



Solano Local Agency Formation Commission

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Transmitted via email

September 10, 2024

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Associate Planner
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Subject: Solano Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) comments on City of Fairfield General Plan Update Draft Environmental Impact Report

Dear Ms. Hernandez:

Thank you for providing the City of Fairfield's (City) Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) prepared for the Fairfield Forward 2050: General Plan Update, 6th Cycle Housing Element Update, and Climate Action Plan (Project). LAFCO's comments are provided below.

1. Sphere of Influence (SOI)

Please note that LAFCO Law (Gov. Code §56425(b)) requires that when a city amends or updates its SOI, the city and county must discuss the SOI for an agreement on development uses and standards.

2. Agricultural Resources

- a. Agricultural Resources Regulatory Framework (page 3.2-13) and Impact Analysis (page 3.2-18) of the DEIR state the following:

(p 3.2-13) The Solano County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) recommended that the scope of the EIR include the City of Fairfield's Sphere of Influence (SOI) Update and future anticipated annexations, taking into account LAFCO's SOI and annexation requirements. This includes providing information about prime agricultural lands and mitigations that are consistent with the LAFCO standard, identifying the total number of acres that meets the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 definition of "Prime Agricultural Farmland. The other comment requested evaluation of the loss of Prime Farmland for food production given increasing issues related to climate change.

(p 3.2-18) The Proposed Project would establish various urban land use designations for areas with FMMP Prime Farmland in a focused area. The Hale Ranch Study Growth Area is currently used for agriculture and designated as Prime Farmland. Proposed land uses in this area include an Advanced/Food and Beverage Manufacturing Study Area as shown in Figure

2-4. This designation allows for development that would result in farmland conversion. In total, the Proposed Project would allow for development on 185.4 acres of FMMP Prime Farmland within the Planning Area. As such, the conversion of Important Farmland to non-agricultural uses is a potentially significant impact.

The DEIR identifies the impacts to agricultural resources as “significant and unavoidable” due to no mitigation measures being available. However, LAFCO recommends that the City adopt an agricultural mitigation policy that requires 1.5:1 agricultural preservation (follows Solano County adopted policy). Recommended language could be

Require that development on any prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland (as classified by the California Department of Conservation) purchase conservation easements to permanently protect agricultural land of equal or greater value at a ratio of 1.5 acre of conserved agricultural land per 1 acre of developed agricultural land.

b. For the mitigation of agricultural lands to meet LAFCO requirements, the mitigated land must meet the following standards for LAFCO Standard No. 9:

a. *It does not contain prime agricultural land as defined under the Cortese- Knox Hertzberg (Gov Code §56064). In determining whether or to what extent land is prime or productive a hierarchy of land classification shall be used based on the following criteria, in descending order of importance.*

- 1) Land that qualifies, if irrigated, for rating as class I or class II in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service land use capability classification, whether or not land is actually irrigated, provided that irrigation is feasible..*
- 2) Land that qualifies for rating 80 through 100 in the Storie Index Rating.*
- 3) Land planted with fruit or nut-bearing trees, vines, bushes, or crops that have a nonbearing period of less than five years and that will return during the commercial bearing period on an annual basis from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production not less than four hundred dollars (\$400) per acre..*
- 4) Land that has returned from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant products an annual gross value of not less than four hundred dollars (\$400) per acre for three of the previous five calendar years.*
- 5) Land that supports livestock used for the production of food and fiber and that has an annual carrying capacity equivalent to at least one animal unit per acre as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture in the National Range and Pasture Handbook, Revision 1, December 2003.*

[Lands which are defined under 1 and 2 above are considered prime agricultural lands and have the greatest importance within Solano County. In reviewing lands identified as prime agriculture, consideration will be given to the economic

viability of the property and whether the land can be economically and productively farmed.]

Please ensure that Table 3.2.1 Important Farmland and Grazing Land Types and Acreages (page 3.2-4) identifies land within the SOI that meets LAFCO Prime Agricultural definition.

3. Draft General Plan – Hale Ranch Study Area

- a. This area is identified as a focus area, but it is not identified being added to the SOI. The SOI must be clear as to what the difference between the “current” and “proposed” SOI.
- b. LAFCO has a concern with the future potential annexation of Hale Ranch possibly creating an “island.” To avoid any potential issues related to “islands” for any annexations, LAFCO recommends that the General Plan include a policy or statement that reiterates LAFCO Law (Gov. Code §56375.3(b)(3)) and includes LAFCO Standard No. 7 languages, as follows:
 - i. Gov. Code §56375.3(b)(3):
 - (3) *It is surrounded in either of the following ways:*
 - (A) *Surrounded, or substantially surrounded, by the city to which annexation is proposed or by the city and a county boundary or the Pacific Ocean.*
 - (B) *Surrounded by the city to which annexation is proposed and adjacent cities*
 - ii. Solano LAFCO No. 7:
 - A. *The proposal would not: create islands, irregular, or illogical configuration of city limits.*
 - 1) *Whether unincorporated territory is an “island,” or “entire island,” or “entire unincorporated island,” or “part of a larger island,” or “surrounded,” or “substantially surrounded,” or “irregular,” or “illogical configuration” are determinations to be made by the Commission on a case by case basis, based on the evidence before it at the time those determinations are made.*
 - 2) *A small island of unincorporated territory that is connected to and an integral or essential part of a large unincorporated island is not an entire island and may not be annexed to a city without a protest proceeding under Government Code section 56375.3(a).*
 - 3) *A small island of unincorporated territory that is connected to, but not an integral or essential part of a large island, may be determined by the Commission to be an entire island or an entire unincorporated island under Government Code section 56375.3(b).*

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on your documents. We look forward to working with you in the coming years. If you have any questions, please let us know:
rseithel@solanolafco.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard J. Seithel". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Rich Seithel
Executive Officer
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