

# CHAPTER 4

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## Alternatives

### 4.1 Introduction and Overview

CEQA and the *CEQA Guidelines* (Section 15126.6) dictate that an EIR must describe a reasonable range of alternatives to a proposed project that could feasibly attain most of the basic project objectives, and would avoid or substantially lessen any of the proposed project's significant effects. Additionally, a "No Project" alternative must be analyzed. An EIR must evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives.

The range of alternatives in an EIR is governed by a "rule of reason" that requires an EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasonable choice. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather, the alternatives must be limited to ones that meet the basic project objectives (though some objectives may be compromised with an alternative), are feasible, and would avoid or substantially lessen at least one of the significant environmental effects of the project. "Feasible" means capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social and technological factors.

The EIR must briefly describe the rationale for selection and rejection of alternatives and the information the Lead Agency relied on when making the selection. It also should identify any alternatives considered, but rejected, as infeasible by the lead agency during the scoping process and briefly explain the reasons for the exclusion. Alternatives may be eliminated from detailed consideration in the EIR if they fail to meet most of the project objectives, are infeasible, or do not avoid any significant environmental effects.

This chapter identifies a No Project Alternative, as required under CEQA. In addition, two additional alternatives (a Less Intensive / No Parking Structure Alternative and a Reduced DRC Height Alternative) are evaluated. Both of these alternatives would attain some of the project objectives, are feasible, and could avoid or lessen environmental impacts. This chapter concludes by analyzing the environmentally superior alternative.

### 4.2 Project Objectives

As discussed in Chapter 2, Project Description, the Art Center's objectives relevant to this EIR and the proposed development in the Master Development Plan include the following:

- Further the Art Center’s educational mission and provide for long range growth of the College’s degree programs by providing the educational and research capacity physical space for expanded undergraduate level instruction in art, design and related disciplines, in a space designed to take advantage of opportunities afforded by evolving technologies;
- Express the College’s commitment to high stands of stewardship, architecture and design;
- Enhance Pasadena’s prestige as a center of cultural and educational institutions;
- Ensure the long-term financial stability of the College by balancing enrollment projections with facility needs, at the same time providing a unified, balanced, and dynamic plan for future growth which also minimizes uncertainty with the community regarding the scope of future campus development;
- Provide new outdoor plazas that would serve as venues for formal and informal meetings and events that would help foster a sense of campus community at the College;
- Conserve open and native vegetation both by leaving the hillside behind the existing campus undeveloped, and maintain an appropriate relationship between the campus, the surrounding community and the natural environment;
- Improve the quality of campus life for students at the Art Center by increasing the College’s educational and research capacity through the construction of the DRC; and
- Develop a distinct program and identity for the North (Hillside Campus) Campus separate from the South Campus.
- Respond to the applicant’s desire to increase the number of parking spaces at the Art Center North Campus (Hillside Campus) to address high parking demand.

### **4.3 Factors Considered in the Selection of Alternatives**

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

- The extent to which the alternative would accomplish most of the basic objectives of the project;
- The extent to which the alternative would avoid or lessen any of the identified significant environmental effects of the project;
- The feasibility of the alternative, taking into account site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, and consistency with other applicable plans and regulatory limitations;

- The appropriateness of the alternative in contributing to a “reasonable range” of alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice; and
- The requirement of the *CEQA Guidelines* to consider a “no project” alternative; and to identify an “environmentally superior” alternative in addition to the no-project alternative (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(e)).

Alternatives are ultimately compared to the goals of the project and of the City.

## 4.4 Selection of Alternatives

An EIR must briefly describe the rationale for selection and rejection of alternatives. The Lead Agency may make an initial determination as to which alternatives are feasible and which are infeasible, therefore providing merit to in-depth consideration for those selected for additional analysis. After consideration of various alternatives, the following were selected for evaluation: the No Project/ No Build Alternative and the Less Intensive/ No Parking Structure Alternative. These alternatives were selected for their potential to reduce project impacts, particularly significant project impacts. It is noted that all project impacts are reduced to less than significant; therefore, the proposed alternatives were selected in order to further reduce these impacts.

