

V. ALTERNATIVES

The CEQA Guidelines require the analysis of a range of reasonable alternatives to the project or to the location of the project that would feasibly attain most of the project's basic objectives and avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a "rule of reason" that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice.¹ CEQA states that an EIR should not consider alternatives "whose effect cannot be ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative."

The Draft General Plan and its objectives are described in detail in Chapter III, Project Description. The potential environmental effects of implementing the Draft General Plan are analyzed in Chapter IV, Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures, with an emphasis on significant impacts resulting from the project and mitigation measures recommended to avoid these impacts. The following discussion is intended to inform the public and decision-makers of the relative impacts of three feasible alternatives to the Draft General Plan. The environmentally superior alternative is also discussed.

The three alternatives proposed for the Draft General Plan are the following:

- The **No Project alternative**, which assumes that development would occur in the City of Albany, and specifically on available opportunity sites identified in the Housing Element, as allowed under the current General Plan and zoning designations. While approximately the same number of future residents (1,800) and employees (850) are anticipated to occur with implementation of this alternative as with the Draft General Plan, the No Project alternative does not include the new goals, policies, and actions of the Draft General Plan that would provide environmental and community benefits.
- The **Increased Density Near Transit alternative** assumes that the City would identify and implement policies and land use regulations to encourage more density, more infill development and more redevelopment of underutilized parcels along major transit corridors and near transit nodes. At least four stories of development would be allowed with a bonus of up to five stories or more, (under the State Density Bonus law), along San Pablo and Solano Avenues and on land within 0.5 miles of the El Cerrito BART Station. This alternative also would include the elimination of a minimum parking requirement for the San Pablo and Solano Avenue corridors and properties within 0.5 miles of the BART station. This alternative would result in an increase in the number of new residents and employees compared to the Draft General Plan.

¹ CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6.

- The **Reduced Density and Development alternative** assumes that the City would reduce the allowable floor area on residential and commercial parcels, maintain its current parking standards, and encourage development practices that retain the one- and two-story profile of the San Pablo Avenue commercial district.

The objectives developed for the proposed project are an important part of the context for evaluating alternatives. The proposed project is described in detail in Chapter III, Project Description. The following are the primary objectives of the Draft General Plan:

- Preserve and enhance the high quality of life enjoyed by Albany residents.
- Create new housing opportunities for persons of all incomes and physical abilities.
- Direct future growth to appropriate locations, including the San Pablo Avenue and Solano Avenue corridors and key opportunity sites.
- Ensure that infill development, including major residential alternations and additions, is sensitive to its surroundings and mitigates its impacts.
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled by enhancing opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.
- Improve transportation safety and reduce the adverse effects of vehicle traffic on neighborhoods.
- Grow more sustainably, and in a manner that reduces non-renewable resource consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Continue to provide high quality parks and recreational facilities.
- Reduce the potential for loss of life and property due to a natural or man-made disaster.
- Promote public health and safety.
- Create a positive environment for local business, and foster business retention and improvement.
- Improve access to the shoreline while protecting and restoring the waterfront environment.
- Provide outstanding public services.

Following is a discussion of each alternative, and an analysis of the anticipated environmental impacts. This analysis compares the anticipated impacts of each alternative to the impacts associated with the Draft General Plan, and includes a determination as to whether or not each alternative would reduce, eliminate, or create new significant impacts.

A. NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

1. Principal Characteristics

The No Project alternative assumes that development would occur in the City of Albany, and specifically on available opportunity sites identified in the Housing Element, as allowed under the current General Plan and zoning designations. Approximately the same number of future residents (1,800) and employees (850) are anticipated to occur with implementation of this alternative as with

the Draft General Plan. Table V-1 shows the land use acreage comparison between this alternative and the Draft General Plan.

