
16.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

16.1 INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15126.6(a) states that an environmental impact report (EIR) shall describe and analyze a range of reasonable alternatives to a project. According to the guidelines, these alternatives should feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project, while avoiding or substantially lessening one or more of the project's significant environmental impacts. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project, nor is it required to consider alternatives that are infeasible. The discussion of alternatives is to focus on those alternatives which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if they impede the attainment of the project objectives to some degree or would be more costly (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[b]).

When addressing feasibility, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 states that "among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, jurisdictional boundaries, and whether the applicant can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to alternative sites." The CEQA Guidelines also specify that the alternatives discussion should not be remote or speculative; however, the alternatives need not be presented in the same level of detail as the assessment of the proposed project.

The CEQA Guidelines indicate that several factors need to be considered in determining the range of alternatives to be analyzed in an EIR and the level of analytical detail that should be provided for each alternative. These factors include (1) the nature of the significant impacts of the proposed project; (2) the ability of alternatives to avoid or lessen the significant impacts associated with the project; (3) the ability of the alternatives to meet the objectives of the project; and (4) the feasibility of the alternatives. These factors would be unique for each project.

The significant environmental impacts of the projects that the alternatives will seek to eliminate or reduce were determined and based on the findings contained in each technical section evaluated in Sections 4.0 through 15.0 of this Draft EIR.

Project Objectives

The objectives of the proposed commercial developments are as follows:

- Expand and provide new retail options in close proximity to local consumers by locating shopping opportunities in a safe and secure environment.
- Enhance the commercial retail offerings in Nevada County.
- Develop each commercial development in a way that is compatible in design with the surrounding neighborhood.
- Provide commercial developments that serve the local market area for each development in Nevada County.

Impact Avoidance

Alternatives should provide a means of avoiding or reducing the significant environmental impacts that would otherwise result from implementation of the project. The technical analyses in

16.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

Sections 4.0 through 15.0 identified that there would be a significant and unavoidable aesthetics impact for the Alta Sierra site and for the Rough and Ready Highway site and a significant and unavoidable land use compatibility impact for the Rough and Ready Highway site. With regard to aesthetics, in both cases, the projects would substantially alter the visual character of their respective sites. For land use, the difference in size and scale of the building would make it incompatible with surrounding residential uses. For all other impact areas for the three sites, impacts were determined to be less than significant, or potentially significant impacts could be mitigated to less than significant levels through mitigation measures identified in the technical sections.

16.2 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

The following alternatives for each of the three sites were identified for analysis in this Draft EIR:

Alternative 1a – No Project/No Build Alternative. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(1) requires that a No Project Alternative be analyzed. If the No Project Alternative were implemented, the proposed project would not be constructed and the site would remain in its current condition.

Alternative 1b – No Project/Other Commercial Development Alternative. Under Alternative 1b, the analysis assumes each project site could be developed with another use consistent with each site's existing General Plan land use designation and zoning. The County has not received an application for any other type of development, and if an application for a different project were submitted for a project site, environmental review pursuant to CEQA would be required. The impacts of any other type of project would be speculative. The purpose of considering this alternative is to illustrate the general types of potential environmental impacts that might be associated with a different type of development for disclosure and informational purposes only. This analysis is also included to be responsive to comments on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) suggesting that uses other than the proposed projects should be considered for the sites.

Alternative 2 – Reduced Project Alternative. Under Alternative 2, the size of each store would be reduced from 9,100 square feet to approximately 7,200 square feet¹ and the height of the building would be less than the proposed stores. It is also assumed that the reduction in building size, and thus store inventory, would result in a corresponding reduction in daily patrons at the stores. Under this scenario, fewer parking spaces would be required, which would reduce the amount of paved parking area required.

Alternative 3 – Off-Site Alternative. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(f)(2) addresses the evaluation of alternative locations for proposed projects as part of an EIR alternatives analysis. This discussion falls under the guidelines' explanation of the "rule of reason" governing the selection of an adequate range of alternatives for evaluation in the EIR. The key question concerning the consideration of an alternative location to the proposed projects is whether any of the significant effects identified for a given project would be avoided or substantially lessened by putting the project in another location. It should be noted that the County is not proposing development at any of the alternative sites but the alternative is included to demonstrate how development on a different site could potentially reduce identified project impacts.

¹ 7,200 square feet is the size of a conventional or standard store: <http://supermarketnews.com/retail-amp-financial/dollar-general-boosts-store-size>.

