

5 ALTERNATIVES

CEQA Guidelines require that EIRs contain a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project. Section 15126.6(c) of the Guidelines directs lead agencies that the “range of potential alternatives to the proposed project shall include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic objectives of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects.” Based on this guidance, the EIR evaluates alternatives that would lessen or avoid significant project impacts that have been identified in Chapter 4. The alternatives analysis evaluates each issue area in comparison to the Draft General Plan and also discusses the ability of each alternative to achieve the project objectives. Each alternative is first described and then analyzed in comparison to the Draft General Plan and whether it would avoid or substantially reduce at least one of the significant effects of the project. CEQA requires consideration of the No Project Alternative and identification of the environmentally superior alternative from among the project alternatives.

The environmental effects of the Draft General Plan have been described and analyzed in the previous chapters with an emphasis on potentially significant impacts and recommended mitigation measures to reduce such impacts. Table 5-1 provides a summary of the significant impacts of the Draft General Plan and compares the impacts of the alternatives to the Draft General Plan.

5.1 RATIONALE FOR ALTERNATIVE SELECTION

In accordance with Section 15126.6(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, an EIR must contain “a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project,” as well as an evaluation of the “comparative merits of the alternatives.” In addition, Section 15126.6(b) of the CEQA Guidelines states that “the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly.”

This EIR concludes that adoption and implementation of the Draft General Plan would result in significant impacts to transportation and mobility; air quality, biological resources, paleontological resources, and hazards and hazardous materials. Mitigation measures contained in the EIR would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels for all these issues except impacts to transportation and mobility and air quality, which remain significant and unavoidable even after adopting all recommended feasible mitigation measures. No significant impacts were identified to land use, population, and housing; noise; hydrology and water quality; geology, soils, and mineral resources; agricultural resources; public services; utilities; cultural resources; aesthetics; greenhouse gas emissions; and energy.

5.2 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED

5.2.1 ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS ALTERNATIVE

The alternative of widening roadways by adding additional lanes was considered, but rejected, during preparation of the EIR. According to Chapter 1, Introduction, of the Draft General Plan, the City’s roadways are affected by growth in Placer and El Dorado counties. Local and regional population and employment growth would increase travel demand in the vicinity of the City’s planning area. Many roadways through Citrus Heights are constructed to their maximum capacity configuration, and widening existing roadways would be inconsistent with other Draft General Plan policies due to the resulting right-of-way expansion impacts. Roadway widening could adversely affect pedestrian and bicycle safety and convenience, induce travel demand, require substantial investment for relatively minor improvements in peak-hour conditions, thwart the City’s efforts to provide complete streets and reduce GHG emissions, and lead to other undesirable consequences.

Widening existing roadways would be inconsistent with other General Plan policies that support pedestrian and bicycle safety and convenience, since roadway and intersection widening would increase crossing distances for pedestrians and bicyclists. Acquisition of right-of-way for roadway expansion is not feasible in all of the locations where widening would be required.

The Draft General Plan includes a complete streets policy approach, which explicitly considers the function of the transportation network for walking, bicycling, and using transit, as well as automobile travel. The complete streets considerations in Table 4.2-7 identify the choices being made by the City to encourage increased pedestrian and bicycle use. Therefore, the Roadway Improvements Alternative is rejected because it would conflict with Goal 29 of the Draft General Plan: “Plan, design, construct, and manage a Complete Streets transportation network that accommodates the needs of all mobility types, users and ability levels.”

5.2.2 REDUCED VEHICLE TRIP GENERATION THROUGH TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE

Reducing vehicle trip generation through Transportation Demand Management (TDM) policies, programs, and regulations encourages use of alternative modes of transportation, such as by public transit, bicycle, walking, or carpooling, in order to reduce single occupant vehicle trips to work. TDM is most viable in locations of high-intensity office, commercial, manufacturing, and high-density residential uses where real estate values create high costs to develop employee and resident parking. The high cost of parking often results in development of structured parking as more economical than surface parking lots. In addition, surface parking in these areas may be available only in fee lots or as metered on-street parking with time limits. Transit service to these areas is usually available by rail or on express bus routes with fewer stops and higher fares. These conditions typically only exist in downtowns with high population densities and high-rise office buildings, and in regional business parks. Citrus Heights residents may increasingly choose public transit for job travel to regional employment centers by using the Sacramento Regional Transit (RT) bus route #103 for travel on I-80 to access the RT Blue Line light rail Watt Station for travel to Sacramento and other regional employment centers.

Citrus Heights has done much to encourage pedestrian and bicycle use and the Draft General Plan contains goals and policies to improve transit and other alternative travel modes. However, existing land use conditions do not provide sufficient opportunity for more intensive land use development in which City-initiated TDM programs would be likely to cause a meaningful reduction in daily traffic volumes for travel to employment within the City. As identified in Table 4.1-1 of the EIR, approximately 81% (7,450 acres) of the City is designated for residential use, of which only 1% (138 acres) of residential land is designated as high density residential, only 16% (1,487 acres) is designated as medium density residential, and only 16% (1,417 acres) is designated for commercial or industrial use. Only 149 acres of vacant residential land and 46 acres of vacant commercial land remain available for development. Citrus Heights' land use characteristics have been too firmly established for TDM programs to cause a meaningful reduction in traffic volumes, particularly when a high volume of commuter traffic originates outside the City. Therefore, the alternative of reducing vehicle trip generation through TDM would not be a reasonable project alternative that would avoid or substantially lessen the significant impacts of the project.

5.2.3 ALTERNATIVE LAND USE PLAN

The land use pattern and the density and intensity of land uses within the planning area have become well established and are accepted by the community. Vacant land that is not subject to flooding primarily occurs as relatively small parcels of one-acre or less in size at scattered locations throughout the City. Through its long history of development as an unincorporated area, the community's land use character was well established by the time Citrus Heights incorporated on January 1, 1997. During 1999 and 2000, there was an intensive general planning process that combined efforts of the City and the community to shape the future direction of Citrus Heights. The Land Use Diagram provided in Exhibit 3-3 still represents the desired land use plan for the City's future. In addition, due to the largely built-out character of the planning area, an alternative land use plan would

likely be inconsistent with existing land uses. Therefore, an alternative land use plan would not be a reasonable project alternative.

