

5.0 Alternatives

Introduction

Section 15126.6 of the State CEQA Guidelines requires the identification and evaluation of reasonable alternatives designed to feasibly achieve most of the basic objectives of the project, while avoiding or substantially lessening any of the significant environmental effects of the project. In addition, CEQA requires a comparative evaluation of the merits of the alternatives.

Pursuant to Section 15126.6(f)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines, factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives include, but are not limited to, site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control, or otherwise have access to the alternative site (or the site is already owned by the proponent). Although these factors do not present a strict limit on the scope of reasonable alternatives to be considered, they help establish the context in which “the rule of reason” is measured against when determining an appropriate range of alternatives sufficient to establish and foster meaningful public participation and informed decision-making.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(f)(2) requires the analysis of alternative locations for the project. The Town Center Specific Plan is intended to act as the City’s downtown and be located in close proximity to City Hall, nearby commercial centers, and transit. The General Plan identified a portion of the Town Center Specific Plan area for the Town Center Plan (generally along Huntington east of Buena Vista Street). The boundary of the Specific Plan includes the area identified by the General Plan, plus an expanded area along north/south streets to provide connectivity to the Duarte Gold Line Station and the City’s employment centers. There is no other location in the City that would provide the required proximity to City Hall and the Gold Line Station. As a result, the City has concluded that no feasible alternative locations exist for the project.

General Plan Project Objectives

The General Plan EIR identified the following Community Values/Guiding Principles developed for the General Plan Update:

- Keep or improve the quality of life in Duarte
- Create a downtown/city center for Duarte
- Build transit development around the Gold Line Station
- Seek to mitigate traffic issues

Specific Plan Process and Objectives

The Duarte Town Center Specific Plan is the culmination of a broad community-based process, beginning in the early 2000s with the Town Center Vision Plan. Adopted by City Council in 2003, the Town Center Vision Plan envisioned a community-oriented, walkable, mixed-use activity center in the heart of Duarte.

In 2012, the City convened a Town Center Ad Hoc Committee to review the 2003 Town Center Concept Plan vision. The Ad Hoc Committee reaffirmed the original Vision and recommended that the City Council authorize development of a specific plan to implement that Vision. The goal of the specific plan would be to encourage and promote mixed-use development and set forth a plan for streetscape improvements in the area. In 2015, the process of crafting the Specific Plan began, drawing from early visioning efforts as the primary foundation. The City conducted stakeholder interviews and held 12 meetings with the Ad Hoc Committee to develop the Specific Plan. The Ad Hoc Committee formed for the Specific Plan formulated the following vision, which this EIR considers the basic project objectives:

Proposed Town Center Specific Plan Basic Project Objectives

As required by the CEQA Guidelines, the following basic project objectives have been identified to help compare alternatives to the proposed Specific Plan:

1. Revitalize existing development and transform vacant and underutilized properties to create a synergistic and lively Town Center.
2. Facilitate the creation of a mixed-use Town Center with an appropriate mix of residential, commercial, retail, services, civic, and cultural uses that will accommodate higher densities, revitalize existing development, and reflect market conditions.
3. Establish development standards and design guidelines that promote high-quality project designs that are attractive, yield a variety of uses, and create a sense of place.
4. Provide for an attractive and unique image for the community by creating a walkable, cohesive, and enduring built environment.
5. Improve pedestrian and transit facilities to create a comfortable walking environment and enhance connectivity to the Duarte Metro Gold Line Station, City of Hope, and the Duarte Bike Trail.
6. Identify and provide for implementation of capital improvement projects and investments to realize the vision of the Town Center Specific Plan and ensure that future demands on the Town Center's infrastructure will be successfully accommodated.

