

CHAPTER 14

ALTERNATIVES

14.1 Introduction

The primary issues discussed by the public and the Planning Commission and City Council in response to comments on the previously circulated draft EIR concerned two issues: first, the appearance, alignment, wall height and restoration of the verdure walls along Las Virgenes Road (discussed in Aesthetics and Visual Resources (Chapter 12) and in the Response to Comments (Chapter 13) and second, the Las Virgenes Water District objected to the overall design of the project along the southern perimeter adjacent to the District facility.

The final adopted configuration for the design of the project studied in the prior Draft EIR was analyzed and revised on a number of occasions and many of these revisions are presented in the Technical Appendix (Applicant Submittals—Appendix 5). The City Council wanted to further explore alternatives to the project as a result of the public hearings on the development. The Council wanted to expand the range of possible alternative configurations to the project studied in the EIR and therefore additional options were included in this Recirculated Draft document.

For this version of the EIR, planning and environmental staff worked with the applicant to devise an additional alternative (Section 14.7 below, "Project Configuration Compatible with Adjacent Land Uses"). In addition, staff worked with the Applicant's designers to provide specific alternative schematic site plans for all alternatives, including a retail, office and multifamily design option. Combining the submittals in Technical Appendix 5 and the Alternatives considered in this Chapter, about thirteen different project configurations have been studied over the past 14 months.

The California Environmental Quality Act requires that an EIR present reasonable and feasible alternatives to a proposed project, including the "no project" alternative. The purpose of the following discussion is to ascertain whether an "environmentally superior" alternative to the proposed project can be conceived consistent with the overall project objective. Section 15126(d) of CEQA Guidelines recommends that the discussion of alternatives should focus on revisions to a proposed project that can either eliminate a significant effect or reduce the severity of an impact.

The alternatives evaluated for the Entrada Residential Subdivision include the following options:

Alternative 1: The No Project Alternative (including No Project / No Build and No Project with Build out to Existing Land Use designations)

Alternative 2: A Multi-Family Housing Alternative Suitable for Market rate, Senior or Mixed Market/Affordable and Market Rate Senior Housing

Alternative 3: Commercial Office or Small Retail Center Alternative

Alternative 4: Project Configuration Compatible with Adjacent Land Uses (40 Lots with incorporation of mitigation recommended by the Las Virgenes Water District)

Alternative 5: Estate Lot Alternative (13 Estate Lots on Large Pads)

14.2 Legal Background

An EIR must describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project, or to its location, that could feasibly attain the project's basic objectives. The document must include an evaluation of the comparative merits of each alternative (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126, subd.(d); section 21100, subd.(d).) The discussion must focus on alternatives capable of either eliminating any significant adverse environmental effects or reducing them to a level of insignificance, even if such alternatives would be costly or to some degree would impede the project's objectives (Guidelines, section 15126, subd.(d)(3).)

If an alternative would cause one or more significant effects in addition to those that the project itself would cause, the adverse effects of alternatives must be discussed, but in less detail than is required for impacts caused by the project (Guidelines, section 15126, subd.(d)(4).) Court cases have clarified that the discussion of alternatives need not be exhaustive and the requirement to discuss alternatives is subject to the test of reasonableness. The statute does not demand discussion of what is not realistically possible given the limitation of time, energy, and funds (Residents Ad Hoc Stadium Committee v. Board of Trustees). In Village Laguna of Laguna Beach v. Board of Supervisors, the court noted that "there are literally thousands of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project...the key issue is whether the selection and discussion of alternatives fosters informed decision-making and informed public participation. An EIR need not consider an alternative whose effects cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose

implementation is remote and speculative (emphasis added)." (Guidelines, section 15126, subd.(d)(5).) In summary, reasonable alternatives must be studied with a "sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information to allow them to intelligently take account of [the alternative's] environmental consequences." (San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society, Inc. v. County of San Bernardino).

One of the alternatives analyzed must be the so-called "No Project Alternative." It must "describe what condition or program preceded the project." (County of Inyo v. City of Los Angeles). The No Project Alternative must summarize the environmental consequences of not permitting future development under the proposed Plan. This alternative must address a condition which results in no further development. In addition, the alternatives discussed in this document include the more realistic "No Project" option--that is, buildout under existing land use designations. If the No Project alternative is environmentally superior to all others, the EIR must also identify which of the other alternatives causes the least environmental damage. (Guidelines, section 15126, subd.(d)(2).)

14.3 Summary of Significant Project Specific and Cumulative Impacts

The specific environmental impacts associated with implementation of the project can be segmented into population dependent and non-population dependent impacts. Population dependent impacts include effects on transportation circulation, public and municipal services, air quality and noise. Non-population dependent impacts would occur regardless of proposed densities or types of land use; these impact categories include cultural resources, biological resources, community aesthetics and visual resources, geologic hazards, water quality/hydrology, and hazardous materials related problems.

The potential environmental impacts of the project have been discussed in detail in the individual chapters in the EIR and a summary table has been provided in Chapter 2 which links each significant impact and the mitigation measures required to offset these impacts to acceptable levels. For the purposes of comparing the impacts of the project alternatives, the following environmental impact categories were considered:

1. *Land Use and Planning (Class I: potentially significant unless Alternative 4 is adopted as the project)*
2. *Geologic and Seismic Impacts (Class II)*
3. *Air Quality Impacts (Class II)*
4. *Drainage, Hydrology, and Flood Control (Class II)*
5. *Biological Resources (Class II)*

6. *Noise (Class II)*
7. *Transportation and Circulation (Class II)*
8. *Aesthetics/Visual Resources (Class I: potentially significant unless Alternative 4 is adopted as the project)*
9. *Public Services Impacts (Class II)*

In developing and analyzing each of the project alternatives, fiscal constraints, environmental resources, known significant effects arising from the proposed project configuration, and design constraints implicit in the existing land use designations were all taken into account. An alternative by definition is supposed to represent an improvement in the project, usually measured by a proposal that reduces one or more significant impacts to less than significant levels.

14.4 Alternative 1: No Project

The "No Project" alternative which must be analyzed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is defined for this EIR to include two options: (1) an alternative which results in no development at all and (2) an alternative that involves no amendments to the existing plan designations (no General Plan Amendment/Zone Change and related entitlements) and buildout to present zoning and general plan designations. The environmental consequences of these alternatives, both of which are considered unlikely long-term outcomes for the property, are described in the following summary.

No Project Alternative 1

Option 1: No Project/No Build (No Future Development on the Property)

The assumption that no development will occur at all within the property boundary is unlikely. There is a reasonable probability that investment will be made in the property to convert at least part of it to a residential or commercial use in the near future. There are several reasons supporting this assumption. For example, the subject site is located in close proximity to the US 101 Freeway (a major transportation corridor), the subject site is surrounded by preserved open space, the subject site is in close proximity to commercial uses and public recreational facilities (such as City parks, Malibu Creek State Park, and the Santa Monica Mountains), and the subject site is adjacent to existing utility lines designed to serve the surrounding commercial and residential uses.

Therefore, the no-project/no build alternative is considered a short-term outcome because of the site's potential economic value and because the City's General Plan, Gateway Plan, and Corridor

Plan for Las Virgenes Road, all indicate that private development of this parcel was suitable and appropriate. It was not designated either for Institutional Uses (such as the Water District) nor for Open Space. Consistent with the City's adopted land use designations, the applicant purchased the property and has, for some months now, been pursuing entitlements to build a project that is consistent both with the City's general development trend in this area (to convert multi-family sites to single family type projects) and with the stated public concern that single-family housing, rather than multi-family or office/institutional uses, be placed on this property.

To accomplish the single-family development goal, a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change are necessary. To implement a multi-family residential project, no such amendments are necessary, but the surrounding community, particularly during the Shea-Pazar hearings, clearly indicated an aversion to this type of housing in this corridor. In response, the Council did not approve multi-family housing on the adjacent Shea-Pazar site but instead approved a single family product type nearly identical in concept to what has been presented in the Standard Pacific Application.. The applicant is willing to build either of these options.

Option 2: No Project and Build out of the Proposed Gateway and Las Virgenes Corridor Plan Roadway Improvements without Private Development on the Parcel Under this scenario, the project would not be developed with any type of land use and the majority of the property would be acquired to implement the proposed road widening and safety improvements outlined in the Gateway Master Plan and Las Virgenes Corridor Plan. To accomplish this objective, the following precedent steps would need to occur:

- 1. The City would need to acquire the needed right-of-way to construct the improvements along this corridor using a 2:1 slope concept which would minimize the use of any wall retaining features but instead create a significant fill slope and landscape maintenance area;*
- 2. The City would need to compensate the owner for this acquisition. The acquisition would likely be a "full take" of both right of way and remaining development rights because the remnant parcel once the right of way is acquired would not likely be able to be developed consistent with the City's Development Code and the remnant would be of questionable dimension for the applicant to make reasonable economic use of the property. Also, if the remnant was to be used, additional property would be needed to provide for ramping through the 2:1 slope needed to build out the road bed consistent with the General Plan and Corridor Plan; and*
- 3. Finally, the City would need to acquire and construct this improvement completely with resources in the General Fund since this improvement was always presumed to be a developer related burden and is not programmed in the current Lost Hills B and T District schedule of improvements.*

A concept road-widening plan was included and adopted by the City of Calabasas as part of the Las Virgenes Road Corridor Design Plan and the proposed widening to be funded by the applicant consistent with the approval of the project also implements the overall schematic of improvements set forth in the General Plan for this reach of Las Virgenes. Therefore, while this alternative is reasonable, whether it is feasible, can be funded by the City, or would result in costs much in excess of value (due to the need to acquire the property, its development rights, and then construct all improvements rather than accomplishing this same work through dedication requirements and private funding) would likely result in a condition of no improvements or improvement long in the future. The construction and build out of this alignment is an expensive endeavor without government-private development cooperation. If the property remains undeveloped, the City of Calabasas would eventually be responsible for funding and constructing the ultimate road improvements.

Obviously, if no development occurs, then none of the anticipated impacts described in this EIR would occur as predicted. **Therefore, a more likely no project alternative is discussed below.**

No Project Alternative 2: Buildout to the Existing General Plan and Land Use Designations

Under the existing Business Limited Intensity/Commercial Limited land use and zoning designations, the 21-acre property could be developed with a variety of commercial and more limited residential and specialty uses. Permitted specialty and residential uses include a recycling center, churches/places of worship, outdoor commercial recreation, dance studios, multi-family housing, senior housing, and residential accessory uses and structures. Commercial uses such as commercial office and commercial retail are conditionally permitted. Although traditional single-family residential development is not permitted under the current zoning designation, senior and multi-family residential development is also allowed subject to approval of a Conditional Use Permit. Consequently, it is likely that a commercial or residential development of equal or greater magnitude than the currently proposed project could eventually be constructed, even if a no project scenario is adopted at this time through denying the present residential application, an amended application, or a multi-family project option.