5.3 ALTERNATIVES CARRIED FORWARD FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS

In addition to focusing on alternatives capable of either eliminating any significant environmental effects of the project or reducing them to a less-than-significant level, the following analysis examines variations of the proposed project that were considered during preparation of the General Plan and that may be considered further during the public hearing process. The following project alternatives are examined:

- ▶ Alternative 1: No Project/Existing General Plan
- ▶ Alternative 2: Reduced Density/Intensity

The alternatives analyzed in the EIR are general in nature, as is the analysis of the proposed project. The degree of specificity used in the alternatives analysis is related to the programmatic nature of the EIR and the approach used in the analysis of impacts associated with implementation of the Draft General Plan. Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines, the analysis in this section provides:

1. A description of alternatives considered;
2. An analysis of whether each alternative meets most of the basic objectives of the proposed project as described in the Chapter 3.0 of this EIR; and
3. A comparative analysis of the alternatives under consideration and the proposed project. The focus of this analysis is to determine if alternatives are capable of eliminating or reducing the significant environmental effects of the project to a less-than-significant level. The conclusions of this comparative analysis are provided in Table 5-1.

5.4 NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE (EXISTING GENERAL PLAN)

The No Project Alternative assumes that the Draft General Plan would not be implemented, and that the City would continue to build out as indicated in the existing (2000) General Plan. Unlike most general plan amendment projects, the Draft General Plan does not increase residential density or the intensity of permitted commercial or industrial uses. Rather, the land uses assumed within the No Project Alternative and the Draft General Plan are the same. Both would allow for approximately 3,577 additional dwelling units and approximately 3 million non-residential square feet of additional non-residential development.

Under the No Project Alternative, Sunrise Boulevard would be widened to a six-lane arterial between Greenback Lane and the north City limit, as identified in the current General Plan. The new sustainability, energy efficiency, climate change, complete streets, traffic level of service, and water quality/flooding policies would not be adopted by the City, and the City would not adopt the proposed Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan (GGRP) under this alternative.

5.4.1 LAND USE, POPULATION, AND HOUSING

Both the No Project Alternative and the Draft General Plan would allow a similar buildout of the City with residential and commercial development and a similar increase in population. The GGRP includes measures and actions requiring the City to review and adjust (if necessary) development standards along the City's major corridors to ensure opportunities exist for mixed-use infill projects, and to explore opportunities for various alternative land uses and design prototypes as infill development options for low-density residential areas. As described in Section 4.1 of the EIR, the Draft General Plan contains goals, policies, and actions to maintain the

**Table 5-1
Comparison of Impacts of the Proposed Project to the Alternatives**

Environmental Issue	Proposed Project	No Project Alternative	Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative
Land Use, Population, and Housing	Less than significant	Greater	Similar
Transportation and Mobility	Significant and unavoidable	Greater	Less
Air Quality	Significant and unavoidable	Greater	Less
Noise (Construction and Vibration Impacts)	Mitigated to less than significant	Similar	Similar
Hydrology and Water Quality	Less than significant	Similar	Similar
Biological Resources	Mitigated to less than significant	Greater	Similar
Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources (Paleontological Resources Impact)	Mitigated to less than significant	Greater	Similar
Agricultural Resources	No Impact	Similar	Similar
Public Services	Less than significant	Similar	Similar
Utilities	Less than significant	Similar	Similar
Cultural Resources	Mitigated to less than significant	Similar	Similar
Aesthetics	Less than significant	Similar	Similar
Energy	Less than significant	Greater	Similar
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Less than significant	Greater	Similar
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Mitigated to less than significant	Similar	Similar

positive character and identity of existing residential neighborhoods and to support economic revitalization of commercial areas. Based on these goals and policies, Section 4.1 of the EIR concludes that the Draft General Plan would not induce substantial population growth, would not displace substantial numbers of people or existing housing, would not physically divide an established community, and would not conflict with other applicable land use plans, policies, or agency regulations. Since the No Project Alternative would not include GGRP measures and actions to support infill development and reuse within the parameters of the current General Plan land use designations, it would have a greater impact on land use, population, and housing compared to the proposed project. [Greater]

5.4.2 TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

The No Project Alternative includes widening of Sunrise Boulevard from 4- to 6-lanes between Greenback Lane and the north City limit. Future traffic volumes on City roadways and VMT are projected to increase between 2005 and 2035, although the Draft General Plan would result in about 6,200 fewer VMT per weekday in 2035 than the No Project Alternative (see Table 5-2).

This result is largely due to Goal 29 of the Draft General Plan to “plan, design, construct, and manage a Complete Streets transportation network that accommodates the needs of all mobility types, users, and ability levels.” The City’s Complete Streets program would give equal consideration to the safety, comfort, and convenience of pedestrians and bicyclists as it does to drivers, and is expected to result in fewer roadway capacity expansion projects.

