

3

EXISTING CONDITIONS

3.1) Plan Area Setting

Madera is the county seat of Madera County, and is the principal City of the Madera–Chowchilla Metropolitan Statistical Area. Madera is bisected by State Route (SR) 99 and the Union Pacific railroad along a north-south axis as well as the Fresno River along an east-west axis. The 1,883 acre Plan Area is located west of the Madera City limits and just north of the Fresno River, within the Sphere of Influence.

While the Plan Area is entirely within the City’s General Plan boundary, the City’s Urban Growth Boundary, and the City’s Sphere of Influence and is located generally west and south of the Madera Municipal Airport, most of the Plan Area is undeveloped, representing an opportunity to implement the City’s “Building Blocks” policies through master-planning.

Exhibit 3.1: Aerial Photograph and Physical Setting shows the limits of the Plan Area and the three neighborhoods within it: Northwest Neighborhood, Southwest Neighborhood and Southeast Neighborhood.

3.2) Existing Physical Conditions

The Specific Plan Area is predominately characterized by active agriculture operations, with a mix of irrigated crops. Three parcels are currently subject to land conservation contracts (Williamson Act Contract). The Plan Area has a few existing residential and agricultural support structures.

The Fresno River abuts the southern portion of the Plan Area and multiple irrigation canals traverse the Plan Area. The terrain is relatively flat, with few inclines aside from the Fresno River, and Madera Irrigation District (MID) canals. In the Southeast Neighborhood Lateral 24.2-14.2 is adjacent to and parallels the River. Lateral 24.2-13.2 is along the north side of Avenue 16/Kennedy Street alignment abutting both the Southeast and Northwest Neighborhoods.

The Airport Canal is located along the Road 23 alignment adjacent to the western edge of the Northwest Neighborhood. Pipeline Airport 1.0W is located along the Avenue 17 alignment adjacent to the northern edge of the Northwest Neighborhood.

Exhibit 3.1, Aerial Photograph and Physical Setting



Source: Google Maps



3.3) Existing Circulation

As shown in *Exhibit 3.2, Opportunities and Constraints* existing east/west streets are Avenue 17, Avenue 16 (Kennedy Street), and Avenue 15 ½ (Cleveland Avenue). Existing north-south streets are Road 24, Road 23 (Loop Road) and Road 24 (Photo 3.1). A two-lane bridge over the Fresno River exists on Road 23 and will require widening with the build out of the Plan Area. The Fresno River, Madera Municipal Airport and Municipal Golf Course limit connectivity to surrounding development presenting a challenge to the Plan Area.

The City's General Plan circulation system for the Plan Area consists of Arterials, Collectors, Loop Road, and Local streets. Arterials and Major Collectors are located alternately every mile with a Minor Collector located approximately every half-mile. Road 23 is planned to serve as a portion of the Madera Loop Road with the intent of providing intercity travel along the perimeter of the City of SR 99. The Vern McCullough Fresno River trail is a Class I trail that provides access and mobility opportunities for pedestrians, runners and bicyclists. Currently the river trail system does not extend or connect to the Plan Area.

