6.0 ALTERNATIVES

In addition to the three General Plan Land Use Alternatives analyzed in the EIR, this section analyses other alternatives based on rationale provided in the CEQA Guidelines.

RATIONALE FOR ALTERNATIVES SELECTION

CEQA requires the consideration of alternative development scenarios and the analysis of impacts associated with the alternatives. Through comparison of these alternatives to the proposed project, the advantages of each can be weighed and analyzed. Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR, "describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives."

Additionally, Section 15126.6 of the Guidelines states:

- The specific alternative of "no project" shall also be evaluated along with its impact. If the environmentally superior alternative is the "no project" alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives. (15126.6(e)(1)(2))

- . . . An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather, it must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision making and public participation. An EIR is not required to consider alternatives which are infeasible. . . . The range of potential alternatives to the proposed project shall include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic objectives of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects. The EIR should briefly discuss the rationale for selecting the alternatives to be discussed. The EIR should also identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible during the scoping process and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination. . . Among the factors that may be used to eliminate alternatives from detailed consideration in an EIR are: (i) failure to meet most of the basic project objectives, (ii), infeasibility[1], or (iii) inability to avoid significant environmental impacts. (15126.6(a)(c))

[1] Section 15364 of the CEQA Guidelines defines feasible as follows: "'Feasible' means capable of being accomplished within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social and technological factors."

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, a range of alternatives to the proposed project is considered and evaluated in this EIR. These alternatives were developed in the course of project planning and environmental review. The discussion in this section provides:

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

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION AND ANALYSIS

Alternative Location

The CEQA Guidelines recommend considering an alternative location to reduce potential impacts of a proposed project. The proposed General Plan is a plan guiding the growth and development of areas that are located within the jurisdiction of the City of Moreno Valley or its sphere of influence. Because no other lands are within the jurisdiction of the City of Moreno Valley, no alternative location is analyzed.

6.1 NO PROJECT/EXISTING GENERAL PLAN

This alternative is analyzed within this EIR as it is a required under CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e). According to Section 15126.6(e)(2) of the CEQA Guidelines, the "no project" analysis shall discuss, " . . . what is reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services." This alternative assumes that the Moreno Valley planning area would be developed according to the land use and circulation plans as well as the other policies and programs of the existing General Plan.

Description of Alternative

The No Project/Existing General Plan alternative considers the environmental impact associated with development per the City's existing General Plan. This alternative would also leave the existing General Plan in place as the City's primary policy document. The No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative has been analyzed throughout the EIR as Alternative 1. Therefore, no further discussion of this Alternative is needed in this section.

6.2 INCREASED PRESERVATION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

Description of Alternative

This alternative is analyzed within this EIR as a means of preserving an increased amount of the remaining agricultural land (as compared to any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives) with the planning area, thereby reducing the impacts to agricultural resources. Preservation of some of the remaining agricultural land is also assumed to result in less population, and less residential and non-residential development. This alternative would implement other policies, plans and implementation programs of the proposed General Plan.

Comparison of Environmental Impacts of Increased Agricultural Land Preservation Alternative to Proposed Project Alternatives 1, 2, and 3

Land Use and Planning

Implementation of this alternative would not reduce nor avoid a significant impact to land use and planning as no significant land use and planning impact has been identified with the implementation of any of the proposed General Plan Alternatives 1, 2 or 3.

Traffic/Circulation

Implementation of this alternative would result in less development than would occur under any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives since more of the remaining agricultural land would be preserved. Therefore, this alternative would result in less daily trips within the planning area and less local traffic compared to any of the three proposed General Plan Alternatives 1, 2, or 3. However, prohibiting development on agricultural land could prohibit the construction of needed road improvements across the agricultural property and make it difficult to finance needed road improvements in other areas. While this alternative may generate less traffic on some streets, it would not generate less traffic for other streets and on a regional level. It would create a greater imbalance between local jobs and local households at buildout. Therefore, more workers would be commuting into Moreno Valley from surrounding areas. Preservation of agricultural land also would contribute to sprawl because growth, housing growth in particular, would be diverted to more remote parts of the region. Sprawl leads to greater dependence on automobiles, longer commutes, more freeway traffic and the associated air emissions and fuel consumption. Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce the traffic impacts to a level less than significant.

Air Quality

Less development would occur and fewer local daily trips would be generated within the planning area than would be under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. The reduced number of daily trips and reduction in urban development would result in less local air emissions. While this alternative may generate less air pollution on a local level, it would not affect regional air quality. Preservation of agricultural land would contribute to sprawl because growth would be diverted to other parts of the region. Sprawl leads to greater dependence on automobiles, longer commutes, more freeway traffic and associated increases in air emissions. Agricultural operations would also continue to impact the air quality within the planning area in terms of dust from the fields and the use of farming machinery. Therefore, implementation of this alternative would result in a similar air quality impact as would any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. This alternative would not eliminate or reduce the air quality impact to a level less than significant.

