

Project Summary 2.1

The proposed project analyzed in this EIR is the adoption and implementation of nine amended elements of the City of Costa Mesa General Plan: Land Use, Circulation, Growth Management, Conservation, Noise, Safety, Community Design, Open Space and Recreation, and Historical and Cultural Resources. The proposed project also includes any subsequent amendments to Title 13 (Planning, Zoning, and Development) of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (Zoning Code) adopted to implement the General Plan Amendments, as well as any amendments to existing specific plans and urban plans to implement the General Plan Amendments. A comprehensive amendment of the Housing Element was adopted by the City Council in 2013 to meet a statutory deadline for cities within the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) region; the Housing Element is not part of the current project. The proposed project is referred to as the "General Plan Amendments" or "City of Costa Mesa General Plan 2015-2035."

General Plan Amendments

The intent of the General Plan Amendments with respect to each of the elements is summarized below.

Land Use Element

The Land Use Element includes an amended Land Use Plan. Focused amendments are proposed that would provide new development opportunities in targeted areas and along corridors in Costa Mesa that can accommodate such development. These land use changes represent four percent of the land area in the entire City. The strategy behind these targeted land use changes is to identify focus areas where private investment and redevelopment efforts would create new opportunities for housing and businesses, particularly in areas well served by transit and where reinvestment could enhance neighborhoods, districts, and nodes. These targeted areas are vacant or underutilized properties north of I-405 and along Harbor Boulevard and Newport Boulevard. The proposed General Plan Amendments are also to provide a future alternative use for the Fairview Developmental Center site. The amended Land Use Plan includes:

- A new land use designation (Fairview) that applies to the Fairview Development Center site to allow for the future repurposing of this State-owned property to residential and open space uses
- A change in the land use designation on a site referred to as the Los Angeles Times property from Industrial Park to Urban Center Commercial
- Creation of a two new overlay designations: Residential Incentive Overlay and Harbor Mixed Use Overlay
- Amendments policies affecting the SoBECA Urban Plan to allow for residential densities of up to 40 units per acre, with a cap of 450 units overall
- Amendments to policies affecting the *North Costa Mesa Specific Plan*, which includes the Segerstrom Home Ranch and Sakioka Lot 2 properties to increase the development cap applicable to the Segerstrom Home Ranch property and allow residential densities of up to 80 units per acre on the Sakioka Lot 2 site (without increasing the maximum permitted unit yield)

Circulation Element

The Circulation Element has been updated to incorporate a complete streets approach to managing travel modes and to reflect create a new Bicycle Master Plan, both in terms of system design and goals and policies. Complete streets planning aims to provide for all transportation routes in Costa Mesa to accommodate all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities (Figure 3.0-13 Draft Circulation Plan). New goals, policies, and exhibits have been prepared to reflect the City's future direction related to walking, bicycling, and transit improvements.

Growth Management Element

The Growth Management Element has been amended to reflect the requirements of the Orange County Transportation Agency's Measure M2 program; the element guides City programs and policies that allow Costa Mesa to remain eligible for future transportation funding improvements of the Measure M2 program.

Conservation Element

The Conservation Element has been amended to update policies regarding the preservation of coastal wildlife habitat areas and landforms, natural resource conservation and environmental sustainability, water conservation and water quality, and specifically to address air quality and climate change.

Open Space and Recreation Element

Because Costa Mesa recently initiated preparation of an updated Master Plan of Parks and Recreation, the Open Space and Recreation Element has been amended to set the framework for the master plan, including identification of future parks and open space improvements needed to accommodate the population growth identified in the Land Use Element. New goals and policies have been added to pursue new revenue streams to fund the acquisition and maintenance of future and established parks, and as a priority, to pursue parkland acquisition in underserved neighborhoods, as identified in the element. In addition, the scope of the element has been augmented to include cultural arts goals and policies.

