4.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

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SETTING

This section describes the agricultural resources on the project site and evaluates any potential impacts associated with the proposed project as well as anticipated future impacts based on the conceptual development plan provided by the applicant. This section also describes the status of lands under Williamson Act contracts.

Agricultural Soils on the Site

The soil types on the project site have been identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (1977). The soil mapping units and their capability characteristics are summarized in Table 4.2-1.

TABLE 4.2-1: **Soil Types at Project Site and Vicinity**

Symbol	Mapping Unit	Slope (%)	Capability Class
Ys	Yolo silty clay loam	0-2	I-1 (17)
Yo	Yolo loam	0-2	I-1 (17)
Ca	Capay silty clay loam	0-2	I-1 (17)
BrA	Brentwood clay loam	0-2	IIs-3 (17)

Source: USDA, 1977, Soil Survey of Solano County,

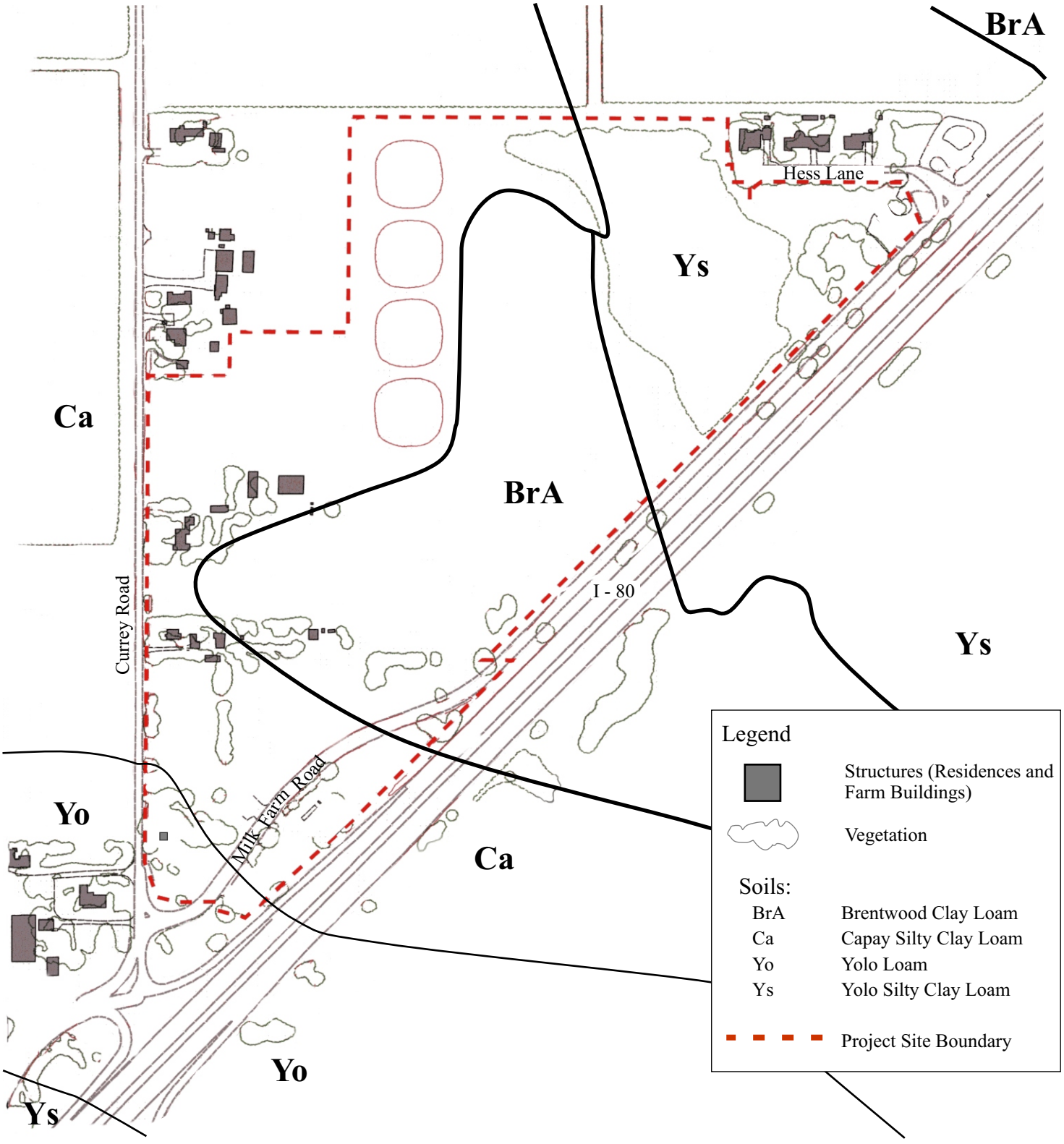
The project site is underlain by Yolo silty clay loam, Brentwood clay loam, Capay silty clay loam, and Yolo loam (Figure 4.2-1). Soils are identified by the Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service) with a Capability Class rating, which measures the productivity of the soils for agriculture. "Prime" soils (the best soils for crop production) are generally defined by a Capability Class rating of I or II. All of the soils on the project site are classified as prime. The California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping Program (2003) designates all of the project site as "P" (Prime Farmland).

