

City of Calexico Draft Agricultural Element

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

The Agricultural Element is an optional, not mandatory, element of the General Plan. Although the City of Calexico General Plan, adopted on May 1, 2007, did not include a separate Agricultural Element, it did include objectives and policies to promote infill development and preserve and protect agricultural lands.

The purpose of the Agricultural Element is to:

- Acknowledge the importance of agriculture to the Imperial County economy and to City resident workers employed in the industry
- Inventory farmland located within the City and Sphere of Influence
- Carry forward key agriculture-related objectives and policies of the *2007 General Plan*
- Establish a basis to develop cooperative efforts with the County and LAFCO to preserve agricultural land
- Improve and enhance the City's efforts to preserve, conserve and protect agricultural land

10.2 HISTORY OF IMPERIAL COUNTY AGRICULTURE

Ethno historic research has demonstrated that upon European contact in Imperial County in the 1700s, the Kamia Indians, a desert subgroup of the Kumeyaay (Diegueño) Indians whose territory included coastal and inland regions of San Diego County, were using dams and ditch systems to irrigate land along the New and Alamo Rivers. Annual flooding of the Colorado River made desert cultivation of corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, gourds, and watermelon possible.

Dr. Oliver M. Wozencraft, in 1849, was one of the first newcomers to the County to recognize the region's potential for irrigation development. Irrigation water was first delivered to the Imperial Valley in June 1901, by the California Development Company by diverting it from the Colorado River through a channel cut in Mexico to the Alamo River. After crossing the International Border east of Calexico, water was diverted from the stream to irrigate crops. Until this time, although many people traveled through Imperial County, the area held little attraction for settlers. Irrigation by the Alamo Canal Project soon led to a substantial population base in the area and the establishment of several towns. More irrigation ditches were completed and rapid development occurred as settlers poured into the area.

In 1905 the Colorado River flooded and ran uncontrolled through Imperial Valley, inundating 488 square miles of farmland and creating the Salton Sea. Several decades were required to improve the water delivery system, culminating in the completion of the All American Canal, which replaced the Alamo Canal, in 1941. With a reliable water system, operated by the Imperial Irrigation District since 1911, and the construction of the Southern Pacific Railroad and paved highways, the County's population and agricultural industry grew. All larger towns and most smaller communities grew up as agricultural centers or shipping stations. Today, agriculture remains the main economic resource in Imperial County.

Irrigation is critical for crop production in Imperial County. Most basically, irrigation permits farmers to apply measured amounts of water to particular crops as required. Although some crops are affected by salinity, extreme temperatures, and other environmental factors, the existing water delivery system overcomes the lack of precipitation in this otherwise arid region as a significant limiting factor to intensive crop production. Detailed information on the water delivery systems is available from the IID.

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10.3 STATE OF CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

10.3.1 Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 - commonly referred to as the Williamson Act - enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments which are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value.

The Open Space Subvention Act was enacted in 1971 to provide partial replacement of local property tax revenues foregone as a result of participation in the Program. The first Open Space Subvention payments were made in Fiscal Year (FY) 1972. From inception until FY 2010, over \$863 million was distributed by the State to counties and cities in support of the Program, averaging \$57 per acre over the lifetime of the subventions, or \$1.48 per acre per year. Adjusted for inflation, the value of the State's investment in subventions to participating jurisdictions totals \$1.5 billion.

In recent years, revenue constraints have limited the ability of the State to provide subventions to local governments to backfill for the foregone property tax revenue associated with contracted land. As discussed in the 2012 Status Report, the recent economic recession resulted in the reduction and ultimately the effective elimination of the State's Open Space Subvention payments to local governments. Payments were reduced and, pursuant to Government Code section 16148, subvention payments were effectively eliminated beginning in FY 2010.

While most participating counties continue to support agricultural and open space land conservation without subventions, the loss of this tax revenue continues to cause some jurisdictions to consider whether they can continue to offer the Program in the future. As a result, some counties have frozen enrollments.

As of 2013, all counties except Del Norte, San Francisco, Inyo, and Yuba offer Williamson Act contracts. Imperial County filed non-renewal on all Williamson Act contracts, effective January 2011, covering 117,246 acres; however, pursuant to Government Code Section 51246 the contracts remain in full force and effect until the contracts terminate. Imperial County remains the only county to exit the Program.

Source: California Department of Conservation, *The California Land Conservation Act 2014 Status Report*, March 2015, page 8

10.3.2 Agricultural Conservation Easement

An agricultural conservation easement is a voluntary, legally recorded deed restriction that is placed on a specific property used for agricultural production. The goal of an agricultural conservation easement is to maintain agricultural land in active production by removing the development pressures from the land. Such an easement prohibits practices which would damage or interfere with the agricultural use of the land. Because the easement is a restriction on the deed of the property, the easement remains in effect even when the land changes ownership.

Agricultural conservation easements are held by land trusts or local governments, which are responsible for ensuring that the terms of the easement are upheld. A landowner would seek an appropriate easement holder, which could be a land trust or a local government. The property

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proposed for easement must have characteristics (e.g., location, soil quality) that make it a priority for the easement holder organization. If the potential easement holder wishes to pursue an easement on the proposed property, it would negotiate terms with the landowner, including price (unless the easement is to be donated) and restrictions. If the easement is to be purchased, the potential easement holder may seek grant funding which requires that the easement be appraised.

Grant funding is available from the California Department of Conservation and the United States Department of Agriculture's Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP).