Table V-1: Acreage Comparison Between No Project Alternative and Draft General Plan

Land Use Category	No Project Alternative Acreage	Draft General Plan Acreage	Difference
Low Density Residential ^a	466	467	+1
Medium Density Residential	37	37	0
High Density Residential (including "Tower") ^b	65	63	-2
Hillside Residential (formerly Planned Development 1 and 2) ^c	26	19	-7
San Pablo Avenue Mixed Use ^d	33	44	+5
Planned Residential-Commercial	6		
Solano Avenue Mixed Use ^e	29	30	+1
Commercial Recreation	137	137	0
Commercial Services and Production (formerly Commercial Service/ Light Industrial) ^f	35	30	-5
Public/Quasi-Public ^g	62	65	+3
Parks/Open Space ^h	132	150	+18
University Village (formerly three different categories)	75	80	+5
Undesignated (Freeway/Railroad ROW)	72	53	-19
TOTAL	1,175	1,175	0

^a Increase due to the addition of several churches to this category

^b Decrease partially due to removal of Albany Middle School from the High Density Residential category, offset by increase of 1.0 acre at Pierce Street parcel

^c Decrease due to acquisition of parcels on the east side of Albany Hill as parkland

^d Increase due to University Village mixed use development

^e Increase due to designation of AT&T facility as Solano Mixed Use

^f Decrease due to freeway realignment, Corporation Yard addition, removal of University Village ball field

^g Increase due to Albany Middle School and Corporation Yard addition

^h Increase due to Albany Hill, Pierce Street, University Village area addition

Notes:

- No Project alternative column includes General Plan Map Amendments made through 2004.
- Total excludes the Creek Conservation Overlay and the Major Activity Node overlay, to avoid double counting.

Source: Barry Miller, Planning Consultant to the City of Albany, 2015.

The No Project alternative does not include the new goals, policies, and actions of the Draft General Plan that would provide environmental and community benefits. Implementation of these policies are expected to: (1) encourage higher-density growth along San Pablo and Solano Avenues; (2) increase transit use and improve air quality, greenhouse gas emissions and noise; (3) improve access to the waterfront; (4) maintain the character of single-family neighborhoods; (5) develop additional local-serving office space; (6) improve open space; (7) increase environmental protections for biological and cultural resources; and (8) increase public safety through more public safety programs and measures to reduce risk related to seismic hazards and adverse effects from hazardous materials.

Although the No Project Alternative would meet many of the objectives of the proposed project, this alternative would not meet the following objectives as well as the Draft General Plan, due to the lack of policies, actions and programs described above:

- Direct future growth to appropriate locations, including the San Pablo Avenue and Solano Avenue corridors and key opportunity sites.
- Ensure that infill development, including major residential alternations and additions, is sensitive to its surroundings and mitigates its impacts.
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled by enhancing opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.
- Improve transportation safety and reduce the adverse effects of vehicle traffic on neighborhoods.
- Grow more sustainably, and in a manner that reduces non-renewable resource consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reduce the potential for loss of life and property due to a natural or man-made disaster.
- Improve access to the shoreline while protecting and restoring the waterfront environment.

2. Analysis of the No Project Alternative

The potential impacts associated with the No Project alternative are described below.

a. Land Use, Planning Policy, and Agricultural Resources. The No Project alternative would include the same amount of developed land as would the Draft General Plan (see Table V-1). Similar to the Draft General Plan, this alternative would not divide an established community or conflict with any applicable land use plan or agency regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing an environmental effect. This alternative would not contain as many policies and measures to support the objectives of other Bay Area plans. Because the Draft General Plan builds upon the 1992 General Plan (essentially this alternative), the over-arching principles and objectives are the same as are the majority of land use designations. Thus, similar to the Draft General Plan, all land use impacts for this alternative would be less than significant.

b. Population and Housing. Development of the No Project alternative would result in the same number of residents, employees, and housing units as the Draft General Plan. Population would increase by approximately 1,800 residents; there is an expected increase of 850 jobs, and housing units would increase by approximately 815 units. This alternative would not focus on concentrating development – and thus new housing units, residents, and employees – along San Pablo and Solano Avenues, as would the Draft General Plan. New employment under this alternative would continue to encourage development of service sector jobs, while the Draft General Plan would encourage more local-serving office and retail development. All population, housing, and employment impacts from this alternative would be less than significant, similar to the Draft General Plan.

c. Transportation and Circulation. The No Project alternative would result in approximately the same number of daily trips as would the Draft General Plan since the total population and employees would be the same. Under future conditions, all study roadway segments would operate at the same level of service with this alternative as under the Draft General Plan. With this alternative, more of its

total daily trips would be by automobile compared to the Draft General Plan, which encourages growth along transit corridors (San Pablo and Solano Avenues) and improvements to the transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks.

