

4.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

This section summarizes the information on agricultural resources in Chino and describes the effects of both the Proposed General Plan and the Focused Growth Plan on these resources.

A. Regulatory Framework

The following section describes the policies and regulatory agencies that apply to the conservation of agricultural resources in Chino.

1. Chino Right-To-Farm Ordinance

Chino's right-to-farm ordinance would continue to be included in the revised zoning ordinance associated with both projects. The ordinance seeks to reduce the premature conversion of farmland to urban uses. Since agricultural operations are frequent subjects of nuisance complaints, the ordinance specifically limits the circumstances under which an agricultural operation may be considered a nuisance. The ordinance declares that legal agricultural operations in the City are a priority use and inconveniences or discomforts arising from such a use shall not be considered a nuisance if they were not considered a nuisance at the time they began.

2. The Williamson Act

The Williamson Act, officially entitled the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, allows local governments to enter into contracts with landowners guaranteeing them a lower rate of property assessment based on continued agricultural or open space use contracts with ten-year terms. The City of Chino participates in the program and there are property owners within the City that have entered into contracts. The contracts can be cancelled or put in a status of non-renewal at any time.

3. Farmland Classification

The California Department of Conservation (CDC) Important Farmland Inventory System classifies land into one of eight mapping categories based on soil and climatic conditions, including in order of importance, Prime Farm-

land, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance. These categories are explained in Table 4.2-1.

B. Existing Conditions

The following sections describe the existing conditions in Chino related to agricultural resources.

1. Important Farmland

The CDC considers portions of Chino to be important agricultural resources. These areas are shown in Figure 4.2-1. According to the 2008 CDC farmland data, there are a total of 2,527 acres of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance.¹ These two categories account for the majority of important farmland within the City limits. A summary of the acres by farmland classification is presented in Table 4.2-2.

Most of the areas identified as Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance are located in the southern and eastern parts of the City, where agriculture is most concentrated. A significant percentage of this land is located within the boundaries of the CIM and the Chino Airport where limited agricultural operations do remain as administered by the land owners. Since the CDC last classified the farmland in 2008, some of this farmland has been lost, as some areas have been converted to urban uses. A total of approximately 504 acres have been converted to urban uses: approximately 82 acres of Prime Farmland, 1 acre of Unique Farmland, 83 acres of Farmland of Local Importance and 338 acres of Grazing Land. These areas are located in The Preserve, East Chino and College Park and are indicated with hatching on Figure 4.2-1.²

¹ California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2008; City of Chino, 2009.