As noted earlier, the purpose of alternatives is to explore ways to avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed project. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, all impacts of the proposed project are less than significant, or less than significant with mitigation. No significant impacts would remain after mitigation. The following is a list of significant impacts requiring mitigation measures. The alternatives are expected to reduce these already less than significant impact, and may require fewer or reduced mitigation measures:

### ***Significant Project Impacts Reduced to Less than Significant with Mitigation***

- Aesthetics (scenic vistas, light and glare);
- Biological Resources (habitat modifications, wildlife movement, tree protection ordinance);
- Cultural Resources (archaeological and paleontological resources, human remains if found);
- Geology (seismicity, slope stability);
- Hydrology (surface water quality during construction, stormwater runoff during operations, expansion of stormwater systems);
- Land Use (plan consistency - implementation of biological resources and aesthetics mitigation measures required);
- Public Services (police – operational);

- Transportation/Traffic (vehicle trips, parking, alternative transportation); and
- Utilities (water facilities and supplies).

### ***Significant Project Impacts that Cannot be Mitigated***

- None.

## **4.5 Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration**

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

### **Alternative Site**

The Art Center College of Design operates two campuses, the Hillside Campus (location of the proposed project) at 1700 Lida Street, and the South Campus, located at 950 South Raymond Avenue, both in Pasadena. As described in Section 2, Project Description, and in Section 3J, Transportation/Traffic, the Art Center plans to reduce interaction between the two campuses. One of the stated goals, listed above is to: Develop a distinct program and identity for the North Campus separate from the South Campus. Locating the proposed DRC and Tyler Wing Addition on another site is not feasible, because they are planned as integrated components of the proposed project. Furthermore, since the expanded facilities would be instrumental to expanding the undergraduate programs, relocating these programs to the South Campus would dilute the identity of separate facilities, impact Art Center's objective to improve the quality of its educational curriculum at one location, and would increase commuting traffic to and from the North Campus to the South Campus. In addition, three of the proposed project objectives would not be met while one potential environmental impact would be increased.

### **Alternative Land Use**

As the proposed project is an operating college, the consideration of non-college uses was not considered applicable or feasible. While some colleges include on-site dormitories or faculty residences, the Art Center has not had such uses as a programming goal. Further, unless a large number of dormitory or faculty units were provided, reduced trip lengths or other environmental impact improvements would not occur. Also, new or increased impacts would likely occur with such an alternative, such as increases in noise levels outside the hours of peak campus activity,

grading beyond the project area, and calls for public services (police and fire). An alternative land use was not explored further, as it would fail to meet most of the project objectives and may have additional impacts than those of the project.

## Alternative Site Plans

Due to the location of the DRC on the eastern edge of the campus, visible from surrounding areas to the east, north and south, the City considered whether relocating the building to another portion of the site would reduce view impacts. An obvious proposal would be to switch the locations of some of the proposed Master Plan components, as discussed further, below.

**DRC on South Parking Lot and Parking Structure at Proposed DRC Location:** Switching the Parking Structure and DRC locations would make the more substantial and blocky massing of the parking structure more prominently visible. This would result in increased view impacts. Views of the DRC building (to be designed by a world-renown, prize-winning architect) would be at least partially obscured by the Parking Structure. View impacts would be greater with this alternative, and therefore would not satisfy the purpose of alternatives under CEQA.

**DRC on North Parking Lot:** Locating the DRC on the North Parking Lot would not be feasible, and would be undesirable, for several reasons. First, the existing pad would not be sufficient to accommodate the building. Additional grading could be proposed, but may require cuts into the hillside and/or grading beyond the amount (less than 0.5 acres) required under the proposed project. Second, if the DRC replaced the North Parking Lot, existing parking spaces would be displaced. The Art Center may request to replace these elsewhere, in order to meet the objectives of the proposed project, and additional grading and visual impacts could occur elsewhere on campus. Replacement spaces would either require additional grading on campus, remote parking with shuttle service, or other measures to reduce parking demand, such as carpooling and transit incentives. These measures could have a beneficial impact on traffic, by reducing the number of individual trips to the Art Center North Campus; however, these measures are already explored with the project in the Transportation/Traffic mitigation measures. Lastly, due to the insufficient space at this location, changes to campus access roads may be necessary, which in turn could result in additional environmental impacts (e.g., grading, vegetation removal).

In addition, neither of the Alternative Site Plans allows for the interaction of the campus buildings in the manner proposed by the Master Plan. As currently proposed, the location of the Elwood Building, Tyler Addition, Sinclair Pavilion and DRC building would together create a focal point to the campus buildings, with appropriate pedestrian and vehicular access, landscaping and hardscaping provided to serve the buildings. Neither of the Alternative Site Plans provides a unified campus as well as the proposed Master Plan. The alternatives provide for a more disjointed plan that would not meet the City's General Plan policy which promotes architectural and design excellence.