**Table 5-2
VMT Comparison of Current and Draft General Plan**

Scenario	Population	Employment	Weekday VMT	VMT/Population ¹	VMT/Employment	VMT/ (Population + Employment)
2035 Current General Plan	100,480	31,970	1,835,248	18.26	57.41	13.86
2035 Draft General Plan	100,480	31,970	1,829,043	18.20	57.21	13.81

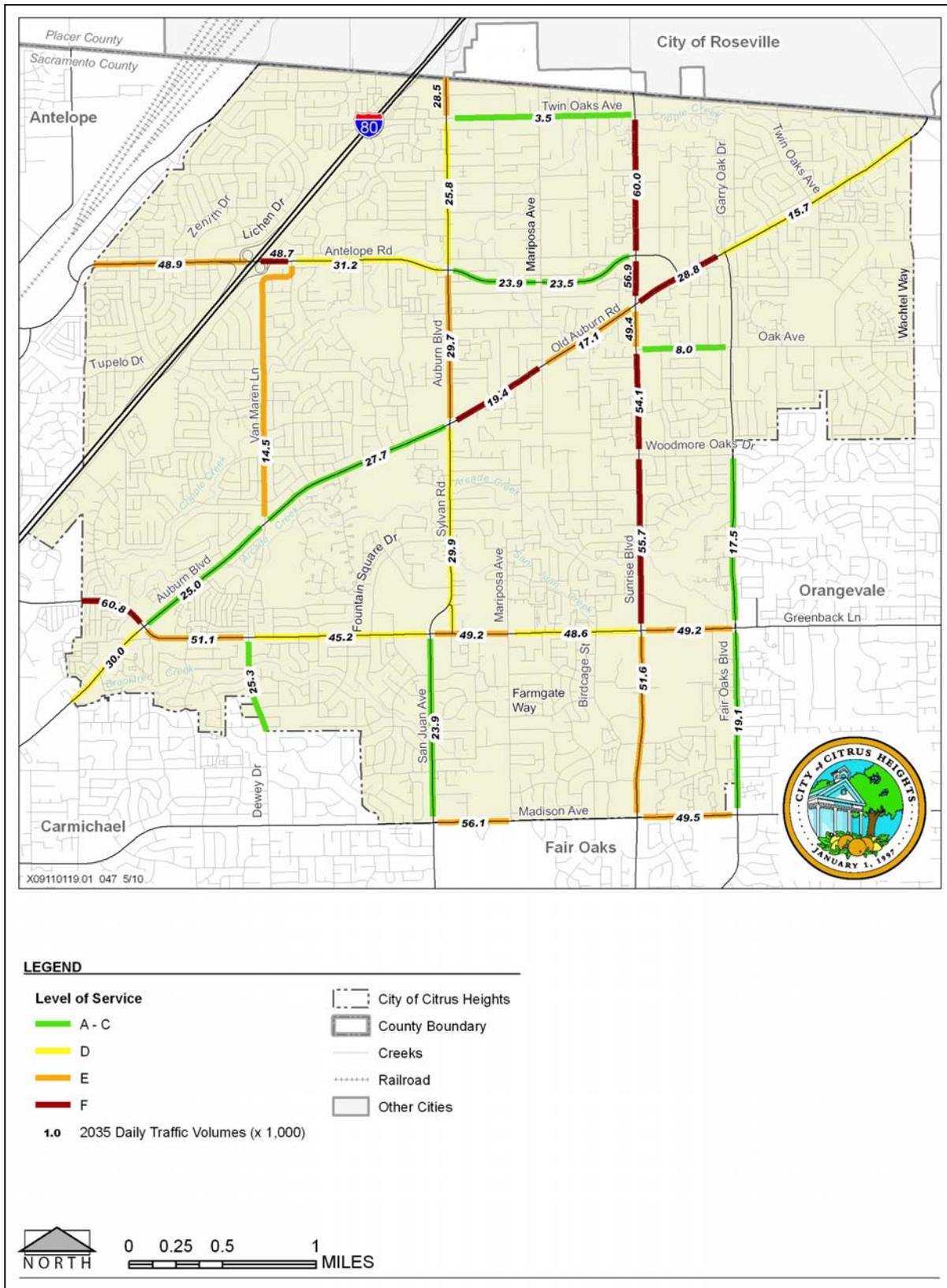
Notes:
¹ Population was derived by using SACOG household forecasts and a population/household ratio of 2.36 for 2005 and 2.55 for 2035 according to US Census and DOF data.
Source: SACMET Regional Travel Demand Forecasting Model 2010

Exhibit 5-1 and Table 5-3 identify projected roadway volumes and LOS for roadway segments throughout the City under the No Project Alternative, would result in the following 20 roadway deficiencies compared to the City’s existing LOS D standard. By comparison, as identified in Section 4.2, Transportation and Mobility, of this EIR, the Draft General Plan results in 19 roadway deficiencies.

1. LOS C to LOS E Antelope Road: West City limits to I-80
2. Worsen LOS F Antelope Road: I-80 to Van Maren Lane
3. LOS D to LOS E Auburn Boulevard: North City Limits to Twin Oaks Avenue
4. LOS D to LOS E Auburn Boulevard: Antelope Road to Old Auburn Road
5. LOS D to LOS F Greenback Lane: West City Limits to Auburn Boulevard
6. LOS C to LOS E Greenback Lane: Auburn Boulevard to Dewey Drive
7. LOS D to LOS E Greenback Lane: San Juan Avenue to Mariposa Avenue
8. LOS C to LOS E Greenback Lane: Sunrise Boulevard to Fair Oaks Boulevard
9. LOS C to LOS E Madison Avenue: San Juan Avenue to Mariposa Avenue
10. LOS C to LOS E Madison Avenue: Sunrise Boulevard to Fair Oaks Boulevard
11. LOS E to LOS F Sunrise Boulevard: Twin Oaks Avenue to Antelope Road
12. Worsen LOS F Sunrise Boulevard: Antelope Road to Old Auburn Road
13. LOS D to LOS E Sunrise Boulevard: Old Auburn Road to Oak Avenue
14. LOS D to LOS F Sunrise Boulevard: Oak Avenue to Woodmore Oaks Drive
15. Worsen LOS F Sunrise Boulevard: Woodmore Oaks Drive to Greenback Lane
16. LOS D to LOS E Sunrise Boulevard: Greenback Lane to Madison Avenue
17. Worsen LOS E Van Maren Lane: Antelope Road to Auburn Boulevard
18. Worsen LOS F Old Auburn Road: Auburn Boulevard to Mariposa Avenue
19. LOS D to LOS E Old Auburn Road: Mariposa Avenue to Sunrise Boulevard
20. Worsen LOS F Old Auburn Road: Sunrise Boulevard to Fair Oaks Boulevard

This outcome is due to a combination of local and regional population and employment growth plus insufficient planned roadway capacity to accommodate forecasted traffic volumes. The current general plan LOS D threshold represents a maximum throughput volume on roadways that is less than their capacity. Widening existing roadways would be inconsistent with other general policies due to the right-of-way expansion impacts.

