

8.0 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and considers the comparative effects of a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project. The alternatives are developed to substantially lessen or eliminate the significant or potentially significant adverse environmental effects identified as a result of the proposed project, while still meeting most of the basic project objectives.

California Environmental Quality Act Requirements

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project, or to the location of the proposed project, which could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives (California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, section 15126.6). An EIR need not evaluate the environmental effects of alternatives in the same level of detail as the proposed project, but must include enough information to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project. CEQA provides the following guidelines for discussing alternatives to a proposed project:

The specific alternative of the "no project" shall also be evaluated along with its impacts....If the environmentally superior alternative is the "no project" alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives (CEQA Guidelines, section 15126.6 subd.(e)(2)).

The discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the proposed objectives, or would be more costly (CEQA Guidelines, section 15126.6 subd.(b)).

If an alternative would cause one or more significant effects in addition to those that would be caused by the project as proposed, the significant effects of the alternative shall be discussed, but in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed (CEQA Guidelines, section 15126.6 subd.(d)).

The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a "rule of reason" that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice....The range of feasible alternatives shall be selected and discussed in a manner to foster meaningful public participation and informed decision making....An EIR need not consider an alternative whose effect cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative (CEQA Guidelines, section 15126.6 subd.(f)).

The requirement that an EIR evaluate alternatives to the proposed project or alternatives that address the location of the proposed project is a broad one; the primary intent of the alternatives analysis is to disclose other ways that the objectives of the project could be attained while reducing the magnitude of, or avoiding, the environmental impacts of the proposed project. Alternatives that are included and evaluated in the EIR must be feasible alternatives. However, the Public Resources Code and the CEQA Guidelines direct that the EIR need "set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice." The CEQA Guidelines provide a definition for "a range of reasonable alternatives" and, thus, limit the number and type of alternatives that need to be evaluated in a given EIR. According to the CEQA Guidelines (section 15126.6(b)):

The alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. Of those alternatives, the EIR need examine in detail only the ones that the lead agency determines could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project.

First and foremost, alternatives in an EIR must be feasible. In the context of CEQA, “feasible” is defined as:

...capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social and technological factors.

Further, the following factors may be taken into consideration in the assessment of the feasibility of alternatives: site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and the ability of the proponent to attain site control (section 15126.6(f)(1)). Finally, an EIR is not required to analyze alternatives when the effects of the alternative “cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative (section 15126.b(f)(3)).”

Project Objectives

As noted above, the selection of a reasonable range of alternatives must take into account the project objectives that are presented in Chapter 3 (Project Description). The stated objectives of the proposed project are to:

- Integrate the Railyards area into the fabric of the existing Central City. The Railyards have historically been isolated from the City. Now the opportunity exists to integrate the area from all points, not just downtown, into a seamless patch of the City fabric;
- Create a dynamic 24-hour mixed use urban village that provides a range of complementary uses—including cultural, office, hospitality, entertainment, retail, residential and open space--and a mixture of housing products, including affordable housing;
- Connect the Railyards area with Sacramento’s downtown office, retail, government center areas, Old Sacramento, the Richards Boulevard area, and the Alkali Flat neighborhood, using pedestrian and bicycle facilities, roadways, and public transportation routes;
- Connect the Railyards area to the Sacramento River waterfront, and allow for hotel, public open space, residential waterfront and recreational uses consistent with the Riverfront Master Plan that will result in a vibrant waterfront, valuable to the region and the City;
- Transform the Railyards area from an under-utilized and environmentally contaminated industrial site into a transit-oriented, attractive, and nationally renowned mixed-use urban village;
- Utilize the historic Central Shops buildings as a heritage tourism draw and as inspiration for a mix of uses that will help to create a culturally-vibrant, urban community;
- Create a development that is a regional draw for the City of Sacramento due to its geographic location downtown near the Sacramento River waterfront and its unique mix of transportation, residential, cultural, office, hospitality, entertainment, retail and open space uses;
- Provide a mixture of uses that complement and support the City’s planned Sacramento Intermodal Transit Facility (SITF), connecting the Central City to the region, the state and beyond; and
- Create a sustainable community that utilizes green building technology, water conservation measures and renewable energy sources.

Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

In determining a reasonable range of alternatives for consideration in the EIR, equally important to attaining the project objectives is the reduction of some or all significant impacts, particularly those that could not be mitigated to a level below the threshold of significance. The project-specific and cumulative significant and unavoidable impacts of the proposed project, after mitigation, are listed below.

