

# AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT

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The Agricultural Element of the Coachella General Plan identifies and establishes the City's official policy relative to the identification, preservation and management of agricultural lands within the City. The purpose of the Agricultural Element is to provide official City policy which:

- Protects productive agricultural land.
- Preserves the historic element of agricultural land and underscores the significance of this industry for Coachella.
- Provides for compatibility of urban development that is established adjacent to agricultural land.

Coachella's past is strongly tied to agricultural production and this continues today. The City's desire is to blend this segment of Coachella's economy with opportunities that have been identified in the entertainment and tourism segments.

## EXISTING SETTING

Agriculture is an important economic segment for California, which is the leading agriculture producing state in the nation. Furthermore, Riverside County is the leading agriculture producing county in Southern California. This is reflected by the fact that agricultural production is the leading industry in the County in terms of dollar value and is a significant source of employment for County residents.

Within the Planning Area, there are approximately 21,840 acres of agricultural land, 3,800 in the incorporated area and 18,040 in the unincorporated area. This land is primarily located to the east and south of the existing urbanized area of Coachella. There are a substantial number of date and citrus groves in the area, as well as grape, lettuce, corn and carrot production.

## SUMMARY OF KEY PLANNING ISSUES

The following key planning issues are addressed in the policies of the Agricultural Element.

- Agriculture plays an important role in the economic, social, and physical fabric of Coachella, however increasing urbanization will tend to displace agricultural land over time. It is therefore important to retain a critical mass of productive agricultural land to maintain Coachella's identity and support the agricultural component of Coachella's economy.
- In addition to the production and sale of crops, agriculture has the potential to contribute to Coachella's identity as a tourist destination by incorporating visitor serving areas such as tasting rooms, produce stands, and agricultural demonstration projects.
- As urbanization increases, the potential for land use conflicts between agricultural and urban uses will also grow. Provision of transitional interfaces between agricultural lands and future adjacent urban development is therefore important.
- Agriculture can be a source of environmental concern including the use of pesticides and fertilizers, noise and dust associated with farm equipment and similar issues. Protection of environmental resources through appropriate land use restrictions and operational methods is therefore important.
- Provision of adequate quantities of suitable irrigation water is a critical component of cultivation in the Coachella Valley. As the area develops, urban uses will compete more strongly with agriculture for water resources. Provisions should be made to protect the agricultural share of this resource to ensure continued viability of the agricultural industry.
- Agriculture is dependent upon an existing infrastructure of pipelines which deliver irrigation water and agricultural tile drains which keep fields from becoming inundated. Urbanization could put these systems at risk by interrupting water supply and/or increasing drainage contribution to the tile drains thereby eroding their ability to drain fields. Consideration should be given to protecting the viability of existing irrigation pipe and tile drain infrastructure.

- The need to provide housing for seasonal workers is an issue unique to agricultural areas. This is further compounded in Coachella since the agricultural season lasts for three quarters of the year and is, therefore, almost a year-round consideration. There is also a tendency for this housing to be substandard and sometimes illegal. The general plan should address a strategy for the provision of safe, sanitary, and legal farmworker housing.
- Investment in agriculture must earn a reasonable return to continue as a viable industry. Weather, commodity prices and other uncontrollable factors can cause farm incomes to vary considerably from year to year. Furthermore, the sale and/or encumbrance of land as collateral is frequently used as a source of capital which can lead to the loss of agricultural land. An economic environment with maximum stability is, therefore, of great importance in maintaining land in agricultural use.
- Much of the prime agricultural land upon which Coachella depends is under the jurisdiction of Riverside County. Consequently, Coachella must seek to influence the County's oversight of agricultural lands to incorporate City goals, objectives, and policies to the maximum extent possible.

## AGRICULTURAL VISION STATEMENT

A Vision Statement based on the key agricultural issues and desires of the citizens and elected officials of the City of Coachella is presented below. The development policies included in this Agricultural Element are designed to make this vision a reality.

The City of Coachella's vision of the future for Agriculture focuses on the continued importance of the agri-business industry. Care should be given in continuing the vitality of agri-business and combining this historic use with the proposed entertainment and tourism opportunities.