Other important considerations for this impact include limitations of the travel demand model and the daily LOS capacity thresholds. The travel demand model that generated the daily traffic volumes does not fully capture long-term traffic effects on individual travel choices (i.e., some travelers reduce vehicle travel as congestion worsens)



Source: Fehr & Peers Transportation Consultants, 2010

Roadway Traffic Volumes and Level of Service (2035 No Project Alternative)

Exhibit 5-1

**Table 5-3
Roadway Level of Service (2035 No Project Alternative)**

Location	Average Volume	Classification	LOS
1. Twin Oaks Avenue – between Mariposa Avenue and Sunrise Boulevard	3,500	2 Lane Low Access Control	A
2. Antelope Road – between City limits and Interstate 80	48,900	6 Lane Moderate Access Control	E
3. Antelope Road – between Interstate 80 and Van Maren Lane	48,700	4 Lane Moderate Access Control	F
4. Antelope Road – between Van Maren Lane and Auburn Boulevard	31,200	4 Lane Moderate Access Control	D
5. Antelope Road – between Mariposa Avenue and Sunrise Boulevard	23,500	4 Lane Moderate Access Control	B
6. Auburn Boulevard – between Greenback Lane and Van Maren Lane	25,000	4 Lane Moderate Access Control	B
7. Auburn Boulevard – between Van Maren Lane and Sylvan Road	27,700	4 Lane Moderate Access Control	C
8. Auburn Boulevard – between Old Auburn Road and Antelope Road	29,700	4 Lane Low Access Control	E
9. Auburn Boulevard – between Antelope Road and Twin Oaks Avenue	25,800	4 Lane Low Access Control	D
10. Auburn Boulevard – just north of Twin Oaks Avenue	28,500	4 Lane Low Access Control	E
11. Old Auburn Road – between Sylvan Road and Mariposa Avenue	19,400	2 Lane Low Access Control	F
12. Old Auburn Road – east of Fair Oaks Boulevard	15,700	2 Lane Moderate Access Control	D
13. Greenback Lane – between City limits and Auburn Boulevard	60,800	6 Lane High Access Control	F
14. Greenback Lane – between Auburn Boulevard and Dewey Drive	51,100	6 Lane Moderate Access Control	E
15. Greenback Lane – between Dewey Drive and San Juan Drive	45,200	6 Lane Moderate Access Control	D
16. Greenback Lane – between Mariposa Avenue and Sunrise Boulevard	48,600	6 Lane Moderate Access Control	D
17. Greenback Lane – between Sunrise Boulevard and Fair Oaks Boulevard	49,200	6 Lane Moderate Access Control	E
18. Madison Avenue – between San Juan Avenue and Mariposa Avenue	56,100	6 Lane High Access Control	E
19. Madison Avenue – between Sunrise Boulevard and Fair Oaks Boulevard	49,500	5 Lane High Access Control	E
20. San Juan Avenue – north of Madison Avenue	23,900	4 Lane Low Access Control	C
21. Sylvan Road - between Greenback Lane and Auburn Boulevard	29,900	4 Lane Moderate Access Control	D
22. Sunrise Boulevard – between Madison Avenue and Greenback Lane	51,600	6 Lane Moderate Access Control	E
23. Sunrise Boulevard – between Greenback Lane and Woodmore Oaks Drive	55,700	6 Lane Moderate Access Control	F
24. Sunrise Boulevard – between Oak Avenue and Old Auburn Road	49,400	6 Lane Moderate Access Control	E
25. Sunrise Boulevard – between Old Auburn Road and Antelope Road	56,900	6 Lane Low Access Control	F
26. Sunrise Boulevard – between Antelope Road and Twin Oaks Avenue	60,000	6 Lane Moderate Access Control	F
27. Fair Oaks Boulevard – between Greenback Lane and Woodmore Oaks Drive	17,500	3 Lane Moderate Access Control	B
28. Oak Avenue – between Sunrise Boulevard and Fair Oaks Boulevard	8,000	2 Lane Low Access Control	A
29. Van Maren Lane – between Auburn Boulevard and Interstate 80	14,500	2 Lane Low Access Control	E
Source: Fehr & Peers, 2009			

and may overstate the daily traffic volumes. Further, the daily LOS capacity thresholds do not reflect potential changes in future roadway utilization that would likely happen if severe congestion occurred.

In addition, the Draft General Plan focuses on traffic operations management through intelligent transportation systems (ITS) improvements that are not present in the No Project Alternative. These results do not fully account for traffic flow effects of the ITS improvements or the potential trip suppression effects of future congestion on regional roadways. However, the results are useful for comparing the general direction and magnitude of change in VMT between the two plans.