Project-Specific Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

- 6.1-3 Operation of the proposed project would result in the generation of increased ROG and NO_x emissions.**
- 6.8-1 Construction of the proposed Specific Plan would temporarily produce loud noise.**
- 6.8-2 The proposed Specific Plan could permanently expose sensitive receptors to traffic and rail noise levels.**

Initial Phase Only (see Section 6.12, Transportation and Circulation)

- 6.12-1 The Initial Phase would increase traffic volumes at study area intersections and cause the level of service to deteriorate.**
- 6.12-2 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study roadway segments that result in substandard levels of service.**
- 6.12-3 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study freeway mainline segments and cause the level of service to degrade below LOS E.**
- 6.12-4 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study freeway interchanges and cause the level of service to degrade below those of the freeway mainline.**
- 6.12-5 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study freeway off-ramps and cause freeway off-ramp queues to exceed the available storage capacity.**
- 6.12-10 The Initial Phase would increase traffic volumes at study area intersections and cause the level of service to deteriorate.**
- 6.12-11 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study roadway segments that result in substandard levels of service.**
- 6.12-12 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study freeway mainline segments and cause the level of service to degrade below LOS E.**
- 6.12-13 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study freeway interchanges and cause the level of service to degrade below those of the freeway mainline.**
- 6.12-14 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study freeway off-ramps and cause freeway off-ramp queues to exceed the available storage capacity.**
- 6.12-16 The Initial Phase would increase traffic volumes at study area intersections and cause the level of service to deteriorate.**

- 6.12-17 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study roadway segments that result in substandard levels of service.
- 6.12-18 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study freeway mainline segments and cause the level of service to degrade below LOS E.
- 6.12-19 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study freeway interchanges and cause the level of service to degrade below those of the freeway mainline.
- 6.12-20 The Initial Phase would add traffic to the study freeway off-ramps and cause freeway off-ramp queues to exceed the available storage capacity.

Cumulative Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

- 6.1-8 Project construction activities would contribute to cumulative increases in ozone precursors.
- 6.1-9 The proposed project would contribute to cumulative air quality degradation.
- 6.1-10 Project construction would contribute to cumulative increases in particulate matter in the vicinity of the Specific Plan Area.
- 6.8-6 The proposed project would contribute to increases in traffic and rail noise levels.
- 6.12-22 The Full Project would increase traffic volumes at study area intersections and cause the level of service to deteriorate.
- 6.12-23 The Full Project would add traffic to the study roadway segments that result in substandard levels of service.
- 6.12-24 The Full Project would add traffic to the study freeway mainline segments and cause the level of service to degrade below LOS E.
- 6.12-25 The Full Project would add traffic to the study freeway interchanges and cause the level of service to degrade below those of the freeway mainline.
- 6.12-26 The Full Project would add traffic to the study freeway off-ramps and cause freeway off-ramp queues to exceed the available storage capacity.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND DISMISSED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

The City has given consideration to a wide array of alternatives that could reduce significant impacts. Those alternatives that would have impacts identical to or more severe than the proposed project, or that would not meet most of the project objectives, were considered, explored, and then dismissed from further consideration. The following alternatives were also considered but dismissed from further consideration and evaluation:

Low Density Residential-Only Alternative: To reduce or avoid effects that are associated with the population intensity on the site that creates indirect effects on traffic, air quality, service demands, and similar uses, City staff considered the idea of developing the Specific Plan Area as primarily lower density housing consistent with the density of single-family units found elsewhere in Midtown, East Sacramento, and other inner parts of the City. This alternative would reduce the number of proposed units and the population in the Specific Plan Area. However, the alternative would be

economically infeasible due to the costs associated with site clean up, utilities extension, and construction versus the cost of the proposed units. This alternative would also include residential uses in areas not considered for residential under the proposed project. These areas would be subject to additional Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) approval, which may not be granted, because of limitations on first floor residences. Additionally, the development of a residential-only alternative would be inconsistent with existing General Plan land uses. It is likely that such an alternative would not generate revenues adequate to support the preservation of the historic buildings on the site and could result in the removal of historic Central Shops buildings. A Low Density/Residential-Only Alternative would fail to meet the majority of the proposed objectives of both the City and the applicant.

Further, while the traffic and air quality effects caused by this alternative would be lower, it is reasonable to assume that the housing, office, retail, and other uses eliminated from the Specific Plan to accommodate this alternative would be developed somewhere else in the greater Sacramento region. This is illustrated in the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) Blueprint. The SACOG Blueprint is based upon smart growth principles, which encourage growth patterns with more compact, mixed-use communities that use space in such a manner to encourage more walking, biking, and transit use, thus shortening auto trips. The proposed project, a development with residential, employment, entertainment, and retail, with access to transit, all within Sacramento's Central City, would be considered smart growth. The level of growth in the proposed project is similar to that called for in the Blueprint. A residential-only alternative is not consistent with the Blueprint and would not be supportive of such a growth pattern. SACOG estimates that compact development, similar to that in the proposed project, would result in less than half the acreage converted to urban uses compared to that of typical development patterns.¹ In addition, vehicle miles traveled would be reduced from 47.2 miles per household per day under SACOG's Base Case Scenario to 34.9 miles per household per day under the Preferred Blueprint Scenario.² Thus, it is reasonable to assume that development that would have been developed under the proposed project would be developed at a greater distance from the regional core in downtown Sacramento, resulting in greater dependence on the automobile, more vehicle miles traveled, and more land converted to urban uses. The net result of this type of development would be greater levels of congestion on regional roadways, higher levels of air pollutant emissions, greater consumption of land resulting in losses of farmland and/or habitat, and other effects caused by development typically considered to be sprawl.

