

## V.A. LAND USE AND PLANNING

This section summarizes the findings presented in Chapter V.A of the *Willow Road/Highway 101 Interchange Final Environmental Impact Report*, prepared by Douglas Wood & Associates, Inc. (March 1999: pp. V3-V14). Per the CEQA Guidelines, section 15150, this EIR incorporates the previous study by reference. However, this section includes the County's updated Thresholds of Significance and provides other updated land use information as applicable. The 1999 Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) is on file and available for public review at the County of San Luis Obispo Planning and Building Department.

### 1. Existing Conditions

**Land Use.** The project area currently contains a variety of land uses including low density residential, nurseries, recreation, agricultural farmlands, and open space. The Land Use Element of the San Luis Obispo County General Plan, South County Area Plan (Inland), identifies the project area as containing three land use designations (Figure V.A-1). Detailed planning area standards are provided for each designated land use as provided for in Article 9 (South County) of the County's land use ordinance.

All the land east of US 101 and the land east of Hetrick Road and north of Willow Road have been designated Agricultural (AG). This area contains the C&M nursery, scattered homesites on large parcels, open grasslands, and pasture lands used for cattle grazing. In regard to the agricultural land, the South County Area Plan states "agricultural practices of varying degrees of intensity involve over two-thirds of the planning area. Any appreciable loss in viable farm acreage should be avoided." The South County Area Plan goes on to state that "commitments to agriculture have been made... These commitments should be bolstered by retaining the agriculture category next to the Nipomo urban area east of Highway 101... Prime soils in the valley lands should be protected exclusively for agriculture."

Black Lake Village lies immediately west of Pomeroy Road and north of Willow Road. This area has been designated Recreation (REC) and supports a 27 hole golf course, and a larger residential community on approximately 515 acres.

The remainder of land has been designated Residential Rural (RR) which provides for estate-sized lots or smaller farms of five acres or larger. Most of this area contains homes on relatively smaller lots with rural access roads. According to the South County Area Plan, "the rural residential density on the mesa recognizes that services are not generally available for higher densities and are not planned." The South County Area plan also states that "residential uses should be considered only in support of employment development" and the Residential Rural designation "recognizes both the potential for continued agricultural uses as well as potential development of large-lot rural homesites."

**Circulation.** The Circulation Element of the San Luis Obispo County General Plan provides guidance for traffic and circulation planning within and around the project area. Specific roadway improvements included as part of this project that are listed in the Circulation Element include:

- Principal Arterials – a provision of future interchanges on US 101 at both Willow Road and Southland Street with an extension of Willow Road to that interchange.

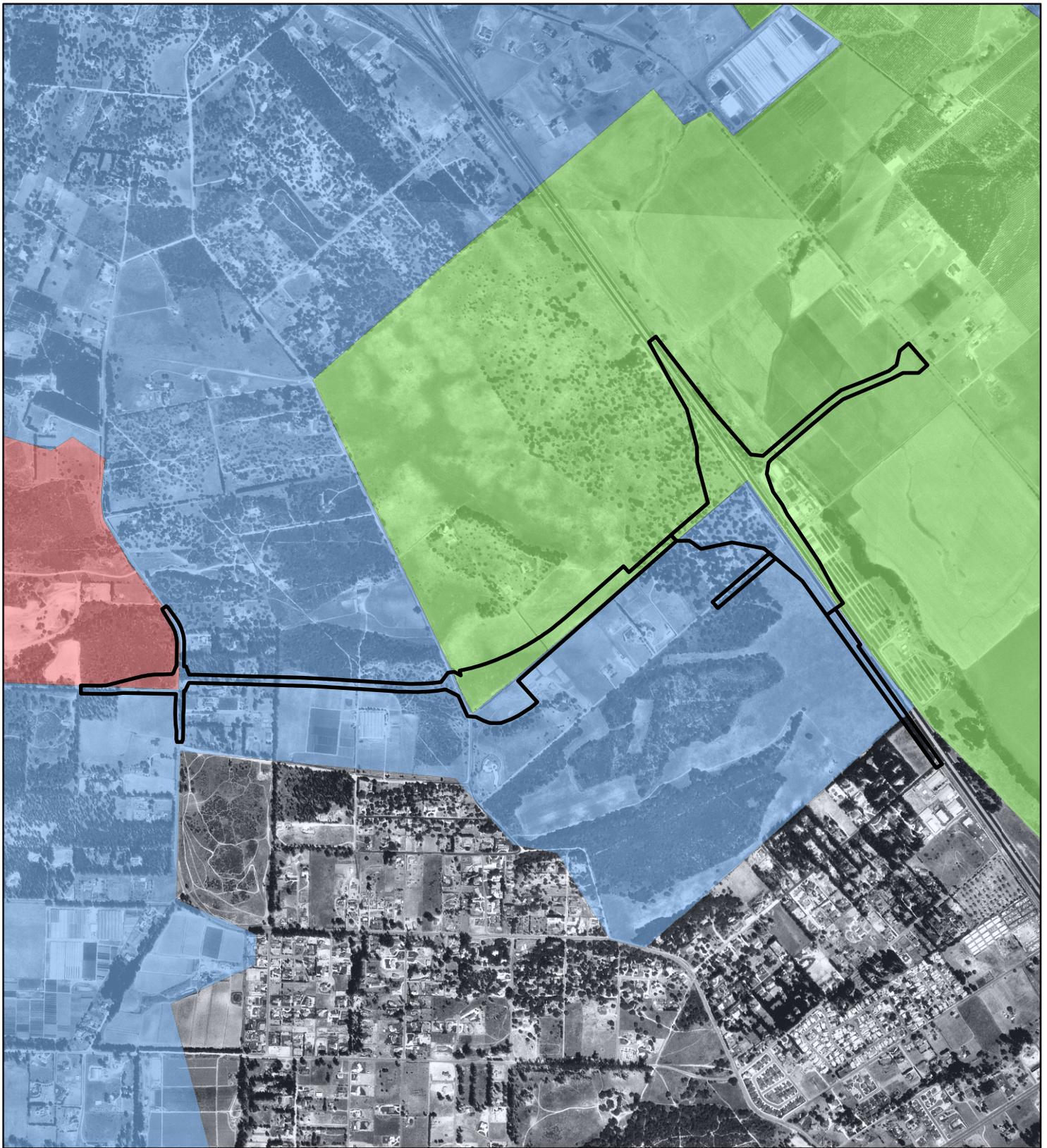
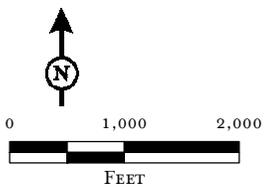


