

5.1 CEQA REQUIREMENTS

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) analyze a reasonable range of feasible alternatives that meet most or all project objectives while reducing or avoiding one or more significant environmental effects of the project. The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a “rule of reason” that requires an EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[f]). Where a potential alternative was examined but not chosen as one of the range of alternatives, the CEQA Guidelines require that the EIR briefly discuss the reasons the alternative was dismissed.

Alternatives that are evaluated in the EIR must be potentially feasible alternatives. However, not all possible alternatives need to be analyzed. An EIR must “set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice.” (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(f).) The CEQA Guidelines provide a definition for a “range of reasonable alternatives” and, thus limit the number and type of alternatives that need to be evaluated in an EIR. An EIR need not include any action alternatives inconsistent with the lead agency’s fundamental underlying purpose in proposing a project. (In re Bay-Delta Programmatic Environmental Impact Report Coordinated Proceedings (2008) 43 Cal.4th 1143, 1166.)

First and foremost, alternatives in an EIR must be potentially feasible. In the context of CEQA, “feasible” is defined 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. (CEQA Guidelines 15364)

The inclusion of an alternative in an EIR is not evidence that it is feasible as a matter of law, but rather reflects the judgment of lead agency staff that the alternative is potentially feasible. The final determination of feasibility will be made by the lead agency decision-making body through the adoption of CEQA Findings at the time of action on the Project. (Mira Mar Mobile Community v. City of Oceanside (2004) 119 Cal.App.4th 477, 489 see also CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15091(a)) (3) (findings requirement, where alternatives can be rejected as infeasible); 15126.6 ([an EIR] must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision making and public participation”).) The following factors may be taken into consideration in the assessment of the feasibility of alternatives: site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plan or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and the ability of the proponent to attain site control (Section 15126.6 (f) (1)).

Equally important to attaining the project objectives is the reduction of some or all significant impacts, particularly those that could not be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. The following significant and unavoidable impacts of the proposed project are discussed in Chapters 3.1 through 3.15 and in Chapter 4.0 (cumulative-level). The following environmental topics were found to have one or more impacts that were found to be significant and unavoidable: Aesthetics,

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Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Public Services and Recreation, and Utilities. Those topics are summarized below:

- **Impact 3.1-3:** Specific Plan implementation would result in substantial adverse effects or degradation of visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- **Impact 3.2-1:** Specific Plan implementation would convert Important Farmlands to non-agricultural land uses.
- **Impact 3.2-2:** Specific Plan implementation would conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract.
- **Impact 3.3-1:** Specific Plan implementation would conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan.
- **Impact 3.3-2:** Specific Plan implementation during project construction would expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations or result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in nonattainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.
- **Impact 3.3-3:** Specific Plan implementation during project operation would expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations or result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in nonattainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.
- **Impact 3.13-3:** The proposed Specific Plan may result in, or have the potential to require the construction of school facilities which may cause substantial adverse physical environmental impacts.
- **Impact 3.13-4:** The proposed Specific Plan may result in, or have the potential to require the construction of park facilities which may cause substantial adverse physical environmental impacts.
- **Impact 3.13-5:** The proposed Specific Plan may result in, or have the potential to require the construction of other public facilities which may cause substantial adverse physical environmental impacts.
- **Impact 3.15-1:** The proposed Specific Plan would require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded wastewater facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects.
- **Impact 3.15-3:** The proposed Specific Plan would require or result in construction of new or expanded water facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects.
- **Impact 3.15-5:** The proposed Specific Plan would require or result in the construction of new or expanded stormwater drainage facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects.
- **Impact 4.1:** Specific Plan implementation may contribute to the cumulative degradation of the existing visual character of the region.
- **Impact 4.2:** Specific Plan implementation may contribute to the cumulative impact on agricultural land and uses.
- **Impact 4.3:** Specific Plan implementation would contribute to cumulative impacts on the region's air quality

- **Impact 4.13:** Specific Plan implementation may contribute to cumulative impacts on public services.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the proposed project include future development of land for a wide variety of land uses including: Low Density Residential, Medium Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, Medium High Density Residential, Urban Neighborhood Residential, High Density Residential, Community Commercial, Recreation Commercial, General Commercial, Regional Commercial, Office, Business Park, Light Industrial, Corridor/Center Mixed Use, Regional Mixed Use, Pocket Park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Open Space, Ponding Basin, Public Facility, Church, Special School, Elementary School, Elementary, Middle & High School, High School, and Fire Station uses, as well as the required transportation and utility improvements.

Quantifiable Objective

The quantifiable objective of the proposed project includes the future development of up to 54,953 dwelling units (DU) (including 67 DU in the commercial category, 47,072 DU in the residential category and 7,814 DU in the mixed use category) and 60,621,006 square feet (SF) of non-residential uses.

Specific Plan Guiding Principles

The West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan's ("Specific Plan") guiding principles are designed to form the direction of the Specific Plan, and how the Plan can best benefit the future of the Plan Area. The guiding principles incorporate input received from community members and formal recommendations of the Steering Committee. The guiding principles of the Specific Plan are summarized as follows:

TRANSPORTATION

- Accommodate and improve roadway access, connectivity and mobility among all modes of transportation, and prioritize roadway widening where bottlenecking exists.
- Accommodate planned transit services in the Plan Area by locating routes near or adjacent to the community centers, schools, parks, and retail centers.
- Provide a complete, safe, and well-maintained sidewalk network from residential neighborhoods to commercial centers, schools, parks, and community centers.
- Provide a complete, safe, and well-maintained roadway network that allows for efficient and smooth access from the Plan Area to other sections of the City and region.

PARKS AND TRAILS

- Create parks that are within existing and planned neighborhoods that are easily accessed by community members using pedestrian and bicycle pathways, transit services, or motor vehicles, consistent with the City of Fresno's Parks Master Plan.

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- Provide for the location of a flagship Regional Park in the Plan Area that has components of the Plan Area’s agricultural history through the planting of drought-resistant vegetation or trees, and the creation of public art that exhibits the Plan Area’s contribution to the agricultural industry.

AGRICULTURE

- Incorporate elements of agriculture in future parks by planting a mixture of native drought tolerant vegetation, shrubs, and trees that can serve to provide shade and enhance the streetscape.
- Encourage and provide land use opportunities for agri-tourism ventures to occur in the Plan Area.
- Encourage the development of harvest – producing community gardens.

RETAIL

- Attract desired and needed local retail establishments to serve the needs of the Plan Area community. Such establishments include grocery stores, bakeries, restaurants other than fast food places, and boutiques.
- Discourage the expansion of undesirable retail establishments such as liquor stores, tobacco and vapor stores, short-term loan and pawn shops, and adult stores.
- Encourage the development of retail establishments along commercial corridors.
- Encourage the orderly and consistent development of civic, parkland, retail and commercial, mixed-use, and multi-family uses along West Shaw Avenue, West Ashlan Avenue, Veterans Boulevard, West Shields Avenue, West Clinton Avenue, and Blythe Avenue.

HOUSING

- Encourage a variety of housing types and styles.
- Encourage the development of housing to accommodate an aging population including, multi-generational houses and other elder housing options.
- Reaffirm the City’s commitment and obligation to affirmatively furthering access to fair and affordable housing opportunities by strongly encouraging equitable and fair housing opportunities to be located in strategic proximity to employment, recreational facilities, schools, neighborhood commercial areas, and transportation routes.

EDUCATION

- Attract much needed educational opportunities for the residents of the Plan Area, especially for post-secondary education, and access to programs for life-long learners.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- Provide for safe routes to schools for children, with the City and County working together with residents, to provide sidewalks in neighborhoods that have sporadic access.

- Work to promote Neighborhood Watch in all neighborhoods, and further assess the need for the location of emergency response facilities west of State Route 99.

These Specific Plan guiding principles functionally represent project objectives as required by CEQA Guidelines section 15124, subdivision (b).

5.2 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT DISMISSED

One alternative, the Additional Annexation Alternative, was considered as an alternative to the proposed Specific Plan. Under the Additional Annexation Alternative, the land uses within the Plan Area would be changed as described in Chapter 2.0, Project Description, but the area utilized for the development (i.e., the project footprint) would be increased to include the approximately 160-acre area adjacent to the southwestern corner of the Plan Area. The 160-acre area is bound by Shields Avenue on the north, Grantland Avenue on the east, Clinton Avenue on the south, and Garfield Avenue on the west. This area was recommended to be included in the Sphere of Influence expansion by the Steering Committee. Under this alternative, the approximately 160-acre area would be designated Elementary School (12 acres), Low Density (48 acres), Medium Low Density (90 acres) and Community (10 acres) by the proposed City land use map.¹ This additional annexation area would allow for additional development within the Plan Area. The additional annexation area could accommodate an additional 708 residential units (including 168 Low Density units and 540 Medium Low Density units) and an additional 435,600 SF of commercial uses. When compared to the Specific Plan, this Alternative would have equal impact on Aesthetic and Visual Resources and Land Use, but would have greater impact or an increased potential for greater impact under all other environmental categories.

Figure 5.0-1 illustrates the Additional Annexation Alternative.

Expansion of the SOI is not permitted per General Plan Policy LU-1-g. The Additional Annexation Alternative would be inconsistent with this General Plan Policy. As such, the Additional Annexation Alternative would not be a feasible alternative to the Specific Plan.

5.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN THIS EIR

Four alternatives to the proposed project were developed based on input from City staff, the public during the NOP review period, and technical analyses performed to identify the environmental effects of the proposed project. The alternatives analyzed in this EIR include the following four alternatives in addition to the proposed Specific Plan that is described in Chapter 2.0, Project Description.

- No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative;
- Regional Park Alternative;
- Lower Density Alternative.

¹ Note: The land use designations for this additional annexation area total 150 acres. The additional approximately 10 acres includes existing and/or planned roadway right-of-way.

NO PROJECT (EXISTING GENERAL PLAN) ALTERNATIVE

The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6[e]) require consideration of a no project alternative that represents the existing conditions, as well as what would reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved. For purposes of this analysis, the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative assumes that future development of the Plan Area would occur as allowed under the existing General Plan. It is noted that the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would fail to meet the project objectives identified for the Specific Plan.

Figure 5.0-2 illustrates the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative.

REGIONAL PARK ALTERNATIVE

Under the Regional Park Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed land use map. However, this alternative would provide a 74.2-acre Regional Park within the Plan Area. This flagship Regional Park would include components of the Plan Area's agricultural history through the planting of drought-resistant vegetation and trees, and would include public art that exhibits the Plan Area's contribution to the agricultural industry. The Regional Park would be provided generally south of W. Barstow Avenue, north of W. Shaw Avenue, and west of N. Grantland Avenue. The park area would be designated by the City for dual land uses. The underlying designation would be the same as the land use proposed by the Specific Plan (i.e., Neighborhood Mixed Use and Park [Community/Neighborhood]), and the overlying designation would be Park.

Figure 5.0-3 illustrates the Regional Park Alternative.