Because the Low Density Residential-Only Alternative would result in greater environmental effects and because it would fail to meet most of the basic objectives of the Specific Plan, it is not further considered or evaluated in this EIR.

Low Building Height Alternative: City staff also considered a low building height alternative. While maintaining much of the density, urban character, and mix of uses as proposed in the Specific Plan, this alternative would generate fewer residents and employees, and would tend to reduce the magnitude of intensity-caused effects, such as traffic congestion, water demand, air emissions, and the like. This alternative would maintain the land use types proposed in this EIR, but would limit building heights to a maximum of four stories or a maximum of 56 feet. The building height limit would drastically reduce the density of the area and change both onsite and offsite views of the project area.

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- 1 The Preferred Blueprint Alternative would convert 304 square miles versus 661 square miles converted under the base Case Scenario. Sacramento Area Council of Governments, *Special Report: Preferred Blueprint Alternative*, January 2005, page 5.
 - 2 Sacramento Area Council of Governments, *Special Report: Preferred Blueprint Alternative*, January 2005, page 9.

It is unlikely that this alternative would generate adequate internal or municipal revenues to support the high cost of infrastructure improvements necessary to make the site developable, including the cost of new roads crossing the railroad tracks, or the rehabilitation of the Central Shops buildings. As such, it is likely that such an alternative would be required to have its primary vehicular access from Richard's Boulevard in the north or 7th Street. As such, it would fail to meet the objectives to connect the Specific Plan Area with Sacramento's downtown, to integrate the Specific Plan Area into the fabric of the existing Central City, to use the Central Shops buildings, or to create a nationally renowned mixed-use urban village. A Low Building Height Alternative would fail to meet most of the basic objectives of both the City and the applicant.

Further, like the residential-only alternative discussed above, while the traffic and air quality effects caused by this alternative would be lower, it is reasonable to assume that the housing, office, retail and other uses eliminated from the Specific Plan to accommodate this alternative would be developed somewhere else in the greater Sacramento region. In that case, it is also reasonable to assume that such development would be at a greater distance from the regional core in downtown Sacramento, resulting in more vehicle miles traveled, and more land converted to urban uses. The net result of this type of development would be greater levels of congestion on regional roadways, higher levels of air pollutant emissions, greater consumption of land resulting in losses of farmland and/or habitat, and other effects caused by development typically considered to be sprawl.

Because the Low Building Height Alternative would result in greater environmental effects and because it would fail to meet most of the basic objectives of the Specific Plan, it is not further considered or evaluated in this EIR.

Central Shops Rehabilitation/Center City Park Alternative: In order to avoid environmental effects associated with bringing new population and employees to the Specific Plan Area, the City staff considered an alternative that would focus around the redevelopment of the Central Shops and provide a large-scale active and passive park space in the remainder of the Specific Plan Area. The proposed park would be modeled as a small scale version of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco or Central Park in New York City. The new park would provide a logical pedestrian link to Old Sacramento, the Sacramento River, and Discovery Park/American River Parkway. While the proposed park would be a logical destination for tourists and locals during their leisure time, the number of peak hour trips generated by the proposed alternative would be far less than the proposed project. The result would be much lower levels of congestion in the vicinity of the Specific Plan Area, less air pollutant emissions originating from the Specific Plan Area, fewer demands on public services and infrastructure in the Central City, and the like.

This alternative would, however, fail to meet all of the stated objectives of the proposed Specific Plan. Further, like the residential-only alternative discussed above, while the traffic and air quality effects caused by this alternative would be lower, it is reasonable to assume that the housing, office, retail and other uses eliminated from the proposed Specific Plan to accommodate this alternative would be developed somewhere else in the greater Sacramento region. In that case, it is also reasonable to assume that such development would be at a greater distance from the regional core in downtown Sacramento, resulting in more vehicle miles traveled, and more land converted to urban uses. The net result of this type of development would be greater levels of congestion on regional roadways, higher levels of air pollutant emissions, greater consumption of land resulting in losses of farmland and/or habitat, and other effects caused by development typically considered to be sprawl.

Because the Central Shops Rehabilitation/Center City Park Alternative would result in greater environmental effects and because it would fail to meet any the objectives of the Specific Plan, it is not further considered or evaluated in this EIR.

Different Location Alternative: Section 15126.6(f)(2)(B) states that “[i]f the lead agency concludes that no feasible alternative locations exist, it must disclose the reasons for this conclusion, and should include the reasons in the EIR. For example, in some cases there may be no feasible alternative locations for a geothermal plant or mining project which must be in close proximity to natural resources at a given location.”

The most prominent and important project objective is to improve and redevelop the Specific Plan Area, the historic downtown Sacramento Railyards. While the mere construction of residential, office, retail, cultural, or other uses identified in the Specific Plan Area could be accomplished at other locations in the region, no other location would meet the primary objective of the project – to redevelop the Specific Plan Area. In this case, no feasible alternative location exists that would achieve the primary and most important objective of the project. As such, the evaluation of a Different Location Alternative is not further considered in this EIR.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN THIS EIR

Although any number of alternatives could be designed that could result in the reduction or elimination of project impacts, a total of four alternatives, each intended to reduce or eliminate one or more of the significant impacts identified for the proposed project, are evaluated in this Draft EIR, as described below.

