



# Data Collection & Mapping

## AGRICULTURAL MITIGATION PROGRAM & FEASIBILITY STUDY

OCTOBER 2020

### PREPARED FOR:

City of Visalia  
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Visalia, CA 93291

### PREPARED BY:

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# INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The City of Visalia General Plan establishes a tiered growth strategy for the City. Buildout thresholds have been identified for when growth could begin in Tiers II and III, but the City has also required an agricultural mitigation program be established before expansion into Tier II. As the City approaches the buildout thresholds established for Tier II development, the agricultural mitigation program is being re-evaluated for feasibility and effectiveness. This document provides an inventory of local land uses, farmland categories, soil types, public utilities, and other relevant data mapping. Analysis based on these data sets will occur during the preparation of the Feasibility Study. Additional data sets may be used as part of the analysis as well.

## MAPPING

### RELEVANT CITY AND SPECIAL DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

**Figures 1 through 3** display various jurisdictional and special district boundaries that are relevant to the potential agricultural mitigation program. This includes the City of Visalia jurisdictional boundaries, including the tiered growth boundaries and the adopted Sphere of Influence represented in **Figure 1**, the Groundwater Sustainability Agency boundaries represented in **Figure 2**, and the water district boundaries represented in **Figure 3**. There are approximately 66,640 acres (or just over 104 square miles) in the Visalia Planning Area.

### EXISTING AND PLANNED LAND USES

**Figures 4 through 8** represent existing and planned land uses within the City. **Figure 4** shows on-the-ground land uses, including agricultural parcels in crop production. Approximately 33,407 acres (or about 50 percent) of the Visalia Planning Area are in agricultural crop production, growing a variety of crops including citrus, tree nuts, and vineyard plants. **Figure 5** shows the adopted City of Visalia General Plan Land Use Diagram. **Figure 6**, **Figure 7**, and **Figure 8** show existing infrastructure for the City, including major roadways, sewer lines, and storm drainage facilities and basins, respectively. Some planned roadway improvements are also included.

### AGRICULTURAL LANDS

**Figures 9 through 14** show previous and current distribution of agricultural lands and related land contracts in the Visalia Planning Area. Farmland type, according to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), is represented for a series of years in **Figure 9**, **Figure 10**, **Figure 11**, **Figure 12**, and **Figure 13**. Parcels currently under or expired from Williamson Act Contracts are represented in **Figure 14**, which also indicates two existing Sequoia Riverlands Trust conservation easements and one additional agricultural conservation easement identified through the Williamson Act Contract program data.

### **Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Categories**

The California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. As part of this process agricultural land is categorized according to soil quality and irrigation status. These agricultural categories include the following:

**Prime Farmland.** Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

**Farmland of Statewide Importance.** Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

**Unique Farmland.** Farmland of lesser quality soils used to produce the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

**Farmland of Local Importance.** Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee.

**Urban and Built-Up Land.** Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, institutional, public administrative purposes, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.

**Other Land.** Land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

**Table 1. Summary of FMMP Acres by Category, 2000 - 2016**

Category	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
Prime Farmland	39,123	36,745	33,987	31,786	31,405
Farmland of Statewide Importance	7,452	7,365	7,353	7,291	7,212
Unique Farmland	92	129	181	145	115
Farmland of Local Importance	1,713	2,149	1,630	2,224	2,466
Urban and Built-Up Land	15,343	17,300	19,033	20,142	20,734
Other Land	2,918	2,953	4,457	5,052	4,706
Grazing Land	--	--	--	--	1

Each iteration of FMMP maps for the Visalia Planning Area demonstrated a loss of farmland to urban conversion. Between 2000 and 2016, Urban and Built-Up Land and Other Land increased from 18,261 acres to 25,440 acres. During this same period, farmland categories decreased from 48,380 acres to 41,199 acres.

### **Williamson Act Contracts**

The Williamson Act, also known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. Private land within locally designated agricultural preserve areas is eligible for enrollment under contract. The minimum term for contracts is ten years and will automatically renew on each anniversary date of the contract.

Landowners enrolled under Williamson Act contract receive considerably reduced property tax assessments in return for their enrollment. Property tax assessments of Williamson Act contracted land are based upon generated income as opposed to potential market value of the property.

Williamson Act contracts may be exited at the option of the landowner or local government by initiating a non-renewal process, which effectively halts the automatic renewal of the contract term. Once a notice of non-renewal is filed, the remaining contract term is allowed to lapse, with the contract null and void at the end of the term. During the non-renewal process, the annual tax assessment continually increases each year until it is equivalent to current tax rates at the end of the non-renewal period. Under a set of specifically defined circumstances, a contract may be cancelled without completing the process of term non-renewal.

## **SOIL AND RECHARGE**

**Figures 15 and 16** show different soil characteristics within the Visalia Planning Area. Soil classifications are represented in **Figure 15**. Relating to soil type, **Figure 16** shows the Soil Agricultural Groundwater Banking Index (SAGBI) ratings for the Visalia Planning Area. The SAGBI is based on five major factors that indicate the effectiveness of the location as a natural groundwater recharge area, including: deep percolation, root zone residence time, topography, chemical limitations, and soil surface condition.