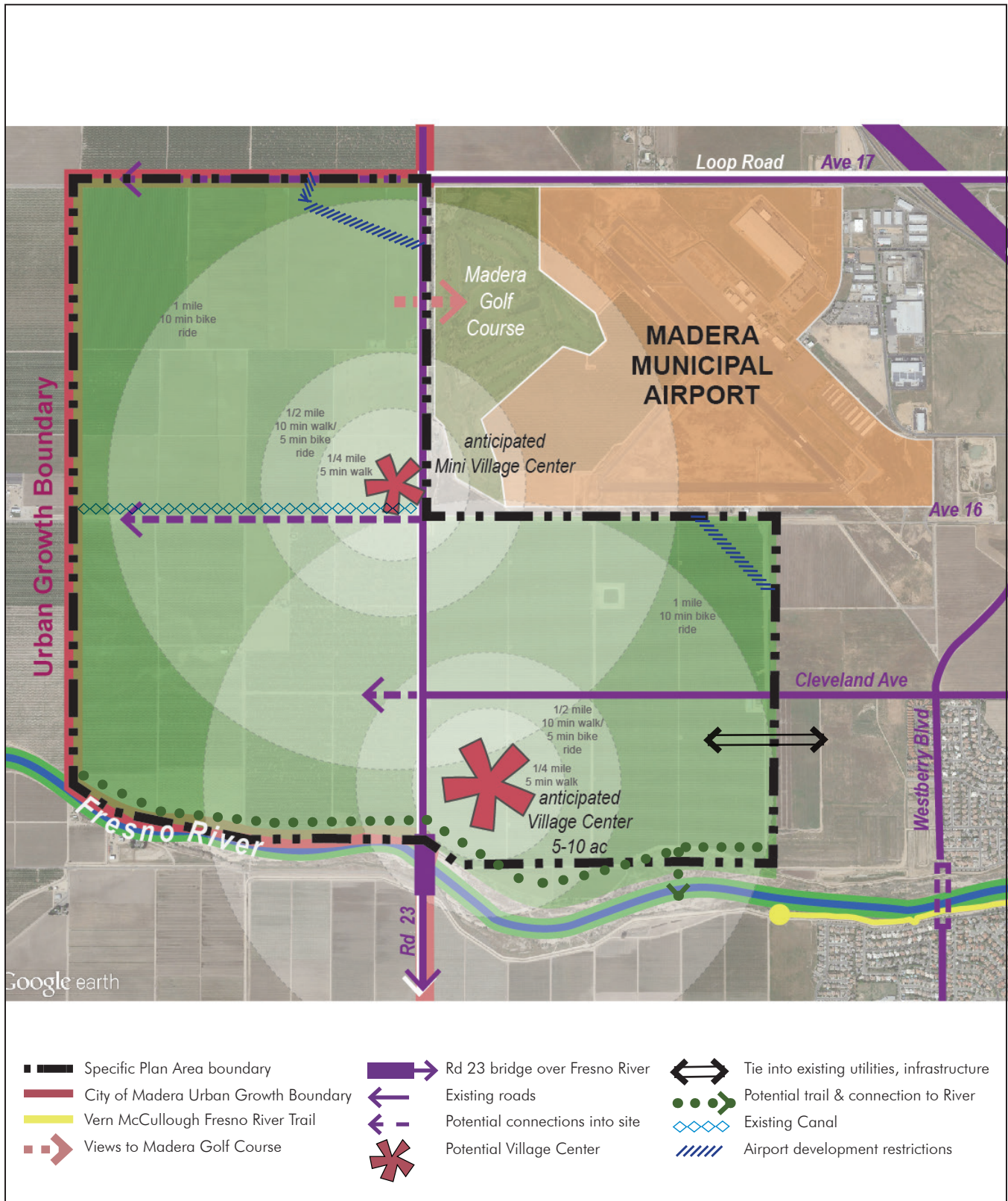
3.4) Surrounding Uses

Surrounding uses include, but are not limited to, agriculture, airport (Photo 3.2), industrial and residential uses. While some of these uses present challenges to the Plan Area, they also provide opportunities for nodes and connections in future development as shown in *Exhibit 3.2*.



Photo 3.1 - Looking South at the intersection of Road 24 and Avenue 16

Exhibit 3.2, Opportunities and Constraints



N. T. S.

3.5) Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) Consistency

The Plan Area is within the Airport Influence Areas of Madera Municipal Airport as illustrated on *Exhibit 3.3, Airport Land Use Compatibility*. This exhibit identifies the various compatibility zones applicable to the Plan Area. The EIR prepared for The Villages at Almond Grove Specific Plan identifies potential impacts from the airport and includes criteria for addressing any potential impacts.

3.6) Topography

The Plan Area is relatively flat and gently falls to the south at an average gradient of approximately 1.0 to 2.0 percent. The existing topographic conditions for the Specific Plan area are illustrated on *Exhibit 3.4, Existing Plan Area Topography*.

