

Chapter 4: Project Alternatives

This Chapter describes a range of reasonable alternatives that would feasibly attain most of the project objectives and would avoid or reduce any significant environmental effects of the proposed project. Through comparison of these alternatives, the relative advantages of each can be evaluated and considered toward making a balanced and well-informed decision.

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6, the discussion of alternatives must focus on alternatives that are potentially feasible and capable of achieving major project objectives while avoiding or substantially lessening any significant environmental effects of the project. Further, the EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to the project, or alternatives whose effects cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative. The Guidelines require that the range of alternatives to be addressed be governed by “a rule of reason” to allow for a reasoned choice.

The EIR must consider potentially feasible alternatives that will inform public decision-makers of the differential environmental impacts which may be associated with each potential alternative, thus enabling a reasoned judgment to be made as to which alternative to the proposed project may be environmentally superior.

As presented in Chapter 1, the following are goals of the proposed DHSP:

1. Provide a clear vision and flexible strategies framework that will help spur the future evolution of Downtown Hawthorne
2. Ensure an economically vibrant, safe, healthy and sustainable Downtown Hawthorne that supports a range of users, including residents, business owners, workers and visitors.
3. Capitalize on key transformative projects that will be catalysts for future public and private investment and positive change
4. Identify opportunities to develop and expand plazas, parks and open space areas to support a livable and healthy downtown
5. Foster strong connectivity, access and circulation for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and automobiles
6. Engage the entire community in robust, creative and ongoing engagement and participation processes

The analysis in the EIR indicates that the implementation of the Specific Plan will result in significant and unavoidable impacts with regard to air quality, GHG emissions, and water supply. All other impacts analyzed in this EIR were found to be either less than significant or can be mitigated to less than significant levels with implementation of the mitigation measures identified in the EIR. Thus, the following analysis of alternatives focuses on alternatives that can reduce or avoid the identified significant and unavoidable impacts. Environmental effects after full implementation of mitigation measures are used as a basis for comparison.

The following discussion considers alternatives to the proposed DHSP. The following three reasonable alternatives were analyzed and compared relative to the proposed DHSP:

- No Project Alternative
- Mixed-Use/Housing Emphasis Alternative
- Commercial Expansion Alternative

In addition, this Chapter discusses alternatives that were identified but were not considered for in-depth analysis and their reason for rejection.

Alternatives Not Evaluated

The DHSP area has historically been identified as the key commercial corridor and governmental center of the City. The DHSP's vision and goal is to revitalize and promote economic development along the Hawthorne Boulevard corridor in order to continue the area's prominence and identity as the commercial center for the City. As the economic and governmental center of the City, an alternative site for the proposed DHSP is not appropriate because the strategies were specifically developed to address the needs of downtown Hawthorne. An alternative site will have different needs, opportunities, constraints, and objectives from those of Hawthorne. There are no other locations within the City that could accommodate the types of uses proposed by the Specific Plan, including the four Transformative Project areas. Hence an alternative location was not evaluated further.

Alternatives Evaluated

Three alternatives have been identified to represent a reasonable range of development scenarios that could occur within the Plan area. In addition to the No Project scenario required under CEQA, a development alternative that places a greater emphasis on incorporation of residential uses (compared to the proposed project) and one that places a greater emphasis on commercial development were evaluated. **Table 4-1** summarizes the development potential for each alternative evaluated below.

Table 4-1: Alternative Analysis Net Increase in Potential Development				
	Proposed DHSP	Alternative 1 No Project	Alternative 2 Mixed-Use/ Housing Emphasis	Alternative 3 Commercial Expansion
Housing Units	317 Units	356 Units	1,109 Units	-587 Units
Non-Residential SF	2,166,600 SF	290,000 SF	1,670,000 SF	2,625,000 SF

Alternative 1: Five percent increase of residential and non-residential development according to SCAG RTP/SCS forecast for the City.