Williamson Act Contracts

A Williamson Act contract is a legal contract signed between a rural property owner and a county, which allows the property to be assessed at a lower tax rate. To receive the tax benefits from the Williamson Act, a property owner must agree to retain the property in agricultural and open space uses for ten years. An owner who wishes to terminate the contract must file a "notice of nonrenewal" of the annual contract, after which the tax rate rises to market value over the next nine years and the contract ends in the tenth year. Alternatively, the property owner may request that the contract be canceled immediately. Under state law, a legislative body may approve a Williamson Act contract cancellation upon adoption of specific findings, accompanied by the payment of a financial penalty to the state.

AGRICULTURAL SOILS

Figure 4.2-1



Milk Farm
Dixon, California

Source: U.S. Soil Conservation Service-Soil Survey of Solano County, 1977.

BASELINE

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The project site is not under any existing Williamson Act contracts. There are lands under contract in the vicinity of the project that may be affected by the project. Two properties immediately north of the project site, consisting of 116 and 40 acres, are under Williamson Act contract. The two properties, located east of Currey Road and south of Sievers Road, include a 116-acre "L"-shaped parcel (Azilla, APN 111-01-05) and a smaller 40-acre parcel (Bagwell, APN 111-01-06). Other properties north of Sievers Road are also under active contracts (Smalley, 2004).

The "L"-shaped, 116-acre parcel north of the project site (APN 111-01-05) has an active Williamson Act contract. However the owner of the smaller 40-acre parcel (Bagwell, APN 111-01-06) filed for "non-renewal" of the Williamson Act in 2001, which means that the property will no longer be under a contract starting in 2011 (Smalley, 2004).

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Dixon General Plan

There are several City General Plan goals, policies, and implementations that address agricultural resources as identified below:

Dixon General Plan	Project Consistency
Goals	
To protect existing agriculturally-related operations from potential land use conflicts.	The project is consistent with this goal because approximately one-half of the 60-acre site would remain designated as agricultural use. The agricultural portion of the site would serve as a buffer between the future commercial uses and nearby agricultural operations.
URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY DESIGN	
Policy	
11: The City shall restrict land uses north and west of Interstate 80 to agricultural use, except as otherwise provided in the General Plan.	The project is not fully consistent with this policy. About 25 acres of the current 30 acres of Agricultural would remain (but slightly reconfigured).

Dixon General Plan	Project Consistency
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	
Policies	
1: The City shall preserve agricultural lands and prevent their premature conversion to urban uses.	The project is not fully consistent with this policy since 25 acres of the current 30 acres of the site will be agricultural and the remainder of the site has already been designated for development and so is not being converted prematurely.
2: The City shall protect existing agriculturally-related operations from potential land use conflicts.	The agricultural portion of the site will serve as a buffer between future commercial uses and agricultural operations, so future site development design would protect existing agriculture from land use conflicts.
Implementation	
Encourage agriculture as an interim use in all industrial and rural residential zones.	The project is consistent with this implementation program since agriculture would be an interim use on the site until site development.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Significance Criteria

Based on the Environmental Checklist in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a proposed project could be considered to have significant land use or agricultural impacts 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 existing zoning for agricultural use, or a 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.

Impacts Determined to Be Less than Significant

- **Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use**.

The project site is adjacent to intensive agricultural activities. It is also bounded on the northwest and the northeast by a total of five occupied rural residences. Once it is developed, it could affect agricultural activities and the nearby residences during the

construction period by subjecting the workers and residents to traffic, noise, and dust from earth-moving and construction equipment. These anticipated future impacts related to construction traffic, noise, and dust are addressed in Section 4.8, Transportation and Circulation, Section 4.9, Air Quality, and Section 4.10, Noise.

The future operation of the commercial portion of the site could also impact the adjacent residences, as well as nearby agricultural activities, through increased traffic, noise, air emissions, night-time lighting, and other growth-related issues. The urban uses of the project would be re-introduced into a predominantly agricultural area north of Interstate 80. Urban uses in agricultural areas have the potential to cause compatibility problems, such as shoppers or residents complaining about agricultural operations such as spraying, urban pets harassing livestock, trespassing, and vandalism of farm equipment. The result of these incompatibilities could be to encourage the agricultural families remaining in the area to consider selling land for urban development.