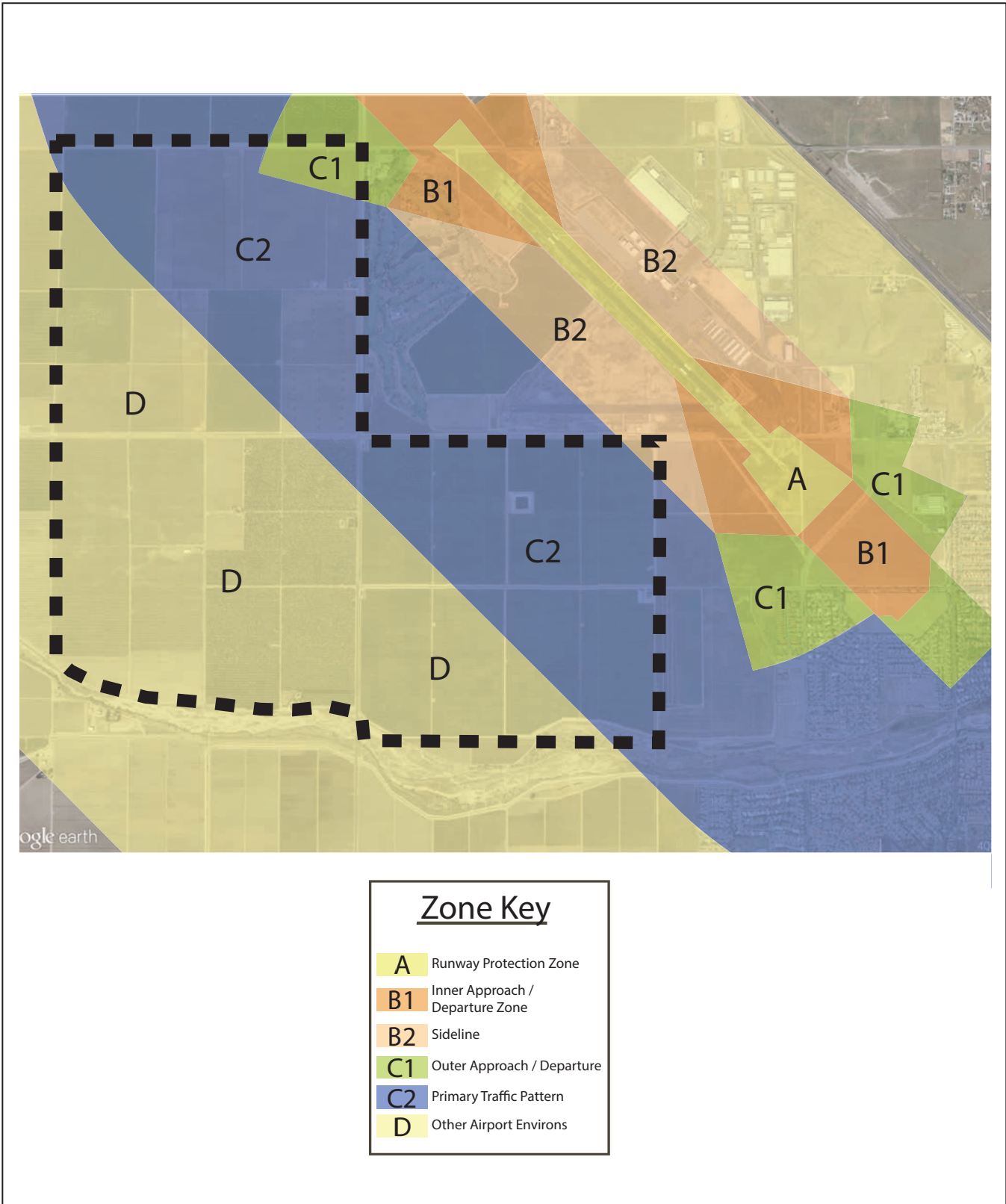
3.7) Williamson Act Contract

The Williamson Act program is designed as a mechanism for the preservation of agricultural and open space lands in the State of California. Within the Specific Plan, there are active Williamson Act contracts on three parcels that make up the Plan Area. It is anticipated that the current land owner(s) will initiate and cancel the contract as part of the development process, or wait for their term to expire.



Photo 3.2 - Looking East at the airport from Avenue 16

Exhibit 3.3, Airport Land Use Compatibility



Source: Google Maps

N. T. S.

3.8) Hydrology

The Plan Area resides in the Madera Subbasin of the San Joaquin River Watershed. The Madera Subbasin encompasses the entire City of Madera and most of Madera County. Major reservoirs upstream of the Madera Sub basin include Hensley Lake along the Fresno River and Millerton Lake along the San Joaquin River. The watershed is recharged with stream flow percolation from rivers within the watershed including from the Fresno River abutting the Plan Area.

The Fresno River is the major natural drainage channel for the City of Madera. Other drainage channels also flow through the City, but they are not within the vicinity of the Plan Area. The Fresno River is relatively dry throughout most of the year due to controlled flow of the Hidden Dam and Madera Lake Dam upstream of the Plan Area.

The Madera Irrigation District (MID) serves the agricultural community surrounding the City of Madera, including the agricultural operations of Plan Area.