Another related potential option under this alternative would be that if the property is again placed on the open market, it could be purchased by the Water District. Because the District is not directly subject to the City's Land Use Plan designations or to the City's Development Code, if acquired either by the Water District or School District, the City would lose control over the

development and build out of the parcel since both of these agencies are largely exempt from City authority through pre-emption provided in the Government Code.

If this occurred, either District would likely place an institutional use on the property, conduct CEQA review independent of the City, and place facilities at this location related to their primary public service goals. If the Water District were to purchase the property, there is some possibility that it would be, at least for a period of time, retained in open space. However, unless placed in joint ownership with another agency and burdened with a Conservation Easement or Open Space Easement, nothing would preclude this acquisition from eventually becoming a developed facility.

14.5 Alternative 2: Multi-Family Residential Development

Because the Council, or at least some members of the Council, appeared to object to the applicant's request to amend the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance to develop a project consistent with the adjacent Shea-Pazar form of residential housing, the applicant seriously considered a multi-family development option.

This alternative, as schematically presented in this chapter, is acceptable, in broad terms, to the applicant (Standard Pacific Homes), subject to better definition from the Council about what type of housing would be provided. For this option to be acceptable to the applicant, the project would have to be largely market rate, oriented to the general demographic market or to the general market and seniors. Some affordable units could also be constructed by use of a density bonus procedure as permitted under state law and the City's Development Code and General Plan.

This project alternative as presently proposed would be designed to provide for the construction of 96 for-sale market rate condominium units averaging about 1300 square feet each resulting in a total building square footage of 124,800 square feet gross building area (with a smaller net usable area) which would be similar to the habitable space in the proposed 40-unit single family residential project.

Figure 14-1: Multi-Family Residential Alternative

Under this alternative, the approximately 124,800 square feet of livable space would be distributed among 96-units, providing a mix of tenancies and floor plans ranging from one to three bedroom homes, with unit size varying according to number of bedroom. .

The applicant and the planning and environmental staff conceived a basic development schematic for this proposal which is illustrated in Figure 14-1. Inspection of this illustration provides a basic outline of the features of this option which include:

1. Preservation of both of the large hillsides intervening between this parcel and the adjacent Water District property to the south;
2. Construction of required frontage improvements using a three tier wall system similar to the project as proposed—however, this wall system would be shorter in length and would begin slightly further north than the present wall design;
3. The 96 units would require both at-grade and tuck-under parking as illustrated on the Multi-family Schematic site plan (Figure 14-1);
4. The entire perimeter of the project under this option would be surrounded by tiered or slope-laid verdera or similar retaining walls—these walls are estimated to achieve heights of about 30 feet;
5. The proposed structures in this smaller, reduced footprint would be three stories in size with gradually stepping back designs (using the General Plan set-back step-back procedure at a ratio to be negotiated with the City); and
6. These units would be consolidated into four basic 24-unit complexes, each with its own designated tuck-under parking.

This more vertical design, with heights from 35 to 40 feet, would reduce the total building footprint's spatial distribution over the sight, enabling greater preservation of existing hillsides to the east and to the south. This option provides a very substantial buffer between the project and the Water District. The approval of this project would require Planning Commission review and approval only and would not make necessary a General Plan Amendment or Zone Change. This option is administratively simpler for both the City and the applicant and is generally acceptable to the applicant as a development form if the City Council is inclined to support such a project. A reduction in building area could provide an opportunity to increase setbacks from the existing LVMWD site, thereby reducing potential land use compatibility issues.

Environmental Consequences of the Alternative

Land Use and Planning

A multi-family residential alternative could be approved under the City's current General Plan/Zoning Designation. A multi-family residential use would also be compatible with adjacent land uses (which include attached and detached residential uses). The primary benefit associated with this alternative is a reduced grading footprint created by utilizing a three story building design with smaller individual residences and subterranean parking. This would allow the project applicant to utilize the same primary entrance, while increasing the separation between the LVMWD facilities. The potential quality of life impacts from LVMWD activities on future residents could be reduced under this alternative. This alternative eliminates nearly all of the objections to the present project expressed by the Water District staff. However, prior public hearings on nearby parcels where this type of housing stock has been proposed, has been strongly opposed by neighboring communities. If was for this reason, and as a consequence of meeting with adjacent communities, that the housing developer originally decided to embark on the complexities of a General Plan Amendment and Rezone, which are otherwise unnecessary to implement this option. This alternative requires only a Conditional Use Permit, Site Plan Review, and Oak Tree Permit. When compared to the proposed project, no additional land use related impacts or approval procedures or amendments would be required. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Geology and Seismic Impacts

This alternative would likely reduce the total grading required to establish building pads and the vehicle access infrastructure. However, remedial grading may still be required based on existing geologic conditions identified by applicant's geotechnical consultant. Cut and fill slopes would still be needed to create enough flat area for construction of a three-story multi-family residential project, although the total area dedicated to cut and fill slope construction is assumed to be decreased. Geologic and seismic effects on this proposed alternative should still be considered potentially significant, but subject to effective mitigation. When compared to the proposed project, environmental impacts caused by geologic and seismic conditions inherent to the area are considered proportional. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Air Quality

Air quality impacts associated with construction of a multi-family development would remain less than significant with specific mitigation measures. The total quantity of construction related air emissions could conceivably be reduced because the total grading quantities would be less when compared to the proposed single-family development. Reduced grading quantities could reduce the total time of construction and reduce the concentration of pollutants generated by construction equipment. However, operational air quality impacts would be incrementally increased because of an increase in the total number of units. A 96 unit project would generate 645 Average Daily Trips, 49 AM and 60 PM peak hour trips. A screening analysis was done to determine if this level of increase would exceed present air quality thresholds and this analysis determined that while more operational impacts would occur than with the project as proposed, the impacts would remain insignificant.

An increase in the total number of units would generate additional vehicle trips entering and exiting the site each day. Moreover, this alternative would likely increase the number of stationary air emission sources (such as air conditioning/heating units and fireplaces). Air quality impacts created by operational sources would likely be increased when compared to the proposed project. Similar to the proposed single-family residential project, pollutant emissions from construction and operation of a multi-family land use could be reduced to less than significant levels with incorporation of feasible mitigation. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Drainage, Hydrology and Flood Control

This multi-family alternative would introduce impervious surfaces and involve remedial site grading. However, the associated reduction in total building area would reduce the quantity of impervious surfaces when compared to the proposed project. Best management practices would still be required to reduce the potential degradation of surface water quality in Las Virgenes Creek. If proper best management practices are not developed and installed prior to site grading and incorporated into the overall project design, significant impacts could occur.

The magnitude of such impacts could be less than the impacts associated with the proposed development because a larger natural area, or an increase in natural landscaping would reduce overland flow velocities, thereby decreasing erosion and increasing infiltration and percolation on-

site. Project specific and cumulative water quality impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels and would decrease compared to the project as proposed (due to the smaller development footprint) All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Biological Resources

This alternative would marginally reduce impacts to the substantial population of Valley Needlegrass Grassland located on the southern portions of the subject site. This native plant community is considered threatened by the California Department of Fish and Game. Under this alternative, a significant proportion (approximately 60-70%) of Valley Needlegrass Grassland proposed for removal could be saved. While some mitigation would still be required, the total impact would be slightly reduced under this alternative since a portion of this plant community is present on the two knolls separating the project area from the Water District and these two knolls would be preserved.

Only two oak trees would be affected under the proposed single-family development. This multi-family alternative could salvage the existing oak tree proposed for removal in the southwestern portion of the site and likely reduce encroachment into the protected zone of a Heritage oak tree located in the southeastern portion of the site. Oak tree impacts would be less than significant with this project alternative. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply in concept and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Noise

Short-term construction noise generation levels would be proportional to the proposed project. Similar types and numbers of construction equipment would be utilized at the subject site; therefore construction noise levels would not be noticeably reduced. Noise impacts would still be considered less than significant after mitigation. The City's standard restrictions applicable to the operation of construction equipment near sensitive noise receptors would apply to this alternative.

Due to the increase in total number of residential units, project related traffic volumes would be higher, resulting in noise level increases along Las Virgenes Road. However, the associated increase in traffic associated with the differential between the single and multifamily projects are not expected to generate roadway noise significantly above noise levels estimated for the proposed project. Indeed, the change would not be perceptible. The potential audible increase in

traffic noise attributed to this alternative would be less than significant when compared to the proposed project. Nevertheless, existing noise levels measured along the western portion of the subject site currently exceed the City's 65-decibel noise threshold. Therefore, most mitigation measures recommended for the proposed project would apply to this alternative.

The impact of noise generated by the LVMWD facility and its affect on residential development could be very substantially reduced if the greater setbacks included in the design of this alternative are incorporated into the design (compared to the present application). Increased separation between the Water District equipment yards combined with a more enclosed development product (i.e. reduced yard areas, reduced numbers of windows) and the opportunity for additional landscaping and wall systems, would attenuate noise more successfully than the proposed 40-unit single-family proposal. It is very doubtful if the areas of concern that the Water District has expressed about the project as proposed (noise generation from the District impacting quality of life, inadequate land use separation, visibility of District facilities from adjacent homes, the safety of children or young adults breaking and entering the District's enclosure, conflicts with expanded District use in the future, etc.) would apply to this alternative since a very substantial topographic barrier would exist between the project and the District's existing and future facilities.

Transportation and Circulation

This project alternative will generate additional traffic. Based on a cursory analysis of the project by the consulting traffic engineers for the City, a 42 % increase in the total number of units would proportionally increase traffic along Las Virgenes Road. The trip generation calculations for this alternative suggest that the condominium project would generate 645 Average Daily Trips, 49 AM and 60 PM peak hour and 262 average daily trips. For this reason, because of increased traffic, this alternative would likely result in some significant impacts at the Las Virgenes Road/Highway 101 Northbound Ramps in the AM peak hour and southbound ramps in the PM peak hour. The number of trips added would likely cause an exceedence of the City's threshold of a 0.01 increment to the Volume:Capacity ratio at any intersection. Consequently, traffic related environmental effects under this alternative could be potentially significant. Substantial public infrastructure improvements along the project frontage would still be required. These physical improvements combined with a pro-rata contribution to the City's Traffic Improvement Fund to offset cumulative traffic impacts would be needed to reduce traffic impacts to less than significant levels.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Although this project alternative could reduce the total building envelope, consequently reducing the total area proposed for landform modification, the total height of the residential structure(s) would likely be increased from a two-story single-family product to a three story multi-family product. This height increase may increase the visibility of structures from certain vantage points within the Las Virgenes Road, the US 101 Scenic Corridors and from neighborhoods to the west of the project. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

A reduction in total grading quantities would lessen the percentage of landform modification. As a result, this alternative could be built utilizing a smaller portion of the natural hillside environment. Impacts on regional aesthetics and visual resources created during the construction of cut and fill slopes would be reduced. However, some remedial grading would still be required. The resulting cut and fill slopes would likely still be partially visible from vantage points along the US 101 Freeway and other scenic vantage points within the Las Virgenes Valley. Mitigation measures consisting of contour grading, and effective slope planting will still be required to reduce visual impacts to less than significant levels.