LOWER DENSITY ALTERNATIVE

Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed land use map, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. Additionally, this alternative would focus the medium and higher density residential uses and commercial uses at available sites on major street corridors. A mixed use town center would be provided along Shaw Avenue.

Figure 5.0-4 illustrates the Lower Density Alternative.

ALTERNATIVES NOT SELECTED FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

A Notice of Preparation was circulated to the public to solicit recommendations to help the City formulate a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project for inclusion in this Draft EIR. Additionally, a public scoping meeting was held during the public review period to solicit recommendations for a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project. No specific

alternatives were recommended by commenting agencies or the general public during the NOP public review process.

CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6(f)(2) describes conditions under which consideration of alternative project location is appropriate. The key question to be considered is whether or not any of the significant effects of the project would be avoided or substantially lessened by putting the project in another location and whether the proposed project, placed at an alternative location, is environmentally superior to the proposed project. Only locations that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project need be considered for inclusion in an EIR.

The City of Fresno considered alternative locations early in the Draft EIR preparation process. The City's key considerations in identifying an alternative location were as follows:

- Is there an alternative location where significant effects of the project would be avoided or substantially lessened?
- Is there a site available within the City's Sphere of Influence with the appropriate size and characteristics such that it would meet the basic project objectives?

The City's consideration of alternative locations for the project included a review of previous land use planning and environmental documents in Fresno, including the General Plan. The City found that there are no potential alternative locations that exist within the City's Sphere of Influence with the appropriate size and characteristics that would meet the basic project objectives.

5.4 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The alternatives analysis provides a summary of the relative impact level of significance associated with each alternative for each of the environmental issue areas analyzed in this EIR. Following the analysis of each alternative, Table 5.0-1 summarizes the comparative effects of each alternative.

NO PROJECT (EXISTING GENERAL PLAN) ALTERNATIVE

This alternative assumes that future development of the Plan Area would occur as allowed under the existing General Plan. It is noted that the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would fail to meet the project objectives identified for the Specific Plan.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative, the Specific Plan Area would be designated with the same land use designations and circulation facilities as described in the Fresno General Plan. The No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would result in the eventual conversion of the undeveloped land from agricultural uses, which would contribute to changes in the regional landscape and visual character of the area. Under this alternative, the existing uses would remain. Similar to the proposed Specific Plan, future development within the Plan Area under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would be subject to the requirements of the General Plan and the Fresno Municipal Code, which includes design standards

in order to ensure quality and cohesive design of the Specific Plan Area. Compliance with the City's development review process and consistency with the General Plan and the Fresno Zoning Ordinance would ensure that impacts are reduced to the greatest extent possible. This alternative would equally impact the visual and aesthetic character of the site area compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Overall, this alternative would have equal impacts to aesthetics when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. The significant and unavoidable impact related to degradation of visual character or quality of the site and its surrounding would still occur under this alternative.

Agricultural Resources

The City's existing General Plan land use map would allow fewer housing units and less non-residential SF than the proposed Specific Plan. Because the same site and site area as the proposed Specific Plan would be developed under this alternative, impacts related to Williamson Act contracts, land use conflicts, and conversion of farmland to urban uses would be identical to the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, this alternative would have equal impacts to agricultural resources as the proposed Specific Plan. The significant and unavoidable impact related to agricultural resources would still occur under this alternative.

Air Quality

As described in Section 3.3, Air Quality, implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would generate emissions during both the construction phase and the operational phase. Construction related impacts would be similar under this alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan, as the area of ground disturbance would be comparable, and the duration of construction would be comparable. However, under this alternative, mobile source emissions would slightly increase. Mobile source (largely from vehicles) emissions are directly related to the number of vehicle trips generated by a project. Buildout under this alternative would facilitate up to 67,205 new residential units. Based on the City's General Plan Housing Element estimate of approximately 2.97 persons per dwelling unit, this alternative could result in up to approximately 199,598 new residents, while buildout under the proposed Specific Plan would allow for 54,953 new residential units, resulting in approximately 163,211 new residents. Therefore, under this alternative, more residential development would be allowed, resulting in a greater increase in the number of residents, which would generate greater daily vehicle trips when compared to the proposed Specific Plan, resulting in increased levels of pollutants from mobile sources. Therefore, this alternative would have increased impacts related to air quality when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. The significant and unavoidable impact related to air quality would still occur under this alternative.

Biological Resources

Potential impacts to biological resources are primarily related to the area proposed for disturbance and less on the type of urban uses that would occur on the Plan Area. Under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative, the Specific Plan Area would be designated with the same land use designations and circulation facilities as described in the Fresno General Plan. The No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would result in the eventual conversion of the undeveloped land from agricultural uses to urban uses, which would eliminate any movement

habitat through the Specific Plan Area and any upland habitat adjacent to the movement corridors. Because the same site and site area as the proposed Specific Plan would be developed under this alternative, impacts related to biological resources would remain unchanged when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Cultural and Tribal Resources

According to the *Cultural and Paleontological Resource Assessment*, a total of 82 cultural resources have been previously recorded within the Plan Area. Of these cultural resources, four are historic archaeological sites and 78 are historic built environment resources. Additionally, as with most projects in the region that involve ground-disturbing activities, there is the potential for discovery of a previously unknown cultural and/or historical resource or human remains. Implementation of the mitigation measures incorporated into this EIR would reduce impacts associated with unknown cultural resources where they to be found.

Under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative, the Specific Plan Area would be designated with the same land use designations and circulation facilities as described in the Fresno General Plan. The No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would result in the eventual conversion of the undeveloped land from agricultural uses to urban uses. Because the same sites and site area as the proposed Specific Plan would be eventually disturbed by future development under this alternative, impacts related to cultural and tribal resources would remain unchanged when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Geology, Soils and Seismicity

The land use map for this alternative would allow more housing units and more population growth than the proposed Specific Plan. The future buildings and structures allowed under this alternative would be exposed to the same level of risk from geologic hazards as the proposed Specific Plan. However, as discussed further below, the number of residents and employees resulting from this alternative may increase compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Because more people may be located in the Specific Plan Area under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative, more people would be exposed to the risks from geologic hazards as compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, this impact would be slightly increased under this alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change and Energy

Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would generate GHG emissions during construction and operation. Short-term construction GHG emissions are a one-time release of GHGs and are not expected to significantly contribute to global climate change over the lifetime of a project. As described in Section 3.7, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Climate Change and Energy, the proposed General Plan would result in less than significant impacts to Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change and Energy. The proposed Specific Plan would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. Additionally, the proposed Specific Plan would be consistent with the current version of the City's GHG Reduction Plan, which is considered a "Qualified Plan," according to CEQA Guidelines §15183.5,

thereby allowing for streamlined review process for proposed new development projects that are subject to discretionary review and trigger environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

Under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative, the Plan Area would be developed with the same land use designations and circulation facilities as described in the Fresno General Plan. As described previously, buildout under this alternative would facilitate up to 67,205 new residential units. Based on the City's General Plan Housing Element estimate of approximately 2.97 persons per dwelling unit, this alternative could result in up to approximately 199,598 new residents, while buildout under the proposed Specific Plan would allow for 54,953 new residential units, resulting in approximately 163,211 new residents.

As explained in Section 3.14 (Transportation and Circulation), implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would result in VMT per capita and VMT per employee during the horizon year that is less than the VMT per capita and VMT per employee of existing conditions in Fresno County. The decreased VMT under the proposed Specific Plan is the result of the proposed land use mix within the Plan Area. The retail and employment opportunities keep the VMT per capita lower than the County average, while the large number of dwelling units near the jobs allows employees to live close to work resulting in a VMT per employee that is lower than the County average today.

Under this alternative, the amount of non-residential SF would decrease compared to the proposed Specific Plan, while the amount of residential dwelling units would increase. Residential densities would be reduced and the land use map under the existing General Plan would not provide the same opportunity for employees to live close to jobs; therefore, because there would be more residents with fewer employment-centered uses under this alternative, VMT would increase compared to the project. As such, the overall land use mix under this alternative would generally be seen to increase per capita GHG emission levels. Therefore, impacts would be increased under this alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Large portions of the Plan Area are improved with existing residential, public facilities, commercial, mixed use, undeveloped rural land, and agricultural uses. These uses are spread throughout the entire Plan Area. Agricultural uses are primarily located in the western portion of the Plan Area. The developed uses are aggregated in the central and eastern portions of the Plan Area.

Due to the long-term use of land for agricultural purposes, properties within the Plan Area may have residual soil (and potentially groundwater) contamination that may require remediation. Also, potentially hazardous building materials (e.g., asbestos containing materials, lead-based paint, etc.) could be encountered during demolition of existing structures to accommodate new development. A release into the environment could pose significant impacts to the health and welfare of people and/or wildlife, and could result in contamination of water (groundwater or surface water), habitat, and countless important resources.

Like most agricultural and farming operations in the Central Valley, agricultural practices in the area have used agricultural chemicals including pesticides and herbicides as a standard practice.

Residual concentrations of pesticides may be present in soil as a result of historic agricultural application and storage. Continuous spraying of crops over many years can potentially result in a residual buildup of pesticides in farm soils. Of highest concern relative to agrichemicals are chemicals such as chlorinated herbicides, organophosphate pesticides, and organochlorine pesticides, such as such as Mecoprop (MCP), Dinoseb, chlordane, dichloro-diphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), and dichloro-diphenyl-dichloroethylene (DDE). Other chemicals may also be present due to other built-up uses. As described in the Environmental Setting section of Section 3.8, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, there is a historical record of soil contamination at the Proposed Constance-Sierra Elementary School site, the Westlake Proposed 430 Acre Development, and the West Shields Elementary School site, each of which are at differing levels of cleanup status. Therefore, there is the potential for other sites to have experienced contamination or have a history of hazardous materials being used as part of previous or current operations.

The No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative is similar to the proposed Specific Plan in that both the Specific Plan and this alternative would result in future development of the entire Specific Plan Area with residential, commercial, mixed-use, and public uses. Because the land area to be developed would not change in comparison to the proposed Specific Plan, the potential for exposure to hazardous materials, or a release of hazardous materials would be similar with this Alternative. Similar to the proposed Specific Plan, new development would introduce new sensitive receptors into an area that contains land that has historically utilized chemicals for agricultural production. Any negative health effects associated with the residuals of these chemicals would be alleviated through compliance with state and federal regulations that require remediation when above certain thresholds. There would be a long-term potential for hazards associated with use and generation of household and commercial hazardous wastes, although compliance with state and federal regulations would be required. The No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would result in equal potential for such impacts.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Implementation of the Specific Plan has the potential to result in the violation of water quality standards and waste discharge of pollutants into surface waters during both construction and long-term operations. Construction operations could result in temporary increases in runoff, erosion, sedimentation, soil compaction and wind erosion effects that could adversely affect soils and reduce the revegetation potential at construction sites and staging areas. The long-term operation of the Specific Plan could result in long-term impacts to surface water quality from urban stormwater runoff and could enter groundwater or surface water systems. Additionally, the proposed Specific Plan would result in new impervious surfaces that could reduce rainwater infiltration and groundwater recharge. Mitigation measures incorporated into the project would reduce potential water quality impacts to a less than significant level. The Specific Plan would not place persons or structures in a flood hazard zone.