The No Project alternative would not contain the same measures to reduce impacts related to traffic calming strategies, pedestrians and bicycles, transit, and emergency access as would the Draft General Plan. Because mitigation measures would be available for development resulting from this alternative, on a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on transportation impacts, similar to the Draft General Plan.

d. Air Quality. Air quality operational emissions associated with vehicle trips for this alternative would be equivalent to those from the Draft General Plan. Construction-related air quality impacts would be similar for this alternative and the Draft General Plan, since dust-control measures are a standard condition of approval in the City. Similar to the Draft General Plan, operation of this alternative could expose future residents of the City to toxic air contaminants. The No Project alternative would not contain the same measures to reduce air quality impacts as the Draft General Plan, but the City would ensure that future development is in compliance with Bay Area Air Quality Management District and State regulations regarding air quality. On a program level this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on air quality impacts, similar to the Draft General Plan.

e. Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Since the No Project alternative would follow the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP) and would have the same amount of future growth as the Draft General Plan, greenhouse gas emissions for this alternative would be similar to those generated by development under the Draft General Plan. This alternative would not contain the same measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as the Draft General Plan, but with implementation of the CAP, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on greenhouse gas emissions, similar to the Draft General Plan.

f. Noise and Vibration. Similar to the Draft General Plan, the No Project alternative could result in the exposure of future residents in Albany to existing excessive noise levels related to existing traffic and railway use. Since this alternative and the Draft General Plan would not expose people to noise levels in excess of the City's Municipal Code and Noise Ordinance, this impact would be less than significant for this alternative as well as for the proposed project. Since this alternative would not contain the same measures to reduce noise and vibration impacts as the Draft General Plan, this alternative would have a greater potential to result in noise and vibration impacts.

g. Geology, Seismicity, and Mineral Resources. The No Project alternative would not contain the same measures to reduce impacts related to seismic hazards as would the Draft General Plan, but the City would ensure that buildings are constructed in a seismically safe manner by following the California Building Code. This alternative would result in the same number of residents and employees as would the Draft General Plan. Thus geotechnical and seismic hazards would be similar for both this alternative and the Draft General Plan. Geology and seismicity impacts from this alternative would be less than significant, the same as for the Draft General Plan.

h. Hydrology and Water Quality. The No Project alternative would not contain the same measures to reduce water quality impacts, depletion of groundwater, increased erosion or siltation, increased flooding, contribution of runoff water or polluted runoff, reduction of impacts related to

placing housing within a 100-year flood hazard area, and reduction of risk of inundation by tsunami as would the Draft General Plan. However, this alternative would comply with existing regulatory programs and the City's standard conditions of approval. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on hydrology and water quality, similar to the Draft General Plan. Failure of a reservoir under this alternative would be the same as for the Draft General Plan. Potential impacts related to substantial risk of inundation by tsunami could be greater under this alternative as existing policies do not address sea level rise and tsunami risk.

i. Hazards and Hazardous Materials. The No Project alternative would not contain the same measures to: (1) reduce the routine use, transport, use, handling or disposal of hazardous materials; (2) reduce accidental releases of hazardous materials; (3) protect children from the handling or emissions of hazardous materials near or at schools; (4) consider hazardous material sites during demolition and construction; (5) prepare emergency response and evacuation plans; and (6) reduce the risk of wildland fires, as would the Draft General Plan. However, this alternative would comply with existing regulatory programs and the City's standard conditions of approval. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on these hazards and hazardous material impacts, similar to the Draft General Plan.

j. Biological Resources. The No Project alternative has few policies regarding biological resources compared to the Draft General Plan, which has new policies to address preservation of the waterfront, conservation of creeks, and expansion of the City's tree canopy. Although development potential would be the same for this alternative and the Draft General Plan, there would be more potential for impacts on biological resources with this alternative than there would be with development under the Draft General Plan.

k. Cultural Resources. The No Project alternative has fewer policies regarding cultural resources than the Draft General Plan, which has new policies to address construction impacts on historic preservation, archaeological resources, and paleontological resources that could result from implementing the Draft General Plan. Although this alternative would comply with the City's standard conditions of approval regarding subsurface archaeological resources, it does not contain similar protections for other cultural resources. Thus this alternative would have more potential for cultural resource impacts than development under the Draft General Plan.