10.3.3 Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP)

The State of California Strategic Growth Council/Department of Conservation is funding a Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP) that supports the State's greenhouse gas (GHG) emission goals by making strategic investments to protect agricultural lands. There are three major elements proposed for the SALCP:

- Sustainable Agricultural Land Strategy Plans— Short term grants to counties, cities, and partners, to inventory and evaluate which agricultural lands are most highly productive and critically threatened and develop locally appropriate strategies, programs and actions that ensure the long term protection of those lands.
- Agricultural Conservation Easements—Provide funding to leverage the protection of strategically located, highly productive, and critically threatened agricultural land, via permanent agricultural conservation easements.
- Financial Incentives for Adoption and Use of Land Management Practices —Leverage United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other funding to incentivize management practices designed to reduce GHGs, sequester carbon and provide other co-benefits on working agricultural operations.

10.4 AGRICULTURAL SETTING

10.4.1 Agricultural Lands

Within the Calexico city limits there are an estimated 1,455 acres designated in one of the following four farmland categories:

- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Unique Farmland
- Locally Important Farmland

Attachment A contains definitions of these four categories and other farmland terms. Table AG 1 shows the number of acres per category located within the City of Calexico. Exhibit AG 1 shows the locations of the four important farmland categories within the City limits.

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Table AG 1
City of Calexico: Number of Acres
By Farmland Category: 2012

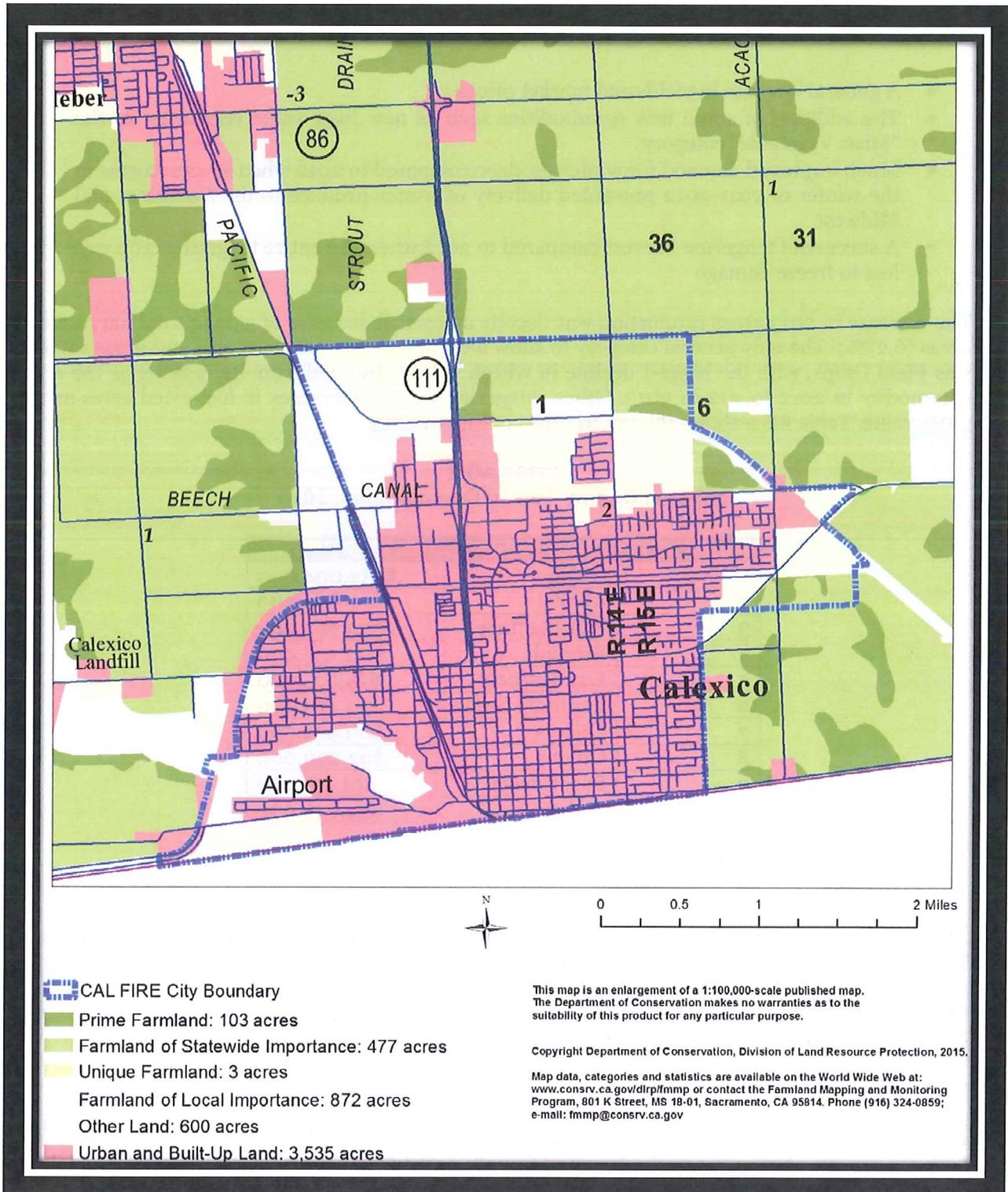
Type of Farmland	Number of Acres	Percent
Farmland of Local Importance	872	15.6%
Farmland of Statewide Importance	477	8.5%
Prime Farmland	103	1.8%
Unique Farmland	3	0.1%
Total	1,455	26.0%

Source: City boundaries are based on CALFIRE data. City farmland acreage provided by the California Department of Conservation, June 9, 2015.