Figure 2: Groundwater Sustainability Agency Boundaries

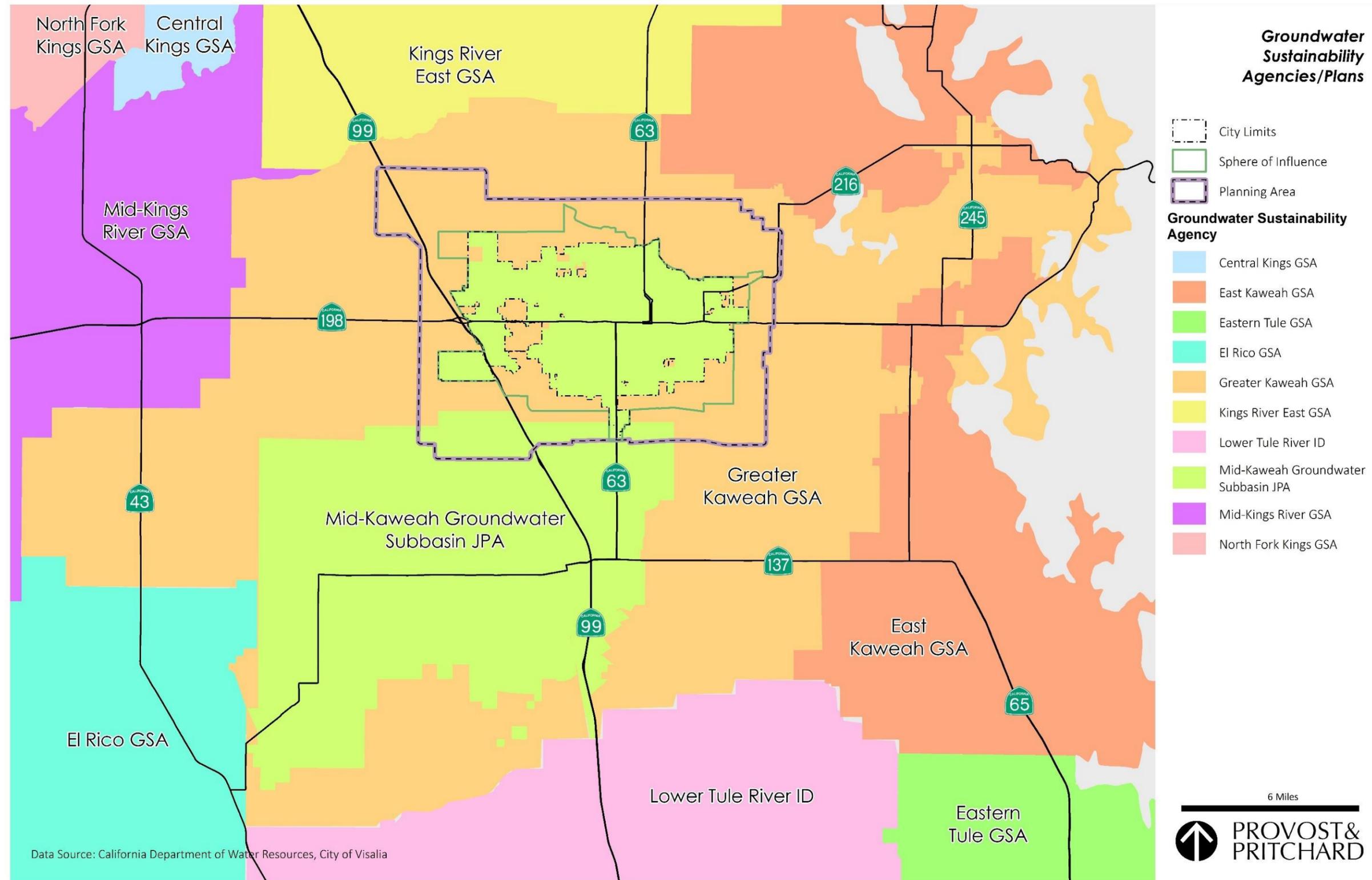


Figure 3: Water District Boundaries

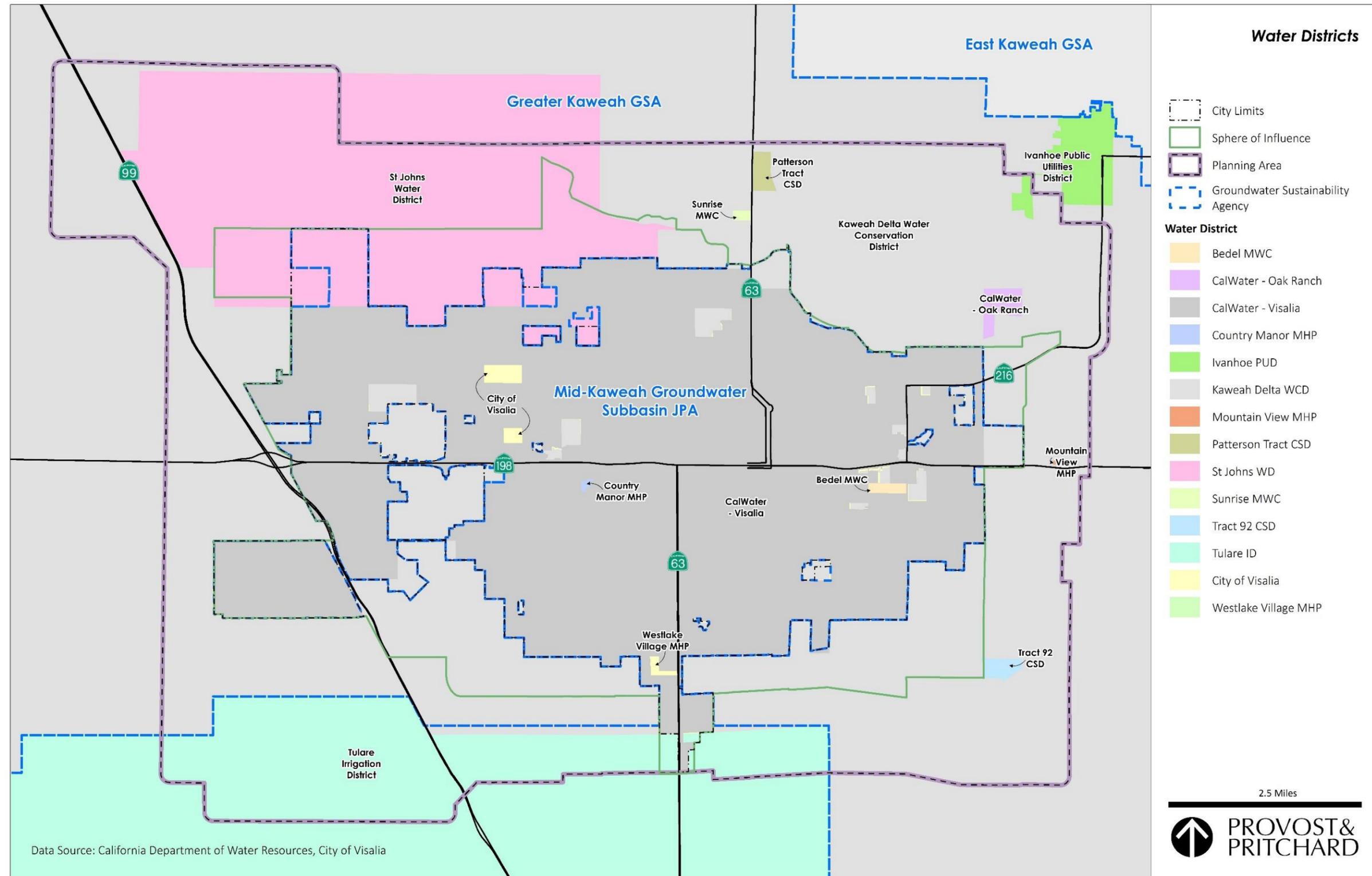


Figure 4: Existing Land Uses