Historical and Cultural Resources Element

The Historical and Cultural Resources Element has been amended to address the potential for post-World War II historical resources to be recognized, as well to include policies that encourage compatibility between historical resource sites and new development.

Safety Element

The Safety Element has been amended to reflect 2015 data regarding hazards present in the City, including flooding and dam inundation, seismic hazards, aviation safety, and emergency services. Also, maps and policies have been included to address potential flooding hazards associated with sea level rise.

Noise Element

The Noise Element includes updated exhibits and analysis that depict the future noise environment consistent with the amended Land Use and Circulation Elements. New goals and policies have been added to protect established and new residential and industrial uses within mixed-use districts.

Community Design Element

The goals and policies of the Design Element have been updated to ensure consistency with changes to the Land Use Element.

Project Location 2.2

The City of Costa Mesa is located in the extensively developed west-central portion of Orange County. Costa Mesa is surrounded by the cities of Newport Beach, Huntington Beach, Santa Ana, Fountain Valley, and Irvine. Major transportation facilities include Interstate 405 (I-405), State Route 55 (SR-55), State Route 73 (SR-73), and John Wayne-Orange County (SNA) Airport. The area covered by the General Plan Amendments consists of the 15.8 square miles within the corporate City limits, as well as lands within the City's unincorporated sphere of influence.

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Environmental Setting 2.3

Orange County is characterized by mild summers and winters. The average winter high temperature is 46.9° Fahrenheit (F) and the average summer high temperature is 73.4° F. Daytime winds are from the southwest at six to eight miles per hour (MPH) as air moves onshore from the Pacific Ocean. Rainfall in the area is infrequent and variable. Most precipitation occurs from December through March, averaging 11.0 inches per year.

The City's municipal limits encompass 15.8 square miles. The planning area also includes two small areas comprising 209 acres within the City's unincorporated Sphere of Influence (SOI). While the City is largely urbanized, natural features include the Santa Ana River, which runs along the City's western boundary, and large natural areas within Fairview Park, Talbert Regional Park, and the adjacent wildlife refuge.

Residential land is the predominant land use category, totaling 47% of the planning area. Industrial land uses comprise the second largest percentage at 10.5%. Combined office/commercial uses comprise 13.7% of the planning area, while open space and recreation uses comprise 14.1%. Only about 20 acres remain vacant, and 70 acres are still in agricultural production. Major institutional and cultural land uses include the Orange County Fairgrounds, Orange Coast College, Vanguard University, and the Segerstrom Center for the Arts.

Geologic deposits in Costa Mesa are composed mainly of volcanic, marine, and non-marine sedimentary rocks overlying a basement complex of granitic and metamorphic rock. The plain is immediately underlain by a thick sequence of alluvial sediments, which overlie the older sedimentary and volcanic rocks. Soils within Costa Mesa are variable, ranging from a predominance of clay with some silty sand in the northern half of the City to a predominance of silty sand with some sand and clay in the southern half.

The City is contained within the Santa Ana River Hydrologic Unit. This unit covers an area of approximately 2,700 square miles, or the majority of the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board jurisdictional area, which includes portions of Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. Within this hydrologic unit, the City's geography is split between the Santa Ana River Watershed (northern portion) and the Newport Bay Watershed (southern portion).

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Environmental Impacts 2.4

Based on the preliminary environmental analysis conducted, the City determined that the adoption and long-term implementation of the updated General Plan Amendments has the potential to result in significant, unavoidable environmental effects with regard to the following environmental issue areas:

- Air Quality Aesthetics (due to inconsistency with regional plans)
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (due to inconsistency with regional plans)

The analysis has determined that the following significant impacts can be avoided with incorporation of mitigation:

- Biological Resources
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The analysis determined that the Project would have less than significant impacts or no impacts in the following areas:

- Aesthetics
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

This Program EIR examines each of these issue areas in separate sections, in addition to other required topics specified in the State CEQA Guidelines. Table 2.0-1 summarizes the environmental impacts associated with the project and lists the mitigation measures required to reduce or avoid impacts.