Similar to the proposed project, this multi-family alternative would introduce a new source of light and glare into the area. However, overall lighting impacts could be less than expected compared to the proposed project since the overall number of structures would be reduced and the development footprint would be decreased to preserve more natural open space near light-sensitive uses. Nevertheless, any type of development adjacent to the existing open space would require mitigation measures designed to reduce light and glare impacts. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Public Services

This alternative would result in a 42 % increase in the number residential units compared to the proposed project. Consequently, future demands on public services, including fire protection, police protection, water, wastewater, schools, and solid waste would be increased proportionally. This increase, at least on the school district, could be ameliorated somewhat by orienting the project to senior housing. If 50% of the project housing units were senior and 50% were market

rate, impacts to public schools would be substantially reduced but still are likely to exceed the 40 unit residential project's impacts.

The alternative project would use approximately 10,588 more gallons of water per day when compared to the proposed project and would generate about 1,420 more gallons of wastewater. When compared to the proposed project, water/sewer usage would be greater, thus requiring the incorporation of standard water conservation mitigation measures.

The increase in total number of units would incrementally increase student population at already overcrowded local public schools. Similar to the proposed project, payment of school impact fees would be required to offset impacts to local primary and secondary schools.

The alternative would increase service demand on the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Correspondence received from the Fire Department indicates that additional manpower, equipment and facilities are needed in the area now. Therefore, impacts on fire service are considered potentially significant. All mitigation measures applicable to the proposed project would apply to reduce impacts to less than significant levels.

The presence of a multi-family residential development on-site would incrementally increase the number of calls to the local Sheriff's Substation. This increase would be similar to but slightly more than the proposed project due to the increase in overall site population. This is considered a less than significant impact, with appropriate mitigation. All mitigation measures recommended for the proposed project would apply.

This alternative would increase solid waste generation when compared to the proposed project. Overall solid waste generation for this alternative would increase 845 pounds per day (from approximately 1,251 lbs/day to 2,096 lbs/day) when compared to the proposed project. Because the current Calabasas Landfill trash acceptance figures are well below the facility maximum, this increase is less than significant. Nevertheless, the project would be required to incorporate all City of Calabasas source reduction programs currently in use by the local trash haulers.

All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

14.6 Alternative 3: Commercial Office or Small Retail Center Development

Because the Council, or at least some members of the Council, appeared to object to the applicant's request to amend the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance to develop a project consistent with the adjacent Shea-Pazar form of residential housing, the Council directed that all potential uses currently permitted be evaluated as an alternative to the project. CEQA requires that a document identify at least one alternative that reduces impacts compared to the project but in a development form that is generally acceptable to the applicant or is consistent with the overall development goals of the applicant. This alternative, in its form as schematically presented in this chapter, is **not** acceptable, in broad terms, to the applicant (Standard Pacific Homes). The applicant has been clear from the outset that their intended use of the project, consistent with the Land Use Designations in the General Plan, was a residential project, subject to better definition from the Council about what type of housing should be provided. A retail or commercial office option is not acceptable to the applicant. Nor would a small retail center likely succeed at this location due to lack of sufficient integration with other nearby retail areas.

The community will recall that the adjacent property to the north had an approved retail center application which was ultimately not funded for a variety of reasons. Now that the Albertson's Center has been constructed and partially occupied, it is evident that ample retail centers are present in this corridor. Isolated small retail centers can produce blight (as they have in other parts of the City) and disinvestment. Therefore, although permitted by the Development Code, planning staff would not encourage the serious consideration of a "strip mall and parking field" type center at this location. The existence of vacancies at existing retail centers on the west side of the City testifies to an absence of market demand for this type of use.

A commercial "garden" office alternative is not consistent with the project objectives. However, because a commercial office project is a permitted use of the subject site if City decision makers reject the requested residential use, the environmental consequences of a 100,000 square-foot commercial office building were considered in this alternatives analysis. Garden offices, unlike strip centers, are in high demand and an office use, particularly if properly laid out and detailed, could be successful at this location economically and could potentially meet an ever-expanding demand for small, entrepreneurial businesses. A similar small garden office center with an array of buildings in Agoura presently being considered by the Planning Commission, has been fully pre-leased with general commitments by a number of small professional businesses. Therefore, development of a commercial office on this site is considered a viable option economically. Figure 14-2 presents a schematic of the footprint for either a small office complex or retail center.

For the purposes of this study, to evaluate the “worst case impacts” of such a use, the proposed commercial center was defined as containing a 38,500 square foot retail building footprint (unsegmented) with a 3,600 square foot fast-food or mid quality sit down type use.

It is important to note, examining the footprint of this design as shown in Figure 14-2, like the previously multi-family design, this alternative would require all of the following physical improvements to the site and retained attributes of topography:

1. Preservation of both of the large hillsides intervening between this parcel and the adjacent Water District property to the south;
2. Construction of required frontage improvements using a three tier wall system similar to the project as proposed—however, this wall system would be shorter in length and would begin slightly further north than the present wall design;
3. The commercial or retail buildings would require an expansive field of parking in front of the main building—if garden offices were created rather than a retail center, it is possible parking could be underground if this is determined to be economically feasible for the land’s carrying capacity;
4. The entire perimeter of the project under this option would be surrounded by tiered or slope-laid verdera or similar retaining walls—these walls are estimated to achieve heights of about 30 feet;
5. The proposed structures in this smaller, reduced footprint would be two stories in size with gradually stepping back designs (using the General Plan set-back step-back procedure at a ratio to be negotiated with the City); and
6. These uses would likely be consolidated into two basic complexes for the retail center and up to four units if designed as a small scale commercial garden office center, each building cluster in the campus with its own designated tuck under parking.

Environmental Consequences of the Alternative

Land Use and Planning

A commercial office development or retail center could be approved under the City’s current General Plan/Zoning Designation. While a commercial office use would be most compatible with the adjacent LVMWD facility, a commercial office use would be less compatible with the surrounding residential uses (which include attached and detached residential uses, a church or a school) primarily because of the increased traffic. The primary benefit from a land use compatibility standpoint is the “temporary” occupation typical of a commercial office building. For example, office employees would only occupy the building during regular business hours and thus would not be affected by water district activities during non-business hours (from 7:00 pm to 7:00 am).

Figure 14-2: Commercial or Retail Alternative

A commercial office use would generate much more peak hour traffic than a residential alternative (see the analysis below) and would likely require increased site modification due to the City's vehicle parking requirements. Therefore, a commercial office use may be less compatible with the surrounding residential uses. It may be possible to design the commercial office uses to be consistent with basic residential product cladding and architectural standards. There are several such successful garden office buildings in the Agoura Hills-Thousand Oaks commercial corridor which could serve as models for this type of use. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Geology and Seismic Impacts

This alternative would likely increase site grading quantities. Construction of an adequate vehicle parking area would likely increase the need for landform modification. As a result, remedial grading would be required based on existing geologic conditions identified by applicant's geotechnical consultant. More cut and fill slopes would likely be needed to create a building area large enough for construction of a three-story commercial office with the required surface parking. Geologic and seismic effects on this proposed alternative should still be considered potentially significant, but subject to effective mitigation. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Air Quality

Air quality impacts associated with construction of a commercial office or retail office development would remain less than significant with specific mitigation measures. When compared to the proposed residential project, the total quantity of construction related air emissions would be increased because additional on-site grading would require additional construction time and thus extend the total time of operation associated with pollutant emitting construction equipment. Therefore, construction related air quality impacts are considered more significant when compared to a residential alternative. All mitigation measures designed to reduce construction related pollutant emissions would apply to this commercial office alternative.

Operational emissions would be increased proportionally by additional vehicle trips generated by a commercial office or retail use. The total number of vehicle trips entering and exiting the site each day would be increased substantially when compared to a residential alternative (see the traffic analysis below). Consequently, air quality impacts for either an office or retail alternative would be increased compared to the proposed residential project. All mitigation measures

designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Drainage, Hydrology and Flood Control

This commercial office alternative would likely introduce additional impervious surfaces (vehicle parking lots) and involve additional remedial site grading. Both factors would contribute to potential degradation of surface water quality in Las Virgenes Creek if proper best management practices are not developed and incorporated into the site grading program and the project's associated drainage facilities. Water quality impacts would likely be increased when compared to the proposed project and the multi-family alternative due to increases in impervious surfaces and grading quantities. Additional mitigation measures would be required to ensure that project specific and cumulative water quality impacts are reduced to less than significant levels.

Biological Resources

This alternative would marginally reduce impacts to the substantial population of Valley Needlegrass Grassland located on the southern portions of the subject site. This native plant community is considered threatened by the California Department of Fish and Game. Under this alternative, a significant proportion (approximately 60-70%) of Valley Needlegrass Grassland proposed for removal could be saved. While some mitigation would still be required, the total impact would be slightly reduced under this alternative since a portion of this plant community is present on the two knolls separating the project area from the Water District and these two knolls would be preserved.

Only two oak trees would be affected under the proposed single-family development. This multi-family alternative could salvage the existing oak tree proposed for removal in the southwestern portion of the site and likely reduce encroachment into the protected zone of a Heritage oak tree located in the southeastern portion of the site. Oak tree impacts would be less than significant with this project alternative. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply in concept and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Noise

Short-term construction noise generation levels would be similar when compared to the proposed project. Similar types of construction equipment would be utilized at similar locations; therefore construction noise levels would not be noticeably reduced. Noise impacts would still be

considered significant but subject to effective mitigation. The City's standard restrictions applicable to the operation of construction equipment near sensitive noise receptors would apply to this alternative.

Due to the change in land use, total project related traffic volumes would be higher, resulting in increased noise along Las Virgenes Road. The associated increase in traffic is not expected to generate roadway noise significantly above noise levels estimated for the proposed project. The potential increase in traffic noise attributed to a commercial office or retail alternative would be similar to or greater than the anticipated noise impacts associated with the proposed residential use. Therefore, all mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

The impact of noise generated by the LVMWD facility and its effect on a commercial office use will be reduced. An office project would not be occupied during non-business hours. Therefore, after hours operation of the LVMWD facility and the associated noise would not affect business utilizing a commercial office building. Therefore, LVMWD noise impacts on a commercial office building are considered less than significant.

Transportation and Circulation

Either of these project alternatives will generate additional traffic. A change in land use from residential to commercial would significantly increase traffic along Las Virgenes Road. Using the worst case analysis projected above (38,000 square feet of retail and 3,600 square feet of fast food or mid range sit down restaurant traffic), this alternative would generate as many as 2000 Average Daily Trips with 129 AM and 138 PM peak hour trips. This level of traffic generation would impact the Las Virgenes interchange ramps in the AM peak hour, southbound ramps in the PM peak hour and cumulative results would also occur at both of these locations. In line traffic, delays with school traffic flows and overlap with current school peak hours would be sufficient, in the opinion of staff, to result in a rejection of either of these alternatives for this site. Mainline traffic would also increase, as would delays at cross streets, both signalized and unsignalized, in the corridor.