The EIR concludes that adequate funding to implement the Draft General Plan circulation improvements has not been identified, which could contribute to a lag or delay in implementing General Plan Policy 29.7, which requires the City to develop a transportation financing program that will fully fund the planned expansion of the existing transportation network and comply with Policies 29.1 and 29.2 in particular. The No Project Alternative would not feature proposed Draft General Plan Policy 29.2, which would change the City's acceptable LOS threshold from LOS D within the existing general plan to LOS E with specified exceptions. Anticipated 2035 LOS E and LOS F conditions described above would be greater than those anticipated with the Draft General Plan, and similar funding constraints would exist that would lead to a lag or delay in transportation financing. This would constitute a significant and unavoidable transportation and mobility impact. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have a greater transportation and mobility impact than would the proposed project. [Greater]

5.4.3 AIR QUALITY

Section 4.3 of the EIR concludes that long-term operational impacts from emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ would exceed SMAQMD thresholds for significance; and that substantial exposure to TACs from the Roseville Railyard, I-80, and other sources would not be reduced to acceptable levels. Both of these impacts, which would be significant and unavoidable, would also occur under the No Project Alternative, since the land use plan and development capacity of the No Project Alternative and the Draft General Plan are identical. However, the GGRP includes measures and actions requiring the City to review and adjust (if necessary) development standards along the City's major corridors to ensure opportunities exist for mixed-use infill projects, and to explore opportunities for various alternative land uses and design prototypes as infill development options for low-density residential areas. These measures and actions would emphasize more infill development along major corridors located away from the Roseville Railyard and could shift development patterns to place fewer land uses and residents at greatest risk from TACs. The No Project Alternative would not include these GGRP measures and actions. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have a greater air quality impact than the proposed project. [Greater]

5.4.4 NOISE

Section 4.4 of the EIR concludes that future development that would occur pursuant to the Draft General Plan would have less-than-significant impacts from temporary construction noise, increases in ambient noise levels, and transportation noise. Temporary construction vibration and vibration-generating land uses (e.g., industrial) could expose nearby residents to excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels. Implementation of recommended Mitigation Measure 4.4-4 would require use of project-specific vibration mitigation measures (i.e., preparation of vibration analysis and implementation of vibration abatement measures, as necessary and to the greatest extent feasible) to mitigate vibration impacts to sensitive land uses and structures. Implementation of the recommended mitigation measures would also reduce the potential for vibration levels in areas of new vibration-sensitive land uses to exceed FTA standards (80 VdB) and reduce the potential for vibration levels at structures to exceed recommended Caltrans standards (0.2 in/sec PPV). Since the No Project Alternative would allow an identical level of future development and a similar level of associated traffic, it would have a similar noise impact as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.4.5 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Section 4.5 of the EIR states that future development pursuant to the Draft General Plan would increase the amount of impervious surfaces (e.g., rooftops, sidewalks, driveways, streets, parking lots) in the planning area and result in higher rates of runoff during rain events. This could be a source of surface water pollution, could reduce groundwater recharge, and could cause an increased risk of flooding. In addition, the planning area may potentially be affected by flooding in the unlikely event of a dam or dike failure at Folsom Lake. However, the EIR concludes that compliance with proposed policies and actions in the Draft General Plan and other local, state, and federal regulations would result in a less-than-significant impact.

Section 4.5.1 of the EIR lists the various federal, state, regional, and local agencies, regulations, and procedures to avoid water quality and flooding impacts that could result from land development activities. These include various provisions of the Federal CWA and the California Water Code; and regional and local agencies that enforce the CWA, including the SWRCB, the Central Valley RWQCB, the Sacramento Stormwater Quality Partnership, and for flood control, SAFCA and CVFPP. These regulatory provisions also include the City Municipal Code Chapter 106.30, which contains performance standards and requirements for grading, development near creeks, setbacks from open spaces, and flood hazard mitigation. Implementation of both the No Project Alternative and the Draft General Plan Update would require compliance with these regulations. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have a similar water resources and hydrology impact as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.4.6 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Section 4.6 of the EIR states that three special status plant species and four special status wildlife species are known to occur or have the potential to occur within the planning area; and that one of the special status plant species and two of the special status wildlife species are known to occur in valley foothill riparian habitat that occurs within Citrus Heights. Loss of populations of these species or degradation of their habitat would be a significant project impact. In addition, riparian and wetland habitats associated with streams and drainages may qualify as protected federal and/or state jurisdictional waters and be classified as sensitive natural communities. The EIR contains mitigation measures to reduce impacts to special status plant and wildlife species and to minimize impacts to jurisdictional waters. Existing requirements of CEQA, if implemented under the No Project Alternative, would provide protection to sensitive biological resources. However, the proposed mitigation measures to accompany the Draft General Plan provide precise direction for review, analysis, and permitting to avoid potential impacts to sensitive biological resources. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have a greater impact to biological resources than the proposed project. [Greater]

5.4.7 GEOLOGY, SOILS, AND MINERAL RESOURCES

Section 4.7 of the EIR concludes that there would be a less-than-significant potential impact for future development pursuant to the Draft General Plan to be exposed to seismic activity, cause soil erosion, be impacted by unstable or expansive soils, or result in construction of septic systems on incompatible soils. However, potential exists to encounter vertebrate fossil specimens during earth-moving or utility excavations and a mitigation measure would be adopted to require evaluation of impacts on a site-specific basis. The potential for impacts to paleontological resources was not addressed by the EIR prepared for the existing general plan. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have a greater potential impact on paleontological resources than would the proposed project. [Greater]

5.4.8 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Section 4.8 of the EIR concludes that there are no lands designated as important farmland, no agricultural zoning or Williamson Act contract lands, and no existing farmlands within the planning area. Therefore, both the No Project Alternative and the Draft General Plan would have no impact to agricultural resources. [Similar]

5.4.9 PUBLIC SERVICES

Section 4.9 of the EIR concludes that construction of new police, fire, and parks and recreation facilities would be within the footprint of development envisioned as part of the Draft General Plan and, therefore, potential impacts from expansion of these facilities have been analyzed at a program level in this EIR. In addition, the SJUSD reports that school enrollment figures have declined over the past five years, and the District has extra facility capacity and no new facilities are planned. Since the land use plan is the same for the No Project Alternative and Draft General Plan, there would be no difference in the need for additional public services and the No Project Alternative would have a similar impact on public services as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.4.10 UTILITIES

