

21.0

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

21.1 INTRODUCTION

Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR describe and comparatively evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives to a project, or location of the project, that would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the project's significant effects. The range of alternatives evaluated in the following analysis is dictated by the range of project significant impacts identified in this RDEIR, and evaluated alternatives are limited to those that would reduce or eliminate identified environmental impacts.

This RDEIR found that many significant impacts could be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of mitigation measures outlined within this document. Exceptions include impacts in the environmental topics of agriculture, biological resources, noise, population growth, and traffic; and cumulative impacts to visual quality, biological resources, cultural resources, hydrology and water quality, noise, population growth, and traffic and transportation. Two alternatives, in addition to the CEQA-required "no project" alternative, were formulated to illustrate a reasonable range of project alternatives that could be implemented as alternatives to the 2035 General Plan project. A detailed description of the proposed project is provided in Chapter 3, *Project Description*. CEQA does not require the environmental review of alternatives to be at the same level of detail as that for the proposed project [State CEQA Guidelines §15126.6(d)]. The review must be at a sufficient level, however, to allow for a meaningful comparison of the environmental merits of each.

This meaningful comparison of the identified alternatives is summarized in [Table 21-4](#), shown at the end of this chapter. Each of the alternatives, as well as their comparative merits, is described below.

21.1.1 Factors Considered in Selection of Alternatives

An EIR should briefly describe the rationale for selecting the alternatives to be discussed, identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible, and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination [State CEQA Guidelines §15126.6(c)]. This section describes the process used to select the alternatives. The proposed project and the alternatives addressed in this RDEIR are based on several ideas and concepts developed during the 2035 General Plan Update community outreach process. Citizen input was essential to the update process. When the County initiated the 2035 General Plan Update in 2007, key stakeholder interviews and community workshops were held and countywide mail-in-surveys were distributed, followed by rounds of General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) meetings, input from County staff, and from joint study sessions with the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. In November 2011, a scoping meeting initiated the environmental review process, which further contributed to the development of the selected alternatives. The alternatives addressed in the RDEIR were also selected in consideration of one or more of the following factors:

- The extent to which the alternative would accomplish most of the basic objectives of the proposed project;
- The extent to which the alternative would avoid or lessen any of the identified significant environmental effects of the project;
- The feasibility of the alternative, taking into account location, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, and consistency with various applicable plans and regulatory limitations;
- The appropriateness of the alternative in contributing to a “reasonable range” of alternatives; and
- The requirement of the State CEQA Guidelines to consider a “no project” alternative and, where the “no project” alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, to identify an “environmentally superior” alternative in addition to the no project alternative [State CEQA Guidelines §15126.6(e)].

The significant environmental impacts that the County, in identifying alternatives, seeks to eliminate or reduce are:

- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agriculture use;

- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or the provisions of Williamson Act contracts;
- Involve other land use changes that would result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses;
- Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- Loss or destruction of riparian or other sensitive natural habitats and the wildlife and plants that depend on those habitats;
- Existing noise levels and future noise levels at the locations of proposed noise sensitive developments allowed for under the 2035 General Plan could expose people to or generate noise levels that exceed the County's noise thresholds of acceptability;
- Traffic noise level increases caused by development consistent with the 2035 General Plan would result in a permanent increase in ambient noise levels;
- Induce substantial population growth either directly, by proposing new homes and business, or indirectly, through extension of roads and other infrastructure;
- Substantial increase in vehicular traffic on state freeways and highways, local roadway segments, and key intersections;
- Cumulative Aesthetics/Visual Resources, Agricultural Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Hydrology and Water Quality, Noise, Population and Housing, and Transportation impacts;
- Growth Inducement; and
- Irreversible Environmental Changes.

The alternative selection process was complemented by background information provided in the General Plan Background Report (San Benito County 2010b), the General Plan Alternatives Report (San Benito County 2010a), the project objectives, and the identification of community issues collected during outreach workshops and meetings. The discussion of the 2035 General Plan alternatives, as referenced in the Alternatives Report is distinct from the alternatives analysis presented in this RDEIR. However, there is some overlap regarding certain concepts. The 2035 alternatives outlined in the Alternatives Report were designed to compare various development scenarios for the purpose of exploring different policy directions. The alternatives outlined in this RDEIR are developed to address scenarios that reduce potentially significant impacts associated with the 2035 General Plan.

Consistent with State CEQA Guidelines §15126.6(a), during the RDEIR preparation process, each alternative scenario was reviewed to develop a range of alternatives that would feasibly attain most of the project objectives, but also avoid or lessen several significant effects associated with the proposed project. The objectives of the 2035 General Plan, based upon regulatory requirements, the vision established within the community workshops, and the County's guiding principles as set forth in the 2035 General Plan, are as follows:

1. Adopt a General Plan that complies with state law.
2. Promote a positive and prosperous future, in which balance has been attained between business and residential growth without surrendering rich natural resources, valuable agricultural assets, active county character, or the historic heritage.
3. Encourage new growth in existing unincorporated communities, new communities, or clustered developments in order to preserve prime farmland and rangeland, protect natural habitats, and reduce the financial, social, and environmental impacts of urban sprawl.
4. Ensure that there is a mix of residential, commercial, employment, park, open space, school, and public land uses in order to create a sense of place by supporting condensed, pedestrian accessible, and transit-oriented development.
5. Promote higher residential densities in existing unincorporated urban areas and new communities while encouraging mixed-use development.
6. Ensure new development complements and preserves the unique character and beauty of San Benito County.
7. Establish defined boundaries to separate cities and unincorporated communities from prime agricultural land and important natural resources, using such features as agriculture buffers, greenbelts, open space, and parks.
8. Ensure that a full range of housing options is available to accommodate residents of all income levels and life situations.
9. Balance housing growth with employment growth in order to provide local, affordable housing choices so people can live and work in the county.
10. Ensure that agriculture and agriculture-related industries remain a major economic sector by protecting productive agriculture lands and industries, promoting new and profitable agricultural sectors, and supporting new technologies that increase the efficiency and productivity of commodity farming.

