

SECTION 7: ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

7.1 - Introduction

In accordance with Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines, as amended, this Draft Master EIR contains a comparative evaluation of the proposed project with the alternatives to the project, including a No Project Alternative. Per Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines, this section focuses on alternatives to the proposed General Plan and Development Code Update (proposed project) that are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant adverse impacts associated with the proposed project, despite the possibility that the alternatives could impede attainment of project objectives. Additionally, the alternatives could result in new impacts that would not have resulted from the proposed project. CEQA requires that an alternatives analysis provide sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project.

Under case law and CEQA Section 15126.6(f), the discussion of alternatives need not be exhaustive and is subject to a rule of reason. CEQA Section 15126.6(d) states that “if an alternative would cause one or more significant effects in addition to those that would be caused by the project as proposed, the significant effects of the alternatives shall be discussed, but in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed.” Determining factors that may be used to eliminate alternatives from detailed consideration in an EIR are (a) failure to meet most of the basic project objectives, (b) infeasibility, or (c) inability to avoid significant environmental impacts. CEQA Section 15364 defines “feasibility” as “Capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors.”

An EIR need not consider an alternative whose effects cannot be reasonably ascertained, whose implementation is remote and speculative, or whose execution does not substantially lessen or avoid the significant effects of the project.

The implementation of the General Plan and Development Code Update would result in significant and unavoidable impacts and significant impacts prior to mitigation incorporated, but less than significant with mitigation incorporated. These potential significant and unavoidable impacts and less than significant impacts with mitigation incorporated are evaluated for each of the alternatives that are considered and evaluated as discussed below.

The environmental issues that were found to be significant and unavoidable include the following:

- Aesthetics – visual character and illumination of the dark sky.
- Agricultural Resources – loss of farmland and removal of Williamson Act Contract land.
- Air Quality – criteria pollutant emissions and toxic air contaminants pollutant concentrations.
- Cultural Resources – potential removal of historic resources.

- Greenhouse Gases – increase in greenhouse gas emissions beyond the year 2020.
- Noise – exceed noise standards and substantial permanent increases in noise levels.
- Transportation and Traffic – potentially exceed thresholds of levels of service on roadways under the jurisdictions of the County of Fresno, City of Clovis, and Caltrans.
- Utility and Service Systems – construction of water, wastewater, and drainage facilities that could cause substantial impacts associated with loss of agriculture and increases in air emissions.

The following impacts were found to be significant prior to mitigation and less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

- Biological Resources
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Public Services

The impacts that were found to be less than significant or no impact include geology and soils, land use and planning, population and housing, and energy conservation.

As addressed in Section 3, Project Description, of this Draft Master EIR, the following are the objectives of the General Plan and Development Code Update.

1. Increase opportunity, economic development, business and job creation.
2. Support a successful and competitive Downtown.
3. Emphasize conservation, successful adaptation to climate and changing resource conditions, and performance effectiveness in the use of energy, water, land, buildings, natural resources, and fiscal resources required for the long-term sustainability of Fresno.
4. Emphasize achieving healthy air quality and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.
5. Support agriculture as an integral industry and sustainable food production system.
6. Protect, preserve, and enhance natural, historic, and cultural resources.
7. Provide for a diversity of districts, neighborhoods, housing types (including affordable housing), residential densities, job opportunities, recreation, open space, and educational venues that appeal to a broad range of people throughout the City.
8. Develop “complete neighborhoods” and districts with a compact and diverse mix of residential densities, building types, and affordability which are designed to be healthy, attractive, and centered by schools, parks, public and commercial services to provide a sense of place and that meet daily needs within walking distance.
9. Promote a city of healthy communities and improve quality of life in existing neighborhoods.