Alternatives Analyzed

Certified General Plan EIR Alternatives

The General Plan EIR analyzed the following alternatives:

- A. No Project/No Development
- B. Existing General Plan (1989)

Proposed Town Center Specific Plan Alternatives

The following alternatives have been analyzed in this section:

- A. No Project/No Development
- B. Existing General Plan (2007)

Alternative A: No Project/No Development Alternative

Implementation of the No Project/No Development alternative assumes that no additional development would occur within the Planning Area; thus, the Planning Area would maintain existing land use conditions and levels of development. No Specific Plan would be adopted. As was the case in the General Plan EIR, this alternative prohibits the issuance of any further building permits. This alternative would prevent the implementation of any current or future Town Center concept for the Planning Area, which would conflict with the Town Center Concept Plan adopted by the Duarte City Council in 2003 to plan for a community-oriented, walkable, mixed-use activity center in the heart of Duarte.

Alternative B: Existing General Plan Alternative

As required by Section 15126.6(e) of the CEQA Guidelines, the Existing General Plan alternative describes build-out of the Planning Area in accordance with existing zoning and General Plan (2007) land use designations and policies. This alternative assumes that development of the Planning Area would include build-out of vacant and underutilized sites. The existing General Plan Land Use Plan designates General Commercial, High Density Residential, Medium

Density Residential, Low Density Residential, Public/Quasi-Public, and Administrative/Professional uses within the Planning Area. The existing General Plan would not provide for a mixed-use, walkable, community-oriented environment.

Comparison of Impacts Among Alternatives

Potentially significant impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed Specific Plan are identified in Sections 4.1 through 4.19, which indicate that significant and unavoidable impacts related to air quality and water supply due to implementation of the General Plan update would remain significant and unavoidable with implementation of the proposed Specific Plan. Implementation of identified General Plan policies and implementation measures and certified General Plan EIR mitigation measures would mitigate all other potentially significant impacts to less than significant levels. This section considers alternatives to otherwise avoid or minimize these impacts.

The analysis of alternatives includes the assumption that all applicable policies, implementation measures, and mitigation measures associated with the General Plan would be implemented with the No Project/No Development alternative and the Existing General Plan alternative. A comparison of each alternative's impacts compared to those of the Specific Plan are provided below.

Table 5-1 (Alternatives' Impacts Comparison Summary) summarizes the impact comparison.

Table 5-1
Alternatives' Impacts Comparison Summary

Impact	Project	No Project/No Development	Existing General Plan
Land Use and Planning	L	+	+
Population and Housing	L	+	=
Aesthetics	L	+	+
Traffic and Circulation	M	=	=
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions	S	-	-
Noise	M	-	-
Geology and Seismic Hazards	L	-	-
Hydrology and Water Quality	M	-	-
Public Health and Safety	M	-	-
Cultural Resources	M	-	=
Biological Resources	L	-	=
Public Services and Utilities	M	-	-
<p>Source: MIG, 2016</p> <p>KEY</p> <p><i>S</i> Significant and Unavoidable Impact</p> <p><i>M</i> Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated</p> <p><i>L</i> Less than Significant Impact</p> <p><i>N</i> No Impact</p> <p><i>+</i> Impact is greater than proposed project</p> <p><i>=</i> Impact is similar to proposed project</p> <p><i>-</i> Impact is less than proposed project</p>			

Land Use

Alternative A (the No Project/No Development alternative) would not result in any changes to existing land uses or development levels within the Planning Area. Under this alternative, 4.4 acres of vacant land would remain undeveloped. In addition, underutilized parcels would not be expanded or provide opportunities for infill development.

Under the No Project/No Development alternative, land use conditions would not be updated to reflect the City's goal to create a mixed-use activity area that is community-oriented and walkable within the heart of Duarte.

Alternative B (the Existing General Plan alternative) assumes that the Planning Area would be built out according to the existing General Plan Land Use Plan, which designates general commercial, high density residential, medium density residential, low density residential, public/quasi-public, and administrative/professional uses within the Planning Area. Vacant and underutilized parcels would be developed according to existing General Plan land use designations.

Both the No Project/No Development and Existing General Plan alternatives would not require revisions to the General Plan Land Use Plan or Development Code. However, neither alternative would meet the City's objective to facilitate the creation of a lively, high density, mixed-use Town Center that would improve pedestrian facilities and establish design guidelines to create a sense of place within Duarte. As discussed in Section 4.1 of this Supplemental EIR, the proposed Specific Plan would be consistent with regional goals and policies to reduce vehicle miles traveled by facilitating a walkable, high density, mixed-use Town Center that would encourage pedestrian activity. Therefore, compared to the proposed Specific Plan, land use impacts under the No Project/No Development alternative and the Existing General Plan alternative would be greater.