Consequently, traffic related environmental effects under this alternative could be potentially significant. Therefore, substantial public infrastructure improvements along the project frontage combined with a pro-rata contribution to the City's Traffic Improvement Fund to offset cumulative traffic impacts would be needed to reduce traffic impacts to less than significant levels. Even with these efforts, it is likely the Council would need to make a statement of over-riding considerations to approve either type of project given the substantial impacts to the existing seriously constrained traffic conditions along Las Virgenes Road at peak hours.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

A commercial office or retail project at a similar square footage to the project as proposed (approximately 100,000 square feet) would likely require the construction of additional cut and fill slopes to create flat building pads and an associated vehicle parking lot. Moreover, the height of a commercial office structure would likely rise 35 feet above finished grade and include three stories. This height increase when compared to a residential single-family product may increase structure visibility from certain vantage points within the Las Virgenes Road and the US 101 Scenic Corridors. Therefore, from a visual impact perspective, any commercial office or retail project would result in more significant environmental effects than the project as proposed or as mitigated under Alternative 4 discussed below. All mitigation measures developed to reduce visual and aesthetic impacts to less than significant levels would apply. And, even with these efforts, it is likely the Council would need to make over-riding considerations to approve either type of project given the substantial impacts to the view shed.

Similar to the proposed project, this project alternative would introduce a new source of light and glare into the area. Overall lighting impacts would be similar when compared to the proposed project since the intensity and distribution of lighting associated with a commercial development usually exceeds lighting programs for single-family uses. Therefore, light and glare impacts related to this project alternative are considered significant but subject to effective mitigation. All mitigation measures applicable to the proposed project would apply to this alternative.

Public Services

Commercial office and retail facilities and the associated landscaping generally consume less water than typical residential single-family uses. Based on water demand factors developed by the LVMWD, a commercial office use would use less water when comparing per household demand factors with commercial development water demand factors. Consequently, future demands on public services, including water and wastewater would be less than significant.

Demands on other public services, such as police and fire service, would be lessened because there would be fewer structures associated with a commercial office or retail development. However, the County Fire Department and the County Sheriff's Department has taken the position that any new development in the area further impacts Fire Department and Sheriff response times due to insufficient staffing. Therefore, the payment of developer impact fees would adequately offset these impacts.

A commercial office or retail project would not directly increase student population at local public schools. However, if significant numbers of employees are forced to relocate to the area for the purposes of occupying a commercial office building, this could potentially create significant new demands on the Las Virgenes Unified School district. Similar to the proposed project, payment of school impact fees would be required to offset impacts to local primary and secondary schools.

A commercial office or retail development would not substantially increase solid waste generation when compared to the proposed project. Moreover, because Calabasas Landfill average trash acceptance quantities are well below the facility maximum, any small increases in solid waste disposal is considered less than significant. A commercial office alternative would still be required to provide recycling opportunities consistent with the City's diversion strategies. Impacts to solid waste disposal are considered less than significant under this alternative. For all public service impacts, nonetheless, all mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

14.7 Alternative 4: Forty (40) Unit Residential Project Configuration Compatible with Adjacent Land Uses

This alternative, in its form as schematically presented in this chapter, is acceptable, in broad terms, to the applicant (Standard Pacific Homes), subject to better definition from the Council about what types of additional mitigation measures may be required to approve this modified project alternative. For this option to be acceptable to the applicant, the project would have to meet the basic definition of its title, it must be determined to be generally consistent with the adjacent land uses to the south (the Water District). According to the applicant, most of the features of this alternative were designed to be consistent with recommendations made by the Water District. So, in a sense, this alternative is one designed almost exclusively to address the concerns of this agency. The applicant's ability to be supportive of this option is contingent of course on the District determining that the majority of their concerns have been met with this redesign. This alternative still requires a rezone under the City's Development Code procedures and a General Plan Amendment.

This project alternative as presently proposed would be designed to provide for the construction of 40 single family dwellings consistent with the project description. The layout of these units is presently just schematic, has not been reviewed and approved by the Fire Department, and has

not been through detailed design review or consideration by the City's Development Review Committee or Architectural Review Panel. However, the basic layout of the project, subject to resolving engineering and design issues, is very similar to the project as proposed with several exceptions: various lots have been rotated to enable a redesign of the street system, a wall and berm system has been conceived, as well as a setback, from the adjacent Water District property, and to avoid impacts to the southernmost portion of the project associated with wall construction, the verdura wall system has been relocated a short distance to the north to enable the preservation of a portion of the landform separating the project from the District. Under this alternative, the approximately 125,000 square feet of livable space would be distributed among 40 residential units to be held in title and with the basic design features outlined in the project description. The applicant and the Planning and Environmental Staff conceived a basic development schematic for this proposal which is illustrated in Figure 14- 3.

Inspection of this illustration provides a basic outline of the features of this option which include:

1. Preservation of both of the large hillsides intervening between this parcel and the adjacent Water District property to the south is not possible but a substantial buffer, setback, retaining wall, and contour graded saddle would be reconstructed along the entire southern boundary of the property;
2. Construction of required frontage improvements using a three tier wall system similar to the project as proposed—however, this wall system would be shorter in length and would begin slightly further north than the present wall design;
3. The 40 units would require only at-grade parking as illustrated on the design schematic site plan (Figure 14-3);
4. The entire perimeter of the project under this option would not be surrounded by tiered or slope-laid verdera or similar retaining walls—the wall systems would be limited to the area along the street frontage and are still estimated to achieve heights of about 30 feet;
5. The proposed structures in this smaller, reduced footprint for development would be one and two story, consistent with the present application, with gradually stepping back designs (using the General Plan set-back step-back procedure at a ratio to be negotiated with the City) along the street system
6. The proposed recreation area for the project would need to be eliminated to make room for the setback system proposed along the southern perimeter; and
7. The highly visible landform behind the project would be reconstructed, revegetated and in this way retained. Any development on the subject property will require some modification to this structure and the small surface landslide it contains.

Figure 14-3: 40 Unit Single Family Residential Alternative (Modified Design)

This option provides a modest buffer between the project and the Water District but this buffer, together with the planned perimeter wall and other mitigation, should reduce noise related conflicts between the two uses to acceptable levels. The approval of this project would require both Planning Commission and City Council review and approval and would make necessary a General Plan Amendment or Zone Change. The slight reduction in building area and elimination of the recreation area as well as modification of the street system for the project provides an opportunity to increase setbacks from the existing LVMWD site, thereby reducing potential land use compatibility issues.

Environmental Consequences of the Alternative

Land Use and Planning

A revised single-family residential alternative could not be approved under the City's current General Plan/Zoning Designation and therefore all of the land use issues raised in this EIR relative to the project as proposed would apply to this option, with the caveat that the design of the project would minimize conflicts with the adjacent Water District property. The primary benefits associated with this alternative are a slightly reduced grading footprint created by providing a setback from the Water District property, construction of slightly smaller individual residences, revisions to the layout of the property and substitution of recreational facilities for buffer areas between this project and the adjacent Water District.

The design of this alternative has been predicted on the theory that it is possible to meet the primary concerns of the Water District, short of a long term indemnification agreement between the parties, by redesign of the project. This design alternative would allow the project applicant to generally utilize the same primary entrance, while increasing the separation between the LVMWD facilities. This location would still be signalized as previously proposed. The potential quality of life impacts from LVMWD activities on future residents could be reduced under this alternative. This alternative eliminates nearly all of the objections to the present project expressed by the Water District staff.

A General Plan Amendment and Rezone, which are necessary to implement this option, require the same findings as the project as proposed. This alternative also requires a Conditional Use Permit, Site Plan Review, and Oak Tree Permit. When compared to the proposed project, no additional land use related impacts or approval procedures or amendments would be required. However, the benefits of this alternative in terms of increased set back, separation, and reduction of visibility of the District by the project residents and the residential buildings' decreased

exposure to the District's present and future operations comes at a certain cost—and that cost is some reduction in lot size, loss of the project's on-site recreational center (not thought to be a major marketing problem given the setting of the project in the National Recreation Area and extensive City Parks and Recreation program) and some loss of diversity in the presentation of lots to the streets. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Geology and Seismic Impacts

This alternative would not likely reduce the total grading required to establish building pads and the vehicle access infrastructure. Indeed, some additional eastern perimeter wall work will be required that is not necessary for the project as presently proposed. The wall and berm system separating the project from the District would be heavily landscaped and stabilized. Remedial grading and removal and recompaction of the shallow on-site landslide will still be required based on existing geologic conditions identified by applicant's geotechnical consultant. Cut and fill slopes would still be needed to create enough flat area for construction of this version of the residential project, although the total area dedicated to cut and fill slope construction is assumed to be increased slightly due to the berm work along the separation between the project and the District. Geologic and seismic effects on this proposed alternative should still be considered potentially significant, but subject to effective mitigation. When compared to the proposed project, environmental impacts caused by geologic and seismic conditions inherent to the area are considered proportional. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and it is unlikely that any additional measures would be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail if it is to substitute for the project as now proposed.

Air Quality

Air quality impacts associated with construction of this project would remain less than significant with specific mitigation measures. The total quantity of construction related air emissions could conceivably be increased very slightly due to the construction of additional berms, contour grading, which requires more grading and more refined grading methods, and some additional perimeter wall work will be required on the eastern perimeter. Grading quantities could not be significantly reduced as the total time of construction and reduce the concentration of pollutants generated by construction equipment would likely be the same for this alternative and the project as proposed. Operational air quality impacts would not be incrementally increased because no increase in the total number of units is proposed. The trip generation for this project alternative is identical to the project as proposed (analyzed in detail in the traffic section of the EIR). A screening analysis was done to determine if this level of increase would exceed present air

quality thresholds and this analysis determined that no more operational impacts would occur than with the project as proposed, the impacts would remain insignificant.

Similar to the multi-family residential project, pollutant emissions from construction and operation of this modified single-family land use would be reduced to less than significant levels with incorporation of feasible mitigation. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and it is unlikely that additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Drainage, Hydrology and Flood Control

This version of the project would not introduce any significant increase in impervious surfaces or involve significant or substantial remedial site grading which differs from the project as proposed. However, the reduction in total building area would reduce by a very small degree the quantity of impervious surfaces when compared to the proposed project. Best management practices would still be required to reduce the potential degradation of surface water quality in Las Virgenes Creek. If proper best management practices are not developed and installed prior to site grading and incorporated into the overall project design, significant impacts could occur.