l. Public Services and Recreation. With the same number of dwelling units and the same number of new residents as with the Draft General Plan, the No Project alternative would have similar impacts related to public services. This alternative has fewer policies regarding public services than the Draft General Plan, which has new policies related to fire protection, police protection and facilities, schools, and parks and recreation. However, this alternative would comply with existing regulatory programs and the City's standard conditions of approval. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on public services and recreation, as would the Draft General Plan.

m. Utilities and Infrastructure. With the same number of dwelling units and the same number of new residents as with the Draft General Plan, the No Project alternative would have similar impacts related to utilities and infrastructure. This alternative has fewer policies regarding utilities than the Draft General Plan, which has new policies related to water supply, stormwater treatment, wastewater treatment, solid waste, energy, and telecommunications. However, this alternative would comply with

existing regulatory programs and the City's standard conditions of approval. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on utilities and infrastructure as would the Draft General Plan.

n. Visual Resources. The No Project alternative would accommodate future growth in the same areas as the Draft General Plan, thus resulting in comparable potential effects on visual resources. However, the No Project alternative has fewer policies regarding: (1) protection of scenic resources and visual character; and (2) reduction of light and glare impacts. This alternative would result in similar impacts related to visual resources, and development under this alternative would comply with the City's standard conditions of approval regarding light and glare. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on visual resources, as would the Draft General Plan.

B. INCREASED DENSITY NEAR TRANSIT ALTERNATIVE

1. Principal Characteristics

The Increased Density Near Transit alternative (called the Increased Density alternative in this section) assumes that the City would identify and implement policies and land use regulations to encourage more density, more infill development and more redevelopment of underutilized parcels along major transit corridors and near transit nodes. At least four stories of development would be allowed with a bonus of up to five stories or more (under the State Density Bonus law), along San Pablo and Solano Avenues and on land within 0.5 miles of the El Cerrito BART Station. Under this alternative, zoning regulations for these areas would be amended to increase allowable densities, floor area ratios, and heights. It is expected that this alternative would result in an increase in the number of new residents and employees compared to the Draft General Plan. This alternative includes all of the new mitigating policies and implementing actions contained in the Draft General Plan.

This alternative also would include the elimination of a minimum parking requirement for the San Pablo and Solano Avenue corridors and properties within 0.5 miles of the BART station. The elimination of parking requirements would be expected to incentivize development in these areas, and increase the number of people walking, bicycling and taking transit rather than using single-occupancy vehicles.

This alternative would meet all of the primary objectives of the Draft General Plan.

2. Analysis of the Increased Density Near Transit Alternative

The potential impacts associated with the Increased Density alternative are described below.

a. Land Use, Planning Policy, and Agricultural Resources. The Increased Density alternative would include the same amount of developed land as would the Draft General Plan alternative. Similar to the Draft General Plan, this alternative would not divide an established community or conflict with any applicable land use plan or agency regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing an environmental effect. This alternative would contain new policies and measures to support the objectives of other Bay Area plans (e.g., reduce traffic and greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality, increase affordable housing, etc...). Thus, similar to the Draft General Plan, all land use impacts for this alternative would be less than significant.

b. Population and Housing. Because taller buildings would be allowed along the transit-served avenues and within 0.5 miles of the BART station, the Increased Density alternative is expected to result in an increase in the number of housing units, residents, and employees compared to the Draft General Plan. Development of new employment uses (e.g., local-serving office and retail) under this alternative is expected to be similar to that under the Draft General Plan. This alternative would increase housing in the City with more of it anticipated to be affordable, compared to the Draft General Plan. Population, housing, and employment impacts associated with this alternative would be less than significant, similar to the Draft General Plan.

c. Transportation and Circulation. The Increased Density alternative could result in an increase in daily vehicular trips associated with increased population and employment compared to the Draft General Plan. However, because no parking would be required for new development along Solano and San Pablo Avenues or within 0.5 miles of the BART station, it is possible that there could be a decrease in vehicular trips as more residents would use transit and other modes travel. At the same time, there could be an increase in traffic congestion as an increased number of residents, workers, and shoppers search for parking in the transit-served areas. It is expected that intersection levels of service would be similar for this alternative as for the Draft General Plan. This alternative could result in greater use of transit services.

