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**ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS**

**INTRODUCTION**

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The primary intent of the alternatives evaluation in an EIR, as stated in Section 15126.6(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, is to “[...] 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 [...].”

The City’s project objectives are as follows:

- Provide a diversity of housing types and sizes that will provide options to a range of economic levels;
- Contribute to the City’s regional fair share housing needs;
- Provide safe and attractive transportation networks to assure appropriate public safety and emergency access and promote alternative transportation modes, such as bicycling, walking, and public transit;
- Protect the viability of agriculture and prime agricultural land in and around Davis including consistent agriculture buffer; and
- Minimize impacts on Davis’ land, water, air, and biological resources, and provide outdoor common areas, greenbelts, and agricultural buffers that enhance the environment and foster a sense of community.

In addition, the applicant’s objectives for the project are as follows:

- Provide a net positive value to the neighborhood and the City.
- Create a model for social, ecological, and economic sustainable community development.
- Incorporate the best of smart growth concepts.
- Create a strong network of open spaces within the project. Create small nodes for informal resident interaction throughout.
- Embrace Low Impact Development concepts for the site such as on-site stormwater management; reduced pavement heat sinks; water conserving landscaping; and porous paving.
- Create architecture that is aesthetically pleasing and that utilizes the best of green building practices.
- Define a project that is economically viable. A reasonable profit is necessary to assure completion and provision of amenities for the Davis community.

Furthermore, Section 15126.6 (f) states that “[...] 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 [...].”

The CEQA Guidelines (§15126.6 (e)(1)) state that a ‘no project’ alternative should be evaluated along with its impact. Specifically, the Guidelines state:

The specific alternative of the “no project” shall also be evaluated along with its impact. The purpose of describing and analyzing a no project alternative is to allow decision makers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project. The no project alternative analysis is not the baseline for determining whether the proposed project’s environmental impacts may be significant, unless it is identical to the existing environmental setting analysis which does establish that baseline.

In addition, Section 15126.6 (d) of the CEQA Guidelines states that “[...] If an alternative would cause one or more significant effects in addition to those that would be caused by the project as proposed, the significant effects of the alternative shall be discussed, but in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed.”

### **Selection of Alternatives**

Alternatives that are included and evaluated in this EIR must be feasible alternatives. According to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(f), “[...] the alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project [...].” In addition, Section 15126.6(f)(1) states that the feasibility of an alternative may be determined based on a variety of factors including, but not limited to, site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and site accessibility and control.

Six alternatives are considered in this chapter. One alternative is considered and dismissed from further analysis (Alternative 1), and five alternatives (Alternatives 2-6) are studied comparatively.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS**

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Consistent with CEQA, primary consideration was given to alternatives that could reduce significant impacts, while still meeting most of the basic project objectives. Any alternative that would have impacts identical to or more severe than the Proposed Project, and/or that would not meet any or most of the project objectives was rejected from further consideration. The rejected alternative is discussed below.

#### **Increased Density Alternative**

The Increased Density Alternative would have increased the number of residential units constructed on the Proposed Project site by increasing the number of attached dwelling units.

Increasing the number of dwelling units would result in more traffic, which would subsequently increase impacts related to noise and air quality. Furthermore, increased density would result in a similar or greater impact to aesthetics. As the Increased Density Alternative would not reduce any impacts, and would increase the project's contribution to several impacts, the Alternative was dismissed from further consideration.

## **ON-SITE ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN THIS EIR**

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This section provides a description of the on-site alternatives to the Proposed Project analyzed in this Draft EIR and evaluates the anticipated environmental effects of those alternatives. Table 6-1 includes a comparison of all of the key features of the alternatives considered in this Draft EIR.

### **Alternative 2: No Project/No Build Alternative**

CEQA requires the evaluation of the comparative impacts of the "No Project" alternative (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 (e)). The No Project Alternative can be defined either as "no action taken on the proposed project" or "no build" on the project site.

A "no build" alternative means that the existing environmental setting is maintained. A "no build" alternative is the type of No Project Alternative that is evaluated below for the Proposed Project. Therefore, under the No Project / No Build Alternative, the project site would remain a horse ranch with associated pastures. However, in the future the owners could convert the project site to other uses under the existing zoning designation, which principally permits 1) horse breeding, 2) horse boarding and training, 3) riding stables, and 4) agriculture, except the raising of animals (other than horses) or fowl for commercial purposes, or the sale of any products at retail on the premises.

### Environmental Effects

#### *Land Use and Agricultural Resources*

The No Project/No Build Alternative would result in the project site remaining in use as a horse ranch. This would be consistent with the current Davis General Plan land use designation for the site of Agriculture. Under the current use, incompatibilities arise from having a working horse ranch adjacent to residential uses. A Horse Ranch Management Plan is in place to manage horse operations, including odors; however, implementation of the Proposed Project would remove the possibility of conflicts between the horse ranch and existing uses. Therefore, the No Project/No Build Alternative could result in slightly greater land use impacts.

**Table 6-1  
Comparison of Alternatives Features**

Features	Project and Project Alternatives					
	Proposed Project	No Project/No Build Alternative	Reduced Intensity - Viewshed Preservation Alternative	Agricultural Character Alternative	Infill Site Alternative	Off-Site Alternative
Residential units	191	N/A	75	75	191	191
Acreage	25.8	25.8	25.8	25.8	Less than 25.8 acres	47
Multi-story housing	Y	N/A	N	Y	Y	Y
Affordable housing units	Y	N/A	Y*	Y*	Y	Y
Larger residential lot sizes	N	N/A	Y	N	N	Y
Dedication of greenbelt	Y	N/A	Y	Y	N	N
Dedication of agricultural buffer/habitat area	Y	N/A	Y	Agricultural buffer would be used for small-scale onsite agricultural uses.	N	N

\*The Reduced Intensity – Viewshed Preservation Alternative and Agricultural Character Alternative would comply with the affordable housing requirements; however, as the requirement is calculated as a percentage of the total units, the alternatives would result in fewer affordable housing units.

