

6.0 ALTERNATIVES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Section 15126.6 of the *CEQA Guidelines* requires an EIR to describe and evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives to a proposed project. The purpose of the evaluation is to identify ways to mitigate or avoid the significant effects that a project may have on the environment. An EIR does not need to consider every conceivable alternative to a proposed project, nor is it required to consider alternatives that are infeasible. Rather, it must consider a reasonable range of alternatives that could feasibly attain most of the project's basic objectives, while avoiding or substantially lessening any significant adverse environmental effects of the project. The EIR must evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives and provide sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis and comparison with the proposed project to foster informed decision making and public participation. In addition, *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(e) requires that an EIR specifically evaluate the impacts associated with the alternative of 'no project' to allow decision makers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project.

This chapter provides a brief description of the proposed project, project goals and objectives, and potentially significant project impacts, followed by a description and evaluation of each alternative selected for inclusion in the EIR. Finally, this chapter concludes with a comparison of the alternatives and identification of the environmentally superior alternative.

6.2 PROJECT SUMMARY

6.2.1 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

To meet state housing requirements identified in the County's Housing Element, high density residential zoning (R3) for an additional 1,270 low and very low income housing units are required to meet the County's unmet housing needs. The project proposes to implement rezoning through the Zoning Map Amendment process to rezone sufficient acreage to higher density residential, or the equivalent of higher density residential, to meet the minimum low and very low income requirements. The specific rezoning process is proposed through the implementation of Housing Element Programs HD-8.1.3 and HD-8.1.4, including adding the "RH" Zoning Combining District to those sites included in Program HD-8.1.5.

The Housing Element Programs are described below:

Program HD-8.1.3: To accommodate the unmet housing need of 571 low and very-low income units identified in the 2003-2008 Nevada County Housing Element, the County would rezone at least 29-acres of property suitable and available for development.

Program HD-8.1.4: To accommodate the unmet housing need of 699 low and very-low income units identified in the 2009-2014 Nevada County Housing Element, the County would rezone at least 35-acres suitable and available for development.

The rezoning of property under Programs HD-8.1.3 and HD-8.1.4 will occur through one of the following scenarios:

1. Rezones within the cities' sphere of influence to a maximum density of 20 units per acre (R3-20) and a minimum density of 16 units per acre; or
2. Rezone a sufficient amount of land outside the cities' sphere of influence to a minimum density of 16 units per acre; or
3. A combination of rezoned land within and outside of the cities' sphere of influences at the identified densities may also be used to satisfy the unmet need of 571 and 699 units, respectively.

A minimum of 50 percent of the 1,270 units shall be accommodated on sites zoned exclusively for residential uses. Owner occupied and rental multi-family residential uses on these sites shall be allowed by right (without a conditional use permit, planned unit development plan, or other discretionary action) as required by Government Code Sections 65583.2(h) and (i). The rezoned sites shall provide for a minimum of 16 units per site and require a minimum density of 16 units per acre.

Program HD-8.1.5: Required the County to amend the Zoning Regulations to create a definition and development standards for a Regional Housing (RH) Combining District that is to be attached to the rezoned sites in order to accommodate the new construction objectives under Programs HD-8.1.3 and HD-8.1.4. The RH Combining District was developed by County staff and adopted by the County Board of Supervisors on September 27, 2011.

In addition to a Zoning Map amendment, all of the proposed project sites will require a General Plan Map Amendment, with the exception of Site 6, to accommodate a proposed density of a maximum 20 du/acre for Sites 1-9 located within the Grass Valley SOI area of Nevada County, and a maximum 16 du/ac for Sites 10-18. The range of 16-20 du/ac reflects the County's designation that allows up to 20 du/ac in the R3 Zoning when the site is within a City SOI. The 16 du/ac relates to the state-mandated density for rezoned sites and is allowed by the County's RH (Regional Housing) Combining Districts. All proposed sites, other than Site 6, will require a General Plan Map Amendment to change the designation to Urban High Density Residential.

SITE DEVELOPMENT

The proposed project does not include any site development or construction on the 18 candidate sites evaluated in this EIR. Future development would occur on these sites as market conditions allow at the discretion of the individual property owners.

To evaluate the potential impact associated with development on the 18 identified properties, the theoretical or maximum yield of each candidate site is used in this EIR. The method was used as a conservative approach to evaluating the potential environmental impacts associated with future development on the properties. This is a conservative approach because assuming a maximum yield assumes the highest number possible of units could be built, and does not take into consideration any development constraints such as sensitive biological resources, cultural resources, ground slope, wetlands, or regulatory constraints such as existing easements, driveways, frontage improvements, or roadway or intersection improvements. The presence of any one of these constraints could limit the amount of development that is permitted on a given site. The maximum or theoretical yield is simply a calculation that multiplies the total area of a property by the allowable density. The maximum yield for the properties addressed in this analysis is 2,680 total units on approximately 149 acres. It is anticipated that very few, if any, of the sites will be able to achieve their maximum yield. However, the maximum yield is assumed for purposes of this

EIR to evaluate the greatest number of units possible to provide future development the opportunity to utilize the analysis in this environmental document for future development applications.

Establishment of Site Development Criteria for Rezoned Sites

As outlined in the “RH” Combining District Ordinance (Section L-II 2.7.11.C.3 of the Nevada County Land Use and Development Code), the project will result in the development of a Regional Housing Need Implementation Plan. This Plan will outline site-specific development standards and any CEQA mitigation measures adopted for each site that must be adhered to in order for the site to develop consistent with the purpose of the rezone and to ensure that the development of the site does not result in a significant environmental impact.

6.2.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The following are the project objectives:

- Identify private properties that can be feasibly rezoned to meet the County’s obligation to provide high-density housing opportunities as required by state law;
- Increase high-density housing opportunities in different areas of unincorporated Nevada County;
- Identify properties with property owners that consent to participating in the County’s program and agreed to have the RH Combining District on their properties;
- Identify properties that are large enough to support enough units to make developing affordable high-density financially feasible;
- Identify participating properties that have reasonable access to existing infrastructure (e.g., public roads and utilities);
- Identify properties that have reasonable access to community services (e.g., public transportation, retail/grocery stores, employment opportunities)
- Protect the natural environment
- Establish clear and effective site-specific development standards/mitigation measures for each rezoned property to ensure that the future development of high density housing on that site meets County development standards and does not result in significant and avoidable environmental impacts.

6.2.3 POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT PROJECT IMPACTS

Chapter 4 (Existing Conditions, Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures) of this EIR describes the potential impacts of the proposed project. As identified in that chapter, the project would result in a number of potentially significant environmental impacts, some of which could be mitigated to less than significant levels. The following summarizes the proposed project’s potentially significant impacts prior to implementation of mitigation measures:

- Land Use and Planning – No potentially significant land use and planning impacts were identified for the County of Nevada. However, the proposed change in land use density to high density residential (20 dwelling units per acre) within the Grass Valley Sphere of Influence would conflict with the City’s existing medium density (4-8

dwelling units per acre) and mixed use density land use designations because the proposed density is higher. The potential conflicts would be addressed through policy agreements between the two jurisdictions. While the mitigation would address the density conflicts with the City of Grass Valley, the conflicts would remain until there was a change in the Grass Valley General Plan. Acceptance of an agreement by the City of Grass Valley or a change in the City's General Plan is outside the jurisdiction of the County and potential conflicts would remain significant and unavoidable.

- Aesthetics – The project would result in short-term aesthetic impacts as a result of construction debris and construction-related activities. These impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level with implementation of mitigation measures. Future development associated with the RH Combining District would permanently alter the nature and appearance of the project area. However, this impact would be less than significant given that the majority of proposed development would be located outside heavily forested areas of the site where disturbance has already occurred. In addition, views from surrounding land uses would be buffered by existing on-site dense trees and proposed trees and vegetation. The proposed project would result in new sources of light and glare. Implementation of mitigation measures would reduce this impact to less than significant.
- Air Quality – Future development within the RH Combining District would result in significant and unavoidable increases in air pollutants during construction and operation of the project due to the exceedance of established air quality standards. The proposed project would not be consistent with air quality attainment plan criteria, which would result in a significant and unavoidable impact.
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions – Cumulatively considerable increases in air pollutants during operation of future development of the project would result in a significant and unavoidable cumulative contribution of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to global climate change.
- Biological Resources – The proposed project would result in potentially significant impacts due to the loss of wildlife habitat, direct loss of wildlife, wildlife disturbance from increased human presence, and removal of habitat for special-status species. Potentially significant impacts to wetland and riparian areas due to vegetation removal, disruption of wetland hydrology from potential increases and/or decreases in hydrologic input during project operation, and wetland habitat degradation from sedimentation and/or contaminated stormwater runoff during the life of the project have also been identified. Finally, future development associated with the proposed project could result in the direct loss of special-status plants during construction and direct loss of terrestrial plant communities. All of these impacts would be reduced to less than significant with implementation of mitigation measures.
- Cultural Resources – Future development within the proposed project areas could potentially damage or destroy prehistoric, historic, archaeological or paleontological resources during project construction resulting in potentially significant impacts. Implementation of mitigation measures would reduce these impacts to less than significant.
- Geology and Soils – The proposed project could result in potentially significant impacts due to structural damage and safety risks from seismic hazards (ground shaking and seismically induced settlement, liquefaction, and dam failure) and potentially unstable soils (landslides, subsidence, or expansive soil). In addition,

potential soil erosion during construction of future development could result in a potentially significant impact. Implementation of mitigation measures would reduce these impacts to a less than significant level.