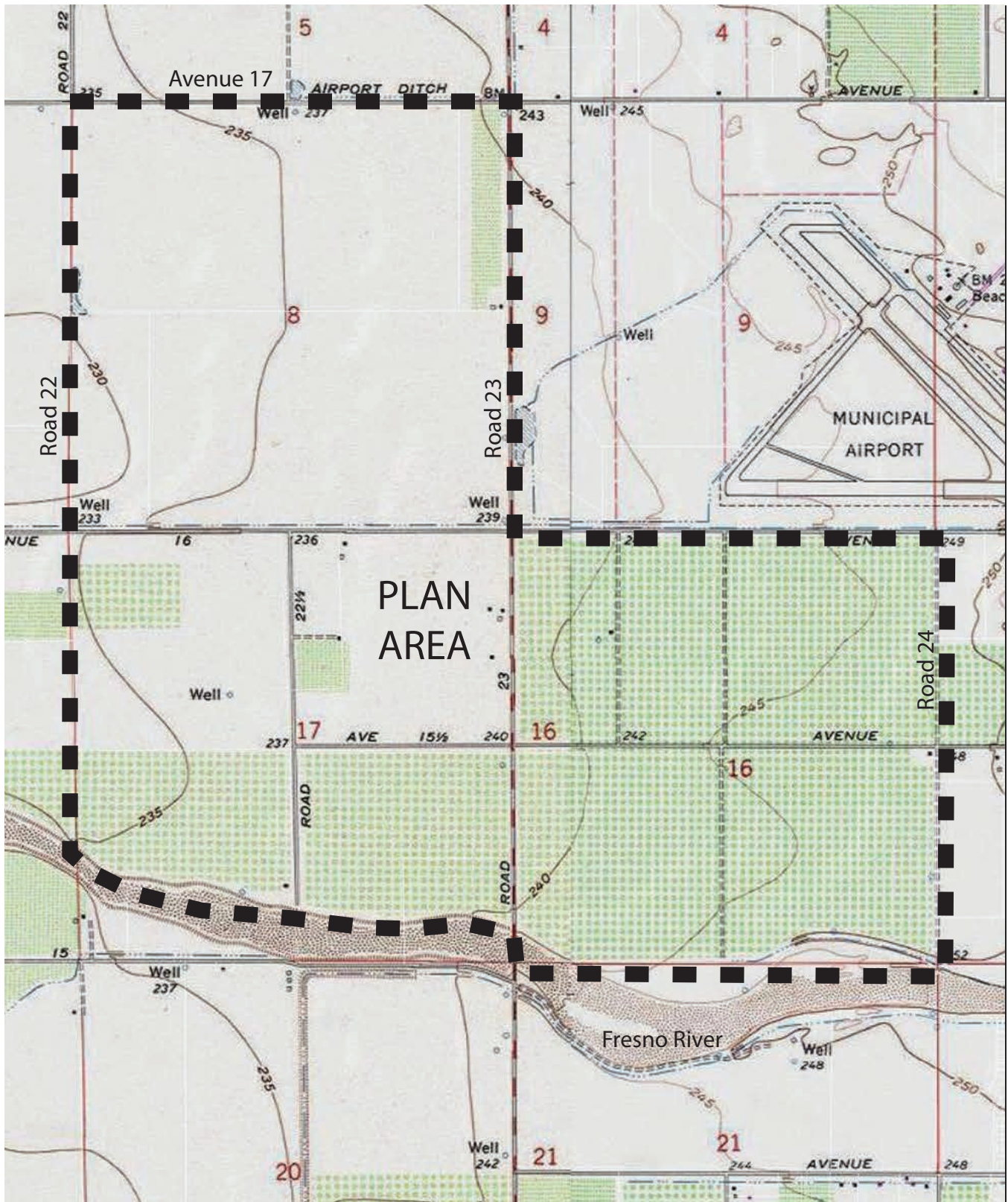
The predominate method of runoff disposal in the City Madera is through the use of retention basins which recharge the groundwater. Presently, rainfall within the Plan Area either percolates into the soil or captured into drainage swales, both of which recharge the groundwater.

3.9) Biology

Due to the extensive agricultural operations, which has remained largely unchanged over the past 75 plus years with the hydrology of the area controlled to facilitate various agricultural operations, the Plan Area is devoid of natural habitats. No riparian or other sensitive natural communities are present within the Plan Area. The Plan Area is predominately composed of almond orchards, vineyard, disced/ plowed fallow fields. Aquatic features within the Plan Area consist of those associated with the agricultural water conveyance systems and retention basins scattered across the Plan Area.

Wildlife use of the Plan Area is relatively low due to the lack of natural habitats and the monotypic orchard trees across the majority of the landscape. Local wildlife is limited to species that are, able to adapt-to the-agricultural environment. No migration corridors exist-within the Plan Area.

Exhibit 3.4, Existing Plan Area Topography



Source: Madera County GIS (USA Topo Maps)

