

CHAPTER 5.0

Alternatives

5.1 Introduction and General Requirements

The purpose of the alternative analysis in an EIR is to describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and to evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(a)). Additionally, Section 15126.6(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires consideration of alternatives that could reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level or eliminate any significant adverse environmental effects of the proposed project, including alternative that may be more costly or could otherwise impede to some degree the attainment of the project's objectives.

It is important to understand that the mere inclusion of an alternative in an EIR does not constitute definitive evidence that the alternative is in fact "feasible." The ultimate decision regarding the feasibility of alternatives lies with the ultimate decision maker for a project, which is the County of Plumas for the proposed project. Such determinations are to be made in statutory mandated findings addressing potentially feasible means of reducing the severity of significant environmental effects. One finding that is permissible, if supported by substantial evidence, is that "specific economic, legal, social, technological or other considerations...make infeasible the...alternative identified" on the EIR (Pub. Resource Code, § 21081, (a); see also CEQA Guidelines, § 15901, subd. (a)). CEQA Guidelines section 15364 defines "feasible" to mean "capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social and technological factors." In deciding whether an alternative is feasible or infeasible, a decision making body may consider the stated project objective in an EIR, and may balance any relevant economic, environmental, social and technological factors (See *City of Del Mar v. City of San Diego* (1982) 133 Cal. App. 3d 410, 417; *Sequoiah Hills Homeowners Assn. v. City of Oakland* (1993) 23 Cal. App. 4th 704, 715).

5.2 Factors in Selection of Alternatives

The CEQA Guidelines recommend that an EIR should briefly describe the rationale for selecting the alternatives to be discussed, identify any alternative that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible, and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(c)).

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

- the extent to which the alternative would accomplish most of the basic goals and objectives of the proposed project (shown in Chapter 3.0 Project Description);
- the extent to which the alternative would avoid or lessen any of the identified significant effects of the proposed 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 alternative 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)).

As stated in Chapter 3.0, Project Description, the objectives of the proposed project are to:

- achieve a comprehensive update to the County’s General Plan that reflects the current values and vision of the community and reflects the latest legal, statutory, scientific, and technical changes and advances;
- directs new development to Planning Areas to support future economic growth and facilitate the efficient provision of new infrastructure and public services;
- reinforce the vitality, local economy, and individual character of existing communities, while ensuring the continued viability of timber and agricultural production and the preservation of the County’s scenic and environmental resources;
- results in land use patterns that accommodate the most recent population growth, housing, and employment projections in an orderly manner that minimizes environmental impacts as feasible while meeting the County’s obligations under California Planning Law to provide housing for all income levels;
- ensure that development accounts for physical constraints and the natural hazards of the land;
- minimize public costs of infrastructure and services and correlate their timing with new development; and
- preserve the larger watershed area to conserve limited water supplies for current and projected future uses, including urban, rural, and agricultural uses.

5.3 Alternatives Eliminated from Consideration

The following alternatives were originally considered during the planning and scoping process for the proposed project, but were determined to not be viable for continued evaluation and were eliminated from further consideration.

- **Restrictive Growth Alternative.** This alternative is similar to the proposed project (primarily focus growth within established Planning Areas) but would be more restrictive for individual residential development outside of the Planning Areas by reducing the overall density on lands designated as “General Forest”, Agriculture Preserve”, and “Agriculture and Grazing” within the County. Residential densities would be reduced to allow 1 additional dwelling unit/160 acre parcel minimums similar to those requirements on lands designed for “Timberland Production Zone”. While anticipated population growth under this alternative for the Planning Areas would be similar to that anticipated under the proposed project, growth within other areas of the County would be greatly restricted compared to residential densities currently proposed for agricultural and timberlands outside of identified Planning Areas. All other aspects of the proposed project (including objectives, goals, policies, and implementation measures) would remain the same. This alternative was dropped from further consideration as being infeasible due to its potential conflict with existing property rights. Thus, this EIR does not evaluate the Restrictive Growth Alternative.
- **Alternative Project Location.** None of the alternatives includes consideration of an alternative location. The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6(3) (f) (2)) recommend considering an alternative location to reduce potential impacts of a project. However, the goals and policies of the proposed project are specific to the geographic context of the County’s planning area. Build-out consistent with the goals and policies of the proposed project at another location does not make sense for a general plan that applies to all properties within the County’s jurisdiction and within its planning area. Thus, this EIR does not evaluate an Alternative Location alternative.

5.4 Alternatives Selected for Consideration

According to the CEQA Guidelines, the range of alternatives required is governed by the “rule of reason” that requires the EIR to set forth only those feasible alternatives necessary to permit an informed and reasoned choice by the decision-making body and informed public participation. The following alternatives to the proposed project were selected to be addressed in this EIR:

- Alternative A – No-Project Alternative (development under the existing 1984 General Plan).
- Alternative B – Flexible Growth Alternative.
- Alternative C – Focused Growth Alternative.

The following provides a general description of each alternative.

5.4.1 Alternative A – No-Project Alternative

Section 15126.6(e) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR evaluate and analyze the environmental impacts of the “No-Project” Alternative. When the project is the revision of an existing land use or regulatory plan or policy, the no-project alternative will be the continuation of the existing plan or policy into the future. Therefore, Alternative A (No-Project or existing 1984 General Plan) analyzes the effects of continued implementation of the existing 1984 Plumas County General Plan (existing 1984 General Plan), which would remain as the adopted long-range planning policy document for the County. Consequently, current development patterns would continue to occur in accordance with the existing 1984 General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and established Growth Areas (i.e., prime opportunity areas, etc.).

Population forecasts under the No Project Alternative are anticipated to be similar as those anticipated under the proposed project. Existing development capacity (under the existing 1984 General Plan) in Plumas County far exceeds the actual market demand for additional housing units, as there is currently zoned capacity for an additional 31,200 dwelling units. In consideration of this existing zoned capacity, the No-Project Alternative would similarly add 4,765 residential units (both primary and secondary homes) by 2035. As a result, the relative degree of impact when the alternatives are compared to one another would remain essentially the same as during the 2035 planning horizon. As described below, the primary difference between the alternatives is how future growth is managed under the alternatives.

The primary difference between the No Project Alternative and the proposed project is that the proposed project considers existing constraints (i.e., infrastructure, environmental) to development and concentrates population growth within established Growth Areas (Planning Areas under the proposed project) where infrastructure and services are available, while the existing 1984 General Plan has less focus on environmental and infrastructure constraints (levels of existing available service or the ability to easily connect to existing infrastructure). The existing 1984 General Plan allows for the intensification of rural areas by facilitating the development of new Towns or large recreation-focused developments that would require new infrastructure and the administration of this infrastructure independently of existing service and/or infrastructure providers. Also, under the No Project Alternative, the existing 1984 General Plan elements would remain the guiding documents for development in the unincorporated County. The County would utilize its existing zoning and other regulations to direct development within its jurisdiction. Infrastructure would be constructed under existing plans. Existing 1984 General Plan maps, objectives and policies would continue to be in effect.