The Draft EIR identified significant and unavoidable project-level and cumulative agricultural conversion impacts associated with project implementation under Impacts 4.1-3 and 4.1-5, respectively. Because the No Project/No Build Alternative would not result in the conversion of the project site from agricultural land to urban uses, the No Project Alternative would not result in the conversion of Prime Farmland. Furthermore, because the No Project/No Build Alternative would not place residential uses on the site, incompatibility conflicts would not occur between the project and existing agricultural operations occurring east of the project site. Therefore, the No Project/No Build Alternative would result in fewer impacts to agricultural resources compared to the Proposed Project.

#### *Population, Housing, and Employment*

The No Project/No Build Alternative would not result in a substantive increase in the number of housing units, or of the population of the City of Davis. Under the current zoning designation, guest houses or second dwelling units are allowed as an accessory use. There could be a second dwelling unit improvement on the property under the No Project/No Build Alternative. However, it should be noted that because the No Project Alternative does not involve the construction of new housing, affordable housing units would not be added to the City. Although the proposed project would have a less-than-significant impact to population, housing, and employment, the No Project Alternative would result in less intense impacts to the City of Davis as compared to the Proposed Project because the City's population and households would not increase.

#### *Transportation and Circulation*

The No Project/No Build Alternative would not result in the construction of any residential uses on the Wildhorse Ranch site and would consequently not generate additional trips on local roadways. Therefore, the No Project/No Build Alternative would not cause a traffic increase in the surrounding area and, unlike the Proposed Project, would have no impacts to traffic. However, it should be noted that all impacts to Transportation and Circulation are mitigated to a less-than-significant level for the Proposed Project.

#### *Air Quality*

The project site is currently in use as a horse ranch, and is designated Agriculture by the Davis General Plan. The No Project/No Build Alternative would not result in a change in land use designation for the site. Horse ranching operations on the site could adversely impact air quality due to horse waste related odors and dust that becomes airborne as a result of wind blowing across open paddocks. Implementation of the No Project/No Build Alternative would result in continued horse ranching operations and subsequent emissions. However, a Horse Ranch Management Plan is in place to ensure that odors are minimal. Because, construction and operational emissions associated with the Proposed Project would result in substantially increased airborne pollutant emissions from construction of new residential units on the site, implementation of the No Project/No Build Alternative would be considered to have fewer impacts to air quality as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Noise*

The No Project/No Build Alternative would result in continued horse ranching operations on the project site which do not currently result in substantial noise generation. In contrast, the uses associated with the Proposed Project are expected to generate substantial short-term noise due to the construction of residential uses on the Wildhorse Ranch site. In addition, the Proposed Project would place residences adjacent to existing agricultural uses which generate noise through the use of heavy agricultural equipment, and would place residences within an area subject to elevated traffic noise levels. Therefore, as the No Project/No Build Alternative would not expose new residents to noise impacts from traffic and agricultural equipment, implementation of the No Project/No Build Alternative would result in fewer noise impacts as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Biological Resources*

The No Project/No Development Alternative would not result in development of the project site for residential uses. Therefore, the project site would remain in use as a horse ranch, and would remain available as a foraging area by migratory birds, passerines, and other species including burrowing owls and Swainson's hawks. However, the possibility exists that the property owner may choose to remove trees and/or convert the site to more intensive agricultural operations; which could result in similar impacts to migratory birds, bats, raptors, and badgers. Furthermore, the No Project/No Development Alternative does not include the expanded greenbelt/habitat buffer. Overall, the No Project/No Development Alternative would have fewer impacts to the Proposed Project.

### *Aesthetics*

The Draft EIR identified significant and unavoidable project-level and cumulative aesthetics impacts as a result of project implementation for Impacts 4.7-1 and 4.7-3, respectively. The No Project/No Build Alternative would not result in the development of the project site, and the site would remain in agricultural use. Therefore, the existing character of the site would be maintained and the partial open views to the east of agricultural lands and the Sierra would be preserved for residences located adjacent to the project site. Therefore, the No Project/No Build Alternative would result in fewer impacts to aesthetics as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Hydrology and Water Quality*

The No Project/No Build Alternative would not result in the construction of impervious surfaces; therefore, the existing drainage pattern for the project area would not be altered. In addition, the No Project/No Build Alternative would not generate urban runoff that would affect water quality in the area, including the quality of the water in Channel "A". Therefore, the No Project/No Build Alternative would not result in the need to treat stormwater runoff, as would the Proposed Project. Overall, compared to the Proposed Project, the No Project/No Build Alternative would result in decreased impacts on hydrology and water quality.

### *Public Services and Facilities*

The No Project/No Build Alternative would not result in the introduction of new residents to the City of Davis. Therefore, unlike the Proposed Project, the No Project/No Build Alternative would not create an increased need for public services and utilities, such as law enforcement, fire protection, the public school system, parks and recreation facilities, wastewater treatment and disposal, and water supply and delivery. As a result, the No Project/No Build Alternative would have fewer impacts to public services compared to the Proposed Project.

