

Chapter 4. Alternatives Analysis

4.1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

According to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must describe a reasonable range of alternatives to a proposed project that could feasibly attain most of the basic project objectives, and would avoid or substantially lessen any of the proposed project's significant effects. Additionally, a No Project alternative must be analyzed. An EIR must evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives.

The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a "rule of reason" that requires an EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather, the alternatives must be limited to ones that meet the project objectives, are feasible, and would avoid or substantially lessen at least one of the significant environmental effects of the project. "Feasible" means capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors.

The EIR must briefly describe the rationale for selection and rejection of alternatives and the information the lead agency relied on when making the selection. It also should identify any alternatives considered, but rejected as infeasible by the lead agency during the scoping process and briefly explain the reasons for the exclusion. Alternatives may be eliminated from detailed consideration in the EIR if they fail to meet most of the project objectives, are infeasible, or do not avoid any significant environmental effects.

This chapter identifies five alternatives that attain some of the project objectives, are feasible, and could avoid or substantially lessen environmental impacts, including the No Project alternative. This chapter concludes by analyzing the environmentally superior alternative.

4.2 ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

An EIR must briefly describe the rationale for selection and rejection of alternatives. The lead agency may make an initial determination as to which alternatives are potentially feasible and, therefore, merit in-depth consideration, and which are clearly infeasible. Alternatives that are remote or speculative, or the effects of which cannot be reasonably predicted, need not be considered (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126(f)(3)). This section identifies alternatives considered by the lead agency, but rejected as infeasible, and provides a brief explanation of the reasons for their exclusion. Alternatives may be eliminated from detailed consideration in the EIR if they fail to meet most of the project objectives (see Chapter 2), are infeasible, or do not avoid any significant environmental effects (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(c)).

The alternative identified below was not carried forward for analysis because it would not allow for development of the proposed project due to insufficient site acreage. This alternative is described below:

Alternate Site

The development of a Costco type project on an alternate site within the City of San Dimas would require a minimum of 15 acres on a major street without any additional off-site facilities attributed with the proposed project. The City of San Dimas does not currently have available a vacant lot located along a major street that is 15 acres in size. The City has no capability of acquiring a 15-acre lot. The largest available lot on a major street suitable for commercial development is approximately 8-10 acres. Furthermore, there are Costco retail centers currently located in the Cities of Azusa and Montclair. Therefore, placing a new Costco retail center in another nearby city would not be feasible to the west or south due to the proximity of the other stores. Also, locating this retail center in another city would not meet the goals and objectives of the City of San Dimas to provide a new source of goods and services for their residents (and surrounding communities) and generate new sources of revenue for the City.

4.3 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

This section describes and analyzes the No Project Alternative and two additional alternatives selected due to their potential to attain some of the project objectives and to lessen or avoid some of the significant environmental effects resulting from implementation of the proposed project.

No Project Alternative

An EIR is required to evaluate and analyze the impacts of a No Project Alternative. The purpose of evaluating the No Project Alternative is to allow decision-makers to compare the impacts of approving the project with the impacts of not approving the project. However, the No Project Alternative is not the baseline for determining whether the proposed project's impacts are significant, unless it is identical to the existing environmental setting analysis that establishes the baseline (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(e)(1)).

At the time the NOP is published, the No Project analysis must discuss the existing conditions and what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved based on current plans and consistencies with available infrastructure and community services (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(e)(2)).

The discussion of the No Project Alternative normally proceeds along one of two lines. When the project is the revision of an existing land use or regulatory plan, policy, or ongoing operation, the No Project Alternative will be the continuation of the plan, policy, or operation into the future. On the other hand, if the project is an individual development project on an identifiable location, the No Project Alternative should compare the environmental effects of the property remaining in its existing state. However, if other future uses of the land are predictable, such

uses also should be discussed as possible no project conditions and the project should be compared to those uses (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(e)(3)).

No Project, No Development

The No Project, No Development Alternative involves the scenario where the commercial complex is not constructed at the proposed project site. The site would remain as it is with the open fields, vacant lots, single-family residences and light industrial businesses and continue its current operations with no new construction. Demand for a new retail center in the City of San Dimas would not be met. The No Project, No Development Alternative would not achieve the City's goal to provide a new source of goods and services for their residents (and surrounding communities) and generate new sources of revenue for the City.