Noise

Generally, the primary noise sources within the City associated with urban developed areas include vehicular traffic along roadways, commercial and industrial centers, construction noise, and property maintenance activities. Since this alternative would result in preservation of all remaining agricultural land within the planning area, this alternative would generate less local traffic than any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives would. The noise sources associated with agricultural activities would include the use of farming machinery. Therefore, implementation of this alternative would result in less of a noise impact than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce a hazards and hazardous materials impact as no significant hazards and hazardous materials impact has been identified with the implementation of any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives.

Geology and Soils

Implementation of this alternative would result in preservation of more agricultural land within the planning area as compared to any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. As a result, this alternative would result in fewer structures and people exposed to geologic hazards. This alternative would result in less of an impact associated with geology and soils than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives.

Hydrology and Water Quality

This alternative would result in less urbanization and impervious surfaces than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives since this alternative would preserve more agricultural land. However, agricultural practices can introduce as much sediment, fertilizers and other chemicals into the drainage systems as urban uses. This alternative would result in a similar hydrology and water quality impact as Alternatives 1, 2, and 3.

Agricultural Resources

Under this alternative more agricultural land would be preserved as compared to any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives. However, some agricultural land would still be allowed to be developed. Under any of the other three proposed General Plan alternatives, all of the remaining agricultural land would be eventually developed. Therefore, this alternative would result in less of an impact associated with agricultural resources than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives.

Biological Resources

This alternative would not result in any more preservation of natural habitat than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. However, under this alternative, more agricultural land would be preserved. Some of the preserved agricultural lands would serve as a buffer between wildlands and urban uses. Agricultural lands can also benefit some of the native plant and animal species residing on lands adjacent to the agricultural lands by offering open space and foraging areas, thereby increasing the likelihood of their long-term survival. Overall, implementation of this alternative would result in a less of an impact to biological resources than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. However, implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce the biological resources impacts to a level less than significant.

Cultural Resources

Under this alternative, more agricultural land would be preserved as compared to any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives. Although, no urban development would occur on these lands, the continued agricultural activities could also uncover buried cultural resources potentially occurring on those lands. Therefore, implementation of this alternative is anticipated to result in a similar cultural resources impact than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. As a result, this alternative would not eliminate or reduce the cultural resources impact to a level less than significant.

Aesthetics

Implementation of this alternative would result in preservation of more agricultural land when compared to any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives. This alternative would result in more aesthetically valuable open space than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. Therefore, this alternative would result in a less of an aesthetic impact than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. However, implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce the aesthetics impacts of to a level less than significant.

Population and Housing

Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce any population and housing impact because no significant population and housing impact was identified with the implementation of any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives.

Public Services and Utilities

Under this alternative, more agricultural land would be preserved within the planning area as compared to any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives. Since the agricultural lands would not be developed, the need for public services and utilities on those lands would be minimal. As a result, this alternative would result in a less of a public services and utilities impact than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. However, implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce the public services and utilities impacts to a level less than significant.

Mineral Resources

Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce any mineral resources impact because no significant mineral resources impact was identified with the implementation of any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives.

Conclusion

Implementation of the Increased Agricultural Land Preservation Alternative would result in: less impacts to local traffic, noise, geology and soils, hydrology, agricultural resources, biological resources, public services and utilities, and aesthetics; and similar impacts to air quality, water quality, and cultural resources. This alternative would also result in greater regional traffic impacts. Overall, this alternative is environmentally superior to the proposed project; however, it would not reduce any of the project alternative impacts to a level less than significant. This alternative would also result in less development, less economic activity and less local tax revenue. This alternative does not further the General Plan goals to achieve a community with "an orderly and

balanced land use pattern", "a healthy economic climate" and that "conserves natural resources while accommodating growth and development."

6.3 REDUCED DENSITY ALTERNATIVE

Description of Alternative

This alternative is analyzed within this EIR as a means of reducing the residential density on all residential lands in order to reduce population. This alternative would result in an approximately ten percent reduction in population compared to Alternative 2. With this alternative, the same amount of acres would be developed; however, the density of the development would be reduced. This alternative would implement the objectives, policies, and programs of the proposed General Plan.

Comparison of Environmental Impacts of the Reduced Density Alternative to Proposed Project Alternatives 1, 2, and 3

Land Use and Planning

Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce a land use and planning impact as no significant land use and planning impact has been identified with the implementation of any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives.

