

CHAPTER 5

ALTERNATIVES

BACKGROUND

The State CEQA Guidelines require that a range of reasonable alternatives to a project, which could feasibly attain the objectives of a project, be described and evaluated in a comparative fashion. The CEQA Guidelines also require that the environmentally-superior alternative (including consideration of the proposed project) be identified. If the alternative with the least environmental impact were the No Project Alternative, then one of the other remaining alternatives must be designated as the environmentally-superior alternative. The FEIR on the Mountain House General Plan Amendment to the General Plan 1995 (BASELINE 1992b) and the FSEIR (BASELINE, 1993) contained discussions and evaluations of five alternatives to the proposed project. These alternatives included the No Project Alternative, the Tracy Alternative Site, the North Livermore Alternative site, the Reduced Scale Alternative, and the Redesigned Alternative. These alternatives were evaluated for environmental impacts. The impacts of the alternatives were compared to impacts associated with the impacts associated with the General Plan Amendments to the County's General Plan 1995 and 2010 (BASELINE, 1992b and 1993). The comparative impacts identified the Reduced Scale Alternative as the environmentally superior alternative. In approving the General Plan Amendment for the project in 1993, the County Board of Supervisors found that the alternatives were infeasible. These previously-evaluated alternatives are discussed below for informational purposes. However, additional comment is not being sought on them in this DEIR, with the exception of the No-Project alternative.

This DEIR evaluates one additional alternative, the Mitigated Alternative. The Mitigated Alternative is described in detail, below, and the environmental impacts are identified in Table 5.1 to a level of detail that allows comparison with the proposed project and all of the impacts from the other alternatives. Table 5.2 identifies whether the goals of the proposed project are achieved for the No Project and Mitigated Alternatives. The comparison between the Mitigated Alternative and the proposed project identifies the Mitigated Alternative as the environmentally superior alternative.

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Five of the alternatives described below were defined and described in previous EIRs for the project site (BASELINE, 1992a and 1993). The characteristics of those five alternatives, previously determined to be infeasible, are summarized below, and the new Mitigated Alternative is described in more detail.

NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

Construction of the proposed project would not occur. The site is currently designated for urban use as a New Community in the County's General Plan 2010. The implementation measures in the General Plan for New Communities require that following a General Plan Amendment, a Master Plan, Public Financing Plan, and a Specific Plan must be prepared. Thus, should the No-Project Alternative be implemented, no development on the site (including subdividing of rural residential parcels currently on-site) could occur without the preparation of the required plans. Williamson Act Contracts on about 418 acres of land have been tentatively canceled. However, if certain conditions (including payment of penalty fees to the State) were not met, the cancellations would not occur, and the land would remain as Contract land.

TRACY ALTERNATIVE SITE

This alternative was evaluated at the request of the City of Tracy. This alternative would be similar to the proposed project except that the entire project would be relocated to the western edge of the City of Tracy. Major access would be available from I-205 and I-580. Changes to the land use plan from the proposed project would include removal of the 60-acre marina (includes 20 acres of related land uses) and replacement of the proposed project's 43-acre town center with 20 acres of neighborhood commercial uses and 23 acres of freeway commercial uses. This alternative would have similar impacts to the proposed project, but would not meet the goal of creating a distinct new community, nor would it comply with the County's General Plan 2010 policy of being a distinct community, separate from existing communities.

NORTH LIVERMORE ALTERNATIVE SITE

The North Livermore site was evaluated because of its location and lack of site constraints. This site appeared to be more advantageously located to supply proximate housing to the Tri-Valley job market than the Mountain House site and would, thus, mitigate some of the identified traffic impacts. The North Livermore site also had relatively few known site constraints, and its agricultural value as grazing land was less than that of Mountain House site.

This alternative would be located within a portion of the North Livermore Planning Area, located north of the City of Livermore in Alameda County. The project acreage and land use categories would be similar to the proposed project except for the removal of the 60-acre marina, which would be replaced with 60 acres of regional parkland. Major access would be available from I-580.

REDESIGNED-PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

This alternative included a major redesign of the project for an ultimate population of about 34,000, as compared to the proposed project's population of more than 43,000 persons. A major difference between the proposed project and this alternative was the village-centered concept, whereby development would be concentrated around four villages. This development form would promote the use of public transit as well as pedestrian and bicycle use. This alternative would maintain 232

acres in agricultural use and include 976 acres of regional parkland. The total acreage for residential, commercial, and industrial use would be slightly less than that for the proposed project.