Section 4.10 of the EIR concludes that adequate facilities and capacities for the conveyance, treatment, and/or disposal of wastewater and solid waste exist to serve the proposed project. With regard to stormwater and drainage systems, water infrastructure, and private utility services, the EIR concludes that potential impacts from expansion of these facilities have been analyzed at a program level in this EIR. Since the land use plan is the same for the No Project Alternative and Draft General Plan, there would be no difference in the need for improvements to existing utilities and the No Project Alternative would have a similar impact on utilities as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.4.11 CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Draft General Plan would result in less-than-significant impacts related to changes in historic character of Citrus Heights, destruction of or damage to known archeological or historic resources, destruction of or damage to as-yet unknown cultural resources, and discovery of human remains. Section 4.11 of the EIR identifies policies and actions in the Draft General Plan that provide measures for the preservation and avoidance of impacts to historical and archaeological resources and human remains. These policies and actions are present in both the existing general plan and Draft General Plan. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have a similar impact on cultural resources to the proposed project. [Similar]

5.4.12 AESTHETICS

Both the existing general plan and the Draft General Plan contain goals and policies to preserve the unique character of Citrus Heights, to maintain safe and high quality neighborhoods, achieve attractive, inviting, and functional corridors, establish attractive streetscapes, and create distinctive entryways. Based on these goals and policies, Section 4.12 of the EIR concludes that the Draft General Plan would have a less-than-significant impact to aesthetics. These goals and policies are also present in the existing general plan. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have a similar impact as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.4.13 ENERGY

Section 4.13 of the EIR states that although the Draft General Plan does not change the existing General Plan land use diagram, the Draft General Plan and GGRP provide an estimate of the energy consumption of implementing the Draft General Plan based on the types and intensities of envisioned land uses. In addition, the Draft General Plan includes numerous additional energy conservation policies (e.g., Goal 41 and Policies 41.1 through 41.4) that

are not present in the existing General Plan, and the GGRP outlines a comprehensive strategy to reduce energy consumption in existing buildings and new development. Under the No Project Alternative, these General Plan policies would not be implemented, and a GGRP would not be adopted. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have a greater impact on energy use than would the Draft General Plan. [Greater]

5.4.14 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Section 4.14 of the EIR provides a cumulative GHG emissions analysis and describes emissions that would be generated by land uses pursuant to the Draft General Plan. These emissions from general plan-related construction activities and from General Plan land uses would contribute to global climate change. The EIR concludes that implementation of the proposed goals, policies, and actions in the Draft General Plan and measures and actions in the GGRP would reduce the extent and severity of operational impacts related to GHG emissions and climate change adaptation to less-than-significant levels by proactively planning for changes in climate and conditions, and providing methods to adapt to these changes. Under the No Project Alternative, these General Plan policies would not be implemented, and a GGRP would not be adopted. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have a greater impact on construction and operational GHG emissions and climate change adaptation than would the Draft General Plan. [Greater]

5.4.15 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The Draft General Plan would result in less-than-significant impacts related to routine transport, use, or disposal or accidental release of hazardous materials; interference with an adopted emergency response plan; public health hazards from development on a known hazardous materials site; and hazardous materials near schools.

Both the existing general plan and the Draft General Plan contain a goal to protect the community's health, safety, natural resources, and property from potential risks associated with the use, transport, treatment, and disposal of hazardous materials. Both also contain identical policies and actions to provide for the safe use and disposal of hazardous materials; to protect residents against potential or undiscovered unexploded ordnance at the Roseville Railyard; and to work with other agencies to inform businesses and consumers on the proper use and disposal of hazardous material. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have a similar impact to the proposed project. [Similar]

5.4.16 CONCLUSION

The EIR concludes that the Draft General Plan would result in significant impacts to transportation and mobility, air quality, noise, biological resources, paleontological resources, cultural resources, and hazards and hazardous materials. Mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels for all issue areas except impacts to transportation and mobility and air quality, which remain significant and unavoidable even after adopting all recommended feasible mitigation measures. No significant impacts were identified to land use, population, and housing; hydrology and water quality; geology, soils, and mineral resources (except paleontological resources); agricultural resources; public services; utilities; aesthetics; GHG emissions; and energy. In comparison to the Draft General Plan, the No Project Alternative would have a greater impact to land use, population, and housing; transportation and mobility; air quality; biological resources, paleontological resources, energy, and GHG emissions.

5.5 REDUCED DENSITY/INTENSITY ALTERNATIVE

This Alternative assumes the same land use designations for all parcels and Corridor/Transition Zones for all areas as does the Draft General Plan, and assumes that development would occur at a density lower than what was assumed for the proposed project based on existing development densities and intensities. That is, where the project would include, for example, commercial development in the Commercial designation at a floor-area ratio

(FAR) of 0.6, this alternative would assume development in the Commercial designation at a FAR of 0.3. Similarly, where the project would include multi-family, high-density residential development at 21-30 units per acre, this alternative would assume medium-density residential development at 11-15 units per acre.

5.5.1 LAND USE, POPULATION, AND HOUSING

As described in Section 4.1 of the EIR, the Draft General Plan contains goals, policies, and actions to maintain the positive character and identity of existing residential neighborhoods and to support economic revitalization of commercial areas. Based on these goals and policies, Section 4.1 of the EIR concludes that the Draft General Plan would not induce substantial population growth, would not displace substantial numbers of people or existing housing, would not physically divide an established community, and would not conflict with other applicable land use plans, policies, or agency regulations. These conditions would also occur under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative, though reducing density and intensity of development may become a disincentive to removal of existing lower density residential properties for development at a higher density. Therefore, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would have a similar effect on the displacement of existing housing in comparison to the proposed project. [Similar]

5.5.2 TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Section 4.2 of the EIR concludes adequate funding to implement the Draft General Plan circulation improvements has not been identified, which could contribute to a lag or delay in implementing General Plan Policy 29.7, which requires the City to develop a transportation financing program that will fully fund the planned expansion of the existing transportation network and comply with Policies 29.1 and 29.2 in particular. Under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative, fewer dwelling units and non-residential square feet would be expected to develop in the future as compared to the Draft General Plan, resulting in fewer vehicle trips. Given that fewer trips would be accommodated on the City's roadway system, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would result in a reduction in Average Daily Trips (ADT), but not enough of a reduction to change the buildout LOS conditions of the proposed project. The Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would not negate the funding constraints that may hamper the City's ability to complete planned improvements. Therefore, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would also be significant and unavoidable. [Less but no change in significance]

