7 ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

7.1 Introduction

The Alternatives Analysis chapter of the EIR includes consideration and discussion of a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project, as required per CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6. Generally, the chapter includes discussions of the following: the purpose of an alternatives analysis; alternatives considered but dismissed; reasonable range of project alternatives and their associated impacts in comparison to the proposed project's impacts; and the environmentally superior alternative.

7.2 Purpose of Alternatives

The primary intent of the alternatives evaluation in an EIR, as stated in Section 15126.6(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, is to "[…] describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives." In the context of CEQA Guidelines Section 21061.1, "feasible" is defined as:

> ...capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social and technological factors.

Section 15126.6(f) of CEQA Guidelines states, "The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a "rule of reason" that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice." Section 15126.6(f) of CEQA Guidelines further states:

> The alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. Of those alternatives, the EIR need examine in detail only the ones that the lead agency determined could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project.

In addition, an EIR is not required to analyze alternatives when the effects of the alternative "cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative."

The CEQA Guidelines provide the following guidance for discussing alternatives to a proposed project:

- An EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project, but

would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[a]).

- Because an EIR must identify ways to mitigate or avoid the significant effects that a project may have on the environment (Public Resources Code Section 21002.1), the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[b]).
- 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 […] Among the factors that may be used to eliminate alternatives from detailed consideration in an EIR are: (i) failure to meet most of the basic project objectives, (ii) infeasibility, or (iii) inability to avoid significant environmental impacts (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[c]).
- The EIR shall include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project. A matrix displaying the major characteristics and significant environmental effects of each alternative may be used to summarize the comparison (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[d]).
- If an alternative would cause one or more significant effects in addition to those that would be caused by the project as proposed, the significant effects of the alternative shall be discussed, but in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[d]).
- The specific alternative of "no project" shall also be evaluated along with its impact. The purpose of describing and analyzing a no project alternative is to allow decision-makers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project. The no project alternative analysis is not the baseline for determining whether the proposed project's environmental impacts may be significant, unless it is identical to the existing environmental setting analysis which does establish that baseline (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[e][1]).
- If the environmentally superior alternative is the "no project" alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[e][2]).

Project Objectives

The project alternatives need to feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project, but avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. The following project objectives have been developed by the project applicant for the proposed project:

1. To develop a new professional office park close to existing office and commercial development consistent with the Granite Bay Community Plan's vision for the Douglas Boulevard corridor in Granite Bay.

2. Thoughtfully develop an infill parcel into a boutique office park that complements and blends in with the natural setting of the project area and is compatible with existing and planned adjacent development.

3. Provide a landscaped scenic corridor along Douglas Boulevard to enhance and maintain its scenic quality. Landscaping will be used to reduce the visual profile of the project.

4. Design a project with high-quality design that is compatible in form, massing, height, set-backs, building materials, size, and design that positively contributes to the existing neighborhood context.

5. Preserve native trees and existing topography of the site to the maximum extent possible.

6. To provide mutually supportive office and retail uses in immediate proximity to one another.

7. Fulfill the design standards and guidelines of the Granite Bay Community Plan including minimization of environmental impacts, such as noise, pollution and visual impacts of commercial development on adjacent residential areas.

8. To construct a high-quality project with enough commercial floor area to produce a return on investment sufficient to attract private capital and construction financing.

Significant Impacts Identified for the Proposed Project

In addition to attaining the majority of project objectives, reasonable alternatives to the project must be capable of reducing the magnitude of, or avoiding, identified significant environmental impacts of the proposed project. Significant environmental impacts (including cumulative impacts) of the proposed project that have been identified as requiring mitigation measures to ensure that the level of significance is ultimately less than significant include the following:

<u>Significant and Unavoidable</u>

The EIR did not identify any impacts associated with the proposed project that would remain significant and unavoidable after implementation of all feasible mitigation measures set forth in this EIR.

<u>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</u>

The EIR concluded that the following impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of mitigation:

- ***Noise.*** The EIR determined that the proposed project could result in significant impacts related to the following: exposure of persons to or generation of non-transportation noise levels in excess of standards established in the local General Plan, Community Plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies; and a substantial temporary or

periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project. However, with implementation of the mitigation measures set forth within the EIR, all such impacts would be reduced to less-than-significant levels.