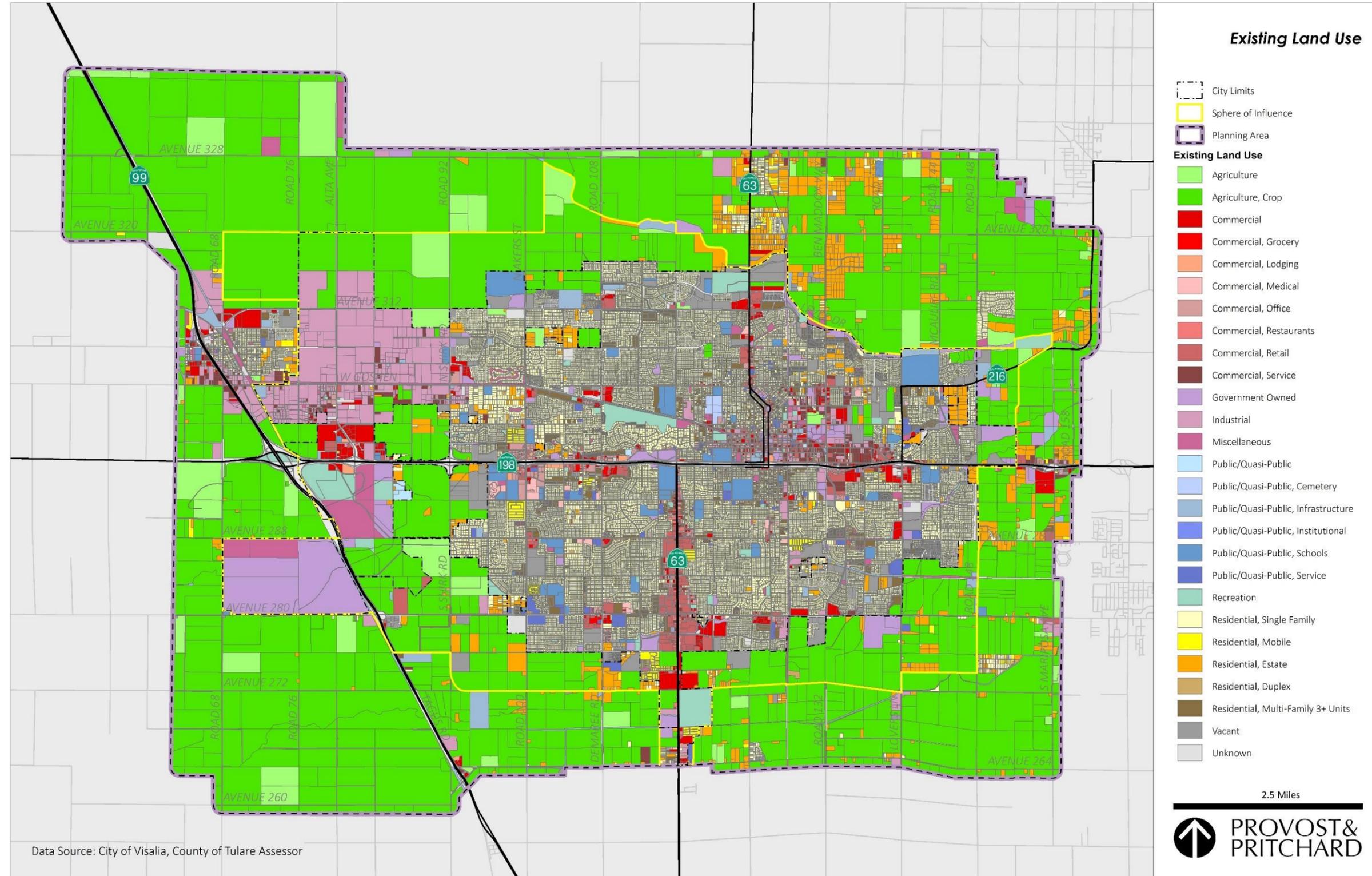


Figure 5: General Plan Land Use Diagram

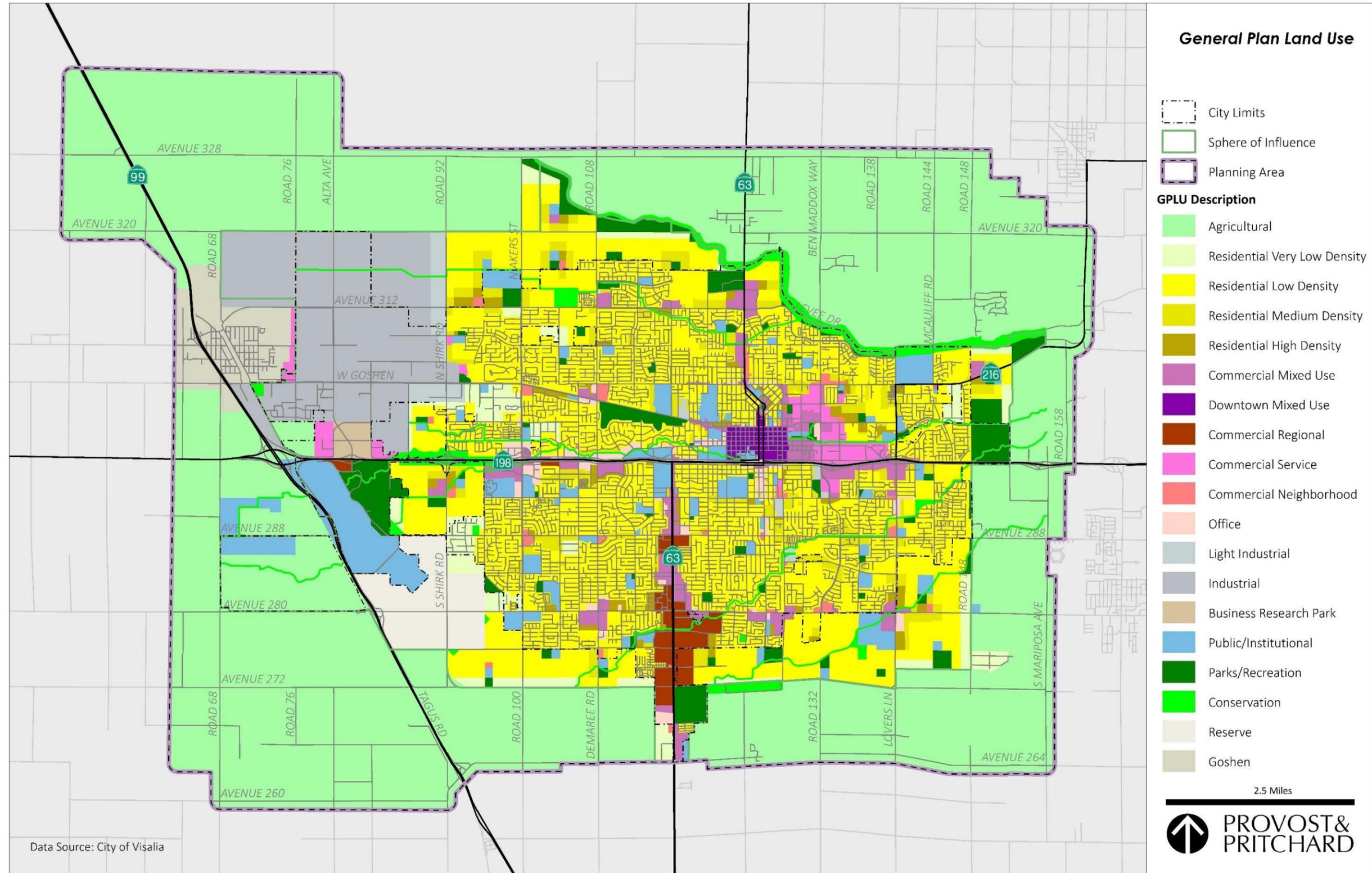


Figure 6: Existing and Planned Roads

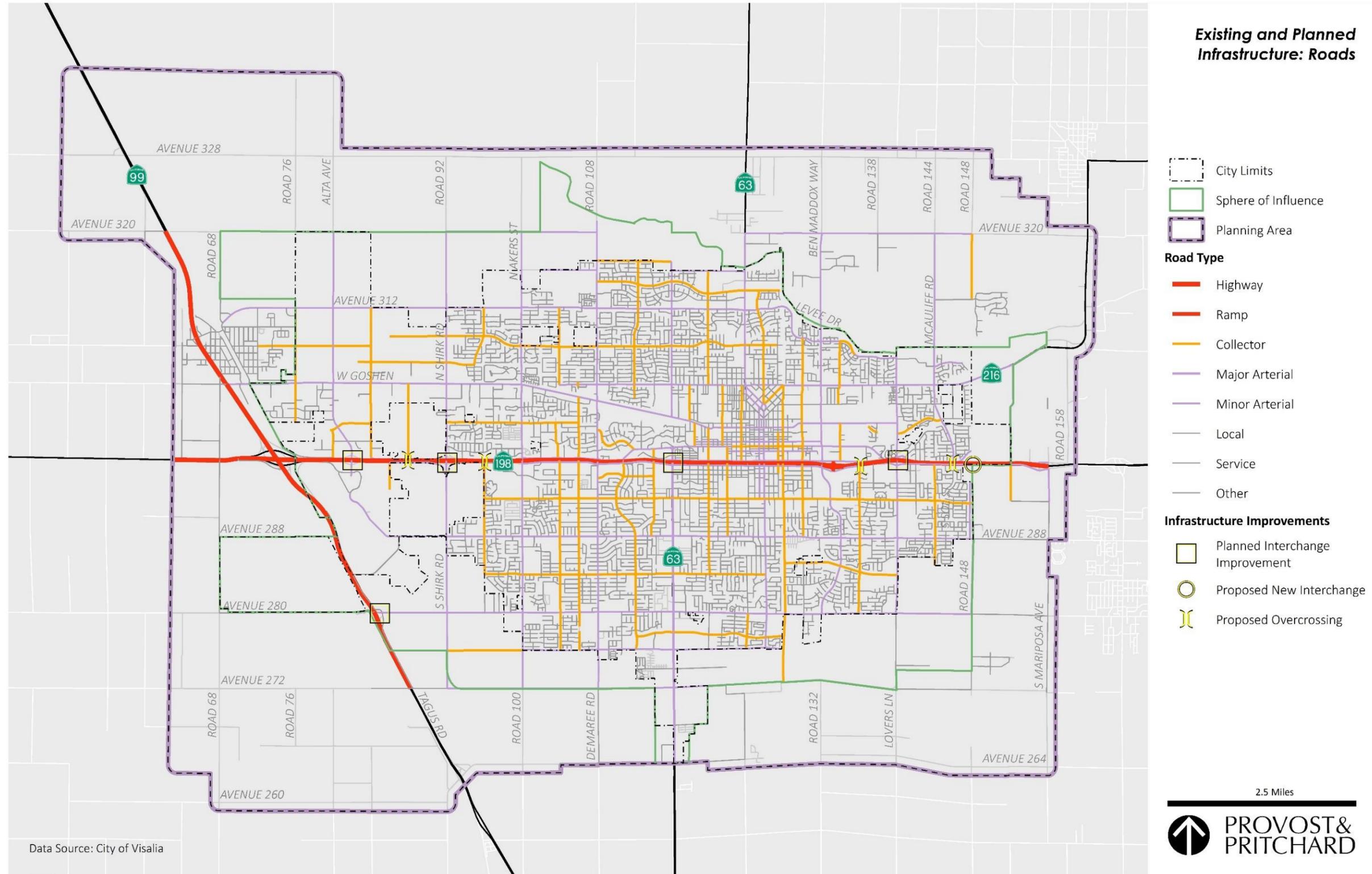