Table construction by Castañeda & Associates

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Exhibit AG 1 City of Calexico Important Farmland by Category-2012



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10.4.2 Agricultural Crop and Livestock Report (2013)

Gross production for 2013 was valued at \$2,158,517,000, a new record for Imperial County. This is an increase of \$212,758,000 (10.93%) compared to the 2012 gross value of \$1,945,759,000. The main reason for this increase included:

- A general increase in yields and market prices
- The addition of some new commodities such as new high value vegetables in the “Misc. Vegetable” category
- Much improved demand for winter produce compared to 2012 when severe storms in the winter of 2011-2012 prevented delivery of winter produce to the Northeast and Midwest
- A successful tangerine harvest compared to 2012 when the entire tangerine crop was lost to freeze damage

The increase in 2013 gross production was despite an overall decrease of 35,444 total harvested acres (6.27%). The only general category to show a decline in harvested acreage and gross value was Field Crops, with the biggest decline in wheat. Wheat dropped from its ranking as the #3 commodity in 2012 to #12 in 2013. Other categories showed increases in harvested acres and gross value. Table AG 2 shows the top 10 commodities in 2013.

Table AG 2
Imperial County Top 10 Commodities: 2013

Rank	Commodity	Value
1	Cattle	\$552,004,000
2	Alfalfa	\$174,840,000
3	Head Lettuce	\$133,964,000
4	Broccoli	\$112,139,000
5	Leaf Lettuce	\$76,875,000
6	Bermuda Grass	\$70,220,000
7	Carrots	\$69,959,000
8	Onions	\$62,290,000
9	Sugar Beets	\$61,571,000
10	Sudan Grass	\$54,646,000

Source: 2013 Imperial County Agricultural and Livestock Report

About 26% of agricultural production in 2013 came from feeder cattle (beef) (\$552 million). This was driven by demand from National Beef that operated a processing facility in Brawley. In April 2014 National Beef ceased operations and moved out of California. The closure resulted in the complete elimination of beef-livestock production and over 1,300 direct jobs (approximately \$40 million annually in direct wages).

10.4.3 Agricultural Employment

Imperial County has approximately 500,000 acres of farmland, mild winters, and a year-round growing season. According to the Imperial County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer, the job-generating force of agriculture is as follows:

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- Roughly 5 full time workers for every 1,000 acres of field crops (alfalfa, sugar beets, etc)
- Roughly 15 or more full time workers per 1,000 acres of produce (lettuce, broccoli, etc.)
- Roughly 500 jobs per 1,000 acres of produce during harvest

In addition, to the numbers given above, jobs are also created for farm services/support business such as farm equipment suppliers, pesticide and fertilizer dealers, irrigation supply companies, seed companies, pest control advisors, brokers, and exporters.

Beside the almost \$2.2 billion of gross agricultural production in 2013, there is additional economic value in the various support industries, such as processing facilities, pest control services, pesticide dealers, shippers, seed companies, export companies, and labor contractors.

Approximately 1,200 Calexico workers are employed in the “agricultural, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining industry”. The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) defines this industry as follows:

The Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting sector comprises establishments primarily engaged in growing crops, raising animals, harvesting timber, and harvesting fish and other animals from a farm, ranch, or their natural habitats. The establishments in this sector are often described as farms, ranches, dairies, greenhouses, nurseries, orchards, or hatcheries.

The sector distinguishes two basic activities: agricultural production and agricultural support activities. Agricultural production includes establishments performing the complete farm or ranch operation, such as farm owner-operators, tenant farm operators, and sharecroppers. Agricultural support activities include establishments that perform one or more activities associated with farm operation, such as soil preparation, planting, harvesting, and management, on a contract or fee basis.

Ninety percent of the agriculture workers are employed in occupations such as first-line supervisors of farming, agricultural inspectors, graders and sorters of agricultural products, truck and tractor operators and miscellaneous agricultural workers.

Almost 8% of those employed in the agricultural industry are farmers, ranchers and agricultural managers.

A few agricultural workers are employed in sales and office occupations.

According to the State Employment Development Department’s Calexico Employer Data Base, there are seven Agricultural Industry employers located in the City (92231 Zip Code):

- 4 Other Crop Farming
- 1 Cattle Ranching and Farming
- 2 Support Activities for Crop Production

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These agricultural industry sub-sectors are defined as follows:

Other Crop Farming: This industry group comprises establishments primarily engaged in (1) growing crops (except oilseed and/or grain; vegetable and/or melon; fruit and tree nut; and greenhouse, nursery, and/or floriculture products). These establishments grow crops, such as tobacco, cotton, sugarcane, hay, sugar beets, peanuts, agave, herbs and spices, and hay and grass seeds; or (2) growing a combination of crops (except a combination of oilseed(s) and grain(s) and a combination of fruit(s) and tree nut(s)).

Cattle Ranching and Farming: This industry group comprises establishments primarily engaged in raising cattle, milking dairy cattle, or feeding cattle for fattening.

Support Activities for Crop Production: This industry comprises establishments primarily engaged in providing support activities for growing crops. Illustrative examples include aerial dusting or spraying (i.e., using specialized or dedicated aircraft), planting crops and cultivating services.

10.5 AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

10.5.1 Imperial County Agricultural Economy

Although an estimated 10% of Calexico's labor force is employed in the Agricultural Industry, the workers do not all have jobs located within the City limits. Undoubtedly, some Calexico workers had jobs at the now closed National Beef facility which was located in Brawley.

