
Chapter 15. Agriculture, Soils and Minerals

BACKGROUND

Agricultural Resources

Much of the area surrounding Davis is used for agriculture, and agriculture is the most significant industry in the region. The Davis area has a temperate climate with sunny skies, cooling summer winds, and light rainfall during moderate winters, which is ideal for agriculture. There is adequate rainfall for crop growth during seven months of the year; irrigation is required for continued growth during the rest of the year. Approximately 275 days of the year have a minimum temperature of 32 degrees, which constitutes the growing season.

Figure 33 shows the agricultural soil classifications in the Davis Planning Area. "Prime agricultural land" in the Planning Area has been classified in three separate classification systems: the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service Land Capability Class System of I through VII; the State Department of Conservation's Important Farmland Inventory System; and the Cortese-Knox Local Governmental Reorganization Act of 1985 Criteria. The Natural Resources Conservation Service's system has seven classes of soils (ranging from a high of I to a low of VII) and Classes I and II are considered to be of prime agricultural significance. Most of the City of Davis is built on prime agricultural soils, Classes I and II soils. Class III and IV soils are found in the northern and eastern portions of the planning area, with a small area to the east.

Figure 34 shows the agricultural land surrounding Davis under Williamson Act contracts. Pursuant to the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act), a landowner of prime agricultural land may receive a property tax advantage in exchange for entering into a contract to maintain the land in agricultural use for at least ten years. If the landowner notifies the County that he/she wishes to terminate the contract, it normally takes ten years for the development restriction to expire. The importance of Williamson Act contracts changed with Proposition 13 property tax laws, but the contracts remain an important tool for preserving farm land.

The provisions of AB 1190 (Chapter 97, Statutes of 1992) amending various provisions of the Civic Code of the State of California, provide that certain existing agricultural processing facilities do not constitute a nuisance as long as they continue to operate in a similar manner to that in which they have historically operated. AB 1190 provides for the protection of a wide range of existing agricultural operations including, but not limited to, food processing, crop cultivation and the raising of livestock. The Hunt-Wesson Cannery and the Simmons property in East Davis fall

under the protection of this legislation. Similarly, existing agricultural operations adjacent to the Davis city limits in unincorporated Yolo County would be protected from nuisance complaints under AB 1190.

The city has found that agricultural processing facilities (including the Hunt-Wesson facility) located within the city meet the criteria of AB 1190. The city has also found that the provisions set forth in the noise ordinance related to AB 1190 are necessary to make the provisions of AB 1190 conform with the city's requirements to set noise standards for various activities.

Mineral Resources

The most important mineral resources in the region are sand and gravel, which are mined on Cache Creek and other channels in Yolo County. A survey of aggregate resources by the State Division of Mines and Geology showed no significant aggregate resources in the planning area. The only mineral resource known to exist in the Planning Area is natural gas, but resource areas have not been identified.

AGRICULTURE

GOAL AG 1. Maintain agriculture as an important industry around Davis.

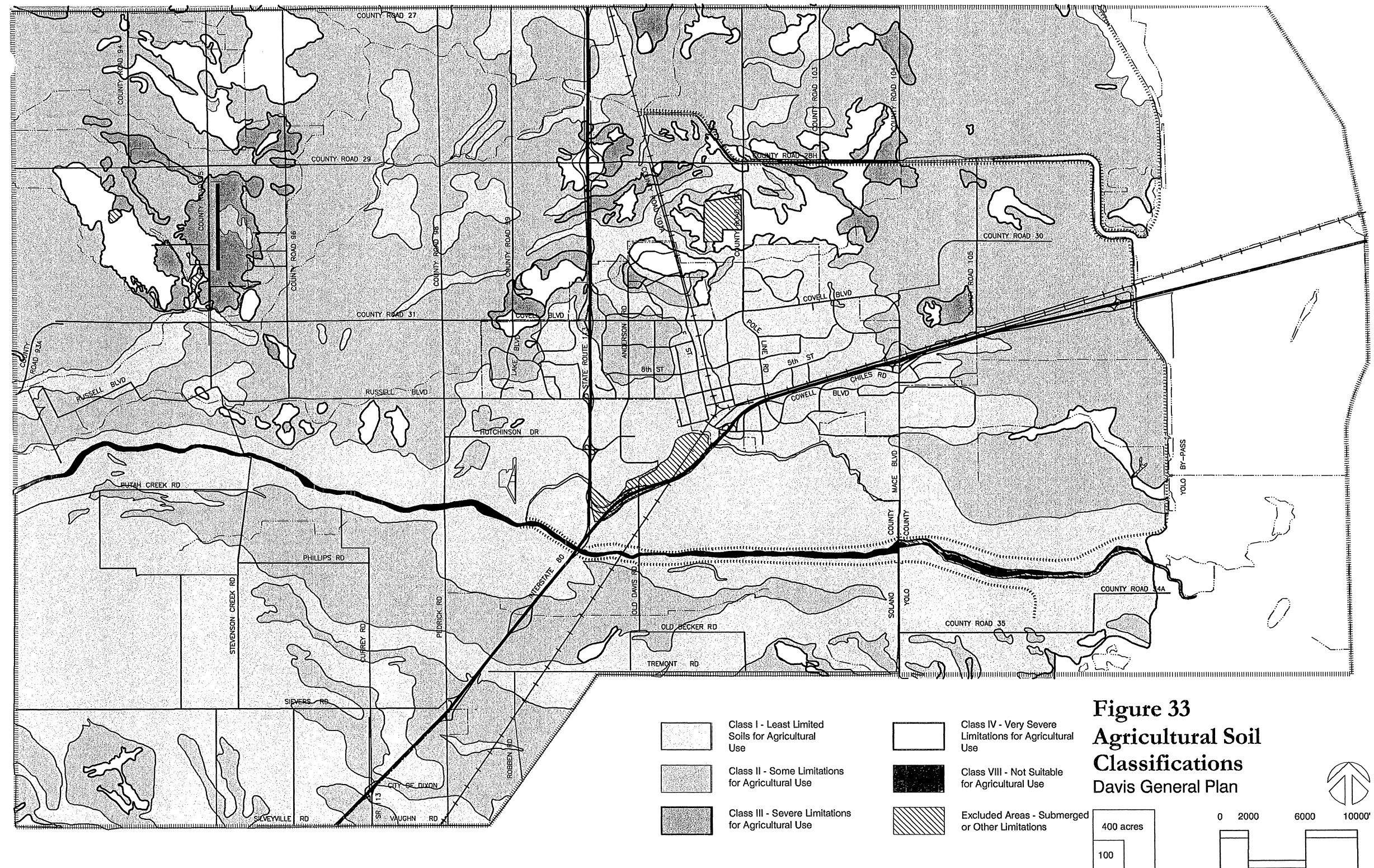
Policy AG 1.1 Protect agricultural land from urban development except where the general plan land use map has designated the land for urban uses.