Under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative, future development allowed under the City's existing General Plan would result in a similar amount of land covered with impervious surfaces compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Similar to the proposed Specific Plan,

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stormwater would flow into the City's stormwater system via a network of drains, pipes, and detention basins. Future development projects allowed under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would be required to develop permanent storm water control measures and incorporate these measures into the alternative in order to mitigate the impacts of pollutants in storm water runoff from the alternative. Because the alternative would be required to implement improvements in order to manage and treat stormwater flows from the site, impacts related to water quality would be similar.

As described in Section 3.9, Hydrology and Water Quality, when the proposed Specific Plan is eventually developed, the on-site impervious area would increase, leading to faster runoff rates. The No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would provide a similar amount of impervious surface on-site as compared to the proposed Specific Plan, which would also result in similar impacts related to rainfall infiltration and runoff during storm events as compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

As described in Section 3.9, Hydrology and Water Quality, Specific Plan implementation has the potential to result in the discharge of pollutants into detention basins and storm drains, and would change the existing drainage pattern on the site, although these impacts are less than significant as a result of compliance with local, state, and federal regulations, as well as compliance with Specific Plan policies. Under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative, these impacts would be similar and development of this Alternative would be required to comply with the regulatory requirements and General Plan policies to reduce potential impacts, similar to the Specific Plan. Therefore, impacts related to hydrology and water quality would be similar under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Land Use

Unlike the proposed Specific Plan, the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would not require a change of the Specific Plan Area's General Plan Land Use designations. This alternative would be consistent with the General Plan, including the goals, policies, and standards, and with the Zoning Code. The analysis in Section 3.10, Land Use, concluded that the proposed Specific Plan would not result in any significant land use impacts. The No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would allow more housing units and more population growth than the proposed Specific Plan. It is noted that this this alternative would not be consistent with General Plan Policy UF-13-a, which requires future planning, such as Specific Plans, neighborhood plans or Concept Plans, for Development Areas and BRT Corridors by the General Plan. The proposed Specific Plan Area is located in the West Area; therefore, the proposed Specific Plan will serve as an implementation tool to support the General Plans goals and objectives as well as a vital instrument for much needed comprehensive planning, to improve area-wide connectivity, housing opportunities, recreation, services and infrastructure improvements. For these reasons, this alternative would have slightly greater impacts related to land use as compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Noise

As discussed in Section 3.11, Noise, the primary sources of noise associated with implementation of the proposed Specific Plan are from increased vehicle trips on study area roadways in the project vicinity from on-site uses, and increased noise from future operation within the Specific Plan Area. Some existing noise-sensitive receptors located near the Plan Area are currently exposed to exterior traffic noise levels exceeding the 65 dB L_{dn} exterior noise level standard for residential uses. In some locations, the noise levels are predicted to increase to levels that would trigger a new exceedance of the 65 dB L_{dn} exterior noise level standard, or exceed the FICON allowable increase criteria.

Under this alternative, noise associated with vehicle trips is expected to slightly increase due to the increase in population, while other on-site noise sources would likely be comparable to those generated by the proposed Specific Plan. When compared to the proposed Specific Plan, this alternative would result in an increase in the number of housing units by approximately 12,252 units, resulting in approximately 36,388 more residents. Therefore, this alternative would generate more daily vehicle trips and peak hour trips, which would generate increased noise levels on area roadways when compared to the proposed project. Although this alternative would be subject to the mitigation measures identified for the project, due to the increase in anticipated vehicle trips and associated noise, noise impacts would be increased under this alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Population and Housing

The City anticipates growth within the community over time, and has responded to the anticipated growth by establishing Development Areas in the General Plan, including the West Development Area, Southwest Development Area, and Southeast Development Area. The proposed Specific Plan seeks to provide for the orderly and consistent development that promotes and establishes complete neighborhoods within the West Area with enhanced transportation infrastructure, development of core commercial centers, creation of additional parkland, and encouraging the development of a diverse housing stock. The proposed Specific Plan is a planning document that implements the City's intent to focus new development, and the growth that goes along with the new development, into the West Area. The proposed Specific Plan would not displace substantial numbers of existing housing and/or substantial numbers of people, but would instead provide new housing consistent with the City's General Plan. The Specific Plan does not divide the community, but rather, it is an extension of the existing community.

The City has undergone extensive planning efforts since 2017 to refine the General Plan's land use vision for the West Area. The No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would result in an increase in the number of housing units by approximately 12,252 units, resulting in approximately 36,388 more residents. Currently, the City, and the State as a whole, are having a housing crisis due to the lack of housing stock coupled with a significant increase in homelessness. The State of California has even gone as far as to pass legislation with incentives for municipalities and developers to build more housing. In response to an increase in housing stock under this

alternative, it would be anticipated that City would not need to look to other undeveloped areas of the region to supply housing stock to meet the regional demand and the State's directive. This assumption is based entirely on the fact that California, and the City of Fresno, is having a housing shortage and an appropriate response to a shortage is to provide additional housing supply. The increase in residential uses under this alternative and overall land use mix would also meet the minimum number of residential units and layout required for New Urbanism principals that are established in the General Plan for the Plan Area. Overall, because the population growth under this alternative would increase compared to the proposed Specific Plan, this alternative would have a greater impact when compared to the proposed project.

Public Services and Recreation

New development would place increased demands on public services such as police, fire, schools, parks, libraries, and other governmental services. As discussed in Section 3.13, Public Services and Recreation, the proposed Specific Plan would not result in, or have the potential to require the construction of addition fire or police department facilities which may cause substantial adverse physical environmental impacts. However, the proposed Specific Plan incorporates sites for new schools and parks.

Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the project that require payment of impact fees to the City and other public agencies to ensure that the Specific Plan project does not have adverse financial impacts on these agencies. The Specific Plan includes land for schools and parks to ensure the increased demand for these services is met within the Plan Area.

The No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would result in an increase in the number of housing units by approximately 12,252 units, resulting in approximately 36,388 more residents. Therefore, under this alternative, there would be an increased demand for schools, parks, and other public facilities when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Future development of schools and parks within the proposed Specific Plan was determined to contribute to significant and unavoidable impacts related to aesthetics (Impact 3.1-3), agricultural resources (Impact 3.2-1 and Impact 3.2-2), air quality (Impacts 3.3-1 through 3.3-3), and utilities (Impacts 3.15-1 through 3.15-3). These unavoidable impacts associated with construction of schools and parks under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would still occur. Therefore, when compared to the proposed Specific Plan, this alternative would have an increased impact to public services and recreation.

Transportation and Circulation

As explained in Section 3.14 (Transportation and Circulation), implementation of the Specific Plan would result in VMT per capita and VMT per employee during the horizon year that is less than the VMT per capita and VMT per employee for existing conditions in Fresno County. Under the Specific Plan, VMT per capita is 7.4 lower, or 46% lower, while VMT per employee is 12.4 lower, or 48% lower. The decrease in VMT is the result of the proposed land use mix within the Plan Area. The retail and employment opportunities keep the VMT per capita lower than the County average, while the large number of dwelling units near the jobs allows employees to live close to work resulting in a VMT per employee that is lower than the County average today. Additionally,

the guiding principles of the Specific Plan support the policies of the General Plan; therefore, no conflict with policies, plans, and programs for alternative transportation would occur from future development and redevelopment under the proposed Specific Plan.

Under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative, the Specific Plan Area would be designated with the same land use designations and circulation facilities as described in the Fresno General Plan. As noted previously, the amount of non-residential SF would decrease compared to the proposed Specific Plan, while the amount of residential dwelling units would increase. Residential densities would be reduced and the land use map under the existing General Plan would not provide the same opportunity for employees to live close to jobs; therefore, because there would be more residents with fewer employment-centered uses under this alternative, VMT would increase compared to the project. For these reasons, this alternative would have an increased impact to transportation and circulation when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Utilities

Future development within the Specific Plan would result in an increased demand for wastewater, potable water, storm drain, and solid waste services. Under the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative, the Specific Plan Area would be designated with the same land use designations and circulation facilities as described in the Fresno General Plan. However, this Alternative anticipates an increase in the number of housing units by approximately 12,252 units, resulting in approximately 36,388 more residents when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, it is anticipated that the overall demand for water, wastewater, solid waste, and storm drainage would be increased under this alternative. As discussed in Section 3.15 (Utilities), the City's preliminary water demand projections for the Plan Area under the General Plan were higher than for the Specific Plan.

In conclusion, the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would result in increased impacts to water demand. This alternative would also increase the amount of solid waste and wastewater generated at the site compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Overall, impacts under this alternative are expected to be slightly increased.

Conclusion

Table 5.0-1 summarizes the comparative effects of this alternative. As shown, the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would result in equal impacts in six areas and more or slightly more impacts in nine areas.

REGIONAL PARK ALTERNATIVE

Under the Regional Park Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed land use map. However, this alternative would provide a 74.2-acre Regional Park within the Plan Area. This flagship Regional Park would include components of the Plan Area's agricultural history through the planting of drought-resistant vegetation and trees, and would include public art that exhibits the Plan Area's contribution to

the agricultural industry. The Regional Park would be provided generally south of W. Barstow Avenue, north of W. Shaw Avenue, and west of N. Grantland Avenue. The park area would be designated by the City for dual land uses. The underlying designation would be the same as the land use proposed by the Specific Plan (i.e., Neighborhood Mixed Use and Park [Community/Neighborhood]), and the overlying designation would be Park.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Under the Regional Park Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed land use map. However, this alternative would provide a Regional Park within the Plan Area, which would be about 74.2 acres in size. When compared to the proposed Specific Plan, assuming a regional park is constructed, this alternative would result in a decrease in the amount of Neighborhood Mixed Use development. Nevertheless, developing the entire Specific Plan Area would likely result in buildings with equal stories as the proposed Specific Plan. Additionally, similar to the proposed Specific Plan, future development under the Regional Park Alternative would be subject to the Development Standards, Design Guidelines, and policies of the Specific Plan, as well as the City's General Plan policies and actions. This alternative would equally impact the visual and aesthetic appeal of the site compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Overall, this alternative would have equal impacts to aesthetics when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. The significant and unavoidable impact related to degradation of visual character or quality of the site and its surrounding would still occur under this alternative.

Agricultural Resources

The land use map for this alternative would be the exact same as the proposed Specific Plan, except 74.2 acres would have an overlay designation for the 74.2-acre Regional Park. Under this Alternative, because the same site and site area as the proposed Specific Plan would be developed under this alternative, impacts related to Williamson Act contracts, land use conflicts, and conversion of farmland to urban uses would be similar to the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, this alternative would have equal impacts to agricultural resources as the proposed Specific Plan. The significant and unavoidable impact related to agricultural resources would still occur under this alternative.