The proposed project site would remain a candidate for other commercial or institutional development proposals, consistent with the City of San Dimas General Plan and zoning designations for the site. As the site has the potential to remain as it is with existing structures onsite, there would be:

- No new aesthetics impacts introduced into the existing project site viewed;
- No new construction- or operation-related emissions such as fugitive dust, construction equipment emissions, or project-induced vehicle emissions;
- No impacts associated with geology and soils;
- No impacts associated with hazardous materials;
- No impacts associated with hydrology and water quality;
- No changes in land use or recreational demands;
- No new sources of noise;
- No displacement of residents;
- No changes to demands on public services and utilities; and,
- No impact or change to current traffic, parking and circulation conditions.

The No Project, No Development Alternative would eliminate all impacts associated with proposed project construction of the Costco commercial complex at the site, and many impacts associated with proposed project operation. However, this Alternative would not attain any of the project objectives and goals.

No Project, Development According to Existing Land Use Plans

This variant of the No Project Alternative – development according to existing land use plans - involves ultimate development of the site according to the City of San Dimas General Plan designation and zoning designation. The site is located within the City of San Dimas Specific Plan No. 24 area. According to the Plan, the zoning designation of the proposed project site is a mix of Residential and Industrial.¹ If the new Costco commercial complex was not constructed, the site could be developed with other uses (i.e., corporate Business Park) under this zoning.

¹ City of San Dimas, *General Plan*, 1991.

Developing the proposed project site for these other uses would require redeveloping or renovating the existing site to accommodate the new use. There would be no amendment to the City's General Plan. Development would likely occur over an extended period of time and generate jobs rather than revenue. While there is no current or proposed developments plans, the development of a corporate business park at the proposed project site could result in significant impacts to the surrounding area. Development of the proposed project site for such uses could result in impacts similar to those of the proposed project.

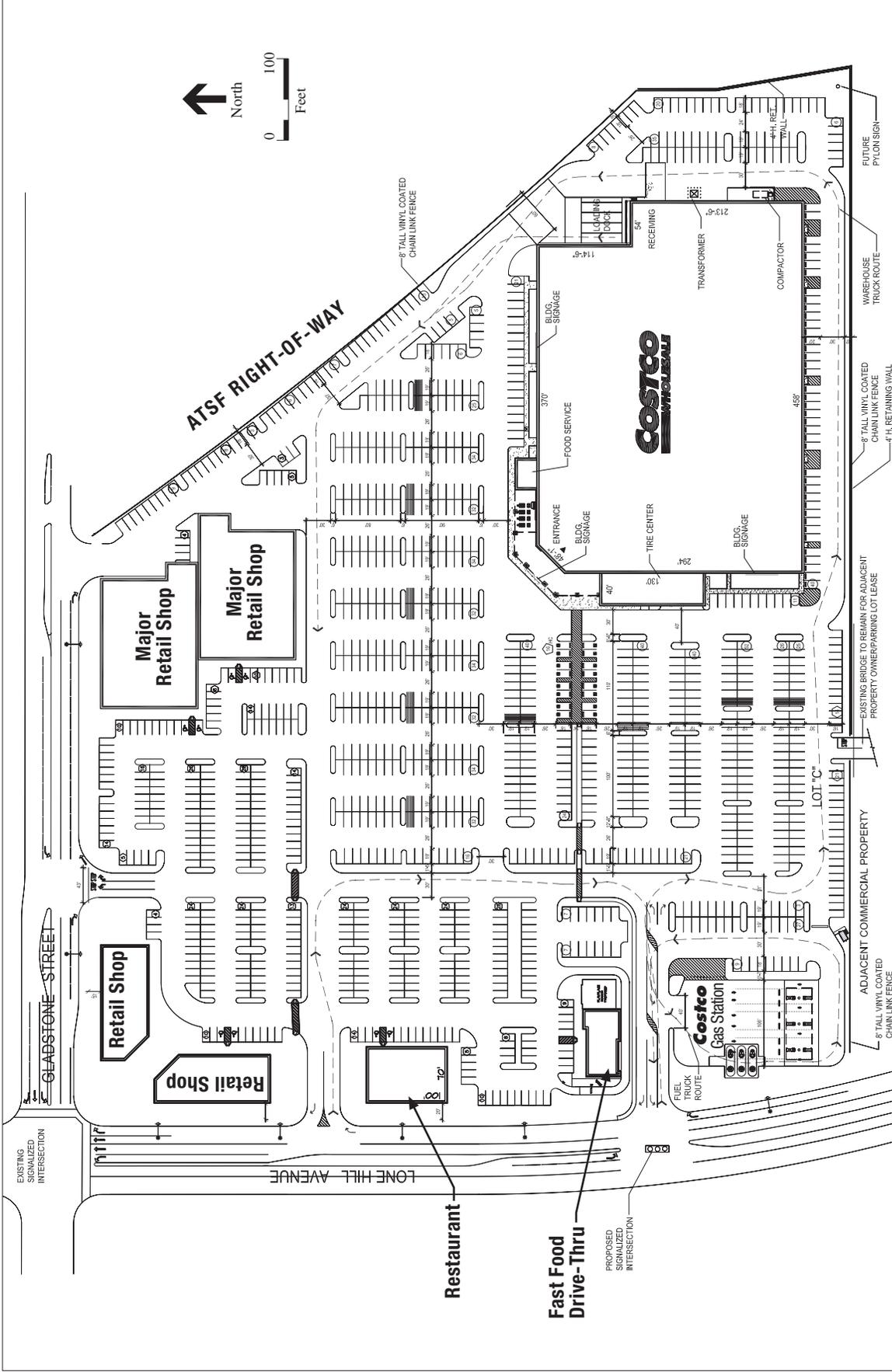
Without a current development proposal, it is not possible to compare the impacts of the construction and operation of the Costco commercial complex proposed by the City with an alternate development. Many impacts would be similar, but others (such as traffic patterns) could vary significantly. However, using the proposed project site for any uses other than a commercial complex would not achieve the City's goal to provide a new source of goods and services for their residents (and surrounding communities) and generate new sources of revenue for the City.