For purposes of the off-site alternatives analysis, County staff identified potential alternative sites based on the following criteria: General Plan designation of Commercial (NC, RC, HC, CC), undeveloped, and 1 to 3 acres in size. Five alternative locations were identified in Alta Sierra and five in Penn Valley. There were no locations in the Rough and Ready area that met the criteria. **Figure 16.0-1** and **Figure 16.0-2** show the locations of the Alta Sierra and Penn Valley off-site alternative sites, respectively. Information about each off-site alternative parcel is presented in **Table 16.0-1**, which lists the parcel number, street address, size, and zoning. As noted above, all parcels are vacant and/or undeveloped. For all locations, the store size and associated customer trips and delivery trucks are assumed to be identical to the proposed projects. The operational traffic volume and related air and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would therefore be the same as the proposed projects.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

CEQA requires an EIR to identify the “environmentally superior” alternative from among the range of reasonable alternatives evaluated. The alternative evaluation for each site identifies the environmentally superior alternative for each of the three sites and provides the basis for that determination. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(e)(2) states that if the environmentally superior alternative is the No Project Alternative, the EIR must also identify an environmentally superior alternative from among the other alternatives.

16.3 ALTA SIERRA SITE – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The potential environmental impacts of the Alta Sierra site alternatives compared to the proposed Alta Sierra project’s impacts are summarized in **Table 16.0-2**. As noted above, one significant and unavoidable impact was identified for the Alta Sierra site related to aesthetics. All other impacts would be less than significant or have no impact, and all potentially significant impacts, other than visual character, could be mitigated to less than significant levels.

16.3.1 ALTA SIERRA SITE – NO PROJECT/NO BUILD ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Project/No Build Alternative, the Alta Sierra store site would remain in its existing vacant and undeveloped condition. There would be no environmental impacts at the site because construction or operation would not occur. The No Project/No Build Alternative would avoid the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts at the Alta Sierra site. This alternative would not achieve any of the proposed project objectives.

16.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

**TABLE 16.0-1
OFF-SITE ALTERNATIVE PARCEL DESCRIPTIONS**

Site/Address/APN/ Acreage/Zoning	Key Physical Features	Surrounding Land Uses	Surrounding Zoning
Alta Sierra (see Figure 16.0-1)			
Alta Sierra Site 1 15156 State Route 49 APN 23-300-36 1.00 acres Zoning: C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrow parcel (approx. 125 feet wide) Grass and mature trees along western half Paved pull-out and gravel along SR 49 frontage 	North: vacant and heavy vegetation West: vacant and heavy vegetation South: vacant and vegetation, Pingree Road farther south East: SR 49; farther east Grass Valley Mobile Home Village on Little Valley Road and fire station to northeast	North: RA-10 West: RA-10 South: RA-10 East: RA-3
Alta Sierra Site 2 15448 Little Valley Road APN 23-300-63 1.60 acres Zoning: C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> L-shaped parcel with moderate to steep slope toward Little Valley Road Most of parcel has been disturbed and contains limited vegetation (a few trees and shrubs) Existing access is at end of Johnson Place 	North: commercial (nursery) disturbed area with vegetation West: vegetation and ditch adjoin SR 49 South: vacant and disturbed areas with some vegetation East: Little Valley Road and fenced propane tank and gravel turn-out	North: C1 West: RA-3 South: C1 & CH East: C1
Alta Sierra Site 3 15484 Little Valley Road APN 25-430-01 1.10 acres Zoning: C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate to steep slope west to east toward Little Valley Road Portions of parcel have been disturbed Vegetation a mixture of trees and shrubs covering portions of the parcel Existing access is at end of Johnson Place 	North: Site 2 West: Site 2 South: commercial and disturbed area with vegetation (trees and shrubs) East: Little Valley Road	North: C1 West: C1 South: C1 East: R2-X & RA-1.5
Alta Sierra Site 4 15637 Johnson Place APN 25-430-05 2.00 acres Zoning: C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate to steep slope west to east toward Little Valley Road Dense tree cover over most of parcel Existing access is Johnson Place 	North: commercial/retail West: commercial/retail South: vacant parcel with heavy vegetation and restaurant farther south East: Little Valley Road and single-family residence farther east downslope	North: C1 West: CH South: C1 East: RA-1.5
Alta Sierra Site 5 10061 Alta Sierra Drive APN 25-220-46 1.28 acres Zoning: C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate slope south to north toward Alta Sierra Drive Primarily grass with some scattered trees and shrubs 	North: Alta Sierra Drive and commercial/retail West: commercial/retail South: commercial/retail East: Alta Sierra Drive, commercial/retail, including proposed Alta Sierra site	North: C1 West: C1 South: C1 East: C1

