

Relative to the State's economy, Riverside has much greater activity in the Construction sector, reflecting the high level of residential and commercial building now underway, and less activity related to professional and technical services. The large Lodging and Accommodations sector is indicative of the importance of tourism in the County, such as the resorts near Palm Springs.

The County's economic mix has changed several ways since 1994. Construction has grown sharply, with jobs doubling from 21,000 to 44,000 jobs and the sector rising from 8 to 12 percent of total employment. The importance of the employment in services industries in the County also has increased, with a 70 percent rise in employment (to 160,000 jobs, when considering all service industry jobs). During the past five years, employment in Agriculture and Forestry has fallen (from 5,800 jobs to 1,400), as has work in the Retail sector (79,000 jobs to 59,000), although reclassification of industrial codes may account for some of these internal changes.

Unemployment in the County measured 5.5 percent in 1999, slightly above the State's 5.3 percent, as it has been in recent years. The County's trend in unemployment rate is favorable, decreasing every year since hitting 9.5 percent in 1995.

3.3.2.2 Agriculture

Riverside County contained 3,048 farms on 206,100 ha (509,000 ac) in 1997, according to the Agricultural Census (www.nass.usda.gov/census/census97/highlights/ca/cac033.txt). Agricultural revenues valued at \$1.05 billion were generated in the County that year, 55 percent from crops and orchard products and the remainder from livestock sales. Important crops include orchards (49 percent of farms, 25 percent of agricultural revenues) and vegetables (5 percent of farms, 14 percent of revenues), while dairy (11 percent of farms, 26 percent of revenues) and poultry (4 percent of farms, 12 percent of revenues) were the dominant livestock industries.

Most of the cropland in Riverside County is irrigated (79 percent), and most farming operations are smaller than 20 ha (50 ac) in size (79 percent). Farms in the County are generally profitable with average revenues of \$344,000 and average operating expenses of \$255,000. Farming was the principal occupation of 44 percent of the 3,048 farm owners in Riverside County.

Agricultural businesses of all kinds operate throughout the study area. A number of orchards are located northeast of Lake Mathews, which appear to be fragmented remnants of historically larger operations. Dairies and farms line most of the land along the Ramona Expressway between Perris and San Jacinto, while the central part of the study area includes grain farms, orchards, and scattered poultry operations.

3.3.3 HCLE Study Area

The study area for the proposed project, and 1990 and 2000 census tracts included in the analysis, are illustrated in Figure 3.3.1. The study area comprises 19 tracts from the 1990 Census and 47 tracts from the 2000 Census. The higher number of tracts in 2000 reflects the Census Bureau decreasing the size of tracts in response to growing population density.