- **Alternative 1: No Project/No Development Alternative.** This alternative assumes that the proposed project would not occur and there would be no new development of the Specific Plan Area. This alternative assumes the existing Specific Plan Area would remain undeveloped with the exception of the existing depot (Intermodal Facility) and the Central Shops structures, currently used to store and repair old train cars.
- **Alternative 2: No Project/General Plan Buildout.** This alternative assumes that the Plan Area would be redeveloped consistent with the existing land use designations identified in the current General Plan. The No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative allows for the development of over 9.6 million sf of office, 527,000 sf of retail, 320,000 sf of public/cultural space, 2,800 residential units, and 640 hotel rooms.³
- **Alternative 3: Reduced Density/Reduced Intensity Alternative.** This alternative assumes that the density and or intensity of all of the proposed land uses besides Parcel 2, Parcel 11a, and Parcel 35 would be reduced by approximately 30 percent. The retail uses anticipated for Parcel 2 under the proposed project would remain the same as the proposed project, while the amount of retail in Parcel 11a would be reduced by 50 percent compared to the proposed project. This alternative would eliminate residential uses from Parcel 35 and reduce the number of hotel rooms from 500 rooms to 300 rooms. All of the retail within Parcel 35 in the proposed project would be included in the Reduced Density/Reduced Intensity Alternative. The Reduced Density/Reduced Intensity Alternative would place a 60-foot height limit on the proposed hotels within Parcels 35, 14, and 3c. The roads included in the proposed project would remain the same under this alternative. Under a maximum buildout scenario, the Reduced Density/Reduced Intensity Alternative would generate approximately 7,400 du, 956,143 sf of retail, 343,700 sf of mixed use, 720 hotel rooms, 1,571,360 sf of office, 339,773 sf of cultural space, and 41.6 acres of open space.
- **Alternative 4: Water Supply Constrained Alternative.** This alternative assumes the development of the proposed project would be reduced to an enlarged Initial Phase, which would allow the project to be completed by 2020, when it is anticipated that a potable water

3 Economic and Planning Systems, Inc., *Draft Report, Railyards/Richards/Downtown Nexus Study*, September 3, 1996, page 2.

treatment capacity deficit may occur within the City without a new Sacramento River diversion and WTP, based on the proposed maximum day demand. The entire Initial Phase and parcels 50, 52N, 52S, 53N, 53S, 54a, 57N, 57a, 58N, 59N, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, and 72 would be developed in a manner consistent with the proposed project. Parcels 71N, 70N, 69N, 68N, 67N, and 66N would not be developed under this alternative, which would result in a reduction the development footprint size (a reduction of 6.59 acres). To address issues related to visual resources along the river, the land uses within the Riverfront District, (Parcels 34 and 35), which include the proposed 350- to 450-foot tall hotel, would be converted to passive open space under this alternative. Under this alternative, all proposed roads would be included, but Parcels 49a, 54N, 54S, 66S, 67S, 68S, 69S, 70S, and 71S would be converted from RMU to open space. Parcels 47a, 48, 51, 57S, 58S and 59S would be converted to surface and above-ground parking. At maximum buildout, the Water Supply Constrained Alternative would generate approximately 4,678 du, 1,720,190 sf of retail (including the Central Shops), 491,000 sf of mixed use, 600 hotel rooms, 1,045,200 sf of office, and 35.51 acres of open space by the year 2020.

An assessment of each of the alternative's comparative environmental impacts relative to the proposed project analysis is included below. The focus of this analysis is the difference between the alternative and the proposed project, with an emphasis on addressing the significant impacts identified under the proposed project. For each alternative, the analysis indicates which proposed project mitigation measures would be required of the alternative, and which significant and unavoidable impacts would be avoided. In some cases, the analysis indicates what additional mitigation measures, if any, would be required for the alternative being discussed, and what significant and unavoidable impacts would be less (or more) severe. Unless otherwise indicated, the level of significance and required mitigation would be the same for the alternative as for the proposed project and no further statement of the level of significance is made. Table 8-1 provides a summary comparison of the severity of impacts for each alternative by topic. Table 8-2 provides the level of development for each of the alternatives compared to the proposed project.

Alternative 1: No Project/No Development Alternative

The CEQA Guidelines require the evaluation of the comparative impacts of the "No Project" alternative (CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6(e)(1)). The No Project/No Development Alternative describes an alternative in which no development would occur in the Specific Plan Area with the exception of the continued current use of the existing depot and the Central Shops structures. Because the Specific Plan Area is assumed to remain undeveloped under the No Project/No Development Alternative, the site-specific conditions of the No Project/No Development alternative are best described by the existing conditions presented in the environmental setting sections in Chapter 6 of this Draft EIR.