Standards

- a. New residential subdivisions and other urban development are discouraged in areas of Class 1 and 2 soils except where the General Plan land use map has designated the land for urban uses.

Actions

- b. Encourage participation in the Williamson Act and/or other farmland preservation programs.
- c. Establish a 150-foot minimum agricultural buffer around the City. Require dedication from developers of lands to make up the buffer concurrently with any peripheral development.
- d. Continue to work with the counties, other cities and the general public to minimize conflicts with land uses such as agriculture and wildlife habitat when developing agricultural buffers.



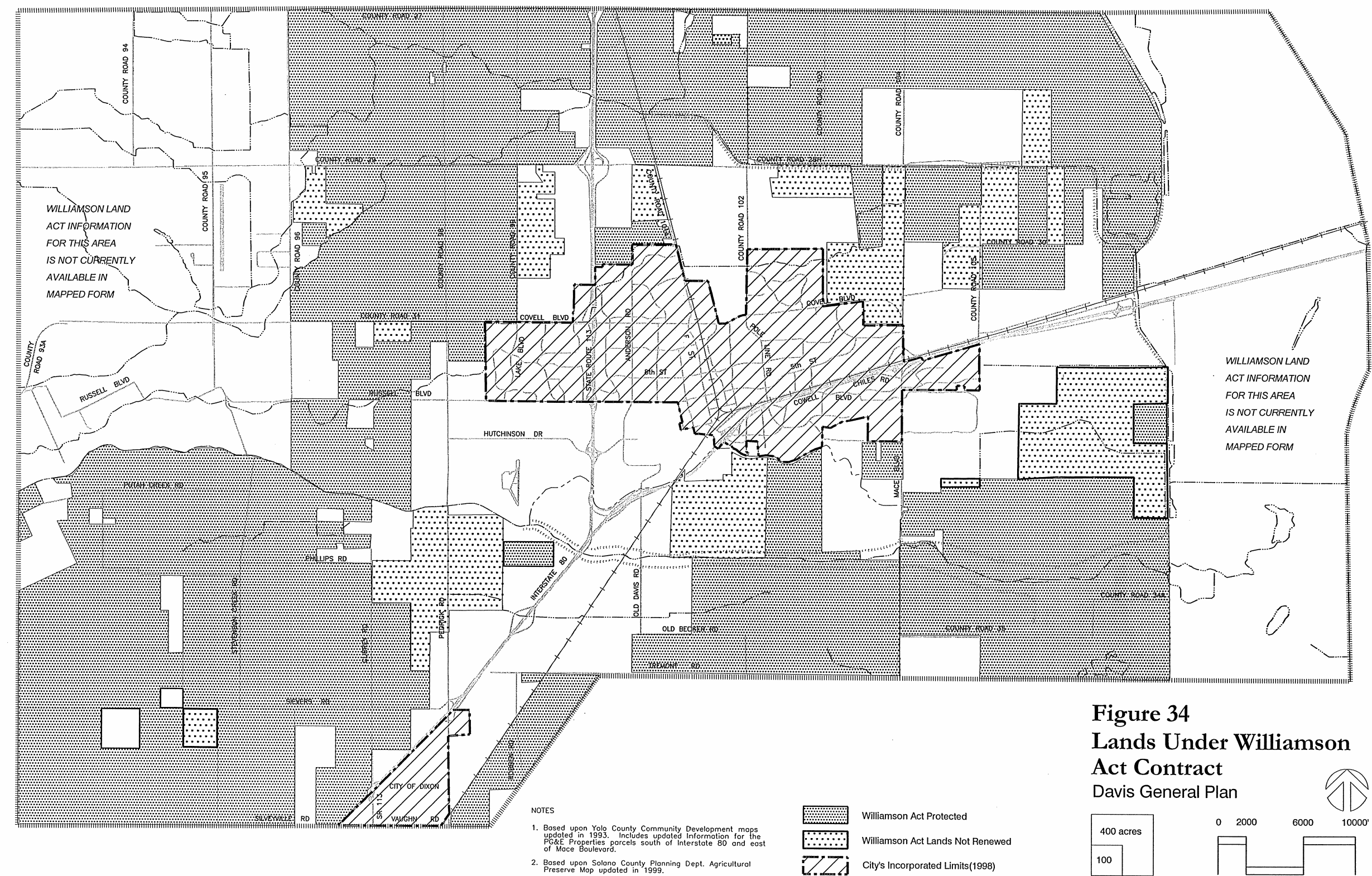


Figure 34
Lands Under Williamson
Act Contract
Davis General Plan

- e. Implement the provisions of AB 1190 to provide that certain existing agricultural activities, operations, or facilities, or appurtenances thereof do not constitute a nuisance as long as they continue to operate in a similar manner to that in which they have historically operated.
- f. Define land development guidelines for new projects proposed adjacent to existing agricultural activities, operations, or facilities. Such guidelines may include, but are not limited to, specific mitigation measures such as sound walls, landscaping, beams, and construction standards.
- g. Continue to require disclosure agreements for new developments within 1,000 feet of agricultural land.
- h. Urge Yolo County and Solano County to preserve agricultural land within the Davis Planning Area beyond that proposed for development.
- i. Continue to implement the provisions of the Farmland Preservation Ordinance requiring buffering, notification and conflict resolution in the Planning Area. Maintain a strong right-to-farm policy.
- j. In order to create an effective permanent agricultural and open space buffer on the perimeter of the City, immediately upon completion of the General Plan Update, pursue amendments of the Farmland Preservation ordinance to assure as a baseline standard that new peripheral development projects provide a minimum of 2:1 mitigation along the entire non-urbanized perimeter of the project. The proposed amendments shall allow for the alternate location of mitigations for such projects including but not limited to circumstances where the project is adjacent to land already protected by conservation easements or by some other form of public ownership that guarantees adjacent lands will not be developed.

Policy AG 1.2 Promote and enhance local agriculture.

Standards

- a. Developers shall be required to reduce the impacts caused by their developments on adjacent agricultural lands in accordance with the city's right to farm and farmland preservation program.