- ***Transportation and Circulation.*** The EIR determined that the proposed project could result in significant impacts related to the following: traffic related to construction activities; study intersections under the Existing Plus Project Condition, particularly the Douglas Boulevard/Woodgrove Way/Quail Oaks Drive intersection; increased impacts to vehicle safety due to roadway design features (i.e. sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment); and while the project's incremental contribution of traffic to the cumulative scenario would not be considered cumulatively considerable, resulting in a significant combined impact, mitigation is included to require the project applicant to provide payment of applicable traffic impact fees to fund necessary roadway improvements included in the County's CIP. With implementation of the mitigation measures set forth within the EIR, all such impacts would be reduced to less-than-significant levels.

The Initial Study prepared for the proposed project (see Appendix C to this EIR) determined that the following impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of mitigation:

- ***Aesthetics.*** The Initial Study determined that the proposed project could create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. However, the Initial Study requires mitigation in order to ensure that the associated impact would be less than significant.

- ***Biological Resources.*** The Initial Study determined that the proposed project could have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies or regulations, or by the CDFW, USFWS, or NOAA Fisheries. In addition, the project could substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number of restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species, or conflict with local policies and ordinances that protect biological resources, including oak woodland resources. However, the Initial Study requires mitigation in order to ensure that such impacts would be less than significant.

- ***Cultural Resources.*** The Initial Study determined that the proposed project could substantially cause adverse change in the significance of a unique archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5 or disturb human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries. However, the Initial Study requires mitigation in order to ensure that such impacts would be less than significant.

- ***Geology and Soils.*** The Initial Study determined that the proposed project could result in significant disruptions, displacements, compaction or overcrowding of on-site soils, and/or

substantial change in topography or ground surface relief features. In addition, the proposed project could result in a significant increase in wind or water erosion of soils, either on- or off-site, and could result in changes in deposition or erosion or changes in siltation which may modify the channel of a river, stream, or lake. However, the Initial Study requires mitigation in order to ensure that such impacts would be less than significant.

- ***Hydrology and Water Quality.*** The Initial Study determined that the proposed project could result in potentially significant impacts related to substantially altering the existing drainage pattern of the project site, increasing the rate or amount of surface runoff, and/or creating or contributing runoff water which would include substantial additional sources of polluted water. In addition, short-term construction activities associated with the proposed project could result in soil erosion or the loss of topsoil. However, the Initial Study requires mitigation in order to ensure that such impacts would be less than significant.

Less Than Significant Impacts

As discussed in each respective section of this EIR, the proposed project would result in no impact or a less-than-significant impact related to the following topics associated with the resource area indicated:

- ***Noise.*** The EIR determined that impacts related to the following would be less than significant: exposure of people to or generation of noise in excess of standards established in the local General Plan, Community Plan or noise ordinance; a permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project; and exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels.

- ***Transportation and Circulation.*** The EIR determined that impacts related to the following would be less than significant: study roadway segments under the Existing Plus Project Condition; study intersections under the EPAP Plus Approved Project Condition; Study roadway segments under the EPAP Plus Project Condition; conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (i.e. bus turnouts, bicycle lanes, bicycle racks, public transit, pedestrian facilities, etc.) or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities; study intersections under the Cumulative Plus Approved Project Condition; and study roadway segments under the Cumulative Plus Project Condition.

In addition, the Initial Study prepared for the proposed project determined that no impacts or less-than-significant impacts would occur to the following issue areas, and mitigation would not be required:

- Aesthetics (Items I-1 through -3);
- Agricultural and Forest Resources (all items);

- Air Quality (all items);
- Biologic Resources (Items IV-3 through -6 and -8);
- Cultural Resources (Items V-1, -3, and -4);
- Geology and Soils (Items VI-1, -4, and -7 through -9);
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (all items)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials (all items);
- Hydrology & Water Quality (Items IX-1, -2, and -8 through -11);
- Land Use and Planning (all items);
- Mineral Resources (all items);
- Noise (Items XII-4 and -5);
- Paleontological Resources (all items);
- Population and Housing (all items);
- Public Services (all items);
- Recreation (all items);
- Transportation and Traffic (Item XVII-3 through -6 and -8); and
- Utilities and Service Systems (all items).