Comparative Environmental Effects

Because the site would remain in its current condition under the No Project/No Development Alternative, there would be no physical changes to the Specific Plan Area. Under the No Project/No Development Alternative, there would be no change in the existing visual environment: no light sources would be created and there would be no change to the existing visual character of the Specific Plan Area. There would be no increase in air pollutants associated with project construction nor an increase in pollutants associated with more vehicles accessing the area. Under this alternative, historic structures would remain inaccessible and in disrepair. In addition, the potential disturbance of any biological resources or unknown subsurface cultural resources would not be an issue because the site would not be disturbed to accommodate the construction of new buildings. Hazards associated with building design or use would not occur. The current drainage pattern would not be changed. There would be no effects on water quality. There would be no increase in noise

Issue Area	Proposed Project	No Project/No Development	No Project/General Plan Buildout	Reduced Density/Intensity	Water Supply Constrained
Air Quality	SU	NI	SU-Reduced	Reduced	Reduced
Biological Resources	LS	NI	Equal	Equal	Equal
Cultural Resources	LS	NI	Equal	Equal	Equal
Seismicity, Soils, and Geology	LS	NI	Equal	Equal	Equal
Hazardous Materials	LS	NI	Equal	Equal	Equal
Hydrology and Water Quality	LS	NI	Equal	Equal	Equal
Land Use	LS	NI	Equal	Equal	Equal
Noise and Vibration	SU	NI	Reduced	Reduced	Reduced
Parks and Open Space	LS	NI	Reduced	Reduced	Reduced
Public Services	LS	NI	Reduced	Reduced	Reduced
Public Utilities	LS	NI	Reduced	Reduced	Reduced
Transportation and Circulation	SU	NI	Reduced	Reduced	Reduced
Aesthetics and Visual Resources	LS	NI	Equal	Reduced	Reduced
Energy	LS	NI	Reduced	Reduced	Reduced

Notes:
 SU = Significant and Unavoidable – if any impact was identified as significant and unavoidable, after mitigation, in the technical analysis.
 LS = Less than Significant – if all impacts were identified as less than significant, after mitigation, in the technical analysis.
 NI = No impact would occur.
 Equal = Level of significance is equal to the proposed project.
 Greater = Level of significance is greater compared to the proposed project.
 Reduced = Level of significance is reduced compared to the proposed project, but not necessarily to a less-than-significant level.
 Source: PBS&J/EIP, 2007.

Use	Proposed Project	No Project/No Development	No Project/General Plan Buildout	Reduced Density/Intensity	Water Supply Constrained
Office	2,828,200	N/A	9,600,000	1,571,360	1,045,200
Retail	1,384,000	N/A	527,000	956,143	1,244,800
Cultural Space	485,390	N/A	320,000	339,773	485,390
Mixed Use	491,000	N/A	0	343,700	491,000
Total Non-Residential	5,188,590		10,447,000	3,210,976	3,266,390
Residential (DUs)	10,000 to 12,501	N/A	2,800	7,400	4,678
Hotel (rooms)	1,100	N/A	640	720	600

Source: EIP Associates, a Division of PBS&J, 2007.

associated with project construction and/or any noise impacts associated with construction or future operational activities. Lastly, because the site would not be developed, impacts on public utilities would not occur under this alternative, so there would be no need for additional sewer and drainage capacity or potable water. Under this alternative, the number of vehicles accessing the site would not change; therefore, there would be no operational impacts on the surrounding roadway network or freeway interchanges.

Nevertheless, while the local traffic and air quality effects caused by this alternative would be lower, it is reasonable to assume that the housing, office, retail and other uses not developed on in the Specific Plan Area as called for under the Specific Plan would need to be developed somewhere else in the greater Sacramento region. In that case, it is also reasonable to assume that such development would be at a greater distance from the regional core in downtown Sacramento, and would be developed at substantially lower densities than proposed as discussed above. The resulting development would be characterized by a greater dependence on the automobile, more vehicle miles traveled, and more land converted to urban uses. The net result of this type of development would be greater levels of congestion on regional roadways, higher levels of air pollutant emissions, greater consumption of land resulting in losses of farmland and/or habitat, and other effects caused by development typically considered to be sprawl.

Mitigation That Would No Longer Be Required

None of the mitigation measures identified in this Draft EIR would be required under the No Project/No Development Alternative.

Significant Unavoidable Impacts That Would No Longer Occur

None of the significant and unavoidable impacts identified in this Draft EIR would occur under the No Project/No Development Alternative. It is reasonable, however, to assume that there would be significant unavoidable environmental effects caused by the accommodation of a similar amount of development at much lower densities elsewhere in the region.

Relationship of the No Project/No Development Alternative to the Project Objectives

The No Project/No Development Alternative would not meet any of the stated objectives of the proposed project. In particular, it would not develop the Specific Plan Area into a mixed use urban village near Downtown and the Sacramento waterfront. This alternative would not integrate the Plan Area into the fabric of the existing Central City. Therefore, the No Project/No Development Alternative would not achieve any of the project objectives.