5.5.3 AIR QUALITY

Section 4.3 of the EIR concludes that long-term operational impacts from emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ would exceed SMAQMD thresholds for significance; and that substantial exposure to TACs from the Roseville Railyard, I-80, and other sources would not be reduced to acceptable levels. The Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would lower the volume of additional traffic and have a reduced air quality impact in comparison to the Draft General Plan. However, any increase in traffic volumes would increase emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀, and this alternative would not reduce TACs from the Roseville Railyard and I-80. Therefore, the air quality impact of the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would also be significant and unavoidable. [Less but no change in significance]

5.5.4 NOISE

Section 4.4 of the EIR concludes that future development that would occur pursuant to the Draft General Plan would have less-than-significant impacts from temporary construction noise, increases in ambient noise levels, and transportation noise. Temporary construction vibration and vibration-generating land uses (e.g., industrial) could expose nearby residents to excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels. Implementation of recommended Mitigation Measure 4.4-4 would require use of project-specific vibration mitigation measures (i.e., preparation of vibration analysis and implementation of vibration abatement measures, as necessary and to the greatest extent feasible) to mitigate vibration impacts to sensitive land uses and structures.

Noise contours for the Draft General Plan were developed for select roadway segments using average daily traffic data provided by Fehr & Peers (2010). All of the major road segments analyzed in the traffic study show small increases in traffic volumes within the City limits that are not expected to result in substantial, noticeable noise level increases (refer to Table 4.4-9). Therefore, a significant noise impact would not result from the Draft General Plan. The traffic noise sources under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would be similar to the proposed project and also be less than significant. [Similar]

5.5.5 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Section 4.5 of the EIR states that future development pursuant to the Draft General Plan would increase the amount of impervious surfaces (e.g., rooftops, sidewalks, driveways, streets, parking lots) in the planning area and result in higher rates of runoff during rain events. This could be a source of surface water pollution, could reduce groundwater recharge, and could cause an increased risk of flooding. In addition, the planning area may potentially be affected by flooding in the unlikely event of a dam or dike failure at Folsom Lake. However, the EIR concludes that compliance with proposed policies and actions in the Draft General Plan and other local, state, and federal regulations would result in a less-than-significant impact.

As with the proposed project, implementation of the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would require compliance with land use, stormwater, grading, and erosion control regulations of local, state, and federal agencies. Although this alternative could decrease the area of impervious surfaces in comparison to the proposed project, it would be a very minor difference, and the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would have a similar impact to water resources and hydrology as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.5.6 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Section 4.6 of the EIR states that three special status plant species and four special status wildlife species are known to occur or have the potential to occur within the planning area; and that one of the special status plant species and two of the special status wildlife species are known to occur in valley foothill riparian habitat that occurs within Citrus Heights. Loss of populations of these species or degradation of their habitat would be a significant project impact. In addition, riparian and wetland habitats associated with streams and drainages may qualify as protected federal and/or state jurisdictional waters and be classified as sensitive natural communities. Based on lower anticipated levels of new development, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative could reduce the area of land disturbance associated with new development and may discourage conversion of existing low intensity land uses. Nevertheless, the mitigation measures proposed in this EIR to protect riparian and wetland habitats would also apply to the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative. Therefore, it would have a similar impact to biological resources to the proposed project. [Similar]

5.5.7 GEOLOGY, SOILS, AND MINERAL RESOURCES

Section 4.7 of the EIR concludes that there would be a less-than-significant potential impact for future development pursuant to the Draft General Plan to be exposed to seismic activity, cause soil erosion, be impacted by unstable or expansive soils, or result in construction of septic systems on incompatible soils. However, potential exists to encounter vertebrate fossil specimens during earth-moving or utility excavations and a mitigation measure would be adopted to require evaluation of impacts on a site-specific basis. While there could be more limited property redevelopment under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative, the potential to impact paleontological resources would still occur and, therefore, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would have a similar impact to the proposed project. [Similar]

5.5.8 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Section 4.8 of the EIR concludes that there are no lands designated as important farmland, no agricultural zoning or Williamson Act contract lands, and no existing farmlands within the planning area. Therefore, both the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative and the Draft General Plan would have no impact to agricultural resources. [Similar]

5.5.9 PUBLIC SERVICES

Section 4.9 of the EIR concludes that construction of new police, fire, and parks and recreation facilities would be within the footprint of development envisioned as part of the Draft General Plan and, therefore, potential impacts from expansion of these facilities have been analyzed at a program level in this EIR. In addition, the SJUSD reports that school enrollment figures have declined over the past five years, and the District has extra facility capacity and no new facilities are planned. Due to the relatively minor difference in new development between the Draft General Plan and the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative, and the forecast adequacy of public services, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would have a similar impact on public services as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.5.10 UTILITIES

Section 4.10 of the EIR concludes that adequate facilities and capacities for the conveyance, treatment, and/or disposal of wastewater and solid waste exist to serve the proposed project. With regard to stormwater and drainage systems, water infrastructure, and private utility services, the EIR concludes that potential impacts from expansion of these facilities have been analyzed at a program level in this EIR. Due to the relatively minor difference in new development between the Draft General Plan and the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would have a similar impact on utilities as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.5.11 CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Draft General Plan would result in less-than-significant impacts related to changes in historic character of Citrus Heights, destruction of or damage to known archeological or historic resources, destruction of or damage to as-yet unknown cultural resources, and discovery of human remains with consideration of policies and actions in the Draft General Plan, Section 4.11 of the EIR identifies policies and actions in the Draft General Plan that provide measures for the preservation and avoidance of impacts to historical and archaeological resources and human remains. These measures would also apply under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative and, therefore, it would have a similar impact on cultural resources as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.5.12 AESTHETICS