10. Emphasize increased land use intensity and mixed-use development at densities supportive of greater use of transit in Fresno.
11. Emphasize and plan for all modes of travel on local and major streets in Fresno.
12. Resolve existing public infrastructure and service deficiencies, make full use of existing infrastructure, and invest in improvements to increase competitiveness and promote economic growth.
13. Emphasize the City as a role model for growth management planning, regional cooperation, collaborative planning, efficient processing and permit streamlining, public-private partnerships and shared financing, sustainable urban development policies, environmental quality, and a strong economy, and work with other jurisdictions and institutions to further these values throughout the region.
14. Provide a network of safe, well-maintained parks, open spaces, athletic facilities, and walking and biking trails connecting the city's districts and neighborhoods to attract and retain a broad range of individuals, benefit the health of residents, and provide the level of public amenities required to encourage and support development of higher density urban living and transit use.
15. Improve Fresno's visual image and enhance its form and function through urban design strategies and effective maintenance.
16. Protect and improve public health and safety.
17. Recognize, respect, and plan for Fresno's cultural, social, and ethnic diversity, and foster an informed and engaged citizenry.
18. Retain the existing sphere-of-influence.
19. Provide project development direction for future annexations within the existing sphere-of-influence.
20. Encourage development within urban infill areas.

During the development process of the General Plan and Development Code Update as well as during the scoping process, various alternatives were identified. Sections 7.2 and 7.3 provide discussions of the alternatives. These discussions include brief descriptions of the alternatives and documentation why the alternative was rejected, or if the alternative was not rejected, providing a comparative evaluation to the proposed project.

7.2 - Alternatives Considered But Rejected

Following are the alternatives to the proposed General Plan and Development Code Update that were considered but rejected. As discussed below, Concept Alternative A was rejected from further consideration. Concept Alternatives B through E are similar to the Growth Area Expansion that is evaluated in Section 7.3.3.

7.2.1 - The Boulevard Plan – Concept Alternative A

This alternative is known as Concept Alternative A from the Alternatives Report that was prepared for the General Plan Citizens Committee in March 2012. This plan is similar, but different than the proposed project. This alternative provides a slightly higher gross density (9.4 dwelling units per acre) compared to the proposed project (9.12 dwelling units per acre). The number of residential units associated with this alternative is anticipated to be slightly more under buildout conditions compared to the proposed project. The amount of non-residential development is assumed to be the same as the proposed project. As a result, this alternative would result in higher densities and potentially a greater number of residential units. An increase in the number of residential units when factoring in the same amount of other development as the proposed project would result in greater environmental effects. These greater effects could be aesthetics (visual character and lighting), air emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, noise, public services, traffic, and utilities in the areas with greater residential densities compared to the proposed project. This alternative would not avoid a significant and unavoidable effect of the proposed project. This alternative could meet all of the project objectives. However, since this alternative would not avoid a significant and unavoidable environmental effect of the proposed project, this alternative meets one of the factors identified above to eliminate an alternative from detailed consideration in this Master EIR as discussed in Section 15126.6 (c) of the CEQA guidelines.

7.2.2 - The Growth Areas Plan – Concept Alternative B

This alternative is known as Concept Alternative B from the Alternatives Report that was prepared for the General Plan Citizens Committee in March 2012. This alternative includes more housing units and a lower gross density (7.5 dwelling units per acre) compared to the proposed project (9.12 dwelling units per acre). With a lower density and greater number of units, this alternative would result in more residential acreage compared to the proposed project; however, the amount of non-residential development is assumed to be the same, but more dense than the proposed project. Development of this alternative could result in less environmental effects due to lower residential densities, but greater environmental effects due to a greater amount of residential units. A similar increase in residential development (i.e., four percent more than the proposed project) is evaluated in Section 7.3.3 (Growth Area Expansion). The Growth Area Expansion also includes lower residential densities (i.e., 5.3 units per acre) compared to the proposed project. As a result, Section 7.3.3 includes an evaluation of an alternative that has similar components as this alternative.

7.2.3 – The Expanded SOI Plan – Alternative Concept C

This alternative is known as Concept Alternative C from the Alternatives Report that was prepared for the General Plan Citizens Committee in March 2012. This alternative is similar to the Growth Area Expansion that is evaluated in Section 7.3.3. This alternative includes a similar four percent increase in residential units and the same gross average residential density as the Growth Area Expansion. In addition, this alternative as well as the Growth Area Expansion would include a similar amount of non-residential development. Therefore, see Section 7.3.3 for an evaluation of an alternative with similar components as this alternative.