5.4.2 Alternative B – Flexible Growth Alternative

While this alternative would still focus new growth within established Planning Areas, some subdivision development would be allowed outside of established Growth Areas as long as public service and utility infrastructure requirements could be met with the exception of fire protection. Additionally, on lands designated as “Timber Production Zones” (TPZ under the land use diagram) residential densities would be increased to allow 1 additional dwelling unit/40 acre

parcel minimums rather than the 160 acre parcel minimums identified under the proposed project. Additionally, these properties may be subdivided into parcels less than 40 acres in order to cluster development and protect timber and other resource values as long as the overall dwelling unit density does not exceed the base density permissible on the original parcel.

Anticipated base population growth under this alternative would be similar to the proposed project (using market demand development assumptions of 4,765 additional residential units by 2035), although growth may be slightly higher than the proposed project due to the additional growth potential (1 additional dwelling unit per 40 acre parcel minimums rather than 160 acre parcel minimums) that could be accommodated outside of designated Planning Areas. However, the exact number of new housing units on TPZ designated land has not been determined due to the speculative nature of this type of growth. For example, the additional housing growth on TPZ designated land would be based on individual land owner decisions with no current information available on the number of land owners that would apply for development permits to subdivide parcels that would meet the 40 acre parcel minimum requirements.

All other aspects of the General Plan Goals and Policies Report would remain the same as the proposed project.

5.4.3 Alternative C – Focused Growth Alternative

Compared to the proposed project, this alternative would provide for a slight increase in planned urban residential densities in existing Planning Areas, increasing urban-serviceable development, including infill and mixed-use opportunities. As appropriate within each Planning Area, future urban development would be focused around existing community core areas and transportation routes to help decrease local vehicle miles travelled and increase the opportunities for alternative forms of transportation including transit, pedestrian, and bicycle use locally.

All other aspects of the General Plan Goals and Policies Report would remain the same as the proposed project.

5.5 Environmental Impacts of the Alternatives

As provided in Section 15126.6(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, the significant effects of each alternative are identified in less detail than those of the proposed project. Thus, the environmental analysis below focuses on potentially significant and significant impacts prior to implementation of mitigation. **Table 5-1**, below, provides a summary of all impacts under each of the alternatives considered and compares each alternative to the proposed project. In some cases, the significance conclusion of an impact may be the same under each alternative when compared to the Thresholds of Significance. However, the actual degree of impact may be slightly different (more or less).

**TABLE 5-1
SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES
(COMPARISON OF IMPACTS WITH 2035 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE)**

Impact No.	Impact Statement	Proposed Project	Alt A: No Project	Alt 2: Flexible Growth	Alt 3: Focused Growth
Land Use and Aesthetics (Section 4.1)					
4.1-1	The proposed project could divide the physical arrangement of an established community.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
4.1-2	The proposed project could conflict with other applicable adopted land use plans.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
4.1-3	The proposed project could substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.	LTS	SU	SU	SU-
4.1-4	The proposed project could have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista or substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
4.1-5	The proposed project could substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of Plumas County.	SU	SU+	SU+	SU-
4.1-6	The proposed project could create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the County.	SU	SU+	SU+	SU-
Traffic and Circulation (Section 4.2)					
4.2.-1	The proposed project could result in a substantial increase in vehicular traffic. This would result in a significant impact to SR 36 west of Chester (Existing plus Proposed Project).	SU	SU+	SU+	SU+
4.2.-2	The proposed project could result in increased conflicts between vehicles/pedestrians and vehicles/bicycles which could result in unsafe conditions (Existing plus Proposed Project).	LTS	LTS+	LTS+	LTS+
4.2.-3	The proposed project could result in increased conflicts between trains and vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles which could result in unsafe conditions (Existing plus Proposed Project).	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Air Quality (Section 4.3)					
4.3-1	The proposed project could expose a variety of sensitive land uses to construction-related air quality emissions.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
4.3-2	The proposed project could result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of criteria air pollutants that result in a violation of an air quality standard.	SU	SU+	SU+	SU-
4.3-3	The proposed project could result in conflicts with applicable Air Quality Management Plans and Standards.	SU	SU+	SU+	SU-
4.3-4	The proposed project could expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations that could affect public health.	LTS	SU	LTS+	LTS-
4.3-5	The proposed project could result in the emission of objectionable odors.	LTS	LTS+	LTS+	LTS-
Energy and Climate Change (Section 4.4)					
4.4-1	The proposed project could contribute considerably to cumulative GHG emissions and global climate change.	LTS	LTS+	LTS+	LTS-

**TABLE 5-1
SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES
(COMPARISON OF IMPACTS WITH 2035 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE) (continued)**

Impact No.	Impact Statement	Proposed Project	Alt A: No Project	Alt 2: Flexible Growth	Alt 3: Focused Growth
4.4-2	The proposed project could result in subject property or persons to otherwise avoidable physical harm in light of inevitable climate change.	LTS	LTS+	LTS+	LTS-
4.4-3	The proposed project could result in the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy by residential, commercial, industrial, or public uses associated with increased demand due to anticipated development in the County.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Noise (Section 4.5)					
4.5-1	The proposed project could result in exposure of noise sensitive land uses (persons) to traffic noise in excess of County noise standards, or substantial increases in traffic noise.	SU	SU+	SU+	SU+
4.5-2	The proposed project could result in temporary, short-term noise impacts during associated construction activities.	LTS	LTS+	LTS	LTS
4.5-3	The proposed project could result in the exposure of persons to excessive ground-borne vibration.	LTS	LTS+	LTS+	LTS
4.5-4	The proposed project could involve the potential exposure of people residing or working near an airport to excessive noise levels.	LTS	LTS+	LTS	LTS
4.5-5	The proposed project could expose people residing or working near industrial/agricultural land uses and recreational venues to excessive noise levels.	LTS	LTS+	LTS+	LTS
Hydrology, Water Quality, and Drainage (Section 4.6)					
4.6-1	The proposed project could violate water quality standards or waste discharge requirements.	LTS	LTS+	LTS+	LTS-
4.6-2	The proposed project could result in increased soil erosion and sedimentation during construction activities, substantially degrading water quality in downstream waterways.	LTS	LTS+	LTS	LTS-
4.6-3	The proposed project could result in sewer- and septic-related water quality impacts, including those associated with reuse of treated water and migration of septic tank leach field wastewater effluent to groundwater that would violate water quality standards.	LTS	LTS+	LTS+	LTS-
4.6-4	The proposed project could deplete groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge.	SU	SU+	SU+	SU-
4.6-5	The proposed project could alter existing drainage patterns resulting in increased erosion or siltation, or could increase surface runoff in a manner that would result in flooding on or off site.	LTS	LTS+	LTS+	LTS-
4.6-6	The proposed project could result in the construction of housing within areas that are subject to 100-year flooding.	LTS	LTS+	LTS	LTS-
4.6-7	The proposed project could result in the construction of facilities within areas that are subject to flooding, which could redirect or impede flood flows.	LTS	LTS+	LTS	LTS-
4.6-8	The proposed project could result in the development of areas that are located within an existing dam failure inundation zone.	SU	SU+	SU	SU-