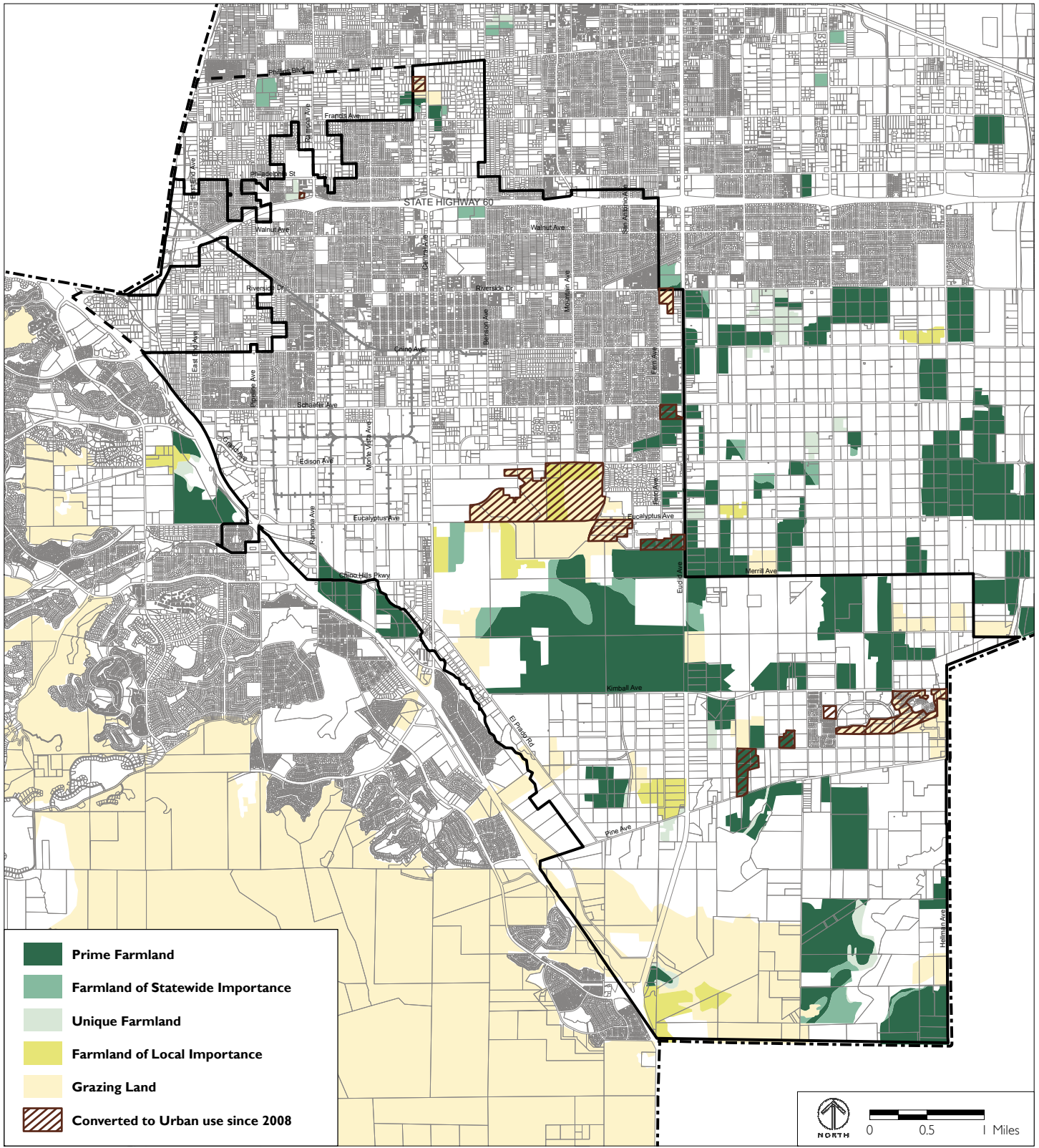
² California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2008; City of Chino, 2009.

TABLE 4.2-1 **IMPORTANT FARMLAND CATEGORIES**

Name	Description
Prime Farmland	Land which has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to current farming methods. Prime Farmland must have been used for the production of irrigated crops within the last three years.
Farmland of Statewide Importance	Land other than Prime Farmland which has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It must have been used for the production of irrigated crops within the last three years.
Unique Farmland	Land which does not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance that is currently used for the production of specific high economic value crops. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high quality or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to current farming methods. Examples of such crops may include oranges, olives, avocados, rice, grapes and cut flowers.
Farmland of Local Importance	Land other than Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland that is either currently producing crops or that has the capability of production. This land may be important to the local economy due to its productivity. The county-specific definition for San Bernardino County is farmlands growing dryland pasture, and dryland grains.