7.2.4 – The Hybrid Plan – Concept Alternative D

This alternative is known as Concept Alternative D from the Alternatives Report that was prepared for the General Plan Citizens Committee in March 2012. This alternative would result in a greater amount of residential development, less gross average residential density (6.7 units per gross acre), and expand outside of the Planning Area. This alternative would result in similar components as the Growth Area Expansion Alternative discussed in Section 7.3.3. Both of these alternatives would expand the Planning Area and reduce the gross average residential density compared to the proposed project. Potential environmental effects associated with this alternative would be similar to the potential environmental effects associated with the Growth Area Expansion Alternative discussed in Section 7.3.3. Therefore, see Section 7.3.3 for an evaluation of an alternative with similar components as this alternative.

7.2.4 – BIA Alternative – Concept Alternative E

This alternative is known as Concept Alternative E that was included for consideration by the General Plan Citizens Committee in April 2012. This alternative includes similar development parameters as those that are evaluated in the Growth Area Expansion Alternative discussed in Section 7.3.3. The similar development parameters are gross average residential densities (5.3 units per gross acre), expansion of the Planning Area, and an approximately four percent increase in residential development compared to the proposed project. Therefore, see Section 7.3.3 for an evaluation of an alternative with similar components as this alternative.

7.3 - Alternatives Considered and Evaluated

An evaluation of four alternatives to the proposed project is provided below. These alternatives represent a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project. This analysis includes alternatives that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic objectives of the proposed project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects.

Following is an evaluation of each of the alternatives to the proposed project that were further considered for analysis. Table 7-1 provides a summary of impacts comparison between the proposed project and the project alternatives. Table 7-1 includes the impacts of the alternatives and compares each impact to the impacts of the proposed project. Table 7-1 also provides the level of impact significance for each issue.

For each impact issue listed, Table 7-1 first gives the level of significance under the project and each alternative, and then in parenthesis it compares the impact of the alternative to the project. For example, where the project's impact, Effects on Species, is shown as "LSM" (less than significant with mitigation), the table shows that the impact of the Growth Area Reduction Alternative would also be "LSM" but the alternative would have less impact than the project, "(L)". The analysis of each alternative assumes that all applicable mitigation measures as well as objectives and policies of the General Plan Update could be implemented with the appropriate alternative. However, applicable mitigation measures may be scaled to reduce or avoid a potential impact of the alternative under consideration and may not precisely match those identified for proposed project.

Table 7-1: Comparison Summary of Impacts between the Proposed Project and Project Alternatives

Environmental Issue	Proposed General Plan and Development Code Update	No Project - No Development	No Project - Development in Accordance with Existing 2025 General Plan	Growth Area Expansion Alternative	Growth Area Reduction Alternative
Aesthetics					
Scenic Vista	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Scenic Resources within a State Scenic Highway	NI	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)
Visual Character	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Light and Glare (Illumination of night sky)	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Agricultural Resources					
Convert Farmland to Non-Agricultural Use	SU	NI (L)	SU (E)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Conflict with Existing Zoning or Williamson Act Contract	SU	NI (L)	SU (E)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Other Changes Resulting in Conversion to Non-Agricultural or Non-Forest Use	NI	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)
Air Quality					
Air Quality Plan	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Air Quality Standards/Violations (CO and SOx)	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Criteria Pollutants (Exceedance of ROG, NOx, PM10, and PM2.5 standards)	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Sensitive Receptors (Substantial Pollutant Concentrations)	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Odors	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LSM (L)
Biological Resources					
Effect on Species	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LSM (L)
Riparian Habitat	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (E)	LSM (G)	LSM (L)

NI = No Impact
 LS = Less Than Significant, No Mitigation Required
 LSM = Less Than Significant with Mitigation
 SP = Speculative (Impact is too speculative to assess)

(E) = Equivalent Impact (same level of impact significance compared to the proposed project)
 (L) = Lesser adverse impact (lesser level of impact compared to the proposed project)
 (G) = Greater adverse impact (greater level of impact compared to the proposed project)