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Table 2.0-1
Environmental Impact Summary

Impact Summary (The numbers in the first column refer to the EIR sections where specific impact topics are addressed. The letters refer to the thresholds identified in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines.)	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance with Mitigation Incorporated
Significant and Unavoidable Impacts		
<i>Air Quality</i>		
4.3.A 4.3.B 4.3.C	The General Plan Amendments have the potential to conflict with the 2012 Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) because land use policies provide for a greater level of population and jobs growth than projected and assumed in the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) <i>Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy</i> , which informs the AQMP. Impacts at the program level would be significant and unavoidable.	
<i>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</i>		
4.7.A	Over the long term, GHG emissions may exceed regional thresholds established, as projected population capacity for Costa Mesa exceeds population growth assumptions in the regional plans. Impacts at the program level are significant and unavoidable.	
4.7.B	The General Plan Amendments have the potential to conflict with the 2012 SCAG RTP/SCS and California Air Resources Board's Scoping Plan—and thereby not attain GHG reductions targets—because land use policy does not support the same level of population growth projected. Impacts at the program level are significant and unavoidable.	
Less than Significant Impacts with Mitigation Incorporated		
<i>Biological Resources</i>		
4.4.A	4.3.A-1 – A focused survey for burrowing owls shall be conducted by a qualified professional biologist for any new development project proposed on a vacant site of two acres or larger, with a landscape of annual and perennial grasslands, desert, or arid scrubland with low-growing vegetation or agricultural use or vegetation. The purpose of the survey is to determine if burrowing owls are foraging or nesting on or adjacent to the project site. If surveys confirm that the site is occupied habitat, mitigation measures to minimize impacts to burrowing owls, their burrows, and foraging habitat shall be identified. The results of this survey, including any mitigation recommendations, shall be incorporated into the project-level CEQA compliance documentation. Owl surveys and approaches to mitigation shall be in	Less than Significant

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		accordance with the Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation, issued by the California Department of Fish and Game on March 7, 2012.	
<i>Hazards and Hazardous Materials</i>			
4.8.D	Impacts to development and persons due to building siting on contaminated properties would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.	4.8.D-1 - Applications for new development projects requiring City discretionary approval shall include the results of a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA), prepared in accordance with the latest ASTM protocol for such assessments. If the Phase I ESA indicates some evidence of site contamination exists that could require cleanup to avoid danger to people or damage to the environment, a Phase II level review shall be completed to fully characterize the nature and extent of such contamination, and the scope of required clean up procedures. The results of the Phase II assessment shall be considered as part of the CEQA compliance process prior to any action on the project.	Less than significant
No Impact and Less than Significant Impacts			
<i>Aesthetics</i>			
4.1.A 4.1.B	Impacts to scenic vistas and resources would be less than significant with implementation of draft General Plan policies in the Land Use and Community Design Elements that focus on enhancements to Costa Mesa's arterial corridors.		
4.1.C	Impacts to the visual character and quality of the planning area would be less than significant with implementation of draft General Plan policies in the Land Use and Community Design Element that require review of new projects for compatibility with the established, surrounding development.		
4.1.D	Impacts due to light and glare would be less than significant with implementation of existing zoning standards that provide for shielding of new light sources, particularly in areas adjacent to residential development.		
<i>Agricultural Resources</i>			
4.2.A	Implementation of the General Plan Amendments would not result in impacts to prime farmland since none exists in the City.		
4.2.B	Implementation of the General Plan Amendments would not result in any Williamson Act Contract impacts since none exist in the City.		
4.2.C, D	No impact would occur to existing zoning for forest land or timberland as a result of the General Plan Amendments since no such lands exist in the City.		

