

Discussion:

Section 15126(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, Alternatives to the Proposed Project, states that alternatives are intended to describe a range of reasonable options which would feasibly attain most of the project objectives but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed project and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. The CEQA Guidelines [(Section 15126(d)(4)] requires the evaluation of the “No Project” alternative which shall discuss existing conditions as well as what would reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project is not approved. Although not proposed by Planning Services staff to be included in the EIR alternatives analysis, other alternatives could include; higher or lower FARs, not using FARs in favor of an optional method of describing land use intensity standards, alternative locations for the application of FARs (amendment to the location of Commercial, Industrial, and Research and Development land use designations), and/or different definitions to mixed use development.

Information provided by the public will be used by Planning Services to identify alternatives for evaluation in the EIR. The EIR process is governed by the “rule of reason” that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. In addition, alternatives shall focus the on the capability to avoid or significantly lessen the effects of the proposed project, including the feasibility of implementation.

As a final note, Planning Services staff has initiated discussions with the consultant team to determine the scope, budget, and schedule for preparing the EIR. We expect to receive a draft proposal by May 12, 2006, and to obtain contract approval during June. Planning Services staff will provide the Planning Commission periodic updates as the environmental review process progresses.

Recommendation:

Planning Services staff recommends that the Planning Commission open the public hearing, receive public comments concerning the scope and content of the EIR, receive public comment concerning the identification of alternatives, and provide any necessary direction to staff concerning the contents of the EIR and/or alternatives.

Attachments

Resolution No. 111-2006
Notice of Preparation