Environmental Issue	Proposed General Plan and Development Code Update	No Project - No Development	No Project - Development in Accordance with Existing 2025 General Plan	Growth Area Expansion Alternative	Growth Area Reduction Alternative
Federally Protected Wetlands	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (E)	LSM (G)	LSM (L)
Wildlife Corridors and Nursery Sites	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (L)
Local Policies or Ordinances Protection Biological Resources	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (L)
Conservation Plans	NI	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)
Cultural Resources					
Historical Resources	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (E)	SU (E)
Archaeological Resources	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (E)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Unique Paleontological Resources/Site or Unique Geologic Feature	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (E)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Human Remains	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (E)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Geology and Soils					
Earthquakes (Exposure to Fault Ruptures)	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Seismic Ground Shaking)	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Seismic Ground Failure	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Landslides	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Soil Erosion or Topsoil Loss	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Unstable Geologic Location (landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse)	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Expansive Soil	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Wastewater Disposal Systems (Soils Incapable to Support Use of Septic Tanks)	NI	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)

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Environmental Issue	Proposed General Plan and Development Code Update	No Project - No Development	No Project - Development in Accordance with Existing 2025 General Plan	Growth Area Expansion Alternative	Growth Area Reduction Alternative
Greenhouse Gases					
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Conflict with Plan, Policy, or Regulation that Reduces Emissions	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Hazards and Hazardous Materials					
Routine Use (Hazard Caused by Routine Transport, Use, or Disposal)	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Accident Conditions (Accidental Release of Hazardous Materials)	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Schools (Hazardous Emissions or Materials Within One-Quarter Mile of School)	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Hazardous Materials Site Listing (Create a Significant Hazard to Public or Environment)	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Airports (Safety Hazard)	LSM	NI (L)	LS (L)	LSM (E)	LSM (E)
Emergency Plans (Physically Interfere with Plans)	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (E)	LSM (E)	LSM (E)
Wildland Fires	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Hydrology and Water Quality					
Water Quality Standards and Requirements	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Groundwater Supplies and Recharge	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LSM (L)
Drainage Pattern: Erosion or Siltation	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Drainage Pattern: Flooding	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Runoff Water and Drainage Systems	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LSM (L)
Water Quality	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)

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Environmental Issue	Proposed General Plan and Development Code Update	No Project - No Development	No Project - Development in Accordance with Existing 2025 General Plan	Growth Area Expansion Alternative	Growth Area Reduction Alternative
Housing Placement: Flood Hazard Area (Placing Housing Within 100-Year Flood Hazard Area)	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (L)
Structures: Flood Hazard Area (Placing Structures within 100-Year Flood Hazard Area)	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (L)
Flooding (Exposure of People of Structures)	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (L)
Seiche, Tsunami, or Mudflow (Inundation)	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (L)
Land Use and Planning					
Divide Establish Community	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Conflict with Applicable Plans, Policies, or Regulations	LS	NI (E)	SU (G)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Conflict with Conservation Plans	NI	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)
Noise					
Noise Levels in Excess of Standards	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Excessive Groundborne Vibration	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Permanent Increase in Ambient Noise Levels	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Temporary or Periodic Increase in Ambient Noise Levels	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Airport Noise Levels	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Population and Housing					
Induce Population Growth (Inducement of Substantial Growth)	LS	NI (L)	LS (E)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Displacement of Housing	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)

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Alternatives to the Proposed Project

Environmental Issue	Proposed General Plan and Development Code Update	No Project - No Development	No Project - Development in Accordance with Existing 2025 General Plan	Growth Area Expansion Alternative	Growth Area Reduction Alternative
Public Services					
Fire Protection	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LSM (L)
Police Protection	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LSM (L)
Schools	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LSM (L)
Other Public Facilities (Courts, Libraries, and Hospitals)	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LSM (L)
Transportation and Traffic					
Traffic Increase					
City of Fresno Jurisdiction	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (L)	LS (L)
County of Fresno Jurisdiction	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (G)	SU (L)
City of Clovis Jurisdiction	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (L)	SU (E)
Caltrans Jurisdiction	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (L)	SU (L)
Other Surrounding County Jurisdictions	SP	NI (L)	SP	SP	SP
Congestion Management Plan	NI	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)
Air Traffic Patterns	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (E)	LS (E)
Emergency Access	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (L)	LS (L)
Conflict with Alternative Transportation	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Utilities and Service Systems					
Wastewater Treatment (Exceeding Wastewater Treatment Requirements)	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LS (L)
Water and Wastewater Treatment Facilities					
Construction of New Facilities	SU	NI (L)	SU (L)	SU (G)	SU (L)
Impact on Capacities of Facilities	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	SU (G)	SU (L)