Alternate Site Design Alternative

The Alternate Site Design Alternative would consist of the development of a "big box" commercial complex that is of the same size as the proposed project, but with a different layout of the complex's businesses on the proposed project site. Figure 4-1 shows a conceptual site plan for this alternative. As shown in Figure 4-1, the two major retail shops that are located at the southwest corner of the site under the proposed project design are located at the northeast corner of the site under the alternate design. Similarly, the Costco gas station located at the northeast corner of the site under the proposed project design is located at the southwest corner of the site under the alternate design. Additionally, under the alternate design the restaurant located at the northern end of the site (along Gladstone Street) is located on the western side of the site (along Lone Hill Avenue) where the fast food drive-thru is located under the proposed project. Under the alternate design the fast food drive-thru is located south of the restaurant (and south of where it is located under the proposed project) on the western side of the site. Since the commercial complex would be of the same size as the one proposed under the project, this alternative would meet all of the City's objectives for the proposed project. Similarly, most of the potential environmental impacts would likely be similar under both the Alternate Site Design Alternative and the proposed project.

Aesthetics

The different layout of the alternate design would not change the number and mass of structures proposed on-site. Therefore, potential light and glare impacts on adjacent properties associated with this alternative would be similar in nature to the proposed project design. Similar to the proposed project, the only nighttime lighting would be low-level, low-intensity security lighting, and therefore, potential impacts would not be significant. There may be slight differences in the aesthetic effects of placing the gas station along Lone Hill Avenue since the architectural solutions for dealing with large gas station canopies are limited. However, the overall change to the visual character and quality of the project site is anticipated to be similar under both the Alternate Site Design Alternative and the proposed project.



Costco Commercial Complex / 202349
Figure 4-1
 Alternate Site Plan

SOURCE: Mulvaney Architects, 2003

Air Quality

The Alternate Site Design Alternative would involve similar types of construction activities as the proposed project, including grading of the site and construction of a commercial complex. Therefore, under this alternative, construction- and operation-related air quality impacts are anticipated to be the same as that under the proposed project due to the same size of the proposed commercial complex. Notably, construction-related air quality impacts are still likely to be significant and unavoidable with the alternate site design.

Biological Resources

Under the Alternate Site Design Alternative, potential impacts to biological resources would be similar to the proposed project. This alternative, like the proposed project, would involve grading of the proposed project site, the construction of a new commercial complex, and the re-vegetation of the project site for landscaping purposes. Therefore, the same impacts to biological resources are anticipated under both project designs.

Cultural Resources

The potential for disturbing significant cultural resources under the Alternate Site Design Alternative would be the same as under the proposed project since the existing single-family residences that have been designated as historic would be removed.