FIGURE V.A-1

LSA



- Land Use**
- Agriculture
  - Recreation
  - Residential Rural

**—** Project Limits

*Willow Road Extension/U.S. 101 Interchange Project*  
**Land Use Designations**

SOURCE: DOQQ (1m), Geometrics-Rajappan & Meyer Consulting Engineers Inc.

I:\RAJ334\GIS\Landuse\_fig5a-1.mxd (3/11/05)

- Arterials – an easterly extension of Willow Road from Pomeroy Road to intersect US 101 at a proposed interchange and then east to Thompson Avenue with rural arterial standards, including a Class II (on-street, separate lane) bicycle lane.
- Collectors – extend the existing North Frontage Road from Sanddydale Drive to the proposed Willow Road interchange.

**Proposed Public Facilities.** The South County Area Plan designates an area at the northwest corner of Pomeroy and Willow roads as Proposed Government Facilities (GF) (Map 2, South County Area Plan, revised 5-2-02). Possible uses for this area include: a Sheriff's substation, government offices and courts, a branch library, a multi-purpose room for citizen activities, interview and office space for health services, and kitchen facilities.

## 2. Thresholds of Significance

Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines and the County's Initial Study Checklist require a determination of whether the proposed project would have the following impacts related to land use and planning<sup>1</sup>:

- Be potentially inconsistent with land use, policy/ regulation (e.g., general plan [County land use element and ordinance], local coastal plan, specific plan, Clean Air Plan, etc.), adopted to avoid or mitigate for environmental effects;
- Be potentially inconsistent with any habitat or community conservation plan;
- Be potentially inconsistent with adopted agency environmental plans or policies with jurisdiction over the project; and
- Be potentially incompatible with surrounding land uses.

## 3. Project Impacts

**Land Use.** The following discussion describes potential impacts from the proposed project upon a variety of land uses including low density residential, nurseries, recreation, agricultural farmlands and open space. Impacts are discussed in terms of land uses in the proposed western, middle and eastern road segments, as well as along the proposed frontage road.

**Western Segment.** The western segment includes the proposed Willow Road extension between Pomeroy Road and Hetrick Avenue. The majority of this segment runs along existing dirt or paved roads with a small section running through a fallow field. The proposed road would pass approximately 120 feet to the north of existing residences currently served by the existing road (paved and unpaved). Some property acquisition, however, will be required to complete the road extension. Long-term access to residential land uses in the area will be improved through the addition of a paved, all-weather roadway.

---

<sup>1</sup> Although this section is incorporated by reference from the 1999 FEIR, the Thresholds of Significance have been updated to include criteria as stated in the County's current Initial Study Checklist.

**Middle and Eastern Segments.** Between Hetrick Road and US 101 the alignment follows an existing paved roadway. Construction of this segment and long-term use will not impact any residences or other land uses. East of US 101, the proposed project will run along an existing fenceline that defines the northern property boundary of the C&M nursery. Although it will be necessary to acquire some of the nursery property near US 101, the nursery manager has stated that the project will not impact ongoing nursery operations because this acquisition will not impact any greenhouses.