7.3 Selection of Alternatives

The requirement that an EIR evaluate alternatives to the proposed project or alternatives to the location of the proposed project is a broad one; the primary intent of the alternatives analysis is to disclose other ways that the objectives of the project could be attained, while reducing the magnitude of, or avoiding, one or more of the environmental impacts of the proposed project. Alternatives that are included and evaluated in the EIR must be feasible alternatives. However, the CEQA Guidelines require the EIR to "set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice." As discussed previously, the EIR must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision making and public participation. An EIR is not required to analyze alternatives when the effects of the alternative "cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative."

Alternatives Considered but Dismissed from Further Analysis

Consistent with CEQA, primary consideration was given to alternatives that could reduce significant impacts, while still meeting most of the basic project objectives.

As stated in Guidelines Section 15126.6(c), among the factors that may be used to eliminate alternatives from detailed consideration in an EIR are:

(i) failure to meet most of the basic project objectives,
(ii) infeasibility, or
(iii) inability to avoid significant environmental impacts.

Regarding item (ii), infeasibility, among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries (projects with a regionally significant impact should consider the regional context),

and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to the alternative site (or the site is already owned by the proponent). No one of these factors establishes a fixed limit on the scope of reasonable alternatives.

The off-site alternative was considered but dismissed from detailed analysis in this EIR. The reasons for dismissal, within the context of the three above-outlined permissible reasons, are provided below.

Off-Site Alternative

The possibility of an off-site location was considered as an alternative to the project. In determining potential off-site locations, the feasibility and suitability of such locations for development of the proposed project was considered. One specific factor evaluated was whether the project applicant had access to or ownership of alternative sites. Because the project applicant currently owns the proposed project site, but does not own any other nearby parcels, development of an off-site alternative would require purchase of a new property, if such a property is available. Thus, the feasibility of an off-site alternative would be limited by the availability of alternative sites for acquisition by the applicant.

In addition, much of Granite Bay is currently built-out and development of the proposed project on any of the few remaining undeveloped properties would generally not be expected to avoid significant impacts identified for the proposed project. For example, the majority of the undeveloped properties primarily consist of open space and wooded areas. Development of the proposed project on such sites would likely result in greater impacts related to biological resources. For similar reasons, an increased potential to result in impacts related to aesthetics, hydrology and water quality, geology and soils, and cultural and tribal resources would occur. Water or sewer services and/or infrastructure may not be available at some of the undeveloped properties, such as the properties located near Indian Springs Road and Barton Road, as well as along Dick Cook Road, in the northern portion of the Granite Bay Community Plan. Accordingly, impacts related to utilities could be greater at such locations. The majority, if not all, of the undeveloped properties are located near residential uses, primarily rural residential uses, rather than commercial uses. As such, development of the proposed office uses may not be suitable for the undeveloped properties without creating land use conflicts, particularly related to incompatibility with surrounding land uses and/or conflicting with General Plan land use or zoning designations.

Overall, development of the proposed project on any of the remaining undeveloped properties within Granite Bay would result in similar, if not greater, environmental impacts. Therefore, off-site alternatives that could accomplish the project objectives or accommodate a similar type and intensity of development as the proposed project are not considered feasible at this time. As a result, the Off-Site Alternative is dismissed from detailed evaluation.

Alternatives Considered in this EIR

The following alternatives are considered and evaluated in this section:

- No Project (No Build) Alternative;
- Existing Zoning Alternative;
- Reduced Intensity Alternative.

Each of the project alternatives is described in detail below, with a corresponding analysis of each alternative's impacts in comparison to the proposed project. While an effort has been made to include quantitative data for certain analytical topics, where possible, qualitative comparisons of the various alternatives to the project are primarily provided. Such an approach to the analysis is appropriate as evidenced by CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[d], which states that the significant effects of the alternative shall be discussed, but in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed. The analysis evaluates impacts that would occur with the alternatives relative to the significant impacts identified for the proposed project. The following terminology is used:

- "Fewer" = Less than Proposed Project;
- "Similar" = Similar to Proposed Project; and
- "Greater" = Greater than Proposed Project.