### **Alternative 3: Reduced Intensity - Viewshed Preservation Alternative**

The intent of the Viewshed Preservation Alternative is to maintain the partial views of agricultural land and the Sierras east of the project, which are currently afforded to existing residents immediately west of the project site. In order to still achieve the basic objectives of the project, the project site would still be developed with residential uses, albeit, at a lower density than the Proposed Project. Similar to the Proposed Project, this Alternative would involve a General Plan Amendment. For this Alternative, the project site would be re-designated from Agriculture to Low Density Residential. Using the minimum density of the Low Density Residential designation of three units per acre, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would include 75 units (3 du/acre \* 25 acres = 75 dwelling units). Similar single-family product types would be included in this Alternative as are included in the Proposed Project; however, the Alternative would comply with the affordable housing requirement through the creative placement of attached residences, such as duplexes on corner lots. Average lot size would be approximately 0.25 acres in area. The large lot sizes would allow for the development of single-level ranch style units, which would reduce the impact of the development associated with the change in the current character of the site. Furthermore, single-level houses would obstruct fewer views of the Sierra foothills given a maximum building height of 20 feet. In comparison, the Proposed Project includes structures of up to three stories in height. Land dedications for roadways, agricultural buffers, and greenbelt/open space would remain the same as for the Proposed Project.

### Environmental Effects

#### *Land Use and Agricultural Resources*

Similar to the Proposed Project, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would require the conversion of land currently designated for agricultural use in the City of Davis General Plan to urban uses. The Alternative would require a General Plan Amendment, and would result in the conversion of Prime Farmland. The expanded lot sizes could allow for the placement of residences further away from agricultural uses east of the project site; however, the potential for incompatibility conflicts would remain. Therefore, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would have impacts similar to the Proposed Project in the area of Land Use and Agricultural Resources.

### *Population, Housing, and Employment*

The Viewshed Preservation Alternative would reduce the total number of residences built on the project site from 191 to 75. Based on a population generation rate of 2.48 residents per unit, the Alternative would result in a total of 186 new residents. Therefore, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would result in 288 fewer new residents than the Proposed Project. Development of the Proposed Project or Viewshed Preservations Alternative would not exceed the 15,500 single-family unit goal of Action “e” of the General Plan. Therefore impacts to Population, Housing, and Employment would be similar to the Proposed Project for the Viewshed Preservation Alternative.

### *Transportation and Circulation*

The reduction in total housing units, and the resultant decrease in the total number of residents, would result in a decrease in the total number of project related trips by approximately 1,400 daily trips (based on 12.189 daily trips per dwelling unit). Furthermore, a reduction in the total number of residences would potentially decrease the construction time of the project, thereby reducing the impact of construction vehicles on traffic. However, design-related impacts to site access, and bicycle and pedestrian circulation which were identified for the Proposed Project would remain until such time as a final project design is completed to the satisfaction of the City Engineer. It should be noted that all of the transportation and circulation impacts related to the Proposed Project would be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. However, as the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would reduce the total number of project-related trips, the Alternative would reduce the intensity of impacts to transportation and circulation.

### *Air Quality*

The Viewshed Preservation Alternative would reduce the total number of dwelling units constructed on the project site by 116 dwelling units, which would result in decreases in total population by 290 residents and vehicle trips by approximately 1,400. As a result, emissions of criteria pollutants from households and automobiles would be reduced. However, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would also result in the emission of greenhouse gases beyond the existing situation; therefore, the significant and unavoidable impact to global climate change would remain. Overall, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would reduce impacts to air quality as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Noise*

The Viewshed Preservation Alternative would reduce the total number of vehicle trips, which would also reduce project-related vehicle noise. Furthermore, a reduction in the total number of dwelling units could also reduce the amount of construction time, thereby reducing construction-related noise impacts. Furthermore, larger lot sizes would allow for residences to be located further away from both local roadways and agricultural uses, which could reduce noise impacts to future residents. Therefore, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would be expected to reduce impacts related to noise compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Biological Resources*

The Viewshed Preservation Alternative would dedicate the same amount of space to agricultural buffers and greenbelt/open space as the Proposed Project. Similar to the Proposed Project, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would develop the remainder of the project site with urban uses. Larger lot sizes would potentially allow for the preservation of a greater number of the existing trees; however, because the project site would be converted to urban uses impacts to biological resources would remain substantially the same under the Viewshed Preservation Alternative as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Aesthetics*

The Viewshed Preservation Alternative would reduce the total number of dwelling units by 116, and would also reduce building heights from up to three story residential complexes proposed in the center of the Proposed Project to a single-story ranch style residential product with a maximum height of 20 feet. Therefore, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would reduce the visual impact of the Proposed Project, and would be less-likely to obstruct views to the east of the Sierra foothills. However, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would still alter the existing character of the project site, by developing urban uses where primarily open horse ranch uses currently exist.

Although the intensity of development would be reduced under this Alternative, existing views would still be converted from vistas of horse ranch and associated open pastures to those of an urban setting, which would still be considered a significant and unavoidable impact under the Davis General Plan Update EIR criteria. Therefore, although aesthetic impacts would be reduced under this Alternative, the project-level and cumulative impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

### *Hydrology and Water Quality*

The Viewshed Preservation Alternative would reduce the total number of dwelling units by 116 and expand lot sizes, which has the potential to reduce the total amount of impervious surfaces. In addition, the elimination of the multi-family units would eliminate the need for parking lots. However, by restricting building heights and focusing on single-story housing, a substantial amount of the larger lot size would be covered by an expansion of the buildings footprint. In total, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would likely reduce the amount of impervious surfaces, which would reduce the total amount of stormwater. Therefore, the Viewshed Preservation Alternative would reduce impacts to Hydrology and Water Quality.