Population, Employment, and Housing

Under the Alternative A (No Project/No Development), new development within the Planning Area would be prohibited. No additional housing would be provided within the Planning Area, which would conflict with the City's Housing Element. The Housing Element provides a plan for the City to meet its fair share of regional housing needs, as required by State law and mandated by the State of California Housing and Community Development (HCD). In addition, employment-generating non-residential uses would not be developed and, therefore, opportunities for increased employment would not occur. Because development of residential and non-residential uses would not be allowed within the Planning Area under the No Project/No Development alternative, the City of Duarte would not be able to accommodate projected population or employment increases for the region. The No Project/No Development alternative would result in greater impacts compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

The existing General Plan build-out planning horizon is the year 2020 and does not reflect the most recent regional population, housing, and employment projections. Two of the General Plan's objectives are to update the City's environmental baseline conditions and development projections to the year 2020. The proposed Specific Plan updates the environmental baseline conditions within the Planning Area and updates development projects for the Planning Area to the year 2036. Because the Planning Area is primarily built out, build-out of the Planning Area according to either the existing General Plan or the proposed Specific Plan would continue at a realistic pace based on present growth trends and capacities. Therefore, impacts on population, housing, and employment would be similar.

Aesthetics

Alternative A (the No Project/No Development alternative) would result in no net change to the landform and visual character of the Planning Area, given that no development beyond existing levels would be permitted. Development of vacant and underutilized parcels would not occur, and design guidelines included in the proposed Specific Plan, which would improve the overall visual character of the Planning Area as new uses are developed, would not be applied. Therefore, compared to the proposed Specific Plan, the No Project/No Development alternative would result in greater impacts.

Because the Planning Area is primarily built out, build-out of the Planning Area according to either the existing General Plan or the proposed Specific Plan would continue at a realistic pace based on present growth trends and capacities. However, the proposed Specific Plan includes design guidelines and standards that would improve the

overall visual character of the Planning Area as new uses are developed. Therefore, compared to the Specific Plan, Alternative B (the Existing General Plan alternative) would result in greater impacts.

Traffic/Circulation

As discussed in Section 4.4 of this Supplemental EIR, Planning Area intersections currently operate at acceptable LOS except for two intersections along Huntington Drive. The intersection of Huntington Drive and Cotter Avenue operates at LOS E during the AM peak hour, and the intersection of Huntington Drive and Mount Olive Street operates at LOS E during the PM peak hour. The No Project/No Development alternative would not generate any new traffic or any new traffic impacts, compared to the proposed Specific Plan and pursuant to General Plan EIR traffic mitigation measures, measures shall be taken to increase the capacity and enhance traffic flow of identified roadways. These improvements would likely take place to alleviate existing conditions under Alternative A. Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would require that improvements to intersections be made when traffic volumes and conditions associated with future development warrants improvements. Therefore, similar impacts would result.

With implementation of the General Plan EIR mitigation measures, all studied roadway segments within the City would operate at acceptable LOS. Mitigation measures from the General Plan EIR, as well as new mitigation measures identified for the Specific Plan, would apply to the proposed Specific Plan. Under both Alternative B (Existing General Plan alternative) and the proposed Specific Plan, roadway segments would operate at acceptable LOS after mitigation. Therefore, similar impacts would result.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

As discussed in Section 4.5 of this Supplemental EIR, build-out of the proposed Specific Plan would result in greater air emissions and greenhouse gas emissions than under existing conditions. Implementation of the Specific Plan would facilitate higher densities than currently exist and would accommodate additional residential units and non-residential square footage. Under the Alternative A (No Project/No Development alternative), no additional development would be permitted. The Specific Plan would facilitate new mixed-use development that would be designed and built according to current energy efficiency, water conservation, and building code standards, and also would reduce vehicle miles traveled. However, the additional residential and non-residential uses facilitated by the proposed Specific Plan still would result in greater cumulative air and greenhouse gas emissions compared to no new development at all. Therefore, impacts related to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions would be less under the No Project/No Development alternative.