Actions

- b. Continue to implement the farmland preservation ordinance to mitigate for the loss of agricultural land.
- c. Use signage, access restrictions, fines, education and other available means to minimize trespassing into agricultural areas.
- d. Maintain existing community gardens, and develop more where costs to the City are low.
- e. Encourage residents to purchase produce from local farmers and community supported agriculture.
- f. Support the establishment of projects to teach urban residents about the agricultural industry and to provide a forum for dialogue between urban residents and farmers.

GOAL AG 2. Encourage sustainable and organic forms of agriculture.

Policy AG 2.1 Foster the growth of environmentally friendly agricultural business and industry in Davis.

Actions

- a. Maintain all City-owned community gardens as "organic" as defined by California law.
- b. Develop a sustainable gardening ordinance to encourage users of city-owned community gardens to garden sustainably.
- c. With landowners, neighbors, the school district, and others, establish a "School Farm or Landscape Program" wherein schools establish and maintain an organic crop farm or landscape on nearby barren or idle sites within the City.
- d. New apartment complexes should provide a gardening space for use by tenants.

SOILS

GOAL AG 3. Conserve soil resources within the planning area.

Policy AG 3.1 Develop programs to help to conserve soil resources.

Standards

- a. Tree rows or other windbreaks shall be required in buffers on the edges of urban development and in other areas as appropriate to reduce soil erosion.
- b. Drainage facilities shall be designed to control runoff and minimize erosion.

Actions

- c. Regulate activities that cause soil compaction and stratification.
- d. Include information on soil erosion in the public water conservation program and school education program.
- e. Coordinate with Yolo and Solano counties, the Resource Conservation District, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service in implementing programs to reduce soil erosion by wind and water and prevent soil contamination.
- f. Work with area farmers and farming organizations to coordinate farming practices conducive to soil conservation. Provide assistance when appropriate.

MINERAL RESOURCES

GOAL AG 4. Maintain Davis' visual character and natural topography by minimizing mineral resource exploitation.

Policy AG 4.1 Discourage the extraction of mineral resources in the planning area.

Actions

- a. Coordinate with County government in regulating mineral-resource-production operations, including sand-and-gravel mining, and oil and gas wells.