Traffic/Circulation

Implementation of this alternative would result in less dense residential development than would occur under any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives. Therefore, this alternative would also result in fewer housing units and fewer daily local trips. As a result, this alternative would create less local traffic in some parts of the City compared to any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. While this alternative may generate less traffic on some streets, it would generate more traffic on other streets and on a regional level. Reduced residential density would create a greater imbalance between local jobs and local households at buildout. Therefore, more workers would be commuting into Moreno Valley from surrounding areas. Reduced residential density would also contribute to sprawl because housing growth would be diverted to more remote parts of the region. Sprawl leads to greater dependence on automobiles, longer commutes, more freeway traffic and the associated air emissions and fuel consumption. Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce the traffic impacts to a level less than significant.

Air Quality

Under this alternative all residential land would be developed with less dense residential development than would occur under any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives. Since this alternative would result in fewer housing units, fewer daily trips would be generated within the planning area. While this alternative may generate less traffic and air pollution on a local level, it would not positively affect regional air quality. Reduced residential density would contribute to sprawl because growth would be diverted to other parts of the region. Sprawl leads to greater dependence on automobiles, longer commutes, more freeway traffic and associated air emissions. Therefore, implementation of this alternative would result in an air quality impact similar to that of any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate of reduce the air quality impact to a level less than significant.

Noise

Generally, the primary noise sources associated with urban developed areas include vehicular traffic, commercial and industrial centers, construction noise, and property maintenance activities. Implementation of this alternative would result in less dense residential development than would occur under any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives. Therefore, this alternative would also result in fewer housing units and fewer daily trips within the planning area. As a result, implementation of this alternative would result in less noise than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. However, this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce the noise impacts to level less than significant.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce a hazards and hazardous materials impact as no significant hazards and hazardous materials impact has been identified with the implementation of any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives.

Geology and Soils

Implementation of this alternative would result in less dense residential development than would occur under the any of the three proposed General Plan Alternatives. Therefore, fewer residential structures and people would be exposed to geologic hazards. This alternative would result in less of an impact associated with geology and soils than would occur under the proposed General Plan alternatives (with the exception of Alternative 2). However, this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce the geology and soils impacts to level less than significant.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Generally, this alternative would result in the same amount of land disturbance as would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. This alternative would not reduce the area of residential development. As a result, this alternative would result in a similar hydrology/water quality impact as would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate or reduce the hydrology and water quality impact to a level less than significant.

Agricultural Resources

This alternative would not result in preservation of any more agricultural land than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. As with the three proposed General Plan alternatives, this alternative would allow the remaining agricultural land to be developed with urban uses. Therefore, this alternative would result in a similar impact associated with agricultural resources than would occur under other proposed General Plan alternatives (with the exception of Alternative 2). Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate or reduce the agricultural resources impact to a level less than significant.

Biological Resources

This alternative would not preserve any more biological habitat or agricultural areas used for foraging than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. Therefore, implementation of this alternative would result in a similar impact associated with biological resources to that occurring under any of the proposed General Plan alternatives (with the exception of Alternative 2). As a result, implementation of this alternative would not eliminate or reduce the biological resources impact to a level less than significant.

Cultural Resources

Generally, this alternative would result in the same amount of grading and land disturbance than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. This alternative would not reduce the area of residential development. As a result, this alternative would result in a similar cultural resources impact to that occurring under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate or reduce the cultural resources impact to a level less than significant.

Aesthetics

This alternative would result in less dense residential development throughout the planning area than would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. However, the allowed residential development would still cover the same

areas as with any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. Therefore, this alternative is considered to result in a similar aesthetics impact as would occur under any of the three proposed General Plan alternatives. Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce the aesthetics impacts to level less than significant.

Population and Housing

Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce any population and housing impact because no significant population and housing impact was identified with the implementation of any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives.

Public Services and Utilities

Under this alternative, all residential land would be developed less densely than would occur under any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives. The reduction in population would in turn lessen the need for public services and utilities. Therefore, this alternative would result in a less of a public services and utilities impact than would occur under any of the proposed General Plan alternatives (with the exception of Alternative 2). However, this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce the public services and utilities impacts to a level less than significant.

Mineral Resources

Implementation of this alternative would not eliminate nor reduce any mineral resources impact because no significant mineral resources impact was identified with the implementation of any of the proposed three General Plan alternatives.

Conclusion

Implementation of the Reduced Density Alternative would result in: less impacts to noise, and geology and soils (with Alternative 1); similar impacts to traffic, air quality, hydrology and water quality, agricultural resources (with Alternative 1), biological resources (with Alternative 1), cultural resources, aesthetics, and public services and utilities. A reduction of residential density would reduce many of the impacts locally; however, implementation of this alternative could ultimately create development pressure and impacts on areas surrounding the City. This alternative is likely to result in greater regional traffic impacts. Overall, this alternative is not environmentally superior to the proposed three General Plan alternatives. The Reduced Density Alternative would also result in a greater imbalance between jobs and housing, less economic activity and less local tax revenue. This alternative does not further the General Plan goals to achieve a community "with an orderly and balanced land use pattern" and "a healthy economic climate."