6.0 ALTERNATIVES

6.1 Introduction

The California Environmental Quality Act requires the consideration of a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project. Section 15126.6(c) of the CEQA Guidelines states:

> *…the range of potential alternatives to the proposed project shall include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic objectives of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects. The EIR should briefly describe the rationale for selecting the alternatives to be discussed. The EIR should also identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible during the scoping process and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination.*

This chapter outlines the process by which the range of alternatives was selected, evaluates each alternative in terms of impacts to the environment, identifies the relative severity of impact when compared to the proposed project, and discusses the ability of each alternative to meet the project objectives. The following objectives were initially listed in Chapter 3, Project Description, and are repeated here to help inform this evaluation of alternatives:

- Enhance Old Redwood Highway as the downtown, mixed-use center of Cotati community life.
- Maintain the historic character which makes Cotati unique, and achieve a high level of design quality to reinforce this character.
- Improve the walking and bicycling system through downtown Cotati as well as the interconnections between Cotati and the region.
- Promote a street system that is safe for all modes of transportation within a successful commercial mixed-use environment.
- Design housing to accommodate a diversity of income levels, ages and needs.
- Encourage development that is sustainable: energy efficient and conserves resources.

The potential environmental effects of implementing the proposed project are analyzed in Chapter 4. Impacts associated with the following environmental topics would be significant for the proposed project without the implementation of mitigation measures, but would be reduced to less than significant levels if the mitigation measures recommended in this EIR are implemented:

- Biological resources
- Geological resources
- Hydrology and water quality
- Noise
- Transportation and circulation

Two significant and unavoidable impacts were identified: project and cumulative impacts to historical resources.

The Alternatives evaluated in this chapter consist of the following (each is discussed and evaluated in Section 6.3 of this chapter):

- No Project Alternative
    - No Project/No Build Alternative
    - No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative
- Reduced Development Alternative
- Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative

6.2 Alternatives Previously Considered but Rejected

Alternative Location for the Project or its Components
While there is vacant land elsewhere within the City limits which may accommodate this project, or its components, the relocation of the project is not feasible. Existing vacant land elsewhere in the City is primarily zoned for low-density residential or agricultural use, and is therefore not suitable for more dense development. Furthermore, the central goal of this project is the revitalization and infill of the Downtown; relocating the project or its components would not achieve this objective.

Alternative Land Uses
A central objective of the DSP and the planning documents that preceded it is to enhance and build upon the existing mix of land uses in the Downtown. Alternatives which rely on land uses other than residential or commercial development (e.g., industrial, institutional, open space, etc.) would not support the objective of enhancing the Downtown as a mixed-use center.

Parking Structures
An earlier version of the DSP contained two parking structures. The parking structures were eliminated as a required element from subsequent drafts of the DSP because of their projected high cost and large scale. The parking structures are still an option to fulfill the project objectives.

6.3 Alternatives Description

No Project Alternative
CEQA requires the analysis of the No Project Alternative, which can further be subdivided into two scenarios: the No Project/No Build scenario, in which development in the planning area is held static, and the No Project/Existing General Plan Buildout scenario, which assumes development of the planning area in accordance with the existing General Plan. Both scenarios are analyzed.

Under the No Project/No Build scenario, the existing conditions of Downtown Cotati would remain as they are. Under the No Project/Existing General Plan Buildout scenario, there would be approximately 497,000 square feet of non-residential use, and 595 units of residential development.

Reduced Development Alternative
A reduced development alternative would decrease the amount of residential units and commercial square footage within the planning area. This would reduce the number of people both living within the planning area and driving into the planning area for services. The alternative analyzed herein assumes reduction in buildout by one-third. This alternative would reduce impacts to air quality, traffic and other issue

areas. Table 6.0-1 shows the differences in buildout for residential units and non-residential square feet.