Air Quality

As described in Section 3.3, Air Quality, implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would generate emissions during both the construction phase and the operational phase. Construction related impacts would be similar under this alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan, as the area of ground disturbance would be comparable, and the duration of construction would be comparable. However, under this alternative, mobile source emissions are anticipated to slightly decrease. Mobile source (i.e., vehicle) emissions are directly related to the number of vehicle trips generated by a project. When compared to the proposed Specific Plan on the West Area, assuming a regional park is constructed, this alternative would result in a decrease in the amount of Neighborhood Mixed Use development. As such, the Regional Park Alternative is anticipated to result in a slight decrease in the number of housing units and non-residential SF,

which would result in a slightly reduced population growth when compared to the proposed Specific Plan buildout due to the inclusion of a 74-acre regional park. Therefore, under this alternative, it is anticipated that slightly less people would be located in the Specific Plan Area generating less daily vehicle trips when compared to the proposed Specific Plan, which would produce lower levels of pollutants from mobile sources. Therefore, this alternative would have slightly reduced impacts related to air quality when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. The significant and unavoidable impact related to air quality would still occur under this alternative.

Biological Resources

Potential impacts to biological resources are primarily related to the area proposed for disturbance and less on the type of urban uses that would occur on the Plan Area. Under the Regional Park Alternative, the Specific Plan's development footprint would be the exact same as the proposed Specific Plan; therefore, an equivalent amount of habitat would be removed as the proposed Specific Plan, and a similar level of ground disturbing activities would occur as compared with the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, when compared to the proposed Specific Plan, potential impacts to biological resources would be equal under the Regional Park Alternative.

Cultural and Tribal Resources

According to the *Cultural and Paleontological Resource Assessment*, a total of 82 cultural resources have been previously recorded within the Plan Area. Of these cultural resources, four are historic archaeological sites and 78 are historic built environment resources. Additionally, as with most projects in the region that involve ground-disturbing activities, there is the potential for discovery of a previously unknown cultural and/or historical resource or human remains. Implementation of the mitigation measures incorporated into this EIR would reduce impacts associated with unknown cultural resources were they to be found.

The Regional Park Alternative would result in a similar level of ground disturbing activities and would have a similar potential to disturb or destroy cultural, historic, and archaeological resources, as well as paleontological resources. While the Specific Plan is not anticipated to result in significant impacts to cultural resources with mitigation, the Regional Park Alternative would result in equal potential for impacts to cultural resources.

Geology, Soils and Seismicity

The land use map for this alternative would be the exact same as the proposed Specific Plan with the exception that 74.2 acres would have an overlay designation for the 74-acre Regional Park. When compared to the proposed Specific Plan on the West Area, assuming a regional park is constructed, this alternative would result in a decrease in the amount of Neighborhood Mixed Use development. This would result in a slight decrease in the number of housing units and non-residential SF, which would result in a slightly reduced population growth when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. The future buildings and structures allowed under this alternative would be exposed to the same level of risk from geologic hazards as the proposed Specific Plan. However, as discussed above, it is anticipated that the number of residents and employees resulting from this alternative may slightly decrease compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Because fewer people may be located in the Specific Plan Area under the Regional Park Alternative, fewer people would be exposed to the risks from geologic hazards as compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, this impact would be slightly decreased under this alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change and Energy

Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would generate GHG emissions during construction and operation. Short-term construction GHG emissions are a one-time release of GHGs and are not expected to significantly contribute to global climate change over the lifetime of a project. As described in Section 3.7, Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change and Energy, the proposed General Plan would result in less than significant impacts to Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change, and Energy. The proposed Specific Plan would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. Additionally, the proposed Specific Plan would be consistent with the current version of the City's GHG Reduction Plan, which is considered a "Qualified Plan," according to CEQA Guidelines §15183.5, thereby allowing for streamlined review process for proposed new development projects that are subject to discretionary review and trigger environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

Under the Regional Park Alternative, the land use map would be the same as the proposed Specific Plan, except 74.2 acres would have an overlay designation for a 74.2-acre Regional Park. When compared to the proposed Specific Plan on the West Area, assuming a regional park is constructed, this alternative would result in a decrease in the amount of Neighborhood Mixed Use development. This would result in a slight decrease in the number of housing units and non-residential SF, resulting in a slight decrease in population growth. This would reduce Plan Area operational GHG emissions by an approximately equivalent amount when compared to the proposed project. Therefore, it is anticipated that under this alternative, impacts related to operational-GHG emissions would be slightly reduced when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. With respect to mobile-GHG emissions, because the overall land use mix is generally the same as the proposed Specific Plan, it is assumed that it would create generally the same opportunities for non-motorized transportation options (such as walking or cycling) assisting with reducing mobile-related GHG emissions. Overall, because fewer people would likely result in the Specific Plan Area under this alternative, the mobile greenhouse gas emissions would slightly decrease when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. As such, the greenhouse gas emissions impact would be slightly reduced when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Large portions of the Plan Area are improved with existing residential, public facilities, commercial, mixed use, undeveloped rural land, and agricultural uses. These uses are spread throughout the entire Plan Area. Agricultural uses are primarily located in the western portion of the Plan Area. The developed uses are aggregated in the central and eastern portions of the Plan Area.

Due to the long-term use of land for agricultural purposes, properties within the Plan Area may have residual soil (and potentially groundwater) contamination that may require remediation.

Also, potentially hazardous building materials (e.g., asbestos containing materials, lead-based paint, etc.) could be encountered during demolition of historic, existing structures to accommodate new development. A release into the environment could pose significant impacts to the health and welfare of people and/or wildlife, and could result in contamination of water (groundwater or surface water), habitat, and countless important resources.

Like most agricultural and farming operations in the Central Valley, agricultural practices in the area have used agricultural chemicals including pesticides and herbicides as a standard practice. Residual concentrations of pesticides may be present in soil as a result of historic agricultural application and storage. Continuous spraying of crops over many years can potentially result in a residual buildup of pesticides in farm soils. Of highest concern relative to agrichemicals are chemicals such as chlorinated herbicides, organophosphate pesticides, and organochlorine pesticides, such as such as MCP, Dinoseb, chlordane, DDT, and DDE. Other chemicals may also be present due to other built-up uses. As described in the Environmental Setting section of Section 3.8, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, there is a historical record of soil contamination at the Proposed Constance-Sierra Elementary School site, the Westlake Proposed 430 Acre Development, and the West Shields Elementary School site, each of which are at differing levels of cleanup status. Therefore, there is the potential for other sites to have experienced contamination or have a history of hazardous materials being used as part of previous or current operations.

Under the Regional Park Alternative, the land use map would be the same as the proposed Specific Plan with the exception that 74.2 acres would have a Park overlay land use designation for the regional park. When compared to the proposed Specific Plan, assuming a regional park is constructed, this alternative would result in a decrease in the amount of Neighborhood Mixed Use development. This would result in a slight decrease in the number of housing units and non-residential SF, which would result in a slightly reduced population growth when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Similar to the proposed Specific Plan, new development would introduce new sensitive receptors into an area that contains land that has historically utilized chemicals for agricultural production. Any negative health effects associated with the residuals of these chemicals would be alleviated through compliance with state and federal regulations that require remediation when above certain thresholds. There would be a long-term potential for hazards associated with use and generation of household and commercial hazardous wastes, although compliance with state and federal regulations would be required. Given that this alternative would likely result in a slight reduction of residential and non-residential development and that all of the sites maintain their underlying land use designations, it is expected that the Regional Park Alternative would generally have an equal impact to this topic relative to the proposed Specific Plan.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Implementation of the Specific Plan has the potential to result in the violation of water quality standards and waste discharge of pollutants into surface waters during both construction and long-term operations. Construction operations could result in temporary increases in runoff, erosion, sedimentation, soil compaction and wind erosion effects that could adversely affect soils

5.0 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

and reduce the revegetation potential at construction sites and staging areas. The long-term operation of the Specific Plan could result in long-term impacts to surface water quality from urban stormwater runoff and could enter groundwater or surface water systems. Additionally, the proposed Specific Plan would result in new impervious surfaces that could reduce rainwater infiltration and groundwater recharge. Mitigation measures incorporated into the project would reduce potential water quality impacts to a less than significant level. The Specific Plan would not place persons or structures in a flood hazard zone.

Under the Regional Park Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed land use map. However, this alternative would provide a Regional Park within the Plan Area, which would be 74.2 acres in size. Approximately the same area as the proposed Specific Plan would be developed with the aforementioned uses in the future. When compared to the proposed Specific Plan on the West Area, assuming a regional park is constructed, this alternative would result in a decrease in the amount of Neighborhood Mixed Use development. The amount of land covered with impervious surfaces would be slightly reduced under this alternative due to the inclusion of a regional park in lieu of urban development.

Similar to the proposed Specific Plan, stormwater from the future buildings would flow into the City's stormwater system via a network of drains, pipes, and detention basins. Future development projects allowed under the Regional Park Alternative would be required to develop permanent storm water control measures and incorporate these measures into the alternative in order to mitigate the impacts of pollutants in storm water runoff from the alternative. Because the alternative would be required to implement improvements in order to manage and treat stormwater flows from the site, impacts related to water quality would be similar.

As described in Section 3.9, Hydrology and Water Quality, the proposed Specific Plan implementation has the potential to result in the discharge of pollutants into detention basins and storm drains, and would change the existing drainage pattern on the site, although these impacts are less than significant as a result of compliance with local, state, and federal regulations. Under this alternative, these impacts would be similar as the proposed Specific Plan. Overall, potential impacts related to hydrology and water quality would be similar under the Regional Park Alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Land Use

Similar to the proposed Specific Plan, the Regional Park Alternative would require a change of the Specific Plan Area's General Plan Land Use designations. This alternative would be required to be consistent with the General Plan, including the goals, policies, and standards and with the Zoning Code. The analysis in Section 3.10, Land Use, concluded that the proposed Specific Plan would not result in any significant land use impacts. This alternative would provide generally the same housing and employment opportunities for the city. However, this alternative would include a 74-acre Park overlay designation to allow for the development of a regional park, which would slightly reduce the overall housing and employment opportunities. Similar to the proposed Specific Plan, upon approval of the General Plan amendment, this alternative would be consistent

with the City's General Plan and other land use regulations, and therefore, would have similar land use impacts as the proposed Specific Plan.

Noise

As discussed in Section 3.11, Noise, the primary sources of noise associated with implementation of the proposed Specific Plan are from increased vehicle trips on study area roadways in the project vicinity from on-site uses, and increased noise from future operation within the Specific Plan Area. Some existing noise-sensitive receptors located near the Plan Area are currently exposed to exterior traffic noise levels exceeding the 65 dB L_{dn} exterior noise level standard for residential uses. In some locations, the noise levels are predicted to increase to levels that would trigger a new exceedance of the 65 dB L_{dn} exterior noise level standard, or exceed the FICON allowable increase criteria.