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Environmental Issue	Proposed General Plan and Development Code Update	No Project - No Development	No Project - Development in Accordance with Existing 2025 General Plan	Growth Area Expansion Alternative	Growth Area Reduction Alternative
Stormwater Drainage Facilities Construction of New Facilities Impact on Capacities of Facilities	SU LSM	NI (L) NI (L)	SU (L) LSM (L)	SU (G) SU (G)	SU (L) SU (L)
Water Supplies (Sufficient Water Supplies for Project)	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LS (L)
Wastewater Treatment Capacity	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LS (L)
Landfill Capacity	LSM	NI (L)	LSM (L)	LSM (G)	LS (L)
Compliance with Solid Waste Regulations and Statutes	LS	NI (L)	LS (L)	LS (G)	LS (L)
Energy Conservation					
Energy Consumption	NI	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)	NI (E)

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7.3.1 - No Project/No Development Alternative

Description

Under the No Project/No Development Alternative (No Project Alternative), the Planning Area would remain unchanged and no new development would occur onsite. The Planning Area would continue to have 545,000 people and include 186,840 dwelling units. No additional land uses would be developed. The existing agricultural uses within the Planning Area would continue their operations.

Analysis

Since this alternative would not include any additional development, no additional environmental effects would occur. The significant and unavoidable effects associated with the proposed project (aesthetics, agricultural resources, air quality, cultural resources, greenhouse gases, noise, traffic, and utility/service systems) would be eliminated with the implementation of this alternative. In addition, the effects that were found to be significant prior to mitigation under the proposed project (biological resources, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and public services) would also be eliminated. Impacts that were found to be less than significant under the proposed project (geology and soils, land use and planning, and population and housing) would also be eliminated with this alternative. Both the proposed project and this alternative would result in a similar no impact related to energy conservation. This alternative is considered environmentally superior to the proposed project; however, this alternative would not meet any of the project's objectives.

7.3.2 - No Project/Development in Accordance with the Existing General Plan

Description

The No Project/Development in Accordance with the Existing General Plan would result in development occurring within the 106,027-acre Planning Area. This alternative would include a population of 790,000 people and a total of approximately 260,000 housing units. Substantially less non-residential development would be developed under this alternative compared to the proposed project. This alternative contemplated buildout of the Planning Area by the year 2025 and due to the economic recession during the past decade, the current estimate of buildout of this alternative is the year 2035. The projected residential density of new residential units after the year 2010 is 6.09 under this alternative.

Analysis

Due to substantially less development under this alternative compared to the proposed project, environmental effects associated with this alternative would be less compared to the proposed project. This alternative would include approximately 180,000 less people and approximately 72,000 fewer residential units compared to the proposed project. This alternative would also include a lower gross residential density (6.09 units per acre) for new residences compared to the proposed project (9.12 units per acre).

With less development, this alternative would be able to reduce the significant and unavoidable effects associated with the proposed project (aesthetics, air quality, cultural resources, greenhouse gases, noise, traffic, and utility/service systems). Potential impacts to agricultural resources would be the same under this alternative compared to the proposed project because this alternative contemplates the removal of all existing farmland. Effects that were found to be significant prior to mitigation under the proposed project (biological resources [effects on species], hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and public services) would also be reduced under this alternative. Impacts that were found to be less than significant under the proposed project (i.e., geology and soils [soil erosion], land use and planning, and population and housing [displacement of housing]) would also be reduced with this alternative. Both the proposed project and this alternative would result in a similar impact related to agricultural resources as discussed above, biological habitat because a similar amount of disturbance within the Planning Area is assumed, seismic hazards, land use and planning, and energy conservation. This alternative is considered environmentally superior to the proposed project.