REDUCED-SCALE PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

This alternative included a significant reduction in the overall scale of the proposed project, and would occur within that portion of the project site bounded by Byron Road in the north and Grant Line Road on the south. Thus, the total area for development would be 2,357 acres, leaving the remaining site in agricultural use. Total residential and commercial development would be about one-half that of the proposed project. Industrial acreage of this alternative would be about 30 percent of that planned for the proposed project.

DESCRIPTION OF NEW MITIGATED ALTERNATIVE

The definition of the mitigated alternative evaluated in this DEIR has been developed in response to mitigation measures identified to mitigate impacts associated with the proposed project. The mitigated alternative includes primarily significant changes to the proposed land use map to mitigate impacts to wildlife, reduce internal vehicle trips, reduce noise impacts to future residents along I-205, reduce water demand, and provide regional recreational opportunities for on-site residents. The Mitigated Alternative would have less environmental impact as compared to the proposed project. Many of the features of the Mitigated Alternative are proposed as mitigation measures; if those were adopted, the proposed project would more closely resemble the Mitigated Alternative. However, the Mitigated Alternative would remain environmentally superior, primarily due to the reduced scale of the development. The following elements would constitute the mitigated alternative:

- The area north of Byron Road would be excluded from development and maintained as an agricultural preserve with habitat enhancement for Swainson's hawk. In addition, a 500-foot buffer along the western site boundary,¹ a 230-foot buffer along the rail corridor, and a 600-foot buffer along the southern boundary should be implemented. This measure would result in a reduction of ~~almost 30~~ **more than 40** percent in the size of the project and would require major redesignation of land uses within the remaining portions of the site to accommodate water and wastewater treatment plants and industrial land uses proposed within the Old River Industrial Park.

A total of about 6,000 residential units and about 1,800 acres would be lost with this alternative, compared to the proposed project. About 3,000 of the lost units could be recaptured on the remaining portion of the site, south of Byron Road, by redesignating 50 percent of the proposed Low Density residential areas south of Byron Road to Medium-High density (with an average of 12 units per acre), for a total of 4,314 Medium-High density units. The distribution of the Medium-High residential areas under this alternative should be near the Town Center area rather than along the western site boundary.

¹ This buffer could be achieved either completely on-site or partially on- and off-site; if portions of the buffer were off-site, it would consist of a conservation easement.

5.0 ALTERNATIVES

As a result of the elimination of development north of Byron Road, the two proposed golf courses would no longer be part of the proposed project, nor would the marina. The proposed second levee system adjacent to Old River may not be required. However, public access to Old River could be designed to accommodate a boat launch after ensuring protection of special taxa species along the river front and appropriate access to the launch area.

- The reduction in acreage of project site development would also reduce the acreage for off-site mitigation for Swainson's hawk and kit fox. The elimination of development north of Byron Road and use of the area as an agricultural preserve with habitat enhancement could possibly suffice as mitigation for loss of habitat to Swainson's hawk; mitigation for the loss of habitat would still need to be negotiated with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). Off-site mitigation for the loss of moderate to high quality atypical kit fox habitat would require concurrence from the US Fish and Wildlife and CDFG; the lands west of the project site, in Alameda County, could possibly be used as mitigation areas.
- Wastewater from the development would receive tertiary treatment rather than secondary treatment. Under this alternative, all treated wastewater would be used on-site for irrigation (either for landscaping or for crops north of Byron Road). In the winter time, treated wastewater would be discharged to Old River, after approval from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (since the wastewater would receive tertiary treatment, it is expected that approval could be obtained). Storage of water during the winter months have not been proposed under this alternative since storage ponds, several hundred feet in area, would reduce developable land.
- This alternative would not provide any regional park lands. Under this alternative, the project would contribute in-lieu fees to the County for regional park development in other places in the County.
- The reduction in the size of the project would reduce the adverse impacts on the regional and local road network from a reduction in vehicle trips. Additional reduction in trips and trip lengths could be accomplished under this alternative by increasing neighborhood commercial land uses. Neighborhood shopping areas would be provided for each 3,000 increment in population; the commercial areas would be located near and adjacent to street intersections in residential areas.
- Mountain House Business Park, proposed in Specific Plan I, would be included in the CSD at the time of its formation to ensure that the job generating land uses in the business park would be constructed as early in the development as possible.
- Intensive archaeological surveys would be performed **incrementally as on the entire site develops prior to any development**. The purpose of the surveys would be to ensure that mitigation measures were implemented to preserve or record any resources identified.