**TABLE 5-1
SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES
(COMPARISON OF IMPACTS WITH 2035 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE) (continued)**

Impact No.	Impact Statement	Proposed Project	Alt A: No Project	Alt 2: Flexible Growth	Alt 3: Focused Growth
Geology, Soils, Seismicity, and Mineral Resources (Section 4.7)					
4.7-1	The proposed project could result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
4.7-2	The proposed project could expose people to injury or structures to damage from potential rupture of a known earthquake fault, strong groundshaking, seismic-related ground failure, or landslide.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
4.7-3	The proposed project could result in potential structural damage from development on a potentially unstable geologic unit or soil.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
4.7-4	The proposed project could increase the potential for structural damage from development on expansive soil.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
4.7-5	The proposed project could result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource, or a locally important mineral resource recovery site that would be of value to the region and residents of the State.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
4.7-6	The proposed project could expose persons and property to seiche or mudflow hazards.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Hazardous Materials and Public Safety (Section 4.8)					
4.8-1	The proposed project could expose persons to hazardous materials from routine use, transport, or disposal of hazardous materials or the release of hazardous materials.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
4.8-2	The proposed project could establish new land uses that would potentially create aviation safety hazards.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
4.8-3	The proposed project could establish new land uses increasing their exposure to wildland fires.	SU	SU+	SU+	SU-
4.8-4	The proposed project could establish new land uses that would interfere with the implementation of an emergency response or evacuation plan.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Public Services, Recreation Resources, and Utilities (Section 4.9)					
4.9-1	The proposed project could result in the need for new or expanded fire facilities.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS-
4.9-2	The proposed project could result in the need for new or expanded law enforcement facilities.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS-
4.9-3	The proposed project could result in the need for new or expanded public education services or facilities.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS-
4.9-4	The proposed project could result in the need for new or expanded libraries or other County services.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS-
4.9-5	The proposed project could result in the creation of additional demands on water supply, resulting in a need for new or expanded water treatment facilities.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS-
4.9-6	The proposed project could result in the creation of additional demands for wastewater collection and treatment, resulting in a need for new or expanded wastewater treatment facilities.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS-
4.9-7	The proposed project could result in the need for new or expanded stormwater drainage facilities.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS-

**TABLE 5-1
SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES
(COMPARISON OF IMPACTS WITH 2035 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE) (continued)**

Impact No.	Impact Statement	Proposed Project	Alt A: No Project	Alt 2: Flexible Growth	Alt 3: Focused Growth
4.9-8	The proposed project could result in a need for new solid waste facilities or non-compliance with waste diversion requirements.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS-
4.9-9	The proposed project could result in the need for new or expanded parks, trails, and recreational facilities, which were not contemplated in the general plan.	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS-
Agriculture and Timber Resources (Section 4.10)					
4.10-1	The proposed project could result in the conversion of Important Farmland or Forest Land to non-agricultural use.	SU	SU+	SU+	SU-
4.10-2	The proposed project could result in conflicts with existing zoning for agricultural use, Williamson Act contracts, or Timberland Protection Zones.	LTS	LTS	LTS+	LTS-
4.10-3	The proposed project could involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, would result in the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use.	SU	SU+	SU+	SU-
Biological Resources (Section 4.11)					
4.11-1	The proposed project could have an adverse impact on special status species.	LTS	SU	LTS+	LTS-
4.11-2	The proposed project could have potential adverse effects on sensitive riparian habitat, other sensitive natural communities and on Federal and State jurisdictional waters and wetlands.	LTS	SU	LTS+	LTS-
4.11-3	The proposed project could result in the potential disturbance and loss of native fish and wildlife species movement corridors.	LTS	SU	LTS+	LTS-
4.11-4	The proposed project would not result in a potential Inconsistency with an adopted conservation plan.	LTS	SU	LTS+	LTS-
Cultural Resource (Section 4.12)					
4.12-1	The proposed project could potentially damage or destroy historic resources.	SU	SU+	SU+	SU-
4.12-2	The proposed project could potentially damage or destroy archaeological resources.	LTS	SU	LTS+	LTS-
4.12-3	The proposed project could result in damage or destruction of paleontological resources.	LTS	SU	LTS+	LTS-
4.12-4	The proposed project could damage or destroy burial sites.	LTS	SU	LTS+	LTS-

Significant and Unavoidable (SU)

Potentially Significant (PS)

Less than Significant (LTS)

"+" means that the impact is greater in magnitude when compared to the proposed project

"-" means that the impact is less in magnitude when compared to the proposed project

5.5.1 Alternative A – No-Project Alternative

Under this alternative, the existing 1984 General Plan would continue to serve as the County's blueprint for growth. No land use designations would change, and it is assumed that existing undeveloped lots of record ultimately would be built out to their highest use, as envisioned by the

existing 1984 General Plan land use map. Overall, population and housing growth assumptions would be similar to those for the proposed project as they are based on market conditions. The existing 1984 General Plan would also continue to provide policy guidance for future planning and development decisions and would not include the updated policy guidance (including the Water Resources, Economics, Public Health and Safety, and Agriculture and Forestry Elements) designed to address key environmental and planning issues affecting the County.

Land Use and Aesthetics

Neither the No Project Alternative nor the proposed project would result in the division or alteration of an existing community. However, under the currently adopted general plan, the County would have less of an ability to direct specific development changes to defined Planning Areas and to ensure that new development is well-connected and compatible with surrounding uses. Similar to the proposed project, development proposed under the No Project Alternative would still need to be consistent with existing plans and policies. Existing general plan policies would generally ensure that new development is compatible with surrounding land uses. For these reasons, the land use impacts of the No Project Alternative are considered to be similar to those of the proposed project and are less than significant.

The No Project Alternative proposes development that is similar in nature to that anticipated under the proposed project. The existing 1984 General Plan includes some policy guidance with respect to community appearance; however, the proposed goals and polices provided as part of the proposed project are considerably more comprehensive (addressing a range of aesthetic issues including light and glare, see Policy COS-7.6.6 “Lighting and Night Sky Protection”) and detailed than those in the existing 1984 General Plan. Similar to the proposed project, development under this alternative would degrade the existing visual character of and introduce new sources of light to the area and result in potentially significant impacts. However, these aesthetic impacts under the No Project Alternative could be greater due to the lack of policy guidance that promotes well connected development within or near existing Planning Areas that minimizes unconnected and sprawling development that could affect the visual character of the County.

Transportation and Circulation

Under the No Project Alternative, the County would continue to function under the direction of the existing 1984 General Plan. Traffic operating conditions on study roadway segments are summarized below, with a full description of the methodologies used to conduct the operations analysis provided in Appendix C of this DEIR. **Table 5-2** summarizes the operating LOS based on capacity thresholds. As shown, all roadways would operate within acceptable LOS, with the exception of SR 36 west of Chester. For this roadway segment, traffic growth associated with future development would exacerbate the existing deficiency. While LOS grade would not degrade, the addition of traffic would increase the percent time drivers must follow another vehicle from 64 percent of the time to 68 percent of the time in the eastbound direction, and from 61 percent of the time to 65 percent of the time in the westbound direction.