This alternative would not meet many of the basic objectives of the proposed project. This alternative would not include the development of “complete neighborhoods”, promote healthy communities and improve quality of life, emphasize increase land use intensity and mixed use development, provide for a plan for all modes of travel on local and major streets, and encourage development within urban infill areas. Since this alternative does not meet many of the basic objectives of the proposed project, this alternative would meet one of the factors identified in Section 15126.6(c) of the CEQA guidelines to reject an alternative from further consideration.

7.3.3 - Growth Area Expansion

Description

The Growth Area Expansion Alternative incorporates components that were identified in the Growth Area Plan, The Expanded SOI Plan, and The Hybrid Plan that were developed for the General Plan Citizens Committee in March 2012 and are discussed in Section 7.2, above. The Growth Area Expansion Alternative includes an average residential density of 5.3 units per gross acre for new residential development and an approximately four percent increase in new residential development compared to the proposed project. The total new residential development beyond the existing units in the year 2010 is approximately 151,000 dwelling units compared to the proposed project’s 145,164 new residential units. With a decrease in density within the Planning Area, new residential communities would be required to be constructed outside of the Planning Area. These new

communities would occur contiguous to the Planning Area boundary and within the current jurisdiction of the County of Fresno. Based on no new residential designations within the Planning Area compared to the proposed project, a four percent increase in new residential units compared to the proposed project, and a 5.3 units per gross acre for the approximately 151,000 new dwelling units, a total of approximately 15,000 acres would be required outside of the Planning Area. This new area would also accommodate uses that would support the residential communities. The total population that would be accommodated under this alternative would be approximately 988,000 people which would be approximately 18,000 more people and less than a two percent increase compared to the proposed project.

Analysis

This alternative would result in approximately 15,000 more acres of development compared to the proposed project and would result in a reduced density within the Planning Area. With a slight increase in the total amount of residential and non-residential development compared to the proposed project, this alternative would not be able to reduce the significant and unavoidable aesthetics, air quality, greenhouse gas, noise, and utility/service systems impacts associated with the proposed project. In addition, with more acres of development compared to the proposed project, the significant and unavoidable agricultural impacts associated with the proposed project would not be reduced, but would result in greater impacts. This alternative would also be inconsistent with the City's policies to retain the existing sphere-of-influence boundary and not prohibit urban development such as residential and commercial development to extend beyond the Planning Area proposed under the project. With a reduction of densities within the Planning Area, traffic volumes throughout the Planning Area could be reduced and levels of service on City of Fresno roadway segments as well as on roadway segment under the jurisdictions of the County of Fresno, City of Clovis, and Caltrans could be reduced. Although potential impacts on roadway segments could be reduced under this alternative, the impacts would remain significant and unavoidable on roadway segments under the jurisdictions of the County of Fresno, City of Clovis, and Caltrans, and the impacts under the jurisdiction of the City of Fresno could be reduced to less than significant. Similar to the finding with the implementation of the proposed project, potential traffic effects outside of the Planning Area and within the surrounding counties is speculative.

Effects that were found to be significant prior to mitigation under the proposed project (biological resources [effects on species], hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and public services) would not be reduced under this alternative because a slightly greater amount of residential and non-residential development would occur under this alternative compared to the proposed project. Impacts that were found to be less than significant under the proposed project (geology and soils [soil erosion] and population and housing [displacement of housing]) would remain less than significant under this alternative. Both the proposed project and this alternative would result in a similar impact related to energy conservation. Since this alternative would result in greater impacts in a number of environmental issue areas compared to the proposed project, this alternative is not considered environmentally superior to the proposed project.

This alternative could meet many of the basic objectives of the proposed project. This alternative could include the development of "complete neighborhoods", promote healthy communities and

improve quality of life, provide for a plan for all modes of travel on local and major streets, and encourage development within urban infill areas. However, this alternative would not emphasize increased land use intensity because this alternative would include a lower residential density for new residential units (5.3 units per gross acre) compared to the density under the proposed project (9.12 units per gross density). In addition, this alternative would not retain the existing sphere-of-influence and not prohibit urban development such as residential and commercial development to extend beyond the existing sphere-of-influence.