The magnitude of such impacts could be less than the impacts associated with the proposed development because a larger natural area, or an increase in natural landscaping would reduce overland flow velocities, thereby decreasing erosion and increasing infiltration and percolation on-site. The degree of difference in open area between this alternative and the project is small but the impact change would be beneficial. Project specific and cumulative water quality impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels and would decrease slightly compared to the project as proposed (due to the smaller development footprint) and increased berm and landscape development along the southern perimeter of the project. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and few if any additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Biological Resources

This alternative would not marginally reduce impacts to the substantial population of Valley Needlegrass Grassland located on the southern portions of the subject site. This native plant community is considered threatened by the California Department of Fish and Game. Under this alternative, very little of the Valley Needlegrass Grassland proposed for removal could be saved. This is also true, however, of the alternatives including No Project: Construction of the Widening

of Las Virgenes Road without Private Funding or Development. Mitigation for this impact would still be required; the total impact would be nearly identical under this alternative and the project as proposed although the contour graded berm between the District and the project could be dedicated to restoration of this plant community.

Only two oak trees would be affected under the proposed single-family development. The same number of tree removals would be required for this alternative. This project alternative would likely not reduce encroachment into the protected zone of a Heritage oak tree located in the southeastern portion of the site. Oak tree impacts would be marginally less than significant with this project alternative and the separation berm and landscape zone between the District and the project would provide new opportunities for restoration of native woodland canopy which would provide effective screening for the project. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply in concept and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail to provide guidance for restoration of the contour graded wall and berm system separating the project from the District's ownership. Mitigation measures for this issue will likely be identical to those anticipated for the project as proposed with the caveat that some additional requirements on using natives on berms along the southern boundary of the project will be required.

Noise

Short-term construction noise generation levels would be proportional to the proposed project. Similar types and numbers of construction equipment would be utilized at the subject site; therefore construction noise levels would not be noticeably reduced. Noise impacts would still be considered less than significant after mitigation. The City's standard restrictions applicable to the operation of construction equipment near sensitive noise receptors would apply to this alternative. However, the creation of the wall and berm system along the southern portion of the project perimeter will provide substantial additional offsets between the project and the adjacent District facilities. Noises from the District would still be periodically perceived by residents along the southern project perimeter but the degree, severity and perpetuity of any impulse or sustained noise annoyances would be substantially reduced.

Since no increase in total number of residential units is proposed, project related traffic volumes would not be higher, resulting in no net increase in noise levels along Las Virgenes Road. The traffic associated with the differential between the proposed project and this alternative is not expected to even be measurable, let alone perceivable. Nevertheless, existing noise levels measured along the western portion of the subject site currently exceed the City's 65-decibel

noise threshold and therefore, most mitigation measures recommended for the proposed project would apply to this alternative. Some reduction in noise mitigation “built into project structures” would likely be reduced since the berm and wall system and set backs between the District and the residential project would be substantial.

The impact of noise generated by the LVMWD facility and its affect on residential development could be substantially reduced if the greater setbacks included in the design of this alternative are incorporated into the design (compared to the present application). Increased separation between the Water District equipment yards combined with a more enclosed development product (i.e. reduced yard areas, reduced numbers of windows) and the opportunity for additional landscaping and wall systems would attenuate noise more successfully than the proposed 40-unit single-family proposal presented in detail in the EIR. It is likely that the areas of concern that the Water District has expressed about the project as proposed (noise generation from the District impacting quality of life, inadequate land use separation, visibility of District facilities from adjacent homes, the safety of children or young adults breaking and entering the District’s enclosure, conflicts with expanded District use in the future, etc.) would at least be partially mitigated by this alternative since a topographic barrier, contour graded berm system, and either single or dual separation wall system would exist between the project and the District’s existing and future facilities. Mitigation measures for this alternative and the project as proposed are anticipated to be nearly identical.

Transportation and Circulation

This project alternative will generate traffic identical to the project as proposed. Unlike the multi-family alternative, which, based on a cursory analysis of the project by the consulting traffic engineers for the City, results in a 42 % increase in the traffic along the corridor, this option maintains a low impact on the AM and PM peak hour, does not interfere with traffic circulation generally, will not result in significant impacts to regional or local intersections, and therefore is preferable to other project alternatives for this reason. For this reason, because of increased traffic associated with other alternatives, this alternative is generally environmentally superior to other options since no additional unmitigated traffic impacts will occur on a regionally and locally heavily used corridor. Mitigation measures for the project and this alternative are anticipated to be nearly identical.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

This project alternative would reduce the total building envelope slightly, consequently reducing the total area proposed for landform modification. The total height of the residential structure(s)

would not be increased from a two-story single-family product to a three story multi-family product, one of the primary disadvantages of the multi-family option. Any alternative that increases height may increase the visibility of structures from certain vantage points within the Las Virgenes Road, the US 101 Scenic Corridors and from neighborhoods to the west of the project. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Since with this alternative, there is no reduction in total grading quantities, impacts on the view shed will not change significantly. There actually would be an increase in the percentage of landform modification but this increase would be used to contour grade, create set backs and separation between the District and the project, and would also be used to retain the general topography and slope configuration at the southern end of the project where the Las Virgenes Road corridor enters the “area for treatment” and re-alignment designated in the Las Virgenes Corridor Plan and General Plan. As a result, this alternative would not utilize a smaller portion of the natural hillside environment but would result in a more aesthetic grading and landscaping result, despite the likely small increase in grading quantities. Impacts on regional aesthetics and visual resources created during the construction of cut and fill slopes would be about the same for the project and this alternative. All cut and fill slopes would likely still only be partially or marginally visible from vantage points along the US 101 Freeway and other scenic vantage points within the Las Virgenes Valley. Mitigation measures consisting of contour grading, and effective slope planting will still be required to reduce visual impacts to less than significant levels.

Similar to the proposed project, this alternative would introduce a new source of light and glare into the area. However, overall lighting impacts could be less than expected compared to the proposed project since the overall concentration of structures would be reduced over the grading footprint, contour graded berms would block the light sources from exposure to the south, the entry to the project along Las Virgenes Road from the south would be better screened and in general, the landscaping and grading is more effectively planned, though in a more preliminary state of refinement, than for the project as proposed. The development footprint would be decreased very slightly to preserve more natural open space near light-sensitive uses. Nevertheless, any type of development adjacent to the existing open space would require mitigation measures designed to reduce light and glare impacts. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Public Services

This alternative would not result in any increase in the number residential units compared to the proposed project. Consequently, future demands on public services, including fire protection, police protection, water, wastewater, schools, and solid waste would be proportional to the unit count in the existing project description studied in detail in the EIR. Any increase in public service impacts, at least on the school district, could be ameliorated somewhat by orienting the project to senior housing. However, this alternative has many other significant impacts which clearly offset the reduction of impacts to the school system.

This alternative project would use approximately the same amount of water in gallons per day compared to the proposed project and would not generate more wastewater. When compared to the proposed project, water/sewer usage would be identical, or nearly so, depending on the extent of slope landscaping and irrigation demands on these slopes. Thus, this alternative does not require the incorporation of any additional standard water conservation mitigation measures.

This alternative does not increase the total number of units so the number of students enrolled in local schools would not increase already overcrowded local public school populations. All other alternatives, except senior housing, have the capacity to increase this enrollment, including retail or office uses, since office occupants or retail store owners and their employees are all qualified under special admission programs to enroll their students at District schools. Similar to the proposed project, payment of school impact fees would be required to offset impacts to local primary and secondary schools.

The alternative would not increase service demands on the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Correspondence received from the Fire Department indicates that additional manpower, equipment and facilities are needed in the area now. Therefore, impacts on fire service are considered potentially significant. All mitigation measures applicable to the proposed project would apply to reduce impacts to less than significant levels.

The presence of a slightly modified single family residential development on-site would not incrementally increase the number of calls to the local Sheriff's Substation compared to the project as proposed. This is considered a less than significant impact, with appropriate mitigation. All mitigation measures recommended for the proposed project would apply.

This alternative would not increase solid waste generation when compared to the proposed project. Because the current Calabasas Landfill trash acceptance figures are well below the facility maximum, this absence of substantive change is less than significant. Nevertheless, the project would be required to incorporate all City of Calabasas source reduction programs currently in use by the local trash haulers.

All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

14.8 Alternative 5: Thirteen (13) Unit Estate Lot Residential Project

This alternative, in its form as schematically presented in this chapter, is not acceptable, in broad terms, to the applicant (Standard Pacific Homes). It may be possible, subject to better definition from the Council about what types of additional mitigation measures may be required to approve this modified project alternative, that the applicant would consider this option. However, based on current information, this option does not meet the applicant's basic objectives.

The applicant believes that this project is not appropriate for a number of reasons including:

1. Market analysis conducted by the applicant suggests that "estate lot" or villa type development such as is being constructed at the Oaks and at several other locations in and around the City, is inappropriate and not consistent with market forces when situated on a major transportation route such as Las Virgenes Road;
2. The applicant also believes that this type of housing is a very substantial departure from the housing types present in the Las Virgenes Valley generally along this corridor;
3. Sales of these types of units have been slow due to certain land use inconsistencies such as those present at this site within the Las Virgenes Corridor;
4. The site is more conducive to a clustered smaller lot, smaller housing product than an estate lot type configuration due to steep topography and other variables;
5. This alternative would not reduce any of the major objections to the existing project evoked in the Water District response to the use of this property; indeed, since the owners of these "estate lots" would likely have greater financial resources potentially and greater capacity to perceive incompatibilities with the District's operations, more potential for litigation in the future, should the District seek to expand its operations, is likely with this option;
6. Large lot estates generally involve the construction of large homes than those proposed by Standard Pacific; the City has no "mansionization" ordinance and so there would be no significant legal basis for managing down the size of these units which would become visually dominant compared to surrounding homes and would likely be much more visible to the surrounding community than the smaller units proposed by the applicants in the Project Description or in Alternative 4;
7. The construction of "estate lot" homes at this location will likely result in significant requests for a number of Planned Unit Development type of requests from the applicant to enable these estate lots to have the same amenities that similar estates have in the City (second units, pools, rock-feature slides and pool amenities, build out to all setbacks, maximization of second level unit dimensions, etc.); and

8. Estate lot housing is typically not constructed immediately across from or adjacent to schools although the Mureau Estates (in the County, along Mureau Road) is situated next to Round Meadow School. However, this project involves much greater use of all landforms within the project boundary, has embedded tiering of lots, and does not make any effort to preserve any open space or on-site resources. Thus, use of this project as a model is really inappropriate.

For this option to be acceptable to the applicant, the project would have to meet the basic requirement of a finding that this use would be determined to be generally consistent with the adjacent land uses to the south (the Water District). This is highly unlikely; indeed the use is less not more consistent with placement adjacent to an industrial facility. According to the applicant, most of the features of this alternative were designed to be consistent with recommendations made by the Water District to the degree feasible, including some buffering wall structure and berms, but to have consistency in lot size, some landscaping would and minimal grading would need to be permitted by the District on their property as part of an overall settlement of land use issues. So, in a sense, this alternative is one designed almost exclusively to address the concerns of several Council members, who are not concerned with market forces or market issues, and the Water District.