Alternative 2: Higher residential densities and 75% residential and 25% non-residential in mixed-use designated areas. 800 units in the Hawthorne Mall (T1), 118 units in Civic Center (T2) and 55 units in South Bay Ford (T3).

Alternative 3: Higher non-residential intensities and 25% residential and 75% non-residential in mixed-use designated areas. No residential development in the Transformative Projects, but 25% increase in non-residential SF in the T1 and T2.

Alternative No. 1: No Project

Consideration of a “no project” alternative is required by CEQA. The Guidelines state that no project means “existing conditions, as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services” (Guidelines, Section 15126[d][4]).

The No Project Alternative considers a scenario under which the proposed DHSP would not be adopted and development would continue under the existing General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Under this alternative, future development (net increase in housing and non-residential uses) would occur at a modest level.

The Alternative No. 1 assumes that future growth for the Plan area will reflect SCAG’s household and employment growth forecast under the 2012 RTP. In general terms, households and employment are forecast to increase by approximately five percent over the 2015-2035 period. With these assumptions, the net housing units would increase by 356 residential units and non-residential building space would increase by approximately 290,000 square feet in the total DHSP area over the 2015-2035 period without incentives that would be accessible under the DHSP. It assumes no development within the Transformative Project areas during the short five-year period between 2015 and 2020. Under the Alternative No. 1, the Plan area is a mix of commercial and residential uses that do not reflect the level of utilization and community integration envisioned by DHSP goals and strategies. Even so, the Plan area is mostly built out, leaving a limited development potential for additional new residential, commercial, and public use development without the Plan incentives and development flexibility. Under Alternative No. 1, it is anticipated that future development would be

limited to construction of vacant land and under-utilized and blighted properties currently in the Plan area. With limited new additional development, this alternative would generally result in lesser environmental impacts in comparison with the proposed Plan.

Also, because the existing General Plan Land Use Element was adopted in 1989 with minor amendments through the years, the General Plan policies do not reflect current population and the economy characteristics, contemporary growth trends, or recent changes to State and regional sustainability policies and regulations. Hence Alternative No. 1 would not achieve the City's objectives identified for the proposed project.

Alternative No. 2: Mixed-Use/Housing Emphasis

From a land use perspective, the Mixed-Use/Housing Emphasis Alternative would allow greater housing development to occur within the DHSP area. The land use designations of Residential, Hospitality, Commercial, Mixed Use and Public would remain the same except residential densities would be increased and non-residential intensities would be decreased. Under this alternative, the assumed mixed-use proportion would be 75 percent residential and 25 percent non-residential in the Mixed-Use land use designation. Under Alternative No. 2, the intensity of development from the increase in residential densities would be offset by the decrease in non-residential intensities (FAR). Furthermore, existing residential uses, regardless of the underlying land use designation of the DHSP, will remain as residential use -- for example, residential uses on land zone for commercial use. Thus, in these cases the residential properties will be legally non-conforming uses.

Under Alternative No. 2, there would be fewer new vehicle trips generated as compared to those of the proposed Plan because of an assumed reduction of approximately 500,000 square feet in retail commercial uses. However, the total vehicle miles traveled would increase due to the need for residents to drive further to access employment opportunities and commercial services that would be located outside of the DHSP area under this alternative. The resultant air pollutant emissions may or may not be reduced in the long-term because the reduction in locally generated trips would be offset by longer trip lengths (to access more distant employment and commercial service centers). Longer vehicle trips, with different trip distributions, could result in increased traffic congestion in outlying areas, although this may provide a greater incentive for utilization of public transit opportunities available within the plan area.

Construction-related impacts, including temporary short-term effects related to air quality and noise are expected to be similar those identified for the proposed Plan, and would be less than significant with appropriate mitigation. Impacts from air pollutant and GHG emissions during long-term operations of this alternative would be similar to those with the proposed Plan, and regardless of the implementation of mitigation measures, these impacts would be considered significant and unavoidable.