Additionally, there have been losses to agricultural production, jobs, and the local economy resulting from renewable energy development on farmland in Imperial County. To offset these losses the Imperial County Board of Supervisors established the Agricultural Benefit Program.

Approved uses of program funds may include, but are not limited to: stewardship, protection, and enhancement of agricultural lands within Imperial County; tools, technology, and techniques for protection of agricultural commodities or increase of crop yields within Imperial County; and support of programs or projects that increase agricultural industry employment opportunities within Imperial County.

Thus, maintaining a healthy, growing and robust Imperial County agricultural economy is important to workers who live in Calexico.

According to the Agricultural Commissioner, a fundamental goal is to promote agricultural and related support industries. Among the more specific goals for the agricultural economy are the following:

- Promote and support research and development of new, high-value, and specialty crops
- Promote and support establishment of food, fiber, and other processing facilities
- Promote and support establishment of bio-fuel, biotechnology, and other ag-related industries/businesses
- Ensure that workforce training programs include modules that address the needs of agribusiness

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10.5.2 Agricultural/Farmland Conversion

The California Department of Conservation tracks the conversion of important farmland to other uses. The Imperial County 2010-2012 Land Use Conversion Report (the most recent) indicated that 268 acres of important farmland were converted to “urban and built-up land.” This term refers to land used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.

The 2012 Department of Conservation Field Report noted the following:

- Northeast of the City of Calexico, two areas of farmland went fallow (200 and 150 acres)
- In the north part of the City of Calexico between the railroad tracks, Main and Beech Canal, over 130 acres of farmland went fallow and roads were paved for homes that were not built

The Field Report also expects future activity around the edges of cities for urban changes and the edges of farmland for fallowing and new agriculture. Solar facilities are also proposed or approved that will convert a significant number of farmland acres.

Agricultural land located within the City limits has been planned and designated for residential, commercial, industrial or other land uses. Table AG 3 shows that the development of nine projects will cause, eventually but not immediately, the conversion of almost 1,000 acres of important farmland located within the City limits.

**Table AG 3
City of Calexico
Approximate Cumulative Project Farmland Conversion in Acres**

Project	Total Area	Prime Farmland Area	Statewide Importance Farmland Area	Local Importance Farmland Area	Total “Important Farmland” Area
Hallwood/Calexico Place II and Casino	232	—	232	—	232
Calexico Mega Park	146	22	111	—	133
Estrella Subdivision	150	—	—	113	113
Palazzo Subdivision	155	5	150	—	155
Las Palmas Subdivision and Mobile Home Park	324	81	81	—	162
Venezia	78	16	62	—	78
Remington Condominiums	18	—	—	—	0
Riverview Condominiums	33	—	—	33	33
Calexico Gran Plaza	173	—	—	57	57
Total	1,309	124	636	203	963

Source: City of Calexico, *Mega Park Environmental Impact Report*, December 2014

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Apart from Las Palmas and Gran Plaza, development has not started on the seven of the nine projects. The land in these projects remains in agricultural use, having not yet been converted to an urban use, or has gone fallow. The Imperial Irrigation District implements a voluntary Fallowing Program (FP). Fields selected to participate in the FP are paid to lie fallow for a fiscal year period. Payments are set at a rate of \$125 per acre-foot per acre of a field's baseline water use history.

Prior to approval, each of nine projects listed in Table AG 3 was evaluated in terms of its impact on agricultural resources. A significant impact occurs if a project 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 Department of Conservation
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract

The City's 2007 *General Plan Environmental Impact Report* (EIR) identifies two mitigation measures:

- MM Ag 1 – a per acre Agricultural in-Lieu Mitigation Fee
- MM Ag 2 – acquisition of Agricultural Conservation Easements

Projects have been approved subject to these mitigation measures.

10.5.3 Agricultural Land Conservation and Preservation

Outside the City limits but within the Calexico Sphere of Influence there are almost 3,200 acres of farmland. Table AG 4 shows that more than 500 acres fall into the Prime Farmland category while almost 2,600 acres are of statewide importance.

Table AG 4
Calexico Sphere of Influence
Number of Acres by Farmland Category: 2012

Type of Farmland	Number of Acres	Percent
Farmland of Local Importance	79	2.5%
Farmland of Statewide Importance	2,592	81.1%
Prime Farmland	525	16.4%
Unique Farmland	0	0.0%
Total	3,196	100.0%

Source: Sphere of Influence acreages estimated from the California Department of Conservation website, Land Protection section, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, California Important Farmland Finder GIS system.

Table construction by Castañeda & Associates

According to the Department of Conservation (DOC), the mapping information for the Sphere of Influence has been delineated as accurately as possible at 1:24,000-scale, but no claim to meet 1:24,000 National Map Accuracy Standards is made due to variations in the quality of source

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data. The data is not designed for parcel-specific planning purposes due to its scale and the ten-acre minimum land use mapping unit. The mapping for the Sphere of Influence was estimated using the DOC GIS mapping tool. Due to the scaling of the GIS mapping tool and the need to estimate the boundaries on the mapping tool, there may be a difference in the total acres between the physical area and the mapped areas.