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4.2.E	Changes to the existing environment would not result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use since no such lands exist in the City.		
<i>Air Quality</i>			
4.3.D	The General Plan Amendments have the potential to result in the exposure of sensitive receptors to pollutant emissions associated with industrial uses. However, potential impacts can be addressed at the project level. Impact would be less than significant with implementation of General Plan policies and application of standard development practices specific to pollutant emissions and most specifically, those regulations of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD).		
4.3.E	The General Plan Amendments have the potential to result in the exposure of sensitive receptors to odors from industrial uses. However, potential impacts can be addressed at the project level through compliance City and SCAQMD regulations. Impact would be less than significant with implementation of draft General Plan policies and application of standard development practices.		
<i>Biological Resources</i>			
4.4.B	No impacts to Southern Cottonwood Willow Riparian Forest or Southern Coastal Salt Marsh habitat would occur as a result of implementation of the General Plan Amendments.		
4.4.C	No impact to Section 404 wetlands would occur as a result of implementation of the General Plan Amendments since no changes are proposed to areas containing wetlands.		
4.4.D	No impact to the Santa Ana River wildlife corridors or any wildlife nurseries would occur as a result of implementation of the General Plan Amendments since the proposed project does not include any changes to any such areas.		
4.4.E	No impact related to conflicts between the General Plan Amendments and other existing policies, regulations, or standards would occur.		
4.4.F	No impact related to conflicts between the General Plan Amendments and existing Habitat Conservation Plans would occur.		
<i>Cultural Resources</i>			
4.5.A	Impacts to historical resources would be less than significant with implementation of existing regulations and draft General Plan policies, specifically those that provide for the protection of such resources.		
4.5.B	Impacts to archaeological resources would be less than significant with implementation of existing regulations and draft General Plan policies, specifically those that provide for the protection of such resources.		
4.5.C	Impacts to paleontological resources would be less than significant with implementation of existing regulations and draft General Plan policies, specifically those that provide for the protection of such resources.		
4.5.D	Impacts to human remains would be less than significant with implementation of existing regulations, particularly those enforced by the Orange County Coroner.		

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<i>Geology and Soils</i>		
4.6.A.1	Hazardous impacts to people and structures resulting from the potential rupture of a known earthquake fault would be less than significant with implementation of existing regulatory practices and policies in the draft General Plan Safety Element.	
4.6.A.2	Impacts to life and property resulting from earthquakes would be less than significant with implementation of existing regulatory standards and draft Safety Element policies that support design parameters related to ground shaking.	
4.6.A.3	Impacts to life and property resulting from seismically induced liquefaction or settlement would be less than significant with implementation of existing regulatory standards and draft General Plan policies that require investigation of site conditions for liquefaction susceptibility.	
4.6.A.4	Impacts to life and property within the planning area related to seismically induced landslides would be less than significant with implementation of existing regulatory standards and draft General Plan policies that require the consideration of site soil conditions in the review of projects in areas subject to landslides.	
4.6.B	Impacts related to wind-blown soil erosion and loss of topsoil would be less than significant.	
4.6.C	Impacts related to ground failure would be less than significant with implementation of existing regulations and draft General Plan policies.	
4.6.D	Impacts related to expansive soils would be less than significant with implementation of existing regulations.	
4.6.E	No impacts related to soils and septic systems would occur since all of Costa Mesa is served by a public sewer system.	
<i>Hazards and Hazardous Materials</i>		
4.8.A 4.8.B 4.8.C	The General Plan Amendments would result in less than significant impacts associated with the use, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials and wastes since existing federal, State, County, and local regulations provide sufficient protections.	
4.8.E 4.8.F	No impacts related to operation of public or private airports would occur with implementation of existing regulatory standards since the project does not proposed any new land use policies that would impact operations at John Wayne Airport. Also, as required by State law, the proposed General Plan Amendments will be reviewed by the Orange County Airport Land Use Commission.	
4.8.G	The General Plan Amendments would not interfere with the implementation of the City's emergency response and evacuation procedures.	
4.8.H	No impacts associated with wildland fires would occur since not wildland fire hazard areas exist in Costa Mesa.	
<i>Hydrology and Water Quality</i>		
4.9.A 4.9.F	Implementation of the General Plan Amendments would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements, or otherwise degrade water quality.	
4.9.B	Impacts related to overdrafting of groundwater resources and lowering of groundwater levels would be less than significant with application of existing standards and regulations.	