Alternative 2: No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative

Comparative Environmental Effects

The No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would develop the same footprint as the proposed project; therefore, effects related to the location of development, such as potential loss of biological and cultural resources, exposure to seismic or other geologic hazards, exposure to hazardous materials, and changes to local hydrology, would be the same as the proposed project. The No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative includes a mix of uses similar to the proposed project, so land use impacts, such as potential incompatibility of uses, would be the same as the proposed project. The No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would include a greater proportion of non-residential uses than the proposed project, but would redevelop the site at urban densities, similar to the proposed project. Although the site would have a different look, the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would result in similar aesthetic effects as the proposed project.

The No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would develop the same area as the proposed project, but the alternative would include more than five million sf more of non-residential construction than the proposed project. Therefore, construction-related noise and air emission impacts would be greater than the proposed project. Because the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would include fewer residential units, fewer residents would be exposed to traffic and rail noise. However, traffic generated by the alternative would also contribute to noise levels that exceed standards at existing sensitive receptors. Therefore, this would be a significant and unavoidable impact, like the proposed project. Based upon gross vehicle trip generation, the No

Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would generate fewer trips than the proposed project. If greater internalization of trips is realized for the proposed project, the proposed project could result in fewer trips and, thus, fewer emissions. However, based upon gross vehicle trips, the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would result in fewer vehicle-related emissions than the proposed project. Nonetheless, the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would result in significant and unavoidable impacts related to operational emissions.

As shown in Table 8-2, the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would allow more than twice the amount of non-residential development, but approximately 25 percent of the residential development of the proposed project. Assuming a household size of 2.1 persons per dwelling unit (see Chapter 5.0, Population and Housing), the 2,800 units would generate a population of 5,880 persons. Because park demand is based upon population (generated from residential units), the demand for parks would be less under the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative: 14.7 acres of Neighborhood Serving Parks, 14.7 acres of Community Serving Parks, 47 acres of Citywide/Regionally Serving, and 2.9 miles of Trails/bikeways, for a total of approximately 80 acres. Like the proposed project, all the parkland may not be able to be accommodated within the Specific Plan Area; therefore, this alternative would also require that the City and developer reach agreement regarding the approximate amount of parkland. However, because less parkland would be required for this alternative, the impact would be less severe than the proposed project.

The No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would increase demand for public services, including police services, fire protection services, schools, libraries, and solid waste. As with the proposed project, the demand for these services would be met through City planning processes. Also like the proposed project, if a school were to be located within the Specific Plan, mitigation recommending that the District prepare a safety study would still apply.

Water demand and wastewater generation of the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would be approximately 40 percent of the proposed project. Even with this reduction, there could still be a shortfall in the availability of treated water by 2020, which would be exacerbated by the increased demand. Energy demands would be less under the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative: electricity demand would be approximately one third of the proposed project and natural gas would be approximately 96 percent of that of the proposed project. Energy impacts of this alternative would also be less than significant.

Based upon the trip generation by land use contained in section 6.12 Transportation, the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would generate fewer gross automobile trips than the proposed project. It should be noted, however, that the gross trip generation does not take into account any potential reductions from transit use or the fact that internal trips could be reduced or eliminated under the proposed project due to the mixed-use nature of the project and proximity of more residential uses to employment opportunities and retail. If the proposed project could result in a higher proportion of internal trips than the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative, the overall impact on traffic in the area and region could be less for the proposed project. Nonetheless, because the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would generate fewer gross automobile trips than the proposed project, the impact of the alternative is assumed to be less severe than the proposed project.

This alternative would continue and exacerbate the historic pattern of downtown Sacramento serving as the jobs center of the region, supported by suburban areas dominated by lower density housing development. While the local traffic and air quality effects caused by this alternative may be somewhat lower, based upon regional growth projections discussed in Chapter 5.0, Population and Housing, it is reasonable to assume that the approximately 9,000 housing units not developed in the Specific Plan Area as called for under the proposed Specific Plan would need to be developed somewhere else in the greater Sacramento region. In that case, it is also reasonable to assume that

such development would be at a greater distance from the regional core in downtown Sacramento, and would be developed at substantially lower densities than proposed. The resulting housing development would be characterized by a greater dependence on the automobile, more vehicle miles traveled, and more land converted to urban uses. The net result of this type of development would be greater levels of congestion on regional roadways, higher levels of air pollutant emissions, greater consumption of land resulting in losses of farmland and/or habitat, and other effects caused by development typically considered to be sprawl. Under this alternative, the environmental benefits of infill, high density housing in close proximity to the regional jobs center in downtown Sacramento would be largely lost.

Mitigation That Would No Longer Be Required

All of the mitigation measures identified in this Draft EIR would be required under the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative.

Significant Unavoidable Impacts That Would No Longer Occur

All of the significant and unavoidable impacts identified in this Draft EIR would occur under the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. It is also reasonable to assume that there would be additional significant unavoidable environmental effects caused by the accommodation of approximately 9,000 housing units at much lower densities elsewhere in the region.