11. Encourage agriculture that is locally-produced, profitable, and that attracts related businesses.
12. Expand and diversify the local economy by supporting businesses, supporting jobs for the diverse population, and capitalizing on the county's natural and human resources.
13. Support existing businesses and establish new local businesses that are based on industries that are innovative, technology-based, and sustainable.
14. Support programs that educate the local workforce on conventional, productive, sustainable, and organic agriculture concepts; water conservation strategies; high-tech industries; and alternative energy production.
15. Support the county's growing tourism industry.
16. Encourage future growth near existing transportation networks such as major roadways, state highways, airports, rail corridors, and other major transportation routes.
17. Encourage future growth near available water and sewer infrastructure to ensure that improvements are economically feasible.
18. Encourage future growth that can be supported by adequate, long-term access to water, sewer, electric, gas, and other utilities.
19. Protect natural resources and open space areas from incompatible uses.
20. Preserve the county's environmental quality and diverse natural habitats.
21. Encourage a healthy living environment that includes walkable neighborhoods, access to recreation and open space, healthy foods, medical services, and public transit.
22. Become a leader in the efficient use of resources, including renewable energy, water, and land.
23. Coordinate County planning efforts with those of the City of Hollister and the City of San Juan Bautista.

21.1.2 Alternatives Eliminated From Further Consideration

The following alternative was determined to not be feasible for continued evaluation because the alternative does not make sense for a General Plan that applies to all the parcels in the County. As a result, the following alternative was eliminated from further consideration.

- **Alternative Project Location.** The State CEQA Guidelines (§15126.6(3)(f)(2)) recommend considering an alternative project location under certain circumstances to reduce potential project impacts. However, the goals and policies of the proposed project are specific to the geographic context of the County’s planning area. Implementation of the proposed project consistent with the 2035 General Plan goals and policies at another location does not make sense for a General Plan that applies to all parcels within the County’s jurisdiction and within its planning area. Therefore, this RDEIR does not evaluate an alternative project location.

21.2 EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

21.2.1 *Alternative 1 – No Project*

CEQA Guidelines require discussion of the “No Project” alternative to allow decision makers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project [State CEQA Guidelines §15126.6(e)]. When the project is a revision or update of an existing land use plan or regulatory policy, the No Project Alternative will be the continuation of the existing plan or policy. Under the No Project Alternative, the existing 1992 San Benito County General Plan (adopted in 1980, with updates through 2010 with the exception of the 2007-2014 Housing Element) would remain the long-range planning policy document for the County.

Therefore, the effects of continued implementation of the existing 1992 General Plan is evaluated. Consequently, current development patterns would continue to occur in accordance with the existing General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Because the proposed 2035 General Plan contains new and updated goals and policies to cluster urban development, protect natural resources, and preserve agricultural lands, the No Project Alternative would not include any of the new policies and implementation programs designed to address the environmental impacts of future County development. Additionally, implementation of the No Project Alternative would not include implementation of the mitigation measures identified in this RDEIR.

As a result, the No Project Alternative would involve a greater amount of land subject to development. It would likely result in a larger buildout population within the unincorporated County compared to AMBAG growth projections due to a lack of guiding goals and policies (designed to manage growth) and a lower-density, sprawling, and scattered development pattern due to residential “ranchette” subdivisions. Urban and other development permitted under the existing 1992 General Plan goals and policies, and the current Zoning Ordinance, would continue under the No Project Alternative.

The No Project Alternative would increase the magnitude of anticipated environmental impacts associated with the proposed project because the new and updated goals and policies included as part of the proposed 2035 General Plan would not be implemented. Compared to the proposed 2035 General Plan, the 1992 General Plan lacks goals and policies designed to prevent and compensate the loss of important farmlands. The 1992 General Plan also lacks specific policy direction to improve air quality and protect biological resources from habitat fragmentation and cultural resources from development by directing growth to cities, cities' spheres of influence, and to clustered locations within new communities under certain conditions. The lack of new and updated policies would likely result in greater impacts to air quality, and agricultural, biological, and cultural resources.

Because the No Project Alternative would result in a larger development footprint, it would convert greater amounts of open space land to urban uses and create more impervious surfaces, which would increase the amount of surface water runoff that would have an adverse effect on water quality. The increase in the creation of impervious surfaces would also reduce groundwater recharge. Compared to the proposed 2035 General Plan, the existing 1992 General Plan lacks extensive goals and policies requiring the efficient and timely provision of public services, recreation facilities, and utility infrastructure. It is also likely "ranchette" development would continue to occur under the 1992 General Plan due to the construction of dwelling units on 5-acre lots, further impacting the efficient delivery of recreation amenities, public services, and utility infrastructure.

In addition to the items noted above, the 1992 General Plan does not have updated wildland fire requirements for new development, or new standards for development within the 100-year floodplains. It does not include updated land use and transportation policies to ensure consistency with state and regional growth and climate change policies. While the No Project Alternative would result in some similar environmental impacts to the proposed 2035 General Plan, such as those to scenic resources, geology, soils, and minerals, most environmental impacts would be greater because the protective policies contained within the 2035 General Plan or identified as mitigation in this RDEIR would not be implemented. Based on the foregoing, the No Project Alternative would result in more environmental effects than the proposed 2035 General Plan Update project.

Table 21-1 includes an evaluation of the relative impacts of implementing Alternative 1 – No Project Alternative.

