

CHAPTER 4.0 – ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which could feasibly avoid or lessen any significant environmental impacts while substantially attaining the basic objectives of the project. An EIR should also evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. This chapter describes potential alternatives to the Proposed Project that were considered, identifies alternatives that were eliminated from further consideration and reasons for dismissal, and analyzes available alternatives in comparison to the potential environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Project.

Key provisions of the *CEQA Guidelines* pertaining to the alternatives analysis are summarized below:

- The discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the Proposed Project or its location that are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the Proposed Project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the Proposed Project objectives, or would be more costly.
- The No Project Alternative shall be evaluated along with its impact. The No Project analysis shall discuss the existing conditions at the time the Notice of Preparation is published. Additionally, the analysis shall discuss what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the Proposed Project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services.
- The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a “rule of reason”; therefore, the EIR must evaluate only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. Alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the Proposed Project.
- For alternative locations, only locations that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the Proposed Project need to be considered for inclusion in the EIR.
- An EIR need not consider an alternative whose effects cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative.

The range of feasible alternatives is selected and discussed in a manner to foster meaningful public participation and informed decision making. Among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are environmental impacts; site suitability; economic viability; availability of infrastructure; general plan contingency; regulatory limitation; jurisdictional boundaries; and whether the proponent could reasonably acquire, control, or otherwise have access to the alternative site. An EIR need not consider an alternative whose effects cannot be reasonably identified, whose implementation is remote or speculative, and that would not achieve the basic project objectives.

4.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

As discussed in Chapter 2, Project Description and Environmental Setting, the Proposed Project is intended to reconcile identified discrepancies between the HTCMP, the City's FBC, and the General Plan. The overarching goal of the Proposed Project is to repeal the HTCMP and associated FBC and amend the General Plan and Zoning Code. The City has determined the following objectives to describe the underlying purpose of the Project:

1. Repeal the HTCMP and the FBC.
2. Initiate a General Plan Amendment and a Zoning text amendment to address the various inconsistencies identified by the Planning Commission ad-hoc committee, including removal of residential land uses, permitting minor alteration of nonconforming uses, and eliminating Freeway Edge Overlay and Railroad Overlay.
3. Preserve and enhance the role of the Project area as the civic and commercial heart of the City.
4. Preserve and honor the historic buildings and other resources in the Project area as integral and generative elements of its urban and architectural character.
5. Codify height and setback requirements for new buildings in the TC and TCE Districts adjacent to any historic buildings.
6. Provide increased FAR in the Project area, especially for areas that provide public gathering spaces.
7. Encourage hotel uses in the Project area, including allowing three story hotels; which will encourage economic generators in the Project Area.
8. Encourage an expanded mix of retail, commercial, and civic uses to create a lively mixed-use environment.
9. Readopt and affirm the Park Once Program parking standards.

4.3 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The alternatives identified below, with the exception of the mandatory No Project Alternative, were selected due to their potential to attain the basic project objectives discussed above and to lessen or avoid significant environmental effects resulting from implementation of the Proposed Project. Alternatives considered in this EIR include:

- No Project Alternative
- Reduced Height Alternative

In summary, the purpose of this section is to discuss feasible alternatives and evaluate the ability of each alternative to reduce or avoid significant adverse environmental impacts while achieving the basic project objectives. The reader is referred to the individual sections of the EIR (Chapter 3) and to the Executive Summary for a detailed discussion of environmental impacts, but each issue area, that would result from implementation of the Proposed Project.

4.3.1 No Project Alternative

Section 15126.6(e) of the CEQA Guidelines requires analysis of a No Project alternative that (1) discusses existing site conditions at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is prepared or the EIR is commenced,

and (2) analyzes what is reasonably to be expected to occur in the foreseeable future based on current plans if the Proposed Project were not approved.

Under this alternative, the Proposed Project would not be implemented. The HTCMP would remain in place and would not be repealed, which would continue to allow for residential land uses in the area. In addition, the FAR would not be increased in the Project area, the maximum building height for all buildings in the HTC area would remain 35 feet, and no new setbacks would be introduced.