Under the Regional Park Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed land use map. However, this alternative would provide a Regional Park within the Plan Area, which would be a minimum of 74.2 acres in size. The remainder of the Plan Area would be developed with the same land uses as the proposed Specific Plan. When compared to the proposed Specific Plan, this alternative would result in a slight decrease in the number of housing units and non-residential SF. The slight decrease in residential and non-residential development would result in a slight decrease in noise levels associated with traffic, stationary sources, and construction under this alternative; however, the decrease is anticipated to be negligible since the land designated for the future regional park would generate trips and generate on-site noise associated with the regional park use. Overall, despite this slight reduction in urban development under this alternative, it is expected that some noise levels associated with traffic under this Alternative would still generate a potentially significant impact similar to the proposed Specific Plan. The same mitigation measures required for the proposed Specific Plan would be required for this alternative. As such, this alternative is expected to have an equal impact relative to the proposed Specific Plan.

Population and Housing

The City anticipates growth within the community over time, and has responded to the anticipated growth by establishing Development Areas in the General Plan, including the West Development Area, Southwest Development Area, and Southeast Development Area. The proposed Specific Plan seeks to provide for the orderly and consistent development that promotes and establishes complete neighborhoods within the West Area with enhanced transportation infrastructure, development of core commercial centers, creation of additional parkland, and encouraging the development of a diverse housing stock. The proposed Specific Plan is a planning document that implements the City's intent to focus new development, and the growth that goes along with the new development, into the West Area. The proposed Specific Plan would not displace substantial numbers of existing housing and/or substantial numbers of people, but would instead provide new housing consistent with the City's General Plan. The Specific Plan does not divide the community, but rather, it is an extension of the existing community.

The City has undergone extensive planning efforts since 2017 to refine the General Plan's land use vision for the West Area. Under the Regional Park Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan's land use map. However, this alternative would provide a Regional Park within the Plan Area, which would be 74.2 acres in size. This would result in a slight decrease in the overall number of housing units and non-residential SF, which would cause a slight decrease in the number of new residents and jobs generated under this alternative. Currently, the City, and the State as a whole, are having a housing crisis due to the lack of housing stock coupled with a significant increase in homelessness. The State of California has even gone as far as to pass legislation with incentives for municipalities and developers to build more housing. While buildout under this alternative might result in a slight decrease of housing stock, it is anticipated that this decrease would be negligible and the overall buildout of the Specific Plan under this alternative would be generally comparable to the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, it is anticipated that impacts to population and housing would be generally similar under this alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Public Services and Recreation

New development would place increased demands on public services such as police, fire, schools, parks, libraries, and other governmental services. As discussed in Section 3.13, Public Services and Recreation, the proposed Specific Plan would not result in, or have the potential to require the construction of additional fire or police department facilities which may cause substantial adverse physical environmental impacts. However, the proposed Specific Plan incorporates sites for new schools and parks.

Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the project that require payment of impact fees to the City and other public agencies to ensure that the Specific Plan project does not have adverse financial impacts on these agencies. The Specific Plan includes land for schools and parks to ensure the increased demand for these services is met within the Plan Area.

Under the Regional Park Alternative, the land use map would be the same as the proposed Specific Plan with the exception that 74.2 acres would have a Park overlay land use designation for the proposed regional park. This 74.2-acre overlay designation would result in a slight decrease in the number of housing units and non-residential SF in the Specific Plan area, which would result in a slightly reduced population when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, under this alternative, it is expected that there would be a slight decrease in demand for fire, police, schools, parks, and other public facilities when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. The park demand would also be less under this alternative because the amount of parkland provided would increase compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

It should be noted that the future development of a parks and open space within the proposed Specific Plan was determined to contribute to significant and unavoidable impacts related to aesthetics (Impact 3.1-3), agricultural resources (Impact 3.2-1 and Impact 3.2-2), air quality (Impacts 3.3-1 through 3.3-3), and utilities (Impacts 3.15-1 through 3.15-3). The proposed land use map for this alternative includes 74.2 acres for the development of a regional park. While the development of an additional park facility would contribute to this significant and unavoidable

impact, it is anticipated that this alternative would result in generally similar impacts relative to park and open space facilities when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. However, the slight decrease in demand for fire, police, schools, and other public facilities due to the slight decrease in population and jobs under this alternative would have a slightly reduced impact to public services under this alternative.

Transportation and Circulation

As explained in Section 3.14 (Transportation and Circulation), implementation of the Specific Plan would result in VMT per capita and VMT per employee during the horizon year that is less than the VMT per capita and VMT per employee for existing conditions in Fresno County. Under the Specific Plan, VMT per capita is 7.4 lower, or 46% lower, while VMT per employee is 12.4 lower, or 48% lower. The decrease in VMT is the result of the proposed land use mix within the Plan Area. The retail and employment opportunities keep the VMT per capita lower than the County average, while the large number of dwelling units near the jobs allows employees to live close to work resulting in a VMT per employee that is lower than the County average today. Additionally, the guiding principles of the Specific Plan support the policies of the General Plan; therefore, no conflict with policies, plans, and programs for alternative transportation would occur from future development and redevelopment under the proposed Specific Plan.

Under the Regional Park Alternative, the land use map would be the same as the proposed Specific Plan with the exception that 74.2 acres would have a Park overlay land use designation for the proposed regional park. When compared to the proposed Specific Plan, assuming a regional park is constructed, this alternative would result in a decrease in the amount of Neighborhood Mixed Use development. This would result in a slight decrease in the number of housing units and non-residential SF in the Specific Plan area, which would result in a slightly reduced population and number of jobs when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. The slightly reduced population and jobs under this alternative may slightly decrease the average daily vehicle trips. However, since the overall land use mix is generally the same as the proposed Specific Plan, it is anticipated that impacts to transportation and circulation would generally be the same under this alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Utilities

Future development within the Specific Plan would result in an increased demand for wastewater, potable water, storm drain, and solid waste services. Under the Regional Park Alternative, the land use map would be the exact same as the proposed Specific Plan with the exception that 74.2 acres would have a Park overlay land use designation for the proposed regional park. The regional park would include the planting of drought-resistant vegetation and trees to assist in reducing overall water demand associated with landscaping. This 74.2-acre overlay designation would result in a slight decrease in the number of housing units and non-residential SF in the Specific Plan Area, which would result in a slight reduction of population and jobs when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Additionally, the proposed regional park would generate less wastewater, potable water, and solid waste demand than the underlying land uses. For these reasons, it is anticipated that the overall demand for wastewater, potable water, solid waste, and storm

drainage under this alternative would be slightly less than the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, this alternative would have slightly reduced impacts to utilities when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Conclusion

Table 5.0-1 summarizes the comparative effects of this alternative. As shown, the Regional Park Alternative would result in reduced or slightly reduced impacts in five areas and equal impacts in 10 areas.

LOWER DENSITY ALTERNATIVE

Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed land use map, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. Additionally, this alternative would focus the medium and higher density residential uses and commercial uses at available sites on major street corridors. A mixed use town center would be provided along Shaw Avenue.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. This would result in reduced light and glare impacts due to less development introduced into the Plan Area. Additionally, buildout of the Specific Plan under this alternative would result in less degradation of the visual character and quality of the site due to the preservation of land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. Similar to the proposed Specific Plan, future development under this alternative would be subject to the Development Standards, Design Guidelines, and policies of the Specific Plan, as well as the City's General Plan policies and actions. Overall, despite this reduction in urban development under this alternative, it is expected that overall buildout of the Plan Area would still generate a significant and unavoidable impact related to visual quality and light and glare due to the conversion of farmland and open space into urban development; however, this alternative would result in less impacts to the visual and aesthetic appeal of the site when compared to the proposed Specific Plan due to the preservation of rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area.

Agricultural Resources

The land use map for this alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. Because fewer agricultural areas would be developed under this alternative, impacts related to Williamson Act contracts, land use conflicts, and conversion of farmland to urban uses would be reduced when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, this alternative would have less impacts to agricultural resources as the proposed Specific Plan. The

significant and unavoidable impact related to agricultural resources would still occur under this alternative, though to a lesser extent than the proposed Specific Plan.

Air Quality

As described in Section 3.3, Air Quality, implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would generate emissions during both the construction phase and the operational phase. The land use map for the Lower Density Alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area, resulting in a reduced development footprint. Construction related impacts would be reduced under this alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan, as the area of ground disturbance would be reduced, which would reduce the duration of construction. Additionally, under this alternative, mobile source emissions are anticipated to also decrease. Mobile source emissions are directly related to the number of vehicle trips generated by a project. The Lower Density Alternative would result in the development of lower densities throughout the Plan Area decreasing the number of housing units and non-residential SF, which would result in a reduced population growth when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, under this alternative, it is anticipated that less people would be located on the Specific Plan Area generating less daily vehicle trips when compared to the proposed Specific Plan, which would produce lower levels of pollutants from mobile sources. Therefore, this alternative would have reduced impacts related to air quality when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. The significant and unavoidable impact related to air quality would still occur under this alternative, though to a lesser extent than the proposed Specific Plan.

Biological Resources

Potential impacts to biological resources are primarily related to the area proposed for disturbance and less on the type of urban uses that would occur on the Plan Area. The Lower Density Alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. Therefore, under this alternative, the Specific Plan's development footprint would be less than the proposed Specific Plan, resulting in less habitat removal and reduced ground disturbing activities when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, there would be less potential for impacts to biological resources under this alternative as compared with the proposed Specific Plan.

The reduced development footprint would result in less ground disturbing activities and habitat removal, resulting in the preservation of more movement habitat and upland habitat adjacent to the movement corridors along the southern and western boundaries of the Specific Plan Area. When compared to the proposed Specific Plan, the overall impacts to biological resources would be reduced under this alternative due to the preservation of the existing site conditions along the southern and western boundaries of the Specific Plan Area, resulting in less habitat loss and ground disturbing activities.

Cultural and Tribal Resources

According to the *Cultural and Paleontological Resource Assessment*, a total of 82 cultural resources have been previously recorded within the Plan Area. Of these cultural resources, four are historic archaeological sites and 78 are historic built environment resources. Additionally, as with most projects in the region that involve ground-disturbing activities, there is the potential for discovery of a previously unknown cultural and/or historical resource or human remains. Implementation of the mitigation measures incorporated into this EIR would reduce impacts associated with unknown cultural resources where they to be found.

The Lower Density Alternative would result in a reduced level of ground disturbing activities and would have less potential to disturb or destroy cultural, historic, and archaeological resources, as well as paleontological resources. While the Specific Plan is not anticipated to result in significant impacts to cultural resources with mitigation, the Lower Density Alternative would result in less potential for impacts to cultural resources.