Figure 7: Existing Sewer Infrastructure

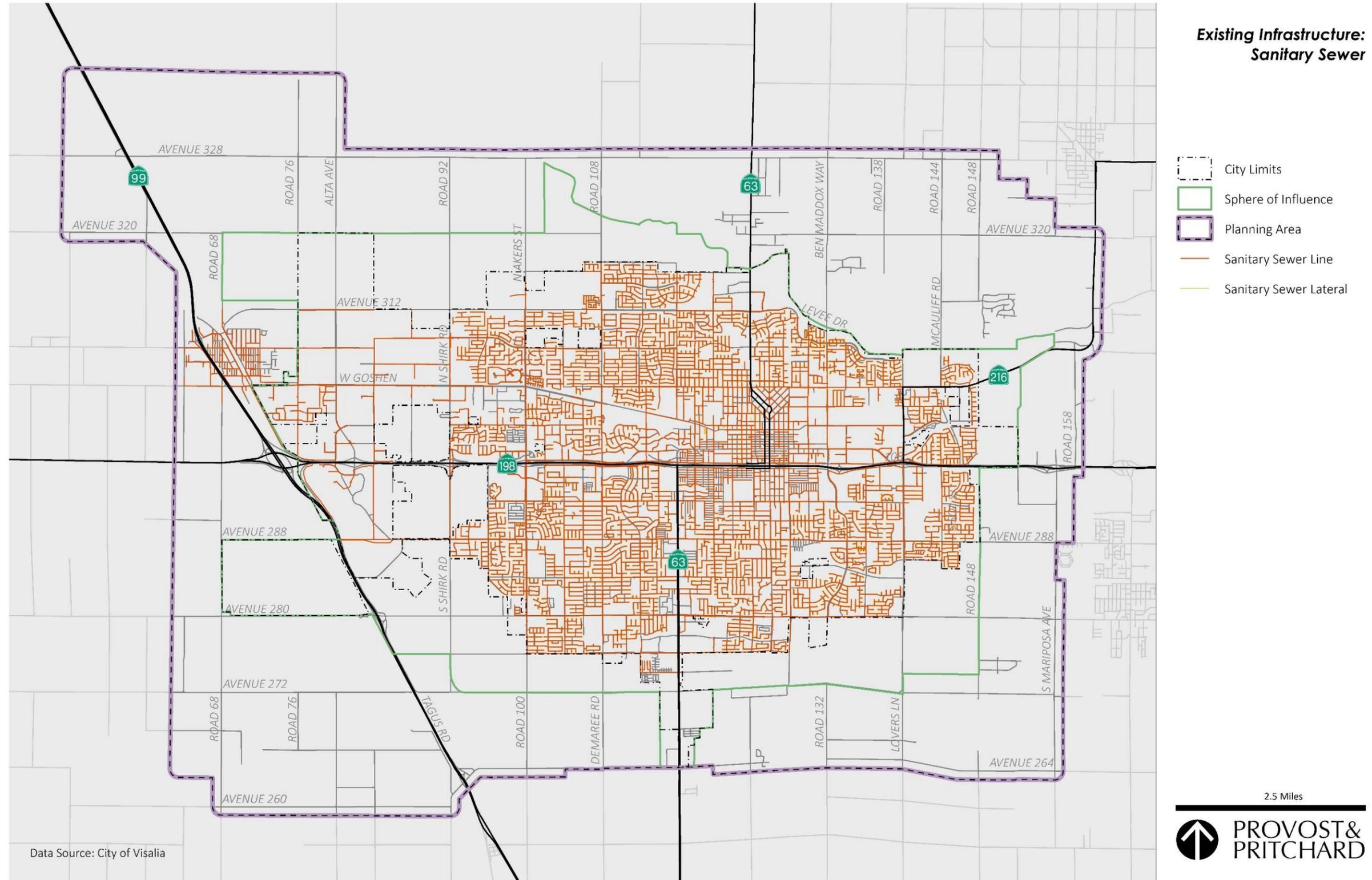


Figure 8: Existing Stormwater Infrastructure

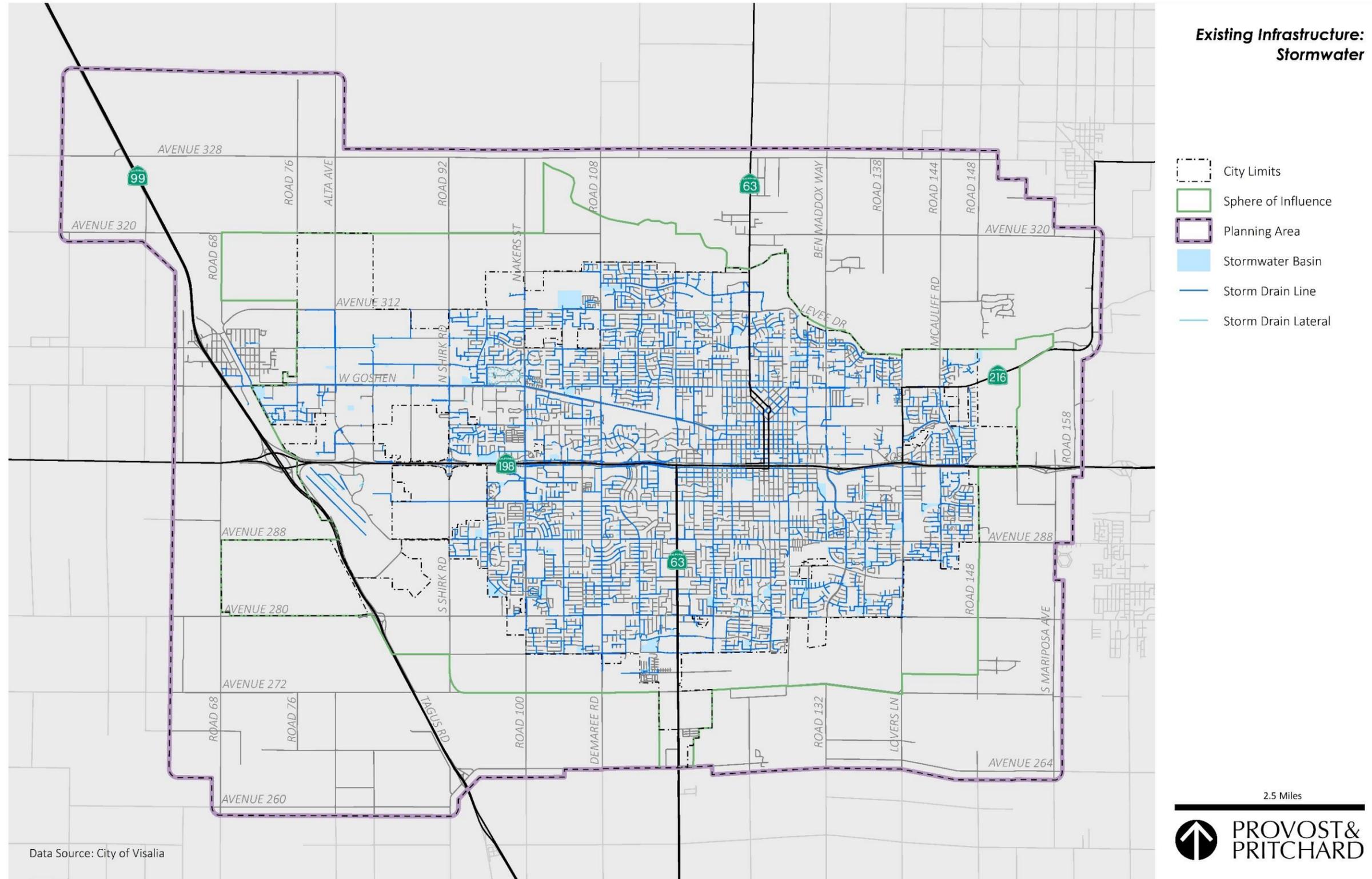