### *Public Services and Facilities*

The Viewshed Preservation Alternative would involve the construction of 116 fewer dwelling units, which would result in 290 fewer total residents compared to the Proposed Project. The reduction in population increase would reduce the demand for public services and facilities as compared to the Proposed Project. Therefore, while all impacts to public services and facilities would be mitigated to a less-than-significant level under the Proposed Project, the Viewshed

Preservation Alternative would further reduce impacts to public services by reducing the total number of residents.

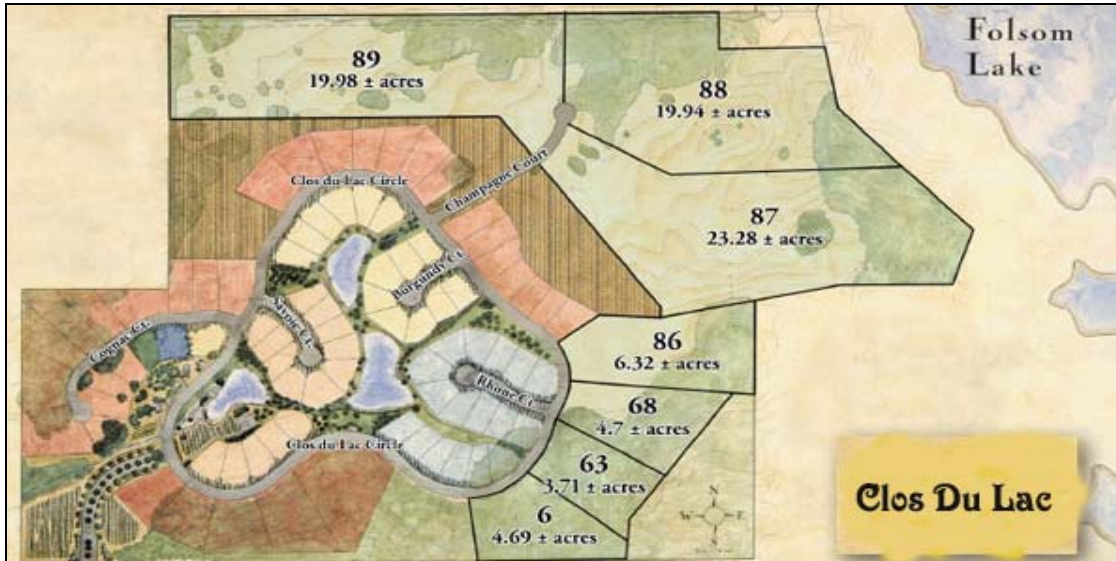
**Alternative 4: Reduced Intensity - Agricultural Character Alternative**

Similar to the Viewshed Preservation Alternative, the Agricultural Character Alternative would include the construction of 75 residential dwelling units. The units would be predominantly detached single-family residences; however, duplexes would be included to provide the affordable housing component. The Agricultural Character Alternative would differ from the Viewshed Preservation Alternative in that housing would be clustered on smaller lots. A preliminary concept for this Alternative includes lots of approximately 1/6<sup>th</sup> of an acre, resulting in 12.5 acres being devoted to residential use (See Table 6-2 for land use acreages). The remaining lands would likely be utilized for small-scale agricultural production of grapes, fruiting trees, or row crops. Trees provided for the residential lots would be agricultural in nature, and could include: olives, walnuts, almonds, or other fruiting trees that would provide both shade and a potential crop. Agricultural lands would likely be owned by the Homeowners Association and leased to an individual or group that would conduct the agricultural operations. An access easement could be included to provide harvesting access to trees in the front yard of residences for tree crops such as olives. The agricultural concept would be woven throughout the development; however, dedicated lands would likely be concentrated along the central greenbelt, adjacent to the agricultural buffer area, and/or in the central portion of the project site. The intended product would be determined at a later date. Similar to the Viewshed Preservation Alternative, low height, low profile street lights would be utilized to reduce the visual presence of the project.

<b>Table 6-2 Agricultural Character Alternative</b>	
<b>Project Site Acreages</b>	<b>Site Plan</b>
Public Streets	1.98 acres
Residential Area	12.5 acres
Additional land dedication to neighbors	0.96 (20' wide) acres
Small-scale Agricultural Lands	7.93 acres (including 2.43 acres minimum along the agricultural buffer)
Interior Greenbelt/Open Space <sup>2</sup>	1.95 acres minimum
Covell Blvd Greenstreet	0.48 acres
<b>Total</b>	<b>25.8 acres</b>

Included below are a drawing and photograph of a project that has included a similar concept in the Loomis area. Figure 6-1, below, illustrates how the clustering of houses can preserve lands for agricultural use. The brown areas represent the agricultural lands planted with vineyards. While the Clos Du Lac project is substantially larger than the Agricultural Character Alternative, the general concept is the same. As illustrated in Figure 6-2, the inclusion of small-scale agricultural uses can maintain an agrarian atmosphere with urban/suburban residential densities. Furthermore, small-scale agriculture that utilizes organic or Integrated Pest Management methods would be unlikely to result in conflicts with adjacent residences as large equipment, and extensive spraying would not be utilized.

**Figure 6-1  
Clustered Land Use**



**Figure 6-2  
Agricultural Lot**



Small holdings of this nature would be attractive to someone seeking to grow a crop with a high value added potential such as wine grapes or olives; or as a Community Supported Agriculture project whereby a farmer contracts with limited number of individuals in the community to provide weekly deliveries of fresh produce. Should agricultural production not be viable the land could also be converted to community gardens.