Geology, Soils and Seismicity

Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. This would result in a decreased number of housing units and non-residential SF introduced into the Plan Area, which would result in a reduced population and total jobs when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. The future buildings and structures allowed under this alternative would be exposed to the same level of risk from geologic hazards as the proposed Specific Plan. However, as discussed above, it is anticipated that the number of residents and employees resulting from this alternative would be less when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Because fewer people may be located in the Specific Plan Area under the Lower Density Alternative, fewer people would be exposed to the risks from geologic hazards as compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Therefore, this impact would be slightly decreased under this alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change and Energy

Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would generate GHG emissions during construction and operation. Short-term construction GHG emissions are a one-time release of GHGs and are not expected to significantly contribute to global climate change over the lifetime of a project. As described in Section 3.7, Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change and Energy, the proposed Specific Plan would result in less than significant impacts to Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change, and Energy. The proposed Specific Plan would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. Additionally, the proposed Specific Plan would be consistent with the current version of the City's GHG Reduction Plan, which is considered a "Qualified Plan," according to CEQA Guidelines §15183.5, thereby allowing for streamlined review process for proposed new development projects that are subject to discretionary review and trigger environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area, resulting in a lower development footprint. This would reduce Plan Area operational GHG emissions by an approximately equivalent amount when compared to the proposed project. Therefore, impacts to greenhouse gases under this alternative are expected to be slightly reduced when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Large portions of the Plan Area are improved with existing residential, public facilities, commercial, mixed use, undeveloped rural land, and agricultural uses. These uses are spread throughout the entire Plan Area. Agricultural uses are primarily located in the western portion of the Plan Area. The developed uses are aggregated in the central and eastern portions of the Plan Area.

Due to the long-term use of land for agricultural purposes, properties within the Plan Area may have residual soil (and potentially groundwater) contamination that may require remediation. Also, potentially hazardous building materials (e.g., asbestos containing materials, lead-based paint, etc.) could be encountered during demolition of existing structures to accommodate new development. A release into the environment could pose significant impacts to the health and welfare of people and/or wildlife, and could result in contamination of water (groundwater or surface water), habitat, and countless important resources.

Like most agricultural and farming operations in the Central Valley, agricultural practices in the area have used agricultural chemicals including pesticides and herbicides as a standard practice. Residual concentrations of pesticides may be present in soil as a result of historic agricultural application and storage. Continuous spraying of crops over many years can potentially result in a residual buildup of pesticides in farm soils. Of highest concern relative to agrichemicals are chemicals such as chlorinated herbicides, organophosphate pesticides, and organochlorine pesticides, such as such as MCP, Dinoseb, chlordane, DDT, and DDE. Other chemicals may also be present due to other built-up uses. As described in the Environmental Setting section of Section 3.8, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, there is a historical record of soil contamination at the Proposed Constance-Sierra Elementary School site, the Westlake Proposed 430 Acre Development, and the West Shields Elementary School site, each of which are at differing levels of cleanup status. Therefore, there is the potential for other sites to have experienced contamination or have a history of hazardous materials being used as part of previous or current operations.

Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. This would result in a decreased number of housing units and non-residential SF introduced into the Plan Area,

which would result in a reduced population and total jobs when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Similar to the proposed Specific Plan, new development would introduce new sensitive receptors into an area that contains land that has historically utilized chemicals for agricultural production. Any negative health effects associated with the residuals of these chemicals would be alleviated through compliance with state and federal regulations that require remediation when above certain thresholds. There would be a long-term potential for hazards associated with use and generation of household and commercial hazardous wastes, although compliance with state and federal regulations would be required. Given that this alternative would result in lower densities throughout the Plan Area and a lower development footprint resulting a reduction of total residential and non-residential development, it is expected that the Lower Density Alternative would have a reduced impact relative to this topic.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Implementation of the Specific Plan has the potential to result in the violation of water quality standards and waste discharge of pollutants into surface waters during both construction and long-term operations. Construction operations could result in temporary increases in runoff, erosion, sedimentation, soil compaction and wind erosion effects that could adversely affect soils and reduce the revegetation potential at construction sites and staging areas. The long-term operation of the Specific Plan could result in long-term impacts to surface water quality from urban stormwater runoff and could enter groundwater or surface water systems. Additionally, the proposed Specific Plan would result in new impervious surfaces that could reduce rainwater infiltration and groundwater recharge. Mitigation measures incorporated into the project would reduce potential water quality impacts to a less than significant level. The Specific Plan would not place persons or structures in a flood hazard zone.

Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area, resulting in an overall lower development footprint. This would result in less impervious surfaces introduced into the Plan Area, which would allow for increased rainwater infiltration and groundwater recharge, especially at the western and southern boundaries of the Plan Area that would be preserved under this alternative.

Similar to the proposed Specific Plan, stormwater from the future buildings would flow into the City's stormwater system via a network of drains, pipes, and detention basins. Future development projects allowed under the Lower Density Alternative would be required to develop permanent storm water control measures and incorporate these measures into the alternative in order to mitigate the impacts of pollutants in storm water runoff from the alternative. Because the alternative would be required to implement improvements in order to manage and treat stormwater flows from the site, impacts related to water quality would be similar.

As described in Section 3.9, Hydrology and Water Quality, the proposed Specific Plan implementation has the potential to result in the discharge of pollutants into detention basins

and storm drains, and would change the existing drainage pattern on the site, although these impacts are less than significant as a result of compliance with local, state, and federal regulations. Under this alternative, these impacts would be similar as the proposed Specific Plan. Overall, potential impacts related to hydrology and water quality would be reduced under the Lower Density Alternative when compared to the proposed Specific Plan due to the lower densities developed throughout the Plan Area.

Land Use

Similar to the proposed Specific Plan, the Lower Density Alternative would require a change of the Specific Plan Area's General Plan Land Use designations. This alternative would be required to be consistent with the General Plan, including the goals, policies, and standards and with the Zoning Code. The analysis in Section 3.10, Land Use, concluded that the proposed Specific Plan would not result in any significant land use impacts. This alternative would provide for decreased housing and employment opportunities for the city. Similar to the proposed Specific Plan, upon approval of the General Plan amendment, this alternative would be consistent with the City's General Plan and other land use regulations, and therefore, would have similar land use impacts as the proposed Specific Plan.

Noise

As discussed in Section 3.11, Noise, the primary sources of noise associated with implementation of the proposed Specific Plan are from increased vehicle trips on study area roadways in the project vicinity from on-site uses, and increased noise from future operation within the Specific Plan Area. Some existing noise-sensitive receptors located near the Plan Area are currently exposed to exterior traffic noise levels exceeding the 65 dB L_{dn} exterior noise level standard for residential uses. In some locations, the noise levels are predicted to increase to levels that would trigger a new exceedance of the 65 dB L_{dn} exterior noise level standard, or exceed the FICON allowable increase criteria.

Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. This would result in a decreased number of housing units and non-residential SF introduced into the Plan Area, which would result in a reduced population and total jobs when compared to the proposed Specific Plan. The decrease in residential and non-residential development would result in a decrease in noise levels associated with traffic, stationary sources, and construction under this alternative. As such, this alternative is expected to have a reduced impact relative to the proposed Specific Plan.

Population and Housing

The City anticipates growth within the community over time, and has responded to the anticipated growth by establishing Development Areas in the General Plan, including the West Development Area, Southwest Development Area, and Southeast Development Area. The

5.0 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

proposed Specific Plan seeks to provide for the orderly and consistent development that promotes and establishes complete neighborhoods within the West Area with enhanced transportation infrastructure, development of core commercial centers, creation of additional parkland, and encouraging the development of a diverse housing stock. The proposed Specific Plan is a planning document that implements the City's intent to focus new development, and the growth that goes along with the new development, into the West Area. The proposed Specific Plan would not displace substantial numbers of existing housing and/or substantial numbers of people, but would instead provide new housing consistent with the City's General Plan. The Specific Plan does not divide the community, but rather, it is an extension of the existing community.

The City has undergone extensive planning efforts since 2017 to refine the General Plan's land use vision for the West Area. Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. This would result in a decrease in the overall number of housing units and non-residential SF, which would cause a decrease in the number of new residents and jobs generated under this alternative.

The Plan Area was planned for population and housing growth under the City's General Plan. This alternative would not provide for the same population, housing and employment growth as anticipated by the General Plan or proposed by the Specific Plan. Neither the proposed Specific Plan nor the Lower Density Alternative would exceed the growth projections anticipated by the General Plan. Substantial unplanned growth under both this alternative and the proposed Specific Plan would not occur. Both the proposed Specific Plan and the Lower Density Alternative would not displace substantial amounts of housing. Overall, this alternative would have a similar impact when compared to the proposed project. It is noted that this alternative would not provide the amount of housing, or diversity of housing options, to the extent that the proposed Specific Plan would.

Public Services and Recreation

New development would place increased demands on public services such as police, fire, schools, parks, libraries, and other governmental services. As discussed in Section 3.13, Public Services and Recreation, the proposed Specific Plan would not result in, or have the potential to require the construction of addition fire or police department facilities which may cause substantial adverse physical environmental impacts. However, the proposed Specific Plan incorporates sites for new schools and parks.

Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the project that require payment of impact fees to the City and other public agencies to ensure that the Specific Plan project does not have adverse financial impacts on these agencies. The Specific Plan includes land for schools and parks to ensure the increased demand for these services is met within the Plan Area.

Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. This would result in a decrease in the overall number of housing units and non-residential SF, which would cause a decrease in the number of new residents and jobs generated under this alternative. Therefore, the demand for police, fire and other public services would be reduced. This alternative would still result in development of public facilities (i.e. schools and parks) and would be required to pay the appropriate public safety impact fees. Overall, this alternative would have a reduced impact to public services when compared to the proposed project. The significant and unavoidable impact related to public services and recreation would still occur under this alternative.

Transportation and Circulation

As explained in Section 3.14, Transportation and Circulation, implementation of the Specific Plan would result in VMT per capita and VMT per employee during the horizon year that is less than the VMT per capita and VMT per employee for existing conditions in Fresno County. Under the Specific Plan, VMT per capita is 7.4 lower, or 46% lower, while VMT per employee is 12.4 lower, or 48% lower. The decrease in VMT is the result of the proposed land use mix within the Plan Area. The retail and employment opportunities keep the VMT per capita lower than the County average, while the large number of dwelling units near the jobs allows employees to live close to work resulting in a VMT per employee that is lower than the County average today. Additionally, the guiding principles of the Specific Plan support the policies of the General Plan; therefore, no conflict with policies, plans, and programs for alternative transportation would occur from future development and redevelopment under the proposed Specific Plan.

The Lower Density Alternative would result in lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. This would result in a decrease in the overall number of housing units and non-residential SF, which would cause a decrease in the number of new residents and jobs generated under this alternative. The reduced population and jobs under this alternative are expected to decrease the average daily vehicle trips. Therefore, transportation and circulation impacts are expected to be slightly less under this alternative.