Potential effects for the No Project Alternative were compared to the areas of potentially significant effects prior to mitigation that could be a result of the Proposed Project.

Aesthetics

Aesthetic impacts would be less under the No Project Alternative than for the Proposed Project, since no taller buildings would be allowed under the No Project Alternative. However, as described in Section SS, the aesthetic impacts of the Proposed Project are less than significant.

The maximum height in the HTC area would remain at 35-feet in height for all buildings. The No Project Alternative would have reduced impacts in comparison to the Proposed Project.

Air Quality

Implementation of the No Project Alternative would include continued use of the HTCMP, which would include residential land uses. As shown in Table 3-2 above, the No Project Alternative would include greater Commercial/Office, Civic, and Residential square footage and units than the Proposed Project; however, the No Project Alternative would result in lesser square footage of Hotel and Retail uses as compared to the Proposed Project. On balance, the air quality impacts with the No Project Alternative are considered to be less than those of the Proposed Project.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources, and particularly historic resources, impacts would be less under the No Project Alternative than for the Proposed Project as the No Project Alternative would not increase FAR or building heights within the HTC area. However, the No Project Alternative would result in some increased impacts as the No Project Alternative would not include the new setback requirements. The setback requirements as outlined in the Proposed Project are intended to provide greater protection for historic resources. Due to the Proposed Project's allowance of three story hotel buildings, the Proposed Project would have significant and unavoidable impacts to historic resources, and would overall have increased impacts in comparison to the No Project Alternative.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Implementation of the No Project Alternative would include continued use of the HTCMP, which would include residential land uses. As shown in Table 3-2 above, the No Project Alternative would include greater Commercial/Office, Civic, and Residential square footage and units than the Proposed Project; however, the No Project Alternative would result in lesser square footage of Hotel and Retail uses as compared to the Proposed Project. On balance, the GHG emissions impacts with the No Project Alternative are considered to be less than those of the Proposed Project.

Land Use

Under the No Project Alternative, the HTCMP and FBC will not be repealed and inconsistencies with the General Plan and Zoning Code would not be corrected. This alternative would keep the HTCMP which allowed residential uses in the HTC area; however, this is inconsistent with the land uses outlined in the General Plan. The No Project Alternative would have increased impacts in comparison to the Proposed Project.

Transportation

The No Project Alternative would continue to allow for residential uses in the HTC area which has the potential to generate new traffic to residential uses; however, it would also allow residents within the area the ability to walk to the commercial uses in the Project Area. The No Project Alternative would also provide roadway connections including the proposed extensions of Forster Street, Yorba Street, and Avenida Los Amigos. As described in Section 3.9.3, the No Project Alternative VMT per capita the same for both Alternatives because the land use is similar; therefore, the No Project generates more VMT but is denser and has a higher population (due to the incorporation of residential uses) while the Project generates less VMT with a lower population so the resulting VMT per capita is the same. Therefore, the No Project Alternative has similar transportation impacts compared to the Proposed Project.

Conclusion and Relationship to Project Objectives

The No Project Alternative would result in keeping the HTCMP in place without any changes to the General Plan or FBC. Compared to the Proposed Project, the No Project Alternative would further reduce the Proposed Project's already less than significant impacts relating to Aesthetics and Cultural Resources, but would result in greater impacts in the areas of Land Use and Transportation. While the overall impacts associated with the No Project Alternative would be slightly less, under the No Project Alternative none of the project objectives identified in Section 4.2, above, would be achieved.

4.3.2 Reduced Height Alternative

The Reduced Height Alternative assumes that the Proposed Project would be implemented as proposed, except for the building height element. Under this alternative, the building heights for all buildings in the HTC area, including hotel buildings, would be limited to 35 feet in height. All other elements of HTCMP Repeal, General Plan Amendment, and Ordinance Change Project would remain the same. The purpose of this alternative is to reduce impacts associated with taller, three-story buildings of up to 45-feet in height.