The Increased Density alternative would contain the same measures to reduce impacts related to traffic calming strategies, pedestrians and bicycles, transit, and emergency access as would the Draft General Plan. Thus on a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on transportation impacts, similar to the Draft General Plan.

d. Air Quality. Air quality operational emissions associated with vehicle trips for this alternative are expected to be similar to those from the Draft General Plan. Construction-related air quality impacts also would be similar for this alternative and the Draft General Plan, since this alternative contains the same acreage of land to be developed and the same mitigation measures as the Draft General Plan. Similar to the Draft General Plan, operation of this alternative could expose future residents of the City to toxic air contaminants. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on air quality impacts, similar to the Draft General Plan.

e. Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The Increased Density alternative could increase the number of residents in the City and greenhouse gas emissions could also increase. However, since an increase in the use of transit and alternative travel modes is also expected, greenhouse gas emissions and reduction measures are expected to be similar to those under the Draft General Plan. Impacts on greenhouse gas emissions for this alternative would likely be less than significant, the same as for the Draft General Plan.

f. Noise and Vibration. Similar to the Draft General Plan, the Increased Density alternative could result in the exposure of future residents in Albany to existing excessive noise levels related to existing traffic and railway use. Since this alternative would contain the same measures to reduce noise and vibration impacts as would the Draft General Plan, this alternative would have a similar potential to result in noise and vibration impacts. Noise and vibration impacts from this alternative would be less than significant, the same as for the Draft General Plan.

g. Geology, Seismicity, and Mineral Resources. The Increased Density alternative would contain the same measures to reduce impacts related to seismic hazards as would the Draft General Plan. This alternative would result in more residents compared to the Draft General Plan. Thus although this alternative would expose more residents to geotechnical and seismic hazards than for the Draft General Plan, the severity of impacts would be similar for both this alternative and the Draft General Plan. Geology and seismicity impacts from this alternative would be less than significant, the same as for the Draft General Plan.

h. Hydrology and Water Quality. The Increased Density alternative would contain the same measures as the Draft General Plan for reduction of water quality impacts, depletion of groundwater, increased erosion or siltation, increased flooding, contribution of runoff water or polluted runoff, reduction of impacts related to placing housing within a 100-year flood hazard area, and reduction of risk of inundation by tsunamis. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on hydrology and water quality impacts, similar to the Draft General Plan. Failure of a reservoir under this alternative would be the same as for the Draft General Plan.

i. Hazards and Hazardous Materials. The Increased Density alternative would contain the same measures of the Draft General Plan to: (1) reduce the routine use, transport, use, handling or disposal of hazardous materials; (2) reduce accidental releases of hazardous materials; (3) protect children from the handling or emissions of hazardous materials near or at schools; (4) consider hazardous material sites during demolition and construction; (5) prepare emergency response and evacuation plans; and (6) reduce the risk of wildland fires. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on these hazards and hazardous material impacts, similar to the Draft General Plan.

j. Biological Resources. The Increased Density alternative has the same policies regarding protection of biological resources as the Draft General Plan, which has new policies to address preservation of the waterfront, conservation of creeks, and expansion of the City's tree canopy. Although development potential would increase for this alternative compared to the Draft General Plan, the additional development would be infill development on the already urbanized transit-served avenues and within 0.5 miles of the BART station. This alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on biological resources similar to the Draft General Plan.

k. Cultural Resources. The Increased Density alternative has the same policies regarding protecting cultural resources as the Draft General Plan that address construction impacts on historic preservation, archaeological resources, and paleontological resources. Although development potential would increase for this alternative compared to the Draft General Plan, the additional development would primarily be on the fourth and fifth floors of buildings that could be built under the Draft General Plan. This alternative would have similar potential impacts to cultural resources as would the Draft General Plan.

l. Public Services and Recreation. With more dwelling units and new residents than for the Draft General Plan, the Increased Density alternative could have increased demand for public services. This alternative and the Draft General Plan would have new policies related to fire protection, police protection and facilities, schools, and parks and recreation. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on public services and recreation, as would the Draft General Plan.

m. Utilities and Infrastructure. With more dwelling units and new residents than for the Draft General Plan, the Increased Density alternative could have increased demand for utilities and infrastructure. This alternative and the Draft General Plan have new policies related to water supply, stormwater treatment, wastewater treatment, solid waste, energy, and telecommunications. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on utilities and infrastructure as would the Draft General Plan.

n. Visual Resources. The Increased Density alternative would accommodate more growth with taller buildings than would the Draft General Plan. The potential for impacts on aesthetics, shadows, and visual character would potentially be greater with more development and taller buildings. This alternative and the Draft General Plan would have policies regarding: (1) protection of scenic vistas, scenic resources, and visual character; and (2) reduction of light and glare impacts. Although buildout of this alternative could result in changes to views and the visual character of the City, with adherence to the new visual resource policies, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on visual resources, as would the Draft General Plan.