Table 6.0-1.
Buildout Assumptions for Proposed Project and Reduced Development Alternative

	Proposed Development		Reduced Development	
	Residential Units	Non-Residential Square Feet	Residential Units	Non-Residential Square Feet
Historic Core	71	41,000	48	27,334
La Plaza	89	118,000	60	78,667
Northern Gateway	229	217,000	153	144,667
Commerce Avenue	61	42,000	41	28,001
Total	**450**	**418,000**	**302**	**278,669**

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative
A great number of variables within the DSP area were explored in the public arena through the planning process. A week-long charrette was held, which provided an opportunity to look at many alternative plans for the downtown. The options considered are reflected in the discussion contained in the Draft DSP. The planning process, which involved citizens and decision-makers, explored these alternatives in a meaningful way, such that the relative costs and benefits of the options were evaluated, along with whether the objectives of the process were achieved. This process complemented the CEQA alternative selection process.

The DSP is the result of carefully considering many possibilities, and arriving at a general consensus among the public, officials and experts as to what makes the "best" plan. Many variations of the DSP are possible, including different mixes of residential and commercial development. Alternatives which adjust the mix of commercial and residential development can be useful in determining the relative impacts of different types of land use. For example, commercial land uses tend to generate more traffic, and residential land uses place greater demands on services. Two sub-alternatives are considered in the analysis: (a) one which emphasizes residential land uses over commercial land uses, and (b) one which dedicates a greater amount of land to non-residential use.

6.4 Alternatives Analysis

This section provides an evaluation of the alternatives by environmental impact category. Table 6.0-2 at the end of this section provides a relative comparison summary of the impacts by alternative.

Aesthetics

No Project/No Build Alternative. Under this alternative, the planning area views would remain the same, and there would be no impacts related to new development. However, the area would not benefit from the building and public

space improvements provided for under the DSP. Therefore, beneficial impacts would likewise be eliminated. Impacts are considered less than significant, but greater than the proposed project because the beneficial impacts would be eliminated.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. The DSP includes design guidelines that are intended to enhance the quality of development and public spaces in the downtown. The DSP was developed in part to address current deficiencies in the type and quality of development occurring in the project area under the current planning framework. Continued development under the existing framework is considered less than significant, but more adverse than the proposed project.

Reduced Development Alternative. The Reduced Development Alternative would alter visual corridors much in the same way the proposed DSP would. With less development, there could be less obstruction of views, although it would not complete the proposed "look" of the downtown core, including the enclosure created by taller buildings. New sources of light and glare would be decreased. Impacts are considered less than significant, and somewhat less adverse than the proposed project.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. Altering the percentage of residential or non-residential land use, while retaining design guidelines and other regulatory controls on the aesthetics of development, will not affect the visual environment in a different manner than the proposed project. A degree of view blockage would still occur; however, the overall appearance of the area would be improved, regardless of the development mix. On the other hand, pedestrian orientation could be lost without a careful mix and density of development. Impacts are considered less than significant, similar to the proposed project.

Air Quality

No Project/No Build Alternative. Under this alternative, the project area would not contribute new trips or construction activities which would adversely affect air quality. Greenhouse gas emissions would not increase. Impacts are considered less than significant, and less adverse than the proposed project.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Buildout of the General Plan would have greater operational air quality and greenhouse gas emission impacts when compared to the proposed project due to the higher development potential and resulting greater number of vehicle trips. Impacts are considered significant, and more adverse when compared to the proposed project.

Reduced Development Alternative. The alternative would entail less construction which would decrease temporary emissions. Other air quality impacts may be decreased when compared to the proposed project. However, the more the project is reduced, the fewer benefits will be realized from the proposed DSP. Impacts are considered potentially significant, and perhaps more adverse in operation than the proposed project.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. Altering the development mix would affect the types and amount of emissions in the area. In general, since residential development generates fewer trips than non-residential development, an alternative

which relied more heavily on residential land use would generate fewer emissions. However, a greater amount of residential development would directly increase the population of the area, and potentially be inconsistent with the Clean Air Plan. Conversely, non-residential development would generate a greater level of long-term emissions and would decrease the population potential of the area. Impacts are considered potentially significant; however (a) is considered less adverse than the proposed project, and (b) is considered more adverse than the proposed project.

Biological Resources

No Project/No Build Alternative. No additional building would eliminate impacts related to construction of new structures. Areas currently undeveloped which are potential habitat for special status species would remain unchanged. Potentially beneficial effects of plan components, such as improved stormwater drainage, would not occur under this alternative. Impacts are considered less than significant, and less adverse than the proposed project.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Impacts to biological resources would likely be the same with development under the General Plan. Regulations in place to protect endangered species such as the California Tiger Salamander would still apply under this alternative.

