as well as the State of California, Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, "Farmland Conversion Report: 2000-2002," December 2004.

Both Sites

The majority of agricultural land remaining in Orange is located in the southern portion of the County. In 2004, a total of 49,354 acres of "Agricultural Land" were inventoried in Orange County, of which 5,601 acres were considered "Unique Farmland." The conversion of 21.3 acres of agricultural use currently existing on the La Floresta Village site is functionally and statistically negligible in the context of ongoing regional trends (three hundredths of a percent) as well as agricultural operations within the City of Brea. In consideration of the preceding factors, the project's contribution to cumulative loss of agricultural resources would be rendered less than cumulatively considerable, and therefore less than cumulatively significant.

Level of Significance: Less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: None are required.

Level of Significance after Mitigation: Not applicable.

5.2.6 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

Both Sites

No significant impacts related to agricultural resources have been identified.