When the term "fewer" is used, the reader should not necessarily equate this to elimination of significant impacts identified for the proposed project. For example, in many cases, an alternative would reduce the relative intensity of a significant impact identified for the proposed project, but the impact would still be expected to remain significant under the alternative, thereby requiring mitigation. In other cases, the use of the term "fewer" may mean the actual elimination of an impact identified for the proposed project altogether.

See Table 7-2 for a comparison of the environmental impacts resulting from the considered alternatives and the proposed project. It should be noted that the following analysis focuses on the potentially significant impacts identified for each issue area per the EIR and the Initial Study prepared for the proposed project, unless otherwise noted. As a result, the analysis does not include discussion of the following issue areas, as all impacts for such CEQA topics were determined to be less than significant in the Initial Study, and mitigation was not required:

- Agricultural and Forest Resources;
- Air Quality;
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Land Use and Planning;
- Mineral Resources;
- Paleontological Resources;
- Population and Housing;
- Public Services;

- Recreation; and
- Utilities and Service Systems.

No Project (No Build) Alternative

CEQA requires the evaluation of the comparative impacts of the "No Project" alternative (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[e]). Analysis of the no project alternative shall:

> "… discuss […] existing conditions […] 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." (*Id.*, subd. [e][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. Here the discussion would compare the environmental effects of the property remaining in the property's existing state versus environmental effects that would occur if the project were approved. If disapproval of the project under consideration would result in predictable actions by others, such as the proposal of some other project, this 'no project' consequence should be discussed. In certain instances, the no project alternative means 'no build,' wherein the existing environmental setting is maintained. However, where failure to proceed with the project would not result in preservation of existing environmental conditions, the analysis should identify the practical result of the project's non-approval and not create and analyze a set of artificial assumptions that would be required to preserve the existing physical environment." (*Id.*, subd. [e][3][B]).

The County has decided to evaluate a No Project (No Build) Alternative, which assumes that the proposed project site would remain vacant and undeveloped. The No Project (No Build) Alternative would not meet any of the project objectives.

<u>Aesthetics</u>

Because the No Project (No Build) Alternative would not develop the project site with office buildings, a parking lot, and associated lighting, the Alternative would not have the potential to introduce new sources of light or glare to the site. Therefore, no impacts related to aesthetics would occur under the No Project (No Build) Alternative.

<u>Biological Resources</u>

Because the No Project (No Build) Alternative would not include ground-disturbing activities or removal of existing on-site trees, potential impacts to raptors and migratory birds would be avoided. In addition, the Alternative would not conflict with local policies and/or ordinances that protect biological resources, including tree resources. Therefore, no impacts related to biological resources would occur under the No Project (No Build) Alternative.

<u>Cultural Resources</u>

The No Project (No Build) Alternative would not involve ground-disturbing activities associated with construction. Therefore, potential impacts related to causing an adverse change in the

significance of a unique archeological resource, disturbance of human remains, and disturbance of previously unknown tribal cultural resources would not occur.

Geology and Soils

The No Project (No Build) Alternative would not require grading of the project site and would not include ground-disturbing activities related to site preparation, paving, utility placement, and various other construction activities. Because on-site soils would not be disturbed, no impact related to significant disruptions, displacements, compaction or overcrowding of on-site soils, and/or substantial change in topography or ground surface relief features would occur. In addition, because the No Project (No Build) Alternative would not include construction activities, no impact would occur related to wind or water erosion of soils.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Because the No Project (No Build) Alternative would not include development of portions of the site with impervious surfaces and would not alter drainage patterns, impacts related to substantially altering the existing drainage pattern of the project site, increasing the rate or amount of surface runoff, and/or creating or contributing runoff water which would include substantial additional sources of polluted water would not occur. Unlike the proposed project, the No Project (No Build) Alternative would not include ground-disturbing activities. Therefore, impacts related to soil erosion or loss of topsoil would not occur.

Noise

Because the No Project (No Build) Alternative would not develop the project site nor involve any construction activities, the No Project (No Build) Alternative would not result in any increase in noise levels in the project vicinity. Accordingly, the impacts identified for the proposed project related to noise would not occur under the No Project (No Build) Alternative and mitigation would not be required.

Transportation and Circulation

Because the No Project (No Build) Alternative would not develop the project site nor involve any construction activities, the No Project (No Build) Alternative would not result in any increase in traffic levels in the project vicinity. Accordingly, the impacts identified for the proposed project related to transportation and circulation would not occur under the No Project (No Build) Alternative and mitigation would not be required.