Reduced Development Alternative. Impacts to biological resources would be similar to the project since roughly the same area of land would be disturbed under either approach. Regulations in place to protect endangered species would still apply.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. Impacts to biological resources would not change under this alternative from the impacts presented for the proposed project in Chapter 4. The existing regulatory framework would still apply. Impacts are considered potentially significant, similar to the proposed project.

Cultural Resources

No Project/No Build Alternative. This alternative would eliminate potential disturbance to archaeological resources and/or historic buildings. However, the historic resources would not benefit from efforts under the plan to enhance the historic character of the Downtown, including efforts to improve facades and restore historic buildings. Under this alternative, these initiatives would not be pursued. The possibility of demolishing historic structures would be avoided. Impacts are considered less than significant, and less adverse than the proposed project.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Buildout of the General Plan would result in substantially the same impacts to historic resources as the proposed project.

Reduced Development Alternative. Reduced development would result in substantially the same impacts to historic resources as the proposed DSP.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. Altering the development mix would not change the type or severity of impact to historic resources.

Geological Resources

No Project/No Build Alternative. This alternative would eliminate impacts associated with introducing new population to a seismically active area, and exposing ground to risks of erosion and other construction-related risks. There would be no impact; impacts are less adverse than the proposed project.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Buildout of the planning area in accordance with the existing General Plan and Existing regulations would have similar impacts associated with geologic hazards.

Reduced Development Alternative. Reduced development would result in less development and people exposed to geologic hazards. Soil expansivity is mitigated with engineering techniques. Impacts are considered less than significant, similar to the proposed project.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. Altering the development mix would not change the type or severity of impact to geologic resources.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

No Project/No Build Alternative. This alternative would eliminate risks associated with increased amounts of hazardous materials during and after construction. However, the lack of redevelopment in the area will eliminate the beneficial effect of remediation of materials in older structures. Assuming, however, that materials in older structures pose little to no immediate risk to the public (risks associated with lead and asbestos-containing materials are significantly increased during demolition activities), impacts are considered less than significant, and less adverse than the proposed project.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Impacts from hazards and hazardous materials would likely be the same under the General Plan development. Hazardous material transport, storage and handling would be subject to the same regulations.

Reduced Development Alternative. Impacts from hazards and hazardous materials would likely be the same as under the proposed DSP. Hazardous material transport, storage and handling would be subject to the same regulations.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. Altering the development mix would only slightly change risks related to hazardous materials, in that non-residential development is more likely to use, store or transport hazardous materials. Impacts are considered less than significant, similar to the proposed project.

Hydrology and Water Quality

No Project/No Build Alternative. This alternative would eliminate risks to water quality associated with construction activities. However, in the long-term, the impact scenario is more mixed. While the lack of additional development would reduce burdens on the existing storm drain system, and would not impact the present recharge pattern, there would be some reduction in erosion risk if additional development occurs. Impacts to water quality from the several areas in the Downtown that are undeveloped would be eliminated as these areas would

become built, landscaped, and their stormwater managed. Likewise, stormwater improvements proposed under the DSP would not go forward and existing drainage deficiencies, as identified in the Redevelopment Plan, would persist. However, for the purposes of this analysis, impacts are considered less than significant, and on par with the proposed project.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Buildout of the planning area in accordance with the existing General Plan would address infiltration and water quality issues as parcels are developed or redeveloped. Impacts are considered less than significant, and similar to the proposed project.

Reduced Development Alternative. This alternative could allow for more open space for groundwater recharge; however, it is more likely that the surface features would be the same (same amount of impervious surface), just shorter buildings. Impacts are considered less than significant, and similar to the proposed project.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. Altering the development mix would not change the type or severity of impact related to hydrology or water quality. Impacts are considered less than significant, similar to the proposed project.

Land Use

No Project/No Build Alternative. The General Plan encourages development in the downtown in accordance with design and development principles enumerated in the existing La Plaza Specific Plan. Discontinuing development of the area would be inconsistent with goals stated in these documents.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Buildout of the planning area in accordance with applicable plans would by definition be consistent with those plans.