Geology and Soils

The construction and operation of the Alternate Site Design Alternative is anticipated to have the same impacts with respect to geology and soils than the proposed project. The Alternate Site Design Alternative would involve similar types of construction- and operation-related activities as the proposed project. Therefore, the potential for surface rupture, ground failure, and other geologic and soil hazards under this alternative is anticipated to be the same as under the proposed project.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Under the Alternate Site Design Alternative, proposed construction and operation activities would be the same as under the proposed project. With the alternate design, the gas station would be located along Lone Hill Avenue. Therefore, under this alternative potential impacts with respect to hazards and hazardous materials would remain the same, but merely shift from the northeast corner of the site to the southwest corner of the site.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Hydrology and water quality impacts under the Alternate Site Design Alternative would be the same as under the proposed project. The amount of water consumed under both designs would be the same. In addition, the amount of surface runoff associated with construction and operation of the commercial complex would be the same as that estimated for the proposed project.

Similar to the proposed project, implementation of the Alternate Site Design Alternative would require meeting any and all applicable regulations for domestic water use and fire flow water storage requirements.

Land Use

Similar to the proposed project, the Alternate Site Design Alternative would convert a former area designated as “Industrial” to a commercial use. The alternative would also not be consistent with the City of San Dimas General Plan and existing zoning. Thus, the impacts to land use and recreation under the Alternate Site Design Alternative would be similar to those anticipated under the proposed project.

Noise

Under the Alternate Site Design Alternative, the types of construction- and operation-related activities would be similar to the proposed project. However, there would be the construction of more structures along Lone Hill Avenue under the alternate design. Therefore, overall impacts with respect to noise generated by equipment during construction and additional traffic would shift towards Lone Hill Avenue. This could pose greater noise impacts to residences located along Lone Hill Avenue.

Public Services and Utilities

Because the size of the facilities under the Alternate Site Design Alternative would be the same as those under the proposed project, impacts associated with demand for public services and utilities is anticipated to be the same as under the proposed project.

Transportation/Traffic

Potential traffic impacts are likely to be similar in nature, with the exception of potential impacts to residences located along Lone Hill Avenue. Both the proposed project and the alternate design have the same land use, and therefore, the trip generation will be the same for both. However, driveway use is likely to shift due to the swapping of locations between the two major retail shops and the gas station. As a result, the residences along Lone Hill Avenue will likely experience greater traffic impacts due to increased use of the driveways along Lone Hill Avenue under the alternate site design.

Under the Alternate Site Design Alternative, the northern Lone Hill Avenue driveway is further south than the one under the proposed project, thereby creating more space in the southbound left-turn only lane between the Gladstone Street/Lone Hill Avenue intersection and the Lone Hill Avenue/Project signalized intersection. The alternate design also locates the gas station along the more heavily traveled Lone Hill Avenue where it would be more visible. Additionally, the gas station would be located adjacent to the signalized project entrance off of Lone Hill Avenue. Having the gas station near a signalized access would make it easier for vehicles to exit the gas station and travel south on Lone Hill Avenue.

Reduced Project Alternative

The Reduced Project Alternative would consist of the development of a commercial complex that is reduced in size, but located at the same location as the proposed project. In general, approximately 100,000 square feet of space is the standard minimum space required for the construction of a “big box” retail center like Costco. “Big box” retail centers usually require about 125,000 square feet or more of space. The maximum amount of space available under this alternative is approximately 175,000 square feet, with no individual space being greater than 100,000 square feet. Therefore, a smaller commercial complex would likely not include a “big box” retail center. The different components of the smaller commercial complex would likely be smaller businesses/retailers, and therefore, would not meet the City’s objectives for the proposed project. It is likely that reducing the size of the project would not help achieve the City’s goal to provide a new source of goods and services for their residents (and surrounding communities) and generate new sources of revenue for the City. The Reduced Project Alternative would not create as many new temporary and permanent employment opportunities in the Redevelopment Project Area as the proposed project. Therefore, there would not be as much additional property tax increment generated to improve, increase and preserve the supply of affordable housing in the community. Furthermore, there would not be as much additional sales tax generated with which the City of San Dimas can promote general welfare and eliminate blight within the Redevelopment Project Area.

Aesthetics

This Alternative would consist of the development of a commercial complex that is reduced in size, but located at the same location as the proposed project. The reduction in size would change the number and mass of structures proposed on-site. Potential light and glare impacts on adjacent properties associated with this alternative would depend on where the proposed structures are located. If the proposed structures were constructed near the periphery of the project site boundaries in close proximity to nearby sensitive receptors, the potential light and glare impacts on adjacent properties would be similar to those of the proposed project. However, similar to the proposed project, the only nighttime lighting would be low-level, low-intensity security lighting, and therefore, potential impacts would not be significant. The overall change to the visual character and quality of the project site is anticipated to be similar under both the Reduced Project Alternative and the proposed project.