Relationship of the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative to the Project Objectives

The No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would develop the Specific Plan Area with a mix of uses near Downtown and the Sacramento waterfront. This alternative could integrate the Specific Plan Area into the fabric of the existing Central City. Each of the project objectives include some aspect of the mixed-use development which relies upon interactions between the internal uses. However, given the proportions of non-residential to residential use, this alternative would be considered more of an office development than a true mixed-use project. As such, this alternative would not be the regional draw for the City of Sacramento for its unique mix of uses that is a project objective. This alternative would be able to take advantage of the proximity of transit for employment on the site, but the transit use generally occur during peak commute hours and would be used for entertainment and retail as envisioned in the project objectives. Therefore, because the No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative would not create a mixed-use development, it would generally be inconsistent with the project objectives.

Alternative 3: Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative

Comparative Environmental Effects

The Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would develop the same footprint as the proposed project; therefore, effects related to the location of development, such as potential loss of biological and cultural resources, exposure to seismic or other geologic hazards, exposure to hazardous materials, and changes to local hydrology, would be the same as the proposed project. The Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative includes a mix of uses the same as the proposed project, only less intense, so land use impacts, such as potential incompatibility of uses, would be the same as the Specific Plan Area.

Although the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would develop the same footprint as the proposed project, it represents an approximately 40 percent reduction in the amount of non-residential development and 2,500 to 5,000 fewer residential units compared to the proposed project. Therefore, impacts related to the level of development of the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would be reduced compared to the proposed project. Construction noise and air quality impacts of the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would be less than the proposed project;

however, these effects would be significant even with implementation of measures identified for the proposed project. While operational air emissions would be reduced compared to the proposed project, the reductions would not be sufficient to reduce the operational emissions to a level below the threshold. The demand for public services and utilities (police, fire, solid waste, libraries, schools, parks, wastewater and drainage, potable water, electricity, and natural gas) would be less under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative, because of the reduced population. The Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would generate fewer vehicle trips than the proposed project, so effects on traffic would be less severe. However, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would also result in significant effects on local road segments, intersections, freeway on- and off-ramps, and freeway segments that could not be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. Although the entire site would still be developed at an urban density under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative, because the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would limit the height of the proposed waterfront hotel to 60 feet, compared to up to 30 stories under the proposed project, the effect on the visual character of the area would be less than that of the proposed project.

While the local traffic and air quality effects caused by this alternative may be somewhat lower, it is reasonable to assume that the non-residential space and up to 5,000 housing units not developed in the Specific Plan Area as called for under the proposed Specific Plan would need to be developed somewhere else in the greater Sacramento region. As discussed above, it is also reasonable to assume that such development would be at a greater distance from the regional core in downtown Sacramento, and would be developed at substantially lower densities than proposed. The resulting housing development would be characterized by a greater dependence on the automobile, more vehicle miles traveled, and more land converted to urban uses. The net result of this type of development would be greater levels of congestion on regional roadways, higher levels of air pollutant emissions, greater consumption of land resulting in losses of farmland and/or habitat, and other effects caused by development typically considered to be sprawl.

Mitigation That Would No Longer Be Required

All of the mitigation measures identified in this Draft EIR would be required under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative.

Significant Unavoidable Impacts That Would No Longer Occur

All of the significant and unavoidable impacts identified in this Draft EIR would occur under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative. It is reasonable to assume that there would also be additional significant unavoidable environmental effects caused by the accommodation of approximately 3,000 to 5,000 housing units at much lower densities elsewhere in the region.

Relationship of the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative to the Project Objectives

The Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would develop the Specific Plan Area into a mixed use urban village near Downtown and the Sacramento waterfront, thereby integrating the Specific Plan Area into the fabric of the existing Central City. Therefore, the project objectives could be achieved through the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative.

Alternative 4: Water Supply Constrained Alternative

Comparative Environmental Effects

The Water Supply Constrained Alternative would eliminate development on six parcels, totaling 6.59 acres, on the northern portion of the project. Other areas would be developed with open space uses instead of intensive uses, as proposed for the project. However, while the uses in these areas would be open space, due to the current condition of the site, some construction activity would be required to make these areas suitable for active or passive open space use. Thus, the area of

disturbance under the Water Supply Constrained Alternative would be only reduced by the 6.59 acres discussed above. Because the Water Supply Constrained Alternative would develop a smaller footprint than the proposed project, effects related to the location of development, such as potential loss of biological and cultural resources, exposure to seismic or other geologic hazards, exposure to hazardous materials, and changes to local hydrology, would be similar to, but proportionately reduced, compared to the proposed project. The Water Supply Constrained Alternative includes the same uses as the proposed project, except Parcels 71S, 70S, 69S, 68S, 67S, 66S, 54N, 54S, and 49a would be developed as open space (instead of RMU) and Parcels 59S, 58S, 57S, 51, 48, and 47a would be developed with surface and above-ground parking (instead of RMU and ORMU). Nonetheless, the uses within the proposed project would be considered internally compatible, so land use impacts, such as potential incompatibility of uses, would be the same as the proposed project.