Reduced Development Alternative. This alternative would not accomplish all of the objectives of the existing planning framework, though it would have similar elements such as mixed use and high quality development. Impacts are considered less than significant, similar or greater than the proposed project.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. Altering the development mix could still achieve the objectives of the existing regulatory framework, depending upon how extensive those alterations were. Impacts are considered less than significant, similar to the proposed project.

Noise

No Project/No Build Alternative. This alternative would eliminate noise associated with new construction in the planning area, and would eliminate noise associated with new vehicle trips. This alternative would eliminate new buildings proposed under the DSP which would shield noise from the highway. The alternative would also eliminate the redevelopment of structure which would improve interior noise levels. However, the alternative would result in no new population in the area exposed to noise and impacts are, therefore, considered less than significant, and less adverse than the proposed project.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Due to the higher development potential under the General Plan, impacts related to noise are considered potentially significant, and more adverse than the proposed project.

Reduced Development Alternative. Noise impacts from this alternative would be decreased relative to the proposed DSP because less development would occur. Impacts are considered less than significant, and less adverse than the proposed project.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. Noise could be decreased by decreasing the amount of commercial land use compared to residential land use, due only to the resulting reduction in traffic. However, an increased amount of residential land use along Gravenstein Highway would expose a larger population to unacceptable noise levels. Impacts are considered potentially significant, and are on the whole similar to the proposed project.

Population and Housing

No Project/No Build Alternative. There would be no further residential or commercial development and, therefore, no inducement of additional growth. There would be no displacement of housing.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Buildout under the current General Plan would increase the number of housing units developed in the planning area. The continued implementation of the existing planning framework would increase growth-related effects in the City and environs. Impacts are considered potentially significant, and more adverse than the proposed project.

Reduced Development Alternative. The total number of residential units would be reduced. Impacts are considered less than significant, and less adverse than the proposed project.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. Altering the development mix would have a commensurate alteration of the growth-inducing impacts in the planning area. Impacts are considered potentially significant, similar to the proposed project.

Public Services and Recreation

No Project/No Build Alternative. No further development would mean no additional demand on public services. This alternative would eliminate the increase in park acreage associated with the expansion of La Plaza Park. However, the alternative would not introduce additional population requiring parks space. Impacts are considered less than significant, and less adverse than the proposed project.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Buildout under the General Plan would increase demand for public services. Impacts are considered potentially significant and more adverse than the proposed project.

Reduced Development Alternative. This alternative would lower demand on public services. Impacts are considered less than significant, and less adverse than the proposed project.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. In general, residential development places greater demand on public services than non-residential development. Impacts are considered potentially significant, with (a) being more adverse than the proposed project, and (b) less adverse.

Transportation and Circulation

No Project/No Build Alternative. No further development would mean no additional trips generated from the planning area. However, the mitigation that could be accomplished through impact fees generated by the development under the DSP would not be available. Revenue would not be available to improve existing traffic conditions, which will worsen due to general traffic increases. Also, the roadway improvements which are part of DSP and improve the level of service at certain intersections in 2025 as compared to buildout without the DSP, would not occur. Impacts are considered potentially significant, but less adverse than the proposed project.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Based on the comparison of traffic volumes contained in Section 4.12, the buildout of the Downtown under the existing General Plan would result in greater gross traffic volumes than the proposed project. Impacts are considered potentially significant and mitigable, but slightly greater than the proposed project. The following discussion was excerpted from Section 4.12 and goes into greater detail about traffic conditions and appropriate response to issues without the project at the planning horizon of 2025.

Under the No Project conditions, no changes would be made to the existing street system. Table 4.12-2 (introduced earlier in this section) shows the anticipated LOS for the No Project condition in year 2025. As shown in Table 4.12-2, four of the 12 study intersections would meet or exceed the City's criteria for significant impacts with an LOS E or greater (see column titled "No Project 2025 – Unmitigated/Delay/LOS"). Those intersections are:

- Old Redwood Highway/William and George Streets
- Old Redwood Highway/East Cotati and West Sierra Avenues
- Old Redwood Highway/Henry and Charles Streets
- East Cotati Avenue/La Plaza

The traffic analysis has identified that implementation of the following measures would provide acceptable operating conditions under No Project conditions (see Table 4.12-2, column titled « No Project 2025 – Mitigated/Delay/Los/Mitigation ») :

- Old Redwood Highway/William and George Streets – the traffic impacts could be reduced to less than significant by installing a traffic signal. No changes to the intersection geometry would be needed.