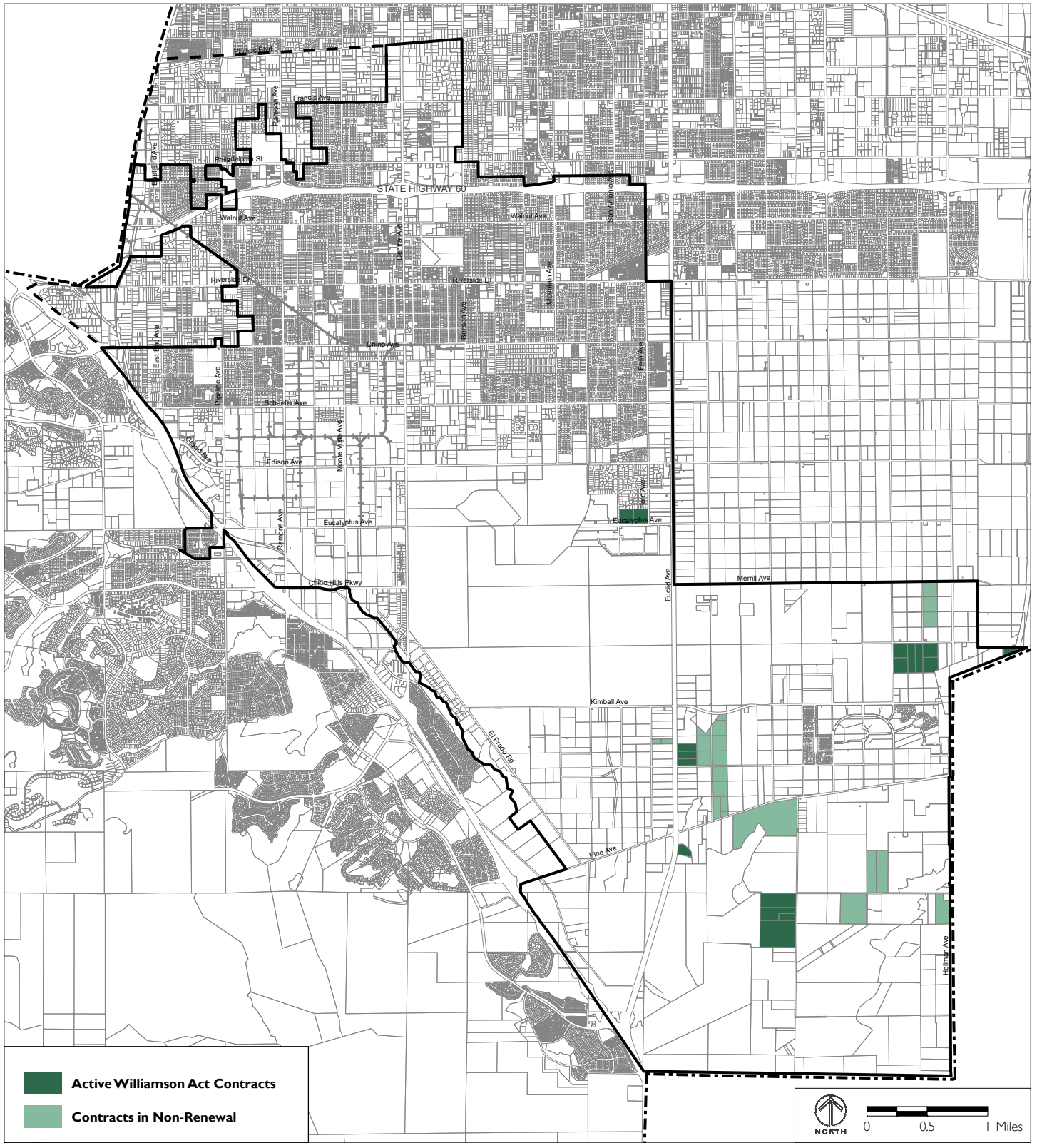
2. Williamson Act Contracts

A few properties in Chino remain under Williamson Act contracts administered by the City, as is shown in Figure 4.2-2. As is shown in Table 4.2-3, 94 percent of acreage covered by Williamson Act contracts in the City have been terminated or are in a status of non-renewal. A total of 187 acres of land are in active contracts, meaning that their owners currently expect to continue agricultural uses of the properties for at least the next ten years. Properties



Source: California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2008, City of Chino, 2009.

FIGURE 4.2-1
IMPORTANT FARMLAND



Source: City of Chino, 2008.

FIGURE 4.2-2
WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACTS

TABLE 4.2-2 **IMPORTANT FARMLAND CLASSIFICATION**

Type	Acres in Chino	Percent of City Area
Farmland of Statewide Importance	275	1%
Prime Farmland	2,252	11%
Farmland of Local Importance	335	2%
Unique Farmland	89	0%
Grazing Land	1,977	10%
Total	4,928	24%

Source: California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2008.

TABLE 4.2-3 **PROPERTIES UNDER WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACT**

Status	Acreage
Active	187
Non-Renewal	294
Total	481
<i>Terminated</i>	2,838

Source: City of Chino, 2008.

under active contracts will remain under contract as long as the landowners choose. While it is possible that these contracts may be terminated at some point in the future, the City will maintain the contracts as long as the property owners wish to remain in them.