An effective way to minimize impacts of urban development on adjacent rural residences and working agricultural lands is to establish an open space buffer. The proposed project would retain about 25 acres in agricultural use. The 25 acres of farming would wrap around the commercial uses located along the freeway frontage and would provide an effective buffer for the rural residences and nearby fields. The nearest residences on Currey Road immediately north of the project boundary (APN 111-020-030 and 040) would be separated from future commercial uses by an agricultural area of approximately 250 feet. The three residences on Hess Road immediately northeast of the project boundary would be separated from the nearest non-agricultural project uses by an agricultural area of at least 500 feet.

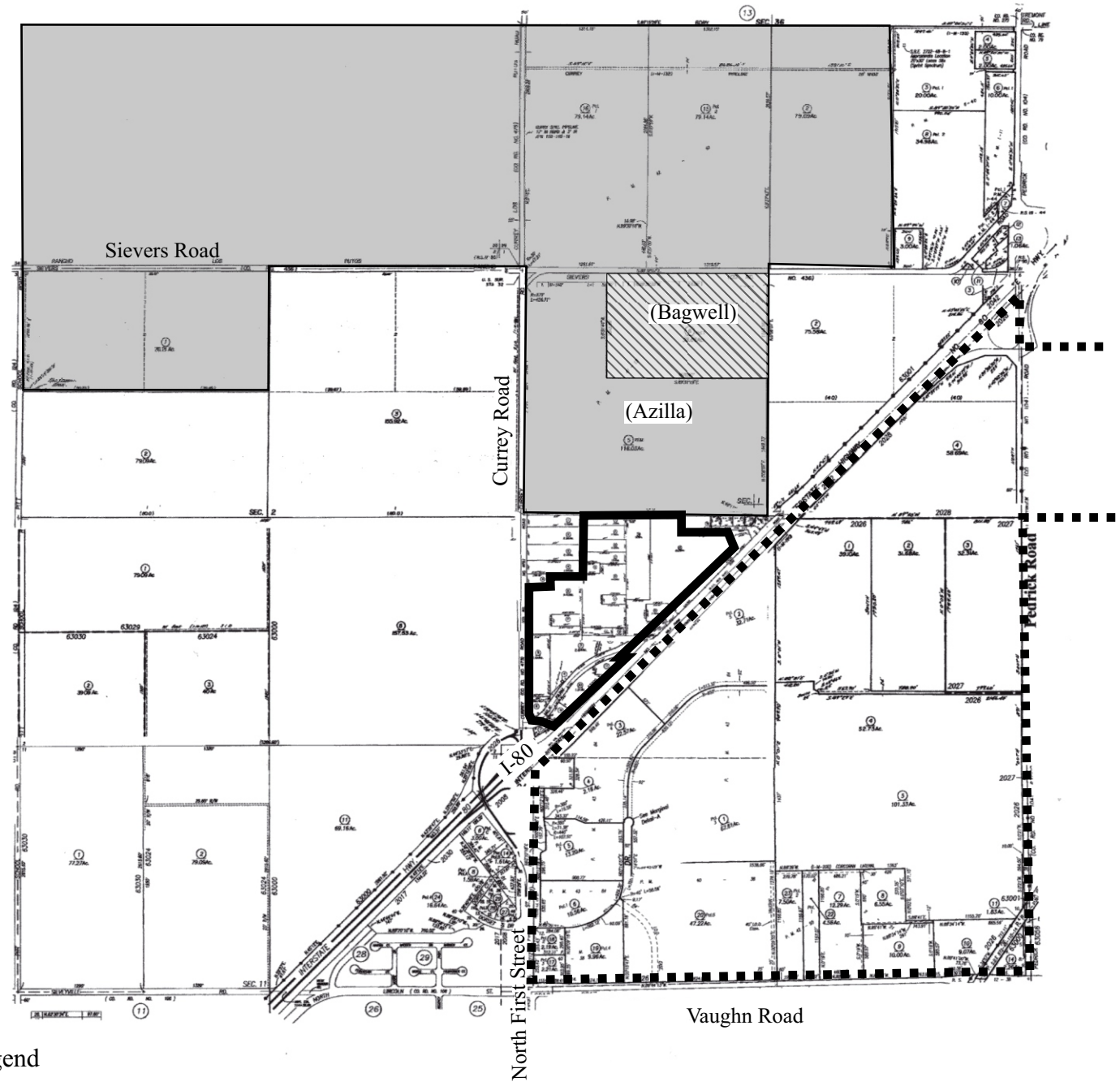
- **Conflict with Williamson Act contract lands**.