## Enrollment Cap Alternative (1,500)

One alternative suggested during scoping was to maintain enrollment at the current level of 1,500 full-time students. The intent of this comment was to address the potential traffic impacts of increased enrollment. This alternative was not considered for several reasons. First, it does not meet the project objective to further the Art Center's educational mission and provide for long range growth of the College by expanding undergraduate level instruction. Second, this alternative does not meaningfully address mitigation in any of the identified potential environmental impacts areas of aesthetics, biology, cultural resources, geology, hydrology, noise, public services, transportation or utilities. The project components of the DRC, Tyler Wing Addition and parking structure would still be built under this proposal of static enrollment. Therefore, the potential aesthetic impacts of the DRC, for example, would still occur and could not be mitigated with fewer students. Third, the proposed project with mitigation measures incorporated addresses potential traffic impacts through the mitigation options of limiting new trips to 291 or capping enrollment at 1,697 students. As discussed in the EIR, the proposed project with mitigation measures would reduce potential traffic impacts to a less than significant level. The Enrollment Cap Alternative (1,500) would not reduce potential traffic impacts significantly beyond the levels of the proposed project with mitigation measures incorporated. Finally, this alternative does not address the basic objective of CEQA which is to discuss in depth those alternatives which appreciably provide mitigation within the identified potential project impact areas.

## 4.6 Alternatives Analysis

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

The *CEQA Guidelines* (Section 16126.6(e)) provides the following guidance on the No Project Alternative, "for ... a development project on identifiable property, the "no project" alternative is the circumstance under which the project does not proceed. Here the discussion would compare the environmental effects of the property remaining in its existing state against environmental effects which would occur if the project is approved."

#### Environmental Impacts

**Aesthetics:** Under the No Project/ No Build Alternative, the site would remain in its present condition. Vegetation would be maintained in the currently landscaped areas (existing landscaping within the existing 33-acre campus site), but remain in a natural condition elsewhere (including the approximately 0.5 acres of proposed new grading). No changes would be made to the existing aesthetic character of the site. The beneficial impacts of providing a new Frank Gehry designed building, which promotes General Plan Policy 5.4, which addresses architectural and design excellence, would not occur. On the other hand, no changes to views would occur. Overall, project impacts would be reduced.

**Air Quality:** Under the No Project/ No Build Alternative, the project site would remain the same. As a result, there would be no construction-related emissions (from construction activities,

vehicles and equipment), and no operational emissions (associated with increased traffic) with the additions to the Art Center. With no additional traffic volumes, air emissions in the vicinity would remain unchanged. No impact to air quality would occur as a result of this alternative; impacts would be reduced.

**Biological Resources:** The No Project/ No Build Alternative would not result in a change to present biological resources at the project site. Under this alternative, the project site landscape would remain unchanged, and no trees or hillside vegetation would be removed. Additional site grading would not occur. No impact to biological resources would occur, eliminating the proposed project's impacts.

**Cultural Resources:** Under the No Project/ No Build Alternative, buildings and structures would remain unchanged. This alternative would not involve excavation and grading activities that could unearth cultural resources. The proposal to restore the Ellwood Building to its original configuration separate from the Tyler Wing would not occur. Under this alternative, there would be no changes to the site and thus no impact to cultural resources would occur, eliminating the potential project impacts and restoration benefits.

**Geology:** Under the No Project/ No Build Alternative, no excavation and/or grading would occur at the project site. The site would continue to be exposed to existing geological risks, but, because the site would remain unchanged under this alternative, no additional people or property would be exposed to potential geology risk. The No Project/ No Build Alternative would result in a less than significant impact related to the exposure of people and structures to geologic hazards. Impacts would be reduced.

**Hydrology and Water Quality:** Under the No Project/No Build Alternative, existing storm water runoff drainage patterns and volumes would remain unchanged. No potential impacts to water quality, such as new point and non-point source discharges, resulting from construction activities, or subsequent business operations would occur. No increase in flow to drainage facilities would occur. Existing sheet flows along neighborhood streets would continue in their present state. This alternative would have no additional impact on hydrology and water quality, and existing conditions would persist. Project related impacts would be reduced.

**Land Use and Planning:** The No Project/ No Build Alternative would not result in a change to the existing land use. Because no change to the existing land use or land use plans, and policies related to the project site would occur, this alternative would have no impact on land use at the site or in the vicinity. This variant of the Master Plan is consistent with both the PS (Public/Semi-Public) Zoning and General Plan Institutional designations. Potential project related construction impacts would be reduced.