The Water Supply Constrained Alternative would reduce development compared to the proposed project (an approximately 28 percent reduction in the amount of non-residential development and up to 7,823 fewer residential units compared to the proposed project). Therefore, impacts related to the level of development of the Water Supply Constrained Alternative would be reduced compared to the proposed project. Construction noise and air quality impacts of the Water Supply Constrained Alternative would be less than the proposed project; however, these effects would be significant even with implementation of measures identified for the proposed project. While operational air emissions would be reduced compared to the proposed project, the reductions would not be sufficient to reduce the operational emissions to a level below the threshold. Like the proposed project, the Water Supply Constrained Alternative would result in impacts related to exposure of onsite receptors to existing and future noise levels from traffic noise levels (local and interstate traffic noise sources) and rail noise associated with freight, passenger rail, and light rail services, which would also be significant and unavoidable under this alternative. However, because this alternative would result in fewer residents on site, the impact would be less severe. The demand for public services and utilities (police, fire, solid waste, libraries, schools, parks, wastewater and drainage, potable water, electricity, and natural gas) would be less under the Water Supply Constrained Alternative, because of the reduced population. The Water Supply Constrained Alternative would generate fewer vehicle trips than the proposed project, so effects on traffic would be less severe. However, the Water Supply Constrained Alternative would also result in significant effects on local road segments, intersections, freeway on- and off-ramps, and freeway segments that could not be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. The Water Supply Constrained Alternative includes less urban development and larger areas of open space than the proposed project, including open space where a 30-story hotel is proposed for the project. Because the Water Supply Constrained Alternative would not include a 30-story hotel, the development of which could conflict with the Riverfront Master Plan or the Sacramento River Parkway Plan, the effect on the visual character of the area would be less than that of the proposed project.

While the local traffic and air quality effects caused by this alternative may be somewhat lower, it is reasonable to assume that the non-residential space and up to approximately 7,800 housing units not developed in the Specific Plan Area as called for under the proposed Specific Plan would need to be developed somewhere else in the greater Sacramento region. In that case, it is also reasonable to assume that such development would be at a greater distance from the regional core in downtown Sacramento, and would be developed at substantially lower densities than proposed. The resulting housing development would be characterized by a greater dependence on the automobile, more vehicle miles traveled, and more land converted to urban uses. The net result of this type of development would be greater levels of congestion on regional roadways, higher levels of air pollutant emissions, greater consumption of land resulting in losses of farmland and/or habitat, and other effects caused by development typically considered to be sprawl.

Mitigation That Would No Longer Be Required

All of the mitigation measures identified in this Draft EIR would be required under the Water Supply Constrained Alternative.

Significant Unavoidable Impacts That Would No Longer Occur

All of the significant and unavoidable impacts identified in this Draft EIR would occur under the Water Supply Constrained Alternative. It is reasonable, however, to assume that there would be significant unavoidable environmental effects caused by the accommodation of approximately 3,300 to 5,800 housing units at much lower densities elsewhere in the region.

Relationship of the Water Supply Constrained Alternative to the Project Objectives

The Water Supply Constrained Alternative would develop a mixed-use urban village near Downtown and the Sacramento waterfront on the western portion of the Specific Plan Area. The open space areas included in the alternative would provide some recreational and scenic amenities. However, this alternative does not include waterfront development, as included in the project objectives. In addition, because the circulation system connecting the development on the western portion of the project to areas to the north, south, and east would still be required under this alternative, the open space would be a series of block- or partial-block-sized open space parcels. The disconnected nature of these parcels would detract from their utility for recreational use. The physical separation from areas to the east created by this expanse of open space could also reduce pedestrian connectivity to the Central City. Therefore, the Water Supply Constrained Alternative would not achieve the project objectives of developing a mixed-use village, including waterfront development, and may not achieve effective pedestrian connectivity with adjacent areas of the City.

Environmentally Superior Alternative

Under CEQA, an EIR is required to identify the environmentally superior alternative (see CEQA Guidelines, section 15126 (e)). If the environmentally superior alternative to a project is the “no project” alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives (CEQA Guidelines, section 15126.6 (e) (2)).

Among the alternatives considered and evaluated in this EIR, the environmentally superior alternative is the No Project/No Development Alternative, due to the lack of environmental impacts associated with this alternative. However the No Project/No Development Alternative does not achieve any of the project’s objectives.

Among the other alternatives, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative in that it would reduce the identified impacts in the vicinity of the Specific Plan Area. However, as discussed in Chapter 5.0, Population and Housing, the population in the City of Sacramento is projected to increase to 72,000 by 2020. As discussed above, development potentially displaced from the proposed Specific Plan would need to be developed elsewhere in the region. If this development occurs at densities commonly being produced at this time, there would be off-site impacts associated with the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative that would be in addition to those direct impacts associated with construction and operation on the project site. Therefore, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would result in higher overall levels of environmental impact, which would lead to a conclusion that the Specific Plan is the environmentally superior alternative.