The applicant's ability to be supportive of this option is contingent on the District determining that the majority of their concerns have been met with this redesign and the negotiation of a satisfactory relationship with the City regarding all amenities, including pools, pool houses, second units, etc. Even with these issues resolved, the applicant believes this type of housing is entirely inappropriate in so urbanized an area and the consultants generally agree. This alternative still requires a rezone under the City's Development Code procedures and a General Plan Amendment.

This project alternative as presently proposed would be designed to provide for the construction of 13 large (6,500 to 7,500) square foot two and two and one-half single family dwellings consistent with the estate or villa definition for housing as it has been broadly applied to other projects in the City. The layout of these units is presently just schematic, has not been reviewed and approved by the Fire Department, and has not been through detailed design review or consideration by the City's Development Review Committee or Architectural Review Panel. However, the basic layout of the project, subject to resolving engineering and design issues, is very similar to estate projects such as the Oaks, Mureau Estates, and other projects.

This alternative is not consistent with immediately adjacent proposals to the north nor is it consistent with housing in the area surrounding the project. A wall and berm system has been conceived, as well as a setback, from the adjacent Water District property, and to avoid impacts

to the southernmost portion of the project associated with wall construction, the verdura wall system has been relocated a short distance to the north to enable the preservation of a portion of the landform separating the project from the District. Under this alternative, the approximately 120,000 square feet of livable space would be distributed among only 13 residential units to be held in title and with the basic design features outlined in the project description. This square footage is roughly equivalent to the project, the retail-commercial alternative, and the multi-family options (as well as the project as proposed and amended in Alternative 4).

The applicant and the planning and environmental staff conceived a basic development schematic for this proposal which is illustrated in Figure 14- 4.

Inspection of this illustration provides a basic outline of the features of this option which include:

1. Preservation of both of the large hillsides intervening between this parcel and the adjacent Water District property to the south is not possible but a substantial buffer, setback, retaining wall, and contour graded saddle would be reconstructed along the entire southern boundary of the property;
2. Construction of required frontage improvements using a three tier wall system similar to the project as proposed—however, this wall system would be shorter in length and would begin slightly further north than the present wall design—however, the grading on this southern corner and the associated wall system would require more land and more construction than the project or Alternatives 2, 3 or 4;
3. The 13 units would require only at-grade parking;
4. The entire perimeter of the project under this option would not be surrounded by tiered or slope-laid verdura or similar retaining walls—the wall systems would be limited to the area along the street frontage and are still estimated to achieve heights of about 30 feet;
5. The proposed structures in this larger development footprint option would be two to two and one-half story, slightly higher, bulkier and much larger than the present application, with gradually stepping back designs (using the General Plan set-back step-back procedure at a ratio to be negotiated with the City) along the street system;
6. The proposed recreation area for the project would need to be eliminated to make room for the setback system proposed along the southern perimeter and adequate lot area—estate lots are generally self-contained with respect to recreational amenities; and
7. The highly visible landform behind the project would be reconstructed, revegetated and in this way retained identical to the project and Alternative 4. Any development on this property will require some modification to this structure and the small surface landslide it contains.

Figure 14-4: 13 Unit Single Family Residential Alternative (Modified Design)

This option provides a modest buffer between the project and the Water District but this buffer, together with the planned perimeter wall and other mitigation, should reduce noise related conflicts between the two uses to acceptable levels. The approval of this project would require both Planning Commission and City Council review and approval and would make necessary a General Plan Amendment or Zone Change. The major reduction in building area and elimination of the recreation area as well as modification of the street system for the project provides an opportunity to increase setbacks from the existing LVMWD site, thereby reducing potential land use compatibility issues.

Environmental Consequences of the Alternative

Land Use and Planning

A revised Estate Lot single-family residential alternative could not be approved under the City's current General Plan/Zoning Designation and therefore all of the land use issues raised in this EIR relative to the project as proposed would apply to this option, with the caveat that the design of the project would minimize conflicts with the adjacent Water District property but would create potential incompatibilities with surrounding housing types and sizes which are more modest than Estate Lot alternatives. The primary benefits associated with this alternative are a slightly reduced grading footprint created by providing a setback from the Water District property, construction of larger high value individual residences, construction of fewer individual properties but at an equivalent square footage to the project, revisions to the layout of the property and substitution of recreational facilities for buffer areas between this project and the adjacent Water District.

The design of this alternative has been predicted on the theory that it is possible to meet the primary concerns of the Water District, short of a long term indemnification agreement between the parties, by redesign of the project. Also, there is a conceptual understanding on the part of some of the Council members, that Estate Lot projects reduce project impacts. While this is true for some issues, as explained briefly above and in detail below, this is not the case for other issues. The total square footage built under this option is roughly equal to the project as proposed, to Alternative 4 and slightly less than Alternatives 2 and 3. This design alternative would allow the project applicant to generally utilize the same primary entrance, while increasing the separation between the LVMWD facilities. This location would still be signaled as previously proposed.

The potential quality of life impacts from LVMWD activities on future residents could potentially be reduced under this alternative and obviously the number of residents would be smaller. However, if the District is concerned with litigation over future District uses, the financial capacity for litigation by the persons purchasing these lots probably far exceeds the capacity of the owners typical of individuals that would purchase the units proposed under the Project Description or Alternative 4. This alternative eliminates some of the objections to the present project expressed by the Water District staff. A General Plan Amendment and Rezone, which are unnecessary to implement this option, require the same findings as the project as proposed.

This alternative also requires a Conditional Use Permit, Site Plan Review, and Oak Tree Permit. When compared to the proposed project, no additional land use related impacts or approval procedures or amendments would be required. However, the benefits of this alternative in terms of increased set back, separation, and reduction of visibility of the District by the project residents and the residential buildings decreased exposure to the District's present and future operations comes at a certain cost—and that cost is increase in lot size, loss of the project's on-site recreational center (not thought to be a major marketing problem given the setting of the project in the National Recreation Area and extensive City Parks and Recreation program), increased visual dominance of the project and its housing form, loss of diversity in the presentation of lots to the streets. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Geology and Seismic Impacts

This alternative would not likely reduce the total grading required to establish building pads and the vehicle access infrastructure. Indeed, some additional eastern perimeter wall work will be required that is not necessary for the project as presently proposed. The wall and berm system separating the project from the District would be heavily landscaped and stabilized. Remedial grading and removal and recompaction of the shallow on-site landslide will still be required based on existing geologic conditions identified by applicant's geotechnical consultant. Cut and fill slopes would still be needed to create enough flat area for construction of this version of the residential project, although the total area dedicated to cut and fill slope construction is assumed to be increased slightly due to the berm work along the separation between the project and the District. Geologic and seismic effects on this proposed alternative should still be considered potentially significant, but subject to effective mitigation.

When compared to the proposed project, environmental impacts caused by geologic and seismic conditions inherent to the area are considered proportional. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and it is unlikely that any additional measures would be

imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail if it is to substitute for the project as now proposed.

Air Quality

Air quality impacts associated with construction of this project would remain less than significant with specific mitigation measures. The total quantity of construction related air emissions could conceivably be increased very slightly due to the construction of additional berms, contour grading, which requires more grading and more refined grading methods, and some additional perimeter wall work will be required on the eastern perimeter. Grading quantities could not be significantly reduced as the total time of construction and reduce the concentration of pollutants generated by construction equipment would likely be the same for this alternative and the project as proposed. Operational air quality impacts would not be incrementally increased because no increase in the total number of units is proposed.

The trip generation for this project alternative is greatly reduced compared to the the project as proposed (analyzed in detail in the traffic section of the EIR). A screening analysis was done to determine if this level of increase would exceed present air quality thresholds and this analysis determined that no more operational impacts would occur than with the project as proposed, the impacts would remain insignificant. The total ADT for 13 units would be approximately 169 trips per day with about 14 AM and 13 PM peak hour trips. Without question, this option would reduce the overall traffic impacts of the project. However, this traffic project does not include the increased service worker, house based service employment, or in-home e-business related trips that are typical of Estate Homes. Therefore, while traffic impacts are obviously reduced, the reduction is probably less than anticipated using ITE manual rates.

Similar to the other single-family residential projects, pollutant emissions from construction and operation of this modified single family land use would be reduced to less than significant levels with incorporation of feasible mitigation. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and it is unlikely that additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Drainage, Hydrology and Flood Control

This version of the project would not introduce any significant increase in impervious surfaces or involve significant or substantial remedial site grading which differs from the project as proposed. However, the reduction in total building area would reduce the quantity of impervious surfaces

when compared to the proposed project, but only by a very small degree. Best management practices would still be required to reduce the potential degradation of surface water quality in Las Virgenes Creek. If proper best management practices are not developed and installed prior to site grading and incorporated into the overall project design, significant impacts could occur.

The magnitude of such impacts could be less than the impacts associated with the proposed development because a larger natural area or an increase in natural landscaping would reduce overland flow velocities, thereby decreasing erosion and increasing infiltration and percolation on-site. The degree of difference in open area between this alternative and the project is small but the impact change would be beneficial. Project specific and cumulative water quality impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels and would decrease slightly compared to the project as proposed (due to the smaller development footprint) and increased berm and landscape development along the southern perimeter of the project. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and few if any additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Biological Resources

This alternative would not marginally reduce impacts to the substantial population of Valley Needlegrass Grassland located on the southern portions of the subject site. This native plant community is considered threatened by the California Department of Fish and Game. Under this alternative, very little of the Valley Needlegrass Grassland proposed for removal could be saved. This is also true, however, of the alternatives including No Project: Construction of the Widening of Las Virgenes Road without Private Funding or Development. Mitigation for this impact would still be required; the total impact would be nearly identical under this alternative and the project as proposed although the contour graded berm between the District and the project could be dedicated to restoration of this plant community.

Only two oak trees would be affected under the proposed estate version of the single-family development option. The same number of tree removals would be required for this alternative as the project. This alternative would also likely not reduce encroachment into the protected zone of a Heritage oak tree located in the southeastern portion of the site. Oak tree impacts would be marginally less than significant with this project alternative and the separation berm and landscape zone between the District and the project would provide new opportunities for restoration of native woodland canopy which would provide effective screening for the project.

All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply in concept and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail to provide guidance for restoration of the contour graded wall and berm system separating the project from the District's ownership. Mitigation measures for this issue will likely be identical to those anticipated for the project as proposed with the caveat that some additional requirements on using natives on berms along the southern boundary of the project will be required.