The *2007 Land Use Element* and *2007 General Plan Land Use Map* designated lands in the Sphere of Influence (SOI) for a variety of residential and non-residential land uses. The *2015 Land Use Element* eliminates these designations and instead designates the lands as Residential Specific Plan. This land use category requires the preparation and approval of Specific Plans – which must include a range of community uses and measures to preserve agricultural land – before the City will consider annexation. This revision to the Land Use Element meets a key objective of the Sustainable Communities Planning Grant which was to update the land use designations in the Sphere of Influence in order to protect prime agricultural land now located outside the City limits.

The land within the SOI is located in unincorporated territory. Exhibit AG 2 shows the County of Imperial zoning designations for land located in the SOI. Most of the land is zoned A2, A2U or A2GU.

A2 refers to the General Agriculture Zone. According to the County of Imperial Zoning Code:

The purpose of the A-2 (General Agriculture), [40 Acre minimum] Zone is to designate areas that are suitable and intended primarily for agriculture uses (limited) and agricultural related compatible uses.

The Zoning Code describes the “U” Zone as follows:

Land classified in the “U” zone shall also be classified in another zone. The “U” zone is therefore intended to be an Overlay zone to designate areas that are within an Urban area of an incorporated city or an Urban area as designated on the County’s General Plan. With regard to Urban areas around incorporated cities, it is the intent of the County of Imperial to adhere to the standards, rules, regulations and ordinances of said urban jurisdiction.

The “G” refers to a Geothermal Overlay.

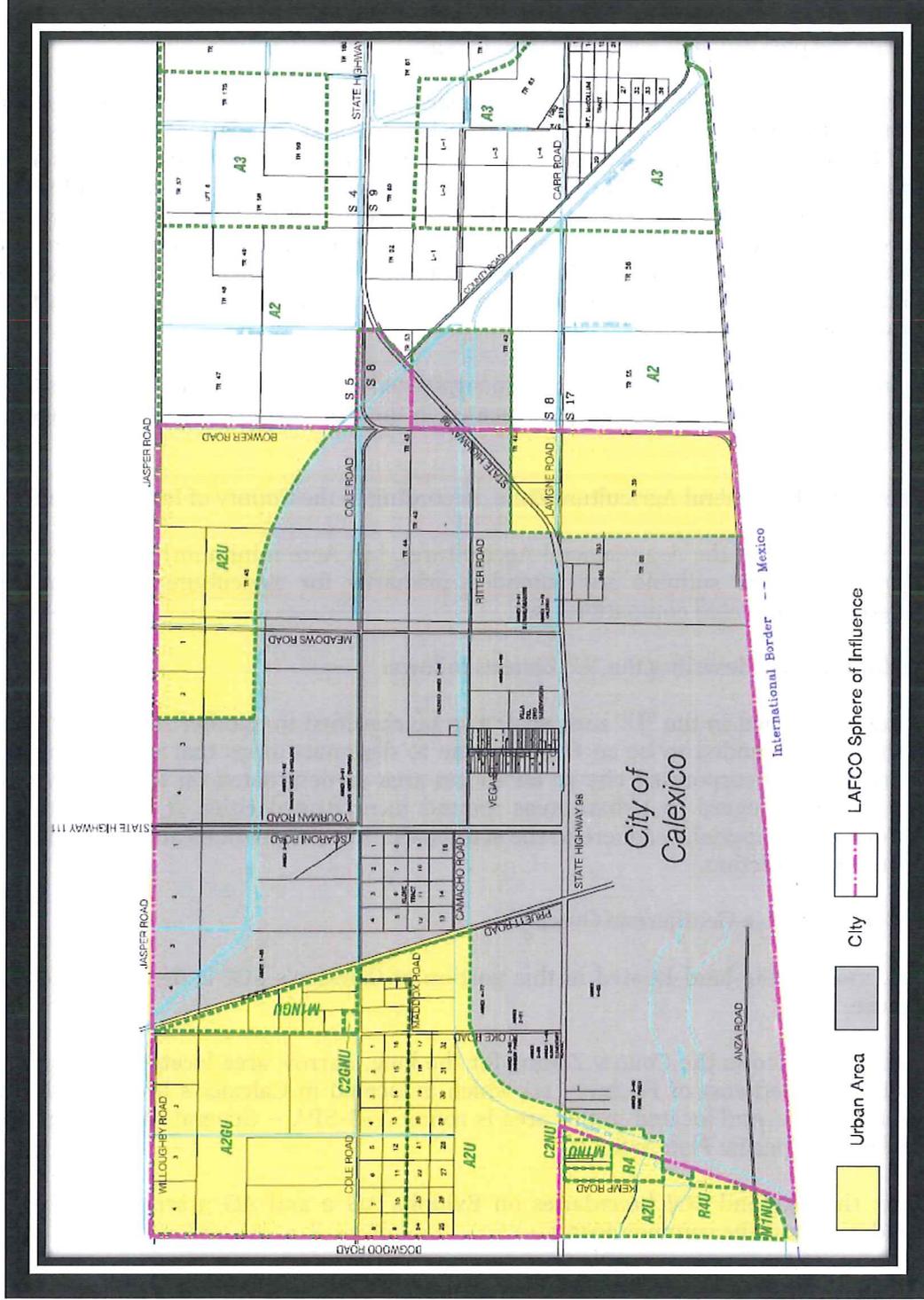
Thus, most of the land located in this portion of Calexico’s SOI is designated for agricultural land use.

Exhibit AG 3 shows the County Zoning for the long, narrow area located between Jasper Road and Heber Road east of Highway 111 which is located in Calexico’s Sphere of Influence. The majority of the land located in this area is zoned A2G-SPA – General Agricultural, Geothermal Overlay and Specific Plan Area.