Table 21-1 Evaluation of Alternative 1 – No Project Alternative

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 1
Aesthetics		
Damage to scenic resources within a state scenic highway	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies would not be implemented
Degradation of the existing visual character or quality of scenic resources	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Create a new source of light or glare adversely affecting day or nighttime views	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Agricultural Resources		
Conversion of important farmland to non-agriculture use	PS/SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Conflict with zoning for agriculture use or Williamson Act contracts	PS/SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Land use changes that result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses	PS/SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Loss of forest land or changes that could convert forest land to non-forest uses	LS	No change from project
Air Quality		
Conflict with an applicable air quality plan	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Violate any air quality standard or contribute to an air quality violation	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Result in an considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 1
Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, or health risks associated with locating sensitive receptors toxic air contaminants	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since new goals and policies would not be implemented
Biological Resources		
Loss or destruction of special status species and habitat	PS/SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Loss or destruction of riparian or other sensitive natural habitat	PS/SU	Increased magnitude but not significant since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Loss or degradation of federally protected wetlands	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Interference with native species' movements, corridors and nursery sites	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Conflict with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Conflict with an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan	LS	No change from project
Cultural Resources		
Adverse change in the significance of a historical resource	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Loss of archaeological resources, paleontological resources, or unique geological features	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 1
Loss of traditional cultural properties where Native American customs and traditions are practiced	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources		
Expose people or structures to earthquake fault rupture, strong seismic ground shaking, or ground failure including liquefaction, landslides, or dam failure	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance even though the new goals and policies would not be implemented since existing protective requirements would be unchanged
Development or structures on unstable soils or expansive soils	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance even though the new goals and policies would not be implemented since existing protective requirements would be unchanged
Soil erosion or topsoil loss from exposure to wind or water erosion or loss of valuable mineral resources	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance even though the new goals and policies would not be implemented since existing protective requirements would be unchanged
Use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems in unfit soils that may impact groundwater resources	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance even though the new goals and policies would not be implemented since existing protective requirements would be unchanged
Global Climate Change		
Increase in GHG emissions that would have a significant environmental impact	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Increase in GHG emissions that would conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 1
Hazards and Hazardous Materials		
Hazards due to the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or through accident conditions	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies would not be implemented
Emit hazardous emissions or handles hazardous materials, within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Located on a hazardous materials site and creates a significant hazard to the public or the environment	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Results in a safety hazard due to a public or private airport	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Interferes with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Exposes people or structures to wildland fires	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Hydrology and Water Resources		
Violation of water quality standards or degradation of water quality	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Deplete groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since new goals and policies would not be implemented
Substantially alter drainage patterns, including alteration of a stream course or river	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Increase the rate or amount of storm water runoff	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 1
Substantially degrade water quality	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Allow new development to proceed within a 100-year flood hazard area	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding related to the failure of a levee or dam	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Expose people or structures to risk of loss, injury, or death due to inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Land Use Compatibility		
Physical division an established community	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Conflict with applicable plan, policy, or regulation	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan	LS	No change from project
Noise		
Development of new noise-sensitive land uses within areas subject to noise impacts	PS/SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Development of noise-producing uses near existing sensitive land uses	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies would not be implemented
Development of new sensitive land uses within areas subject to vibration	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies would not be implemented

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 1
Traffic noise level increases caused by development consistent with the 2035 General Plan	PS/SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Expose sensitive uses to construction noise	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Expose potential uses to aircraft overflight noise	PS/LS	Increased magnitude and significant since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Population and Housing		
Inducement of population growth	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies related to New Communities and Wine/Hospitality uses would not be implemented
Displacement of substantial amounts of population and housing units	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Public Services		
Demand for additional or altered fire protection and emergency response facilities	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies would not be implemented
Demand for additional or altered police protection and law enforcement facilities	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies would not be implemented
Demand for additional or altered school facilities	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Demand for additional or altered library facilities	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Recreation		
Increase the use of existing parks or recreational facilities	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 1
Require recreational facilities that have an adverse physical effect on the environment	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Transportation		
Increase in vehicular traffic on state freeways and highways	PS/SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Increase in vehicular traffic on local roadway segments	PS/SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Increase in vehicular traffic at key intersections	PS/SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Increase demand for air travel or increased development near airports	PS/LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Introduction of hazards due to design features or incompatible uses	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Adverse effects on emergency access and evacuation	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Conflict with policies supporting alternative transportation modes	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Utilities & Service Systems		
Lack of sufficient water supplies and entitlements to accommodate development	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Substantially deplete groundwater supplies	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Require new construction or expansion of existing water treatment facilities	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 1
Lack of adequate wastewater treatment capacity to serve the projected demand or exceed wastewater treatment requirements	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Require new or alteration of stormwater drainage facilities	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Require new solid waste facilities and comply with solid waste requirements	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Cumulative Impacts		
Aesthetics	SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Agricultural Resources	SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Air Quality	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Biological Resources	SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Cultural Resources	SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources	LS	No change from project
Global Climate Change	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 1
Hydrology and Water Resources	SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Land Use Compatibility	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since new goals and policies would not be implemented
Noise	SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Population and Housing	SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Public Services	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Recreation	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Transportation	SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies, and EIR mitigation would not be implemented
Utilities and Service Systems	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Growth Inducement	SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Irreversible Commitment of Resources	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented
Irreversible Environmental Changes	SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 1
Potential Environmental Damage from Accidents	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since the new goals and policies would not be implemented

Source: EMC Planning Group 2014, Planning Partners 2013.

Notes: LS = Less than significant impact, PS = Potentially significant impact, SU = Significant and unavoidable impact, PS/LS = Less than significant impact after mitigation, PS/SU = Significant and unavoidable impact after mitigation

Implementation of the No Project Alternative would not fully meet any of the objectives of the 2035 General Plan project.

21.2.2 Alternative 2 – City-Centered Growth

Under the City-Centered Growth Alternative, urban growth would be directed to the City of Hollister, while providing for a modest amount of unincorporated residential, commercial, and employment growth. Minimal urban development would occur within the City of San Juan Bautista due to its size and proximity to the City of Hollister. Instead, the City of Hollister would accept additional population growth by increasing its density and by developing contiguous land within its sphere of influence (SOI) boundary. This alternative would discourage new development in the County’s unincorporated areas, especially in unincorporated rural areas outside the City of Hollister’s SOI.

Residential ranchette subdivisions and clustered residential developments would be prohibited on prime farmland in the Hollister and San Juan Valleys. This alternative would include very limited future unincorporated commercial and employment growth along major transportation corridors, since the majority of this growth would be assumed to occur in the City of Hollister. This alternative would revise or remove goals and policies that encourage or permit residential and commercial development outside designated urban areas such as the City of Hollister and the City of San Juan Bautista. The New Community Study Areas and Wine/Hospitality Priority Areas would be removed. Goal LU-5 (Commercial and Mixed-Use Development), Policies LU-5.1 (New Commercial Neighborhood Nodes), LU-5.2 (New Commercial Thoroughfare Nodes), LU-5.3 (New Commercial Regional Nodes), and LU-5.4 (New Commercial Nodes Vision); Goal LU-6 (Employment and Industrial Development) and Policies LU-6.1 (Employment Centers) through LU-6.5 (New Heavy Industrial Areas); and Goal LU-8 (New Communities) and Policies LU-8.1 through LU-8.8 (New Community Purpose, Threshold, Application Requirements) would be removed from the Land Use Element.