Noise

Short-term construction noise generation levels would be proportional to the proposed project. Similar types and numbers of construction equipment would be utilized at the subject site; therefore construction noise levels would not be noticeably reduced. Noise impacts would still be considered less than significant after mitigation. The City's standard restrictions applicable to the operation of construction equipment near sensitive noise receptors would apply to this alternative. However, the creation of the wall and berm system along the southern portion of the project perimeter will provide substantial additional offsets between the project and the adjacent District facilities. Noises from the District would still be periodically perceived by residents along the southern project perimeter but the degree, severity and perpetuity of any impulse or sustained noise annoyances would be substantially reduced.

Since a decrease in the total number of residential units is proposed, project related traffic volumes would be lower, resulting in not net increase in noise level increases along Las Virgenes Road. The traffic associated with the differential between the proposed project and this alternative is not expected to even be measurable, let alone perceivable. Nevertheless, existing noise levels measured along the western portion of the subject site currently exceed the City's 65-decibel noise threshold and therefore, most mitigation measures recommended for the proposed project would apply to this alternative. Some reduction in noise mitigation "built into project structures" would likely be reduced since the berm and wall system and set backs between the District and the residential project would be substantial.

The impact of noise generated by the LVMWD facility and its affect on residential development could be substantially reduced if the greater setbacks included in the design of this alternative are incorporated into the design (compared to the present application). Increased separation between the Water District equipment yards combined with a more enclosed development product (i.e. reduced yard areas, reduced numbers of windows) and the opportunity for additional landscaping and wall systems would attenuate noise more successfully than the proposed 40-unit single-family proposal presented in detail in the EIR.

It is likely that the areas of concern that the Water District has expressed about the project as proposed (noise generation from the District impacting quality of life, inadequate land use separation, visibility of District facilities from adjacent homes, the safety of children or young adults breaking and entering the District's enclosure, conflicts with expanded District use in the future, etc.) would at least be partially mitigated by this alternative since a topographic barrier, contour graded berm system, and either single or dual separation wall system would exist between the project and the District's existing and future facilities. However, given the greater financial capacity of future owners, this option does nothing to reduce the District's exposure to future lawsuits arising out of uses or any proposed expansions; indeed, this alternative may increase such exposure. Mitigation measures for this alternative and the project as proposed are anticipated to be nearly identical.

Transportation and Circulation

This project alternative will generate less traffic than the project as proposed. Unlike the multi-family alternative, which, based on a cursory analysis of the project by the consulting traffic engineers for the City, results in a 42 % increase in the traffic along the corridor, this option maintains a low impact on the AM and PM peak hour, does not interfere with traffic circulation generally, will not result in significant impacts to regional or local intersections, and therefore is preferable to other project alternatives for this reason. For this reason, because of increased traffic associated with other alternatives, this alternative is generally environmentally superior to other options since no additional unmitigated traffic impacts will occur on a regionally and locally heavily used corridor. Mitigation measures for the project and this alternative are anticipated to be nearly identical.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

This project alternative would not reduce the total building envelope; consequently there would be no reduction in the total area proposed for landform modification. The total height of the residential structure(s) would be increased from a two-story single-family product to a two and a half story product, one of the primary disadvantages of the multi-family option. Any alternative that increases height and mass of buildings may increase the visibility of structures from certain vantage points within the Las Virgenes Road, the US 101 Scenic Corridors and from neighborhoods to the west of the project. With the product type proposed under this option, estate Homes, the presumption is that visual dominance, wealth display, building size and all the other features of Estate homes would be incorporated into this proposal. All mitigation measures

designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional architectural measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

Since with this alternative, there is no reduction in total grading quantities, impacts on the view shed will not change significantly from this source of impact. There actually would be an increase in the percentage of landform modification but this increase would be used to contour grade, create set backs and separation between the District and the project, and would also be used to retain the general topography and slope configuration at the southern end of the project where the Las Virgenes Road corridor enters the “area for treatment” and re-alignment designated in the Las Virgenes Corridor Plan and General Plan. As a result, this alternative would not utilize a smaller portion of the natural hillside environment but would result in a more aesthetic grading and landscaping result, despite the likely small increase in grading quantities.

Impacts on regional aesthetics and visual resources created during the construction of cut and fill slopes would be about the same for the project and this alternative. All cut and fill slopes would likely still only be partially or marginally visible from vantage points along the US 101 Freeway and other scenic vantage points within the Las Virgenes Valley. Mitigation measures consisting of contour grading, and effective slope planting will still be required to reduce visual impacts to less than significant levels. More detailed architectural review of this product type is always needed since homes are generally very large and a number of architectural considerations are often addressed in design review to reduce the mass and bulk of this type of housing.

Similar to the proposed project, this alternative would introduce a new source of light and glare into the area. However, overall lighting impacts could be less than expected compared to the proposed project since the overall concentration of structures would be reduced over the grading footprint, contour graded berms would block the light sources from exposure to the south, the entry to the project along Las Virgenes Road from the south would be better screened and in general, the landscaping and grading is more effectively planned, though in a more preliminary state of refinement, than for the project as proposed.

The development footprint would be decreased very slightly to preserve more natural open space near light-sensitive uses. Nevertheless, any type of development adjacent to the existing open space would require mitigation measures designed to reduce light and glare impacts. All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail. Overall, from an aesthetics standpoint, the adoption of this alternative as the project would likely have a number of significant aesthetic consequences including visual dominance, incompatibility with surrounding

housing types, the impacts of large homes on relatively small lots, and all the attendant design issues that occur when estate lots are proposed and reviewed by the City.

Public Services

This alternative would result in a decrease in the number residential units compared to the proposed project. Consequently, future demands on public services, including fire protection, police protection, water, wastewater, schools, and solid waste would be proportional to the unit count in the existing project description studied in detail in the EIR. No increase in public service impacts, at least on the school district, is anticipated.

This alternative project would use approximately the same amount of water in gallons per day compared to the proposed project and would not generate more wastewater. When compared to the proposed project, water/sewer usage would be identical, or nearly so, depending on the extent of slope landscaping and irrigation demands on these slopes. Thus, this alternative does not require the incorporation of any additional standard water conservation mitigation measures.

This alternative does decrease the total number of units and therefore the number of students enrolled in local schools and therefore would not incrementally increase student population at already overcrowded local public schools. All other alternatives, except senior housing, have the capacity to increase this enrollment, including retail or office uses, since office occupants or retail store owners and their employees are all qualified under special admission programs to enroll their students at District schools. Similar to the proposed project, payment of school impact fees would be required to offset impacts to local primary and secondary schools.

The alternative would not increase service demands on the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Correspondence received from the Fire Department indicates that additional manpower, equipment and facilities are needed in the area now. Therefore, impacts on fire service are considered potentially significant. All mitigation measures applicable to the proposed project would apply to reduce impacts to less than significant levels.

The presence of an estate homes single family residential development on-site would not incrementally increase the number of calls to the local Sheriff's Substation compared to the project as proposed. This is considered a less than significant impact, with appropriate mitigation. All mitigation measures recommended for the proposed project would apply.

This alternative would not increase solid waste generation when compared to the proposed project. Because the current Calabasas Landfill trash acceptance figures are well below the

facility maximum, this absence of substantive change is less than significant. Nevertheless, the project would be required to incorporate all City of Calabasas source reduction programs currently in use by the local trash haulers.

All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.

14.9 Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the preceding analysis, it is evident that the No Project/No Build Alternative is considered environmentally superior as it invariably is under CEQA programs of analysis. For this reason, and as a result of case law, CEQA now requires two important considerations in an alternatives analysis: first, the Lead Agency must identify at least one other alternative superior to the project as proposed other than the “No project” option, and that at least one superior alternative must be identified that is “broadly consistent with the applicant’s intents”.

Obviously, the No Project/No Build Option would not result in any environmental impacts anticipated for the proposed project or any of the other alternatives. However, this Alternative would not fulfill the basic objectives of the landowner (the applicant), which is to develop single-family residential subdivision. Therefore, other alternatives were analyzed. One of these other alternatives was a No Project option that involved the City funding and building road widening improvements on this property using a 2:1 slope arrangement and road widening. This is a roughly 1.5 million dollar improvement, not including the purchase of required land from Standard Pacific.

Also, it is unclear if Standard Pacific would sell the property to the City in a market transaction which means that the City would have to purchase the property in fee. Since the 2:1 slope option would eliminate half of the property from use, the remnant would likely be determined to be undevelopable and therefore, to build the road along this segment, the City would have to embark on a “full take” of the property. This would be very expensive since the land is zoned for both commercial, retail and residential multi-family development. In light of these circumstances, the No Project/Build out of Las Virgenes Road by the City appears infeasible, very expensive, and certainly not the typical way to provide for public road improvements.

When considering which of the various alternatives studied in this Chapter should or could be adopted as the project, it is important to keep several issues in mind as enumerated below.

First, the three projects which are acceptable to the applicant include: (1) the Project Description option—the project as proposed; (2) Alternative 4—the basic project as proposed with major amendments in circulation, setback from the District, elimination of the recreation area and reorientation of lot configurations; and (3) Alternative 3—the multi-family alternative. Of these three, it is the consultant's understanding that the applicant would prefer to proceed with a slightly modified Alternative 4 option, subject to confirmation that the project is acceptable to the Fire Department and other engineering and public service providers, or Alternative 3, the multi-family option. The multi-family alternative has two distinct disadvantages; such developments have been very strongly opposed by the local community and the City population generally, so not a single development of this type has been approved in the City (despite five applications and three pre-applications being filed in the past five years), with one exception, since incorporation, and the one exception was never built because the community and developer both felt a single family project was more compatible and sensible to construct than higher density multi-family housing. The County approved a great deal of multi-family housing in this corridor historically and there is an overall sense in the community that this County approved housing is sufficient for the multi-family housing stock. Therefore, approval of this type of housing will likely be opposed strongly by the community; at least, this has been the case historically.

Second, the decision-makers need to retain some sense of equanimity and vision about what they want their "urban or semi-rural" corridors to look like in terms of development consistency. The pattern of smaller lot single family homes has been established as the dominant land use type for residential housing in this corridor (e.g., Pazar Shea, El Encanto, Shadow Hills, etc). To make a significant departure from this land use type could place a housing type in the midst of a neighborhood that is in the process of both gentrifying and consolidating itself as a single family residential enclave for people of more modest means (compared to the Calabasas median home price). The City has established a good record of working with applicants to develop adequate estate housing; however, other types of housing, including senior, affordable, and market rate entry housing, even smaller product housing (such as Shea-Pazar and the proposed project) are really in relatively short supply. Therefore, in considering options for approval and denial, the decision-makers and the public should look at trends and shortages relative to the population of the community at large in deciding whether to approve or deny this application.

Third, it is useful to rank the various environmental variables that need to be considered in deciding which environmental impacts will be tolerated and which will not. In the consultant's opinion (and the consultant is supposed to make a recommendation on this matter to the decision-makers), the primary issues in this corridor that need to be considered include: traffic impacts, visual impacts, and land use compatibility. All other impacts should be considered

“second tier” problems and most of these “second tier” problems can be fully mitigated under any scenario for use of the project.