7.3.4 - Growth Area Reduction

Description

The Growth Area Reduction Alternative would remove future development within the area known as the Southeast Development Area (SEDA), but would include this area as part of the Planning Area. Therefore, the Planning Area would remain 106,027 acres. With the removal of future development within SEDA, the existing rural uses including agricultural uses would remain. This alternative would accommodate approximately 850,000 people which would be approximately 120,000 less people compared to the proposed project. A total of approximately 286,000 residential units would be included under this alternative. This includes approximately 99,000 new residential units within the Planning Area at an average density of approximately 8.4 units per gross acre. This density would be less than the average density of 9.12 units per gross acre under the proposed project; however, since the residential densities in SEDA were higher than the average residential density for the proposed project, the average density of residential units would be less under this alternative. Outside of SEDA, the densities throughout the Planning Area under this alternative would be the same densities as proposed under the proposed project.

Analysis

This alternative would result in approximately 7,700 less acres of development compared to the proposed project and would result in the same density in the remaining portions of the Planning Area. With a reduction of a substantial area for new land uses as well as a reduction of a substantial amount of development in SEDA of approximately 45,800 residential units and approximately 18 million square feet (obtained from Table 3-6 in Section 3 of this Master EIR), this alternative would result in substantially less environmental effects compared to the proposed project.

The implementation of this alternative could reduce impacts associated with the proposed project's significant and unavoidable environmental impacts. These reduced impacts would include reductions in aesthetics, agricultural resources, greenhouse gases, noise, traffic, and utility and service systems. Although these impacts could be reduced, the implementation of this alternative would still result in significant and unavoidable impacts. Aesthetics impacts could remain significant and unavoidable due to development throughout the Planning Area. Agricultural resources would remain significant and unavoidable because development outside of SEDA would still remove agricultural resources. This alternative would generate a substantial amount of greenhouse gases that would continue to represent a significant and unavoidable impact. Noise levels would continue to substantially increase and exceed thresholds throughout the Planning Area and outside of SEDA. Traffic levels would be reduced in the vicinity of SEDA; however, impacts on roadway segments under

the jurisdictions of the County of Fresno, City of Clovis, and Caltrans would still be significant and unavoidable. Similar to the finding with the implementation of the proposed project, potential traffic effects outside of the Planning Area and within the surrounding counties is speculative. Impacts associated with utility and service systems would be substantially reduced under this alternative; however, the significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the construction of new facilities to provide adequate services would remain.

Effects that were found to be significant prior to mitigation under the proposed project (biological resources [effects on species], hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and public services) would be reduced under this alternative because substantially less residential and non-residential development would occur under this alternative compared to the proposed project. Impacts that were found to be less than significant under the proposed project (geology and soils [soil erosion] and population and housing [displacement of housing]) would be less under this alternative and remain less than significant. Both the proposed project and this alternative would result in a similar impact related to energy conservation. Since this alternative would result in less impacts in a number of environmental issue areas compared to the proposed project, this alternative is considered environmentally superior to the proposed project.

This alternative could meet many of the basic objectives of the proposed project. This alternative could include the development of “complete neighborhoods”, promote healthy communities and improve quality of life, provide for a plan for all modes of travel on local and major streets, and encourage development within urban infill areas. This alternative would also emphasize increased land use intensity throughout the Planning Area and outside of SEDA similar to the proposed project. In addition, this alternative would retain the existing sphere-of-influence and not allow urban development such as residential and commercial development to extend beyond the existing sphere-of-influence. Based on the population growth projections presented in Table 3-5 in Section 3 of this Master EIR, development under this alternative would reach buildout in approximately the year 2043 based on a similar growth rate as the proposed project. This alternative would have 13 fewer years of growth compared to the proposed project.

7.4 - Environmentally Superior Alternative

CEQA requires that the City identify an Environmentally Superior Alternative. If the No Project Alternative is the Environmentally Superior Alternative as in this case, the City must identify an Environmentally Superior Alternative among the other alternatives considered in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6). This alternatives analysis includes two different no project alternatives. Therefore, based on the evaluation of the two remaining alternatives, the Growth Area Reduction Alternative would reduce most of the environmental impacts of the proposed project and would be considered the Environmentally Superior Alternative.