- Old Redwood Highway/East Cotati and West Sierra Avenues – the traffic impacts could be reduced to less than significant by adding a through traffic lane in northbound and southbound directions, and right-turn lane in the southbound direction. Old Redwood Highway would need to be widened to accommodate northbound and southbound merge lanes. It should be noted that the widening could impact existing parking and right-of-way.

- Old Redwood Highway/Henry and Charles Streets – the traffic impacts could be reduced to less than significant by installing a traffic signal. No changes to the intersection geometry would be needed.

- East Cotati Avenue/La Plaza – the traffic impacts could be reduced to less than significant by installing a traffic signal. No changes to the intersection geometry would be needed.

Reduced Development Alternative. Traffic impacts within the planning area would decrease with this alternative due to the reduction in total development. Impacts are considered potentially significant, but less adverse than the proposed project.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. Traffic would be reduced with the development of a greater percentage of residential land use, and would increase if more land was dedicated for non-residential use. Impacts are considered greater than the proposed project for (a) and less adverse than the proposed project for (b), but remain in either case potentially significant.

Utilities and Service Systems

No Project/No Build Alternative. No further development would mean no additional demands on public utilities. However, like with traffic, the loss of the development would also entail the loss of several opportunities to improve infrastructure and construction of improvements which are part of DSP would not occur. Impacts are considered less than significant, and less adverse than the proposed project.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. Implementation of the General Plan would increase wastewater volumes and increase demand for other utilities. Impacts are considered potentially significant, and more adverse than the proposed project.

Reduced Development Alternative. This alternative would result in comparatively less demand for utilities in the planning area. Impacts are considered potentially significant, but less adverse than the proposed project.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. The amount of wastewater generated varies greatly depending on the type of non-residential use which occupies buildings, and is generally greater in residential projects. Other impacts to utilities infrastructure are similar to the proposed project.

Water Supply

No Project/No Build Alternative. No further development would not require any additional water supply. Impacts would be less than those of the proposed project.

No Project/General Plan Buildout Alternative. The DSP requires less water supply than the General Plan in this area. Impacts would be greater than those of the proposed project.

Reduced Development Alternative. Less development would have less demand for water supply. Therefore, impacts would be less than those of the proposed project.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative. The water demand of commercial land uses varies greatly depending on the specific use. In general, residential uses increase water demand more than commercial uses.

Alternatives Comparison
Table 6.0-2 shows a summary comparison of the alternatives in relation to the proposed DSP.

6.5 Environmentally Superior Alternative

Based on the discussion and Table 6.0-2 below, assuming all topics are valued the same, the No Project/No Build alternative is the environmentally superior alternative. CEQA states that when the No Project Alternative is identified as the environmentally superior alternative, the next most superior alternative should be identified from among the remaining alternatives.

The next most superior alternative is the Project because it achieves the objectives of the DSP. Reductions in density and intensity of development will reduce some of the identified impacts. However, for the most part, all of the impacts could be reasonably mitigated and those that would remain significant would remain so under the reduced development alternatives.

Table 6.0-2.
Comparison of Impacts of Alternatives to Proposed Project by Impact Category

	No Project / No Build	No Project/ General Plan Buildout	Reduced Development	Land Use Alternative Residential (a)	Land Use Alternative Commercial (b)
Aesthetics	>	>	<	=	=
Air Quality	<	>	>	<	>
Biological Resources	<	=	=	=	=
Cultural Resources	<	=	=	=	=
Geological Resources	<	=	=	=	=
Hazards & Hazardous Materials	<	=	=	=	=
Hydrology/Water Quality	=	=	=	=	=
Land Use Planning	>	=	>	=	=
Noise	<	>	<	=	=
Population and Housing	<	>	<	=	=
Public Services & Recreation	<	>	<	>	<
Traffic	<	>	<	>	<
Utilities & Service Systems; Water Supply	<	>	<	>	<
Overall Comparison to Downtown Specific Plan	< (7)	> (7)	=/> (6)	> (2)	< (2)

Notes: > means the alternative has greater impacts that the DSP; < means less impacts; and = means the impacts of the alternative are roughly the same.