TABLE 5.1

SUMMARY TABLE OF IMPACTS OF ALTERNATIVES AS RELATED TO THE PROJECT

| PLANNING, LAND USE, AND AGRICULTURAL ISSUES | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| ALTERNATIVE | Inconsistency with Goals or Policies of Relevant Plans | Removal of Agricultural Land | Mitigation of Land Use Conflicts |
| Proposed Project | Would not meet some policies regarding new communities in the County's General Plan 2010. | Approximately 3,600 acres of Prime Farmland would be removed from production. | Inadequate buffers along the western and southern edges of the project, and inadequate planning for existing on-site uses (rural residences, dairies) would result in potential land use conflicts. |
| No Project | No impact. | No impact. | No impact. |
| Mitigated Alternative | Would require some General Plan and Development Title Text Amendments. | Less than for proposed project due to elimination of area north of Byron Road and buffers along the southern and northern site boundaries. | Land use conflicts would be minimized. |

| PUBLIC SERVICES | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| ALTERNATIVE | Potential To Delay Response Time by Emergency Personnel or To Create an Inherently Hazardous Situation | Difficulty in Provision of Adequate School Services | Difficulty in Provision of Adequate Recreation Services |
| Proposed Project | No significant impacts. | No significant impacts. | Insufficient regional park acreage proposed on-site. |
| No Project | No impact. | No impact. | No impact. |
| Mitigated Alternative | Similar to proposed project. | Similar to proposed project. | Would provide in-lieu fees for off-site regional park land. |
| | | | Difficulty in Provision of Adequate Solid and Hazardous Waste Services |
| | | | Solid waste generated by the project would reduce landfill capacity. |
| | | | No impact. |
| | | | Similar to proposed project. |

Table 5.1 - C

| PUBLIC UTILITIES/WATER & WASTEWATER | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| ALTERNATIVE | Wastewater Flows that Exceed Wastewater Collection and Treatment Capacity | Water Demand that Exceeds Available Supply/Potential | Potential to Create a Public Health Hazard |
| Proposed Project | If discharge to waters is approved, discharge to Old River could result in degradation of surface waters. (Inadequate wastewater treatment system could result in discharge of partially treated effluent into the reclamation system.) | Development is proposed outside of BBID present boundaries. Possible lack of a year-round water source. | Potential of providing untreated water, inadequate wastewater treatment, inadequate water treatment and wastewater sludge disposal. Potential for uncontrolled release of hazardous materials. |
| No Project | No impact. | No impact. | Hazardous materials and toxic substances used in the form of pesticides and herbicides for agricultural uses. |
| Mitigated Alternative | Mitigation alternative would provide on-site reuse of treated wastewater, thereby reducing overall water demand and eliminate discharges to Old River. | Water demand would be reduced by on-site reuse of treated wastewater. | Similar to proposed project. |

| PUBLIC UTILITIES/STORM WATER, ENERGY, AND UTILITIES | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| ALTERNATIVE | Potential for Flooding | Degradation of Water Quality from Urban Runoff | Potential Infringement of Utility Easements | Consumption of Resources |
| Proposed Project | Major storm water facilities would be required to convey rain water off the project site to prevent flooding. | Pollutants in urban runoff may degrade water quality in Old River. | Major gas and electricity transmission lines cross the project site, which would restrict development. | The project would create a large new energy demand that would contribute to the depletion of renewable and nonrenewable resources. |
| No Project | Existing drainage facilities are sufficient except for occasional flooding of the areas adjacent to Old River and lower sections of Mountain House Creek. | Existing runoff into Old River flows across agricultural lands and contains significantly less of the pollutants that are normally found in urban runoff. | Utility easements would not be infringed upon. | No impact. |
| Mitigated Alternative | Similar to proposed project. | Similar to proposed project. | Similar to proposed project. | Similar to proposed project. |