**TABLE 5-2
ROADWAY SEGMENT LOS – EXISTING + EXISTING 1984 GENERAL PLAN CONDITIONS**

Roadway Segment			Existing	Existing Plus Existing GP
	Eastbound/ Northbound LOS ¹	Westbound/ Southbound LOS ¹	Eastbound/ Northbound LOS ¹	Westbound/ Southbound LOS ¹
SR 36 – West of Chester	D	D	D	D
SR 36 – East of Chester	B	B	B	C
SR 89 – South of Canyon Dam	A	B	B	B
SR 147 – Lake Almanor East Shore	B	A	B	A
SR 89 – Graeagle Area	C	C	C	C
SR 70 – North of Keddie	B	B	B	B
SR 70 – East Quincy	A	A	A	A
SR 70 – Sloat Area	B	B	C	B
SR 70 – Portola	A	A	A	A

¹ Level of Service based on the *Highway Capacity Manual* (Transportation Research Board, 2010)

Shading indicates that the roadway segment operates unacceptably. Bold text indicates a significant impact.

Overall, transportation impacts (LOS) to SR 36 (west of Chester) resulting from the No Project Alternative are expected to be similar to those associated with the proposed project, resulting in a significant impact to SR 36 west of Chester. As more fully described in Section 4.2 “Transportation and Circulation” of the DEIR, the proposed project incorporates a number of new policies and implementation measures (see Table 4.2-4 of Section 4.2 of the DEIR) requiring new development to identify and mitigate (i.e., contribute their fair share to both construction of new roadway facilities and for on-going roadway maintenance – see Policy CIR-4.1.4) development-related circulation impacts. Additionally, consistent with the rural nature of the County, the Circulation Element also includes several policies designed to promote complete street concepts for new development. For example, Policy 4.2-1 “Complete Street Design” identifies a number of complete street design elements (such as, a balanced roadway design to accommodate a variety of non-motorized transportation uses, low-impact street lighting, and landscaping that minimizes runoff/erosion). Finally, the Circulation Element includes a number of circulation policies designed to enhance local/regional environmental issues. Consequently, the lack of specific transportation policies designed to address adequate levels of circulation infrastructure along with the lack of policies specifically designed to address transportation-related environmental impacts in the existing 1984 General Plan (No Project Alternative) would result in adverse impacts on transportation and circulation issues greater than those of the proposed project.

Air Quality

Under the No Project Alternative, the County would continue to function under the direction of the existing 1984 General Plan. In consideration of the County’s existing zoned capacity, the No-Project Alternative would add a similar number of residential units (both primary and secondary homes) as the proposed project by 2035, with the primary difference between the alternatives as to how future growth is managed. However, as described in Section 4.3 “Air Quality” of the DEIR, the proposed project incorporates a number of new policies and implementation measures (see Table 4.3-4 of Section 4.3 of the DEIR) that focus on alternative transportation

improvements that reduce vehicle miles travelled (i.e., trails, transit, etc.) and air quality protection measures consistent with the NSAQMD that are not currently found in the existing 1984 General Plan. Consequently, the combination of a lack of specific transportation improvement policies and air quality protection policies in the existing 1984 General Plan would result in potential adverse impacts on air quality greater than those of the proposed project.

Energy and Climate Change

Similar to air quality, the proposed project incorporates a number of new policies and implementation measures (see Table 4.4-4 of Section 4.4 of the DEIR) that focus on reducing GHG emissions by reducing vehicle miles and support participation in a variety of climate change management programs including the preparation and monitoring of GHG emission inventories. Additionally, the proposed project includes a number of policies designed to conserve energy resources (see Policies COS-7.11.1 through COS-7.11.8 in Table 4.4-4) not currently found in the existing 1984 General Plan. Consequently, the combination of a lack of specific transportation improvement policies and GHG reduction policies in the existing 1984 General Plan would result in potential adverse impacts on climate change impacts greater than those of the proposed project. As the County is currently working with PG&E on implementing a number of energy conservation measures (including energy retrofit projects, etc.), energy impacts under the No Project Alternative are expected to be similar to those anticipated under the proposed project.

Noise

Under the No Project Alternative, the County would continue to function under the direction of the existing 1984 General Plan. Both the existing 1984 General Plan and the proposed project would increase exposure of residents to noise by virtue of allowing additional growth within the County. However, the proposed project addresses noise impacts more comprehensively than do the policies in the existing 1984 General Plan. For example, policies (see Table 4.5-11 of Section 4.5 of the DEIR) have been developed to provide guidance on the analysis and mitigation of future project-related noise issues. These policies include identifying appropriate noise levels for sensitive receptors (policies N-3.1.1, N-3.1.2, and N-3.1.3), noise buffering for new residential land uses (Policy N-3.1.10), and requirements for project specific noise study and analysis as part of further environmental compliance review (policies N-3.1.9 and N-3.1.10). Implementation Measure #2 from the Noise Element requires the County to prepare and adopt a Noise Ordinance. Consequently, potential adverse noise impacts resulting from continued implementation of the existing 1984 General Plan would be somewhat greater than those resulting from implementation of the proposed project.

Hydrology, Water Quality, and Drainage

Under the No Project Alternative, the County would have less of an ability to direct specific development changes to defined Planning Areas, which could result in less organized development that would ultimately convert more open space and agricultural land to urban uses or result in greater amounts of fragmented open space areas than the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, the No Project Alternative would result in the creation of impervious surfaces associated with urbanization increasing the amount of runoff, which could affect water

quality. This increase in impervious surfaces could also reduce groundwater recharge potential within the County. As such, impacts to groundwater levels and groundwater recharge potential would be similar but slightly greater than the proposed project and are potentially significant.

The effects of the No Project Alternative would be greater than the proposed project with regard to soil erosion and sedimentation from construction-related activities, wastewater disposal (i.e., septic tanks), groundwater overdraft, and levee and dam failure. All of these are existing issues that are not addressed in the existing 1984 General Plan at the level of policy detail found in the proposed project. In addition, the proposed project includes a specific Water Resources Element and an updated Open Space and Conservation Element that specifically address water quality protection, water consumption, long term water supply, and erosion protection (see Section 4.6 of the DEIR) that are not in the existing 1984 General Plan. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have more impacts on water resources than the proposed project.

Geology, Soils, Seismicity, and Mineral Resources

The No Project Alternative proposes development that is similar in nature to that anticipated under the proposed project. Current State and federal regulations require specific engineering and design criteria to avoid impacts related to geologic, soils, and seismic hazards, which would apply to development under both the No Project Alternative and the proposed project. Any mineral resource extraction activities are regulated by the State, with the County serving as the lead agency to implement the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act or SMARA. For this reason, geologic, soils, seismicity, and mineral resource impacts under the No Project Alternative are considered to be similar to those of the proposed project and are less than significant.

Hazardous Materials and Public Safety

The No Project Alternative proposes development that is similar in nature to that anticipated under the proposed project. The No Project Alternative would not include the additional hazardous materials and public safety policies and implementation programs contained as part of the proposed project. However, hazardous materials generation, storage and clean-up are heavily regulated by federal, State and local regulations that would apply to both the No Project Alternative and the proposed project. For this reason, hazardous materials impacts under the No Project Alternative are considered to be similar to those of the proposed project and are less than significant.