Compared to the proposed Specific Plan, build-out of the existing General Plan Land Use Plan within the Planning Area (Alternative B) would accommodate fewer residential units and less non-residential square footage. The Specific Plan would facilitate new mixed-use development that would be designed and built according to current energy efficiency, water conservation, and building code standards, and also would reduce vehicle miles traveled. Development facilitated by the existing General Plan would also be subject to current energy efficiency, water conservation, and building code standards. However, the additional residential and non-residential uses facilitated by the proposed Specific Plan (beyond General Plan projections) would result in greater cumulative air and greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, impacts related to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions would be less under the Existing General Plan alternative compared to the proposed Specific Plan.

Noise

Under Alternative A (the No Project/No Development alternative), no new development-related noise impacts would result. No temporary construction noise and no increased traffic noise would occur within the Planning Area. However, as noted in the General Plan EIR, through traffic associated with regional growth would likely increase traffic noise within the Planning Area. Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would facilitate development of additional residential and non-residential uses that would cause an increase in traffic noise and result in temporary

construction noise. Therefore, impacts related to noise would be less under the No Project/No Development alternative.

Under Alternative B (Existing General Plan alternative), future development would result in temporary construction noise impacts, similar to development facilitated by the proposed Specific Plan. However, build-out of the existing General Plan Land Use Plan within the Planning Area would accommodate fewer residential units and less non-residential square footage compared to the Specific Plan. Although General Plan mitigation measures would reduce noise impacts to less than significant levels, increases in traffic noise associated with the additional residential and non-residential uses allowed would be greater with Specific Plan implementation. Therefore, impacts would be less under the Existing General Plan alternative.

Geology and Seismic Hazards

Alternative A (the No Project/No Development alternative) would not permit any new development and, therefore, would not expose additional populations to geologic and seismic hazards. Alternative B (the Existing General Plan alternative) would allow for lower densities, fewer residential units, and fewer non-residential square footage compared to the proposed Specific Plan. Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would result in increased residential populations and non-residential square footage. Although all new development would be subject to General Plan policies and implementation measures requiring soils analysis and California Building Code requirements, implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would potentially expose additional populations to geologic and seismic hazards. Therefore, geologic and seismic hazards would be less under both the No Project/No Development alternative and the Existing General Plan alternative.

Hydrology and Drainage

Under Alternative A (No Project/No Development alternative), no increase in population or development would occur within the Planning Area and, therefore, no increase in water demand or impermeable surface coverage would occur. No new development affected by potential hydrology and drainage hazards (e.g., flooding) would occur. The demand on the City's water supply would remain relatively stable, since no new development would occur. Therefore, compared to the proposed Specific Plan, impacts under the No Project/No Development alternative would be less.

In the Planning Area, build-out under the existing General Plan (Alternative B) would result in fewer people exposed to hydrology and drainage hazards compared to build-out the proposed Specific Plan. Future development within the Planning Area under both the Existing General Plan alternative and the proposed Specific Plan would be subject to existing regulations for runoff and low impact development practices. However, because Specific Plan build-out would result in more population in the Planning Area compared to the current General Plan, the demand on the City's water supply would be greater. Therefore, impacts under the Existing General Plan alternative would be less.

Public Health and Safety

The Planning Area is not subject to wildfire or 100-year flooding risk, so these impacts would remain similar under the No Project/No Development alternative and the proposed Specific Plan. Under the No Project/No Development alternative, no new development would be permitted. Therefore, the transport, use, and disposal of household hazardous waste associated with residential and commercial development would not be increased with new development. The existing General Plan Land Use Plan does not designate land uses that greatly differ from the existing built environment. The General Plan Land Use Plan calls for creation of a specific plan to allow for high-density mixed-use development within a portion of the Planning Area, but the zoning is not in place to accommodate such development. Build-out of the proposed Specific Plan would result in increased residential and non-residential uses involving the transport, use, and disposal of common household hazardous wastes such as batteries, electronic wastes, solvents, cleaners, and pesticides. Therefore, impacts would be less under both the No Project/No Development alternative and the Existing General Plan alternative.