(Note: the City and SOI boundaries on Exhibits AG 2 and AG 3 are not the actual current boundaries as of the summer 2015.)

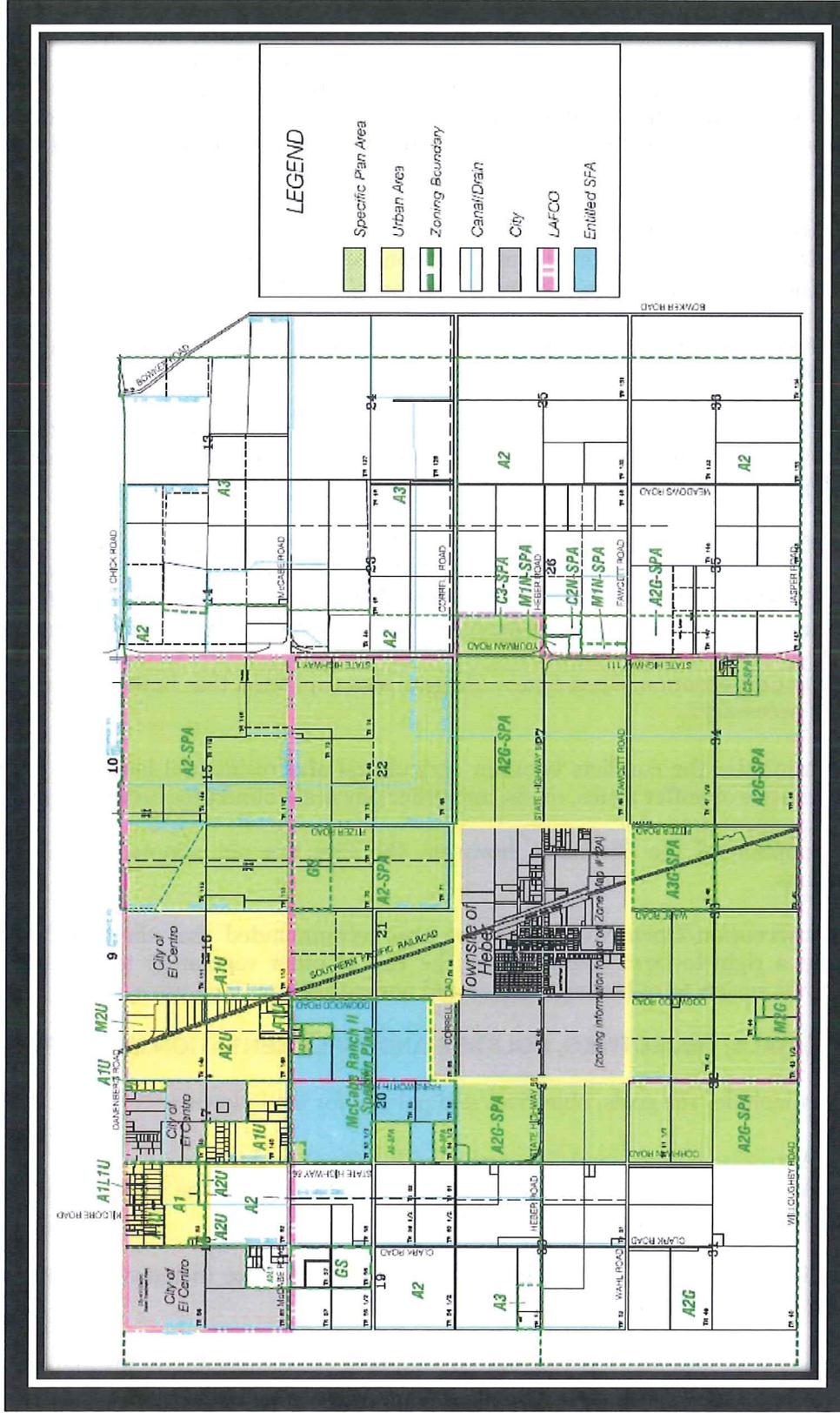
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Exhibit AG 2 County of Imperial Zoning Designations Calexico Sphere of Influence



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Exhibit AG 3 County of Imperial Zoning Designations Calexico Sphere of Influence Jasper Road to Heber Road



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10.5.4 Agricultural/Development Edge Conflicts

In many California counties an agricultural/development edge conflict exists because so many people live very close or next door to agricultural operations. Residential neighborhoods adjacent to or near agricultural operations experience problems such as noise, dust, night lights, and odors associated with farmland. For farmers operating in the midst of neighbors often means:

- Interruptions or restriction on aerial spraying
- Disruptions to irrigations routes and connections to canals
- Increased difficulty in the transportation of oversize machinery between agricultural properties
- Increased nuisance complaints by new inhabitants unaccustomed to the agricultural activities

The *2007 General Plan* acknowledged that buffers are needed to address potential and actual issues associated with land use incompatibilities. The *2007 Land Use Element* included the following policy statements:

- Where land uses may result in conflicting activities, traffic, noise levels, visual character, etc., there shall be adequate buffering and/or setbacks required.
- Development of rural residential units shall be appropriately buffered from adjacent land uses so as not to cause problems from any keeping of farm or ranch animals.

The *2007 Conservation/Open Space Element* also explained that buffers between certain land uses are necessary:

- Minimize the conflicts between agricultural and residential land uses by requiring the use of buffer zones, roads, and other physical boundaries between uses.

