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# Memorandum

**TO:** Steering Committee Members

**FROM:** Winston Rhodes, AICP, Planning Manager  
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**SUBJECT:** Draft General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Alternatives

**DATE:** November 9, 2009

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**BACKGROUND:**

We are approaching the EIR phase of the Corridor Specific Plan, General Plan Update, and Zoning Ordinance Update project. A brief status of the main tasks is as follows to provide context to initiate discussion about the EIR Alternatives:

**Corridor Specific Plan:** The Steering Committee and the public have reviewed the Draft of this Plan earlier this year. Later this month City Staff will supply PMC with consolidated comments on the Plan, and edits will be incorporated so that the Corridor Specific Plan and The Draft General Plan will be available for concurrent public review.

**General Plan Update:** The Steering Committee is nearing completion of its initial review of the Draft General Plan elements. The Sustainability Element, Growth Management Element, and Circulation Element will be reviewed at upcoming meetings in December and early next year.

**Zoning Ordinance Update:** Staff and PMC have been working on the Zoning Ordinance Update and expect to bring that draft document before the Steering Committee for initial review early next year.

**EIR:** It is timely to begin the environmental review required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) within the next month. To assist with the preparation of the EIR, staff and PMC are seeking input from the Steering Committee on the range of Alternatives to be analyzed in the EIR.

**ALTERNATIVES UNDER CEQA**

Alternatives under CEQA are somewhat different from the Vision Alternatives that were examined during the earlier Corridor Specific Plan review process. The EIR must consider a “reasonable range” of alternatives and the City, as lead agency for preparation of the EIR, is responsible for selecting a range of project alternatives and must disclose its reasons for selecting the alternatives.

Under CEQA the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project. The EIR should also identify alternatives that were considered but rejected as infeasible and explain the reasons behind the determination.

The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by the “Rule of Reason”. The alternatives are limited to those that would avoid or substantially lessen significant effects of the project on the environment, and need only include alternatives that could feasibly attain most of the project objectives.

Alternatives are used to:

- Compare different approaches to satisfying the same goals;
- May include one or more alternatives that the City does not intend to fully implement;
- Examine big picture issues, not details that will provide different impact analysis conclusions in the EIR.

**Selection of Proposed Alternatives:** Staff and PMC met last week to generate and discuss various alternative ideas to place before the Steering Committee for input. As indicated in the approved work scope and in compliance with CEQA guidelines, the Project, three alternatives, and the “no project” alternative will be analyzed. The “project” in this discussion is the Draft General Plan Update, Specific Plan and the Zoning Ordinance Update. The project and all of the alternatives will examine circulation and land use impacts, as well as the other CEQA topics listed below.

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resource
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing

- Public Services
- Recreation
- Utilities and Service Systems

In preparing the EIR, the project will receive a greater level of analysis than the alternatives. The analysis will include:

1. The Project
2. The “No Project” Alternative (required under CEQA)
3. Two (2) alternatives at a lesser level of detail
4. Preferred Project Alternative (Hybrid) at a lesser level of detail based on the analysis of the project, no project alternative, and the two other alternatives included in the EIR.

When selecting the proposed alternatives, the main General Plan objectives are applied. The five main General Plan Update Objectives, as identified in the current Draft General Plan are as follows:

1. Sustainability
2. Infill Development to:
  - a. Create a compact community with diverse jobs, housing, activities, and services
  - b. Increase housing options and affordability
  - c. Increase transportation efficiency and choice
3. Economic Health
4. Recreation and Resource Protection
5. Housing Diversity

With these five objectives in mind, staff and PMC have discussed some of the issues that might be included in the alternatives to provide more comprehensive analysis and clarify implications of different project component variables. These variables will be reviewed in more detail at the Steering Committee meeting on November 9<sup>th</sup> so that the Steering Committee may add or modify issues contained within the alternatives. The alternative ideas will be refined and brought back for further Steering Committee discussion on December 14<sup>th</sup>.

### Traffic/Circulation Issues

- ❖ San Pablo Avenue
  - Narrow San Pablo Avenue
  - Keep Existing Configuration
  - Widen San Pablo Avenue
- ❖ Improved Safety on Appian Way
- ❖ Multi-Modal/Auto Oriented
  - Transit Service
    - Shorten Headways / Improve Bus Frequency and Convenience
      - ◆ Bus Loop
    - Direct commute access
    - Park & Ride
    - Reduce Parking Requirements
      - ◆ Old Town
      - ◆ High School
    - Provide Direct Access to Passenger Rail
    - Hercules Ferry / Shuttle Service
    - BART Extension closer to Pinole
  - Pedestrian Improvements
    - Shale Hill
    - Bridge to Hercules
    - Appian Way Pedestrian Bridge across Interstate 80
    - Streetscape Enhancements
  - Bicycle
    - Install and upgrade existing routes
    - Support facilities (e.g., bicycle lockers/parking, etc.)

### Land Use

- ❖ High Residential
  - Increased residential potential in mixed use areas that allow office multi-use and commercial multi-use.
  - Residential mixed use with at least 75% of mixed use areas for future residential development and limit non-residential job-generating land uses.
- ❖ High Commercial
  - Increase office mixed multi-use and commercial multi-use (job-generating uses) potential in mixed use areas that allow some residential multi-use
  - Office multi-use and commercial multi-use for at least 75% of the mixed use areas with a stricter limit on residential uses.
  - Higher proportion of Office uses than other types of commercial land use to maximize job generation.

### Governmental Changes

- ❖ Annexation
  - Extend or alter SOI
  - Extend or alter ULL

Using the five objectives of the General Plan, and considering various issues that would make up the alternatives and have the possibility of decreasing some environmental impacts, as required by CEQA, the project and the following two alternatives are proposed for Steering Committee consideration.

1. Reduced Sphere of Influence/Enhanced Circulation/Lower residential density/ higher employment generating non-residential uses – Low future population & High Jobs
2. Annexation of all Sphere of Influence Areas/Transit Focused /Increased residential density/ lower employment generating non-residential uses – High future population & Low Jobs

The EIR will evaluate the “no project” alternative or build-out of the current General Plan and a hybrid option, to be identified as the process moves forward. An Alternatives worksheet will be provided at the Steering Committee meeting on November 9th. The worksheet will help to clarify the different issues within each alternative, along with a section for notes to facilitate the discussion.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Staff and PMC are seeking input from the Steering Committee regarding the General Plan Alternatives to provide a comprehensive range of alternatives to include in the EIR and assist with future decision-making. This will also help ensure that when the Steering Committee completes its initial review of the Draft General Plan, the EIR preparation can proceed in a timely manner.