Figure 9: Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Categories, 2000

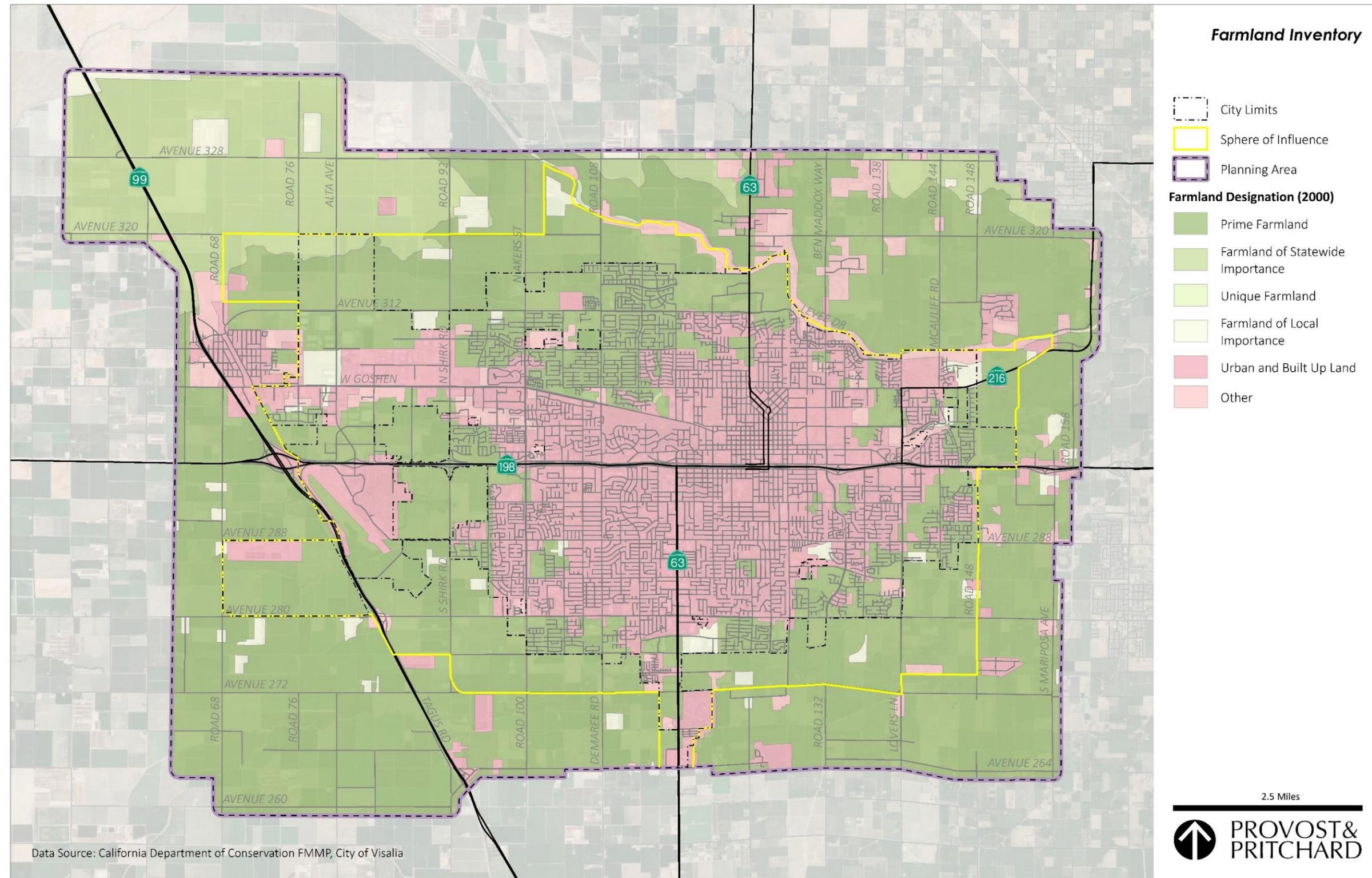


Figure 10: Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Categories, 2004