Under this alternative, land within the City of Hollister's SOI would be annexed as necessary and policies would be included to support annexation and development within Hollister. New development under this alternative would be consistent with current growth trends. This alternative implies the establishment of cooperative development and fiscal arrangements between the County and the City of Hollister, including the development and successful implementation of a countywide TDC program. However, under this alternative, while more growth would be directed to the City of Hollister, the County would not have land use discretion over development activities within the city's planning area. This alternative assumes that the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista may have fewer protective environmental policies compared to the County. With the exception of policies that permit urban development outside designated urban area boundaries (i.e., cities, city SOIs), all other proposed 2035 General Plan goals and policies would apply.

The City-Centered Growth Alternative would decrease the magnitude of most anticipated environmental impacts associated with the proposed project because urban development would be directed to the City of Hollister, and away from natural resources and important farmlands not within the City's SOI. In other words, environmental impacts would decrease in certain respects because the overall amount of growth and the density and intensity of such development in the unincorporated County would be markedly lower under this alternative. Assuming that development within the City of Hollister more efficiently uses land resources and all agricultural lands in the Hollister and San Juan Valley would be protected from subdivision or future development through a countywide TDC program, compared to development within rural parts of the unincorporated County, this alternative would result in a compact and smaller development footprint and there would be fewer impacts on certain resources (e.g., agricultural resources, biological resources, aesthetic and visual resources, etc.) within the unincorporated County. As a result, the City-Centered Growth Alternative would convert less open space and important farmlands, preserve scenic resources, reduce vehicle miles traveled and related automobile emissions, convert less sensitive plant and wildlife habitat, better protect undiscovered cultural resources, minimize flood hazards, reduce the exposure of structures and people to high wildfire risk, decrease the creation of impervious surfaces and surface water runoff associated with increased urbanization, better deliver public services, and reduce impacts associated with the construction of utilities and facilities needed to serve growth. Based on the foregoing, the City-Centered Growth Alternative would result in fewer environmental effects within the unincorporated County than the proposed 2035 General Plan Update project.

Table 21-2 includes an evaluation of the relative impacts of implementing Alternative 2 – City-Centered Growth Alternative.

Table 21-2 Evaluation of Alternative 2 – City-Centered Growth Alternative

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 2
Aesthetics		
Damage to scenic resources within a state scenic highway	LS	No change from project
Degradation of the existing visual character or quality of scenic resources	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Create a new source of light or glare adversely affecting day or nighttime views	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Agricultural Resources		
Conversion of important farmland to non- agriculture use	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Conflict with zoning for agriculture use or Williamson Act contracts	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Land use changes that result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Loss of forest land or changes that could convert forest land to non-forest uses	LS	No change from project
Air Quality		
Conflict with an applicable air quality plan	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county, and resulting development would be more compact
Violate any air quality standard or contribute to an air quality violation	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county and automobile use and trucking operations would be reduced

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 2
Result in an considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment	LS	No change from project
Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations or health risks associated with locating sensitive receptors near toxic air contaminants	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since fewer urban-edge conflicts would occur due to compact development
Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county, and resulting development would be more compact
Biological Resources		
Loss or destruction of special status species and habitat	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Loss or destruction of riparian or other sensitive natural habitat	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less urban development would occur within the unincorporated county
Loss or degradation of federally protected wetlands	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Interference with native species' movement, wildlife corridors and nursery sites	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significant since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Conflict with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Conflict with an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan	LS	No change from project

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 2
Cultural Resources		
Adverse change in the significance of a historical resource	PS/LS	No change from project
Loss of archaeological resources, paleontological resources, or unique geological features	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less urban development would occur within rural areas or on farmland within the unincorporated county
Loss of traditional cultural properties where Native American customs and traditions are practiced	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less urban development would occur within rural areas within the unincorporated county
Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources		
Expose people or structures to earthquake fault rupture, strong seismic ground shaking, or ground failure including liquefaction, landslides, or dam failure	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less urban development would occur within the unincorporated county
Development or structures on unstable soils or expansive soils	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Soil erosion or topsoil loss from exposure to wind or water erosion or loss of valuable mineral resources	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems in unfit soils that may impact groundwater resources	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county, reducing the need for septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 2
Global Climate Change		
Increase in GHG emissions that would have a significant environmental impact	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since more growth would occur within the City of Hollister and existing urbanized areas, reducing automobile use
Increase in GHG emissions that would conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since more growth would occur within the City of Hollister and existing urbanized areas, reducing automobile and energy use and increasing reliance on existing public infrastructure and services
Hazards and Hazardous Materials		
Hazards due to the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or through accident conditions	LS	No change from project
Emit hazardous emissions or handles hazardous materials, within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school	LS	No change from project
Located on a hazardous materials site and creates a significant hazard to the public or the environment	PS/LS	No change from project
Results in a safety hazard due to a public or private airport	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county where most public and private airports are located
Interferes with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan	LS	Increased magnitude and significance since more growth would occur within incorporated cities, increasing traffic congestion on city roadways

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 2
Exposes people or structures to wildland fires	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within rural areas of the unincorporated county where there is a higher wildfire threat
Hydrology and Water Resources		
Violation of water quality standards or degradation of water quality	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since more development would occur within existing urbanized areas where existing storm water infrastructure is in place
Deplete groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less low-density development would occur within the unincorporated county, reducing impervious surfaces and improving groundwater recharge potential
Alter existing drainage patterns, including alteration of a stream course or river	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less development would occur near rivers and streams and within undeveloped land
Increase the rate or amount of storm water runoff	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since more high-density development would occur, decreasing impacts to surface water runoff
Substantially degrade water quality	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since more high-density development would occur, limiting the creation of impervious surfaces and reducing impacts to groundwater quality
Allow new development to proceed within a 100-year flood hazard area	LS	No change from project
Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding related to the failure of a levee or dam	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude and significance since existing urbanized areas have infrastructure in place to reduce flood potential