C. Standards of Significance

The City of Chino's General Plan would create a significant agricultural impact if it would:

- ◆ 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 an existing Williamson Act contract.
- ◆ Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use.

D. Impact Discussion

This section discusses the potential impacts of both the Proposed General Plan and the Focused Growth Plan on the agricultural resources of Chino. The alternatives do not differ in their impacts on agricultural resources because they both propose to develop the same amount of currently undeveloped agricultural land. Implementation of either project would result in a loss of agricultural land. The following discussion responds to each standard of significance individually.

1. Conversion of Farmland

Implementation of both the Proposed General Plan and the Focused Growth Plan would result in the conversion of agricultural areas into urban uses. The agricultural resources that would be lost include farmland that is classified as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance by the CDC. The Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would maintain 1,098 acres of land specifically designated for agricultural purposes. The majority of this land is currently in agricultural use.

As shown in Figure 4.2-1, the majority of these areas are located in College Park, the CIM, the Chino Airport, The Preserve, and the area annexed to the City as Sub Area 1, as well as along Euclid Avenue in East Chino. See Figure 4.9-2 in the Land Use section of this Draft EIR for the location of key landmarks. There are a few other small areas of agricultural resources in the northern portion of the City as well. The loss of agricultural resources in each of these areas of the City is discussed individually below.

The Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan seek to preserve agricultural resources in Chino. Goal OSC-2 calls for the City to support agriculture. Objective OSC-2.1 calls for the City to support links to its agricultural history. Policy P1 under this Goal calls for the City to encourage the retention of existing small-scale agricultural operations and promote collaborations with farmers markets and school programs. Policy P2 calls for the City to work with the County to support agricultural uses in the City's SOI. These efforts could include working with existing farms to support local marketing efforts. Policy P4 would require that the City recognize the potential role small farms play in education and agricultural tourism and provide for the inclusion of such activities through land use regulations, while discouraging the use of small farms as non-agricultural home sites.

Objective OSC-2.2 calls for the preservation and protection of the remaining agricultural land in Chino. Policy P1 under this Objective calls for the City to work with landowners in establishing new and maintaining existing Williamson Act contracts. Policy P2 under this Objective calls for the City to work with non-profit organizations, such as land trusts, to preserve agricultural land in Chino. Policy P3 calls for the City to support private conservation organizations that utilize voluntary conservation easements as a tool for agricultural conservation, accomplishing preservation, continued agricultural use, agricultural supportive uses, tax breaks, and similar goals. To accomplish these goals, Action A1 calls for the City to consider taxation mechanisms such as development impact fees to fund agricultural preservation efforts.

Objective OSC-2.3 calls for the City to minimize conflicts between agricultural and urban uses. Policy P1 under this Objective requires that new development adjacent to properties designated for agricultural uses to have buffer zones, such as roads, setbacks and other physical boundaries, between agricultural uses and urban development. Buffers may be located on the land where the use is being changed, on the property containing the agricultural use, or a combination of the land use being changed and the agricultural property. Policy P2 under this Objective dictates that agricultural uses shall be the primary uses within the Agriculture land use designation. Residential uses, such as a farmer's home, shall be considered accessory uses.

As discussed in the subsections below, the impact of the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan on the conversion of farmland would be *less than significant*.

a. College Park

The areas of agricultural resources located within the boundaries of the College Park Specific Plan have been evaluated in the College Park Specific Plan EIR. This EIR found the conversion of agricultural land into urban uses to be an unavoidable significant impact. The Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would not designate any land for urban development that is not designated already for urban use in the College Park Specific Plan. Therefore, the impacts of the conversion of agricultural resources in this area have been adequately addressed in the College Park Specific Plan EIR, and the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would have *no impact* on the conversion of farmland in this area beyond those addressed in other EIRs.

b. The Preserve and Edgewater

The areas of agricultural resources located within the boundaries of The Preserve Specific Plan have been evaluated in The Preserve Specific Plan EIR and the Edgewater Communities EIR. Both of these EIRs have found that the conversion of agricultural land into urban uses is an unavoidable significant impact. The Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would not designate any land for urban development that is not designated for urban use

in The Preserve Specific Plan EIR or Edgewater Communities EIR. Therefore, the impacts of the conversion of agricultural resources in this area has been adequately addressed in The Preserve Specific Plan EIR and the Edgewater Communities EIR, and the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would have *no impact* on the conversion of farmland in The Preserve area beyond those addressed in other EIRs.