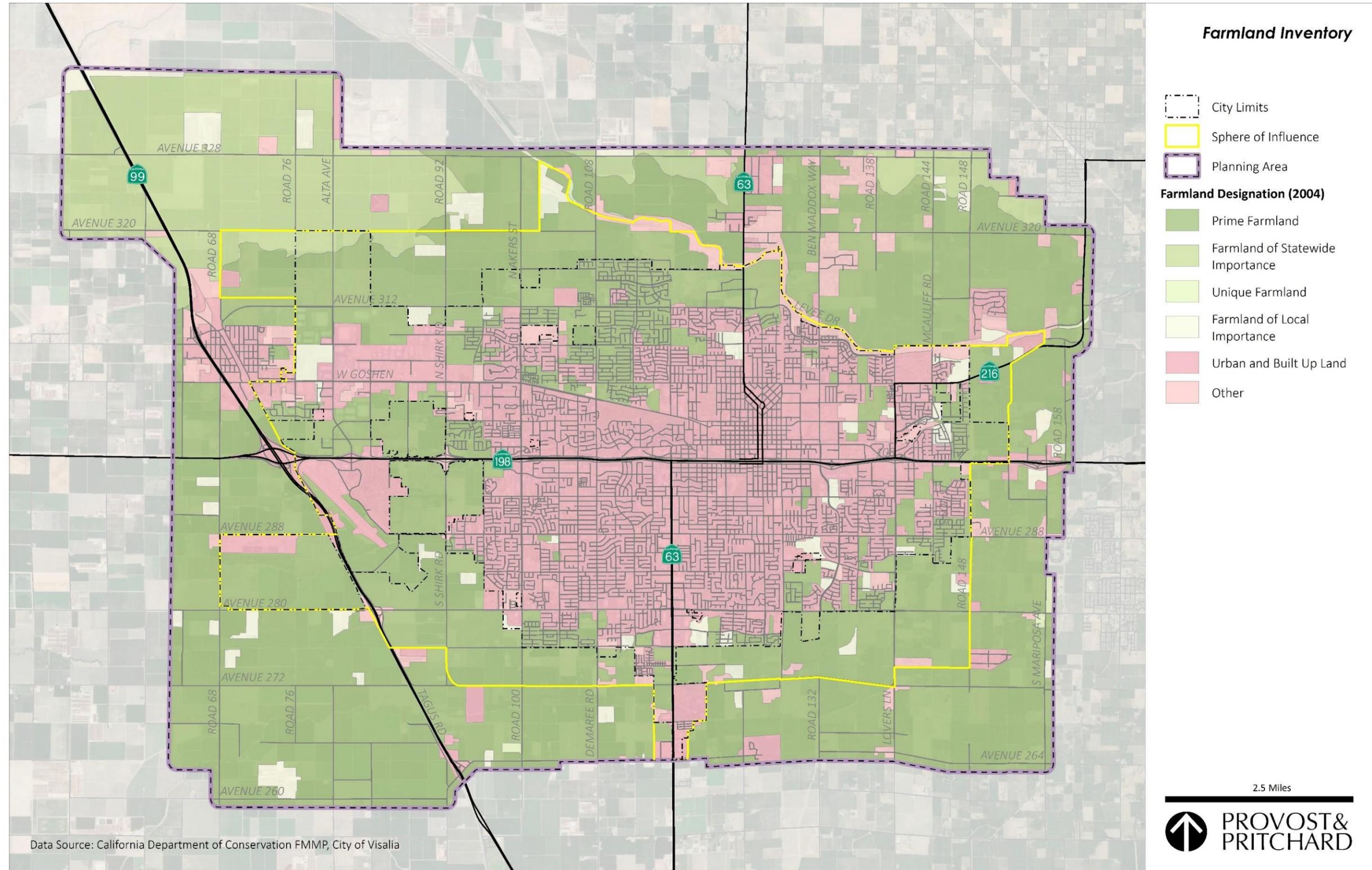


Figure 11: Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Categories, 2008

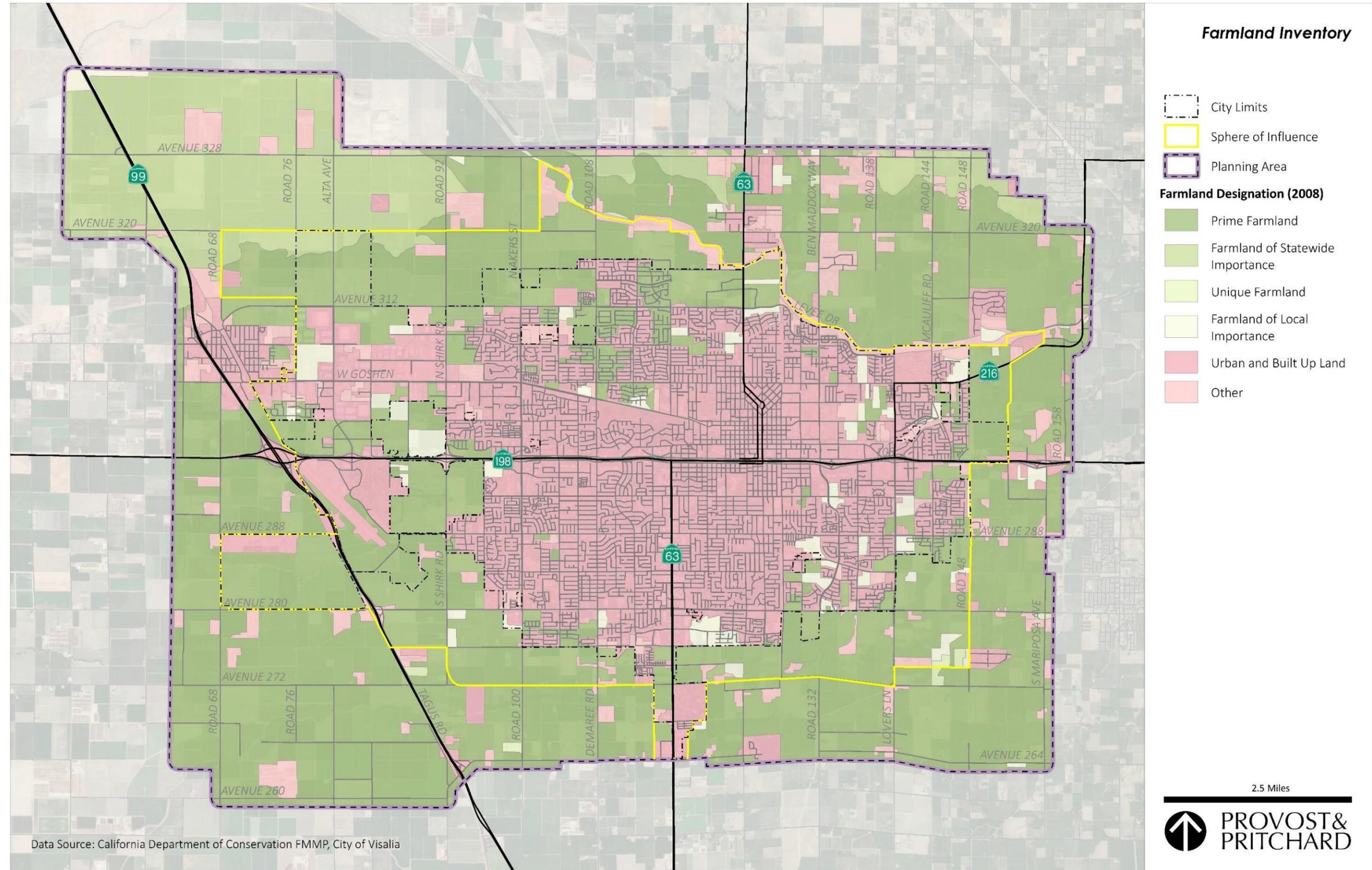


Figure 