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 2
Expose people or structures to risk of loss, injury, or death due to inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow	LS	No change from project
Land Use Compatibility		
Physical division an established community	PS/LS	No change from project
Conflict with applicable plan, policy, or regulation	LS	No change from project
Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan	LS	No change from project
Noise		
Development of new noise-sensitive land uses within areas subject to noise impacts	PS/SU	No change from project
Development of noise-producing uses near existing sensitive land uses	LS	No change from project
Development of new sensitive land uses within areas subject to vibration	LS	No change from project
Traffic noise level increases caused by development consistent with the 2035 General Plan	PS/SU	No change from project
Expose sensitive uses to construction noise	PS/LS	No change from project
Expose potential uses to aircraft overflight noise	PS/LS	No change from project
Population and Housing		
Inducement of population growth	PS/SU	No change from project

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 2
Displacement of substantial amounts of population and housing units	LS	No change from project
Public Services		
Demand for additional or altered fire protection and emergency response facilities	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since high- density development would involve more efficient delivery of fire protection and emergency services
Demand for additional or altered police protection and law enforcement facilities	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since high- density development would involve more efficient delivery of police services
Demand for additional or altered school facilities	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since high- density development would involve more efficient delivery of school services
Demand for additional or altered library facilities	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since high- density development would involve more efficient delivery of public services
Recreation		
Increase the use of existing parks or recreational facilities	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since high- density development would involve more efficient delivery of services
Require recreational facilities that have an adverse physical effect on the environment	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since high- density development would involve more efficient delivery of recreation services
Transportation		
Increase in vehicular traffic on state freeways and highways	PS/SU	No change from project
Increase in vehicular traffic on local roadway segments	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since high- density development would reduce vehicle trips but would result in increased traffic congestion

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 2
Increase in vehicular traffic at key intersections	PS/SU	Increased magnitude but not significance since more growth would occur within incorporated cities, increasing traffic congestion on city roadways
Increase demand for air travel or increased development near airports	PS/LS	No change from project
Introduction of hazards due to design features or incompatible uses	LS	No change from project
Adverse effects on emergency access and evacuation	LS	Increased magnitude but not significance since more growth would occur within incorporated cities, increasing traffic congestion
Conflict with policies supporting alternative transportation modes	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since alternative transportation modes would be better supported within higher-density urbanized areas
Utilities & Service Systems		
Lack of sufficient water supplies and entitlements to accommodate development	LS	No change from project
Substantially deplete groundwater supplies	LS	No change from project
Require new construction or expansion of existing water treatment facilities	LS	No change from project
Lack of adequate wastewater treatment capacity to serve the projected demand or exceed wastewater treatment requirements	LS	No change from project

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 2
Require new or alteration of stormwater drainage facilities	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since more growth would occur within incorporated cities reducing the need to upgrade storm drainage facilities in the unincorporated county
Require new solid waste facilities and comply with solid waste requirements	LS	No change from project
Cumulative Impacts		
Aesthetics	SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Agricultural Resources	SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Air Quality	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Biological Resources	SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Cultural Resources	SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources	LS	No change from project
Global Climate Change	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	LS	No change from project
Hydrology and Water Resources	SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 2
Land Use Compatibility	LS	No change from project
Noise	SU	No change from project
Population and Housing	SU	No change from project
Public Services	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Recreation	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Transportation	SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Utilities and Service Systems	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Growth Inducement	SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Irreversible Commitment of Resources	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Irreversible Environmental Changes	SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county
Potential Environmental Damage from Accidents	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since less growth would occur within the unincorporated county

Sources: EMC Planning Group 2014, Planning Partners 2012.

Notes: LS = Less than significant impact, PS = Potentially significant impact, SU = Significant and unavoidable impact, PS/LS = Less than significant impact after mitigation, PS/SU = Significant and unavoidable impact after mitigation

However, implementation of the City-Centered Growth Alternative would not fully meet some of the objectives of the 2035 General Plan project, as follows.

- Encourage new growth in existing unincorporated communities, new communities, or clustered developments in order to preserve prime farmland and rangeland, protect natural habitats, and reduce the financial, social, and environmental impacts of urban sprawl.
- Promote higher residential densities in existing unincorporated urban areas and new communities while encouraging mixed-use development.
- Encourage future growth near existing transportation networks such as major roadways, state highways, airports, rail corridors, and other major transportation routes.
- Ensure a full range of housing options are available to accommodate residents of all income levels and life situations.
- Expand and diversify the local economy by supporting businesses, supporting jobs for the diverse population and capitalizing on the County's natural and human resources.

21.2.3 Alternative 3 – Increase Minimum Parcel Size for Agriculture Designation

Under the Increase Minimum Parcel Size for Agriculture Designation Alternative, the development standard for the Agriculture (A) land use designation would be increased from a maximum density of one dwelling unit per five acres to one dwelling unit per 20 acres. The purpose of the Agriculture land use designation is to maintain the productivity of agricultural land, especially prime farmland.

Unlike the proposed project, while this designation allows agricultural support uses, it only permits one principal residential dwelling unit per 20 acres. The purpose of this alternative is to limit scattered rural residential development within important farmlands in the County and to better preserve and protect agricultural, open space, scenic, and natural resources. This alternative is also designed to restrict future minor subdivision parcel splits and subsequent ranchette development. Therefore, all existing and new parcels in the County designated and zoned for Agriculture uses would not be allowed to subdivide existing lots below a minimum 20 acre parcel size. Further, with the exception of residential dwelling units that already exist with agricultural parcels, only one new dwelling unit would be allowed for each 20 acre parcel. New development under this alternative would be consistent with current growth trends; however, the land use designations and standards for Agriculture would be revised to a maximum density of one dwelling unit per 20 acres. Under this alternative, all 2035 General Plan goals and policies would apply.

The Increase Minimum Parcel Size for Agriculture Designation Alternative would decrease the magnitude of agriculture, open space, biological resource, and scenic resource impacts because this alternative would substantially reduce the amount of scattered rural residential development that could occur by allowing one dwelling unit for every five acres. Under this alternative, less new development would occur within the areas designated for agriculture uses to the north, east, and west of the City of Hollister. Also, less rural residential development would occur along State Route 25 north and south of the City of Hollister, along State Route 156 between the City of Hollister and the City of San Juan Bautista, and to towards the northwestern corner of the County, west of the U.S. Highway 101. Less scattered rural residential development would result in fewer agricultural and open space impacts, less habitat fragmentation, and fewer human health hazards due to residences situated near agricultural operations, where pesticides can drift. This alternative would also result in better and more efficient delivery of public services, since fewer residences would be located in the rural parts of the County.