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

The Agricultural Element is one of eleven elements in the Coachella General Plan. The development policies within the Agricultural Element are closely related to the policies within the Land Use, Conservation, Open Space and Economic Development Elements. The policies related to agriculture shall be consistent with all other elements of the General Plan.

## OVERVIEW OF THE AGRICULTURAL POLICY DIAGRAM

The graphic depiction of the City of Coachella's official policy relative to conservation is presented on Figure \_\_\_\_, Agricultural Policy Diagram. This diagram illustrates the general pattern of agricultural land uses, and policy area issues in the City at buildout.

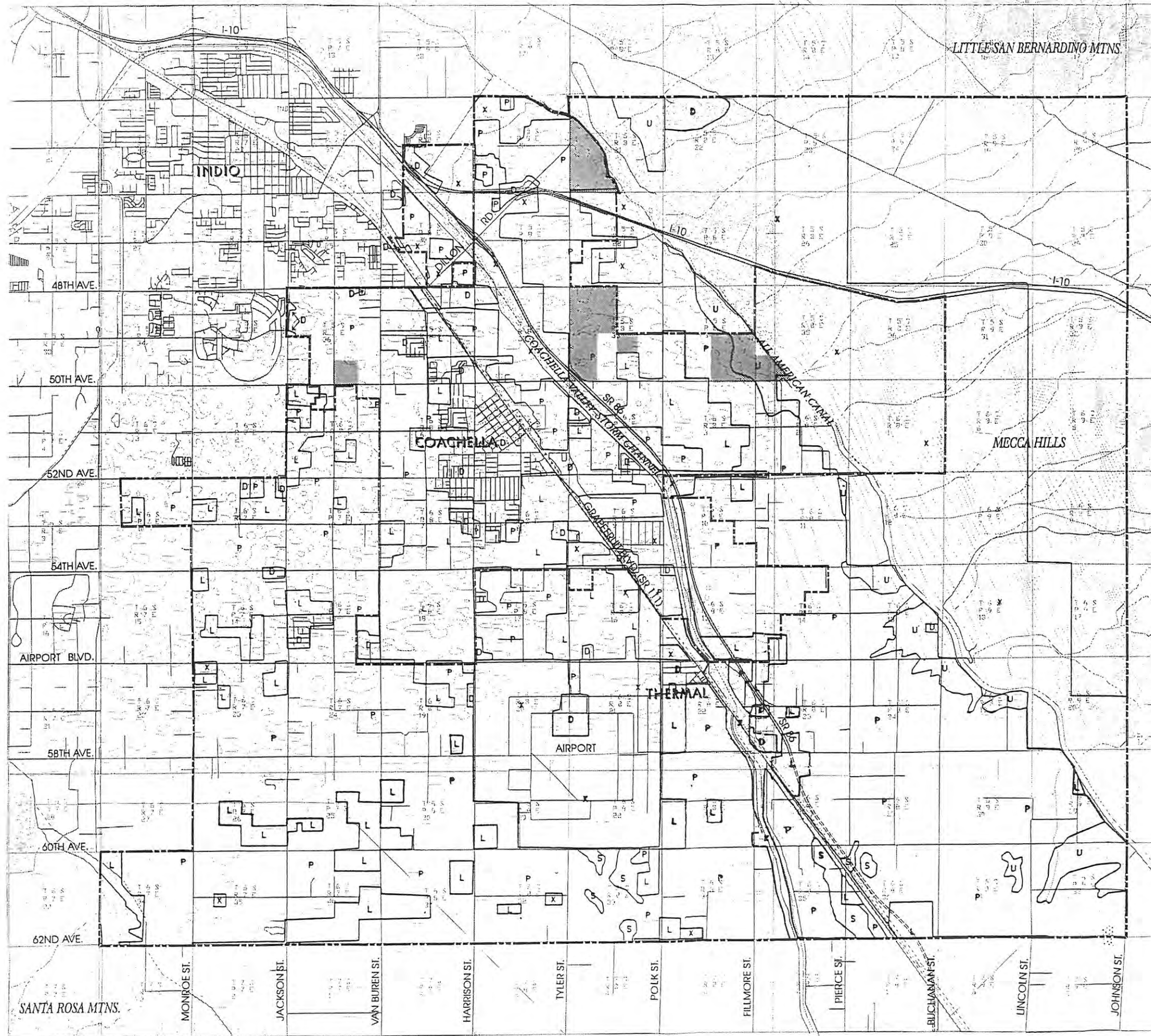
Many of the development policies included within the Agricultural Element are the basis for Figure \_\_\_\_. The Agricultural Policy Diagram should be used as a general guide for the identification and location of agricultural areas in the City. The diagram should be used in combination with the written development policies, standards and other guidelines in the text of the Agricultural Element.