Since adoption of the Elements, however, the City has not adopted buffer standards and regulations.

The *Conservation/Open Space Element* also recommended that the City “should consider adopting a right-to-farm ordinance or the use of other regulatory tools such as zoning or subdivision review to reduce agriculture and non-agriculture land use conflicts.”

10.6 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

This part includes the goals, objectives and policies for the following:

- Agricultural/Farmland Conversion within the City Limits
- Agricultural Land Conservation and Preservation within the Sphere of Influence
- Agricultural/Development Edge Conflicts

The italicized policies are either identical or similar to those included in the *2007 Land Use Element* or *2007 Conservation/Open Space Element*.

Part 10.6.4 describes the Implementation Measures of the Agricultural Element.

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10.6.1 Agricultural/Farmland Conversion within the City Limits

Goal: Manage carefully the conversion of agricultural land to residential, commercial, industrial and other types of development.

Objective: Maintain agricultural lands for the longest feasible time.

Policies:

- *Encourage infill and adjacent new development to provide for the efficient use of existing infrastructure, avoid “leap frog” new development and to reduce impacts to agriculture.*
- *Where possible, encourage infill development as a means to preserve outlying open space and to conserve resources.*
- *Agricultural uses should cease no later than two (2) years after annexation of the property into the City.*
- *Prior to cessation, the owners may submit an application to the City to continue agricultural land uses if potential adverse impacts on surrounding land uses can be mitigated through measures such as agricultural buffer zones.*

10.6.2 Agricultural Land Conservation and Preservation within the Sphere of Influence

Goal: Conserve and preserve agricultural land located within Calexico’s Sphere of Influence.

Objective: Minimize the loss of agricultural land zoned agricultural which is located within the Sphere of Influence.

Policies:

- *Preserve Prime Farmland in the Sphere of Influence by maintaining a compact urban form and focusing on quality development within the City limits.*
- *Agricultural land should not be annexed into the City until development is eminent.*
- *Noncontiguous or “leapfrog” development should be discouraged to retain open space at the urban edge.*
- *Preserve agricultural land within the Sphere of Influence by focusing on growth within the City limits and requiring a comprehensive Residential Specific Plan (which must include to extent possible) measures to preserve some agricultural land within the area covered by the Specific Plan.*
- *Work with the Imperial County Planning Department to adopt zoning measures that will contribute to agricultural conservation and preservation of lands located with the Calexico Sphere of Influence.*
- *Develop measures in cooperation with the County of Imperial to conserve and preserve agricultural lands located in the Sphere of Influence including incentives for landowners to maintain land in productive agricultural uses.*
- *Work with the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to create and maintain a consistent approach to the conservation of agricultural land through the designation of reasonable and logical Sphere of Influence (SOI) boundaries.*

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10.6.3 Agricultural/Development Edge Conflicts

Goal: Enable agricultural land to co-exist in close proximity to other developed land uses.

Objective: Establish buffers between agricultural and non-agricultural uses.

Policies:

- *Adopt a right-to-farm ordinance or the use of other regulatory tools such as zoning or subdivision review to reduce agriculture and non-agriculture land use conflicts.*
- *Any proposed non-agricultural projects near existing agricultural areas shall require an assessment to determine potential impacts to agricultural production and potential impacts to the proposed land use.*
- *Minimize the conflicts between agricultural and residential land uses by requiring the use of buffer zones, roads, and other physical boundaries between uses.*
- Require new non-agricultural development immediately adjacent to agricultural lands to be designed to provide a buffer in the form of a setback of sufficient distance to avoid land use conflicts between the agricultural uses and the non-agricultural uses.

10.6.4 Implementation Measures

This part describes implementation measures that will contribute to the conservation, preservation and protection of agricultural land located within the City limits and Sphere of Influence.

10.6.4.1 Agricultural Land Conversion Mitigation

The City's *2007 General Plan Environmental Impact Report* (EIR) identifies two mitigation measures:

- MM Ag 1 – a per acre Agricultural In-Lieu Mitigation Fee
- MM Ag 2 – acquisition of Agricultural Conservation Easements

MM Ag 1 requires approved projects to pay an in lieu fee in the amount of 20% of the fair market value of the appraised value of the agricultural land that will be converted. The in lieu fee is paid prior to the issuance of any grading or building permit. The developer pays a pro rata portion based on size of the phase to be developed in proportion to the total project.

MM AG2 requires the acquisition of permanent agricultural conservation easements on a 1 to 1 basis for all converted acres of similar quality farmland, outside the path of development. The conservation easement must meet the State Department of Conservation regulations and must be recorded prior to issuance of any grading or building permits.

The City will enforce these mitigation measures on all approved projects as well as apply them to future projects.

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10.6.4.2 Right to Farm Ordinance

A Right to Farm Ordinance is adopted by cities and counties as a means to let the public know that the use of real property for agricultural operations is a high priority and favored use. The Right-to-Farm Ordinance requires disclosure statements between sellers and buyers of properties at the time of property transfer and through inclusion of disclosure statements on all discretionary land use permit applications administered by City.

The County Board of Supervisors has approved a Right-to-Farm Ordinance, which permits operation of properly conducted agricultural operations within Imperial County after recognizing the potential threats to agricultural productivity posed by increased non-agricultural land uses throughout the County. The ordinance is intended to reduce the loss to the County of its agricultural resources and promote a good neighbor policy by advising purchasers and users of adjacent properties about the potential problems and inconveniences associated with agricultural operations.