The proposed project contains new goals and policies to address wildfire hazards and emergency preparedness and response. However, the addition of some level of development under the No Project Alternative within areas of high and very high hazard would still expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires and would be an irreversible consequence similar to that resulting from implementation of the proposed project.

Public Services, Recreation Resources, and Utilities

Under the No Project Alternative, the County would have less of an ability to direct specific development changes to defined Planning Areas, which could result in future development that is

unable to most efficiently expand from existing public service and utility infrastructure. However, development proposed under the No Project Alternative would still need to be consistent with existing plans, policies, and development standards that require the provision of adequate levels of public services and utilities. While the No Project Alternative does not benefit from the improved policies designed to ensure the provision of adequate levels of service (as shown in Section 4.9 of the DEIR), existing 1984 General Plan policies and County standards would generally ensure that new development is provided with adequate levels of public services and utilities. For these reasons, the public service, recreation resources, and utility impacts of the No Project Alternative are considered to be similar to those of the proposed project and are less than significant.

Agricultural and Timber Resources

Under the No Project Alternative, the County would have less of an ability to direct specific development changes to defined Planning Areas, which could result in less organized development that would ultimately convert more open space and agricultural land to urban uses or result in greater amounts of fragmented agricultural or timber areas than the proposed project. Additionally, the No Project Alternative would not benefit from the various policies provided in the Agriculture and Forestry Element that have been specifically designed to promote agriculture resources in Plumas County as part of the proposed project (see Section 4.10 of the DEIR). Specifically, several policies (see Policies AG/FOR-8.1.2 through AG/FOR-8.1.4, AG/FOR-8.2.1 through AG/FOR-8.2.8, AG/FOR 8.6.1 through AG/FOR 8.6.8 and AG/FOR 8.8.1 through AG/FOR 8.8.6) call for the continued recognition of agriculture and timber lands as a productive use of resource lands, for the continuation of a diversified economy, for the maintenance of the County's rural character, for the protection of scenic, natural, and recreational resources, and as a defining characteristic of the County's quality of life, and the continued use of preservation programs (i.e., the California Land Conservation Act/Williamson Act) to protect existing agricultural lands. Consequently, the existing 1984 General Plan would result in greater impacts on agricultural lands than the proposed project.

Biological Resources

Under the No Project Alternative, the County would have less of an ability to direct specific development changes to defined Planning Areas, which could result in less organized development that would ultimately convert more open space and habitat lands to urban uses or result in greater amounts of fragmented open space areas than the proposed project. Additionally, the No Project Alternative would not benefit from the various policies provided in the Open Space and Conservation Element that have been specifically designed to preserve biological resources in Plumas County as part of the proposed project (see Section 4.11 of the DEIR). Specifically, the Open Space and Conservation Element include Policy COS-7.1.4 which encourages the use of private and public conservation easement programs to protect open space areas. Policies COS-7.1.3 "Collaborative Open Space Land Use Management" and COS-7.2.18 "Inter-Agency Coordination" promote continued coordination with a variety of State, Federal, and trustee agencies (with a focus on resource management responsibilities) to jointly address open space and habitat issues. Policy COS-7.2.2 "Species and Habitat Avoidance" requires new

development to avoid or minimize adverse impacts to threatened, rare, or endangered species and critical/sensitive habitat. In the event that avoidance is not feasible, the policy requires a “no-net-loss” of the habitats that support these species. Consequently, impacts would be greater under this alternative when compared to the proposed project.

Cultural Resources

Land that has been used for various types of agricultural or open space uses that do not require extensive excavation and/or grading activities may be more likely to contain previously undiscovered cultural resources, particularly near local waterways. Urbanized areas may also contain a variety of historic resources (i.e., buildings, bridges, etc.). Under the No Project Alternative, the existing 1984 General Plan does not have the full range of policies designed to address cultural resources. Policies provided as part of the proposed project are considerably more comprehensive and detailed, including, in particular, those related to historic resources. Similar to the proposed project, urbanization associated with future growth under this alternative could damage or destroy a variety of cultural resources during various construction-related activities. However, the lack of specific cultural resource policies under the existing 1984 General Plan (No Project Alternative) would result in adverse impacts on cultural resources greater than those of the proposed project.

Ability to Meet Project Objectives

Under the No Project Alternative, the County would continue with implementation of its adopted existing 1984 General Plan, which would remain as the adopted long-range planning policy document for the County. Current development patterns would continue to occur in accordance with the existing 1984 General Plan, and more compact and diverse development located within designated Planning Areas and adjacent to existing utility infrastructure, as well as services, schools, and parks concentrated within designated growth areas would not occur. Consequently, this alternative would fundamentally fail to meet a majority of the Project Objectives described in Chapter 3.0 Project Description. Failure to update the County’s existing 1984 General Plan will not result in a comprehensive update to the County’s existing goals and policies to help incorporate current planning, environmental, and regulatory trends and objectives. By not incorporating these updated goals and policies, it could make it more difficult to protect the County’s rural character based on agricultural or open space land uses. The County’s circulation system would not serve as many different types of users or operate as efficiently under the No Project Alternative. The lack of updated economic vitality policies or programs may also make it more difficult to strengthen and diversify the County’s economic base. However, it is assumed that the County would continue to coordinate and cooperate with other local agencies and organizations on a variety of relevant land management issues whether the proposed project is implemented or not.

5.5.2 Alternative B – Flexible Growth Alternative

Alternative B is similar to the proposed project in that a majority of new growth would be focused within established Planning Areas. Policy guidance would also be similar to the proposed

project and would include updated goals and policies (including the Water Resources, Economics, Agriculture and Forestry Elements) designed to address key environmental and planning issues affecting the County. Alternative B differs from the proposed project in that residential densities for lands designated as “Timber Production Zones” (TPZ under the land use diagram) would be increased to allow 1 additional dwelling unit/40 acre parcel minimums rather than the 160 acre parcel minimums identified under the proposed project. Additionally, these properties may be subdivided into parcels less than 40 acres in order to cluster development and protect timber and other resource values as long as the overall dwelling unit density does not exceed the base density permissible on the original parcel.

Anticipated base population growth under this alternative would be similar to the proposed project (using market demand development assumptions of 4,765 additional residential units by 2035), although growth may be slightly higher than the proposed project due to the additional growth potential (1 additional dwelling unit per 40 acre parcel minimums rather than 160 acre parcel minimums) that could be accommodated outside of designated Planning Areas. However, the exact number of new housing units on TPZ designated land has not been determined due to the speculative nature of this type of growth. For example, the additional housing growth on TPZ designated land would be based on individual land owner decisions with no current information available on the number of land owners that would apply for development permits to subdivide parcels that would meet the 40 acre parcel minimum requirements.