The information presented on the Agricultural Policy Diagram is intended to be general in nature. The boundary lines are not intended to indicate existing or future zoning boundaries. California statutes require consistency, not identical boundary conformity, between the General Plan and the zoning of land within the City.

## AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

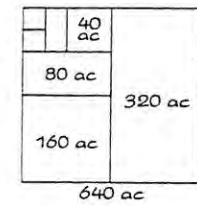
The City of Coachella's official development policies related to Agriculture are presented below. In the context of this General Plan, development policies include goals, objectives, policies and standards based on the definitions given in Chapter 1.

These development policies are established to guide the designation, identification, preservation and management of agricultural resources in the future. Development policies by topical area are presented on the following pages.



### Agricultural Lands

- P** Prime Agricultural Lands
- U** Unique Agricultural Lands
- S** Agricultural Lands of Statewide Importance
- D** Urban Lands
- G** Grazing Lands
- L** Agricultural Lands of Local Importance
- X** Other Lands
- Williamson Act Lands "Agricultural Preserve"



Source:  
California Dept. of Conservation,  
Farmland Mapping & Monitoring  
Program 1995.  
Riverside County Assessors Office

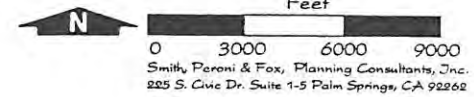



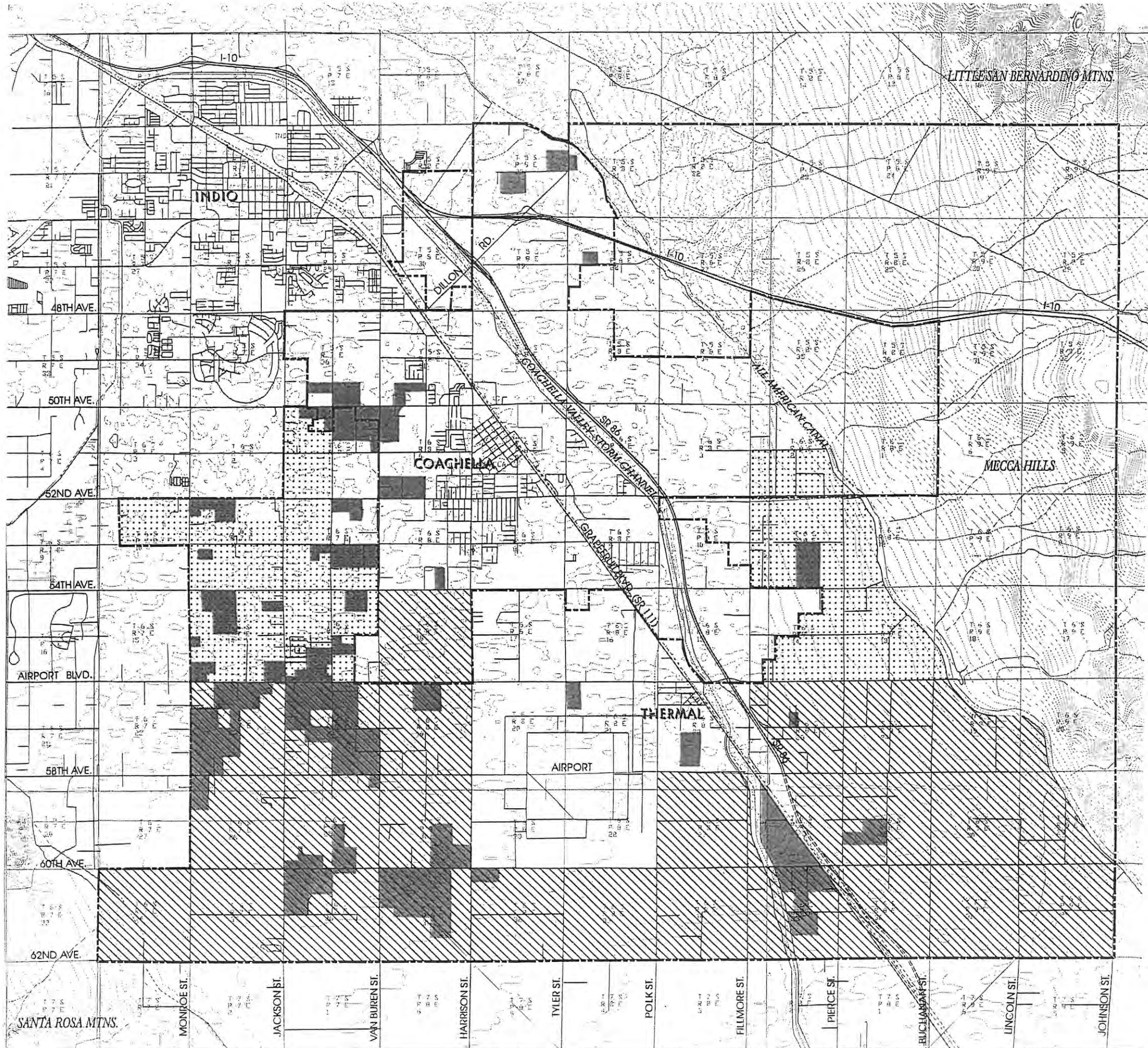


Figure No.



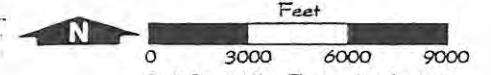
## Agricultural Policy Diagram

-  Agricultural Retention Area
-  Agriculture to Urban Transition Area
-  Date Palm Groves



40 ac	320 ac
80 ac	
160 ac	
640 ac	

Sources:  
City of Coachella  
Smith, Peroni & Fox



Smith, Peroni & Fox, Planning Consultants, Inc.  
225 S. Civic Dr. Suite 1-5 Palm Springs, CA 92262

Figure No.

## AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

### Goal

A stable and productive agricultural industry for its contributions to the local economy, lifestyle, air quality, habitat value and sense of Coachella's heritage

### Objective

The City shall seek the maximum preservation of productive agricultural land.

### Policy

The City shall retain the most productive agricultural lands in agricultural use and clearly define areas suitable for urbanization and other forms of non-agricultural development.