Two properties immediately north of the project site are under Williamson Act contracts (Figure 4.2-2). The larger of the two properties, located east of Currey Road and south of Sievers Road (Azilla, APN 111-01-05), borders the project site. The landowner of the smaller 40-acre parcel (Bagwell, APN 111-01-06) on Sievers Road has filed a "notice of non-renewal."

When urban development occurs at the edge of an agricultural area, landowners subject to Williamson Act contracts often file "non-renewals" to make the land more attractive for sale or options to sell. However, the lands north of the project site are currently outside the City's Sphere of Influence boundary, as adopted by the LAFCO, and the lands are not designated for development by the Dixon or Solano County General Plans.

WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACTS IN THE PROJECT VICINITY

Figure 4.2-2



Legend

- Land under Williamson Act Contract
- Non-Renewal of Williamson Act Contract Filed
- Northeast Quadrant Specific Plan Area
- Project Site Boundary

Milk Farm
Dixon, California

Source: Solano County, 2004.

0 800 Feet

BASELINE

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The potential that the adjacent landowner of the 116-acre parcel (Azilla on Figure 4.2-2) north of the project site would be induced to non-renew or cancel his/her Williamson Act contract is judged to be low due to development pressures, because of the 25-acre agricultural area that the project has incorporated.

- **Other changes that could result in conversion of Farmland**.

No other changes have been identified that could result in conversion.

Impacts Determined to Be Potentially Significant

- Conversion of Prime Farmland.

Anticipated Future Impact 4.2-1

Future site development would result in the conversion of approximately five acres of prime agricultural land to urban uses. This is a significant unavoidable and adverse impact.

The City of Dixon is surrounded by the prime agricultural lands of California's Central Valley. As with most of the existing cities in the Central Valley, virtually any growth that occurs through the expansion of the city limits results in the conversion of prime farmlands. Both the Dixon and the Solano County General Plans have already designated approximately one-half of the project site for urban development of highway commercial uses. The Dixon General Plan includes policies that call for the preservation of agricultural lands and for the prevention of their premature conversion. Policies also support open space buffers between the City and the adjacent cities of Vacaville and Davis, and support the use of annexations as a means of preserving open space.

The project would result in the possibility of developing five acres of prime agricultural lands for urban use above and beyond the 30 acres that are already designated as urban uses in the Solano County and City General plans while restoring 25 of the existing 30 acres in agricultural uses that would be open to the public. The five acres (proposed for future use as a detention basin to address on- and off-site flooding and open space) would have an indirect beneficial impact by partially addressing regional flooding issues (see also discussion in Section 4.3, Hydrology and Water Quality).

Anticipated Future Mitigation Measure 4.2-1

Implement Project Mitigation Measure 4.1-1a.

Implementation of this mitigation measure would reduce this anticipated future impact but not to a level of less than significant.

Anticipated Future Impact 4.2-2

The hydraulic analysis (MBK, 2000) submitted by the applicant proposes that building pads on the developed portion of the project site be elevated using soil that is skimmed from the surface of the agricultural portion of the project site during future site development. Removing the top layer of prime agricultural soil could affect the ability to grow crops and orchards within the future agricultural portion of the site, and could affect the viability of sustaining agricultural uses on the site. This is a potentially significant impact.

The hydraulic analysis (MBK, 2000) notes that *"filling for some building pads and parking areas will be required"* as part of the proposed flood control plan for future site development. The report states that *"adjacent agricultural fields can be skimmed to balance earthwork and replace storage lost to fill"* and that *"Rough earth work calculations indicate that grading is feasible and the agricultural areas production is not impacted."*

The agricultural soil in the 30 northern acres of the project site consists of three different types: Yolo silty clay loam, Brentwood clay loam, and Capay silty clay loam, all of which are classified as "prime" soils. The Solano County Soil Survey (SCS, 1977), indicates that the "A" horizon (the top layer) of these soils ranges from six inches deep for Brentwood clay loam to 40 inches for Capay silty clay loam and Yolo silty clay loam. The "A" horizon for each soil type is underlain by heavy clay loam soils. If all or portions of the "A" horizon is skimmed off the project site and used for fill under the building areas during future site development, the most productive soil would be removed, thereby potentially affecting the ability of land to grow field crops or orchards.

Anticipated Future Mitigation Measure 4.2-2

Prior to the approval of any future development plan for any component of the project, the applicant shall submit a Soils Management Plan to the City for approval. The Plan's objective shall be to demonstrate preservation of on-site agricultural soils. This may be accomplished by removal and stockpiling of topsoil across the entire 60-acre site and using deeper soils and soils from excavation of the pond to raise the elevation of the developable portion of the site to the specified elevations and then replacing the topsoil in the future agricultural portion of the site. The Plan shall include calculations for balancing on-site grading or identify net import or export of soil to the site.

Implementation of this mitigation measure would reduce this anticipated future impact to a less-than-significant level.