



June 21, 2019

VIA EMAIL: RAYALA@CI.ONTARIO.CA.US

Mr. Richard Ayala
City of Ontario
303 East B Street
Ontario, CA 91764

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

JUNE 21 2019

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Dear Mr. Ayala:

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE
ONTARIO RANCH BUSINESS PARK SPECIFIC PLAN, SCH# 2019050018

The Department of Conservation's (Department) Division of Land Resource Protection (Division) has reviewed the Notice of Preparation submitted by the City of Ontario (City) for the Ontario Ranch Business Park Specific Plan (project). The Division monitors farmland conversion on a statewide basis and administers the California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act and other agricultural land conservation programs. We offer the following comments and recommendations with respect to the proposed project's potential impacts on agricultural land and resources.

Project Description

The Ontario Ranch Business Park Project consists of a General Plan Amendment, Specific Plan, Tentative Parcel Map, and Development Plans to allow for development of an industrial and business park development on eleven parcels covering 85.6 acres in the City of Ontario. The development would include eight warehouse and business park buildings ranging from 46,900 square feet to 618,353 square feet, for a maximum development of 1,905,027 square feet of warehouse and office uses. Office uses are ancillary to the warehouses and occupy up to 75,000 SF spread across the eight buildings.

The project site is located in southwestern San Bernardino County, within the City of Ontario. The project site consists of eleven parcels covering 85.6 acres, located in the southwestern portion of the City, immediately north of the City of Chino in San Bernardino County. The project site is located east of Euclid Avenue, north of Merrill Avenue, west of the unimproved right-of-way of Sultana Avenue, and south of Eucalyptus Avenue. The project site is zoned agriculture, and is designated as Prime Farmland and Other Land according to the most recent Important Farmland Map

produced by the Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program¹.

Department Comments

The conversion of agricultural land represents a permanent reduction and significant impact to the State's agricultural land resources. Under CEQA, a lead agency should not approve a project if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available that would lessen the significant effects of the project.² All mitigation measures that are potentially feasible should be included in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). A measure brought to the attention of the lead agency should not be left out unless it is infeasible based on its elements.

The Department advises the use of permanent agricultural conservation easements on land of at least equal quality and size as mitigation for the loss of agricultural land. Conservation easements will protect remaining land resources and mitigate the project impacts in accordance with CEQA Guideline § 15370. The Department highlights agricultural conservation easements because of their acceptance and use by lead agencies as an appropriate mitigation measure under CEQA. Agricultural conservation easements are an available mitigation tool and should always be considered; however, the use of conservation easements is only one form of mitigation that should be considered. Any other feasible mitigation measures should also be considered.

Conclusion

The Department recommends the following discussion under the Agricultural Resources section of the DEIR:

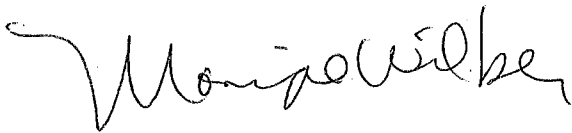
- Type, amount, and location of farmland conversion resulting directly and indirectly from implementation of the proposed project.
- Impacts on any current and future agricultural operations in the vicinity; e.g., land-use conflicts, increases in land values and taxes, loss of agricultural support infrastructure such as processing facilities, etc.
- Incremental impacts leading to cumulative impacts on agricultural land. This would include impacts from the proposed project, as well as impacts from past, current, and likely future projects.
- Proposed mitigation measure for all impacted agricultural lands within the proposed project area.

¹ Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, California Important Farmland Finder, 2016, <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/CIFF/>

² California Environmental Quality Act Statute and Guidelines, Association of Environmental Professionals, 2017, Section 21002, page 2.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Ontario Ranch Business Park Specific Plan Project. Please provide this Department with notices of any future hearing dates as well as any staff reports pertaining to this project. If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Farl Grundy, Environmental Planner at (916) 324-7347 or via email at Farl.Grundy@conservation.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monique Wilber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Monique Wilber
Conservation Program Support Supervisor