## Environmental Effects

### *Land Use and Agricultural Resources*

The Agricultural Character Alternative would include the preservation of approximately 30 percent of the project site in agricultural use. The Alternative would enable clustered development which would provide the ability to orient residences away from agricultural uses to the east while juxtaposing the proposed residences next to less-intense compatible forms of agriculture, thereby reducing the potential for conflicts. However, similar to the Proposed Project, the Agricultural Character Alternative would require the conversion of land currently designated for agricultural use in the City of Davis General Plan to urban uses. The Alternative would require a General Plan Amendment, and would result in the conversion of Prime Farmland. Therefore, while the Agricultural Character Alternative would reduce impacts to agriculture as compared to the Proposed Project, the Alternative would still result in impacts in the area of Land Use and Agricultural Resources.

### *Population, Housing, and Employment*

The Agricultural Character Alternative would reduce the total number of residences built on the project site from 191 to 75. Based on a population generation rate of 2.48 residents per unit, the Agricultural Character Alternative would result in 186 new residents. Therefore, the Agricultural Character Alternative would result in 288 fewer new residents than the Proposed Project. Development of the proposed project or Agricultural Character Alternative would not exceed the 15,500 single-family unit goal of Action “e” of the General Plan. Therefore, the Agricultural Character Alternative would result in similar impacts to Population, Housing, and Employment.

### *Transportation and Circulation*

The reduction in total housing units, and the resultant decrease in the total number of residents, would result in a decrease in the total number of project related trips by approximately 1,400 daily trips (based on 12.189 daily trips per dwelling unit). Furthermore, a reduction in the total number of residences would potentially decrease the construction time of the project, thereby reducing the impact of construction vehicles on traffic. However, design-related impacts to site access, and bicycle and pedestrian circulation which were identified for the Proposed Project would remain until such time as a final project design is completed to the satisfaction of the City Engineer. It should be noted that all of the transportation and circulation impacts related to the Proposed Project would be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. As the Agricultural Character Alternative would reduce the total number of project-related trips, the Alternative would reduce the intensity of impacts to transportation and circulation.

### *Air Quality*

The Agricultural Character Alternative would reduce the total number of dwelling units constructed on the project site by 116 dwelling units, which would result in a decrease in total population by 290 residents and vehicle trips by approximately 1,400. As a result, emissions of criteria pollutants from households and automobiles would be reduced. However, the

Agricultural Character Alternative would also result in the emission of greenhouse gases beyond the existing situation; therefore, the significant and unavoidable impact to global climate change would remain. Overall, the Agricultural Character Alternative would reduce the intensity of impacts to air quality as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Noise*

The Agricultural Character Alternative would reduce the total number of vehicle trips, which would also reduce project-related vehicle noise. Furthermore, a reduction in the total number of dwelling units could also reduce the amount of construction time, thereby reducing construction related noise impacts. Furthermore, the clustering of residential units would allow for residences to be located further away from both local roadways and large-scale agricultural uses, which could reduce noise impacts to future residents. The possibility exists that the use of small-scale agricultural equipment, such as tillers, could result in noise conflicts with the proposed residences. However, small-scale equipment generally does not generate substantially more noise than residential lawnmowers and leaf-blowers. Furthermore, hours of operation could be restricted by contract to further reduce the possibility for conflicts. Therefore, the Agricultural Character Alternative would reduce impacts related to noise.

### *Biological Resources*

The Agricultural Character Alternative would dedicate a substantially larger area to agricultural uses and greenbelt/open space as compared to the Proposed Project. Furthermore, the clustering of houses, and larger undeveloped area, would potentially allow for the preservation of a greater number of the existing trees. However, the agricultural areas would likely be routinely cultivated and would not provide substantial wildlife habitat. Furthermore, vineyards and orchards are not suitable foraging habitat for burrowing owl and Swainson's hawk, and therefore, the impact from this Alternative to Swainson's hawk and burrowing owl foraging habitat would be the same as the Proposed Project. Therefore, impacts to biological resources would remain substantially the same under the Agricultural Character Alternative as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Aesthetics*

The Agricultural Character Alternative would result in the construction of 75 residential units on the project site. Residences would be clustered to preserve a larger land area for agricultural use. The agricultural lands would be situated to reduce the visual impact of development, and small orchards could be planted around the clusters to further reduce visual impact. However, the reduction of the lot size would make the single-story requirement included in the Viewshed Preservation Alternative infeasible; therefore, the Agricultural Character Alternative would result in impacts to the viewshed though not as the Proposed Project, which would include up to 3-story residential buildings. The clustering of residences would ensure that a uniform obstruction of views would not occur, but views from certain angles would be obstructed. In fact, clustering could be designed so as to maintain view corridors for some of the existing residences immediately west of the project site.

Although the intensity of development would be reduced under this alternative, existing views would still be converted from vistas of horse ranch and associated open pastures to those of a mixed agricultural and urban setting. The visual impact would be reduced as compared to the Proposed Project; however, the impact would still be considered a significant and unavoidable impact under the Davis General Plan Update EIR criteria. Therefore, although aesthetics impacts would be reduced under this Alternative, the project-level and cumulative impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

#### *Hydrology and Water Quality*

The Agricultural Character Alternative would reduce the total number of dwelling units and reduce lot sizes, which has the potential to reduce the total amount of impervious surfaces. Furthermore, the lands dedicated to agricultural use would be pervious and would not result in an increase in stormwater runoff. In addition, the elimination of the multi-family units, and most of the attached units, would eliminate the need for parking lots. In total, the Agricultural Character Alternative would likely reduce the amount of impervious surfaces, which would reduce the total amount of stormwater runoff. Therefore, the Agricultural Character Alternative would reduce impacts to Hydrology and Water Quality.