**Noise:** The No Project/ No Build Alternative would not result in any change to existing ambient noise levels and would introduce no new source of noise. Because no additional construction or educational operations would occur, and because traffic related to the project site would remain the same, traffic-related noise attributable to the project site would also remain unchanged. This

alternative would result in no impact related to noise at or in the vicinity of the project site. Impacts would be reduced and the proposed project construction-phase impacts would not occur.

**Public Services:** The No Project/ No Build Alternative would have no impact on the provision of public services in the City of Pasadena. The site is presently serviced by the City of Pasadena Fire and Police Department. The No Project/No Build Alternative would not increase the need for additional services and would have no impact on existing services. Impacts of the proposed project would be reduced.

**Transportation/Traffic:** The No Project/No Build Alternative would result in no changes to traffic, or the related issues of parking and alternate transportation. No increase in traffic, parking or alternative transportation demand would occur. As a result, the No Project/No Build Alternative would result in no change to transportation or traffic, and would have reduced impacts.

**Utilities:** The No Project/No Build Alternative would not result in increased utility usage. As a result, the No Project/ No Build Alternative would have reduced impacts utility demand. Specifically, it would have no impact on electricity, electrical facilities, water supplies, water or wastewater treatment facilities, new or existing storm water drainage facilities, or a substantial impact on solid waste facilities. As a result, the No Project/No Build Alternative would result in no change to utility demand, and would have reduced impacts.

### ***Comparison to Project Objectives***

The No Project/No Build Alternative would not meet any of the project objectives. The No Project/No Build Alternative would not provide the Art Center with expanded facilities, nor would it provide the City with a building of architectural excellence (as promoted by City General Plan policy). The Art Center Hillside Campus would remain limited by its existing facilities, and would not allow for any growth to meet the goals for the campus, as expressed in the project objectives.

### ***Conclusion***

In general, the No Project/No Build Alternative would result in fewer impacts on the environment than the proposed project. However, this alternative would not meet any of the goals and objectives of the project.

## **Alternative 2: Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative**

The Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would eliminate the parking structure from the proposed Master Plan project. This alternative does not cap enrollment, thus the number of full-time students to the proposed 1,900 students is still possible if Art Center manages new trips to the campus at a level below the threshold of significance. This is considered a less intensive

development alternative, as it would include less construction activity and fewer tree removals since the parking structure on the South Parking Lot would not be built.

## Environmental Impacts

**Aesthetics:** The proposed project is not located along a route designated as scenic by Caltrans or by the City of Pasadena. The Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would allow for the other proposed project features (i.e., the DRC Building and the Tyler Wing Addition) to be completed as proposed in the Master Plan. Only the proposed parking structure would be eliminated. The proposed parking structure is visible from View 3 (above and to the left of the DRC) and View 4 (to the left of the DRC, one can see the top 1-2 stories of the parking structure), although not as easily discerned as the DRC. The potential visual impact is not as notable as with the DRC, and is less than significant, as described in the Aesthetics Section. The alternative would have no aesthetic impact, whereas the project parking structure's impact is less than significant. The DRC building's aesthetic impact of less than significant with mitigation would remain unchanged with this alternative. The Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would, as would the proposed project, be subject to the same mitigation measures, design review process and regulations concerning aesthetics, light and glare, which would ensure less than significant impacts on visual quality due to the DRC building. However, impacts would overall be reduced.

**Air Quality:** The Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would result in lower construction emissions, and potentially lower operational emissions. Passenger car trips to the North Campus would remain approximately at the current level. Parking demand associated with increased enrollment would need to be accommodated in other ways, such as carpooling, which reduces the number of parking spaces needed; increased transit use; or shuttle service to a remote parking lot. Increased carpooling and transit use would result in reduced emissions. As with the proposed project, the Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would result in less than significant impacts on state goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as less than significant impacts on localized carbon monoxide concentrations at sensitive receptors. Impacts would be reduced as compared to the proposed project.

**Biological Resources:** As with the proposed project, the Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would result in the same area of general disturbance since the parking structure is proposed to be constructed on an existing parking lot (the existing 33-acres, plus an additional area of approximately 0.5 acres). Fewer trees would be removed, as some trees in the existing South Parking Lot would be removed with the proposed project. Tree removals in the area of the DRC would remain the same as with the proposed project. Both the proposed project and the Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would require mitigation for the loss of trees and tree canopy/however, the alternative would result in fewer removals and therefore result in reduced impacts.