Table 5... - continued

| ALTERNATIVE | CULTURAL RESOURCES | | GEOLOGY, SEISMICITY & SOILS | |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|--|
| | Disruption of Prehistoric and Historic Resources | Exposure of People or Structures to Potential Major Geologic Hazards | Construction of Structures in Areas with Adverse Soil Conditions | |
| Proposed Project | Could impact prehistoric and historic resources. | The proposed project would result in a significant increased exposure of people and structures to strong seismic shaking and potential levee failure. | The proposed project would include construction within areas with adverse soil conditions, including high shrink-swell potential, high organic content, and high groundwater levels. | |
| No Project | No impact. | No impact. | No impact. | |
| Mitigated Alternative | Intensive archaeological surveys would be completed prior to development. Potential impacts would be reduced. | Similar to proposed project. | Similar to proposed project. | |

| ALTERNATIVE | HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| | Substantial Flooding Impacts on Development within the Floodplain | Degradation of Water Quality (Including Siltation from Erosion and Urban Runoff) | |
| Proposed Project | Northern portion of site potentially flooded during 100-year flood by levee overtopping or failure. | Sediment discharge and accumulation in Old River may occur at the outlet of the marina and the mouth of Mountain House Creek. | |
| No Project | No impact. | No impact. | |
| Mitigated Alternative | No impacts, since development is not proposed in 100-year flood plain area. | Similar to proposed project except with respect to the Marina impacts. | |

Table 5.1 - continued

| VISUAL QUALITY | |
|-----------------------|--|
| ALTERNATIVE | Inconsistency with Character and Form of Surrounding Development |
| Proposed Project | Would convert more than 4,000 acres of agricultural land to urban uses. Views from freeways and major arteries would be altered. |
| No Project | No impact. |
| Mitigated Alternative | Similar to proposed project, but the area north of Byron Road would not be affected. |
| | Increase in Light or Glare |
| | Impacts of light and glare could occur due to urban uses. |
| | No impact. |
| | Similar to proposed project. |
| | Removal of Major Vegetation |
| | Could result in removal of trees due to required road widening. |
| | No impact. |
| | Similar to proposed project. |

| POPULATION, HOUSING, AND EMPLOYMENT | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| ALTERNATIVE | Inadequate Provision of Employment in Relationship to Proposed Employment, Resulting in Required Commuting |
| Proposed Project | The proposed project may attain a delayed balance between jobs and housing, if non-residential land uses do not build out at the expected rate. |
| No Project | No impact. |
| Mitigated Alternative | Requiring that more industrial land be made available earlier in the project will maximize the potential for meeting Jobs/Housing goals. |
| | Inadequate Mix of Housing To Meet Needs of Residents with Varying Incomes |
| | The proposed project may not have a sufficient supply of housing that is affordable to workers employed in the community, or to low-income residents of San Joaquin County. |
| | No impact. |
| | Requiring the designation of additional acreage for Medium-High density housing will maximize the potential for meeting Affordable Housing goals. |

Table 5.1 - continued

| PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ALTERNATIVE | Creation of Potential Health Hazard |
| Proposed Project | Potential exposure to subsurface contamination. Exposure to agricultural chemical residue. Potential adverse health effects associated with wastewater treatment. |
| No Project | No impact. |
| Mitigated Alternative | Similar to proposed project. |
| | Use, Production, or Disposal of Materials that Pose a Hazard |
| | Potential exposure to continued use of agricultural chemicals, hazardous materials used during and after development, and electromagnetic fields from transmission lines. |
| | Continued application of agricultural chemicals with reduced exposure; reduced exposure to electromagnetic fields. |
| | Similar to proposed project. |

| BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| ALTERNATIVE | Substantial Effect on Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species | Substantial Interference with Movement of Any Resident or Migratory Fish or Wildlife Species | Substantial Decrease in Habitat for Fish, Wildlife, or Plants |
| Proposed Project | Substantial impacts, especially upon Swainson's hawk. Use of the site for foraging by San Joaquin kit fox is also a factor. | Proposed development would obstruct terrestrial wildlife movement from Altamont Hills to agricultural land east of the site, creating a barrier from Old River to I-5807-205. | All raptor foraging habitat would be eliminated and the impacts of marina construction would greatly reduce the worth of Old River inshore zone. |
| No Project | No impact. | No impact. | No impact. |
| Mitigated Alternative | Reduced impacts to Swainson's hawk habitat. | Similar to proposed project. | North of Byron Road would remain in agriculture and raptor foraging habitat. |