Cultural Resources

Under Alternative A (No Project/No Development alternative), no new development would occur. Since no development would occur, demolition of historic structures and the uncovering of previously undiscovered cultural resources would not occur. Although General Plan policies and implementation measures identify ways to reduce impacts to less than significant levels, no impacts would occur under this alternative.

Under Alternative B (the Existing General Plan alternative), development within the Planning Area would occur on vacant and underutilized sites. Development within the Planning Area under the existing General Plan and the proposed Specific Plan would be subject to General Plan policies and implementation measures that would avoid or reduce impacts. Because development potential exists under both the Existing General Plan alternative and the proposed Specific Plan, impacts would be similar.

Biological Resources

Since no new development would occur under Alternative A (the No Project/No Development alternative), impacts on biological resources would not occur. As discussed in Section 4.11 of this Supplemental EIR, there are no occurrences of sensitive species, habitat, or sensitive natural communities within the Planning Area. As part of Specific Plan implementation, development of underutilized sites could result in the removal of shrubs and trees during the avian nesting season. Future development within the Planning Area would be subject to General Plan policies and implementation measures, and considering the lack of habitat supporting sensitive species in the Planning Area, no new impacts are anticipated. Since no new development would occur under Alternative A, impacts would be less under the No Project/No Development alternative.

Under Alternative B (the Existing General Plan alternative), development within the Planning Area would occur on vacant and underutilized sites that may contain shrubs and trees that could support nesting birds. Development within the Planning Area under both the existing General Plan and the proposed Specific Plan would be subject to General Plan policies and implementation measures that would minimize impacts. Because development potential exists under both the Existing General Plan alternative and the proposed Specific Plan, impacts would be similar.

Public Services and Utilities (Water Supply, Wastewater, Fire, Police, Schools, Parks, Solid Waste, Electricity, and Natural Gas)

Under Alternative A (the No Project/No Development alternative), no new development would be permitted. Therefore, the demands on public services and utilities would not be increased with new development. The existing General Plan Land Use Plan (Alternative B) does not designate land uses that greatly differ from the existing built environment. The General Plan Land Use Plan calls for creation of a specific plan to allow for high-density mixed-use development within a portion of the Planning Area, but the zoning is not in place to accommodate such development. Build-out of the proposed Specific Plan would result in increased residential and non-residential uses that would increase demand on public services and utilities. Therefore, impacts would be less under both the No Project/No Development alternative and the Existing General Plan alternative.

Attainment of Basic Project Objectives

Table 5-2 (Alternatives' Ability to Achieve Project Objectives) discusses the project objectives and ability of alternatives to attain or not attain those project objectives.

**Table 5-2
Alternatives' Ability to Achieve Project Objectives**

Project Objective	Ability for Alternative A (No Project/No Development) to Achieve Objective	Ability for Alternative B (Existing General Plan) to Achieve Objective
1. Revitalize existing development and transform vacant and underutilized properties to create a synergistic and lively Town Center.	Under the No Project/No Development alternative, no new development or redevelopment would occur. As such, no vacant or underutilized properties would be revitalized, and no new opportunities for synergy would occur. Alternative A would not achieve project objective #1.	Under the Existing General Plan, development could occur on vacant sites, however redevelopment of underutilized sites is not anticipated without incentives, such as those provided in the proposed Specific Plan. Overall, Alternative B would not achieve project objective #1.
2. Facilitate the creation of a mixed-use Town Center with an appropriate mix of residential, commercial, retail, services, civic, and cultural uses that will accommodate higher densities, revitalize existing development, and reflect market conditions.	Under the No Project/No Development alternative, no new development or redevelopment would occur. As such, higher densities and opportunities to revitalize existing development would not occur. Alternative A would not achieve project objective #2.	Under the Existing General Plan, development could occur pursuant to existing policy. However, the existing zoning does not allow for mixed use or higher densities. Overall, Alternative B would not achieve project objective #2.
3. Establish development standards and design guidelines that promote high-quality project designs that are attractive, yield a variety of uses, and create a sense of place.	Under the No Project/No Development alternative, no new development or redevelopment would occur. As such, new uses and project designs that create a sense of place would not occur. Alternative A would not achieve project objective #3.	Without the proposed Town Center Specific Plan, existing applicable design policies of the General Plan and Development Code standards would continue to apply to new projects in the Town Center Area. In contrast to the proposed Town Center Specific Plan, however, the existing General Plan and Development Code do not provide detailed guidance on design nor integrated guidance for the public realm. This alternative would not implement the Plan's development standards or design guidelines that would result in active building frontages, pedestrian-friendly facades, and high quality architectural design. Overall, Alternative B would not achieve project objective #3.