Table 21-3 includes an evaluation of the relative impacts of implementing Alternative 3 – Increase Minimum Parcel Size for Agriculture Designation Alternative.

Table 21-3 Evaluation of Alternative 3 – Increase Minimum Parcel Size for Agriculture Designation Alternative

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 3
Aesthetics		
Damage to scenic resources within a state scenic highway	LS	No change from project
Degradation of the existing visual character or quality of scenic resources	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones
Create a new source of light or glare adversely affecting day or nighttime views	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 3
Agricultural Resources		
Conversion of important farmland to non- agriculture use	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones
Conflict with zoning for agriculture use or Williamson Act contracts	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones
Land use changes that result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones
Loss of forest land or changes that could convert forest land to non-forest uses	LS	No change from project
Air Quality		
Conflict with an applicable air quality plan	LS	No change from project
Violate any air quality standard or contribute to an air quality violation	LS	No change from project
Result in an considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment	LS	No change from project
Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations or health risks associated with locating sensitive receptors near toxic air contaminants	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones and minimizing the number of sensitive receptors that could be exposed to pesticides

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 3
Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones and minimizing the number of sensitive receptors that could be exposed to odors associated with agricultural uses
Biological Resources		
Loss or destruction of special status species and habitat	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones and preventing habitat fragmentation
Loss or destruction of riparian or other sensitive natural habitat	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones and preventing habitat fragmentation
Loss or degradation of federally protected wetlands	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones and preventing habitat fragmentation
Interference with native species, movements, wildlife corridors, and nursery sites	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones and preventing habitat fragmentation
Conflict with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources	PS/LS	No change from project
Conflict with an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan	LS	No change from project

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 3
Cultural Resources		
Adverse change in the significance of a historical resource	PS/LS	No change from project
Loss of archaeological resources, paleontological resources, or unique geological features	PS/LS	No change from project
Loss of traditional cultural properties where Native American customs and traditions are practiced	PS/LS	No change from project
Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources		
Expose people or structures to earthquake fault rupture, strong seismic ground shaking, or ground failure including liquefaction, landslides, or dam failure	LS	No change from project
Development or structures on unstable soils or expansive soils	LS	No change from project
Soil erosion or topsoil loss from exposure to wind or water erosion or loss of valuable mineral resources	LS	No change from project
Use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems in unfit soils that may impact groundwater resources	LS	No change from project
Global Climate Change		
Increase in GHG emissions that would have a significant environmental impact	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 3
Increase in GHG emissions that would conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units in agricultural zones
Hazards and Hazardous Materials		
Hazards due to the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or through accident conditions	LS	No change from project
Emit hazardous emissions or handles hazardous materials, within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school	LS	No change from project
Located on a hazardous materials site and creates a significant hazard to the public or the environment	PS/LS	No change from project
Results in a safety hazard due to a public or private airport	PS/LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since fewer residences would be located in the unincorporated portion of the county
Interferes with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan	LS	No change from project
Exposes people or structures to wildland fires	LS	No change from project
Hydrology and Water Resources		
Violation of water quality standards or degradation of water quality	LS	No change from project
Deplete groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge	LS	No change from project

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 3
Alter existing drainage patterns, including alteration of a stream course or river	PS/LS	No change from project
Increase the rate or amount of storm water runoff	PS/LS	No change from project
Substantially degrade water quality	LS	No change from project
Allow new development to proceed within a 100-year flood hazard area	LS	No change from project
Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding related to the failure of a levee or dam	PS/LS	No change from project
Expose people or structures to risk of loss, injury, or death due to inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow	LS	No change from project
Land Use Compatibility		
Physical division an established community	PS/LS	No change from project
Conflict with applicable plan, policy, or regulation	LS	No change from project
Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan	LS	No change from project
Noise		
Development of new noise-sensitive land uses within areas subject to noise impacts	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 3
Development of noise-producing uses near existing sensitive land uses	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units
Development of new sensitive land uses within areas subject to vibration	LS	No change from project
Traffic noise level increases caused by development consistent with the 2035 General Plan	PS/SU	Decreased magnitude but not significance since minimum parcel size would be increased to 20-acres, subsequently restricting the number of allowable dwelling units
Expose sensitive uses to construction noise	PS/LS	No change from project
Expose potential uses to aircraft overflight noise	PS/LS	No change from project
Population and Housing		
Inducement of population growth	PS/SU	No change from project
Displacement of substantial amounts of population and housing units	LS	No change from project
Public Services		
Demand for additional or altered fire protection and emergency response facilities	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since fewer dwelling units would be allowed in agricultural zones, reducing the need to deliver public services to rural parts of the county
Demand for additional or altered police protection and law enforcement facilities	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since fewer dwelling units would be allowed in agricultural zones, reducing the need to deliver public services to rural parts of the county
Demand for additional or altered school facilities	LS	No change from project

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 3
Demand for additional or altered library facilities	LS	No change from project
Recreation		
Increase the use of existing parks or recreational facilities	LS	No change from project
Require recreational facilities that have an adverse physical effect on the environment	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since fewer dwelling units would be allowed in agricultural zones, reducing the need to provide recreational facilities to rural parts of the county
Transportation		
Increase in vehicular traffic on state freeways and highways	PS/SU	No change from project
Increase in vehicular traffic on local roadway segments	PS/SU	No change from project
Increase in vehicular traffic at key intersections	PS/SU	No change from project
Increase demand for air travel or increased development near airports	PS/LS	No change from project
Introduction of hazards due to design features or incompatible uses	LS	No change from project
Adverse effects on emergency access and evacuation	LS	No change from project
Conflict with policies supporting alternative transportation modes	LS	No change from project
Utilities & Service Systems		
Lack of sufficient water supplies and entitlements to accommodate development	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since fewer dwelling units would be allowed in agricultural zones, reducing the use of water