Land Use and Aesthetics

Under the Flexible Growth Alternative, proposed policies and implementation measures designed to direct growth within defined Planning Areas to ensure that new development is well-connected and compatible with surrounding uses would continue to occur, similar to the proposed project. Consequently, the Flexible Growth Alternative would not result in the division or alteration of an existing community. Similar to the proposed project, development proposed under the Flexible Growth Alternative would still need to be consistent with existing plans and policies. General plan policies would generally ensure that new development is compatible with surrounding land uses. For these reasons, the land use impacts of the Flexible Growth Alternative are considered to be similar to those of the proposed project and are less than significant.

While a majority of new growth would be focused within established Planning Areas, the Flexible Growth Alternative would allow some additional residential development to occur on lands designated as “Timber Production Zones”; however, the exact number of new homes and their specific location is unknown at this time. As the Flexible Growth Alternative would provide additional growth and development opportunities outside of defined Planning Areas through increased residential densities within some TPZ designated lands, impacts to the County’s existing visual character, scenic resources, and light/glare impacts would be greater under this alternative (compared to the proposed project).

Transportation and Circulation

Under the Flexible Growth Alternative, growth and the resultant transportation and circulation impacts would be similar within designated Planning Areas. However, the ability to increase

residential densities outside of designated Planning Areas would result in a higher level of vehicle trips travelling on local and regional roadways than the proposed project. Additional development outside of designated Planning Areas could also increase the demand for transit and other alternative forms of transportation for areas not currently served by these forms of transportation. As the Flexible Growth Alternative would provide additional growth and development opportunities outside of defined Planning Areas and generate additional levels of traffic and demand for transit, County transportation and circulation impacts would be greater under this alternative (compared to the proposed project).

Air Quality

Under the Flexible Growth Alternative, the ability to increase residential densities outside of designated Planning Areas would result in a higher level of County-wide vehicle trips and resultant air quality emissions than those resulting from the proposed project. Under this alternative, future growth outside of designated Planning Areas would result in a slightly greater number of dwelling units and residents than the proposed project. While these increases in dwelling units and other types of supporting development can't be quantified at this time, they would result in increased levels of construction emissions, criteria air pollutants, and toxic air contaminants from mobile, area, and stationary sources, as well as exposure of people to odors, in comparison to the proposed project. As the Flexible Growth Alternative would provide additional growth and development opportunities outside of defined Planning Areas and generate additional air quality emissions, criteria air pollutants, and toxic air contaminants, air quality impacts would be greater under this alternative (compared to the proposed project).

Energy and Climate Change

As described above under "Air Quality", the Flexible Growth Alternative would result in a slightly greater number of dwelling units and residents than the proposed project. These increases in dwelling units and other types of development would result in increased energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions from direct and indirect sources (such as on-road transportation, off-road equipment and vehicles, energy generation, etc.). As the Flexible Growth Alternative would provide additional growth and development opportunities outside of defined Planning Areas and generate additional energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions, energy and climate impacts would be greater under this alternative (compared to the proposed project).

Noise

The Flexible Growth Alternative would result in a slightly greater number of dwelling units and residents than the proposed project. These increases in dwelling units and other types of development would result in increased levels of both mobile and stationary noise sources relative to the proposed project. These additional increases in mobile noise sources would affect noise-sensitive uses, in particular those located near County roadways and travel corridors. As the Flexible Growth Alternative would provide additional growth and development opportunities outside of defined Planning Areas and generate additional mobile and stationary noise sources, noise impacts would be greater under this alternative (compared to the proposed project).

Hydrology, Water Quality, and Drainage

Under the Flexible Growth Alternative, the County would continue to direct specific development changes to defined Planning Areas. However, the ability to increase residential densities (TPZ designated lands) outside of designated Planning Areas could result in less organized development that would ultimately convert more open space land to urban uses or result in greater amounts of fragmented open space areas than the proposed project. This conversion of open space land could result in the creation of additional impervious surfaces throughout the County, thus increasing the amount of runoff, which could affect water quality. This increase in impervious surfaces could also reduce groundwater recharge potential within the County. As such, impacts to groundwater levels and groundwater recharge potential would be similar but slightly greater than the proposed project and are potentially significant.

The effects of the Flexible Growth Alternative would be similar to the proposed project with regard to soil erosion and sedimentation from construction-related activities, wastewater disposal (i.e., septic tanks), and levee and dam failure. The Flexible Growth Alternative would include a Water Resources Element and an updated Open Space and Conservation Element that specifically address water quality protection, water consumption, long term water supply, and erosion protection.

Geology, Soils, Seismicity, and Mineral Resources

The Flexible Growth Alternative proposes urban development that is similar in nature to that anticipated under the proposed project. Current State and federal regulations require specific engineering and design criteria to avoid impacts related to geologic, soils, and seismic hazards, which would apply to both the Flexible Growth Alternative and the proposed project. For this reason, geologic, soils, seismic, and mineral resource impacts under the Flexible Growth Alternative are considered similar to those from the proposed project and are considered less than significant.

Hazardous Materials and Public Safety

The Flexible Growth Alternative proposes development that is similar in nature to that anticipated under the proposed project. Implementation of the Flexible Growth Alternative would include the additional hazardous materials and public safety policies and implementation programs contained as part of the Public Health and Safety Element of the proposed project to protect Plumas County from hazards. In addition, hazardous materials generation, storage and clean-up are heavily regulated by federal, State and local regulations that would apply to both the Flexible Growth Alternative and the proposed project. For this reason, most hazardous materials and public safety impacts under the Flexible Growth Alternative are considered to be similar to those compared to those from the proposed project and are considered less than significant.

Public Safety impacts associated with exposure to wildland fires are the one exception under this environmental resource topic. The increased ability to develop subdivisions and increased residential densities outside of designated Planning Areas, in particular those areas with inadequate fire protection service, would result in the additional exposure of people or structures

to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. As the Flexible Growth Alternative would provide additional growth and development opportunities outside of defined Planning Areas (within TPZ designated lands) and potentially expose additional people or structures to a significant wildland fire risk, wildland fire impacts would be greater under this alternative (compared to the proposed project).

Public Services, Recreation Resources, and Utilities

Under the Flexible Growth Alternative, proposed policies and implementation measures designed to direct growth within defined Planning Areas to ensure that new development is well-connected to existing services (including public services, recreation facilities, and utilities) and compatible with surrounding uses would continue to occur, similar to the proposed project. Additional subdivision development and increased residential densities outside of designated Planning Areas would also be allowed as long as public service and utility infrastructure requirements could be met. The Flexible Growth Alternative also benefits from the additional Land Use Element policies that have been developed to ensure that new development projects plan and finance future required public service, recreation, and utility infrastructure (including the new policies LU-1.5.4 “Maintain Existing Levels of Services”, LU-1.5.5 “Fair Share Funding for Public Services and Facilities”, LU-1.5.6 “Coordination with Service Providers”, and LU-1.5.7 “Municipal Service Reviews (MSRs)”). Consequently, the additional personnel and materials costs required to serve development under the Flexible Growth Alternative would be offset through the increased revenue, and fees, generated by future development. In addition, future projects will be reviewed by the County on an individual basis and will be required to comply with requirements and pay any applicable fees. For these reasons, impacts to public services, recreation resources, and utilities under the Flexible Growth Alternative are considered to be similar when compared to the proposed project and are considered less than significant.