c. Sub Area 1

The areas of agricultural resources located within the boundaries of Sub Area 1 have been evaluated in the Chino Sphere of Influence Sub Area 1 EIR and the Chino South Industrial Park EIR. These EIRs found that the conversion of agricultural land into urban uses to be an unavoidable significant impact. The Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would not designate any land for urban development that is not designated for urban use in the Chino Sphere of Influence Sub Area 1 EIR and the Chino South Industrial Park EIR. Therefore, the impacts of the conversion of agricultural resources in this area has been adequately addressed in the Chino Sphere of Influence Sub Area 1 EIR and the Chino South Industrial Park EIR, and the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would have *no impact* on the conversion of farmland in Sub Area 1 beyond those addressed in these EIRs.

d. East Chino Specific Plan

As shown in Figure 4.2-1, the CDC designates several properties along Euclid Avenue in East Chino as containing agricultural resources. However, most of these properties have already been developed, and are no longer agricultural resources, as shown with the hatching on Figure 4.2-1. The East Chino Specific Plan EIR has evaluated the impacts of the conversion of properties that are still in agricultural use, finding that the mitigation measures adopted with the plan may be “sufficient in reducing the potential impacts to a level of insignificance.”⁴ Furthermore, the small areas of remaining agricultural resources in this area are already surrounded by urban uses and subsequently

⁴ City of Chino, 1987, *Final East Chino Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report*, page IV-E-12.

are not ideal locations for agricultural operations and are not likely to be used for agriculture in the future. Thus, the conversion of agricultural resources to urban uses in East Chino would be a *less-than-significant impact*.

e. California Institute for Men and Chino Airport

The CDC identifies significant agricultural resources in the CIM and Chino Airport properties, as shown in Figure 4.2-1. Both of these areas have ongoing agricultural operations on land designated by the CDC as Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Agricultural operations in the CIM property are conducted in coordination with the operations of the CIM. The Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan intend to maintain the operations of the CIM by designating the area as Urban Reserve, which would allow the facility to continue all agricultural operations.

The agricultural operations on the airport property are allowed and controlled by the airport. The Chino Airport would continue to be designated for public use in the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan so that the operations of the airport may continue. The public designation in the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would allow agricultural operations to continue, and would contain the policies listed above to support the continuation of these agricultural operations. Therefore, the impacts to the conversion of farmland in the CIM and Chino Airport properties would be *less than significant*.

f. Remaining Agricultural Resources

While most of the agricultural resources as identified by the CDC are discussed above, there are a few parcels in the northern portion of the City that are identified Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance that are not within the areas of the City described above. These areas, as shown on Figure 4.2-1, are either already developed or relatively small and surrounded by urban development on all sides. As development in Chino continues, these locations will become less viable for agriculture, and significant agricultural operations are not likely to continue. Implementation of the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would include poli-

cies to conserve agricultural uses on the parcels that remain viable. Goal OSC-2 includes a variety of policies and programs to support agricultural uses in the City and its SOI. For example, the policies under Objective OSC-2.1 call for the City to support retention of small-scale farming uses through connections to local markets. They also call for the City to work with the County in support of the small farms found in the City's SOI. Consequently, the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would have a *less-than-significant impact* on the conversion of farmland in these remaining areas.

2. Williamson Act Conflict

The Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan designate agricultural land within the SOI and City limits for urban uses. Some of the parcels designated for urban uses remain in active Williamson Act contracts. This represents 94 acres of the 187 currently in active contracts. These properties would be encouraged to remain in agricultural use as long as possible under both projects. In addition, Policy P.1 under OSC-2.2 states that the City shall continue to work with landowners in maintaining existing Williamson Act contracts, consistent with the City's Right-to-Farm policy. However, as contracts are put into a status of non-renewal in the future, the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would allow the conversion of some of these properties to more urban uses.