**Cultural Resources:** The Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would still result in grading and clearance of the project site to accommodate construction of the DRC. The area of proposed new excavation (approximately 0.5 acres) would remain the same. As with the proposed

project, exclusion of the parking structure would still not have a significant impact to the historic Ellwood Building because the South Parking Lot is sufficiently distant to be visually screened by existing landscape trees, and the configuration of this lot would remain in its current form. Thus, the Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would have the same potential impacts as the proposed project and would require the same mitigation measures.

**Geology:** The Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would result in exposing additional students and faculty to the same geologic hazards as identified for the proposed project. The Parking Structure would not be constructed, limiting effects that could occur within the context of additional construction at the Art Center. This alternative would have similar, potential impacts as the proposed project and would require the same mitigation measures.

**Hydrology and Water Quality:** As with the proposed project, the Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would still result in less impervious surface area at the project site because the location for the proposed parking structure is already a paved surface. Configuration and drainage of the South Parking Lot would remain unchanged. Impacts would be the same and mitigation measures would be required, in order to reduce pollution in stormwater runoff.

**Land Use and Planning:** The Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would not conflict with the objectives of the General Plan. As the project would add fewer new buildings, it would provide less of an impact than the proposed project in terms of the objective to preserve the character and scale of Pasadena, and less of an impact than the proposed project in terms of the objective to protect hillsides. However, since the site for the proposed parking structure is already a paved surface, this reduction in impact is slight. This variant of the Master Plan is consistent with both the PS (Public/Semi-Public) Zoning and General Plan Institutional designations. The alternative would have the same less than significant impact with regard to the historic preservation objective. Overall, impacts would be slightly reduced as compared to the proposed project.

**Noise:** The Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would result in less construction noise for fewer buildings, therefore having a lesser impact than the project. As with the project, the alternative would require mitigation for construction, and would assure no significant impact to area residences (nearest residence is a considerable distance away, at 500 feet). Less than significant operational noise impacts would occur due to traffic associated with an expanded campus. Trips to and from the Art Center would remain close to static, as there would not be an increase in parking, and carpooling and shuttle usage may increase if enrollment increases but the availability of remains fixed at current levels,. To the extent that local trips associated with this alternative may be reduced (due to less parking being available at the Art Center), the alternative could result in less operational noise. Impacts would be reduced as compared to the project.

**Public Services:** The Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would result in an increase in demand for police and fire protection services, as well as emergency medical response. Without the parking structure, a slight reduction in police and fire services at the campus would be needed, creating a reduced demand as compared to the proposed project.

**Transportation/Traffic:** The Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would result in the same or fewer trips to the campus, and therefore a static or reduced traffic impact. Under this scenario, some of the projected trips with the proposed project may be replaced by carpooling trips and shuttle trips. The proposed project mitigation measures would still be applicable and required of the Less Intensive Alternative.

**Utilities and Service Systems:** As with the proposed project, the Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would result in the use of utilities and service systems, but demand would be slightly less given that the parking structure would not be a component of the Master Plan. Impacts would be reduced as compared to the proposed project.

### ***Comparison to Project Objectives***

The Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would meet most of the basic project objectives, but to a lesser extent than with the project since this variant of the Master Plan does not address the applicant's indication of a current shortage of parking at the campus. This alternative would not fulfill the Art Center plans for the site as well as the project would.

In particular, this alternative would not assist Art Center with meeting its objective to further its educational mission and provide for long range growth of the College's degree programs, since it could limit the number of students and faculty who could conveniently access the campus. Thus, the lack of parking could at least partially negate the benefit of the remainder of the project's provision of educational and research capacity physical space for expanded undergraduate and graduate level instruction in art, design and related disciplines, in a space designed to take advantage of opportunities afforded by evolving technologies. If that were to occur, Art Center would also not meet its project objective to enhance Pasadena's prestige as a center of cultural and educational institutions, as well as ensuring the long-term financial stability of the College. If Art Center were to have to increase connectivity between its North and South campuses in an effort to solve a parking shortage issue, that would defeat the project objective to develop a distinct program and identity for the North Campus separate from the South Campus.

### ***Conclusion***

In general, the Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would result in slightly fewer impacts on the environment than the proposed project. However, this alternative would not meet most of the basic project objectives.

## **Environmentally Superior Alternative**

An EIR must identify the environmentally superior alternative. In addition, the *CEQA Guidelines* (Section 15126.6(e)(2)) require that, if the environmentally superior alternative is the No Project Alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives. The No Project Alternative would result in the least environmental impacts. Next to the No Project Alternative, the Less Intensive/No Parking Structure Alternative would have the least impacts, and therefore is the environmentally superior alternative. This alternative would meet some of the Master Plan goals and objectives of the Art Center.