The Draft General Plan contains goals and policies to preserve the unique character of Citrus Heights, to maintain safe and high quality neighborhoods, achieve attractive, inviting, and functional corridors, establish attractive streetscapes, and create distinctive entryways. Based on these goals and policies, Section 4.12 of the EIR concludes that the Draft General Plan would have a less-than-significant impact to aesthetics. These goals and policies would also apply under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative and, therefore, it would have a similar impact on aesthetics as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.5.13 ENERGY

Section 4.13 of the EIR states that although the Draft General Plan does not change the existing General Plan land use diagram, the Draft General Plan and GGRP provide an estimate of the energy consumption of implementing the Draft General Plan based on the types and intensities of envisioned land uses. In addition, the Draft General

Plan includes numerous additional energy conservation policies (e.g., Goal 41 and policies 41.1 through 41.4) that are not present in the existing General Plan, and the GGRP outlines a comprehensive strategy to reduce energy consumption in existing buildings and new development. These measures would also apply under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative and, therefore, it would have a similar impact on energy use as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.5.14 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Section 4.14 of the EIR provides a cumulative GHG emissions analysis and describes emissions that would be generated by land uses pursuant to the Draft General Plan. These emissions from general plan-related construction activities and from operation of the General Plan land uses would contribute to global climate change. The EIR concludes that the Draft General Plan would result in significant and unavoidable operational impacts related to GHG emissions, and that implementation of the proposed goals, policies, and actions in the Draft General Plan and measures and actions in the GGRP would reduce the extent and severity of operational impacts related to GHG emissions and climate change adaptation to less-than-significant levels by proactively planning for changes in climate and conditions, and providing methods to adapt to these changes. These measures would also apply under the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative and, therefore, it would have a similar impact on GHG emissions as the proposed project. [Similar]

5.5.15 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The Draft General Plan would result in less-than-significant impacts related to routine transport, use, or disposal or accidental release of hazardous materials; interference with an adopted emergency response plan; public health hazards from development on a known hazardous materials site; and hazardous materials near schools.

The Draft General Plan contains a goal to protect the community's health, safety, natural resources, and property from potential risks associated with the use, transport, treatment, and disposal of hazardous materials. The Draft General Plan also contains policies and actions to provide for the safe use and disposal of hazardous materials; to protect residents against potential or undiscovered unexploded ordnance at the Roseville Railyard; and to work with other agencies to inform businesses and consumers on the proper use and disposal of hazardous material. Therefore, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would have a similar impact to the proposed project. [Similar]

5.5.16 CONCLUSION

This EIR concludes that the Draft General Plan Update would result in significant impacts to transportation and mobility; air quality, noise, biological resources, paleontological resources, cultural resources, and hazards and hazardous materials. Mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels for all issues except impacts to transportation and mobility and air quality, which remain significant and unavoidable even after adopting all recommended feasible mitigation measures. No significant impacts were identified to land use, population, and housing; hydrology and water quality; geology, soils, and mineral resources (except paleontological resources); agricultural resources; public services; utilities; aesthetics; GHG emissions, and energy. In comparison to the Draft General Plan, the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would have a potentially reduced impact to transportation and mobility and air quality.

5.6 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

Table 5-1 summarizes the potential environmental impacts associated with the alternatives and provides a comparison to the potential impacts of the proposed project. CEQA requires an EIR to identify the environmentally superior alternative among all of the alternatives considered, including the proposed project. If

the “no project” alternative is selected as the environmentally superior alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives (CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6[e][2]).

The EIR analysis for the Draft General Plan identifies mitigation measures that would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels for all issues except impacts to transportation and mobility and air quality, which remain significant and unavoidable even after adopting all recommended feasible mitigation measures. As shown in Table 5-1, each alternative evaluated in the EIR, when compared to the proposed project on an impact-by-impact basis, has a different combination of effects that results in an impact similar to, greater than, or less than the Draft General Plan. The Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative would generally have similar levels of impact for most environmental issues identified for the proposed project; however, it would have less impact with regard to transportation and mobility and air quality. Although the alternative would provide only a minor potential reduction in impacts to these environmental issues, it would be the environmentally superior alternative.

The land use plan for the Draft General Plan is the same as the land use plan for the No Project Alternative; however, the Draft General Plan, GGRP, and this EIR would provide additional goals, policies, and actions, and new mitigation measures that would reduce potential impacts to land use, population, and housing; transportation and mobility; air quality; biological resources; geology, soils, and mineral resources; energy; and GHG emissions in comparison to the No Project Alternative.

The Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative may make redevelopment of existing developed properties less financially feasible and, therefore, more existing housing may be retained, air quality impacts would be reduced by fewer vehicle trips, and more areas that support native plant and wildlife species may remain as private open space. While impacts to existing housing, air quality, and biological resources may be reduced under this alternative, the reduction would be relatively minor in a city that is currently 98% developed.

Overall, the Draft General Plan and this EIR provide a substantial framework for avoiding and mitigating significant environmental effects of future development. The density and intensity of future land uses in the High Density Residential designation and the permitted commercial FAR are important elements in the City’s efforts to revitalize mixed-use commercial and multi-family residential areas. The Draft General Plan Planning Principles, listed in Section 3.0, Project Description, state: “Citrus Heights does not have the property tax base common in other cities and relies heavily on sales tax revenues. The City should pursue a strong economic development program that supports existing businesses and attracts new ones. Economic development and redevelopment strategies should target commercial corridors with vacant buildings and lots, inappropriate signage and poor property maintenance.” Maximizing the potential of the City’s High Density Residential and General Commercial land use designations is important to the City’s overall economic development strategy and reducing the economic value of properties with these designations would hinder economic growth. Therefore, the City does not support the Reduced Density/Intensity Alternative as adequately meeting the Planning Principles expressed within the Draft General Plan.