### Policy

The City shall seek to retain in active cultivation the maximum amount of lands designated "Agriculture" (AG) on the Land Use Policy Diagram.

### Policy

The City shall place highest priority on the preservation of date groves, secondary priority on the preservation of citrus groves, vineyards and other crops which require substantial growth before achieving mature production rates, and lowest priority on field crops.

### Policy

The City shall seek preservation of date palm groves and integration into open space and recreational facilities whenever possible. Where preservation of date groves is not feasible, the City shall encourage the relocation of date palm trees to other locations within the City of Coachella and its immediate environs for their aesthetic and visual value.

### Policy

The City shall encourage urban development to locate in areas which are not designated as "Agriculture" (AG) on the Land Use Policy Diagram.

### Policy

The City shall petition the Riverside County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to expand Coachella's Sphere of Influence to include all lands within the General Plan Study Area to enhance Coachella's influence over development proposals in unincorporated areas.

### Objective

The City shall seek to minimize conflicts between agricultural and nonagricultural uses in areas designated for agricultural production

### Policy

The City shall encourage uses which are compatible with agriculture, including equestrian stables, date grove tours, and the like.

### Policy

Anticipated conflicts between a proposed new use and existing agricultural activities shall be mitigated by the newer use or activity.

### Policy

The City shall require residential development on parcels adjacent to lands designated "Agriculture" (AG) on the Land Use Policy Diagram to provide an assessment of impacts from adjacent agricultural uses including noise, dust, aerial spraying, farmworker housing and any other pertinent operational impacts and recommend buffers and other design features necessary to fully mitigate the impacts of agricultural production on the residential development.