12: Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Categories, 2012

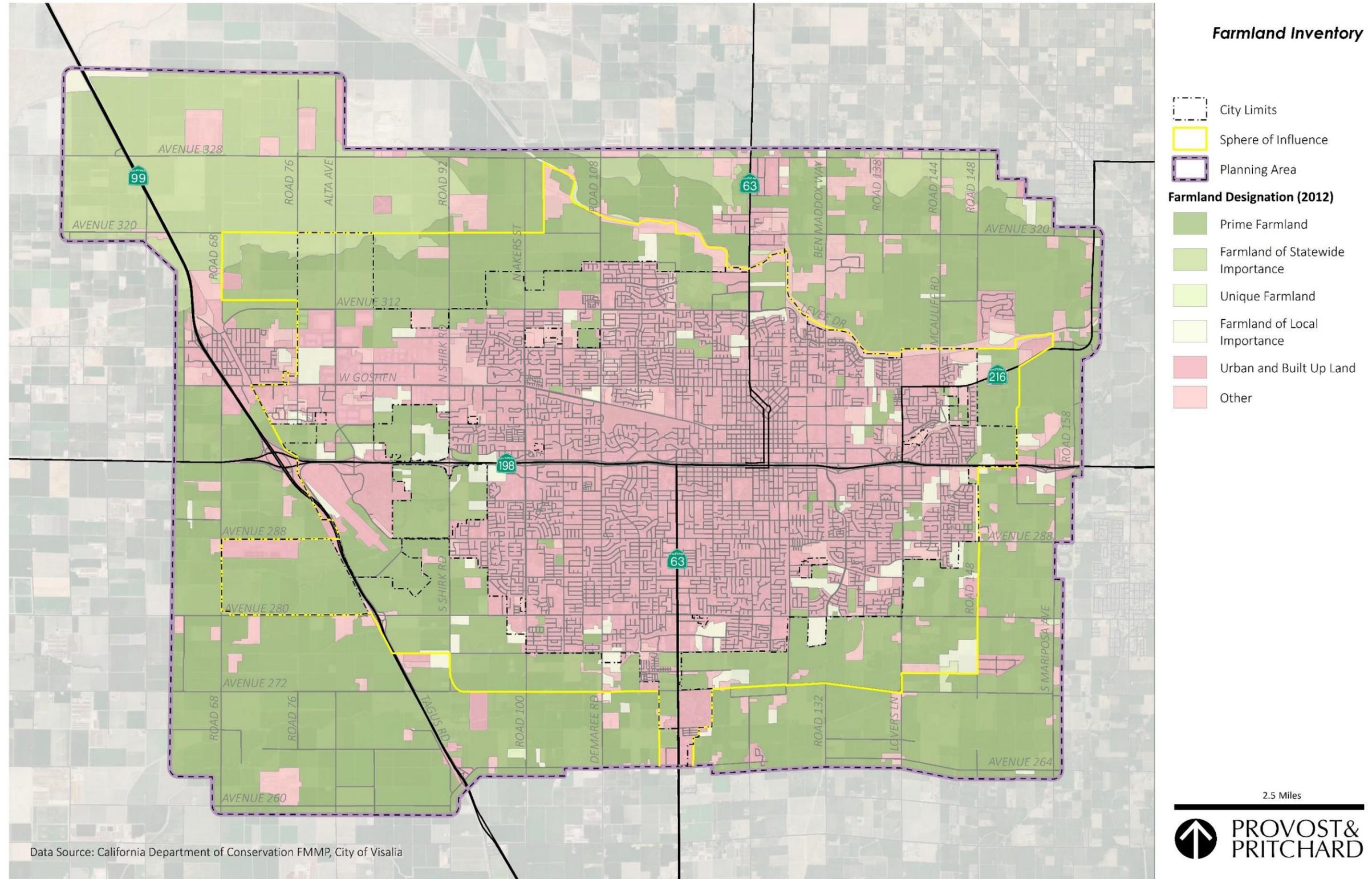


Figure 13: Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Categories, 2016

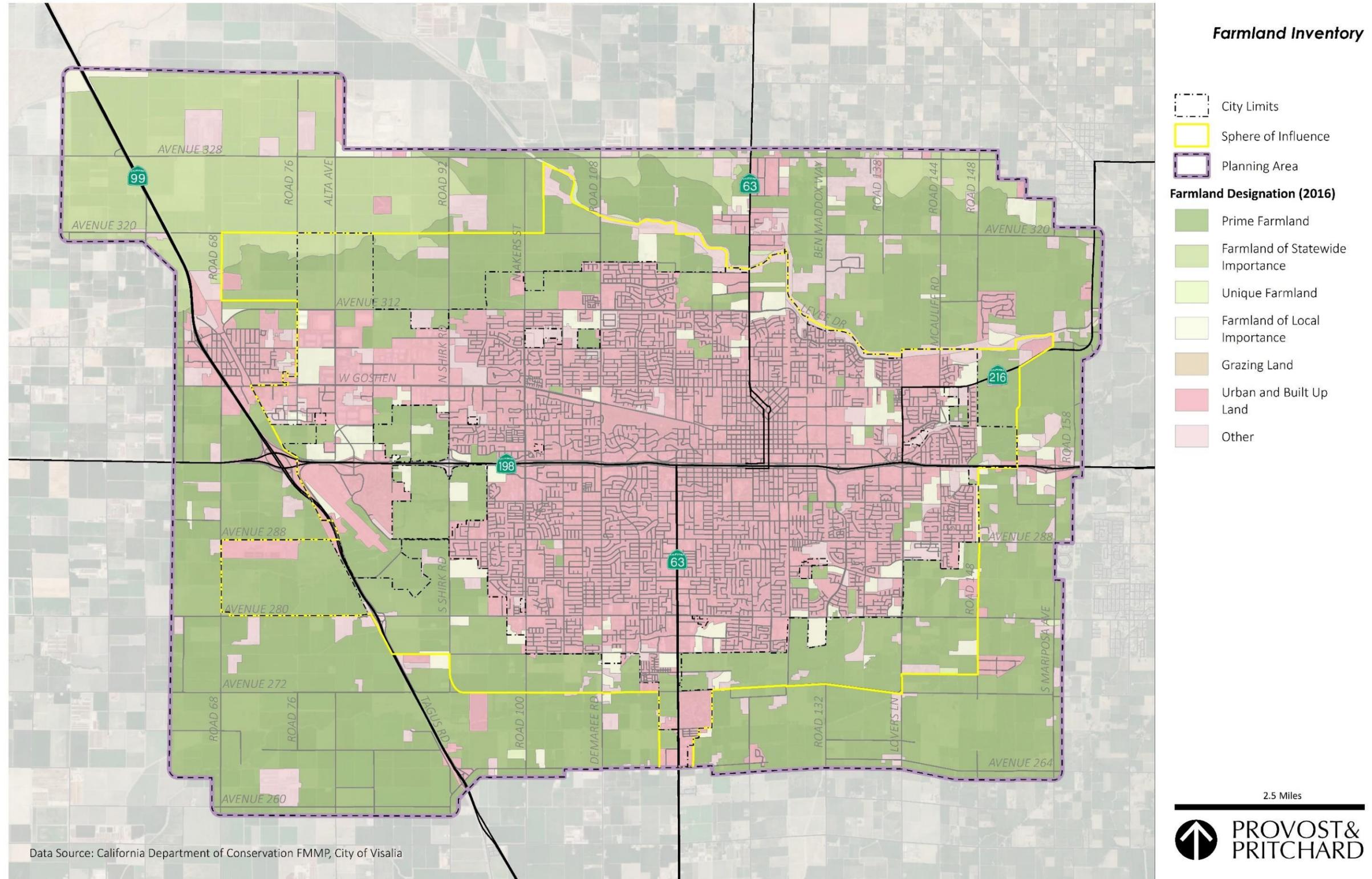