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 3
Substantially reduce groundwater supplies	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since fewer dwelling units would be allowed in agricultural zones, reducing the use of groundwater
Require new construction or expansion of existing water treatment facilities	LS	No change from project
Lack of adequate wastewater treatment capacity to serve the projected demand or exceed wastewater treatment requirements	LS	No change from project
Require new or alteration of stormwater drainage facilities	LS	No change from project
Require new solid waste facilities and comply with solid waste requirements	LS	No change from project
Cumulative Impacts		
Aesthetics	SU	No change from project
Agricultural Resources	SU	No change from project
Air Quality	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since fewer dwelling units would be allowed in agricultural zones, reducing the number of sensitive receptors exposed to agricultural odors and pesticides
Biological Resources	SU	No change from project
Cultural Resources	SU	No change from project
Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources	LS	No change from project
Global Climate Change	LS	No change from project
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	LS	No change from project
Hydrology and Water Resources	SU	No change from project
Land Use Compatibility	LS	No change from project

Impact	Level of Impact	
	Project	Alternative 3
Noise	SU	No change from project
Population and Housing	SU	No change from project
Public Services	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since fewer dwelling units would be allowed in agricultural zones
Recreation	LS	No change from project
Transportation	SU	No change from project
Utilities and Service Systems	LS	No change from project
Growth Inducement	SU	No change from project
Inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy	LS	Decreased magnitude but not significance since fewer dwelling units would be allowed in agricultural zones
Irreversible Commitment of Resources	LS	No change from project
Irreversible Environmental Changes	SU	No change from project
Potential Environmental Damage from Accidents	LS	No change from project

Sources: EMC Planning Group 2014, Planning Partners 2012.

Notes: LS = Less than significant impact, PS = Potentially significant impact, SU = Significant and unavoidable impact, PS/LS = Less than significant impact after mitigation, PS/SU = Significant and unavoidable impact after mitigation

Implementation of the Increase Minimum Parcel Size for Agriculture Designation Alternative would not fully meet all the objectives of the 2035 General Plan project as follows:

- Encourage new growth in existing unincorporated communities, new communities, or clustered developments in order to preserve prime farmland and rangeland, protect natural habitats, and reduce the financial, social, and environmental impacts of urban sprawl.
- Promote higher residential densities in existing unincorporated urban areas and new communities while encouraging mixed-use development.
- Encourage future growth near existing transportation networks such as major roadways, state highways, airports, rail corridors, and other major transportation routes.

- Ensure a full range of housing options are available to accommodate residents of all income levels and life situations.
- Expand and diversify the local economy by supporting businesses, supporting jobs for the diverse population and capitalizing on the County’s natural and human resources.

21.3 COMPARISON OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MERITS OF EACH ALTERNATIVE

In [Table 21-4](#), the symbol “-5” means that an alternative has a lower magnitude of impact and level of significance than that for the project (e.g., the adverse environmental condition is less than for the project, so that the impact is less than significant rather than significant). The symbol “-1” means that an alternative has a lower magnitude of impact than that for the project (e.g., the adverse environmental condition is somewhat less than for the project, but the significance of the impact is unchanged). The symbol “0” means that the alternative has an environmental effect that is equal in significance and magnitude to the proposed project. The symbol “+1” means that an alternative has a higher magnitude of impact than that for the project (e.g., adverse environmental condition is more than for the project, but the significance of the impact is unchanged). Finally, the symbol “+5” means that an alternative has a more significant impact than the proposed project (i.e., a significant impact rather than less than significant). These numerical values have been assigned to these categories in order to assess each alternative across a large number of impact areas.

Table 21-4 Definition and Value of Environmental Merits

Definition	Numerical Value (as shown in Table 21-5)
Reduced magnitude and significance of impact compared to proposed project	-5
Reduced magnitude of impact, but no change in level of significance	-1
Same magnitude and significance of impact as proposed project	0
Increased magnitude of impact, but no change in level of significance	1
Increased magnitude and significance of impact compared to proposed project	5

Because the emphasis of the alternatives analysis is on minimizing or avoiding impacts, those categories associated with avoiding or causing impacts not attributable to the project are assigned a value of -5 or 5 respectively. If an alternative lessens or increases the magnitude of an impact without changing its significance, the category is assigned a value of -1 or 1. The number at the bottom of Table 21-5 indicates, for each alternative, the net number of identified impacts of the project that were avoided or reduced by the alternative.

CEQA requires the selection of an environmentally superior alternative; however, if the environmentally superior alternative is the “No Project” alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives (State CEQA Guidelines §15126.6(e)(2)). Therefore, based on this comparative evaluation, Alternative 2 (City Centered Growth Alternative) would reduce the magnitude of the most impacts as an action alternative. Alternative 2 would be the environmentally superior alternative.

The County will consider the selection of a preferred project upon review of this RDEIR and other information in the public record. Identification of an environmentally superior alternative does not require that the County choose that alternative. In choosing a preferred project, the County is required to make written findings regarding its choice of a project to implement, including the reasons why it chose not to implement an environmentally superior alternative or alternatives, if the selected project is not the environmentally superior alternative. In the findings, the County must set forth its reasoning for proceeding with the 2035 General Plan project. Such reasoning could include the social, economic, or other benefits provided by the 2035 General Plan project. This process allows a lead agency to balance any environmental harm with other factors appropriate in judging the merits of a project.

Table 21-5 Comparison of the Environmental Merits of Each Alternative

Impact	Project Level of Impact	Alternative		
		1	2	3
Aesthetics				
Damage to scenic resources within a state scenic highway	LS	5	0	0
Degradation of the existing visual character or quality of scenic resources	PS/LS	5	-1	-1
Create a new source of light or glare adversely affecting day or nighttime views	PS/LS	5	-1	-1

Impact	Project Level of Impact	Alternative		
		1	2	3
Agricultural Resources				
Conversion of important farmland to non-agriculture use	PS/SU	1	-1	-1
Conflict with zoning for agriculture use or Williamson Act contracts	PS/SU	1	-1	-1
Land use changes that result in conversion of farmland to non- agricultural uses	PS/SU	1	-1	-1
Loss of forest land or changes that could convert forest land to non-forest uses	LS	0	0	0
Air Quality				
Conflict with an applicable air quality plan	LS	1	-1	0
Violate any air quality standard or contribute to an air quality violation	LS	1	-1	0
Result in an considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment	LS	5	0	0
Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations or health risks associated with locating sensitive receptors near toxic air contaminants	LS	1	-1	-1
Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people	LS	1	-1	-1
Biological Resources				
Loss or destruction of special status species and habitat	PS/SU	1	-1	-1
Loss or destruction of riparian or other sensitive natural habitat	PS/SU	1	-1	-1
Loss or degradation of federally protected wetlands	PS/LS	5	-1	-1
Interference with native species' movements, wildlife corridors and nursery sites	PS/LS	5	-1	-1
Conflict with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources	PS/LS	5	-1	0
Conflict with an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan	LS	0	0	0