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4.9.C 4.9.D	Flooding and sedimentation impacts caused by on- or off-site flooding would be less than significant with implementation of draft General Plan policies and existing City regulatory standards, particularly with regard to implementation of the City's <i>Master Plan of Drainage</i> and payment of required fees for development projects.	
4.9.E	Impacts related to polluted urban runoff and storm drain capacity would be less than significant with implementation of existing standards and regulations.	
4.8.G	Impacts due to the placement of housing within 100-year flood zones would not occur as a result of implementation of the General Plan Amendments.	
4.9.H	Impacts related to the diversion of floodwaters would be less than significant with implementation of existing City regulations.	
4.9.I	Impacts related to inundation due to dam or levee failure would be less than significant with implementation of existing federal, City, and county regulations.	
4.9.J	Impacts associated with mudflows, tsunami, and seiche would be less than significant with implementation of existing City regulations.	
<i>Land Use and Planning</i>		
4.10.A	The General Plan Amendments would not result in a division of an established community since the project does not propose any substantial land use changes.	
4.10.B	The General Plan Amendments would not conflict with an applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project, as discussed in other sections of the EIR.	
4.10.C	No impact related to conflicts between the General Plan Amendments and existing Habitat Conservation Plans would occur.	
<i>Mineral Resources</i>		
4.11.A	Implementation of the General Plan Amendments would result in a less than significant impact with regard to loss of known mineral resources of value to the region and the State since the City is largely built out.	
4.11.B	No impact to locally important mineral resources would occur as a result of the implementation of the General Plan Amendments since the City is largely built out.	
<i>Noise</i>		
4.12.A	Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of City standards would be less than significant with implementation of the proposed General Plan Amendments.	
4.12.B	Implementation of the General Plan Amendments would not expose persons to or generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise; impact would be less than significant impact.	
4.12.C	The proposed project would allow for additional development of industrial, commercial, residential, and mixed-use development that may cause a permanent increase in ambient noise levels higher than current levels. However, the anticipated increases would not exceed levels considered	

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	significant. Impacts would be less than significant with continued implementation of the City's Municipal Code and the proposed General Plan Amendment policies.	
4.12.D	The project would allow for additional development of industrial, commercial, residential and mixed-use development that may result in increased temporary or intermittent noise impacts. Those impacts are less than significant with the continued implementation of Municipal Code regulations relating to noise and the proposed General Plan Amendment policies.	
4.12.E 4.12.F	The project would not expose people residing or working within two miles of any public airport nor private airport to excessive noise levels associated with air traffic.	
Population and Housing		
4.13.A	Implementation of the General Plan Amendments would not induce population or housing growth. Impacts would be less than significant.	
4.13.B	The General Plan Amendments do not propose policies that would result in the displacement of substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. Policies support development of new housing for all income categories. Impact would be less than significant.	
4.13.C	The General Plan Amendments do not propose policies that would result in the displacement of substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. Policies support development of housing for all income categories. Impact would be less than significant.	
Public Services		
4.14.A	Impacts related to the expansion of fire protection facilities to maintain applicable service standards would be less than significant with implementation of existing General Plan and Municipal Code policies and requirements, including the payment of impact fees to offset any increased demand for fire protections services.	
4.14.B	Impacts related to the expansion of police protection facilities to maintain applicable service standards would be less than significant with implementation of existing General Plan and Municipal Code policies and requirements.	
4.14.C	Impacts related to the expansion of school facilities to maintain applicable service standards would be less than significant with implementation of existing State regulations that require the payment of school impact fees.	
4.14.D	Impacts related to the expansion and construction of parks to maintain applicable service standards would be less than significant with implementation of existing General Plan and Municipal Code policies and requirements, including compliance with Quimby Act provisions and payment of park impact fees.	
4.14.E	Impacts related to the expansion and construction of libraries to maintain applicable service standards would be less than significant with implementation of existing Municipal Code requirements.	
Recreation		