The proposed road extension east of US 101 would potentially disturb riparian habitat and jurisdictional waters of the U.S. associated with Nipomo Creek. Construction activities could cause indirect impacts to the creek habitat from dust, fuel spills and activities of personnel and equipment outside the designated construction areas. Refer to section V.F, Biological Resources for a more detailed discussion of potential impacts to the creek resources. These impacts can be reduced to a less than significant level with implementation of prescribed mitigation measures in section V.F.

East of Nipomo Creek, the project runs through large, contiguous agricultural parcels. Implementation of the proposed project may impede agricultural operations, a potentially significant impact to agricultural resources. As addressed in Section V.H. of this chapter the proposed road extension would result in significant unavoidable adverse impacts to two agricultural preserves. The proposed project's contribution to cumulative impacts on agricultural resources could also be significant, unavoidable and adverse. The proposed project would also affect areas containing prime agricultural soils (when irrigated), and areas under a variety of agricultural uses including nurseries and greenhouse operations. However, implementation of safe, at-grade agricultural vehicle access to areas under cultivation on both sides of the roadway (Mitigation Measure H-1) and provision of a new cattle undercrossing if the existing one is still in use (Mitigation Measure H-3) will reduce these potential impacts to agricultural resources to less than significant levels. These Willow Road segments will not cause the use of land in this area to change from agricultural uses. Refer to Section V.H for further discussion of impacts to agricultural resources.

**Frontage Road.** The proposed frontage road runs on the western side of and parallel to US 101 between Willow Road and Sandydale Drive. Although partial property acquisitions will be required, construction of this segment and long-term use will not impact any residences or other land uses.

Construction of all of the proposed project road segments will be consistent with County land use plans, Clean Air Plan, any habitat plan, and/or community conservation plan. (Please refer to Sections V.B through V.N as well as this Section for a more complete discussion regarding the consistency of this project with all County resource plans.) Therefore, the proposed project will not have a significant impact related to land use and planning.

**Long Range Planning and Circulation Policies.** The proposed project is consistent with long-range land use and circulation planning for the project area as included in the Land Use and Circulation Elements of the San Luis Obispo County General Plan. The Willow Road extension, US 101 interchange, and frontage road are included as specific roadway improvements within the Circulation Element. The proposed project will not significantly impact the County of San Luis Obispo's ability

to provide any of the potential future public facilities at the corner of Pomeroy and Willow roads. Instead, the addition of a new road will likely enhance the viability of this future use through provisions of enhanced circulation access.

#### **4. Cumulative Impacts**

As was discussed above in the project impacts section, development of the proposed project will not conflict with any land use plan policy or regulation adopted to avoid or mitigate environmental effects and will not conflict with any habitat or community conservation plan. The proposed Willow Road Extension and US 101 interchange project will result in regional cumulative land use impacts. Cumulative land use impacts associated with the proposed project facilities will result from growth-inducing impacts typically associated with improved roadway and access facilities. Provision of such facilities eliminates a potential constraint (e.g., lack of access) upon development in areas served by or adjacent to these roadways, particularly in vacant or sparsely populated areas as is the case with the project area. Provision of roadways and access facilities can increase land values and create economic pressure to develop. These growth-inducing impacts on existing land use designations represent potentially significant land use impacts. For example, the Melschau property located adjacent to and north of the proposed Willow Road extension west of US 101 is the subject of a General Plan Amendment and Development Plan application for a variety of proposed residential and commercial land uses on more than 200 acres. Additional development density is also being considered for the rest of the 160 acres. The proposed project may represent a contributing step in the long-range development of the Melschau property and of the other projects listed in Section IVB of this SEIR. Cumulatively, development of these projects would impact the rural, open space land use pattern and character of the project area. Construction of these projects could also continue to accelerate the trend of the urban development elsewhere in the Nipomo Mesa area.

#### **5. Mitigation Measures**

Implementation of Mitigation Measure, H-1 will reduce potentially significant impacts to agricultural production in the project area (see Agricultural Resources Section, Section V.H). This mitigation measure requires safe, at-grade vehicle crossings where the proposed project traverses lands under cultivation.

#### **6. Residual Impacts**

The proposed extension of Willow Road and interchange at US 101 generally conform to and do not significantly impact ongoing circulation or land use planning efforts for the project area. The proposed project, however, may indirectly accelerate the future development of other planned projects. Because the Willow Road and interchange at US 101 facilitates future planned development, it would indirectly impact the rural, open space land use pattern and character of the project area. Because it is likely to accelerate future development in the immediate vicinity, it would, therefore, also indirectly cause significant impacts to environmental resources such as water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, agricultural resources, and traffic and circulation from the combined effects of the future development projects.