Table 5.1 - continued

| TRANSPORTATION | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|---|
| ALTERNATIVE | Reduction in Levels of Service for Major Highways | Reduction in Levels of Service for Major Arterials in Vicinity of Project or Alternative Site | Inadequate Provision for Public Transit or Opportunities for Public Transit due to Land Use Pattern | Inadequate Provision for Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation |
| Proposed Project | I-580, I-205 at LOS F with cumulative development including project. | Widening of major arterials in site vicinity would be required. | The density of project is generally higher than typical developments in the County; therefore, opportunities for transit are available. | Project designed to encourage pedestrian and bicycle circulation. |
| No Project | 2010 traffic on I580/I205 would be up to 21,000 daily vehicles fewer, but LOS F is still projected due to cumulative growth. | No impact. | No impact. | No impact. |
| Mitigated Alternative | Similar to proposed project. | Similar to proposed project. | Similar to proposed | Similar to proposed project. |

| AIR QUALITY | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|--|
| ALTERNATIVE | Violation of Air Quality Standards | Exposure of Sensitive Receptors to Substantial Pollutant Concentrations | Creation of Significant Construction Emissions | Creation of New Carbon-Monoxide Hot Spots |
| Proposed Project | Significant increase in regional of ozone precursors and | Create potential for agricultural-residential conflicts and industrial-residential conflicts. | Creates significant local and regional dust emissions. | Does not create carbon monoxide hot spot problems. |
| No Project | No impact. | No impact. | No impact. | No impact. |
| Mitigated Alternative | Similar to proposed project. | Similar to proposed project. | Similar to proposed project. | Similar to proposed project. |

Table 5.1 - continued

| NOISE | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| ALTERNATIVE | Substantial Increase in Ambient Noise Level in Areas Adjacent to the Project Site | Exceedances of Land Use Compatibility Standards for Community Noise | Exposure of Project Residents or Employees to Excessive Noise (e.g., Airports, Railroad Tracks, Freeways) |
| Proposed Project | Significant noise level increases (up to 20 dB) are anticipated along major roads in and around the site. | Noise sensitive land uses would not be compatible with the noise environment adjacent to I-205, Byron Highway, Patterson Pass Road, and Grant Line Road. | Many residents near I-205, Byron Highway, and Grant line Road, would be exposed to excessive noise. |
| No Project | Substantial noise level increases along Altamont Pass (19 dB), Mountain House Road (7 dB), Byron Highway (9 dB), Grant Line Road (8 dB), I-580 (5 dB), I-205 (4 dB), 11th Street (4 dB), Lamers Road (15 dB), Corral Hollow Road (10 dB), and Schulte Road (12 dB) due to cumulative traffic. | Noise sensitive land uses are not compatible with the noise environment adjacent to major access roads. | No impact. |
| Mitigated Alternative | Similar to proposed project. | Setback of 600 feet from I-205 would reduce impacts. | Setback from I-205 and railroad tracks would reduce impacts. |

TABLE 5.2

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES' CONSISTENCY WITH PROJECT GOALS

| Project Goals ¹ | ALTERNATIVES | |
|--|--------------|-----------------------|
| | No Project | Mitigated Alternative |
| Create a high quality environment where people of all economic levels can live and work. | No | Yes |
| Develop a distinct and unique new community that is separate from existing communities. | No | Yes |
| Develop Mountain House as a full service community that will accommodate a portion of the growth projected in the County's General Plan 2010 in an orderly, well-organized development pattern. | No | Yes |
| Provide for a life style that is less reliant on the automobile, more involved with activities within the local community and neighborhoods, and more oriented to use of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian transport. | No | Yes |
| Establish a balance of housing, employment, and a full range of services and infrastructure within the community. | No | Yes |
| Minimize impacts on the County's agricultural resources. | Yes | Yes |
| Create attractive and diverse environments for living, working, and playing. | No | Yes |
| Provide for a pedestrian-oriented character within residential neighborhoods, village commercial centers, and the Town Center. | No | Yes |
| Provide an adequate supply of housing for all income groups in the community. | No | Yes |
| Create a financially and fiscally viable community resulting in positive economic impact on the County. | Unknown | Unknown |
| Establish a safe and efficient circulation system to accommodate the movement of people and goods, reduce environmental impacts and advance the quality of life in the community. | No | Yes |
| Provide adequate public services and facilities to serve the new community. | No | Yes |
| Minimize impact on sensitive environmental resources. | Yes | Yes |

¹ These are goals as stated by the applicant (see Chapter 3 of this DEIR).