Forth, the issue of whether a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change is warranted is something that needs brief discussion. When the City adopted the General Plan for this corridor, wisely, the City envisioned setting aside at least some land for multi-family residential use. The subject property was one of several such properties. However, this set-aside must be balanced against the very large inventory of this type of housing already in this corridor and its virtual absence in any other parts of the City, particularly areas east of Calabasas Road generally. And, it should also be balanced against the changing perceptions and desires of the community’s residents. The General Plan is the City’s “constitution” and charter, that is undeniable, but as the years have gone by, a very substantial change in the neighborhoods surrounding the “Gateway Plan” boundary has occurred so that many people now living in the Las Virgenes Corridor were neither present during the General Plan conception nor have they understood the rationale for various land use decisions since participation in the City’s government and land use decisions is not all that broadly based and is often mediated by inputs from or through Homeowner’s Associations, managing groups that new residents typically rely on to represent their interests to government. There has been a significant change in the interest in seeing more multi-family housing constructed in this corridor since the City’s General Plan was adopted.

Finally, land use compatibility issues are significant for this project. The adjacent Water District facility is an industrial use in a residential neighborhood-school facility area and the District, while one of the first uses in place in the immediate area, and is gradually experiencing “in-fill” by residential uses. The District may well be advised to consider methods for reducing incompatibilities between their operations and existing residential and school uses; this consideration may extend to the types of motors used in pumps to future consideration of where best to site various types of expanded land uses. The District has very substantial land holdings and can look to citing some of its more industrial uses at portions of its ownership, near some of its facilities, surrounded by dedicated open space. And, while it is not incumbent on the District to consider such issues in it’s planning, it is, however, fundamentally considerate of the communities and neighborhoods growing and developing in its midst. Therefore, while certain incompatibilities exist between industrial and residential uses, these incompatibilities can largely be mitigated and should involve give and take by both existing landowners and by the District as well.

Given these considerations, we are now in place to discuss Alternatives and what the consultant recommendations are for further consideration of each option. A brief summation and rationale for consideration of various options is provided below.

Summary of Alternative Considerations and Recommended Superior Alternatives

Any alternative recommended to be “superior” to the project must reduce some but not all of the adverse effects of the project as proposed. Because Traffic, Land Use and Aesthetics have been identified as the primary “sorting” criteria for identifying an appropriate “environmentally superior alternative”, these impacts will govern the consultant’s recommendation.

Alternative 1: The No Project

The No Project/No Build option is clearly superior to the project as proposed, as it nearly always is under a CEQA analysis. However, in cases where this is the case, a second alternative needs to be identified which offsets some of the impacts of the project. At least one “superior” alternative must also be “broadly acceptable” to the applicant or consistent with the project as proposed. As discussed in the introduction to this section, the No Project/Build out of Las Virgenes Road by the City appears infeasible, very expensive, and certainly not the typical way to provide for public road improvements in major transportation corridors. This option also result in very similar impacts to the project for issues related to aesthetics, biology, storm water effects, geologic remediation, and similar issues. Either of these No Project options is superior to the project as proposed but neither meets the test of being a project acceptable to the applicant and therefore, in addition to these options, another “environmentally superior alternative” must be identified.

Alternative 2: A Multi-Family Housing Alternative

Careful consideration of this option for the environmental issues of land use compatibility, traffic and aesthetics, results in the conclusion that for issues related to both traffic and aesthetics, the impacts of this alternative are considerably greater for both of these issues. The major findings relative to these critical impacts are:

- This option will result in very substantial increases in traffic, the need to construct underground parking, very high Average Daily and Peak Hour Trips which will conflict with existing school traffic problems and other traffic concerns.
- Aesthetically, an attractive multifamily project could be constructed on this site but the reduction in footprint size does require that the project scale and height increase substantially, to three stories, and large retaining walls and slope retention systems are

necessary along the eastern perimeter of the project.

- Some reduction in land use compatibility impacts accrue from the identification of this project as superior to the project as proposed since the current footprint for this option preserves in place the two landforms that currently exist as a substantial topographic barrier separating the Water District from the project area. However, whether this barrier is sufficient to totally reduce potential noise impacts on the multifamily units which could be constructed in this area is uncertain.

Given these concerns plus the long history of antagonism by the community to this form of development, it could be identified as the “environmentally superior alternative” but has not been for a variety of reasons, principally traffic and aesthetic concerns.

However, this option does not require findings for a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change and if the decision-makers believe that it is the appropriate land use option, this alternative is acceptable to the Applicant, subject to negotiations regarding building height, density, unit size and a number of other details. It is important to note that pursuing this option would be equivalent to “starting over” for the project and therefore, if the Council identifies this as the superior alternative, which it may do over the consultant’s recommendation, the decision should represent a substantial commitment to this land use on this property to avoid the long expense and investment that has occurred to develop a project consistent with the adjacent Shea-Pazar approval which appears to be the development form the community broadly supports for this corridor.

The Multi-Family Residential Alternative, if designed to minimize on-site grading, should be considered a feasible alternative that could potentially reduce environmental impacts when compared to the proposed project and the commercial office alternative. A multi-family alternative could reduce potential land use compatibility issues and would be consistent with the current General Plan and Zoning Designations for the property.

However, this alternative would significantly increase traffic along Las Virgenes Road at peak hours, would conflict with school arrival and departure traffic and worsen conditions along the Las Virgenes Corridor. Furthermore, this alternative would potentially significantly impact views from the scenic corridor. Impacts to biology, hydrology/water quality and geologic safety concerns could be reduced by minimizing the total quantity of landform alteration. In summary, the multi-family residential alternative would reduce the amount of environmental impact that will occur compared to the project as proposed while still achieving the overall project objective of providing a residential use consistent with the general outline of the application that is acceptable to the

applicant. A multi-family project, however, is not the optimal land use at this location, would significantly increase the key variables that have been identified as critical (impacts on traffic circulation, aesthetics, and of course, effects on the school system) and therefore is defined as environmentally superior only if the decision-makers reject Alternative 4 as the designated superior option. Therefore, on balance, although the significance of some grading footprint related issues and compatibility issues could be reduced in severity, other impacts such as effects on traffic, aesthetics, and schools would clearly increase under this alternative.

Alternative 3: Commercial Office or Small Retail Center Alternative

Careful consideration of this option for the environmental issues of land use compatibility, traffic and aesthetics, results in the conclusion that for issues related to both traffic and aesthetics, the impacts of this alternative are considerably greater for both traffic and aesthetics. Some reduction in land use compatibility impacts accrue from the identification of this project as superior to the project as proposed since the current footprint for this option preserves in place the two landforms that currently exist as a substantial topographic barrier separating the Water District from the project area. However, whether this barrier is sufficient to totally reduce potential noise impacts on the tenants of these properties is uncertain. Careful consideration of this option for the environmental issues of land use compatibility, traffic and aesthetics, results in the conclusion that for issues related to both traffic and aesthetics, the impacts of this alternative are considerably greater for both traffic and aesthetics. The major findings relative to these critical impacts are:

- This option will result in very substantial increases in traffic, the need to construct underground parking, very high Average Daily and Peak Hour Trips which will conflict with existing school traffic problems and other traffic concerns.
- Aesthetically, an attractive garden office project could be constructed on this site but the reduction in footprint size does require that the project scale and height increase substantially, to three stories, and large retaining walls and slope retention systems are necessary along the eastern perimeter of the project. Any retail center with at-grade parking will result in a “strip mall” type of appearance. Small retail centers in Calabasas, especially isolated centers such as this one would be, seem to support only marginal service buildings and often, due to lack of sufficient size and income generating capacity, investment in such centers is negligible. Some of these types of centers in the City are doing poorly from the standpoint of income, tenant mix, and appearance of disinvestment.

- Some reduction in land use compatibility impacts accrue from the identification of this project as superior to the project as proposed since the current footprint for this option preserves in place the two landforms that currently exist as a substantial topographic barrier separating the Water District from the project area. However, whether this barrier is sufficient to totally reduce potential noise impacts on the multifamily units which could be constructed in this area is uncertain.

Alternative 4: Project Configuration Compatible with Adjacent Land Uses

Based on the information provided in the discussion of this alternative, it is now identified as the “environmentally superior alternative” and recommendations have been made throughout the Recirculated EIR to adopt this alternative configuration as the project. In the prior version of the EIR, the Commercial Office/Retail Alternative was identified as superior to the project since the footprint area was smaller than the residential options and the potential conflicts with the Water District’s perceptions of its interests in governing the selection of land use on this property were largely met.

However, if traffic and aesthetics are considered carefully, the impacts of either an office or retail alternative clearly results in more serious effects than the project as proposed of the design alternative created to reduce incompatibilities with the Water District. While this option may not satisfy all Water District concerns, combined with some off-site mitigation (which the applicant has proposed but the District has not yet decided to accept) and some careful consideration of the placement of industrial uses on its extensive property holdings in the future, the District’s needs and the applicant’s could likely be accommodated by this alternative. Thus, for these reasons, other than the No Project Alternative, this “mitigated” single family project has been identified as being “environmentally superior” to the project as proposed.

Alternative 5: Estate Lot Alternative

The Estate Lot alternative has, on surface examination, some substantial appeal as it appears to be a smaller project. And while the number of lots may be smaller, the projected building area is about the same as the project as proposed and very similar to the Garden Office and Multi-family options. Therefore, while traffic impacts would be substantially reduced, the aesthetic effects of this option would still likely be significant, perhaps in some ways more significant than the project as proposed. The applicant has also objected to this option as being incompatible with development trends in the region and inappropriate given the present housing stock in the

immediate vicinity. Estate housing is also not the high demand type of housing that the City is in need of at this time. There are ample estate lots under development; smaller unit “starter” homes or second purchase homes, such as are proposed by the applicant, are in short supply.

This option also does nothing to reduce the perceived incompatibilities with the adjacent Water District existing and future uses and this use would likely be opposed by the District. Therefore, taking into account the three primary environmental variables, this option results in more significant impacts than the Project and Alternative 4 for Land Use Compatibility and for Aesthetics but less significant impacts for traffic. Otherwise, the effects of this alternative are very similar to those that will occur with the project or with Alternative 4.

In conclusion, given the key variables used to classify various alternatives, the ranking of Alternatives in terms of all criteria are:

- Alternative 1 (No Project)
- Alternative 4 (Revised Project)
- Alternative 2 (Multi-family Project)
- Alternative 5 (Estate Lots)
- Alternative 3 (Commercial or Retail Center)

In accord with CEQA Guidelines, Alternatives 1 and 4 are determined to be Environmentally Superior to the project as proposed. Alternative 2 is acceptable to the applicant if the City’s decision-makers want to pursue a land use that does not require a General Plan Amendment or Rezone but this option results in significant impacts on traffic circulation and aesthetics considerably more significant than the project or Alternative 4.

All mitigation measures designed for the proposed project would apply and some additional measures would likely be imposed when or if this project is analyzed in detail.