Existing Zoning Alternative

The No Project (No Build) Alternative discussed above would be considered a “no build” alternative, wherein the existing environmental setting is maintained. However, failure to proceed with the proposed project would not necessarily result in the preservation of the existing environmental conditions, but would rather result in the future buildout of the site pursuant to

existing County planning documents. As such, the Existing Zoning Alternative would be considered another type of "no project" alternative.

The 3.23-acre project site is currently zoned Residential Single Family, Building Site 20,000-sf minimum (RS-B-20). Under the Existing Zoning Alternative, the proposed project site would be developed per the current zoning designation, which allows for up to six single-family detached lots. The single-family residential units would not front onto Douglas Boulevard; rather, the rear or side yards of the homes would face Douglas Boulevard. Thus, similar to other existing residential communities along portions of Douglas Boulevard (e.g., homes near Seeno Avenue), construction of a sound wall would likely be required in order to limit noise level increases at the on-site residences.

Because the Existing Zoning Alternative would continue to be subject to the standards included in the Granite Bay Community Plan and the Placer County Design Guidelines, the Alternative would at least partially meet Objectives #3 and #4. In addition, because the Alternative would develop residential uses adjacent to an existing single-family residential neighborhood, the Alternative would likely meet Objective #7. However, because the Existing Zoning Alternative would not include office uses, the Alternative would not meet Objectives #1, #2, #6, or #8. Consistency with Objective #5 would be dependent on the final site development plan and whether said plan would allow for preservation of existing trees and topographical features. Thus, for the purpose of this analysis, the Existing Zoning Alternative would partially meet Objective #5.

Aesthetics

Development of the Existing Zoning Alternative would introduce new sources of light and glare to the site in the form of light spilling from building interiors, exterior light fixtures, and headlights from vehicles entering and exiting the site. Thus, mitigation similar to Mitigation Measure I-1 would still be required. However, because the Existing Zoning Alternative would not require a parking lot with associated lighting poles, associated impacts would be fewer relative to the proposed project.

Biological Resources

Under the Existing Zoning Alternative, construction activities and removal of a portion of the existing on-site trees would be required in order to develop the site with residential uses. Thus, similar to the proposed project, Mitigation Measure IV-1 related to protection of raptors and migratory birds would be required. In addition, Mitigation Measures IV-3 and IV-4 would be required to ensure that impacts related to significant trees are reduced to less-than-significant levels. Given that the Existing Zoning Alternative would require a comparable overall disturbance as the proposed project, impacts to biological resources would be similar.

Cultural Resources

Similar to the proposed project, ground-disturbing activities associated with construction of the Existing Zoning Alternative could potentially disturb previously unknown archeological resources or human remains located on the project site. In addition, while known Tribal Cultural Resources

have not been identified on the project site, the potential exists for construction of the Existing Zoning Alternative to result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource if previously unknown Tribal Cultural Resources are uncovered during grading or other ground-disturbing activities. Thus, Mitigation Measures V-1 and V-2 would still be required. Based on the above, impacts to cultural resources, including Tribal Cultural Resources, would be similar under the Existing Zoning Alternative compared to the proposed project.

Geology and Soils

As noted above, the total disturbance area associated with the Existing Zoning Alternative would be similar to the proposed project. Therefore, impacts related to significant disruptions, displacements, compaction or overcrowding of on-site soils, and/or substantial change in topography or ground surface relief features would be similar under the Alternative. Similarly, impacts related to erosion, unstable geologic units/soils, and expansive soils would be similar compared to the proposed project. However, mitigation would continue to be required for the Existing Zoning Alternative in order to ensure such impacts are reduced to less-than-significant levels.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Because the residential homes developed under the Existing Zoning Alternative would include front yard and backyard areas which would not be developed with impervious surfaces, the Alternative would result in the creation of a slightly reduced amount of impervious areas compared to the proposed project. Therefore, impacts related to substantially altering the existing drainage pattern of the project site, increasing the rate or amount of surface runoff, and/or creating or contributing runoff water which would include substantial additional sources of polluted water would be fewer under the Existing Zoning Alternative compared to the proposed project. Similarly, because the Alternative would not include a parking lot area, the potential for grease, oils, fuels, and other common pollutants to be discharged into local waterways would be reduced. Given that a comparable intensity of ground-disturbing activity would be required under the Existing Zoning Alternative, impacts related to soil erosion and loss of topsoil would be similar relative to the proposed project. However, mitigation requiring submittal of a final drainage report, payment of drainage improvement and flood control fees, and implementation of proper best management practices (BMP) to minimize adverse effects to water quality would still be required for the Alternative.