<p>4. Provide for an attractive and unique image for the community by creating a walkable, cohesive, and enduring built environment.</p>	<p>Under the No Project/No Development alternative, no new development or redevelopment would occur. As such, no improvements to the public realm would occur to encourage a walkable environment. Alternative A would not achieve project objective #4.</p>	<p>Alternative B would not provide the necessary framework to promote the Town Center as a pedestrian-friendly, walkable district. Improvements to the public realm would not occur systematically in the Town Center, and many would not occur at all (such as bulbouts, widened sidewalks, and additional street crossings), which would compromise walkability. Without the proposed Town Center Specific Plan, project objective #4 would not be achieved.</p>
<p>5. Improve pedestrian and transit facilities to create a comfortable walking environment and enhance connectivity to the Duarte Metro Gold Line Station, City of Hope, and the Duarte Bike Trail.</p>	<p>Under the No Project/No Development alternative, no new development or redevelopment would occur. As such, no improvements to the public realm would occur to encourage a walkable environment. Alternative A would not achieve project objective #4.</p>	<p>Alternative B would not provide the necessary framework to promote the Town Center as a pedestrian-friendly, walkable district. Improvements to the public realm would not occur systematically, which would compromise walkability and transit access. Without the proposed Town Center Specific Plan, project objective #5 would not be achieved.</p>
<p>6. Identify and provide for implementation of capital improvement projects and investments to realize the vision of the Town Center Specific Plan and ensure that future demands on the Town Center's infrastructure will be successfully accommodated.</p>	<p>Under the No Project/No Development alternative, no new development or redevelopment would occur. As such, no improvements to the public realm would occur. Alternative A would not achieve project objective #6.</p>	<p>Under Alternative B, future land use changes would continue to occur, but without the proposed Town Center Specific Plan's overarching strategy to ensure that capital improvement projects and investments would be coordinated and planned for. Additionally, without the proposed Downtown Specific Plan, significant transportation improvements such as bulbouts along Huntington Drive would not occur. Therefore, the project objective for capital improvements would not be achieved to the same extent as the proposed Town Center Specific Plan.</p>

Environmentally Superior Alternative

CEQA requires that an Environmentally Superior Alternative be identified (i.e., an alternative that would result in the fewest or lowest levels of significant environmental impacts).

Alternative B (the Existing General Plan alternative) would result in increased Land Use and Planning and Aesthetic impacts because implementation of the existing General Plan would not be as supportive as the Specific Plan in terms of regional goals to reduce vehicle miles travels, increase pedestrian activity, and increased transit use through higher densities and mixed uses. In addition, the proposed Specific Plan incorporates design guidelines and standards that would improve the overall visual character of the Planning Area. Similar impacts would result related to Population and Housing, Traffic and Circulation, Cultural Resources, and Biological Resources. All other impacts, as summarized in this section, would be reduced under the Existing General Plan alternative due to the potential for fewer residential units and non-residential square footage. With respect to meeting the stated objectives of the Specific Plan, the existing General Plan includes policies and implementation measures that ensure long-term development throughout the City. However, the Existing General Plan would not facilitate the development of a mixed-use environment that would be community-oriented and walkable. Therefore, although the Existing General Plan alternative is considered the Environmentally Superior Alternative, it would not meet the objectives of the project.