Agricultural and Timber Resources

While a majority of new growth would be focused within established Planning Areas, the Flexible Growth Alternative would allow additional residential development to occur on lands designated as “Timber Production Zones”; however, the exact number of new homes and their specific location is unknown at this time. As the Flexible Growth Alternative would provide additional growth and development opportunities outside of defined Planning Areas and through increased residential densities within some TPZ designated lands, this alternative would result in the additional conversion or fragmentation of lands currently designated for timber or forest production activities.

The Flexible Growth Alternative would benefit from the various policies provided in the Agriculture and Forestry Element that have been specifically designed to promote agriculture resources in Plumas County (see Section 4.10 of the DEIR). Specifically, several policies (see Policies AG/FOR-8.1.2 through AG/FOR-8.1.4, AG/FOR-8.2.1 through AG/FOR-8.2.8, AG/FOR 8.6.1 through AG/FOR 8.6.8 and AG/FOR 8.8.1 through AG/FOR 8.8.6) call for the continued recognition of agriculture and timber lands as a productive use of resource lands, for the continuation of a diversified economy, for the maintenance of the County’s rural character,

for the protection of scenic, natural, and recreational resources, and as a defining characteristic of the County's quality of life, and the continued use of preservation programs (i.e., the California Land Conservation Act/Williamson Act) to protect existing agricultural lands. Additionally, the opportunity exists for some TPZ designated lands to be subdivided into parcels less than 40 acres in order to cluster development and protect timber and other resource values. However, this potential benefit to forest and timber land areas would need to be evaluated by the County on a case-by-case basis.

As the Flexible Growth Alternative would ultimately provide additional growth and development opportunities outside of defined Planning Areas and result in the additional conversion of timber lands to non-productive uses, timber/forest land impacts would be greater under this alternative (compared to the proposed project).

Biological Resources

Similar to the description of impacts to timber resources provide above, the Flexible Growth Alternative would allow some additional subdivision development outside of established Planning Areas. Additional residential development could also occur on a variety of open space lands that could affect a variety of sensitive habitats, species, and wetland areas. Therefore, the Flexible Growth Alternative would ultimately provide additional growth and development opportunities outside of defined Planning Areas and result in the additional conversion of open space lands (those designated as TPZ lands) to more urbanized uses, biological resource impacts would be greater under this alternative (compared to the proposed project).

Cultural Resources

Land that has been used for various types of agricultural or open space uses that do not require extensive excavation and/or grading activities may be more likely to contain previously undiscovered cultural resources, particularly near local waterways. Urbanized areas may also contain a variety of historic resources (i.e., buildings, bridges, etc.). The Flexible Growth Alternative would result in a greater conversion of open space lands (those designated as TPZ lands) than the proposed project. As a result, impacts would be slightly greater in magnitude under this alternative but would be potentially significant for historical resources, and less than significant for archaeological and paleontological resources.

Ability to Meet Project Objectives

The Flexible Growth Alternative is similar to the proposed project in that a majority of new growth would be focused within established Planning Areas. However the Flexible Growth Alternative differs in that residential densities for lands designated as "Timber Production Zones" (TPZ under the land use diagram) would be increased compared to those allowed under the proposed project, resulting in a greater degree of impacts to aesthetic, timber, and biological resources. While implementation of this alternative would meet several of the key project objectives identifying the need to reflect current planning and environmental considerations, the alternative would not meet several of the objectives related to focused growth, preservation of the County's scenic resources, and preservation of the larger watershed area.

5.5.3 Alternative C – Focused Growth Alternative

Alternative C is similar to the proposed project in that a majority of new growth would be focused within established Planning Areas. However, this alternative would prioritize and encourage increasing urban residential densities within the existing Planning Areas, increasing urban-serviceable development, including infill and mixed-use opportunities. These increased densities would be focused around existing community core areas and along key community access routes or transportation corridors, as appropriate. This infill development would be required to ensure compatibility with existing land use patterns and ensure compatibility with historic building and community design standards. Anticipated base population growth under this alternative would be similar to the proposed project (using market demand development assumptions of 4,765 additional residential units by 2035).

Policy guidance would also be similar to the proposed project and would include updated goals and policies (including the Water Resources, Economics, Agriculture and Forestry Elements) designed to address key environmental and planning issues affecting the County.

Land Use and Aesthetics

Under the Focused Growth Alternative, proposed policies and implementation measures designed to direct growth within defined Planning Areas to ensure that new development is well-connected and compatible with surrounding uses would continue to occur, similar to the proposed project. Consequently, the Focused Growth Alternative would not result in the division or alteration of an existing community. Similar to the proposed project, development proposed under the Focused Growth Alternative would still need to be consistent with existing plans and policies. General plan policies would generally ensure that new development is compatible with surrounding land uses, with a greater emphasis on infill opportunities to ensure that increased densities within Planning Areas are consistent with the existing character of the community. For these reasons, the land use impacts of the Focused Growth Alternative are considered to be similar to those of the proposed project and are less than significant.

Intensifying development within Planning Areas would convert less open space lands or less densely developed areas within or adjacent to existing Planning Areas, as increased housing densities would absorb additional housing demand within the Planning Areas. While an intensification of development within existing Planning Areas could result in a possible increase in the size and height of structures within these areas, policies provided within the Land Use and the Conservation and Open Space Element would include policies designed to address issues of land use compatibility and impacts to existing neighborhoods. For example policies COS-7.5.1, COS-7.5.3, COS-7.5.4, COS-7.5.10 and ECON-5.6.11 which promote the preservation, protection and revitalization of historic buildings and areas to preserve the County's unique historic heritage. Policy COS-7.5.5 would require the preparation of assessment of historical resources for all projects involving ground disturbance shall have evaluations to determine cultural and historical significance. Additionally, the Land Use and Conservation/Open Space Elements contain a variety of policies that encourage the preservation of existing historic areas and older neighborhoods (see Policies LU-1.1.2, LU-1.3.3, E-5.6.11, COS-7.5.1, COS-7.5.10, and

COS-7.6.4). Consequently, impacts to the County's existing visual character, scenic resources, and light/glare impacts would be less under this alternative (compared to the proposed project).

Transportation and Circulation

Under the Focused Growth Alternative, growth and its associated traffic would tend to be clustered within existing Planning Areas where transportation improvements are generally easier to implement. However, increased traffic within the Planning Areas could result in slightly higher levels of delay or congestion along local roadways. While implementation of the Focused Growth Alternative would still result in significant and unavoidable traffic impacts, the Focused Growth Alternative would encourage and support the use transit and a variety of alternative forms of transportation including bicycles and pedestrian use.

Air Quality

Under the Focused Growth Alternative, intensified growth and development within Planning Areas has the potential to reduce the overall number of vehicle miles travelled by local residents. However, the additional vehicles travelling within the Planning Areas has the potential to increase some travel delay at more heavily travelled roadway segments or intersections. Where traffic congestion is increased locally, there may be additional emissions of carbon monoxide in comparison to the proposed project. However, that impact is dependent upon levels of traffic and time at idle. As the locations and development intensities of the Planning Areas are not known at this time, whether these localized emissions would exceed the air district standards cannot be determined. Overall, by reducing vehicle miles travelled, the Focused Growth Alternative would result in a reduction in the severity of air quality impacts from traffic in comparison to the proposed project.