Noise

The Existing Zoning Alternative would still involve development of the project site and would result in a similar area of disturbance during construction as the proposed project. Accordingly, similar construction activities would be required and the same potential for impacts related to a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels identified for the proposed project would occur under the Existing Zoning Alternative and similar mitigation would be required. The Existing Zoning Alternative would involve residential development rather than commercial development. Due to the substantially reduced square footage associated with each future residence under the Existing Zoning Alternative in comparison to the square footage of each

commercial building under the proposed project, the Alternative would involve much smaller-scale pieces of HVAC equipment than what would be necessary for the proposed project. As a result, the noise associated with such equipment would be expected to be much less under the Alternative than what is anticipated for the proposed project. Consequently, impacts identified for the proposed project related to noise associated with HVAC equipment would be fewer under the Existing Zoning Alternative.

Overall, the Existing Zoning Alternative would result in fewer impacts related to noise than the proposed project.

Transportation and Circulation

The Existing Zoning Alternative would still involve development of the project site and would result in a similar area of disturbance during construction as the proposed project. Accordingly, similar construction activities would be required and the impacts identified for the proposed project associated with traffic related to construction activities would still occur under the Existing Zoning Alternative, and similar mitigation would be required.

According to the Institute of Transportation Engineer's (ITE) publication, *Trip Generation Ninth Edition, 2012*, as presented in Table 5-5 of the Transportation and Circulation chapter of this EIR, single-family residential uses involve the following trip rates: 9.52 vehicle trips per day; 0.75 AM peak hour trips per day; and 1.00 PM peak hour trips per day. Based on such data, the Existing Zoning Alternative could be expected to involve 58 daily vehicle trips, 5 AM peak hour trips, and 6 PM peak hour trips. In comparison to the proposed project's anticipated 567 daily, 42 AM peak hour, and 64 PM peak hour vehicle trips, the Existing Zoning Alternative would result in a substantial reduction in overall vehicle trips from what is anticipated for the proposed project. Thus, the Existing Zoning Alternative would result in fewer impacts than the proposed project related to study intersections under the Existing Plus Project Condition and vehicle safety due to roadway design features.

Overall, the Existing Zoning Alternative would result in fewer impacts related to transportation and circulation than the proposed project.

Reduced Intensity Alternative

Whereas the proposed project would develop the project site with one general office building and three office buildings for which medical use is allowed, under the Reduced Intensity Alternative, the site would be developed with two general office buildings (Buildings 1 and 2) and one medical office building (Building 3). Buildings 1 and 2 would include 3,200 and 4,020 sf, respectively, while Building 3 would include 4,530 sf (see Table 7-1).

As shown in the table above, the total building footprint included in the Reduced Intensity Alternative would be reduced by 5,510 sf relative to the proposed project. The eastern portion of the site where Building 4 is currently proposed would be used as open space/common area. Per Section 17.54.060 of the Placer County Code, off-street parking must be provided at a ratio of one parking space per 175 sf of floor area for medical offices, and one parking space per 300 sf of floor

area for general offices. Thus, under the Reduced Intensity Alternative, the size of the on-site parking lot would be reduced from 92 spaces to 61 spaces.

Table 7-1
Building Mix: Reduced Intensity Alternative

Proposed Project		Reduced Intensity Alternative	
Building 1: General Office	3,200 sf	Building 1: General Office	3,200 sf
Building 2: Medical Office	4,020 sf	Building 2: General Office	4,020 sf
Building 3: Medical Office	4,530 sf	Building 3: Medical Office	4,530 sf
Building 4: Medical Office	5,510 sf		
Total:	**17,266 sf**	**Total:**	**11,756 sf**

Under the Reduced Intensity Alternative, Objectives #1 through #7 would be met. However, because the Alternative would include a reduced amount of office space relative to the proposed project, the return on investment associated with development of the site may be insufficient to attract private capital and construction financing. Thus, Objective #8 would not be met.