#### *Public Services and Facilities*

The Agricultural Character Alternative would involve the construction of fewer dwelling units, which would also result in 290 fewer total residents as compared to the Proposed Project. The reduction in population increase would reduce the demand for public services and facilities as compared to the Proposed Project. Therefore, while all impacts to public services and facilities would be mitigated to a less-than-significant levels under the Proposed Project, the Agricultural Character Alternative would further reduce impacts to Public Services and Facilities by reducing the total number of residents.

### **OFF-SITE ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN THIS EIR**

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One of the requirements of CEQA is the assessment of the comparative environmental impacts of alternative locations for the “project.” Only locations that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project need be considered for inclusion in the EIR. The following two off-site alternatives have been included in this analysis.

#### **Alternative 5: Infill Site Alternative**

The Infill Site Alternative would combine geographically separated sites to develop the same project components on a land area of approximately the same size as the Proposed Project. Many potential sites exist within the existing City Limits; however, for the purposes of this analysis three sites have been identified for discussion:

- Simmons Properties (12 acres)
- Grande School Site (8.83 acres)
- Nugget Fields (9.01)

None of the above listed properties are currently owned by the project applicant. Grande School site recently received entitlement approvals from the City Council for the development of 41 single-family units. The property is owned by the school district who intends to sell the entitled property to prospective developers. Project applications have been submitted for the Simmons property for the development of 108 single-family units. The Simmons applications are under review and have not been approved by the City Council. No formal applications have been submitted to the City for the development of the Nugget Fields at this time. Simmons and Nugget Fields sites would require General Plan Amendments and changes of zoning; however, the sites are located within the City Limits and are not designated for agricultural use. Therefore, regardless of which sites are combined for this Alternative, unlike the Proposed Project, approval of this Alternative would not be subject to Measure J voter approval. A combination of any two of the three sites would make up a total of 17.4 to 21 acres. The total land area would be smaller under these potential combinations as compared to the Proposed Project; however, the Proposed Project could still be accommodated as the agricultural buffers would not be required. Therefore, a similar number of residences could be constructed.

### Environmental Effects

#### *Land Use and Agricultural Resources*

The potential infill sites have been designated for urban uses, such as schools and residential development, and are currently surrounded by other urban uses; therefore, development of any combination of the potential sites would not result in impacts related to agricultural compatibility issues. The Simmons and Nugget Fields would require General Plan Amendments and changes of zoning; however, because the amendment(s) to the General Plan do not necessitate re-designating a property currently designated Agriculture the entitlements would not include Measure J approval. Therefore, the Infill Site Alternative would substantially reduce impacts as compared to the Proposed Project in the area of Land Use and Agricultural Resources.

#### *Population, Housing, and Employment*

The Infill Site Alternative would involve the construction of the same number of residential units. As potential sites are located within the City Limits, and some sites are designated for residential use, some percentage of project residents would have been included in the anticipated population of Davis. However, implementation of the Infill Site Alternative could likely require a change of zone to residential use for at least one of the locations, and would potentially require increased densities for sites already designated for residential use. Therefore, impacts to Population, Housing, and Employment would be similar (albeit less-intense) to the Proposed Project for the Infill Site Alternative.

#### *Transportation and Circulation*

The Infill Site Alternative would construct the same number of residential units as the Proposed Project; however, the units would be constructed at two or more sites. As a result, impacts to any one intersection or roadway segment would potentially be reduced; however, identifying impacts is not possible without conducting studies on the intersections surrounding the individual sites.

Furthermore, design-related impacts to site access, and bicycle and pedestrian circulation identified for the Proposed Project would remain until such time as a final project design is completed to the satisfaction of the City Engineer. While all of the transportation and circulation impacts related to the Proposed Project would be mitigated to a less-than-significant level, the Infill Site Alternative may result in new significant impacts to transportation and circulation that are unforeseen at this time. Therefore, the Infill Site Alternative would likely result in similar, or potentially greater, impacts to transportation and circulation.

### *Air Quality*

The Infill Site Alternative would result in the construction of the same number of residential units as the Proposed Project. A combination of sites would be smaller than the Proposed Project site which would reduce the amount of grading that would occur. However, the residential units would result in a similar number of vehicle trips; therefore, project emissions of criteria air pollutants and greenhouse gases would be similar for both the Infill Site Alternative and the Proposed Project. As a result, impacts to air quality would be similar, or slightly reduced, under the Infill Site Alternative as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Noise*

The Infill Site Alternative would spread out the same number of vehicle trips over a larger area, which would also reduce project-related vehicle noise increases at any single location. Furthermore, the above listed sites are not located adjacent to agricultural uses which would reduce the impact of agricultural noise on potential residents. However, identifying whether traffic noise would have a significant impact on the infill sites is not possible without site-specific noise studies. In total, the Infill Site Alternative would likely reduce impacts related to noise as the Alternative would eliminate potential conflicts with agricultural operations.

### *Biological Resources*

The Infill Site Alternative would not require the dedication of buffers which also serve as habitat areas. Furthermore, with the exception of the Nugget Fields site, the above listed sites are largely undeveloped and contain potential wildlife habitat. Other potential infill sites that have not been listed are likely to be undeveloped as well. Furthermore, size-constrained sites reduce the flexibility of potential project designs, which would reduce the ability of the project to build around existing biological resources such as trees. Therefore, depending on the sites on which this Alternative is implemented, impacts to biological resources would be similar or fewer (if the site(s) is already developed) than the Proposed Project under the Infill Site Alternative.