- Hazards and Hazardous Materials – The proposed project could result in a hazard to the public or environment from accidental exposure to hazardous materials during the construction and operation of future development. Given the location of Sites 3 through 9 to the Nevada County Airpark, future development could also result in safety hazards to people living or working in the area. Finally, the project could put people and structures at risk due to potential wildland fires. All of these impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level with implementation of mitigation measures.
- Hydrology and Water Quality – Construction and operation of the proposed project could result in water quality degradation of surface waters within the project area. Protective and enhancement measures to minimize impacts would be required for future development of the sites. Vegetation removal, grading and construction would alter existing drainage patterns and could result in potential erosion and/or siltation. The project would increase the amount of impervious surface onsite, which would change existing absorption rates, drainage patterns and the amount of stormwater runoff and could result in potential flooding on- and off-site. BMPs and green building design features, which would be required by Mitigation Measure 4.10-1b, would help reduce the velocity of flows and encourage infiltration before runoff enters the stormwater drainage system. Only Sites 10 and 13 in the Penn Valley Area were identified to be within the 100-year floodplain. None of the other sites were at risk of being within a 100-year flood hazard area. Implementation of mitigation measures described in this EIR would reduce impacts to a less than significant level.
- Noise – Temporary increases in noise and groundbourne vibration during construction of the proposed project would result in potentially significant impacts. However, none of the roadway segments would experience a 3 dB increase or more between the No Project and Plus Project conditions. Thus, implementation of the proposed project would not result in a significant increase in traffic noise levels. Construction noise impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level with implementation of mitigation measures.
- Population and Housing – The project would induce population growth within the County and City of Grass Valley. Population growth was anticipated in the County General Plan and no impacts have been identified. However, the proposed densities for the project sites within the City’s Sphere of Influence area are higher than what is considered in the City’s current General Plan. As such, the project would induce growth within the City upon annexation of the properties into the City of Grass Valley.
- Public Services, Utilities and Service Systems – The proposed project would result in increased demand for fire and police protection services, libraries, hospitals, and public schools. Payment of development impact fees and increased revenue from property and sales taxes would help offset the increased cost of services, personnel, equipment and infrastructure. Increases in wastewater flows from future development within the proposed project areas would also result in potential impacts. Mitigation requiring the replacement of some of the County’s and City’s wastewater infrastructure would address this impact. Increases in potable water demand and

wastewater flows from future development within the proposed project areas would also result in potential impacts. Mitigation measures are proposed to ensure that adequate water supplies and sewer capacity are available prior to future development receiving service. However it is unknown what the capacity of the water or wastewater facilities will be at the time of construction, Furthermore, the County does not have jurisdiction over the timing of when wastewater improvements would occur within the City of Grass Valley. Thus, potential impacts on water and wastewater service would remain significant and unavoidable.

- Recreation – Future development within the proposed project areas could result in the physical deterioration of community and regional parks due to increased use from additional population generated by the proposed project. In addition, increases in air emissions, dust, noise and erosion during construction of future park and open space amenities could result in potentially significant impacts. Implementation of mitigation measures described in this EIR would reduce impacts to a less than significant level.
- Transportation/Traffic – The proposed project would add traffic to the following intersections causing each intersection to operate at an unacceptable level of service (LOS) in the PM peak hour: Idaho-Maryland Road and Brunswick Road; La Barr Meadows Drive and McKnight Way; and, Brunswick Road and Triple Crown Road. Mitigation measures identified in the EIR would reduce potentially significant traffic impacts at these intersections to a less than significant level.

In addition to adding traffic to existing intersections, the project would construct new project driveways along the project area street network. Restricted sight distance and close spacing of these intersections would result in impacts to safety and traffic operations. Mitigation measures identified in the EIR would reduce impacts to a less than significant level. However, these mitigation measures involve substantial intersection improvements including the construction of roundabouts. It is unknown when the intersection improvements would occur as part of the Grass Valley Capital Improvement Program. It is also unknown if the construction of the complete intersection would be feasible for a single project developer. Furthermore, the County of Nevada does not have jurisdiction over the approval of construction or timing of when the improvement would occur within the City of Grass Valley. As such, potential impacts on these intersections would remain significant and unavoidable.

Cumulative traffic to the following intersections would cause each intersection to operate at an unacceptable level of service (LOS): Nevada City Highway and Brunswick Road; Brunswick Road and Town Talk Road; SR 49 Northbound Ramps and McKnight Way; and SR 49 and Combie Road. Implementation of mitigation measures would reduce cumulative traffic impacts to less than significant; however, the County of Nevada does not have jurisdiction over the approval of funding or construction timing of when the improvement would occur within the City of Grass Valley. For this reason, these cumulative traffic impacts remain significant and unavoidable.

6.3 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

6.3.1 SELECTION OF ALTERNATIVES

In accordance with CEQA, appropriate project alternatives are those that meet most of the project's basic objectives and avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental impacts of the proposed project. The alternatives analyzed in this chapter were selected for their potential to eliminate or reduce project impacts, for their potential to generate fewer impacts or require lesser levels of mitigation, and to provide a comparison between the project's impacts with those that may occur from future development anticipated by the existing Nevada County General Plan (County General Plan) and the 2020 General Plan (Alternative 2). These alternatives include:

- Alternative 1: No Project/Future Development Under Existing Nevada County General Plan
- Alternative 2: Bennett Street Sites
- Alternative 3: Berriman Ranch Sites
- Alternative 4: Reduced Development

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

Two additional sites were reviewed as potential candidate sites for including in the RH Combining District program. The location of these sites are shown in Figure 6-1, *Alternative Site Locations*. These alternative sites were considered as potential alternative sites but were rejected from further analysis for the reasons discussed below.

North Star Site

The North Star site is approximately 735 acres in size and is located on the east side of SR 49, south of McCourtney Road between Old Auburn Road on the west and Allison Ranch Road on the east. This site is located within the Grass Valley Sphere of Influence area. Utilizing a portion of this site was considered for implementing a portion of the RH Combining District. However, based up a preliminary site assessment of the property, further analysis as an alternative site was not considered for the following reasons:

- The property has existing hazardous conditions and hazardous materials onsite as a result of past mining activities.
- The project site is currently designated as a Special Development Area (SDA); and has a comprehensive plan for the property that would develop the site with a variety of uses including single-family residential, commercial, business park, hotel site, and public facilities. As a result, it would not be feasible to develop only a portion of the site with multi-family uses without having to reconfigure the whole plan.
- Currently, the surrounding area is undeveloped. There is no existing infrastructure with regards to roadways, water line, sewer lines, or public transportation opportunities in the surrounding area.
- The property owner has not expressed a desire to participate in the Housing Element Rezone Program.

Kenny Ranch Site

The Kenny Ranch site is located just to the northeast of the City of Grass Valley limits, north of the intersection of Rough and Ready Highway/Main Street/Adam Avenue. The proposed area of development consists of approximately 324 undeveloped acres. Like the North Star site, this property is located within the Grass Valley Sphere of Influence area. Because of the property's size it was considered as a potential alternative site location for inclusion in the RH Combining District. However, further analysis was not considered for this site for the following reasons:

- Like the North Star site, this property is also within a Special Development Area and a comprehensive plan for the project has been established. To develop a portion of this site with multi-family housing would require the planning effort to make substantial changes.
- The Kenny Ranch property is owned by multiple owners who have not expressed a desire to participate in the program.

6.3.2 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

CEQA does not specify the methodology for comparing alternatives. However, the issues and impacts that are most germane to a particular project must be evaluated when comparing an alternative to a proposed project. As such, the issues and impacts analyzed in project alternatives vary depending on the project type and the environmental setting. Long-term impacts (e.g., visual impacts and permanent loss of habitat or land use conflicts) are those that are generally given more weight in comparing alternatives. Impacts associated with construction (i.e., temporary or short-term) or those that are easily mitigable to less than significant levels are considered to be less important.

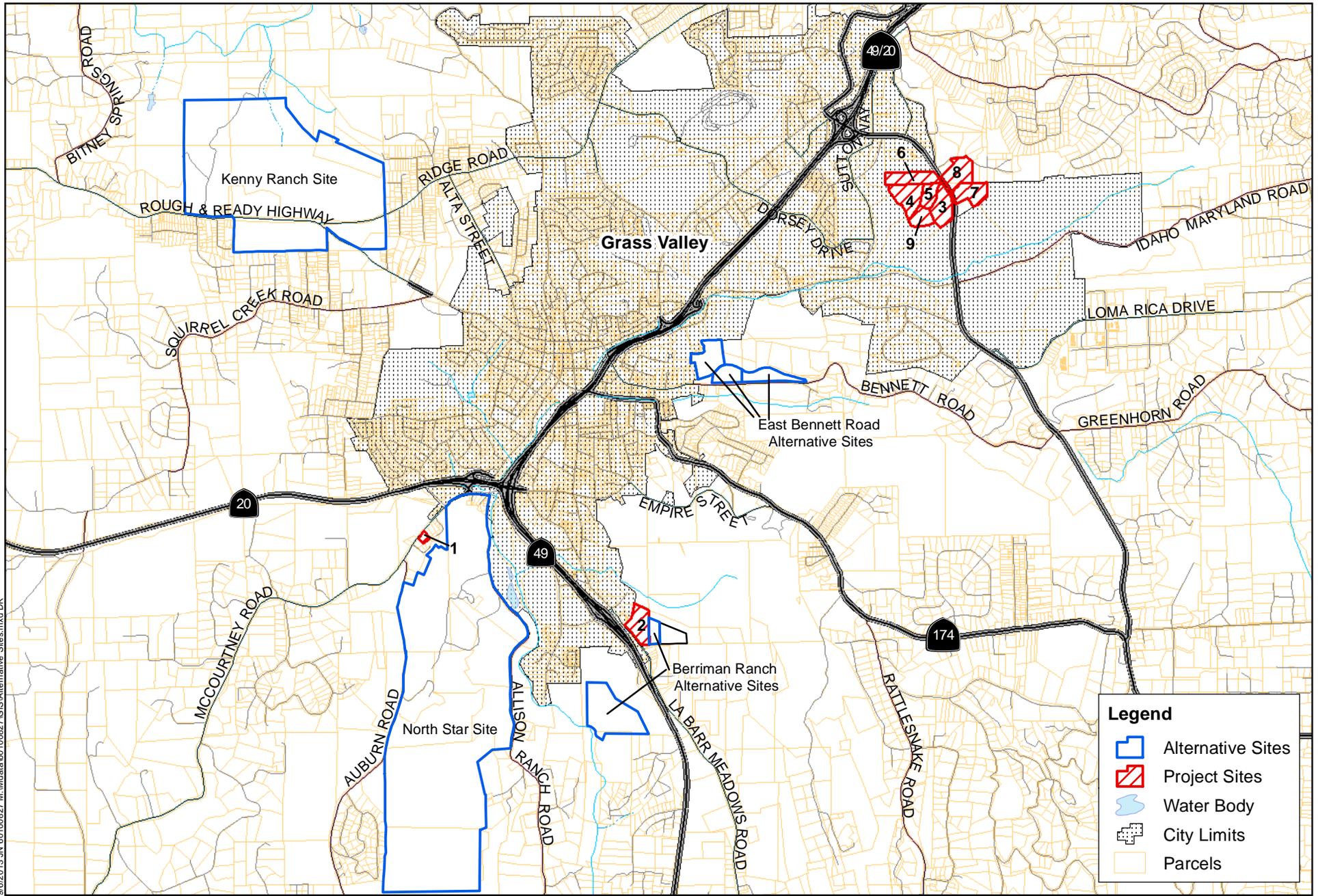
The alternatives analysis below compares each alternative to the proposed project according to whether it would have a mitigating or adverse effect for each of the environmental resource areas analyzed in this EIR.

6.3.3 ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

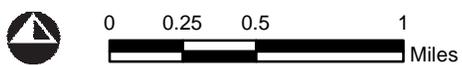
ALTERNATIVE 1: NO PROJECT / FUTURE DEVELOPMENT UNDER EXISTING NEVADA COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

Description of Alternative

Under the No Project/Future Development Under Existing Nevada County General Plan Alternative (Alternative 1), the project area would remain under the jurisdiction of Nevada County (County). Since the project consists of 19 separate parcels (Site 8 consists of two parcels), there is a potential to develop 15 additional homes (assuming the four existing homes on the existing site remain) under County regulations. However, there would be no environmental review of the potential impacts associated with the construction of the 15 homes, as their construction would require approval of a building permit only (a ministerial action) and would be exempt from the requirements of CEQA. It should be noted that although some of the sites are zoned as Office Professional, Business Park, and Medium Density Residential Development, future developments of that nature would require a site plan, discretionary approval, and subsequently CEQA review. In addition, given the options



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Source: Nevada County GIS 2013; ESRI 2013.

COUNTY OF NEVADA
2009-2014 HOUSING ELEMENT REZONE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION EIR

Alternative Site Locations

Figure 6-1

of site design (e.g. densities, it is speculative to determine and compare the type of land use on the sites. Therefore, under the No Project Alternative it is assumed the sites would be developed with single-family residential developments.

It should also be noted that the second dwelling units as an accessory use are permitted with only a building permit as well. The County allows a secondary dwelling unit to be built by right on any property within specific residential zone specified in Section L-II 3.19.1 of the Nevada County Land Use and Development Code. This includes zones R-1, R2, and RA which would apply to Sites 3-9, 12, 17, and 18. The second dwelling unit can be no larger than 1,200 square feet. Even if all of the eligible properties built a second dwelling unit, it would not substantially increase the amount of housing units within the project area. Since the Zoning Regulations do not consider second dwelling units in the density calculation of a property, for purposes of this No Project Alternative, the analysis assumes that each property would develop with one single-family dwelling unit.

With the exception of the potential construction of 15 homes, the existing conditions within the project area would remain primarily unchanged. The majority of the undeveloped areas on the properties (woodlands, chaparral, riparian corridors and grasslands) would continue to function in their current capacity.

None of the sites within the Grass Valley Sphere of Influence would annex into the City. The County would not be in compliance with state law with regards to providing enough property with high density residential zoning. This alternative would not satisfy the project objectives stated in Chapter 3 (Project Description), which are re-stated above.

Environmental Impacts Compared to the Project

Land Use and Planning

Under Alternative 1, the type and distribution of land uses would be different than those proposed by the project. Residential density would be substantially less and no business/industrial, retail/commercial or mixed uses would develop. In addition, the project area would not be annexed into the City. Neither Alternative 1 nor the proposed project would physically divide existing communities within the County or City's Sphere of Influence or Planning Area or be affected by habitat conservation plans or natural community conservation plans. Alternative 1 would not require any changes to the existing land use designation. Alternative 1 would avoid any potential land use conflicts as a result of increased densities with the existing City of Grass Valley General Plan. Therefore, Alternative 1 would have reduced impacts compared to the proposed project.

Aesthetics

The construction of the individual single-family homes under Alternative 1 would only require approval of a building permit and, therefore, would not be subject to the Western Nevada County Design Guidelines. In addition, the construction of the homes could occur anywhere on their respective parcels and there would be no guidance or direction with respect to the visual quality of new urban development and protection of aesthetic resources within the proposed project areas. In addition, the construction activities associated with the single-family homes that might occur under Alternative 1 would not be expected to temporarily degrade scenic views or the visual quality of the area, or increase light and glare. Moreover, single-family homes would not be expected to permanently alter scenic views of on-site natural features or permanently increase light and glare. The proposed project would

not temporarily degrade scenic views or the visual quality of the area, or increase light and glare during construction with the implementation of mitigation. Similarly, with adherence to County and City regulations and implementation of mitigation, future development consistent with the proposed project areas would not be expected to permanently alter scenic views of onsite natural features or permanently increase light and glare. Nonetheless, because there would be less development within the project area, Alternative 1 would result in lesser aesthetic impacts and a slight improvement compared to the project.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas

Alternative 1 would result in substantially less development than the proposed project. Air pollutant emissions from the construction of 15 single-family homes would not be expected to exceed Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD) thresholds with the incorporation of NSAQMD suggested emissions reduction measures. Similarly, the stationary and mobile air pollutant emissions associated with the occupation of 15 single-family homes would not be expected to exceed NSAQMD thresholds. Because Alternative 1 would not result in any significant air quality impacts (contribute to a pollutant for which the area is nonattainment), it would not conflict with the applicable air quality management plans or result in any cumulatively considerable impacts on air quality. Alternative 1 in combination with other projects would not cumulatively contribute GHG emissions in amounts that could hinder the state's ability to achieve AB 32 goals. Thus, Alternative 1 would avoid all of the significant and unavoidable impacts of the proposed project and would be considered a substantial improvement compared to the proposed project.

Biological Resources

Because Alternative 1 would result in substantially less development than the proposed project, its potential to adversely affect biological resources would be reduced compared to the proposed project and the biological impacts discussed in Section 4.4. In spite of this, there would be limited environmental review of the potential biological resource impacts associated with this alternative. No ESAs would be dedicated to protect wetland and riparian habitats and no recommended mitigation measures for any identified impacts, as the construction of the eight homes under this alternative would only require approval of a building permit and a Comprehensive Site Plan review process. The Comprehensive Site Plan review process would ensure buildings are outside of any watercourse setbacks, flood plains and previously identified sensitive biological resources. However, this review process is not considered a discretionary permit and as such, is not subject to the requirements of CEQA. It is possible that the individual land owners could damage or destroy significant biological resources, as the construction of the homes would not be required to undergo review by the Nevada County Planning Department for consistency with applicable Nevada County General Plan goals, objectives and policies related to biological resource protection. While individual land owners would be subject to state and federal regulations designed to protect biological resources, the proposed project would still have greater impacts on biological resources when compared to Alternative 1 given the overall size of the proposed development. As such, Alternative 1 would result in a reduction of impacts.

Cultural Resources

Alternative 1 would result in substantially less development than the proposed project. Far less area would be disturbed under this alternative than under the proposed project. This alternative's potential to disturb or destroy prehistoric, historic or paleontological resources

during construction would be greatly reduced compared to the proposed project. However, because the construction of the 15 homes under this alternative would only require approval of a building permit, this alternative would be exempt from the requirements of CEQA and there would be no requirement for ESAs. Thus, there would be no environmental review of the potential cultural resource impacts associated with this alternative and no recommended mitigation measures for any identified impacts. Under this alternative, individual land owners could possibly alter or destroy potentially significant cultural resources, as Nevada County General Plan goals, objectives and policies related to cultural resource protection do not apply to ministerial project permits for single-family residences on individual lots. While individual land owners would be subject to state and federal regulations designed to protect cultural resources, the proposed project would still have greater impacts on cultural resources when compared to Alternative 1 given the overall size of the proposed development. As such, Alternative 1 would result in reduced impacts.

Geology and Soils

Compared to the proposed project, Alternative 1 would result in substantially less development than the proposed project. Consequently, it would expose far fewer structures and people to potential seismic and unstable soil hazards. However, both Alternative 1 and the proposed project would be required to comply with current federal, state and local regulations that contain specific requirements designed to minimize impacts related to geologic and seismic hazards. In addition, any development within the project area would be required to implement site-specific measures on a project-by-project basis to address seismic and geologic hazards. For these reasons, Alternative 1 would result in a slight improvement compared to the proposed project.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Since Alternative 1 would allow for a substantially smaller population than the proposed project, it would have the potential to expose fewer people to risks associated with hazards and hazardous materials. There would be less development on sites 3 through 9 would require adherence to all policies established by the Nevada County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan to reduce safety hazards related to aviation accidents. Nonetheless, new development under Alternative 1 and the proposed project would be subject to federal, state and local regulations that would reduce the potential for hazards and hazardous materials impacts to less than significant. As a result, Alternative 1 would be a slight improvement compared to the proposed project.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Alternative 1 could result in the construction of 15 single-family homes. Thus, it would have a substantially reduced potential to degrade water quality during its operation than the proposed project. Moreover, the increased pervious surface area of Alternative 1 would allow for more infiltration and less stormwater runoff than the proposed project, but there would be no ESAs restricting development in the 100-year floodplain. For these reasons, Alternative 1 would be a substantial improvement over the proposed project.

Noise

Under Alternative 1, 15 single-family homes could be constructed. As a result, noise and ground-borne vibration associated with construction activities would be substantially reduced compared to the proposed project. Due to the large area that the homes could be

constructed over, there would be a minimal chance that the noise and ground-bourne vibration associated with their construction could have an impact on nearby sensitive uses. Further, construction activities would be required to comply with County and City policies and regulations, which would reduce any potential noise impacts from construction to less than significant. The proposed project would also be required to comply with County and City policies and regulations, as well as implement mitigation to reduce noise and ground-bourne vibration impacts to less than significant. Traffic from the 15 single-family homes would not increase noise levels, such that it could have an adverse effect on sensitive uses. Traffic from the project would also not increase noise levels, such that it could have an adverse effect on sensitive uses. Because all of the project's potentially significant noise impacts can be mitigated to less than significant, noise associated with the project would not result in a significant impact. Thus, noise resulting from the proposed project should not be substantially worse than noise associated with Alternative 1, as it can be mitigated to less than significant. As a result, Alternative 1 would be a slight improvement over the proposed project.

Population and Housing

Development under Alternative 1 would result in substantially less development than the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, Alternative 1 would be within the growth estimates identified in the County's and City's general plans, and would not displace existing housing or people. Alternative 1 would not result in induced growth within the City of Grass Valley as a result of increased densities within the Sphere of Influence area. As a result, Alternative 1 would be a slight improvement over the proposed project.

Public Services, Utilities and Service Systems

Alternative 1 would result in a maximum of 15 single-family homes and a substantially lower population than the proposed project. As a result, the demand for services and utilities under Alternative 1 would be substantially lower, which would be a considerable improvement compared to the proposed project. However, the potential impacts on fire and police protection services, school capacity and sewer line capacity associated with the proposed project could be mitigated to less than significant. Thus, Alternative 1 is considered to be a slight improvement compared to the proposed project.

Recreation

Fewer people would be added to the project areas under Alternative 1 than the proposed project. As a result, it would create considerably less demand for park and recreational facilities. However, Alternative 1 would not provide for the park amenities per population as identified in the County's and City's general plans that are required for the proposed project. Consequently, Alternative 1 would result in a slight improvement when compared to the proposed project.

Transportation/Traffic

Under Alternative 1, there would be substantially less development resulting in considerably less daily vehicle trips and no impacts on local roadways. The majority of traffic impacts associated with implementation of the proposed project could be reduced to less than significant. However, the proposed project would result in significant and unavoidable cumulative traffic impacts at multiple intersections. Alternative 1 would completely avoid

the significant and unavoidable cumulative traffic impacts associated with the project. Therefore, Alternative 1 would be a substantial improvement over the proposed project.

ALTERNATIVE 2: EAST BENNETT ROAD SITES

Description of Alternative

The East Bennett Road Sites Alternative (Alternative 2) would relocate approximately half of the proposed units that are located on Brunswick Road (on Sites 3 through 9) and place them on property on undeveloped land on East Bennett Road, in an area zoned for business park west of Lava Rock Road; see Figure 6-1. The purpose of this alternative is to reduce the number of proposed units along Brunswick Road. The proposed project has a total of 7 sites totaling 61.52 acres and a total maximum number of 1,231 units clustered together in Sites 3 through 9. This alternative proposes to move approximately half of the units to properties off of East Bennett Road to disperse the additional demand on existing traffic facilities, sewer and water facilities, and other City of Grass Valley infrastructure. The East Bennett Road sites would be within the Grass Valley Sphere of Influence (Near Term Annexation), the same as the proposed project.

Because Sites 3, 4, 5, and 9 are under a single ownership and represent approximately half of the total acreage within the cluster of sites along Brunswick Road, those sites would remain part of the project as they are in the proposed project. Sites 3, 4, 5, and 9 represent approximately 31.49 acres and 630 units. Sites 6, 7, and 8, which total 30.03 acres and 601 units, would be dropped from the program and no development under the RH Combining District would occur on those sites. Three new sites would be selected on the north side of East Bennett Road. The new site numbers would be 6, 7, and 8 to replace those sites from the proposed project. The three sites are approximately 29.74 acres and would have a maximum yield of 595 units. A summary of the maximum yield for the new sites is provided in Table 6-1. Alternative 2 would result in the same number of units as the proposed project.

Table 6-1
East Bennett Road Sites Maximum Yield

New Site Number	APN	Existing Zone	Proposed Density (du/acre)	Property Size (acres)	Maximum Yield
6	09-560-05	BP	20	7.9	158
7	09-560-10	BP	20	8.8	176
8	09-560-33	BP	20	13.04	261
TOTAL				29.74	595

A summary of the total maximum yield for all of the sites in the East Bennett Road Alternative is provided in Table 6-2.

Table 6-2
Theoretical Yield of East Bennett Road Alternative Sites

Site	1	2	3	4	5	6*	7*	8*	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	TOTAL ¹
Parcel Area (Acres)	1.08	11.36	9.15	11.35	4.5	7.9	8.8	13.04	6.49	5.95	3.1	4.37	20.1	5.0	5.0	18.12	2.36	11.03	148.7
Building Density (du/acres)	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	-
Maximum Yield (Units)	22	227	183	227	90	158	176	261	130	95	50	70	322	80	80	290	38	176	2,675

*New Sites for this Alternative

¹ For comparison, the proposed project is 148.99 acres and 2,675 units.

Alternative 2 could meet all of the project objectives with the exception of the objective requiring consenting property owners to participate in the program. Property owner agreement to the RH Combining District was a critical objective of the County Board of Supervisors from the very beginning of the implementation program. Only sites with property owner consent were considered for inclusion in the proposed project.

Environmental Impacts Compared to the Project

Land Use and Planning

Alternative 2 would have substantially the same number of units as the proposed project. However, the cluster of units along Brunswick Road would be approximately half that of the proposed project. The same RH Combining District would apply to the East Bennett Road sites the same as the sites on Brunswick Road and throughout the rest of the projects. The East Bennett Road sites are within the City of Grass Valley SOI and would require annexation into the City. Like the proposed projects, these sites are located within the Overflight Zone D* - Urban Overlay Zone for the Nevada County Airport.

One key difference is that the underlying zoning for Sites 6, 7, and 8 under the proposed project is for residential and the underlying zoning for Sites 6, 7, and 8 under Alternative 2 is Business Park. As such, this alternative would convert approximately 30 acres of land previously zoned for Business Park into residential use thereby removing future opportunities for expansion of business park uses within the City. While land use impacts would be mostly the same as the proposed project, Alternative 2 would add an incremental increase in land use conflict as a result of the loss of previously zoned business park land.

Aesthetics

Alternative 2 would likely contain similar guidance and direction addressing the visual appearance of new development and the protection of aesthetic resources as the proposed project. As a result, the potential aesthetic impacts of new development would be mitigated in the same manner as the proposed project (adherence to County and City regulations and design guideline requirements). Alternative 2 would result in some separation of proposed development projects along the Brunswick Road corridor. Site 6 is located just south of the Makiah project to the north and Site 7 is just north of the Loma Rica Ranch project. Relocating the development on these sites to East Bennett Road will result in physical and visual separation among the projects located along Brunswick Road. For these reasons, aesthetic impacts associated with Alternative 2 would be slightly less compared to the proposed project.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases

Alternative 2 would result in approximately the same residential development compared to the proposed project. Like the proposed project, Alternative 2 would be expected to contribute to pollutants for which the area is in nonattainment, would conflict with applicable air quality management plans and would result in cumulatively considerable impacts on air quality. As with the proposed project, Alternative 2 in combination with other projects would cumulatively contribute GHG emissions in amounts that could hinder the state's ability to achieve AB 32 goals. For these reasons, Alternative 2 would result in equivalent air quality impacts and a substantial deterioration compared to the proposed project.

Biological Resources

Alternative 2 would not result in development that would affect biological resources any more or less than development under the proposed project. The sites located on East Bennett Road are undeveloped and have a mix of native and non-native vegetation. Some of the sites contain oak woodland and riparian habitats similar to the sites on Brunswick Road. Alternative 2 would likely contain similar guidance and direction as the proposed project regarding the protection of biological resources. Additionally, the mitigation required for the proposed project to protect biological resources would also be required under Alternative 2. For these reasons, impacts to biological resources under Alternative 2 would be equivalent to the proposed project.

Cultural Resources

Under Alternative 2 three sites would be moved to undeveloped properties on East Bennett Road. Alternative 2 could disturb or destroy potentially significant cultural resources in a manner comparable to the proposed project. Mitigation addressing identification, treatment and protection of cultural resources would be required for both Alternative 2 and the proposed project. For these reasons, impacts associated with Alternative 2 would be equivalent to the proposed project.

Geology and Soils

Similar to the proposed project, each site in Alternative 2 would require site-specific measures on a site-by-site basis to address seismic and geologic hazards, and both would be subject to federal, state and local regulations designed to reduce the potential for geological and soils-related impacts. Overall, fewer people would be exposed to seismic and unstable soil hazards under Alternative 2. Thus, Alternative 2 would result in an equivalent impact and a slight improvement when compared to the proposed project.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Similar to the proposed project, Alternative 2 would place residents within the same fire risk area and within the same Zone D of the Nevada County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan as the proposed project. Nonetheless, federal, state and local regulations would mitigate potential hazards and hazardous materials impacts under Alternative 2, as they would under the proposed project. When compared to the proposed project, Alternative 2 would have equivalent impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Alternative 2 would have a similar development footprint to the proposed project with the exception of approximately 595 units moving from Brunswick Road to East Bennett Road. Surface water runoff would flow to the same Wolf Creek watershed. Alternative 2 would have a similar increase in impervious surface area and risk of flooding, stormwater contamination and degradation of water quality in receiving water bodies. Like the proposed project, Alternative 2 would be required to comply with applicable state and local regulations, and would also be required to implement site-specific measures on a project-by-project basis to address flooding and other hydrologic impacts. As a result, Alternative 2 would have the same impacts as the proposed project.

Noise

Alternative 2 would have overall slightly decreased noise compared to the proposed project because approximately 595 units would be dispersed from the cluster of development along Brunswick Road. Regardless, traffic noise from either Alternative 2 or the proposed project would not exceed established standards and mitigation would be required for each scenario to prevent potential noise impacts on any sensitive uses if they are proposed along specific roadways. Similarly, construction activity would be subject to City policies and regulations and mitigation for construction noise and ground-borne vibration would be required, reducing construction noise and ground-borne vibration impacts to less than significant. Both Alternative 2 and the project would be required to mitigate potential stationary mechanical noise impacts to less than significant. Alternative 2 would have a slight decrease in noise impacts compared to the proposed project.

Population and Housing

Compared to the proposed project, Alternative 2 would result in approximately the same number of units as the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, this alternative would be within the growth estimates identified in the County's 1995 General Plan and, like the proposed project, would exceed estimates the City's 2020 General Plan because of the higher densities proposed on the sites within the City's Sphere of Influence. Similar to the proposed project Alternative 2 would not displace existing housing or people. Consequently, Alternative 2 would result in equivalent impacts compared to the proposed project.

Public Services, Utilities and Service Systems

Population and growth associated with Alternative 2 would result in approximately the same number of residents as the proposed project. As such, Alternative 2 would have the same demand for fire and police services and utilities when compared to the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, Alternative 2 would require the units on East Bennett Road to annex into the City to receive water and sewer service. Similar to the proposed project, mitigation measures to reduce potential utility impacts associated with the water and sewer demand increases would be required. Thus, Alternative 2 would result in similar impacts on public services and utilities when compared to the proposed project.

Recreation

Alternative 2 would result in the same amount of residential development as the proposed project and would have a similar demand for park and recreational facilities. Thus, Alternative 2 would be equivalent to the proposed project.

Transportation/Traffic

Although Alternative 2 would have substantially the same number of units as the proposed project, it would disperse up to 595 units from Brunswick Road to East Bennett Road. The vehicle trips associated with Alternative 2 would result in similar potentially significant mitigated and significant and unavoidable direct impacts due to the same circumstance of the County not having jurisdiction over intersection improvements within the City of Grass Valley. The potential safety risks associated with driveway intersections would be similar to those under the proposed project, and similar mitigation would reduce the impacts to less than significant. In addition, Alternative 2 relocating up to 595 units would result in incrementally less cumulative traffic impacts on Brunswick Road at the Town Talk and SR 49 intersections, but cumulative impacts on intersections within the City's Sphere of Influence would remain significant and unavoidable due to the implementation authority for the mitigation measures being outside the County's jurisdiction. Therefore, Alternative 2 would have reduced traffic impacts compared to the proposed project.

ALTERNATIVE 3: BERRIMAN RANCH SITES

As shown in Figure 6-1, the Berriman Ranch Sites Alternative (Alternative 3) includes two separate sites. The larger of the two sites includes a 25.2-acre site (portions of APNs 22-160-03 and 22-160-02) within the proposed 129-acre Berriman Ranch Project. The smaller of the two parcels is located across SR 49 to the west adjacent to Site 2. Only a portion of this 19 site (APN 09-620-12) adjacent to Site 2 would be used for this Alternative. Approximately 8 acres of this site, the area adjacent to Site 2, would be used for development associated with the implementation of the RH Combining District. The 129-acre Berriman Ranch Property is located adjacent to the city boundary of Grass Valley. Currently, there is no improved access to the 25.2-acre site. An access road would have to be extended from an existing public road or through a private road easement. The eight-acre site would be accessed off of La Barre Meadows Road which runs along the property frontage or through a connection to Site 2.

The portion of the Berriman Ranch property included in this alternative is undeveloped and consists of mostly dense woodland forest. This property consists of rolling to steep terrain, generally draining towards the southwest. Wolf Creek is southwest of the site. The habitat on this site is Ponderosa pine woodland and forest area dominated by Ponderosa pines, incense cedars, and black oaks. The property also contains annual grasslands, with several wetland and riparian habitats.¹

The area adjacent to Site 2 is also undeveloped, and contains a more sparsely populated Sierran Mixed Conifer habitat like Site 2.

Similar to Alternative 2, the intent of this alternative is to disperse the large cluster of development sites located along Brunswick Road. For the reasons described above, Alternative 3 would also include the relocation of Sites 6, 7, and 8. Sites 6, 7, and 8, totaling 30.03 acres and a maximum 601 units, would be dropped from the program and no development under the RH Combining District would occur on those sites. Sites 6, 7, and 8 represent approximately half of the area of the proposed site along Brunswick Road.

¹ Berriman Ranch, Annexation 10PLN-03, Prezone 10PLN-05, Planned Development 10PLN-04, and Tentative Map 10PLN-06; Initial Study and Proposed Negative Declaration, http://www.cityofgrassvalley.com/services/departments/cdd/AdoptedNegDecs/InitialStudy_BR.pdf, accessed July 31, 2013.

Because Sites 3, 4, 5, and 9 are under a single ownership, it is anticipated that certain efficiencies in developing the site would be achieved through a single development plan, minimizing impacts, and building infrastructure onsite. For these reasons, Alternative 3 includes these sites as well as the other sites identified in the proposed project unchanged.

For Alternative 3, the new site numbers would be 6 and 7 to replace those sites removed from the proposed project. The two new sites included in this alternative are approximately 33.2 acres and would have a maximum yield of 595 units. A summary of the maximum yield for the new sites is provided in Table 6-3.

**Table 6-3
 Berriman Ranch Alternative Sites Maximum Yield**

New Site Number	APN	Existing Zone	Proposed Density (du/acre)	Property Size (acres)	Maximum Yield
6	Por. 22-160-03 and 22-160-02	R-2	20	25.2	504
7	09-620-12	R-2	20	8	160
TOTAL				33.20	664

A summary of the total maximum yield for all of the sites in the Berriman Ranch Alternative is provided in Table 6-4. The proposed project would have a maximum yield of 2,675 units, and Alternative 3 would yield a maximum of 2,744 units, an increase of 69 units.

**Table 6-4
 Theoretical Yield of Berriman Alternative Sites**

Site	1	2	3	4	5	6*	7*	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TOTAL ¹
Parcel Area (Acres)	1.08	11.36	9.15	11.35	4.5	25.2	8	6.49	5.95	3.1	4.37	20.1	5.0	5.0	18.12	2.36	11.03	152.16
Building Density (du/acres)	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	-
Maximum Yield (Units)	22	227	183	227	90	504	160	130	95	50	70	322	80	80	290	38	176	2,744

Note: This alternative has 17 total sites because three sites from the proposed project have been replaced with two.

*New Sites for this Alternative

¹ For comparison, the proposed project is 148.99 acres and 2,675 units.

Alternative 3 could meet all of the project objectives with the exception of the objective requiring consenting property owners to participate in the program. Property owner agreement to the RH Combining District was a critical objective of the County Board of Supervisors from the very beginning of the implementation program. Only sites with property owner consent were considered for inclusion in the proposed project.

Environmental Impacts Compared to the Project

Land Use and Planning

Alternative 3 would have substantially the same number of units as the proposed project. However, the cluster of units along Brunswick Road would be approximately half that of the proposed project. The same RH Combining District would apply to the Berriman Ranch sites, the same as the sites on Brunswick Road and throughout the rest of the projects. The Alternative 3 sites are within the City of Grass Valley SOI and would require annexation into the City.

The new sites 6 and 7 in this alternative are zoned R-2 Medium Density which allows 6 dwelling units per acre. The density under the RH Combining District would allow up to 20 units per acre, which is more than three times what is permitted by the existing zone and is a higher density than the current development in the surrounding area. The same potential conflicts with the City's existing land use designations would occur with this alternative as with the proposed project.

The Alternative 3 sites are outside of the Overflight Zone D*-Urban Overlay Zone for the Nevada County Airport which is located just south and east of the sites along Brunswick Road and east of the Alternative 2 sites.

However, it should be noted that Sites 6 and 7 are part of larger development applications that have been submitted to the City of Grass Valley. The development applications include annexation into the City and propose larger planned development that could include single family residential and commercial development and open space areas.

Aesthetics

Alternative 3 would likely contain similar guidance and direction addressing the visual appearance of new development and the protection of aesthetic resources as the proposed project. As a result, the potential aesthetic impacts of new development would be mitigated in the same manner as the proposed project (adherence to County and City regulations and design guideline requirements). Because of the sloped terrain on Site 6 (the larger of Berriman Ranch sites), Alternative 3 would result in increased grading and clearing of the existing woodlands in order to create building pads, parking areas, and driveways associated with multi-family development. However, most of the views from public vantage points such as SR 49 would be screened from view due to the existing woodlands that line the highway in this area. Relocating the development on these sites to Berriman Ranch will result in physical and visual separation among the projects located along Brunswick Road. Because of the proximity of the proposed project Sites 6, 7, and 8 to Brunswick Road, the reduction in density along Brunswick Road would be more noticeable to the public than the development at Berriman Ranch because of the existing screening along SR 49. For these reasons, aesthetic impacts associated with Alternative 3 would be slightly less compared to the proposed project.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases

Alternative 3 would result in approximately the same residential development compared to the proposed project. Like the proposed project, Alternative 3 would be expected to contribute to pollutants for which the area is in nonattainment, would conflict with applicable air quality management plans and would result in cumulatively considerable impacts on air quality. As with the proposed project, Alternative 3 in combination with other projects would cumulatively contribute GHG emissions in amounts that could hinder the state's ability to achieve AB 32 goals. For these reasons, Alternative 3 would result in equivalent air quality impacts and a substantial deterioration compared to the proposed project.

Biological Resources

Alternative 3 would result in development that would likely affect biological resources more than the development under the proposed project. The Berriman Ranch sites are undeveloped and mostly native vegetation including mature woodlands. Site 6 contains

Ponderosa Pine Woodland, black oaks, and riparian habitat associated with Wolf Creek. Site 7 contains Sierra Mixed Conifer woodlands similar to the sites on Brunswick Road. Alternative 3 would likely contain similar guidance and direction as the proposed project regarding the protection of biological resources. Additionally, the mitigation required for the proposed project to protect biological resources would also be required under Alternative 3. Because of the amount of undisturbed Ponderosa Pine on Site 7, impacts to biological resources under Alternative 3 would be considered greater than the proposed project.

Cultural Resources

Under Alternative 3, three sites would be moved to undeveloped properties on East Bennett Road. Alternative 3 could disturb or destroy potentially significant cultural resources in a manner comparable to the proposed project. Mitigation addressing identification, treatment and protection of cultural resources would be required for both Alternative 3 and the proposed project. For these reasons, impacts associated with Alternative 3 would be equivalent to the proposed project.

Geology and Soils

Similar to the proposed project, each site in Alternative 3 would require site-specific measures on a site-by-site basis to address seismic and geologic hazards and both would be subject to federal, state and local regulations designed to reduce the potential for geological and soils-related impacts. Overall, fewer people would be exposed to seismic and unstable soil hazards under Alternative 3. Thus, Alternative 3 would result in an equivalent impact and a slight improvement when compared to the proposed project.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Alternative 3 would place residents within the same fire risk area as the proposed project, but would move up to 664 housing units (assuming maximum buildout) out of Zone D*-Urban Overlay Zone of the Nevada County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. Federal, state and local regulations would mitigate potential hazards and hazardous materials impacts under Alternative 3, as they would under the proposed project. When compared to the proposed project, Alternative 3 would have fewer impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Alternative 3 would have a similar development footprint to the proposed project with the exception of approximately 664 units moving from Brunswick Road to the Berriman Ranch area. Surface water runoff would flow to the same Wolf Creek watershed. Alternative 3 would have a similar increase in impervious surface area and risk of flooding, stormwater contamination and degradation of water quality in receiving water bodies. Like the proposed project, Alternative 3 would be required to comply with applicable state and local regulations, and would also be required to implement site-specific measures on a project-by-project basis to address flooding and other hydrologic impacts. As a result, Alternative 3 would have the same impacts as the proposed project.

Noise

Alternative 3 would have overall slightly decreased noise compared to the proposed project because approximately 664 units would be dispersed from the cluster of development along

Brunswick Road. Regardless, traffic noise from either Alternative 3 or the proposed project would not exceed established standards and mitigation would be required for each scenario to prevent potential noise impacts on any sensitive uses if they are proposed along specific roadways. Similarly, construction activity would be subject to City policies and regulations and mitigation for construction noise and ground-borne vibration would be required, reducing construction noise and ground-borne vibration impacts to less than significant. Both Alternative 3 and the proposed project would be required to mitigate potential stationary mechanical noise impacts to less than significant. Alternative 3 would have a slight decrease in noise impacts compared to the proposed project.

Population and Housing

Compared to the proposed project, Alternative 3 would result in approximately 69 additional units. Similar to the proposed project, this alternative would be within the growth estimates identified in the County's 1995 General Plan and, like the proposed project, would exceed estimates the City's 2020 General Plan because of the higher densities proposed on the sites within the City's Sphere of Influence. Similar to the proposed project Alternative 3 would not displace existing housing or people. Consequently, Alternative 3 would result in equivalent impacts compared to the proposed project.

Public Services, Utilities and Service Systems

Population and growth associated with Alternative 3 would result in approximately the same number of residents as the proposed project. As such, Alternative 3 would have the same demand for fire and police services and utilities when compared to the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, Alternative 3 would require the units on East Bennett Road to annex into the City to receive water and sewer service. Similar to the proposed project, mitigation measures to reduce potential utility impacts associated with the water and sewer demand increases would be required, but would still be considered significant and unavoidable, due to the unknown capacities at the time development of the sites would occur. Thus, Alternative 3 would result in similar impacts on public services and utilities when compared to the proposed project.

Recreation

Alternative 3 would result in the same amount of residential development as the proposed project and would have a similar demand for park and recreational facilities. Thus, Alternative 3 would be equivalent to the proposed project.

Transportation/Traffic

Although Alternative 3 would have a slightly increased number of units (69) compared to the proposed project, it would disperse up to 664 units from Brunswick Road to the McCourtney Road and the McKnight/SR 49 interchange, and La Barr Meadows Road. La Barr Meadows Road is projected to operate at an unacceptable LOS F with or without the project. This alternative would add up to another 160 units adjacent to Site 2 that would be served by this intersection which would increase the impact. The vehicle trips associated with Alternative 3 would result in similar significant and unavoidable direct impacts. The mitigation would be the same as the proposed project but would remain significant because the requirement for constructing dual roundabouts may not be feasible for a single developer and would be outside the jurisdiction of the County. The potential safety risks associated with driveway intersections would be similar to those under the proposed project, and similar mitigation

would reduce the impacts to less than significant. However, with Alternative 3 relocating up to 664 units, cumulative traffic impacts on Brunswick Road at the Town Talk and SR 49 intersections would be incrementally less. Cumulative impacts on intersections within the City's Sphere of Influence would remain significant and unavoidable due to the implementation authority for the mitigation measures being outside the County's jurisdiction. Alternative 3 would have slightly increased traffic impacts compared to the proposed project.

ALTERNATIVE 4: REDUCED DEVELOPMENT

Description of Alternative

The Reduced Development Alternative (Alternative 4) removes four of the most environmentally sensitive sites from the program to minimize the environmental effects of implementing the Housing Element Rezone. The purpose of this alternative is to remove the sites with the most physical constraints to development such that the overall environmental impact of implementing the program is reduced, yet still leaving enough opportunity to for the County to meet the required Regional Housing needs and state law. The sites that have the most physical constraints were removed to decrease impacts on biological resources, cultural resources, traffic, aesthetics, and other issues that would be adversely affected by development.

The following sites would be removed from the project under this alternative:

Site 7: This site is removed because of physical constraints associated with the property. A tributary to Wolf Creek traverses the southeast portion of the site as well as intermittent streams riparian vegetation on other places throughout the site. Potential historic resources were identified at this site. Additionally, as one of the three largest parcels in the cluster of sites along Brunswick Road, it has one of the highest maximum yield of units at 198 units. Removal of these units would reduce the amount of traffic from this cluster of development. Additionally, this site is located adjacent to the recently approved Loma Rica Ranch Project. By removing this site from the program it would provide an additional visual and physical from the future development on the Loma Rica Ranch site.

Site 8: This site has similar physical constraints as those described for Site 7 and has been removed from the program for the same reasons. A tributary to Wolf Creek traverses the site near the center of the property which substantially restricts the amount of area available for development due to wetland protection requirements. Intermittent wetlands also are located along the property frontage of Brunswick Road which would result in potential wetland impacts associated with roadway improvements.

Site 14: This site is removed because of physical constraints on the property. This site contains a well-developed blue oak woodland over approximately 80% of the site which makes avoidance difficult. The project site is located on a hillside which would require grading with manufactured slopes that would be visible from SR 49.

Site 17: This site is removed because of the physical constraints associated with developing the property. The site is bisected by Ragsdale Creek and has a wide riparian zone associated with the creek that would make avoidance difficult. The site also contains sensitive black oak dominated woodland outside the riparian zone. Ragsdale Creek is potential habitat for sensitive aquatic species.

Table 6-5 shows the maximum number of units for the Reduced Development Alternative with Sites 7, 13, 14, and 17 removed. As shown in the table, the project would reduce the

total acreage of properties in the program by 27.69 acres or 19%. The maximum number of units would be reduced by 519 units or 20%.

Table 6-5
Theoretical Yield of the Reduced Development Alternative

Site	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	8*	9	10	11	12	13	14*	15	16	17*	18	TOTAL ¹
Parcel Area (Acres)	1.08	11.36	9.15	11.35	4.5	9.7			6.49	5.95	3.1	4.37	20.1		5.0	18.12		11.03	121.30
Building Density (du/acres)	20	20	20	20	20	20			20	16	16	16	16		16	16		16	-
Maximum Yield (Units)	22	227	183	227	90	194			130	95	50	70	322		80	290		176	2,156

*These sites are removed from the Reduced Development Alternative

¹ For comparison, the proposed project is 148.99 acres and 2,675 units.

Environmental Impacts Compared to the Project

Land Use and Planning

Under Alternative 4, the type and distribution of land uses would be similar to the proposed project, though this alternative would provide fewer residential units, but similar conflicts with the Grass Valley General Plan that occur with the proposed project would remain under Alternative 4. Neither the proposed project nor Alternative 4 would physically divide any existing communities within the County of Nevada or the City of Grass Valley SOI or Planning Area. Each alternative would propose new land use designations for the project area. As a result, Alternative 4 would have the same impacts as the proposed project.

Aesthetics

Residential development would be reduced by approximately 19 percent in the proposed RH Combining District area under Alternative 4. Both Alternative 4 and the proposed project would result in temporary increases in light and glare, as well as temporary impacts on scenic views and visual quality during construction. Construction-related visual quality impacts would be mitigated in the same manner under each scenario.

Alternative 4 would remove sites that would be most visible from major public thoroughfares such as Sites 7 and 8 (Brunswick Road), Site 14 (SR 49), and Site 17 (Combie Road). For the remaining sites, the potential aesthetic impacts of new development would be mitigated in the same manner as the proposed project (adherence to County and City regulations and design guideline requirements). For these reasons, impacts associated with Alternative 4 would be reduced compared to the proposed project.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas

Alternative 4 would result in less residential development compared to the proposed project. The reduced number of units would result in fewer vehicle trips compared to the proposed project. Both Alternative 4 and the proposed project would be expected to contribute to pollutants for which the area is in non-attainment and would, therefore, conflict with applicable air quality management plans and result in cumulatively considerable impacts on air quality. In addition, both Alternative 4 and the proposed project in combination with other projects would cumulatively contribute GHG emissions in amounts that could hinder

the state’s ability to achieve AB 32 goals. However, overall Alternative 4 would result in reduced air quality and greenhouse gas impacts compared to the proposed project.