Utilities

Future development within the Specific Plan would result in an increased demand for wastewater, potable water, storm drain, and solid waste services. Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area, resulting in a smaller development footprint. This would also result in a decrease in the overall number of housing units and non-residential SF, which would cause a decrease in the number of new residents and jobs generated under this alternative. It is anticipated that the overall demand for wastewater, potable water, solid waste, and storm

5.0 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

drainage would be less than the proposed Specific Plan due to the smaller development footprint, lower developed density throughout the Plan Area, and the reduced population under this alternative. Therefore, this alternative would have slightly reduced impacts to utilities when compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Conclusion

Table 5.0-1 summarizes the comparative effects of this alternative. As shown, the Lower Density Alternative would result in reduced or slightly reduced impacts in 13 areas and equal impacts in two areas.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

CEQA requires that an environmentally superior alternative be identified among the alternatives that are analyzed in the EIR. If the No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, an EIR must also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2)). The environmentally superior alternative is that alternative with the least adverse environmental impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Table 5.0-1 presents a comparison of the alternative project impacts with those of the Specific Plan. As shown in the table, the Lower Density Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative because it results in the least adverse environmental impacts when compared to the proposed project. The Lower Density Alternative would decrease or slightly decrease impacts to 13 of the 15 environmental issues. This is mostly due to the preservation of the existing farmland and rural residential areas along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area, and the decrease in development associated with the reduced densities. It is noted that none of the project alternatives would fully eliminate any of the significant and unavoidable impacts that would occur under the proposed Specific Plan; however, the significant and unavoidable impacts that would result under the proposed Specific Plan would occur to a lesser extent under the Lower Density Alternative. The Regional Park Alternative is the next best alternative as it would decrease or slightly decrease impacts to five of the 15 environmental issues. It should be noted that none of alternatives meet all of the project objectives, as described in Section 5.5 below.

TABLE 5.0-1: COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVE IMPACTS TO THE PROPOSED SPECIFIC PLAN

<i>ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE</i>	<i>NO PROJECT (EXISTING GENERAL PLAN) ALTERNATIVE</i>	<i>REGIONAL PARK ALTERNATIVE</i>	<i>LOWER DENSITY ALTERNATIVE</i>
Aesthetics and Visual Resources	Equal	Equal	Less
Agricultural Resources	Equal	Equal	Less
Air Quality	More	Slightly Less	Less
Biological Resources	Equal	Equal	Less
Cultural and Tribal Resources	Equal	Equal	Less
Geology, Soils and Seismicity	Slightly More	Slightly Less	Slightly Less
Greenhouse Gas, Climate Change, and Energy	More	Slightly Less	Slightly Less
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Equal	Equal	Less
Hydrology and Water Quality	Equal	Equal	Less
Land Use	Slightly More	Equal	Equal
Noise	More	Equal	Less
Population and Housing	More	Equal	Equal
Public Services and Recreation	More	Slightly Less	Less
Transportation and Circulation	More	Equal	Slightly Less
Utilities	Slightly More	Slightly Less	Slightly Less

5.5 COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT AND ALTERNATIVES TO SATISFY PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This section examines how each of the alternatives selected for more detailed analysis meets the project objectives.

The No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would not fully satisfy the project objectives because this alternative would not fully implement the community's refined vision for the future growth, development, and conservation of open space and resources within the Specific Plan in a manner consistent with the quality of life desired by residents and businesses. An 11-member Steering Committee, established in March 2018 by the Fresno City Council, held regular public meetings to provide recommendations to the draft land use map and guiding principles based on input received from community members. The proposed Specific Plan seeks to provide for the orderly and consistent development that promotes and establishes complete neighborhoods within the West Area with enhanced transportation infrastructure, development of core commercial centers, creation of additional parkland, and encouraging the development of a diverse housing stock. The No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative would not be consistent with the revisions to the core goals provided in the General Plan for the West Area, which calls for the development of the West Shaw Avenue Town Center and Catalytic Corridors in the West Area. While the No Project Alternative would generally meet the project objectives and specific plan guiding principles, it would not be as effective as the proposed Specific Plan.

The Regional Park Alternative would meet the primary project objectives and would satisfy the policy guidance outlined in the City's General Plan for West Area; however, it would not meet the quantifiable objective future development of up to 54,953 DU (including 67 DU in the commercial category, 47,072 DU in the residential category and 7,814 DU in the mixed use category) and 60,621,006 SF of non-residential uses in the Plan Area. Therefore, the Regional Park Alternative would satisfy the project objectives, but to a lesser extent than the proposed Specific Plan.

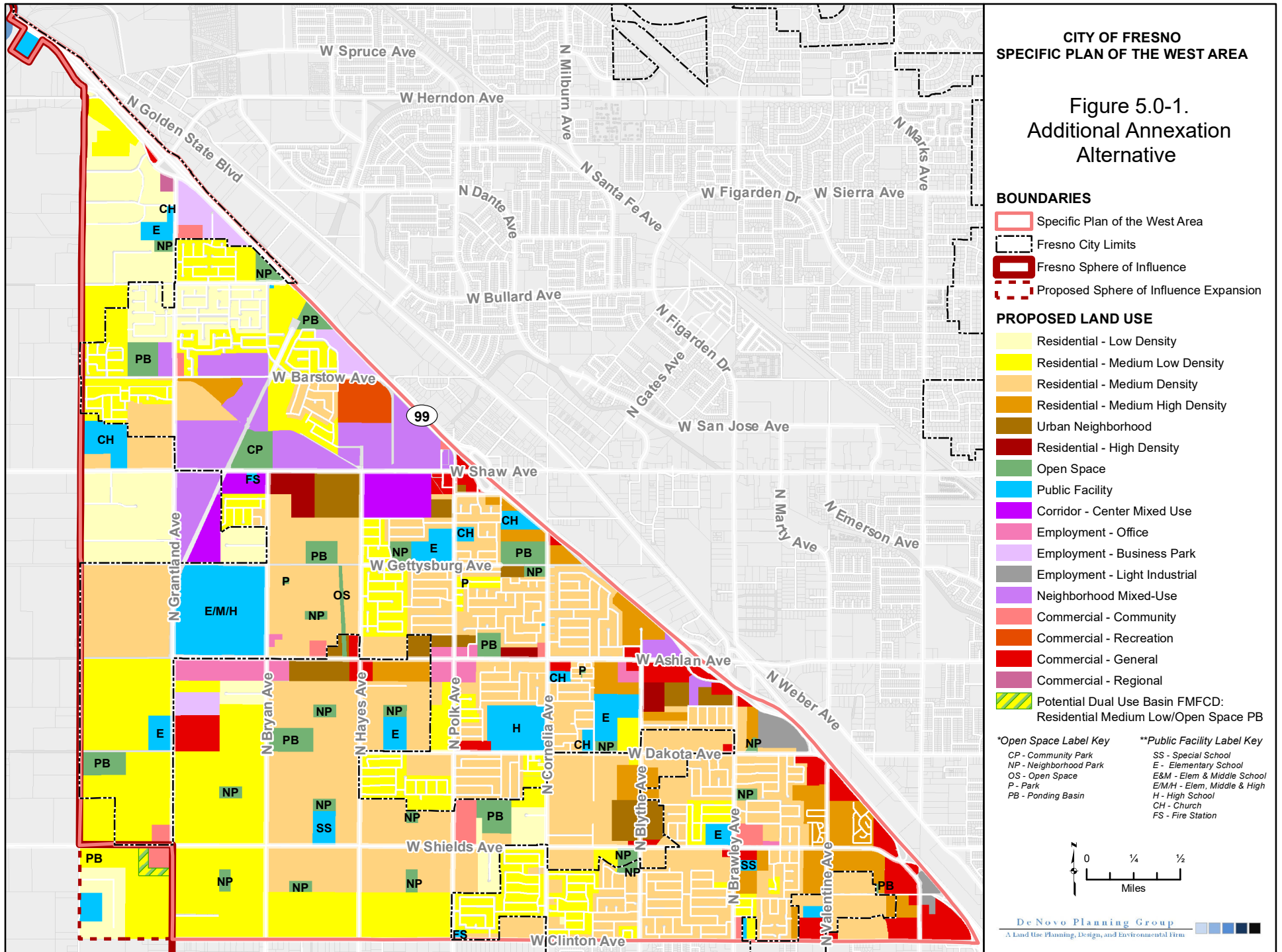
5.0 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Under the Lower Density Alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed land use map, but at lower densities. This alternative would include lower densities throughout the Plan Area and would preserve rural residential and agricultural land along the southern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. Additionally, this alternative would focus the medium and higher density residential uses and commercial uses at available sites on major street corridors. A mixed use town center would be provided along Shaw Avenue. The land use mix under the Lower Density Alternative would not encourage a variety of housing styles and types and would not encourage the development of housing to accommodate an aging population including, multi-generational houses and other elder housing options. Instead, this alternative would encourage the development of lower density single-family homes and ranch style homes. As such, this alternative would cause an overall reduction in housing stock in the Plan Area. Therefore, this alternative would satisfy the project objectives related to housing to a lesser extent than the proposed Specific Plan. Additionally, although this alternative would encourage development of retail along commercial corridors, the amount of retail and job-generating uses would decrease compared to the proposed Specific Plan. As such, the proposed Specific Plan is more effective than the Lower Density Alternative in implementing the retail-related project objectives.

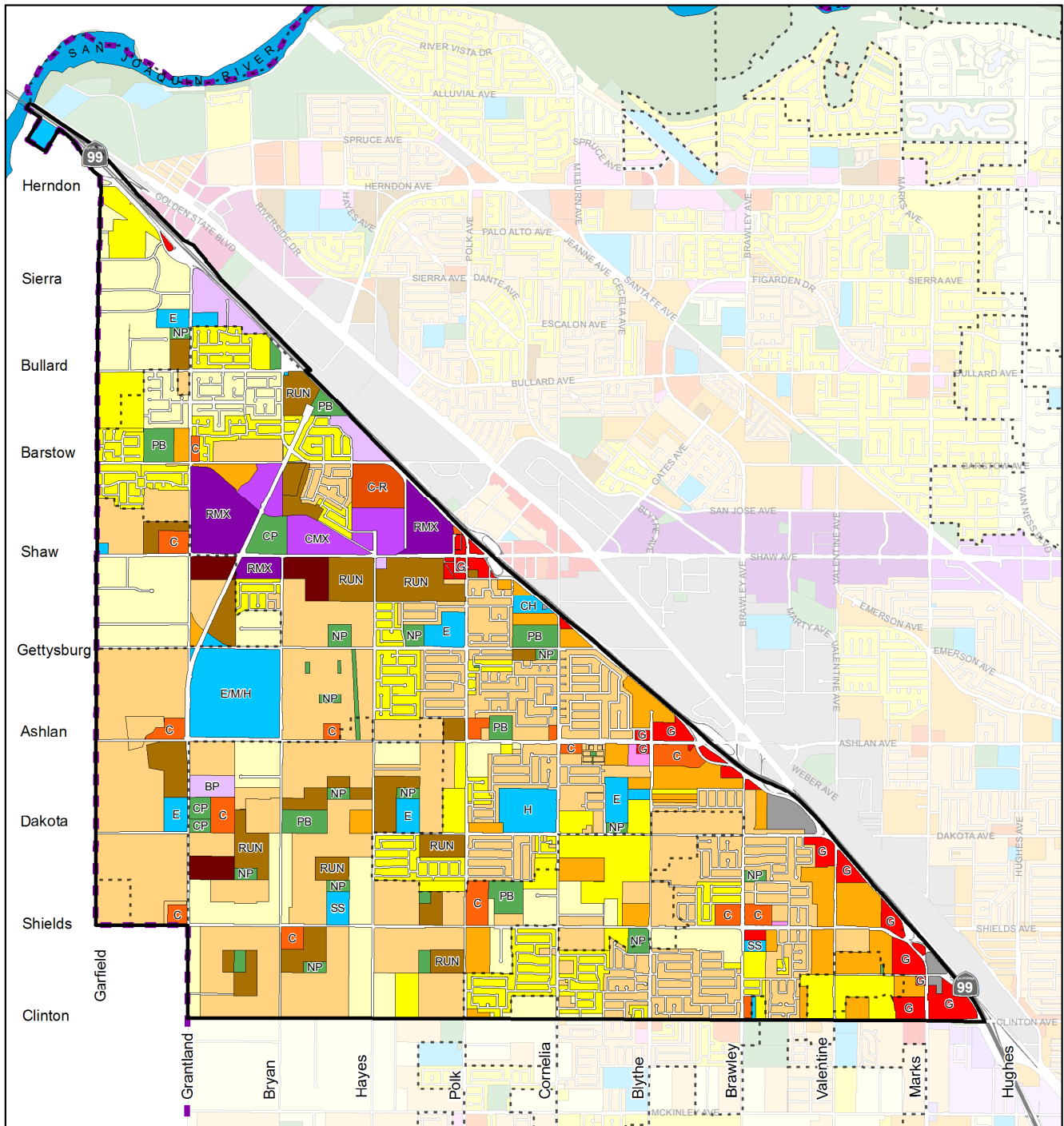
The Lower Density Alternative would accommodate and improve roadways and transit in the area, and would provide a complete roadway network. This alternative would achieve all of the transportation related objectives. This alternative would also result in creation of parks and trails in the Plan Area, and would incorporate elements of agriculture and agri-tourism ventures. Overall, the proposed Specific Plan is more effective than the Lower Density Alternative in implementing the project objectives.