Potential impacts related to cultural resources, geology/soils, and hydrology/water quality would be similar to those identified for the proposed Plan because the area is already mostly built out and the

land surface previously disturbed. As with the proposed Plan, these impacts would be less than significant.

Increased housing units would result in additional residents, which in turn would result in the increased demand for public services, including police, fire, schools and recreation, and public utilities. This increase in demand for services and utilities would be greater than anticipated for the proposed Plan, and with the exception of water demand/supply, the increased demand for public services and utilities would remain less than significant. With limited water supply, the additional residential uses would exceed the projected water supply. Thus, the impact on water supply would be considered significant and unavoidable, as with the proposed Plan.

Impacts related to visual effects would be similar to those anticipated with the proposed Plan due to the net visual effect of increased development intensity. It is anticipated that all new development would undergo architectural and design review, and resultant visual impacts would be less than significant.

Impacts related to land use planning would be similar to those anticipated with the proposed Plan, however, the potential for non-conforming uses and conflict of uses would be slightly greater. Alternative No. 2 would result in a greater number of residential units to occur in a mixed use environment and in closer proximity to existing and future commercial uses, thus increasing the potential for land use conflicts proportionately. However, it is anticipated that the City's project review process, with adherence to required zoning standards and application of conditions of approval, would minimize the potential conflicts and ensure that net effects would be less than significant.

Alternative No. 2 would not achieve the City objectives for the Plan as it would not obtain the level of economic vibrancy and sustainability for the Downtown area and lacks incentives that could serve as catalysts to transform the community and facilitate positive change.

Alternative No. 3: Commercial Expansion

The Commercial Expansion Alternative emphasizes economic development policies that would result in a higher ratio of commercial uses in place of new residential. This is a realistic alternative because of the emphasis on the Transformative Projects. The level of development for the Hawthorne Mall (T1) and Civic Center (T2) Transformative Project sites have been proposed and are under consideration by the City but not yet finalized. Alternative No. 3 analyzes impacts associated with the development of the Transformative Projects commercially intensified as follows:

1. Hawthorne Mall (T1) – Under this alternative, the T1 site would be developed entirely as commercial uses. The 608 residential units proposed by the project Plan would not be developed and would instead be replaced by an additional 25 percent more commercial retail uses, resulting in a net increase of approximately 670,000 square feet, or a total of 2.625 million square feet of development. As with the proposed Plan, it is assumed that the existing Mall would be demolished and the replacement project developed as new

construction.

2. Civic Center (T2) – The intensity of the commercial use of T2 site would be increased by 25 percent, resulting in a net increase of 336,000 square feet of commercial (government, retail and office) uses, for a total development buildout of approximately 521,200 square feet. No residential uses would be proposed under this alternative, although hotel and hospitality uses could still be incorporated.
3. South Bay Ford (T3) – Development of this site would be totally commercial under this alternative, eliminating the option of 55 residential units and doubling the intended net increase of commercial uses from 19,800 square feet under the proposed Plan to approximately 40,000 square feet (or a total building area of approximately 134,600 square feet).
4. St. Joseph's Plaza (T3) – The existing commercial use would remain.

In addition, the residential densities realized for the non-Transformative areas under this alternative are assumed to be similar to those under the proposed Plan at 10 units/acre for R-2 zones, 15 units/acre for R-3 zones, 25 units/acre for R-4 zones, and 1.25 units/acre for MU zones. For non-residential uses, the assumed intensities would be slightly increased to include 1.0 FAR for C-2 zones, 1.5 for C-3 zones and 1.25 for MU zones.

Under the Commercial Expansion Alternative, more new vehicle trips would be generated, as compared to those with the proposed Plan. This increase in vehicle trips to local roadways would result in increased traffic congestion and reduced levels of service that may not be fully mitigatable to less than significant without substantial economic investment and/or enhancements to the public transit system. The resultant air pollutant and GHG emissions would be greater than as for the proposed Plan due to the increased number of vehicle trips and increased traffic congestion. While it is possible that the consolidation of residential and commercial retail and service uses within the area could ultimately result in a reduction in average trip length, the cumulative total vehicles miles traveled is still expected to be greater due the volume of vehicle trips. Thus, under this alternative, long-term air pollutant and GHG emission impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Construction-related impacts, including temporary short-term effects related to air quality, noise and roadway delays, are expected to be cumulatively greater than those identified for the proposed Plan, but ultimately less than significant due to their temporary and short-term nature.