Aesthetics

Development of the Reduced Intensity Alternative would introduce new sources of light and glare to the site in the form of new exterior lighting fixtures and a new parking lot with associated light poles. Because the parking lot could potentially result in increased nighttime light spillage onto the neighboring residential properties to the north of the site, Mitigation Measure I-1 from the IS/MND would still be required. However, because the size of the on-site parking lot would be reduced from 92 spaces to 61 spaces under the Reduced Intensity Alternative, fewer light poles would be required to adequately illuminate the parking lot. Thus, aesthetic impacts would be fewer under the Reduced Intensity Alternative relative to the proposed project.

Biological Resources

Because the Reduced Intensity Alternative would not include development of a 5,510-sf office building in the eastern portion of the project site, two trees (Trees #1039 and #1044, as identified in the Arborist Report prepared for the proposed project by Sierra Nevada Arborists[1]), which are planned for removal as part of the proposed project, would be preserved under the Alternative. One of the trees (Tree #1044) is characterized as a Significant Tree pursuant to Article 12.16 of the Placer County Code. Thus, whereas the proposed project would require the removal of two Significant Trees, the Reduced Intensity Alternative would only require removal of one Significant Tree. Thus, associated impacts would be fewer compared to the proposed project. Mitigation Measure IV-3 from the IS/MND would still be required to mitigate impacts to the single Significant Tree requiring removal. In addition, similar to the proposed project, mitigation would be required for birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. However, ground-disturbing activities would include a reduced overall disturbance area compared to the proposed project and two additional on-site trees would be preserved.

[1] Sierra Nevada Arborists. *Arborist Report and Tree Inventory Summary, Douglas Blvd. and Berg Street Project Site, Granite Bay, County of Placer, California.* August 17, 2015.

Based on the above, impacts to biological resources would be fewer under the Reduced Intensity Alternative compared to the proposed project.

Cultural Resources

Similar to the proposed project, ground-disturbing activities associated with construction of the Reduced Intensity Alternative could potentially disturb previously unknown archeological resources or human remains located on the project site. In addition, while known Tribal Cultural Resources have not been identified on the project site, the potential exists for construction of the Reduced Intensity Alternative to result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource if previously unknown Tribal Cultural Resources are uncovered during grading or other ground-disturbing activities. Thus, Mitigation Measures V-1 and V-2 would still be required. However, because the Reduced Intensity Alternative would include a reduced overall disturbance area, impacts to cultural resources, including Tribal Cultural Resources, could be slightly fewer compared to the proposed project.

Geology and Soils

As noted above, the total disturbance area associated with the Reduced Scale Alternative would be reduced by at least 5,510 sf compared to the proposed project. In addition, the amount of grading necessary for the Reduced Scale Alternative would be expected to be reduced from what is expected for the proposed project. Therefore, impacts related to significant disruptions, displacements, compaction or overcrowding of on-site soils, and/or substantial change in topography or ground surface relief features would be fewer under the Reduced Intensity Alternative. Similarly, impacts related to erosion, unstable geologic units/soils, and expansive soils would be fewer compared to the proposed project. However, mitigation would continue to be required for the Reduced Intensity Alternative in order to ensure such impacts are reduced to less-than-significant levels.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The total building footprint included in the Reduced Intensity Alternative would be reduced by at least 5,510 sf relative to the proposed project. In addition, the size of the on-site parking lot would be reduced from 92 spaces to 61 spaces. Thus, the Alternative would develop the site with a reduced amount of impervious areas compared to the proposed project. Therefore, impacts related to substantially altering the existing drainage pattern of the project site, increasing the rate or amount of surface runoff, and/or creating or contributing runoff water which would include substantial additional sources of polluted water, would be fewer under the Alternative compared to the proposed project. In addition, given that required ground-disturbing activity would be more limited under the Reduced Intensity Alternative, impacts related to soil erosion and loss of topsoil would be fewer relative to the proposed project. Mitigation requiring submittal of a final drainage report, payment of drainage improvement and flood control fees, and implementation of proper BMPs to minimize adverse effects to water quality would still be required for the Alternative.