Impact	Project Level of Impact	Alternative		
		1	2	3
Cultural Resources				
Adverse change in the significance of a historical resource	PS/LS	5	0	0
Loss of archaeological resources, paleontological resources, or unique geological features	PS/LS	5	-1	0
Loss of traditional cultural properties where Native American customs and traditions are practiced	PS/LS	5	-1	0
Geology, Minerals, and Soils				
Expose people or structures to earthquake fault rupture, strong seismic ground shaking, or ground failure including liquefaction, landslides, or dam failure	LS	1	-1	0
Development or structures on unstable soils or expansive soils	LS	1	-1	0
Soil erosion or topsoil loss from exposure to wind or water erosion or loss of valuable mineral resources	LS	1	-1	0
Use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems in unfit soils that may impact groundwater resources	LS	1	-1	0
Global Climate Change				
Increase in GHG emissions that would have a significant environmental impact	LS	5	-1	-1
Increase in GHG emissions that would conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions	LS	5	-1	-1
Hazards and Hazardous Materials				
Hazards due to the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or through accident conditions	LS	5	0	0
Emit hazardous emissions or handles hazardous materials, within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school	LS	1	0	0
Located on a hazardous materials site and creates a significant hazard to the public or the environment	PS/LS	5	0	0

Impact	Project Level of Impact	Alternative		
		1	2	3
Results in a safety hazard due to a public or private airport	PS/LS	5	-1	-1
Interferes with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan	LS	1	5	0
Exposes people or structures to wildland fires	LS	5	-1	0
Hydrology and Water Resources				
Violation of water quality standards or degradation of water quality	LS	1	-1	0
Deplete groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge	LS	1	-1	0
Alter existing drainage patterns, including alteration of a stream course or river	PS/LS	5	-1	0
Increase the rate or amount of storm water runoff	LS	5	-1	0
Substantially degrade water quality	LS	5	-1	0
Allow new development to proceed within a 100-year flood hazard area	LS	1	0	0
Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding related to the failure of a levee or dam	PS/LS	5	-5	0
Expose people or structures to risk of loss, injury, or death due to inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow	LS	5	0	0
Land Use Compatibility				
Physical division an established community	PS/LS	5	0	0
Conflict with applicable plan, policy, or regulation	LS	5	0	0
Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan	LS	0	0	0
Noise				
Development of new noise- sensitive land uses within areas subject to noise impacts	PS/SU	1	0	-1

Impact	Project Level of Impact	Alternative		
		1	2	3
Development of noise-producing uses near existing sensitive land uses	LS	5	0	-1
Development of new sensitive land uses within areas subject to vibration	LS	5	0	0
Traffic noise level increases caused by development consistent with the 2035 General Plan	PS/SU	1	0	-1
Expose sensitive uses to construction noise	PS/LS	5	0	0
Expose potential uses to aircraft overflight noise	PS/LS	5	0	0
Population and Housing				
Inducement of population growth	PS/SU	-5	0	0
Displacement of substantial amounts of population and housing units	LS	1	0	0
Public Services				
Demand for additional or altered fire protection and emergency response facilities	LS	5	-1	-1
Demand for additional or altered police protection and law enforcement facilities	LS	5	-1	-1
Demand for additional or altered school facilities	LS	1	-1	0
Demand for additional or altered library facilities	LS	1	-1	0
Recreation				
Increase the use of existing parks or recreational facilities	LS	5	-1	0
Require recreational facilities that have an adverse physical effect on the environment	LS	1	-1	-1
Traffic and Transportation				
Increase in vehicular traffic on state freeways and highways	PS/SU	1	0	0
Increase in vehicular traffic on local roadway segments	PS/SU	1	-1	0
Increase in vehicular traffic at key intersections	PS/SU	1	1	0
Increase demand for air travel or increased development near airports	PS/LS	1	0	0

Impact	Project Level of Impact	Alternative		
		1	2	3
Introduction of hazards due to design features or incompatible uses	LS	1	0	0
Adverse effects on emergency access and evacuation	LS	1	1	0
Conflict with policies supporting alternative transportation modes	LS	5	-1	0
Utilities & Service Systems				
Lack of sufficient water supplies and entitlements to accommodate development	LS	1	0	-1
Substantially reduce groundwater supplies	LS	1	0	-1
Require new construction or expansion of existing water treatment facilities	LS	5	0	0
Lack of adequate wastewater treatment capacity to serve the projected demand or exceed wastewater treatment requirements	LS	5	0	0
Require new or alteration of stormwater drainage facilities	LS	1	-1	0
Require new solid waste facilities and comply with solid waste requirements	LS	1	0	0
Cumulative Impacts				
Aesthetics	SU	1	-1	0
Agricultural Resources	SU	1	-1	0
Air Quality	LS	5	-1	-1
Biological Resources	SU	1	-1	0
Cultural Resources	SU	1	-1	0
Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources	LS	0	0	0
Global Climate Change	LS	5	-1	0
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	LS	1	0	0
Hydrology and Water Resources	SU	1	-1	0
Land Use Compatibility	LS	5	0	0
Noise	SU	1	0	0

Impact	Project Level of Impact	Alternative		
		1	2	3
Population and Housing	SU	1	0	0
Public Services	LS	5	-1	-1
Recreation	LS	5	-1	0
Transportation	SU	1	-1	0
Utilities and Service Systems	LS	5	-1	0
Growth Inducement	SU	1	-1	0
Inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy	LS	5	-1	-1
Irreversible Commitment of Resources	LS	1	-1	0
Irreversible Environmental Changes	SU	1	-1	0
Potential Environmental Damage from Accidents	LS	1	-1	0
Impacts Relative to Project		+240	-48	-22

Sources: EMC Planning Group 2014, Planning Partners 2012.

Notes: LS = Less than significant impact, PS = Potentially significant impact, SU = Significant and unavoidable impact, PS/LS = Less than significant impact after mitigation, PS/SU = Significant and unavoidable impact after mitigation

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