As shown in Figure 4.2-2, almost all of the active Williamson Act contracts in the City are located within the boundary of The Preserve Specific Plan. As part of The Preserve Specific Plan, the cancellation and non-renewal of Williamson Act contracts in the plan area are being accelerated where land has been designated for urban uses. The Preserve Specific Plan identifies the loss of Williamson Act contracts as an unavoidable significant impact associated with implementation of The Preserve Specific Plan. The Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan do not propose any urban development in The Preserve Specific Plan Area that was not previously designated for urban development. The impacts associated with the loss of Williamson Act contracts in this area have been adequately addressed in The Preserve Specific

Plan EIR, and the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would have no additional impacts to Williamson Act contracts in The Preserve area. Furthermore, the Williamson Act contracts in the northeast portion of The Preserve, east of the Chino Airport, are preserved and will remain active as part of The Preserve Specific Plan and the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan.

There is one remaining active Williamson Act contract covering two parcels that is not located inside the boundary of The Preserve Specific Plan. These parcels are located north of Eucalyptus Avenue and west of Fern Avenue, as shown in Figure 4.2-2. These parcels are both designated for residential use in both the Proposed General Plan and the Focused Growth Plan. This is a conflict with the active Williamson Act contract and is *potentially significant*.

3. Compatibility with Surrounding Urban Uses

The Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would allow the development of potentially incompatible urban uses next to existing farms. This situation could impair the productivity and profitability of agricultural operations, and could eventually lead farmers to take their land out of production. For example, complaints from new residents about noise, dust, and chemical use, can negatively affect existing agricultural operations, while increased vandalism, traffic, access difficulties, and the introduction of domestic animals from new residences, can lower productivity. Adjacent urban development may also drive up land values, increasing the property tax burden for farmland not protected by Williamson Act contracts.

However, the effects of the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would be minimal. Of the few remaining active farms in Chino, most are located in areas that would be continued to be designated for agricultural use, and where surrounding urban uses would not conflict with existing agricultural operations. These areas include the southern portion of the City, in The Preserve and in Sub Area 1, where agricultural designations are relatively expansive and are not surrounded by urban uses.

The few remaining farms in other portions of the City would be supported and would not be terminated by the Proposed General Plan or the Focused Growth Plan. The Chino right-to-farm ordinance and several policies in the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan seek to prevent the incompatibility of land uses from causing the conversion of farmland to urban uses. The Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan include Policy P1 under Objective OSC-2.3 to mitigate potential incompatibilities between agricultural and urban uses by requiring buffer zones between agricultural uses and urban development. However, the continued urbanization of the region and the increases in property values will continue to diminish the viability of agricultural operations in these remaining areas, and it is likely that these farms will eventually be lost to urban development.

With the policies included in the Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan, the impact on agricultural resources due to compatibility with surrounding urban uses would be *less than significant*.

E. Cumulative Impacts

In the region surrounding Chino, large expanses of agricultural land are continually being lost for development of urban uses. With approved annexations and master planned development adjacent to Chino, including in Ontario, more than 20,000 acres of agricultural land may be converted to urban uses.⁵ This conversion of agricultural land to urban uses means that agricultural production in these areas would be lost forever and would be displaced to other parts of the State and the country. The farmland that is being lost in The Preserve and neighboring New Model Colony in Ontario represents the most regionally significant farmland, part of a large area of southern San Bernardino County that in the past was devoted to agricultural use. However, these impacts have been disclosed in a previous EIR. There is no significant additional loss of farmland associated with the Proposed General Plan or Fo-

⁵ City of Chino, 2003, *The Preserve: Chino Sphere of Influence Subarea 2 Environmental Impact Report*, page 5.2-11.

cused Growth Plan. The Proposed General Plan and Focused Growth Plan would maintain 1,098 acres of land specifically designated for agricultural purposes. The cumulative impacts associated with the loss of farmland are primarily associated with development of The Preserve. Therefore, the project's contribution to the loss of croplands in the region would be *less than significant*.

F. Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impact AG-1: The Proposed General Plan and the Focused Growth General Plan would result in the conversion of two parcels that are currently in an active Williamson Act contract, and which are not found within The Preserve Specific Plan Area. Although the City's Right-to-Farm ordinance would remain in effect, this impact cannot be mitigated and would be *significant and unavoidable*.