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4.15.A	Deterioration of existing parks and recreation facilities due to increased use would be less than significant with implementation of policies of the Draft Open Space and Park Element and existing City regulatory standards, including compliance with Quimby Act provisions and payment of park impact fees.		
4.15.B	Any direct impacts related to the expansion and construction of recreational facilities would be less than significant since the General Plan Amendments do not specifically provide for new park facilities. Indirect impacts are addressed by 4.15A.		
<i>Transportation and Traffic</i>			
4.16.C	Impact with respect to air traffic patterns would be less than significant since the project would not interfere with existing patterns and review by the Orange County Airport Land Use Commission is required for any projects with the influence area of John Wayne Airport (SNA).		
4.16.D	Impact with respect to traffic hazards would be less than significant since the General Plan Amendments do not involve any direct changes to the circulation system. All new roadway segments and improvements pursuant to the Circulation Element would be required to conform to City design standards, which have been designed in accordance with accepted traffic safety engineering practices.		
4.16.E	Impact with respect to emergency access would be less than significant since the General Plan Amendments would not change any emergency response plans.		
4.16.F	Impact with respect to parking capacity would be less than significant since the project does not involve any changes to existing parking regulations.		
4.16.G	No adverse impact would result with respect to alternative transportation. In fact, the General Plan Amendments promulgate development and use of alternative transportation modes.		
<i>Utilities and Service Systems</i>			
4.17.A	Impacts related to the exceedance of wastewater treatment requirements would be less than significant with implementation of existing codes, policies and regulations.		
4.17.B	Impacts related to the potential future construction of water and wastewater infrastructure would be less than significant with implementation of existing City standards and regulations.		
4.17.C	Impacts related to the potential future expansion of storm drain facilities would be less than significant with implementation of existing City standards and regulations, and most specifically, implementation of the <i>Master Plan of Drainage</i> and required payment of fees.		
4.17.D	Implementation of the General Plan Amendments would not require new or expanded water supply entitlements to be secured.		
4.17.E	Impacts related to insufficient wastewater treatment capacity would be less than significant with implementation of existing standards and regulations.		
4.17.F 4.17.G	Impacts associated with solid waste regulations and adequacy of disposal sites would be less than significant with implementation of existing policies and regulations.		

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2.5 Areas of Potential Controversy

Areas of potential controversy identified during the initial scoping process and during the preparation of this EIR are as outlined below. These issues are related to and have been addressed in the EIR.

- Land Use and Planning
- Long-term Effects
- Open Space and Parks
- Population and Housing
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utility and Public Service Systems

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2.6 Alternatives to the Proposed Project

CEQA requires that an EIR examine alternatives to the project that are capable of reducing or eliminating the unavoidable significant effects. The alternatives examined in Section 5.0 are:

- Alternative 1: No Project – Continued implementation of the existing General Plan
- Alternative 2: Maintaining the Public/Institutional designation on the Fairview Developmental Center site
- Alternative 3: Maintaining the Industrial Park designation on the Los Angeles Times site
- Alternative 4: Maintaining the current development capacity on the Segerstrom Home Ranch property

The analysis indicates that Alternative 1 could result in the elimination of the significant air quality and greenhouse gas impacts associated with the General Plan Amendments. However, as required by the State CEQA Guidelines, if the No Project alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, another alternative must be identified. Alternative 2 has the potential to result in marginally reduced environmental impacts relative to those associated with the proposed project.

None of the four alternatives fully achieves the objectives of the proposed project.

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