### Policy

The city shall encourage cluster development on residential parcels adjacent to lands designated

"Agriculture" (AG) on the Land Use Policy Diagram placing dwellings as far as possible from agricultural lands. The use of green belts or open space areas ranging from 100' to 300' in width and containing landscaping, fencing and other buffering elements is recommended.

### **Policy**

The City shall develop and institute a program of incentives, including density bonus and density transfer, which reward development projects within the "Agriculture to Urban Transition Overlay" that preserve and/or incorporate agricultural lands.

### **Policy**

The City shall coordinate with the County in developing appropriate standards to allow limited, compatible visitor serving areas (i.e. tasting rooms, produce stands, etc) which are not detrimental to the primary use of the land for agricultural or to adjacent agricultural uses.

### **Objective**

The City shall work to ensure the reliable supply and delivery of irrigation water and the continued removal of excess drainage from agricultural lands

### **Policy**

The City shall cooperate with CVWD in the development of programs to ensure adequate amounts of irrigation water for agricultural use.

### **Policy**

The City shall coordinate with CVWD in the review of development projects to ensure that there is no negative impact to the continued ability of the area's agricultural irrigation pipeline and tile drainage systems to serve existing agriculture.

### **Objective**

The City shall use a variety of alternative means to assist in creating a stable economic environment for farming

### **Policy**

The City shall establish procedures and standards in the Zoning Ordinance to distinguish those agricultural uses and activities which may be approved by administrative action and to expedite the processing of permits for agricultural and related uses.

### **Policy**

The City shall maintain provisions for agriculture exempt structures, subject to limitations on the size, occupancy and use of such structures.

### **Policy**

The City shall promote produce "Grown in Coachella" whenever possible.

### **Objective**

The City shall encourage sound agricultural practices which minimize environmental damage and maximize production capabilities

### **Policy**

The City shall encourage the use of permanent physical features or barriers to separate agriculture from other development uses wherever possible. Such features include canals, roads, railroads, levees, topographical features and vegetation stands.

### **Policy**

The City shall promote the utilization of soil conservation practices as recommended by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service.

### **Policy**

The City shall support state and federal legislation that limits the amounts and types of pesticides used that may have an adverse effect on water quality.

**Policy**

The City shall support programs that would supply reclaimed water for agricultural uses.

**Policy**

The City shall encourage the use of renewable energy sources on agricultural lands, as long as the energy installation is compatible with the agricultural use.

**Objective**

Support the development of adequate amounts of safe and sanitary farm worker and farm family housing in agricultural areas

**Policy**

The City shall coordinate with Riverside County to develop appropriate standards and pre-approved plans for temporary, seasonal, and dormitory housing.

**Policy**

The City shall encourage lending institutions to find creative methods to finance housing construction without encumbering the entire farm and without requiring subdivision.

**Policy**

The City shall encourage farm operators to provide sufficient housing in addition to housing permitted by applicable density for permanent and seasonal agricultural employees and for family members to maintain agricultural production activities.

**Policy**

The City shall locate agricultural employee housing where it promotes efficiency of the farming operation and has minimal impact on productive farmland.

**Policy**

The City shall assist non-profit organizations or other agencies in their efforts to establish a program to provide safe and adequate housing for farm workers.

**Policy**

The City shall permit a limited number of farm worker and farm family housing units in addition to the number of dwellings allowed by density.

**Policy**

The City shall adopt procedures for the administrative approval of temporary use permits for farm worker housing and occasional cultural events if the requirements of all appropriate agencies have been met.

**AGRICULTURAL ELEMENT IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES**

The various actions, programs and strategies the City should take to implement the goals, objectives and policies of the Agricultural Element are presented on Table \_\_\_\_, the City of Coachella Agricultural Element Implementation Measures.

- Implementation Measure - Includes a description of the action program and/or strategy which implements the agricultural development policies.
- Purpose - Identifies the intent and purpose of accomplishing the implementation measure.
- Key Participants - Identifies the appropriate public and/or private body, agencies, group, individuals or volunteers responsible to complete the implementation measure.





FIGURE

CITY OF COACHELLA AGRICULTURE ELEMENT  
IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES
