

# CHAPTER 5

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## Alternatives

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses alternatives to the proposed project and describes the rationale for including them in the EIR. The chapter also discusses the environmental impacts associated with each alternative and compares the relative impacts of each alternative to those of the proposed project.

CEQA requires that an EIR compare the effects of a “reasonable range of alternatives” to the effects of a project. The alternatives selected for comparison should be those that would attain most of the basic project objectives and avoid or substantially lessen one or more significant effects of the project (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6). An EIR must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(a)). The “range of alternatives” is governed by the “rule of reason,” which requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit an informed and reasoned choice by the lead agency and to foster meaningful public participation (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(f)). CEQA generally defines “feasible” to mean an alternative that is capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, social, technological, and legal factors and other considerations (*CEQA Guidelines* Sections 15091(a)(3), 15364).

The alternatives addressed in this Draft EIR were selected in consideration of one or more of the following factors:

- The extent to which the alternative could avoid or substantially lessen any of the identified significant environmental effects of the proposed project;
- The extent to which the alternative could accomplish basic objectives of the proposed project;
- The potential feasibility of the alternative;
- The appropriateness of the alternative in contributing to a “range” of alternatives that would allow an informed comparison of relative advantages and disadvantages of the proposed project and potential alternatives to it; and
- The requirement of the *CEQA Guidelines* to consider a “no project” alternative; and to identify an “environmentally superior” alternative in addition to the no project alternative (Section 15126.6(e)).

## 5.2 Project Objectives

The proposed project is intended to provide for the development and maintenance of a single-family residential neighborhood in conjunction with limited vineyard uses. The following objectives have been established by the applicant to serve as a basis for comparing the alternatives, and for the evaluation of associated environmental impacts.

- To provide a residential community that is compatible with the surrounding residential and natural areas.
- To mitigate impacts to existing blue-line streams and California coastal live oaks.
- To ensure that current infrastructure and public services would not be lessened or burdened by project implementation but would be improved. This includes water capacity, fire safety, and storm-water runoff quality, and road safety.
- To ensure that lot coverage and density do not have impacts upon the site which cannot be mitigated in accordance with the County of Orange land use policies and development standards.
- To provide mitigation to the satisfaction of the County of Orange, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for any impacts to habitat or blue-line streams.
- To provide a residential community that incorporates a wildland fire-safe design that protects the proposed homes from potential wildland fires in accordance with the standards set forth by the Orange County Fire Authority.
- To provide a residential community that is uniquely different by integrating with and being sensitive to the environmental constraints of the existing terrain, geology, blue line streams, and the California live oak trees and that offers a large lot and remote lifestyle in a natural setting that is not commonly found within Orange County.

## 5.3 Alternatives Considered But Rejected

An EIR must briefly describe the rationale for selection and rejection of alternatives. The lead agency may make an initial determination as to which alternatives are potentially feasible and, therefore, merit in-depth consideration, and which are infeasible and need not be considered further. Alternatives that are remote or speculative, or the effects of which cannot be reasonably predicted, need not be considered (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(f), (f)(3)). This section identifies alternatives considered by the lead agency, but rejected as infeasible and provides a brief explanation of the reasons for their exclusion. As noted above, alternatives may be eliminated from detailed consideration in the EIR if they fail to meet most of the project objectives, are infeasible, or do not avoid any significant environmental effects.

An alternative to sell the project site for conservation purposes was considered but not evaluated because it would not meet any of the project objectives. In addition, impacts from this type of

alternative would likely be similar to those discussed by Alternative 1, No Project/No Build Alternative.

An alternative site was considered and also eliminated from further consideration. CEQA specifies that the key question regarding alternative site consideration is “whether any of the significant effects of the project would be avoided or substantially lessened by putting the project at another location.” In addition, an alternative site need not be considered when implementation is “remote and speculative,” such as when the alternative site is beyond the control of a project applicant. For this project, there are no suitable alternative sites within the control of the project applicant. In the event land could be purchased of suitable size and developmental characteristics, based on the known general conditions in the project area, an alternative site would likely have similar impacts after mitigation as the project. Given the size and nature of the proposed project and the project objectives, it would be impractical and infeasible to propose the project on an alternate site in the area with fewer environmental impacts.

## 5.4 Alternatives Selected for Further Analysis

Three alternatives to the proposed project have been identified for further analysis as representing a reasonable range of alternatives that attain most of the objectives of the project, may avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed project, and are feasible from a development perspective. These alternatives have been developed based on the criteria identified in Section 5.1.

The following alternatives are analyzed in detail below:

- **Alternative 1 – No Project/No Build Alternative:** Under this alternative, no development would occur on the project site, and it would remain in its current condition.
- **Alternative 2 – Decreased Density Single Phase:** Under this alternative, a reduction in the number of residential units would occur by not developing Phase 1 (south parcel). Phase 2 (north parcel) would be developed with 29 residential units, as planned by the proposed project, and the Phase 1 (south parcel) would remain as open space. This alternative would decrease the number of residential units developed in the project area by 43 units, or approximately 60 percent.
- **Alternative 3 – Decreased Density Both Phases.** Under this alternative, a 50 percent reduction in the number of residential units would be built in each phase. Thus, 22 single-family residences would be developed in Phase 1 (south parcel) and 14 single-family residences would be developed in Phase 2 (north parcel). This alternative would decrease the number of residential units developed in the project area by 36 units, and provide a larger area of open space on each parcel.

Descriptions of each alternative and its associated impacts are provided below. **Table 5-1** (located at the end of this chapter) provides a side-by-side comparison of the potential impacts of the alternatives to the impacts of the proposed project. **Table 5-2** (also located at the end of this chapter) provides a summary of each alternative’s ability to meet the proposed project objectives.

## **Alternative 1: No Project/No Build**

Section 15126.6(e) of the *CEQA Guidelines* requires analysis of the No Project Alternative. The no project alternative analysis must discuss the existing conditions at the time the Notice of Preparations (2006 and 2013) were published and consider conditions that would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services. The No Project Alternative (Alternative 1) applies to the following scenarios:

- (1) When the project is a revision of an existing land use or regulatory plan, policy, or ongoing operation, the "no project" alternative is the continuation of the existing plan, policy, or operation into the future; or
- (2) If the project is other than a land use or regulatory plan, for example a development project on identifiable property, the "no project" alternative is the circumstance under which the project does not proceed.

As the project is a development project on identified property, the no project alternative means "no build" wherein the existing environmental setting is maintained and no development occurs. The project site has an Orange County General Plan Land Use designation as "Open Space" (OS), and is zoned as "General Agriculture" (A1). Under Alternative 1, the proposed project would not be developed and the project site would continue in its current state as a generally undeveloped and densely vegetated area within the Santa Ana Mountains.

## **Environmental Impacts**

### ***Aesthetics***

The proposed project would substantially alter views of the project site from largely undisturbed settings to residential uses. The project would be incompatible with the scale and character of existing views of the undeveloped area and native vegetation. Even after implementation of project design features and mitigation measures, impacts from viewpoints nearby roadways would remain significant and unavoidable. The No Project Alternative would avoid impacts on aesthetic resources by maintaining the existing generally undeveloped open space character of the entire project site and existing scenic views from Ortega Highway would not be impacted. The No Project Alternative would also not introduce new sources of nighttime light and glare to the project site. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would result in fewer impacts associated with aesthetic resources than the proposed project.

### ***Air Quality***

The proposed project would result in short-term construction-related emissions and long-term operational emissions that would be less than significant. Under the No Project Alternative, construction would not be required and additional vehicular trips from the project area would not occur. The No Project Alternative would avoid an increase in regional and localized emissions. The proposed project impacts to air quality are less than significant; however, the No Project Alternative would result in no impacts to air quality.

### ***Biological Resources***

The proposed project would have an adverse effect on biological resources and mitigation measures would be required to reduce impacts from the proposed project to a less than significant level. Construction of the proposed project would result in direct removal of wildlife habitat and impacts to special status plant and wildlife species and jurisdictional features on the project site. Project impacts to special status plant and wildlife species and jurisdictional features would be less than significant with implementation of Project Design Features, and mitigation measures. The No Project Alternative would avoid all potential impacts related to biological resources that could occur by the proposed project. The No Project Alternative would not impact wildlife habitat, special status plant and wildlife species, or jurisdictional features. In addition, this alternative avoids conflicts with County's management guidelines outlined in Public Resources Code Section 21083.4 (Senate Bill 1334, as adopted) or the Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would result in no impact on biological resources, which is less than to the proposed project's less than significance after mitigation.

### ***Cultural Resources***

The proposed project would result in excavation and grading and therefore, it could potentially affect unidentified archaeological or paleontological resources or result in the accidental discovery of human remains. Because the No Project Alternative would not disturb the ground, the No Project Alternative would not result in impacts related to cultural resources, which is less than the project's less than significance after mitigation.

### ***Geology and Soils***

Implementation of Project Design Features, mitigation measures, and adherence to standard building code requirements along with the proposed project would reduce potential geologic and soils impacts to less than significant. However, the No Project Alternative would avoid placement of people and structures on the project site, which would avoid potential impacts to geology and soils. Although impacts to geology and soils for the proposed project are less than significant, the No Project Alternative would result in no impacts, and would avoid risk of impacts, in comparison to the proposed project.

### ***Greenhouse Gas Emissions***

The proposed project would result in short-term construction-related emissions and long-term operational emissions. Under the No Project Alternative, the project site would not be developed and no GHG emissions would be generated. The No Project Alternative would avoid an increase in GHG emissions generated and would not affect the ability for the project site to meet the state's GHG goals. Even though the proposed project impacts to greenhouse gases are less than significant, the No Project Alternative would not result in GHG impacts.

### ***Hazards and Hazardous Materials***

The proposed project could involve the use of hazardous materials, and result in the generation of hazardous waste from short-term construction activities (e.g., used oil, concrete waste, etc.). In

addition, operations could result in the use and transport of hazardous materials (e.g., cleaning products, fertilizers, small equipment maintenance). Unlike the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would expose additional population or structures into an area that is at risk for wildfires. The No Project Alternative does not increase risks from hazards or hazardous materials. Even though impacts from the proposed project are less than significant, the No Project Alternative would not involve any impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials.

### ***Hydrology and Water Quality***

The proposed project could result in a loss of topsoil and a change in drainage patterns, as the project site would require grading and structural development. Additionally, the proposed project would require onsite wastewater treatment systems. Although impacts to hydrology and water quality for the proposed project are less than significant with implementation of the Project Design Features and mitigation measures, the No Project Alternative would avoid impacts related to loss of topsoil, a change in drainage patterns, or onsite wastewater systems. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would not result in any impacts to hydrology and water quality.

### ***Land Use and Planning***

The project site has an Orange County General Plan Land Use designation as “Open Space” (OS), and is zoned as “General Agriculture” (A1). The project proposes to change the General Plan Land Use of designation to Rural Residential (1A), which allows a minimum density of 0.25 to 0.5 dwelling units per acre, (or two to four units per acre); and the zoning designation to Residential Agricultural (AR), which allows single-family residential in conjunction with agricultural uses and requires a minimum residential lot size of 7,200 square feet. The majority of the project site is undisturbed and supports dense chaparral habitat and oak trees, and implementation of the proposed project would result in development of single-family homes, vineyards, and associated uses. The No Project Alternative would not result in development, and would not require a General Plan Amendment or zoning change. In addition, the No Project Alternative would not potentially conflict with applicable habitat conservation plans, such as the Riverside County MSHCP. Although land use impacts are less than significant, the No Project Alternative would not result in any land use impacts, which would be less than the proposed project.

### ***Noise***

The proposed project would result a short-term increase in noise from construction and a long-term increase in noise from operation. The short-term noise impacts would be significant and unavoidable after implementation of Project Design Features, and mitigation measures. The No Project Alternative would not include any new noise sources at the project site, and, therefore, would not generate any impacts. In addition, the No Project Alternative would not result in groundborne vibration. As a result, the No Project Alternative would avoid the significant construction impacts that would result from the proposed project.

### ***Population and Housing***

The No Project Alternative would not develop 72 residential units and the associated 230 new residents in the project area. Thus, the No Project Alternative would not induce population

growth in the area, either directly (by development of the new homes) or indirectly (by the need for employees). Even though population and housing impacts for the proposed project are less than significant, the No Project Alternative would not result in any impacts to population and housing.

### ***Public Services***

The demand for public services, such as fire protection, police protection, schools, libraries and hospitals, would incrementally increase with implementation of the proposed project. Project development would not create a need for expanding existing fire or police facilities or staff, construction of a new facility, or adversely impact types of services provided. The proposed project would generate additional students and would increase the demand on library services. However, the proposed project's impacts associated with increased demand on public services would be less than significant and the project would be required to pay development fees, as detailed within Section 3.13, *Public Services*.

The No Project Alternative would not result in any housing on the project site, this alternative would not increase demand on existing fire protection, police protection, schools, or libraries. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would not result in any impacts to public services; and impacts from the proposed project would be greater.

### ***Recreation***

The proposed project would add approximately 230 new residents to the site. Because of the proximity of the project site to existing recreational resources, including active recreation opportunities, sufficient park and recreation opportunities are available to meet the demands of the additional residents, and impacts would be less than significant.

However, the No Project Alternative would not result in an increased population and, thus, would not increase the use of existing park and recreation facilities. Even though potential impacts from the proposed project are less than significant, the No Project Alternative would not result in any impacts to recreational facilities.

### ***Transportation and Traffic***

The proposed project would be developed on a vacant site that does not currently generate traffic, so all project-generated trips would be new trips to area roads. The proposed project would increase traffic in the area from construction worker trips and project operations that would increase traffic on area intersections. The proposed would generate approximately 690 daily operational trips. However, with implementation of Project Design Features and mitigation measures, impacts to area roadways would be less than significant.

The No Project Alternative would not increase traffic loads on area streets, therefore no impacts would occur. Thus, the No Project Alternative would result in fewer impacts related to transportation and traffic than the proposed project.

### **Utilities and Service Systems**

The proposed project would develop 72 single-family homes that would require water supply and would generate wastewater and solid waste. Impacts to utilities and service systems would be less than significant with implementation of Project Design Features. The proposed project would increase the demand for water services, wastewater services, and solid waste services compared to the No Project Alternative. Because the No Project Alternative would not involve development, the alternative would not result in any impacts on utilities and service systems.

### **Conclusion**

The No Project Alternative would result in the continuation of existing conditions at the project site, and development and operation of 72 single-family residences would not occur. As a result, the No Project Alternative would avoid the significant and unavoidable aesthetic resource and construction noise impacts that would result from the proposed project. In addition, the No Project Alternative would not require implementation of the mitigation measures that are identified in Section 3.0 of this EIR. Furthermore, the No Project Alternative would not result in any of the impacts that were identified to be less than significant from the proposed project.

While the No Project Alternative would have fewer environmental impacts compared to the proposed project, this alternative would not meet several of the objectives listed in Section 5.2, *Project Objectives*. Specifically, the No Project Alternative would not provide any residences, which is the basic project objective. In addition, the No Project Alternative would not provide a residential community that is compatible with the surrounding residential and natural areas; provide a residential community that incorporates a fire-safe design; or provide a residential community that is uniquely different and that offers a lifestyle that is not commonly found in Orange County.

## **Alternative 2: Decreased Density Single Phase**

Alternative 2, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative, is a variation of the proposed project that provides for residential development and excludes the development of the Phase 1 (south parcel) project site, which would remain as open space. Under this alternative, the number of residential units would be reduced by 43 units (60 percent of the proposed project) to 29 residential units.

### **Environmental Impacts**

#### ***Aesthetics***

The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would retain the existing views of the Phase 1 (south parcel), but would result in similar impacts associated with views from a scenic corridor. The proposed single-family residences would be visible from Ortega Highway (an Eligible State Scenic highway – not designated) from several viewpoints. Although development of this alternative would result in fewer residential units being visible from Ortega Highway, it would still alter the views from an Eligible State Scenic highway. Therefore, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in fewer impacts related to aesthetic resources compared to the proposed project. However, under the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative impacts to



scenic views and visual character would remain significant and unavoidable after implementation of the same Project Design Features and Mitigation Measures that would be implemented by the proposed project.

### ***Air Quality***

Construction activities resulting under the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would be reduced when compared to the proposed project because construction of fewer units and grading of less acreage would occur. However, short-term construction-related emissions of NO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> would still occur, although the generation of these emissions would be less under this alternative than those which would occur under the proposed project. Long-term operational air quality impacts under the proposed project are largely related to vehicular emissions. Because the traffic generated under this alternative would be less than the proposed project, operational air quality emissions (and impacts) generated under this alternative would be reduced. Therefore, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in fewer air quality impacts than compared to the proposed project. Air quality impacts related to both the project and the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would be less than significant.

### ***Biological Resources***

Development of the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in similar but fewer impacts to biological resources as the proposed project. The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative excludes the development of Phase 1 (south parcel), which would remain as open space. As such, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would avoid biological impacts to habitat and potential sensitive status species in the Phase 1 (south parcel) area. In addition, the disturbance area within the Riverside County MSHCP would not occur from this alternative. Thus, potential impacts related to the MSHCP would not occur.

The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would develop the proposed residential uses in the Phase 2 (north parcel); thus, this alternative could affect sensitive habitat and species, and nesting birds protected by the MBTA (if construction occurs during the breeding season). However, because development under this alternative would occur within a smaller footprint than under the proposed project, and this alternative would implement all of the Project Design Features and mitigation measures as the proposed project, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in fewer impacts related to biological resources compared to the proposed project.

### ***Cultural Resources***

The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in fewer but similar impacts related to cultural resources because it would involve excavation and grading activities that could disturb unknown or unidentified archaeological or paleontological resources or human remains. The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative excludes the development of Phase 1 (south parcel), which would remain as open space. As such, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would not impact cultural resources that could exist in the Phase 1 (south parcel) area. The overall area to be graded would be less under this alternative than under the proposed project;

therefore, impacts associated with cultural resources would be less under the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative.

### ***Geology and Soils***

Like the proposed project, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would include earthwork that could result in the loss of top soil and there is a potential for damage caused by ground shaking, landslide, or collapse. However, because this alternative would not include as many residential units, it would expose fewer people and structures to the potential impacts associated with ground shaking, landslide, or collapse. As a result, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in fewer impacts than the proposed project.

### ***Greenhouse Gas Emissions***

The proposed project would generate GHG emissions from construction and operational activities. Under the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative, the amount of construction would be reduced and the number of residential units and related vehicular trips would be less. As such, construction and operational related GHG emissions are anticipated to be less than the proposed project. The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in reduced less than significant GHG emission impacts compared to the proposed project.

### ***Hazards and Hazardous Materials***

Like the proposed project, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would involve the use of hazardous materials during construction and operational activities. In addition, this alternative would require similar fuel modification zones around the Phase 2 (north parcel area) to reduce the risk of wildfires to the occupants. Therefore, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in similar impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials as the proposed project but would expose fewer people and structures to the potential risks.

### ***Hydrology and Water Quality***

The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in a disturbance to and potential loss of topsoil at the project site due to construction activities. However, because this alternative would include fewer residential units, a smaller area would need to be graded and, thus, a smaller area of exposed topsoil would occur, which would reduce potential impacts to water quality associated with erosion and sedimentation. Like the proposed project, drainage patterns would be altered, impervious areas on-site would increase; however, the overall areas to be disturbed would be less and the construction activities would be required to adhere to the same construction related regulations that would reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level. Therefore, this alternative would result in fewer potential impacts, due to the smaller area required for construction and operation.

### ***Land Use and Planning***

The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would require the same General Plan Amendments and zoning changes for Phase 2 (north parcel) that would occur under the proposed project. However, the General Plan Amendments and zoning changes proposed by the project for the Phase 1 (south parcel) area would not occur. This alternative would result in fewer areas to be

developed and a larger area of open space land. Although land use impacts for the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would be less, as fewer acres would be developed, impacts are similar to the less than significant impacts that would result from the proposed project.

### **Noise**

Like the proposed project, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in short-term construction-related and long-term operational noise impacts. The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative excludes the development of the Phase 1 (south parcel) project site, which would remain as open space. As such, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would avoid the significant construction noise impacts to sensitive receptors near the Phase 1 (south parcel) site and reduce overall construction noise compared to the proposed project because this alternative would result in fewer construction activities, over a shorter period of time, and would impact fewer sensitive receptors than the proposed project. However, significant construction noise impacts would still occur after implementation of Project Design Features and mitigation measures with the development of Phase 2 (north parcel) due to the location of existing sensitive receptors.

In addition, operational impacts of this alternative are largely associated with traffic noise, and would be decreased due to the smaller amount of traffic generated under this alternative.

Therefore, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in fewer less than significant operational noise impacts than the proposed project.

### **Population and Housing**

The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would develop fewer new housing units than the proposed project and result in fewer new residents at the project site. Assuming an average household size of 3.2, the addition of 29 single-family residential units would result in approximately 93 new residents versus 230 new residents generated by the proposed project. Therefore, the total population on the project site under this alternative would be less than the proposed project. The Decrease Density Single Phase Alternative would result in fewer less than significant impacts to population and housing compared to the proposed project.

### **Public Services**

The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would require incrementally additional public services such as police, fire protection, schools, and other public facilities such as libraries. However, due to the reduced population that would occur under this alternative, compared to the proposed project, the demand for public services would be incrementally less. Therefore, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in fewer less than significant impacts related to public services compared to the proposed project.

### **Recreation**

The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would increase the population at the project site by approximately 93 residents, which would increase the demand on the recreational facilities in the vicinity of the project site. The population under this alternative would be smaller than what would be generated by the proposed project and the demand for recreation facilities would be

reduced in comparison to the proposed project. Therefore, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in fewer less than significant impacts to recreational facilities than the proposed project.

### ***Transportation and Traffic***

The proposed project would be developed on a generally vacant site that does not generate traffic and would increase traffic on area roadways and intersections from construction and operational trips. The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in less construction traffic than the proposed project because it would include the construction of 60 percent fewer residential units.

The operational trips related to the 29 residential units developed by the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would be substantially less (approximately 60 percent less) than the trips generated by the 72 units proposed the proposed project. As described in Section 3.15, *Transportation and Traffic*, the proposed project would generate approximately 690 vehicular trips per day; a 60 percent reduction would result in approximately 276 vehicular trips per day that would be generated by this alternative. Thus, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in fewer impacts related to transportation and traffic than compared to the proposed project. However, both the project and the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in less than significant impacts after implementation of Project Design Features.

### ***Utilities and Service Systems***

As under the proposed project, water pipelines and solid waste services would need to be extended to the project site under the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative. In addition, the development of onsite wastewater treatment systems would be required under this alternative. Construction impacts associated with the extension of these utilities under this alternative would be similar to those under the proposed project. However, because this alternative would include fewer residential units, demand on all utility and service system facilities would be decreased. Overall, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in fewer less than significant impacts on utilities and service systems than the proposed project.

## **Conclusion**

The Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would result in the development of 29 single-family units and associated infrastructure improvements within Phase 2 (north parcel). The potential impacts from this alternative are less than the proposed project because a smaller land area and number of single-family residential units would be developed. This alternative would not result in any impacts that would be greater than those identified for the proposed project. However, this alternative would not reduce significant unavoidable aesthetic and construction noise impacts to a less than significant level. As described above, impacts related to scenic views, visual character, and construction noise would remain significant and unavoidable under this alternative after implementation of Project Design Features and mitigation measures.

In addition, as shown in **Table 5-2**, this alternative would also not meet the project objectives to the same extent as the proposed project. Specifically, the Decreased Density Single Phase Alternative would provide a much smaller residential community that would provide fewer

residences to meet the market demand that are compatible with surrounding areas and fewer opportunities at a remote lifestyle that is not commonly found in Orange County.

## **Alternative 3: Decreased Density Both Phases**

Alternative 3, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would provide for reduced residential development in both phases. A 50 percent reduction in the number of residential units would be built in each phase. Thus, 22 single-family residences would be developed in Phase 1 (south parcel) and 14 single-family residences would be developed in Phase 2 (north parcel). This alternative would decrease the number of residential units developed in the project area by 36 units, and provide a larger area of open space on each parcel. The residential units developed under this alternative would occur within the same general development area as the proposed project; however, the areas closest to Ortega Highway and the existing offsite sensitive receptors would not be developed, and the proposed residences would be setback farther from Ortega Highway and existing offsite residences.

### **Environmental Impacts**

#### ***Aesthetics***

The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would retain the existing views of the project site from the scenic corridor. The proposed single-family residences would be setback from Ortega Highway, such that residences would not be visible from Ortega Highway (an Eligible State Scenic highway – not designated). Thus, this alternative would not alter the views from an eligible scenic highway. Therefore, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would not result in impacts related to aesthetic resources. The significant and unavoidable impacts related to scenic views and visual character that would occur after implementation of Project Design Features and mitigation measures from the proposed project, would not occur by the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative.

#### ***Air Quality***

Construction activities resulting under the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would be reduced when compared to the proposed project because construction of fewer units and grading of less acreage would occur. However, short-term construction-related emissions of NO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> would still occur, although the generation of these emissions would be less under this alternative than those which would occur under the proposed project. Long-term operational air quality impacts are largely related to vehicular emissions. Because the traffic generated under this alternative would be less than the proposed project, operational air quality emissions (and impacts) generated under this alternative would be reduced. Therefore, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in fewer air quality impacts than compared to the proposed project. Air quality impacts related to both the project and the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would be less than significant.

#### ***Biological Resources***

Development of the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in similar but fewer impacts to biological resources as the proposed project. The Decreased Density Both Phases

Alternative would develop fewer residences and provide a larger area of open space on the project site, which includes habitat areas that may contain sensitive species. As such, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would reduce biological impacts to habitat areas and potential impacts sensitive status species on the project site. In addition, the disturbance area within the Riverside County MSHCP would be less from implementation this alternative. Although a portion of the roadway for Phase 1 (south parcel) that crosses into Riverside County would still occur, potential impacts related to the MSHCP would be less than the proposed project.

Overall, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would develop less than the proposed project, and would implement all of the Project Design Features and mitigation measures as the proposed project. Therefore, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in fewer impacts to biological resources compared to the proposed project.

### ***Cultural Resources***

The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in fewer but similar impacts related to cultural resources because it would involve excavation and grading activities that could disturb unknown or unidentified archaeological or paleontological resources or human remains. The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would reduce the development areas and increase the onsite open space. As such, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would have a reduced potential to impact cultural resources. The overall area to be graded would be less under this alternative than under the proposed project; therefore, impacts associated with cultural resources would be less under the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative.

### ***Geology and Soils***

Like the proposed project, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would include earthwork that could result in the loss of top soil and there is a potential for damage caused by ground shaking, landslide, or collapse. However, because this alternative would not include as many residential units, it would expose fewer people and structures to the potential impacts associated with ground shaking, landslide, or collapse. As a result, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in fewer impacts than the proposed project.

### ***Greenhouse Gas Emissions***

The proposed project would generate GHG emissions from construction and operational activities. Under the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative, the amount of construction would be reduced and the number of residential units and related vehicular trips would be less. As such, construction and operational related GHG emissions are anticipated to be less than the proposed project. The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in reduced less than significant GHG emission impacts compared to the proposed project.

### ***Hazards and Hazardous Materials***

Like the proposed project, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would involve the use of hazardous materials during construction and operational activities. In addition, this alternative would require similar fuel modification zones around the development areas to reduce the risk of

wildfires to the residential structures and residents. Therefore, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in similar impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials as the proposed project, but would expose fewer people and structures to the potential risks.

### ***Hydrology and Water Quality***

The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in a disturbance to and potential loss of topsoil at the project site due to construction activities. However, because this alternative would include fewer residential units, a smaller area would need to be graded and, thus, a smaller area of exposed topsoil would occur, which would reduce potential impacts to water quality associated with erosion and sedimentation. Like the proposed project, drainage patterns would be altered, impervious areas on-site would increase; however, the overall areas to be disturbed would be less and the construction activities would be required to adhere to the same construction related regulations that would reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level. Therefore, this alternative would result in fewer potential impacts, due to the smaller area required for construction and operation.

### ***Land Use and Planning***

The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would require the same General Plan Amendments and zoning changes that would occur under the proposed project. However, this alternative would result in fewer areas to be developed and a larger area of open space land. Although land use impacts for the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would be less, as fewer acres would be developed, impacts are similar to the less than significant impacts that would result from the proposed project.

### ***Noise***

Like the proposed project, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in short-term construction-related and long-term operational noise impacts. The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative excludes development of residences near offsite sensitive receptors. The new residences would be setback a minimum of 2,300 feet from the existing offsite residences. As such, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would avoid the significant construction noise impacts to sensitive receptors. In addition, overall construction noise would be reduced compared to the proposed project because this alternative would result in fewer construction activities, over a shorter period of time. Thus, this alternative would avoid the significant and unavoidable short-term and periodic construction noise impact that would occur from the proposed project.

In addition, operational impacts of this alternative are largely associated with traffic noise, and would be decreased due to the smaller amount of traffic generated under this alternative. Therefore, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in fewer less than significant operational noise impacts than the proposed project.

### ***Population and Housing***

The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would develop fewer new housing units than the proposed project and result in fewer new residents at the project site. Assuming an average

household size of 3.2, the addition of 36 single-family residential units would result in approximately 115 new residents versus 230 new residents generated by the proposed project. Therefore, the total population on the project site under this alternative would be less than the proposed project. The Decrease Density Both Phases Alternative would result in fewer less than significant impacts to population and housing compared to the proposed project.

### ***Public Services***

The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would require incrementally additional public services such as police, fire protection, schools, and other public facilities such as libraries. However, due to the reduced population that would occur under this alternative, compared to the proposed project, the demand for public services would be incrementally less than what would be required for the proposed project. Therefore, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in fewer less than significant impacts related to public services compared to the proposed project.

### ***Recreation***

The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would increase the population at the project site by approximately 115 residents, which would increase the demand on the recreational facilities in the vicinity of the project site. The population under this alternative would be 50 percent less than what would be generated by the proposed project and the demand for recreation facilities would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project. Therefore, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in fewer less than significant impacts to recreational facilities than the proposed project.

### ***Transportation and Circulation***

The proposed project would be developed on a generally vacant site that does not generate traffic and would increase traffic on area roadways and intersections from construction and operational trips. The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in less construction traffic than the proposed project because it would include the construction of 50 percent fewer residential units.

The operational trips related to the 36 residential units developed by the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would be substantially less (approximately 50 percent less) than the trips generated by the 72 units proposed the proposed project. As described in Section 3.15, *Transportation and Traffic*, the proposed project would generate approximately 690 vehicular trips per day; a 50 percent reduction would result in approximately 345 vehicular trips per day that would be generated by this alternative. Thus, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in fewer impacts related to transportation and traffic than compared to the proposed project. However, both the project and the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in less than significant impacts after implementation of Project Design Features.

### ***Utilities and Service Systems***

As under the proposed project, water pipelines and solid waste services would need to be extended to the project site under the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative. In addition, the



development of onsite wastewater treatment systems would be required under this alternative. Construction impacts associated with the extension of these utilities under this alternative would be similar to those under the proposed project. However, because this alternative would include fewer residential units, demand on all utility and service system facilities would be decreased. Overall, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in fewer less than significant impacts on utilities and service systems than the proposed project.

## Conclusion

The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would result in the development of 36 single-family units and associated infrastructure improvements throughout both phases of the project site. The potential impacts from this alternative are less than the proposed project because a smaller area and number of single-family residential units would be developed. This alternative would not result in any impacts that would be greater than those identified for the proposed project. In addition, this alternative would reduce significant unavoidable aesthetic and construction noise impacts to a less than significant level. As described above, impacts related to scenic views, visual character, and construction noise would not occur under this alternative.

However, as shown in **Table 5-2**, this alternative would not meet the project objectives to the same extent as the proposed project. Specifically, the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would provide a much smaller residential community that would provide fewer residences to meet the market demand and fewer opportunities at a remote lifestyle that is not commonly found in Orange County.

## 5.5 Environmentally Superior Alternative

The Environmentally Superior Alternative for the proposed project would be Alternative 1, or the No Project/No Build Alternative. No substantially significant and long-term impacts would occur to the environment as a result of this No Project/No Build alternative. However, *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(3)(1) states:

*The “no project” analysis shall discuss the existing conditions at the time the notice of preparation is published, or if no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced, as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services. If the environmentally superior alternative is the “no project” alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives [Underline added.]*

The Environmentally Superior Alternative among the other alternatives is Alternative 3 – the Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative, which would develop 36 single-family units and associated infrastructure improvements throughout the project site. The potential impacts from this alternative are less than the proposed project because a smaller area would be developed and less single-family residential units would be developed. In addition, this alternative would reduce significant unavoidable aesthetic and construction noise impacts to a less than significant level. As described above, impacts related to scenic views, visual character, and construction noise

would not occur under this alternative. As a result, overall impacts from implementation of this alternative would be less than those of the proposed project.

However, this alternative would not meet some of the project objectives to the same extent as the proposed project. The Decreased Density Both Phases Alternative would provide a much smaller residential community that would provide fewer residences to meet the market demand and fewer opportunities at a remote lifestyle that is not commonly found in Orange County. CEQA does not require the lead agency (County of Orange) to choose the environmentally superior alternative. Instead CEQA requires the County to consider environmentally superior alternatives, weigh those considerations against the environmental impacts of the proposed project, and make findings that the benefits of those considerations outweigh the harm.

**TABLE 5-1  
IMPACT SUMMARY/COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES**

<b>Environmental Issue</b>	<b>Proposed Project</b>	<b>Alternative 1: No Project/ No Build</b>	<b>Alternative 2: Decreased Density Single Phase</b>	<b>Alternative 3: Decreased Density Both Phases</b>
Aesthetics	Significant and Unavoidable	-	-	-
Air Quality – Construction	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Operations	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Biological Resources	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Cultural Resources	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Geology and Soils	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Hydrology and Water Quality	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Land Use and Planning	Less than Significant	-	=	=
Noise – Construction	Significant and Unavoidable	-	-	-
Operations	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Population and Housing	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Public Services – Fire Protection	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Sheriff	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Schools	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Hospitals	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Recreation	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Transportation and Circulation	Less than Significant	-	-	-
Utility and Service Systems	Less than Significant	-	-	-

NOTES: (-) The alternative would result in less impacts than the proposed project.  
 (+) The alternative would result in greater impacts than the proposed project.  
 (=) The alternative would result in same/similar impacts as the proposed project.

**TABLE 5-2  
ABILITY TO MEET OBJECTIVES**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Proposed Project</b>	<b>Alternative 1: No Project/ No Build</b>	<b>Alternative 2: Decreased Density Single Phase</b>	<b>Alternative 3: Decreased Density Both Phases</b>
1. To provide a residential community that is compatible with the surrounding residential and natural areas.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
2. To minimize impacts to existing blue-line streams and California Coastal Live Oaks.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3. To ensure that lot coverage and density do not have impacts upon the site which cannot be mitigated in accordance with the County of Orange.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4. To provide mitigation to the satisfaction of the County of Orange, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for any damage done to existing habitat or blue-line streams.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
5. To provide a residential community that incorporates a fire-safe design that protects the proposed homes from future wildland fires in accordance with the standards set forth by the Orange County Fire Authority.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
6. To provide a residential community that is uniquely different and that offers a lifestyle that is not commonly found in Orange County.	Yes	No	Yes, but to a lesser degree	Yes, but to a lesser degree