### *Aesthetics*

The Infill Site Alternative would result in the development of the same number of residential units on two or more alternate locations. In most likely scenarios, the Infill Site Alternative would convert lands that are currently undeveloped or sparsely developed to urban uses. However, the infill sites are designated for urban uses, and would not involve the conversion of lands designated for agriculture. In addition, development of any one of these sites would not

obstruct existing aesthetic views to adjoining residents, as would the Proposed Project. Therefore, while the Infill Site Alternative would result in changes to the existing conditions of the infill sites, the significant and unavoidable aesthetic impacts identified for the Proposed Project would be eliminated should this Alternative be implemented.

#### *Hydrology and Water Quality*

The Infill Site Alternative would result in the construction of the same number of residential units on two or more infill sites within the City of Davis. The cumulative developed area would likely be less as compared to the Proposed Project, which could reduce the amount of new impervious area. However, less land would likely be dedicated to open space and greenbelt uses under the Alternative which would reduce the amount of impervious land available on-site for stormwater flow reduction. Analysis of potential hydrologic impacts to existing drainage facilities is complicated by the uncertainty regarding project location; however, it may be assumed that similar to the Proposed Project all impacts to Hydrology, Water Quality, and Drainage would be reduced to a less-than-significant level through the implementation of mitigation measures. Therefore, impacts to hydrology and water quality would likely be similar for both the Infill Site Alternative and the Proposed Project.

#### *Public Services and Facilities*

The Infill Site Alternative would result in the construction of the same number of residential units on two or more sites within the City of Davis; therefore, the Alternative would result in a similar increase in the demand for public services and facilities. Similar to the Proposed Project, for the Infill Site Alternative, the applicant would be required to pay the required impact fees to offset impacts. As the Simmons and Nugget Fields sites are located outside of the March 2009 Davis Fire Department five minute response-time map, the Infill Site Alternative is anticipated to result in a significant and unavoidable impact to fire protection services. Therefore, impacts to Public Services and Facilities would be similar under the Infill Site Alternative as compared to the Proposed Project.

#### **Alternative 6: Measure J Alternative**

The Measure J Alternative project site is located in Yolo County, north and east of the City of Davis City limits, southwest of the curve where East Covell Boulevard becomes Mace Boulevard. The Alternative site is comprised of approximately 47 acres. Similar to the Proposed Project, the Measure J site would need to be annexed to the City of Davis and would require public approval pursuant to Measure J. The site is not currently owned by the current project applicant. The Measure J Alternative would result in the construction of the same number and type of residential units. However, both the dedicated greenbelt/open space and single-family detached lots sizes would be increased to fill the approximately 21 additional acres.

**Figure 6-3  
Off-Site Alternative**



### Environmental Effects

#### *Land Use and Agricultural Resources*

Similar to the Proposed Project, the Measure J Alternative project site is designated Agriculture in the Davis General Plan. The Alternative location would require annexation, a General Plan amendment, and would be subject to a Measure J vote. In addition, the Measure J Alternative would result in the conversion of Prime Farmland to non-farm uses. Furthermore, as the Measure J Alternative is located on a larger parcel the amount of land converted would be greater though some of the additional acreage would remain open space. Therefore, the Measure J Alternative would result in the greater impacts to Land Use and Agricultural Resources.

#### *Population, Housing, and Employment*

The Measure J Alternative would involve the construction of the same number of residential units on lands similarly designated for agricultural uses. Therefore, the Measure J Alternative would result in a similar number of new residents on lands not designated for residential use in the Davis General Plan. As a result, impacts to Population, Housing, and Employment would be similar to the Proposed Project for the Measure J Alternative.

#### *Transportation and Circulation*

The Measure J Alternative would construct the same number of residential units as the Proposed Project on a site less-than one mile east of the Proposed Project site. As a result, impacts to traffic circulation would be substantially the same. Furthermore, design-related impacts to site access, and bicycle and pedestrian circulation identified for the Proposed Project would remain

until such time as a final project design is completed to the satisfaction of the City Engineer. The potential also exists that the Alternative's proximity to the Junior High School could result in additional safety conflicts from students traveling to and from school. Therefore, the Measure J Alternative would likely result in similar, or greater, impacts to transportation and circulation.

### *Air Quality*

The Measure J Alternative would result in the construction of the same number of residential units as the Proposed Project. The residential units would likely result in the same number of vehicle trips as the Proposed Project; therefore, project emissions of criteria air pollutants and greenhouse gases would be similar for both the Measure J Alternative and the Proposed Project. However, as the Measure J Alternative involves a larger parcel, and lot sizes could be increased, construction-related impacts as a result of site grading would also increase. As a result, impacts to air quality would be similar, or slightly greater, under the Measure J Alternative as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Noise*

The Measure J Alternative would result in the same number of vehicle trips in the same approximate area as the Proposed Project. However, the Measure J Alternative is only bordered on one side by residential units; therefore, construction-related noise impacts would potentially be experienced by fewer persons. Furthermore, impacts could be reduced even further by locating a substantial open space area along the southern boundary of the site adjacent to residential uses. The Measure J Alternative would be separated from existing agricultural uses by Mace Boulevard to the east, and East Covell Boulevard to the north; therefore, impacts related to agricultural uses would likely be reduced. Traffic along Mace Boulevard and East Covell Boulevard would generate noise; therefore, depending on the orientation of proposed residential structures, noise attenuation in the form of soundwalls, or other design related measures, would possibly be required to reduce noise impacts to future residents. Therefore, overall noise-related impacts would be similar under the Measure J Alternative as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Biological Resources*