Energy and Climate Change

As described above under "Air Quality", the Focused Growth Alternative will result in intensified growth and development within Planning Areas that has the potential to reduce the overall number of vehicle miles travelled by local residents and would serve to further encourage the use of transit and bicycle/pedestrian use along with providing additional incentives to expand their infrastructure. Consequently, the Flexible Growth Alternative would generate less energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions. Energy and climate impacts would be less under this alternative (compared to the proposed project).

Noise

Similar to the proposed project, the Focused Growth Alternative would also result in significant noise level increases associated with increased traffic that would occur adjacent to existing noise sensitive land uses. However, because land uses are intensified within the Planning Areas, noise impacts may actually be greater in some cases, in particular within downtown areas and along major transportation corridors. Overall, implementation of the Focused Growth Alternative would still result in a significant and unavoidable impacts (although slightly greater impact for mobile sources) because growth could still contribute additional sources of noise and vibration that could exceed local standards.

Hydrology, Water Quality, and Drainage

Under the Focused Growth Alternative, infill development would convert less open space land to urban uses than the proposed project. As with the proposed project, the creation of impervious surfaces associated with urbanization would increase the amount of runoff, which could affect water quality. An increase in impervious surfaces could also reduce groundwater recharge potential. Because land conversion would be less than under the proposed project, fewer impervious surfaces within the more rural portions of the Planning Areas and the County would be created. Less development under this alternative in the rural areas would also require less demand for groundwater within some groundwater basins in the County. However, overall hydrologic impacts to groundwater levels and groundwater recharge potential under the Focused Growth Alternative are considered to be similar but less in magnitude when compared to those of the proposed project.

Development under this alternative would expose fewer residents and employees to potential hazards related to dam failure inundation zones. Impacts under this alternative would be similar but slightly less in magnitude when compared to the proposed project.

Geology, Soils, Seismicity, and Mineral Resources

The Focused Growth Alternative proposes development that is similar in nature to that anticipated under the proposed project. Current State and federal regulations require specific engineering and design criteria to avoid impacts related to geologic, soils, and seismic hazards, which would apply to both the Focused Growth Alternative and the proposed project. For this reason, geologic, soils, seismicity, and mineral resource impacts under the Focused Growth Alternative are considered to be similar but slightly less in magnitude when compared to those of the proposed project.

Hazardous Materials and Public Safety

The Focused Growth Alternative proposes development that is similar in nature to that anticipated under the proposed project. Implementation of the Focused Growth Alternative would include the additional hazardous materials and public safety policies and implementation programs contained as part of the Public Health and Safety Element of the proposed project to protect Plumas County from hazards. In addition, hazardous materials generation, storage and clean-up are heavily regulated by federal, State and local regulations that would apply to both the Focused Growth Alternative and the proposed project. For this reason, most hazardous materials and public safety impacts under the Focused Growth Alternative are considered to be similar to those compared to those from the proposed project and are considered less than significant.

Expose to wildland fire risk would be similar to the proposed project. However, additional growth within Planning Areas would result in less growth within adjacent rural areas. Less growth within rural areas would reduce the overall risk to wildland fires and would locate future development with areas that have adequate fire protection service. As the Focused Growth Alternative would provide additional growth and development opportunities within defined Planning Areas and reduce the potential exposure of additional people or structures to a significant wildland fire risk,

wildland fire impacts would be slightly lower under this alternative (compared to the proposed project).

Public Services, Recreation Resources, and Utilities

Under the Focused Growth Alternative, proposed policies and implementation measures designed to direct growth within defined Planning Areas to ensure that new development is well-connected to existing services (including public services, recreation facilities, and utilities) and compatible with surrounding uses would continue to occur, similar to the proposed project. Additional policy direction to promote increased densities within existing Planning Areas would further support existing public service, recreation, and utilities. Required personnel and material costs required to serve development under the Focused Growth Alternative would be offset through the increased revenue, and fees, generated by future development. In addition, future projects will be reviewed by the County on an individual basis and will be required to comply with requirements and pay any applicable fees. For these reasons, impacts to public services, recreation resources, and utilities under the Focused Growth Alternative are considered to be similar (although slightly less in magnitude) when compared to the proposed project and are considered less than significant.

Agricultural and Timber Resources

Intensifying development within Planning Areas would convert less open space/agricultural lands or less densely developed areas within or adjacent to existing Planning Areas. However, some conversions of agricultural and timber resource lands would still occur under the Focused Growth Alternative. Consequently, the Focused Growth Alternative would still result in a significant and unavoidable impact (although slightly less in magnitude) when compared to the proposed project.

Biological Resources

Under the Focused Growth Alternative, development would convert less open space land to urban uses outside of the Planning Areas. Therefore, the Focused Growth Alternative relative to the proposed project would result in less development that could result in adverse impacts to sensitive habitats, wetlands, riparian areas, wildlife movement, and significant trees. However, as with the proposed project, the Focused Growth Alternative would also result in growth that would occur on currently undeveloped or habitat land, and would result in the overall reduction of a plant or wildlife species habitat. Impacts would be slightly less in magnitude under this alternative when compared to the proposed project.

Cultural Resources

Land that has been used for various types of agricultural or open space uses that do not require extensive excavation and/or grading activities may be more likely to contain previously undiscovered cultural resources, particularly near local waterways. Urbanized areas may also contain a variety of historic resources (i.e., buildings, bridges, etc.). The Focused Growth Alternative would result in less conversion of agricultural land and open space than the proposed project. However, similar to the proposed project, urbanization associated with the Focused Growth Alternative could damage or destroy a variety of cultural resources during various construction-related activities. As a result, impacts would be slightly less in magnitude under this

alternative when compared to the proposed project but are potentially significant for historical resources, and less than significant for archaeological and paleontological resources.

Ability to Meet Project Objectives

The Focused Growth Alternative is similar to the proposed project in that a majority of new growth would be focused within established Planning Areas. This alternative would meet a majority of the key project objectives identifying the need to reflect current planning and environmental considerations and all of the objectives related to focused growth near existing Planning Areas and consideration of the ability to benefit from existing infrastructure systems.

5.5.4 Environmentally Superior Alternative

As previously described, Table 5-1 provides a summary of the anticipated impacts resulting from implementation of the alternatives compared to those identified for the proposed project. As summarized in the table, the environmentally superior alternative for this project would be Alternative C: Focused Growth Alternative. Implementation of this alternative would result in the least amount of additional development with a smaller development footprint, and correspondingly, reduce the magnitude of most environmental impacts associated with the proposed project. As described above, implementation of this alternative would convert less farmland and undeveloped lands to urban uses. However, implementation of this alternative would still result in significant and unavoidable impacts related to cultural resources, agricultural resources, traffic, air quality, hydrology, and visual resources.