C. REDUCED DENSITY AND DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVE

1. Principal Characteristics

The Reduced Density and Development alternative (called the Reduced Density alternative in this section) assumes that the City would identify and implement policies and land use regulations to maintain slow growth in Albany over the next 20 years. These slow growth regulations would aim to result in housing and job growth that would continue at approximately the same pace that it has for the last decade, with far fewer households and jobs in 2035 than under the Draft General Plan. The Reduced Density alternative would include new policies to limit building size on residential and commercial properties, generally resulting in lower floor area ratio allowances on residential properties, and lower floor area ratio allowances on San Pablo and Solano Avenues. These policies would reduce the likelihood that small homes would be replaced with larger homes, and would also reduce the potential for large-scale residential additions. The character of the San Pablo and Solano Avenue corridors would remain similar to their current character, with mostly one- and two-story buildings.

This alternative includes all of the new mitigating policies and implementing actions contained in the Draft General Plan. However, this alternative also would not amend Measure D, and would retain the existing parking requirement of two spaces per residential unit. This alternative would meet all of the primary objectives of the Draft General Plan, although it would be less robust in its emphasis on directing growth to the San Pablo and Solano Avenue corridors that are well-served by transit.

a. Land Use, Planning Policy, and Agricultural Resources. The Reduced Density alternative would include the same amount of developed land as would the Draft General Plan alternative. Similar to the Draft General Plan, this alternative would not divide an established community or conflict with any applicable land use plan or agency regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing an environmental effect. This alternative would contain new policies and measures to support the objectives of other Bay Area plans (e.g., reduce traffic and greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality, increase affordable housing, etc...). Thus, similar to the Draft General Plan, all land use impacts for this alternative would be less than significant.

b. Population and Housing. Because less building square footage would be allowed along the transit-served avenues and in residential zones and two parking spaces per unit would be required, the Reduced Density alternative is expected to result in a decrease in the number of potential housing units, residents, and employees compared to the Draft General Plan. Development of new employment uses (e.g., local-serving office and retail) under this alternative is expected to be lower than under the Draft General Plan. This alternative would produce less new affordable housing in the City compared to the Draft General Plan. Population, housing, and employment impacts associated with this alternative would be less than significant, similar to the Draft General Plan.

c. Transportation and Circulation. The Reduced Density alternative would result in fewer daily vehicular trips due to the decreased future population and employment compared to the Draft General Plan. However, because transit-oriented development would be less prevalent and more parking would be required for new development, it is possible that there could be an increase in vehicular trips as fewer residents would use transit and other modes of travel. It is expected that intersection levels of service would be similar for this alternative as for the Draft General Plan.

The Reduced Density alternative would contain the same measures to reduce impacts related to traffic calming strategies, pedestrians and bicycles, transit, and emergency access as would the Draft General Plan. Thus on a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on transportation, similar to the Draft General Plan.

d. Air Quality. Air quality operational emissions associated with vehicle trips for this alternative are expected to be similar to those from the Draft General Plan. Construction-related air quality impacts also would be somewhat lower than for the Draft General Plan, since this alternative would result in less construction. Similar to the Draft General Plan, operation of this alternative could expose future residents of the City to toxic air contaminants. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on air quality impacts, similar to the Draft General Plan.

e. Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The Reduced Density alternative would increase the number of residents in the City over existing conditions, and greenhouse gas emissions could also increase. However, since there would be only a small increase in population and employment, greenhouse gas emissions and reduction measures are expected to be similar to those under the Draft General Plan. Impacts on greenhouse gas emissions for this alternative would likely be less than significant, the same as for the Draft General Plan.

f. Noise and Vibration. Similar to the Draft General Plan, the Reduced Density alternative could result in the exposure of future residents in Albany to existing excessive noise levels related to existing traffic and railway use. Since this alternative would contain the same measures to reduce noise and vibration impacts as would the Draft General Plan, this alternative would have a similar potential to result in noise and vibration impacts. Noise and vibration impacts from this alternative would be less than significant, the same as for the Draft General Plan.