Aesthetics

Aesthetic impacts would be similar but less under the Reduced Height Alternative than for the Proposed Project, since building heights would be limited to 35 feet rather than increased to 45 feet for three-story buildings. The Reduced Height Alternative would have reduced impacts in comparison to the Proposed Project.

Air Quality

Under the Reduced Height Alternative, the only change in potential construction or operational emissions from the Proposed Project would be fewer potential hotel units, as three-story hotels would be limited to 35-feet in height. The Reduced Height Impact would have lesser construction and operational air quality impacts in comparison to the Proposed Project.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources impacts would be less under the Reduced Height Alternative than for the Proposed Project, since no increase in the height of buildings would be approved. With the Reduced Height Alternative, all buildings within the HTC area would be limited to 35-feet in height. This alternative would have reduced cultural resources and historical resources impacts in comparison to the Proposed Project.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Under the Reduced Height Alternative, the only change in potential construction or operational emissions from the Proposed Project would be fewer potential hotel units, as three-story hotels would be limited to 35-feet in height. The Reduced Height Impact would have lesser construction and operational GHG emissions impacts in comparison to the Proposed Project.

Land Use

Under the Reduced Height Alternative, all of the Proposed Project elements would be implemented except the increase in allowable building height to 45-feet for 3-story buildings. This alternative would correct inconsistencies between the HTCMP, FBC, and General Plan, and would provide clarifications through the ordinance change. Compared to the Proposed Project, the Reduced Height Alternative would have similar beneficial impacts to land use.

Transportation

Transportation impacts under the Reduced Height Alternative would be similar to the Proposed Project, as the only difference between the two are the increased allowable building height under the Proposed Project. The Reduced Height Alternative would remove the possibility of residential land uses within the HTC area, and would correct other inconsistencies between the General Plan, HTCMP, and FBC. This alternative would have similar impacts in comparison to the Proposed Project.

Conclusion and Relationship to Project Objectives

Compared to the Proposed Project, the Reduced Height Alternative would further reduce the already less than significant impacts relating to aesthetics and cultural resources. However, under the Reduced Height Alternative, some of the project objectives provided in Section 4.2, above, would not be achieved. For example, the Reduced Height Alternative would not achieve the objective of encouraging three story hotels; which will encourage economic generators in the Project area, as this alternative would limit the height of three story hotels to 35 feet and would reduce the economic potential of those structures.

Table 4-1: Comparison of Alternatives

Environmental Issue Area	Proposed Project	No Project Alternative	Reduced Height Alternative
Aesthetics	Less than Significant	Reduced Less than Significant	Reduced Less than Significant
Air Quality	Significant and Unavoidable	Reduced Less than Signification	Reduced Significant and Unavoidable
Cultural Resources	Significant and Unavoidable	Reduced Less than Significant	Reduced Less than Significant with Mitigation
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Less than Significant	Reduced Less than Significant	Reduced Less than Significant
Land Use	Less than Significant	Increased Potentially Significant	Similar Less than Significant
Transportation	Less than Significant	Similar Less than Significant	Similar Less than Significant

4.4 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

CEQA does not require the City to choose the environmentally superior alternative. Instead CEQA requires the City to consider environmentally superior alternatives, explain the considerations that led it to conclude that those alternatives were infeasible from a policy standpoint, weigh those considerations against the environmental impacts of project that is proposed, and make findings that the benefits of those considerations outweighed the harm. The Reduced Height Alternative would limit the ability for hotels of three stories and 45-feet in height to be built in the Project area. However, this alternative would limit the City’s opportunity to encourage hotel uses in the Project area, including allowing three story hotels, which could potentially limit economic generators in the Project area. Therefore, the Reduced Height Alternative would not meet all of the Project Objectives.

Regardless, the Reduced Height Alternative would result in the fewest environmental impacts as compared to the Proposed Project, while still achieving most of the Project Objectives.