**CITY OF FRESNO
SPECIFIC PLAN OF THE WEST AREA**

**Figure 5.0-1.
Additional Annexation
Alternative**



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BOUNDARIES

- City Limits
- West Area Specific Plan Boundary
- Sphere Of Influence

RESIDENTIAL

- Low Density (1-3.5 D.U./acre)
- Medium Low Density (3.5-6 D.U./acre)
- Medium Density (5.0-12 D.U./acre)
- Medium High Density (12-16 D.U./acre)
- Urban Neighborhood (16-30 D.U./acre)
- High Density (30-45 D.U./acre)

PUBLIC FACILITIES

- Public/Quasi-public Facility
- SS Special School
- E Elementary School
- E/M/H Elementary, Middle & High School
- H High School
- CH Church
- FS Fire Station

EMPLOYMENT

- Office
- BP Business Park
- Light Industrial

MIXED USE

- CMX Corridor/Center Mixed Use
- RMX Regional Mixed Use

OPEN SPACE

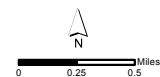
- CP Community Park
- PB Open Space - Ponding Basin
- NP Neighborhood Park
- Open Space
- P Park

COMMERCIAL

- Community
- Recreation
- General

CITY OF FRESNO SPECIFIC PLAN OF THE WEST AREA

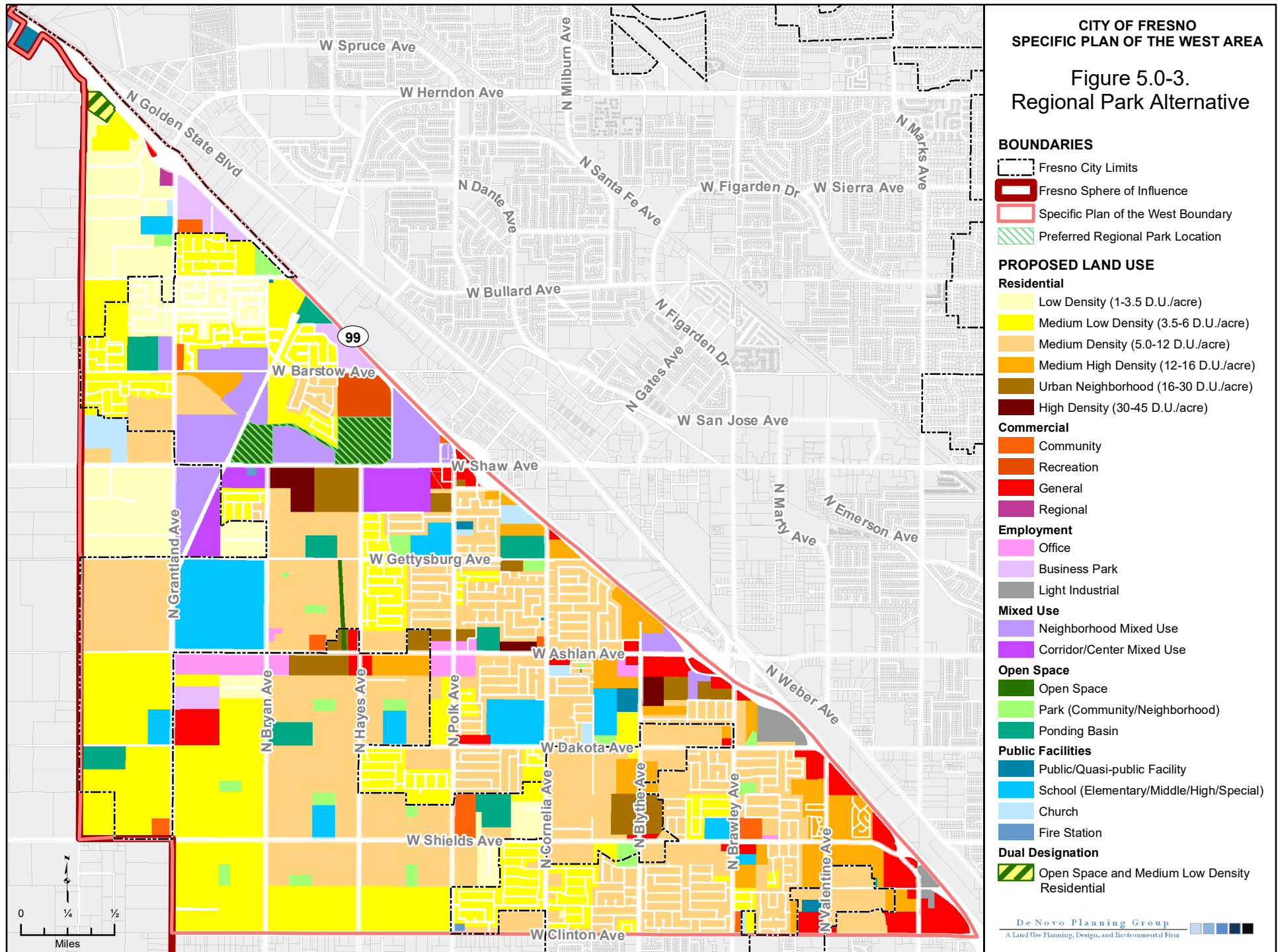
Figure 5.0-2. No Project
(Existing General Plan) Alternative



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**CITY OF FRESNO
SPECIFIC PLAN OF THE WEST AREA**

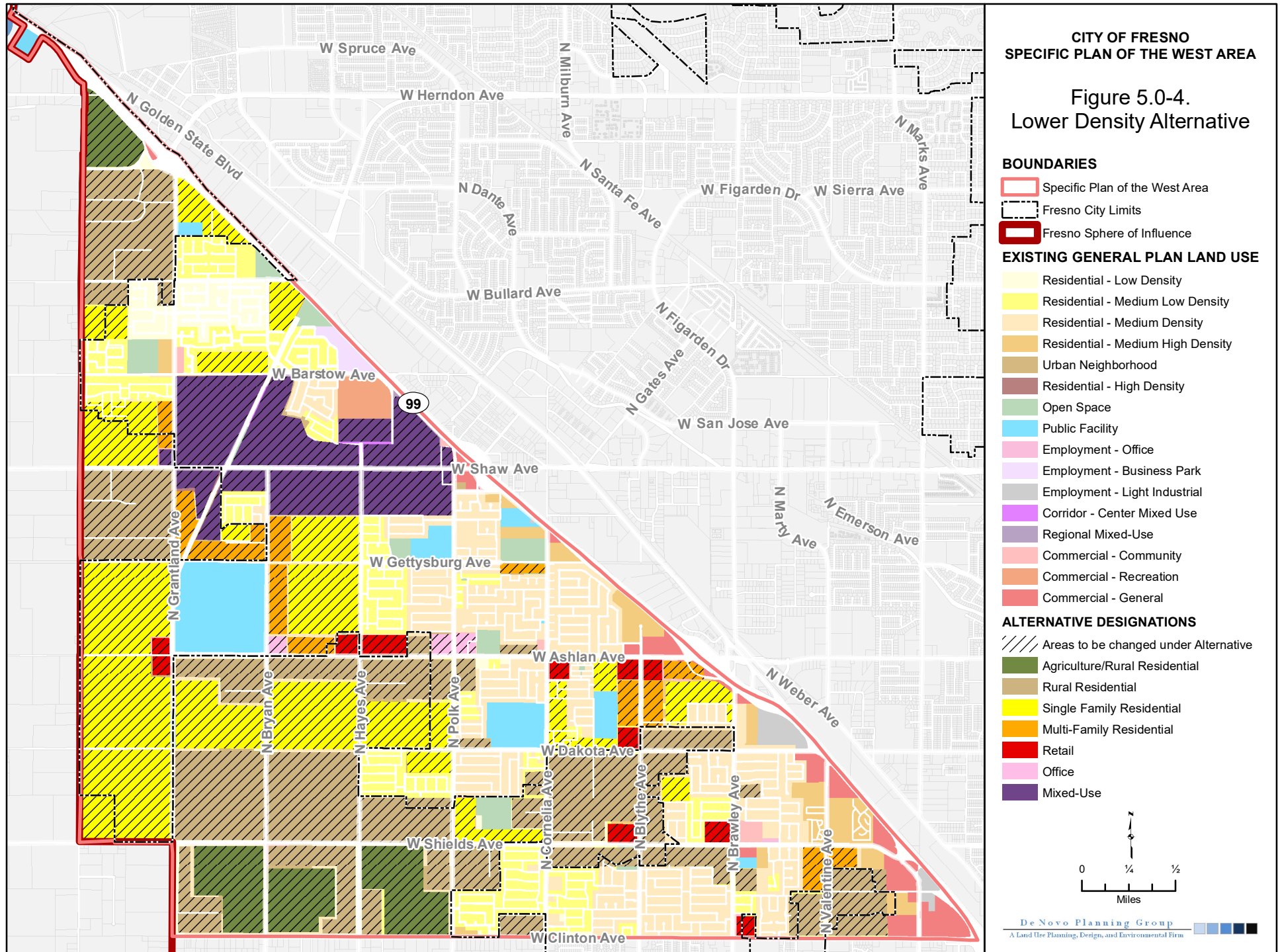
**Figure 5.0-3.
Regional Park Alternative**



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**CITY OF FRESNO
SPECIFIC PLAN OF THE WEST AREA**

**Figure 5.0-4.
Lower Density Alternative**



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