g. Geology, Seismicity, and Mineral Resources. The Reduced Density alternative would contain the same measures to reduce impacts related to seismic hazards as would the Draft General Plan. This alternative would result in fewer residents compared to the Draft General Plan, but the severity of impacts would be similar for both this alternative and the Draft General Plan since the location of

development would be the same. Geology and seismicity impacts from this alternative would be less than significant, the same as for the Draft General Plan.

h. Hydrology and Water Quality. The Reduced Density alternative would contain the same measures as the Draft General Plan for reduction of water quality impacts, depletion of groundwater, increased erosion or siltation, increased flooding, contribution of runoff water or polluted runoff, reduction of impacts related to placing housing within a 100-year flood hazard area, and reduction of risk of inundation by tsunamis. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on hydrology and water quality impacts, similar to the Draft General Plan. Failure of a reservoir under this alternative would be the same as for the Draft General Plan.

i. Hazards and Hazardous Materials. The Reduced Density alternative would contain the same measures of the Draft General Plan to: (1) reduce the routine use, transport, use, handling or disposal of hazardous materials; (2) reduce accidental releases of hazardous materials; (3) protect children from the handling or emissions of hazardous materials near or at schools; (4) consider hazardous material sites during demolition and construction; (5) prepare emergency response and evacuation plans; and (6) reduce the risk of wildland fires. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on these hazards and hazardous material impacts, similar to the Draft General Plan.

j. Biological Resources. The Reduced Density alternative has the same policies regarding protection of biological resources as the Draft General Plan, which has new policies to address preservation of the waterfront, conservation of creeks, and expansion of the City's tree canopy. Development would be allowed on the same sites that are identified in the Draft General Plan, which are either urbanized or adjacent to urban uses. This alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on biological resources similar to the Draft General Plan.

k. Cultural Resources. The Reduced Density alternative has the same policies regarding protecting cultural resources as the Draft General Plan that address construction impacts on historic preservation, archaeological resources, and paleontological resources. Development would be allowed on the same sites that are identified in the Draft General Plan, which are either urbanized or adjacent to urban uses. This alternative would have similar potential impacts to cultural resources as would the Draft General Plan.

l. Public Services and Recreation. Although this alternative has fewer dwelling units and new residents than the Draft General Plan, the Reduced Density alternative would still result in increased demand for public services as development occurs. This alternative and the Draft General Plan would have new policies related to fire protection, police protection and facilities, schools, and parks and recreation. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on public services and recreation, as would the Draft General Plan.

m. Utilities and Infrastructure. Although this alternative has fewer dwelling units and new residents than the Draft General Plan, the Reduced Density alternative would still result in increased demand for utilities and infrastructure as development took place. This alternative and the Draft General Plan have new policies related to water supply, stormwater treatment, wastewater treatment, solid waste, energy, and telecommunications. On a program level, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on utilities and infrastructure as would the Draft General Plan.

n. Visual Resources. The Reduced Density alternative would accommodate less growth, lower building heights, and less building mass than would the Draft General Plan. The potential for impacts on aesthetics, shadows, and visual character would be less than under the Draft General Plan. This alternative and the Draft General Plan would have policies regarding: (1) protection of scenic vistas, scenic resources, and visual character; and (2) reduction of light and glare impacts. With adherence to the new visual resource policies, this alternative would result in less-than-significant effects on visual resources, as would the Draft General Plan.

D. ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

CEQA requires the identification of the environmentally superior alternative in an EIR. Based on this analysis, the Draft General Plan would be considered the environmentally superior alternative. Although development would be similar for the Draft General Plan and the No Project Alternative, the No Project Alternative would not include all of the new mitigating policies and implementing actions contained in the Draft General Plan. Although the Increased Density Near Transit alternative would include the new beneficial policies of the Draft General Plan, it is possible that daily vehicular miles traveled and traffic effects could be greater than the Draft General Plan with the increase in allowed density and reduction in parking requirements. Visual and aesthetic impacts could also be greater, due to allowances for taller structures. Although the Reduced Density alternative would have fewer impacts on visual resources, the City would not meet its housing needs or improve the balance between jobs and housing in the City, as compared to the Draft General Plan. The City could also fall short of its air quality and greenhouse gas reduction measures, which emphasize denser development along corridors well-served by transit.

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