Figure 14: Williamson Act Parcels

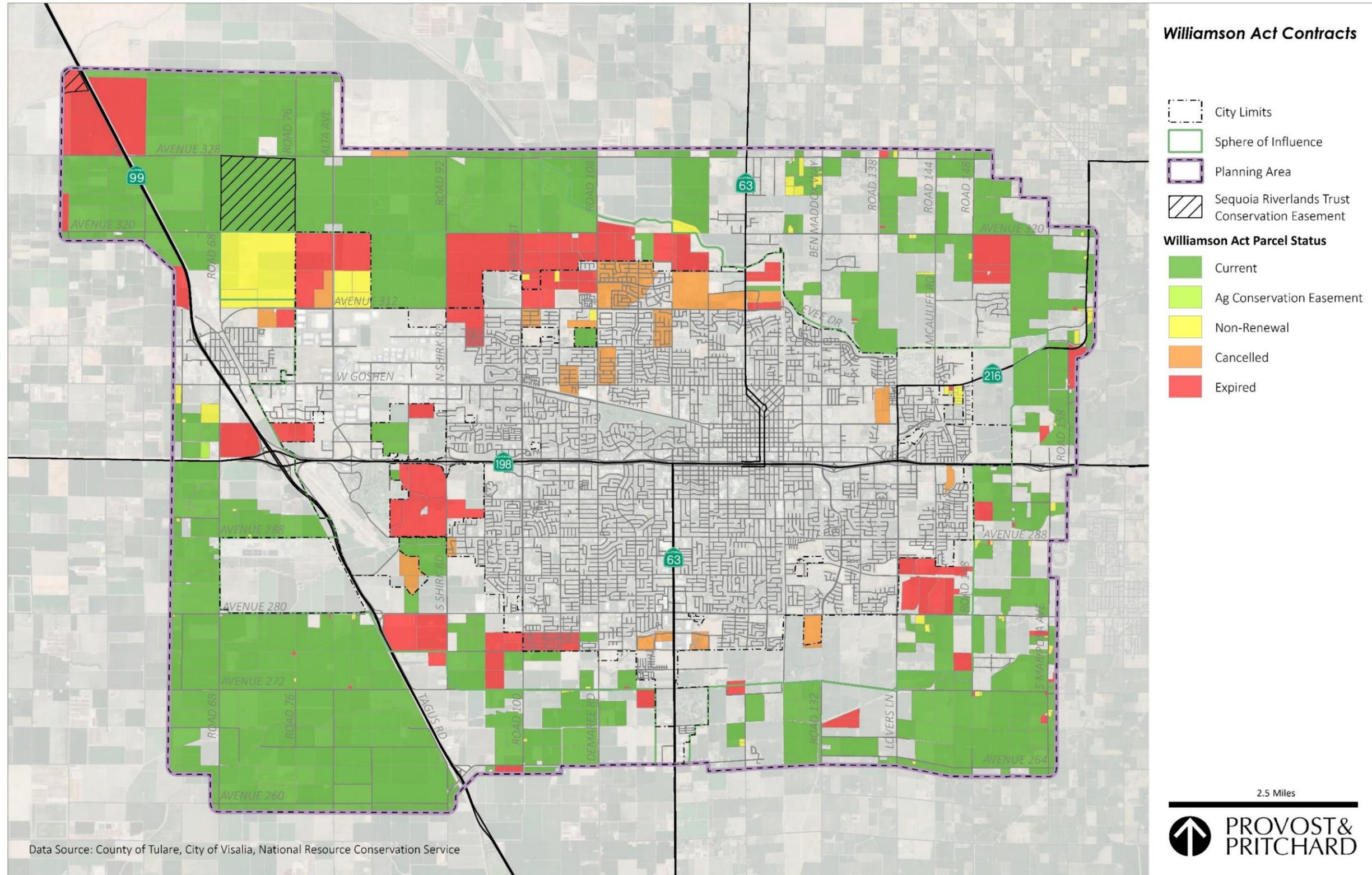


Figure 15: Soil Types

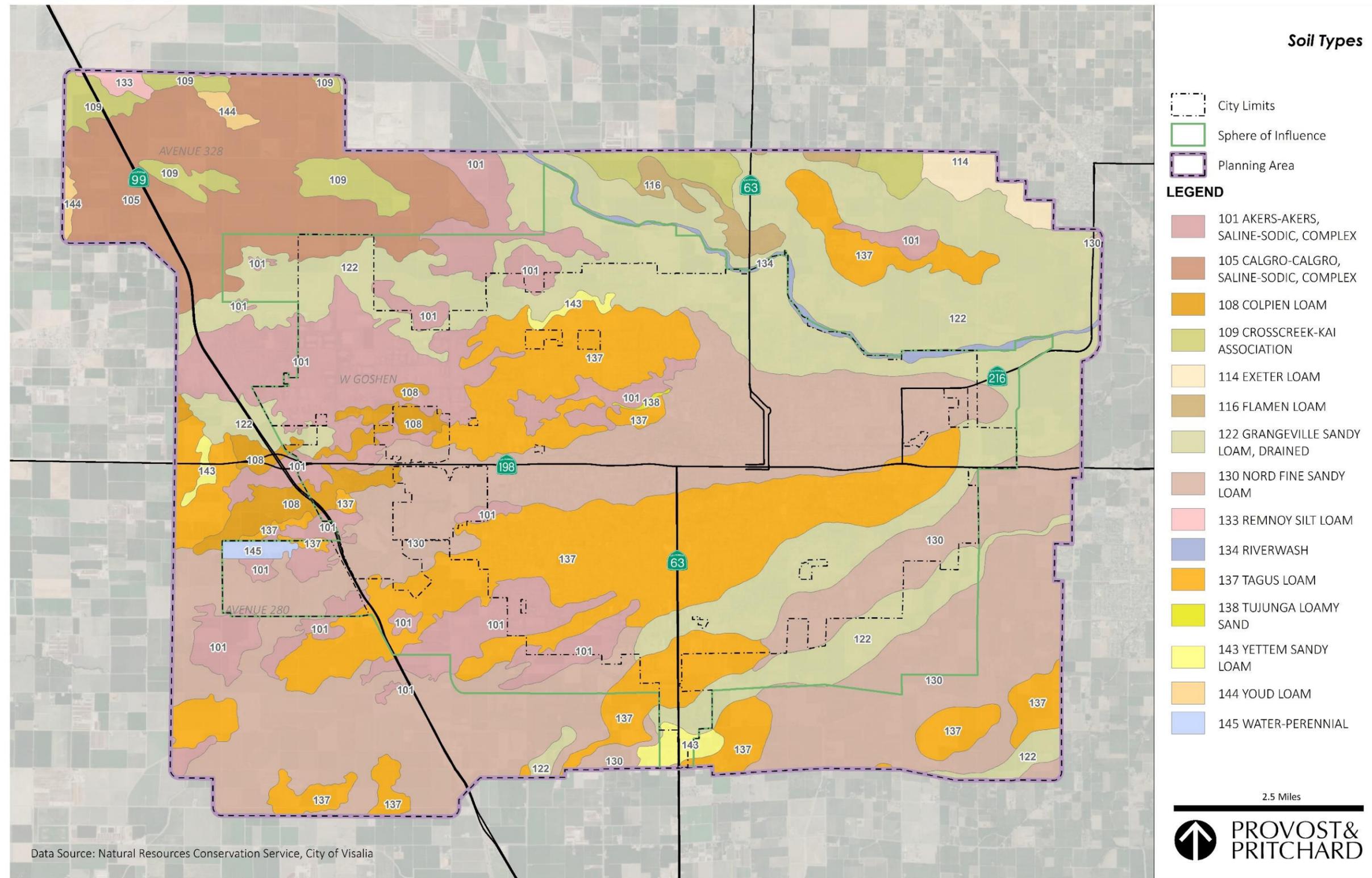


Figure 16: Natural Recharge Areas