Noise

Although the Reduced Intensity Alternative would involve disturbance of a smaller area of the project site during construction, similar construction activities would still be required on the remainder of the site. Thus, the impacts identified for the proposed project associated with a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels would still occur under the Reduced Intensity Alternative, and similar mitigation would be required. However, because the Reduced Intensity Alternative would not involve development of Building 4, the potential for ground-mounted HVAC equipment to be placed in that portion of the project site would not occur under the Reduced Intensity Alternative. Consequently, noise associated with such equipment in that area of the site, and the related impacts identified for the proposed project associated with such, would not occur under the Reduced Intensity Alternative.

Overall, the Reduced Intensity Alternative would result in fewer impacts related to noise than the proposed project.

Transportation and Circulation

Although the Reduced Intensity Alternative would involve disturbance of a smaller area of the project site during construction, similar construction activities would still be required on the remainder of the site. Thus, the impacts identified for the proposed project associated with traffic related to construction activities would still occur under the Reduced Intensity Alternative, and similar mitigation would be required. With regard to operational trip generation, the Reduced Intensity Alternative would generate approximately 296 average daily vehicle trips, including 29 trips during the AM peak hour and 47 trips during the PM peak hour. This represents a reduction of 271 daily trips from the 576 daily trips anticipated for the proposed project. Thus, the Reduced Intensity Alternative would result in fewer impacts than the proposed project related to study intersections under the Existing Plus Project Condition.

Overall, the Reduced Intensity Alternative would result in fewer impacts related to transportation and circulation than the proposed project.

7.4 Environmentally Superior Alternative

An EIR is required to identify the environmentally superior alternative from among the range of reasonable alternatives that are evaluated. Section 15126(e)(2) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an environmentally superior alternative be designated and states, “If the environmentally superior alternative is the ‘no project’ alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.”

Designating a superior alternative depends in large part on what environmental effects one considers most important. This EIR does not presume to make this determination; rather, the determinations of which impacts are more important are left to the reader and the decision makers. Generally, the environmentally superior alternative is the one that would result in the fewest environmental impacts as a result of project implementation. However, it should be noted that the environmental considerations are one portion of the factors that must be considered by the public

and the decision makers in deliberations on the proposed project and the alternatives. Other factors of importance include urban design, economics, social factors, and fiscal considerations. In addition, the superior alternative would, ideally, still provide opportunities to achieve the project objectives.

The No Project (No Build) Alternative would not meet any of the project objectives. The Existing Zoning Alternative would likely meet Objective #7 and would partially meet Objectives #3, #4, and #5; however, the Existing Zoning Alternative would not meet Objectives #1, #2, #6, or #8. The Reduced Intensity Alternative would meet Objectives #1 through #7, but would not meet Objective #8.

A comparison of the impacts that would occur under each of the alternatives, as discussed in detail above, to those anticipated for the proposed project is illustrated in Table 7-2 below. As shown in Table 7-2, none of the impacts identified for the proposed project would occur under the No Project (No Build) Alternative. The Existing Zoning Alternative would result in fewer impacts than the proposed project related to four resource areas (aesthetics, hydrology and water quality, noise, and transportation and circulation) and similar impacts related to three resource areas (biological resources, cultural resources, and geology and soils). However, because the Existing Zoning Alternative technically qualifies as a 'no project' alternative and the Reduced Intensity Alternative would be capable of reducing more of the impacts identified for the proposed project than the Existing Zoning Alternative, while still meeting the majority of the project objectives, the Reduced Intensity Alternative would be considered the environmentally superior alternative to the proposed project.

Table 7-2
Comparison of Environmental Impacts for Project Alternatives

Resource Area	Proposed Project	No Project (No Build) Alternative	Existing Zoning Alternative	Reduced Intensity Alternative
Aesthetics	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Fewer	Fewer
Biological Resources	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Similar	Fewer
Cultural Resources	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Similar	Fewer
Geology and Soils	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Similar	Fewer
Hydrology and Water Quality	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Fewer	Fewer
Noise	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Fewer	Fewer
Transportation and Circulation	Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation	None	Fewer	Fewer
	Total Fewer:	**7**	**4**	**7**
	Total Similar:	**0**	**3**	**0**
	Total Greater:	**0**	**0**	**0**

Note: No Impact = “None;” Less than Proposed Project = “Fewer;” Similar to Proposed Project = “Similar;” and Greater than Proposed Project = “Greater.”