Similar to the Proposed Project Site, the Measure J Alternative location has previously been used for intensive agricultural use, and does not contain substantial habitat areas. The Measure J Alternative is surrounded by developed sites and major roadways; therefore, the site does not represent a potential migration corridor. Nor does the site appear to contain large trees. However, the Measure J Alternative is currently undeveloped and contains potential burrowing owl nesting and foraging habitat and Swainson's hawk foraging habitat. Furthermore, the Measure J Alternative is larger in area than the Proposed Project; as a result, development of the Alternative would result in the conversion of a larger undeveloped parcel to urban uses. Therefore, implementation of the Measure J Alternative would likely result in similar, or potentially greater, impacts to biological resources.

### *Aesthetics*

The Measure J Alternative would result in the development of the same number of residential units on a larger site located to the east of the Proposed Project site. The Measure J Alternative would convert land designated for agricultural use to urban uses. Similar to the Proposed Project, the Measure J Alternative would alter the existing character of the land and would potentially obstruct views of farmland and the Sierra foothills to the east. Therefore, the Measure J Alternative would result in similar significant and unavoidable aesthetic impacts as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Hydrology and Water Quality*

The Measure J Alternative would result in the construction of the same number of residential units as the Proposed Project, and would result in a similar amount of impervious surfaces. However, the Measure J Alternative site is larger in area and would contain a larger amount of open space and greenbelt uses. A larger volume of stormwater runoff could be routed to the expanded greenbelt and open space areas under the Alternative, thereby reducing flows to City drainage facilities. Therefore, depending upon the final design impacts to hydrology and water quality would likely be reduced as compared to the Proposed Project.

### *Public Services and Facilities*

The Measure J Alternative would result in the construction of the same number of residential units as the Proposed Project on a site currently designated Agriculture in the Davis General Plan; therefore, the Alternative would result in a similar unanticipated increase in the demand for public services and facilities. Similar to the Proposed Project, the Measure J Alternative would be required to pay fair share fees to offset impacts. One important consideration is that according to the response time map provided by the Fire Department in March 2009 for the project analysis, the Measure J Alternative site would be within the five minute response time area for Station 33. As a result, implementation of this alternative would eliminate the significant and unavoidable project impact to fire protection services, although the alternative would still contribute toward in increased demand to the Fire Department, which would require mitigation. Therefore, impacts to public services would be similar under the Measure J Alternative as compared to the Proposed Project.

## **Environmentally Superior Alternative**

An EIR is required to identify the environmentally superior alternative from among the range of reasonable alternatives that are evaluated. Section 15126(d)(2) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an environmentally superior alternative be designated and states that “if the environmentally superior alternative is the ‘no project’ alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.” Generally, the environmentally superior alternative is the one that would result in the fewest of least unmitigable impacts or less environmental impact overall.

The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6(e)(2)) further state that if the environmentally superior alternative is the “No Project” alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives. For the Wildhorse Ranch Project, aside from the No Project Alternative, the Infill Site Alternative would be considered the environmentally superior alternative. The Infill Site Alternative, Viewshed Preservation Alternative, and Agricultural Preservation Alternative would all reduce several of the impact areas discussed for the Proposed Project such as aesthetics, air quality, and noise. However, only the Infill Site Alternative would eliminate the significant and unavoidable impacts to aesthetics by placing the project on lands already designated for urban uses. Therefore, the Infill Site Alternative would result in fewer environmental impacts than the Proposed Project while still providing opportunities to achieve most of the City’s and the Applicant’s project objectives.

**Table 6-3  
Environmental Impacts**

	<b>Proposed Project (PP)</b>	<b>No Project/ No Build Alternative (A2)</b>	<b>Viewshed Preservation Alternative (A3)</b>	<b>Agricultural Character Alternative (A4)</b>	<b>Infill Site Alternative (A5)</b>	<b>Measure J Alternative (A6)</b>
<b>Land Use and Agricultural Resources</b>	Significant & Unavoidable (Prime agricultural land conversion)	None	Equal	Less*	Less	<b>Greater</b>
<b>Population &amp; Employment</b>	Less-Than-Significant	None	Equal	Equal	Equal	Equal
<b>Transportation &amp; Circulation</b>	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Less	Less	Equal**	Equal**
<b>Air Quality</b>	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Less*	Less*	Equal	<b>Greater</b>
<b>Noise</b>	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Less	Less	Less	Equal
<b>Biological Resources</b>	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Equal	Equal	Equal**	Equal**
<b>Aesthetics</b>	Significant & Unavoidable (Alteration of site character and obstruction of views)	None	Less*	Less*	Less	Equal
<b>Hydrology, Water Quality &amp; Drainage</b>	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Less	Less	Equal	Less
<b>Public Services</b>	Significant & Unavoidable (Fire protection services)	None	Less	Less	Equal	Less
<b>Climate Change</b>	Significant & Unavoidable (Project contribution to greenhouse gases)	None	Less*	Less*	Equal	<b>Greater</b>

\*Although alternative would reduce potential impacts, the overall result would remain “Significant and Unavoidable.”

\*\*Alternative could result in greater or lesser impacts depending on the results of site-specific studies.

No Impact = “None”    Less Than PP = “Less”    Equal to PP = “Equal”    **Greater Than PP = “Greater”**