Potential impacts related to cultural resources, geology/soils, and hydrology/water quality would be similar to those identified for the proposed Plan because the area is already developed and the land surfaces previously disturbed. As with the proposed Plan, these impacts would be less than significant.

A decrease in total housing units through 2035 for the overall Plan area would result in a net decline in the permanent population within the plan area. However, the effective increase in daytime population due to enhanced intensity of non-residential development will offset any expected decline in demand from fewer residents. Thus, the increase in commercial square footage would

also incrementally add to the demand for utilities and services. Due to existing deficiencies in available water supply, impacts related to water supply and demand would be significant and unavoidable. Otherwise, impacts related to demand for increased services and utilities would be less than significant with implementation of appropriate mitigation measures.

Impacts related to visual effects would be similar to those anticipated with the proposed Plan due to the net visual effect of increased development intensity and the change in urban form to that of an integrated commercial/mixed-use development corridor. It is anticipated that all new development would undergo architectural and design review, and resultant visual impacts would be less than significant.

Impacts related to land use planning would be similar to those anticipated with the proposed Plan. Alternative No. 3 would result in a greater square footage area of commercial uses, with a minor decline in residential units, above levels identified for the proposed Plan. However, similar levels of development intensity are already permitted under the existing land use designations and zoning. The intensities proposed under this alternative for the T1 and T2 Transformative areas would be consistent with development applications previously reviewed by the city of Hawthorne. Under Alternative No. 3, there would be a stronger likelihood that non-conforming buildings and land uses would be removed and replaced with conforming development. Further, it is anticipated that the project review process, with adherence to required zoning standards and application of conditions of approval, would minimize potential conflicts and ensure that net effects related to land use and planning would be less than significant.

Alternative No. 3 would achieve the City economic objectives for the project as this alternative would essentially represent the project development ideals but assumes an enhanced buildout potential. This alternative would contribute toward the level of economic vibrancy, but not the sustainability for the Downtown area, as the proposed Plan.

Environmentally Superior Alternative

Potential impacts anticipated from the Alternatives analyzed in this Section are summarized in **Table 4-2** and compared to the proposed project. The No Project Alternative might be considered to be the environmentally superior alternative to the project but only because it would result in a minimal change over the existing conditions. However, this alternative would not achieve the major project objectives, and in fact may perpetuate current negative conditions with vacant properties and visual and economic blight. The Commercial Expansion Alternative (Alternative No. 3) would be comparable to the proposed Plan by having the best ability among the alternatives to meet the major project objectives and align with goals for economic vibrancy, transformation and enhanced mobility; however, the overall level of impacts, including those significant impacts related to air quality, GHG emissions and water supply, would be incrementally increased compared to the proposed Plan.

Table 4-2: Summary of Impact Alternatives				
	Proposed DHSP	Alternative 1 No Project	Alternative 2 Mixed-Use/ Housing Emphasis	Alternative 3 Commercial Expansion
Land Use and Planning	LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS
Transportation and Traffic	LTS	-/LTS	+/LTS	+/LTS
Air Quality and GHG	S	-/S	+/S	+/S
Noise	LTS	-/LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS
Geology and Soils	LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS
Hydrology and Water Quality	LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS
Aesthetics	LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS
Cultural Resources	LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS
Public Services	LTS	-/LTS	o/LTS	o/LTS
Public Utilities	S (for water only)	-/S	+/S	+/S

LTS = Less than significant net impact.
S = Significant and unavoidable net impact.
o = degree of impact similar compared to the proposed project
+ = degree of impact greater compared to the proposed project
- = degree of impact less than compared to the proposed project