Air Quality

The Reduced Project Alternative would involve similar types of construction activities as the proposed project, including grading of the site and construction of a commercial complex. However, under this alternative, construction- and operation-related air quality impacts are anticipated to be less than the proposed project due to the reduction of the size of the proposed commercial complex. Notably, both construction-related air quality impacts are still likely to be significant and unavoidable under this alternative.

Biological Resources

Under the Reduced Project Alternative, potential impacts to biological resources would be similar to the proposed project. This alternative, like the proposed project, would involve grading of the proposed project site, the construction of a new commercial complex, and the re-vegetation of the project site for landscaping purposes. However, the proposed commercial complex under this alternative would be smaller in size than the proposed project. Therefore, it is assumed that more of the project site would be preserved in its current condition, and therefore, fewer impacts to biological resources are anticipated.

Cultural Resources

The potential for disturbing significant cultural resources under the Reduced Project Alternative depends on whether or not the existing single-family residences that have been designated as historic are removed. If these residences were not removed, potential cultural resource impacts under this alternative would be less than under the proposed project.

Geology and Soils

The construction and operation of the Reduced Project Alternative is anticipated to have fewer impacts with respect to geology and soils than the proposed project. The Reduced Project Alternative would involve similar types of construction- and operation-related activities as the proposed project, but with the construction of a smaller commercial complex, these activities would be less. Therefore, the potential for surface rupture, ground failure, and other geologic and soil hazards under this alternative is anticipated to be less than under the proposed project.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Under the Reduced Project Alternative, proposed construction and operation activities would be less than under the proposed project. The proposed project and the Reduced Project Alternative would use the same site, however, decreased use of the project site under the Reduced Project Alternative is anticipated due to a smaller commercial complex. Therefore, this alternative is anticipated to result in fewer impacts with respect to hazards and hazardous materials on the project site.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Hydrology and water quality impacts under the Reduced Project Alternative would be less than under the proposed project. The amount of water consumed by the smaller commercial complex would be less than the amount estimated for the proposed project. In addition, the amount of surface runoff associated with construction and operation of the smaller commercial complex would also be less than that estimated for the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, implementation of the Reduced Project Alternative would require meeting any and all applicable regulations for domestic water use and fire flow water storage requirements.

Land Use

Similar to the proposed project, the Reduced Project Alternative would convert a former area designated as “Industrial” to a commercial use. The alternative would also not be consistent with the City of San Dimas General Plan and existing zoning. Thus, the impacts to land use and recreation under the Reduced Project Alternative would be similar to those anticipated under the proposed project.

Noise

Under the Reduced Project Alternative, the types of construction- and operation-related activities would be similar to the proposed project. However, under the Reduced Project Alternative the amount of these activities is anticipated to be less since the commercial complex would be smaller. Therefore, overall impacts with respect to noise generated by equipment during construction and additional traffic as a result of a smaller commercial complex would be less than the proposed project.

Public Services and Utilities

Because the size of the facilities under the Reduced Project Alternative would be less than the proposed project, impacts associated with demand for public services and utilities is anticipated to be less than the proposed project. Therefore, impacts to public services and utilities under the Reduced Project Alternative would be less than the proposed project.

Transportation/Traffic

Impacts with respect to local traffic during the operation of a smaller commercial complex would be less than the proposed project because the size of the golf course under the Reduced Project Alternative would be reduced in comparison with the proposed project, and therefore, generate less traffic. Furthermore, construction-related traffic would also be less under the Reduced Project Alternative since there would be less construction for a smaller commercial complex.

4.4 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

An EIR must identify the environmentally superior alternative. As discussed above, each alternative has a different combination of effects that are similar to, greater than, or less than the proposed project. The No Project Alternative would be environmentally superior to the proposed project on the basis of the minimization or avoidance of physical environmental impacts. However, the No Project No Development Alternative does not meet the project objectives. In addition, CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6(c)) require that, if the environmentally superior alternative is the No Project Alternative, the EIR also shall identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.

Based on the level of disturbance and development of the proposed project site associated with each of the remaining alternatives, the Reduced Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative. This alternative involves the construction of a smaller commercial center at the proposed project site. Due to the smaller size of the commercial complex under this alternative, it is assumed that any impacts associated with the construction of this alternative, while similar in nature to the proposed project, would result in fewer significant impacts.