Biological Resources

Alternative 4 would result in development that would reduce potential impacts on biological resources compared to the proposed projects. The four sites that have been removed under Alternative 4 support sensitive biological resources such as wetlands, oak woodlands, and riparian habitat on all or significant portion of the site. Table 6-6 provides a comparison of the impacts to plant communities. This alternative would eliminate impacts to Blue Oak Woodland habitat. For the remainder of the sites in this alternative, mitigation addressing biological resources required for the proposed project would also be implemented under Alternative 4 and it would likely have similar guidance and direction. For these reasons, Alternative 4 would have reduced biological impacts compared to the proposed project.

**Table 6-6
 Potential Impacts to Plant Communities
 for the Reduced Development Alternative**

Site	Annual Grassland (Acres)	Valley Oak Woodland (Acres)	Blue Oak Woodland (Acres)	Montane Hardwood (Acres)	Sierran Mixed Conifer (Acres)	Foothill Riparian (Acres)	Mixed Chaparral (Acres)	Blue Oak-Foothill Pine (Acres)
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	5.78	8.11	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	.03	8.01	0.07	-	-
4	-	-	-	-	11.48	-	-	-
5	-	-	-	-	5.62	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-	10.06	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	0	0	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	0	0	-	-
9	-	-	-	-	4.85	-	-	-
10	4.18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	2.31	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	2.82	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	7.33	2.97	-	-	1.29	-	-	-
14	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-
15	-	-	-	3.86	-	-	-	-
16	-	-	-	5.25	-	-	1.68	11.93
17	-	-	-	0	-	0	-	-
18	-	-	-	4.82	3.80	-	-	-
Total	9.31	2.97	0	14.93	51.93	0.07	1.68	11.93
Proposed Project	16.64	2.97	1.27	14.93	61.12	0.74	1.68	11.93

Cultural Resources

Under Alternative 4, the development footprint would be reduced compared to that of the proposed project. Impacts on potential historical and prehistoric resources on Sites 7 and 8 would be avoided under this alternative. For the remaining sites, potential impacts on cultural resources and mitigation necessary to reduce impacts to less than significant would be comparable. For these reasons, potential cultural resource impacts associated with Alternative 4 would be reduced compared to the proposed project.

Geology and Soils

Alternative 4 would result in approximately 28 fewer acres of development compared to the proposed project. Overall, up to approximately 519 fewer units would be in the project area under Alternative 4. When compared to the proposed project, fewer people would be exposed to seismic and unstable soil hazards under the Alternative 4. Regardless, current federal, state and local regulations require specific mitigations to reduce impacts related to geologic and seismic hazards, which would apply to both Alternative 4 and the proposed project. Additionally, each scenario would require site-specific measures on a project-by-project basis to reduce potential seismic and geologic hazard impacts to less than significant. Thus, Alternative 4 would result in a slight improvement compared to the proposed project.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Since Alternative 4 would result in fewer people in the project area, it would have the potential to expose less people to risks associated with hazards and hazardous materials. With the removal of Sites 7 and 8, fewer people would be living within Zone D of the Nevada County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan area. Federal, state and local regulations would mitigate potential hazards and hazardous materials impacts under Alternative 4 in the same manner they would under the proposed project. For these reasons, Alternative 4 would result in a slight reduction compared to the proposed project.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Compared to the proposed project, Alternative 4 would result in less multi-family residential development. Both would substantially increase impermeable surfaces, which could result in an increased risk of flooding, stormwater contamination and degradation of water quality in receiving water bodies. Applicable state and local regulations protecting against flooding and hydrologic impacts would apply under Alternative 4. In addition, site-specific measures would be required on a project-by-project basis to address flooding and other hydrologic impacts. For these reasons, Alternative 4 would be slightly less compared to the proposed project as a result of less building area.

Noise

Under Alternative 4, there would be up to approximately 519 fewer homes. Neither Alternative 4 nor the proposed project would exceed established noise standards as a result of traffic increases, and mitigation would be required for each to prevent potential noise impacts on any sensitive uses should they be proposed along specific roadways. Like the project, Alternative 4 would be subject to County and City policies and regulations regarding construction noise, and mitigation for construction noise and ground-borne vibration would be required to reduce impacts to less than significant. Furthermore, both Alternative 4 and the proposed project would be required to mitigate potential stationary mechanical noise impacts to less than significant. Therefore, Alternative 4 would have the same impact as the proposed project.

Population and Housing

Alternative 4 would result in up to approximately 519 fewer homes compared to the proposed project and would be within the growth estimates identified in the County General Plan and, like the proposed project, would exceed estimates the City's 2020 General Plan because of the higher densities proposed on the sites within the City's Sphere of Influence. However, the

population growth within the City of Grass Valley would be incrementally less because two of the sites that are removed from this Alternative are within the City's Sphere of Influence. Like the proposed project, Alternative 4 would not displace existing housing or people. Therefore, Alternative 4 would be equivalent compared to the proposed project.

Public Services, Utilities and Service Systems

Population growth associated with Alternative 4 would have less demand for fire and police services, libraries, schools and parks and recreational services when compared to the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, mitigation measures to reduce potential utility impacts associated with the water and sewer demand increases would be required, but would still be considered significant and unavoidable, due to the unknown capacities at the time development of the sites would occur. As a result, Alternative 4 would have a reduced impact compared to the proposed project.

Recreation

When compared to the proposed project, Alternative 4 would result in approximately 519 fewer units. Accordingly, the decrease in population would decrease the demand for park and recreational facilities. Therefore, Alternative 4 would have a slight improvement over the proposed project.

Transportation/Traffic

Under Alternative 4, there would be less development by up to 519 units. Thus, there would be fewer daily vehicle trips associated with new housing. Daily vehicle trips would decrease under Alternative 4 when compared to the proposed project. Under the proposed project there would be significant unavoidable cumulative traffic impacts at the Brunswick Road/SR 49, Brunswick Road/Town Talk, and SR 49/Combie Road intersections. Under Alternative 4 there would be a reduction in traffic volumes at these intersections because Sites 7, 8, 14, and 17 have been removed from the project and would no longer contribute to these failing intersections. Additionally, there would be less cumulative potential safety risk associated with the Brunswick Road/Town Talk intersection because Sites 7 and 8 would no longer contribute to traffic to the intersection. Consequently, Alternative 4 would have a reduced impact compared to the proposed project, however mitigation requirements within the jurisdiction of the City of Grass Valley would remain significant and unavoidable.

6.4 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

Table 6-7, *Comparison of Alternative Project Impacts to the Proposed Project*, compares each alternative to the proposed project according to whether it would have a mitigating or adverse effect for each of the environmental resource areas analyzed under each alternative above.

Table 6-7
Comparison of Alternative Project Impacts to the Proposed Project

Topic	Alternative 1 No Project/ Future Development Under Existing Nevada County General Plan	Alternative 2 East Bennett Road Sites	Alternative 3 Berriman Ranch Sites	Alternative 4 Reduced Development
Land Use and Planning	--	+	=	=
Aesthetics	--	--	=	--
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas	--	=	=	--
Biological Resources	--	=	+	--
Cultural Resources	--	=	=	--
Geology and Soils	--	--	=	--
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	--	=	-	--
Hydrology and Water Quality	--	=	=	--
Noise	--	--	=	=
Population and Housing	--	=	=	=
Public Services, Utilities and Service Systems	--	=	=	--
Recreation	--	=	=	--
Transportation/Traffic	--	--	+	--

Notes:

- Reduced impact compared to the proposed project.
- + Increased impact compared to the proposed project.
- = Same or similar impact as proposed project.

CEQA requires the identification of the environmentally superior alternative in an EIR, which is an alternative that would result in the fewest or least significant environmental impacts. If the "No Project" Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6 (e) (2) requires that another alternative that could feasibly attain most of the project's basic objectives be chosen as the environmentally superior alternative. Based on the above analysis, summarized in Table 6-7, the environmentally superior alternative is the Reduced Development Alternative. The majority of impacts would be reduced compared to those identified for the proposed project. Specifically, impacts associated with land use and planning; aesthetics; air quality; biological resources; cultural resources; hydrology and water quality; noise; public services, utilities and service systems; and transportation/traffic would be reduced under the Reduced Development Alternative.

The Reduced Development Alternative would be able to satisfy a majority of the project objectives as well as provide the County with enough area to meeting the Regional Housing Needs requirements and satisfy state law for providing adequate multi-family housing development opportunities.

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