The ordinance also establishes a "County Agricultural Grievance Committee" to settle disputes between agriculturalists and adjacent property owners.

The City may prepare its own Right to Farm Ordinance or will make the public aware of the County Ordinance. The Planning Division will post and maintain copies of the County's or City's Right-to-Farm Ordinance at the public counter. All building permit applicants proposing non-agricultural uses shall be given a copy of the notice and sign a statement that they have received the copy.

10.6.4.3 Agricultural Buffer Overlay Zone

New residential and other non-agricultural uses that are proposed adjacent to agricultural land or uses may result in land use conflicts. Residential and other non-agricultural uses can be adversely affected by odors, noise, dust and pesticide use. Farmers and ranchers are affected by resident complaints, pilferage of vegetables and fruits, increased incidence of trespass, theft and vandalism, and introduction of plant and animal pests and diseases harmful to agricultural uses.

The purpose of the buffer is to protect agriculture by using natural or man-made buffers where adjacent to non-agricultural land uses in accordance with the policies and procedures included in an adopted Overlay Zone. The primary purpose of an Overlay District is to provide for a mechanism to minimize potential conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses. The Overlay District would provide for an agricultural buffer transitional area and would require that new development and changes in use require discretionary approval in accordance with the adopted provisions. Attached B provides an example of an Agricultural Buffer Overlay Zone.

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ATTACHMENT A CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION FARMLAND MAPPING AND MONITORING PROGRAM (FHHP) IMPORTANT FARMLAND CATEGORIES

FMMP's study area is contiguous with modern soil surveys developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). A classification system that combines technical soil ratings and current land use is the basis for the Important Farmland Maps of these lands. Most public land areas, such as National Forests and Bureau of Land Management holdings, are not mapped.

The minimum land use mapping unit is 10 acres unless specified. Smaller units of land are incorporated into the surrounding map classifications. In order to most accurately represent the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) digital soil survey, soil units of one acre or larger are depicted in Important Farmland Maps.

Prime Farmland (P)

Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date. Download information on the soils qualifying for Prime Farmland. More general information on the definition of Prime Farmland is also available.

Farmland of Statewide Importance (S)

Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date. Download information on the soils qualifying for Farmland of Statewide Importance.

Unique Farmland (U)

Farmland of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include nonirrigated 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.

Farmland of Local Importance (L)

Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee. Download a complete set of the Farmland of Local Importance definitions in PDF format. In some counties, Confined Animal Agriculture facilities are part of Farmland of Local Importance, but they are shown separately. The status of each county regarding Confined Animal Agriculture is available in this spreadsheet.

Grazing Land (G)

Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities.

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Urban and Built-up Land (D)

Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.

Other Land (X)

Land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than forty acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use

This category was developed in cooperation with local government planning departments and county boards of supervisors during the public workshop phase of the FMMP's development in 1982. Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use information is available both statistically and as an overlay to the important farmland information. Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use is defined as existing farmland, grazing land, and vacant areas which have a permanent commitment for development.

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ATTACHMENT B DRAFT CITY OF CALEXICO AGRICULTURAL/NONAGRICULTURAL BUFFER OVERLAY DISTRICT

The primary purpose of the Overlay District is to provide for a mechanism to minimize potential conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses. The Overlay District provides for an agricultural buffer transitional area and requires that new development and changes in use require discretionary approval in accordance with the following provisions.

1. In conjunction with general plan policies outlined in the Land Use Element, Conservation/Open Space Element and Agricultural Element, the City of Calexico has determined that the use of property for agricultural operations is a high priority. To minimize potential conflicts between agricultural and nonagricultural land uses, including the protection of public health, the reduction of noise and odor, and the reduction of risk to farm operations from domestic animal predation, crop theft and damage and complaints from neighboring urban dwellers, all new development adjacent to any designated agricultural district shall be required to provide an agricultural buffer. "Development" as used in this section, means subdivision of land, use permits and building permits for new residential units.
2. The buffer area shall be a minimum of one hundred (100) feet, measured from the edge of the designated agricultural district. Optimally, to achieve a maximum separation, a buffer wider than one hundred (100) feet is encouraged and may be required if it is determined through environmental review under CEQA and/or recommended by the Imperial County Agricultural Commissioner. A waiver may be granted if it can be demonstrated that a physical buffer exists (e.g., Highway 111, detention basin) or a decreased buffer distance may be allowed if it can be demonstrated that a physical buffer exists that is adequate and approved by Imperial County Agricultural Commissioner.
3. The minimum one hundred (100) foot agricultural buffer area shall be comprised of two components: a twenty (20) foot wide agricultural landscaped transition area contiguous to an eighty (80) foot wide agricultural buffer adjacent to the designated agricultural district. The twenty (20) foot transition area may include pedestrian access.
4. The following shall be permitted in the one hundred (100) foot agricultural buffer: native plants, tree or hedge rows, roads, drainage channels, storm retention basins, natural areas such as creeks or drainage swales, utility corridors, storage, and any use, including agricultural or limited commercial uses, determined by the Planning Commission to be consistent with the use of the property as an agricultural buffer. No new residential use shall be permitted within the buffer area unless it is determined there would be no other economically viable use of the property.
5. The one hundred (100) foot agricultural buffer shall be established by the developer pursuant to a plan approved by the Planning Division. The plan shall include provisions for the use of integrated weed and pest management techniques and soil erosion control. An agreement in the form approved by the City Attorney shall be recorded, which shall include the requirements of this section.