Site/Address/APN/ Acreage/Zoning	Key Physical Features	Surrounding Land Uses	Surrounding Zoning
Penn Valley (see Figure 16.0-2)			
Penn Valley Site 1 18829 Pine Shadows Lane APN 51-240-20 1.07 acres Zoning: C2-SP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate slope east to west • Moderate mature tree cover and grass • Directly adjoins Pleasant Valley Road and Pine Shadows Lane (cul-de-sac) • Pleasant Valley Road two lanes with center turn lane, line of sight fairly long in both directions 	North: vacant with dense tree cover West: Pleasant Valley Road, roadside ditch, and vacant parcels farther west South: Penn Shadows Lane and vacant parcel to south East: self-storage facility	North: C1 West: IDR South: C1 East: M1
Penn Valley Site 2 10146 Commercial Avenue APN 51-240-16 1.40 acres Zoning: C2-SP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat • Surface is combination of gravel parking areas and grass with a few shrubs • Access from Commercial Avenue only; two concrete drive aprons lead to gravel parking • Commercial Avenue two-way stop control at Pleasant Valley Road 	North: vacant with dense tree cover West: two-story office and commercial/retail South: Commercial Avenue and commercial/retail farther south East: Commercial Avenue and commercial/retail farther east	North: C1 West: C1 South: M1-PD East: M1-PD
Penn Valley Site 3 17074 Penn Valley Drive APN 51-130-14 2.16 acres Zoning: C2-SP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat • Predominantly covered with grass • A few mature trees along Penn Valley Drive • Adjoins Penn Valley Drive 	North: single-family residence on Ladino Avenue, views of site may be partially obscured by trees and shrubs West: single family residence, trees and shrubs may partially obscure views South: Penn Valley Drive; south of Penn Valley Drive vacant, single-family residence and landscape products farther west East: Clover Road and gasoline station and fast-food restaurant	Northwest: OS West: C2 South: RA-1.5 & AG-5 East & Northeast: AG-5
Penn Valley Site 4 17630 Penn Valley Drive APN 51-150-29 3.1 acres Zoning: C2-SP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat • Mostly grass with a few mature trees scattered around parcel • Unimproved path on east side • Paved driveway (part of parcel) on west side of post office provides access from Penn Valley Drive 	North: Carrie Ann Lane and mobile home park West: vacant, grass South: US Post Office and parking lot East: mobile home park and commercial farther east	North: R3-MH-Sp West: C2-RH-SP South: C2-RH-SP East: R2-MH-SP & C2-RH-SP

16.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

Site/Address/APN/ Acreage/Zoning	Key Physical Features	Surrounding Land Uses	Surrounding Zoning
Penn Valley Site 5 10601 Harper Lane APN 51-160-24 1.19 acres Zoning: C2-SP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat • Predominantly covered with grass with one mature tree • Adjoins Spenceville Road 	North: Spenceville Road and Penn Valley Fire Department station West: Spenceville Road, with vacant parcels farther north South: Harper Lane and single-family residences along Harper Lane with direct views of parcel East: large vacant parcel	North: C2-SP West: BP-SP South: RA-1.5 East: C2-SP
Rough and Ready Highway			
<i>No parcels meet the criteria.</i>			

Source: Nevada County (parcel information); Michael Baker International

TABLE 16.0-2 ALTA SIERRA SITE ALTERNATIVES – SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT COMPARISON

Impact	Proposed Project (Significance)	No Project/No Build (Comparison)	No Project/Other Development (Comparison)	Reduced Project (Comparison)	Off-Site Alternative (Comparison) ¹
Aesthetics	SU	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Reduced impact
Air Quality	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Biological Resources	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Reduced impact
Cultural Resources	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Geology and Soils	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Hydrology and Water Quality	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Land Use and Planning	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Noise	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Public Services and Utilities	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Traffic and Transportation	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact

Notes: Significance is identified by the following: LS: less than significant, SU: significant and unavoidable

¹ Indicates where one of the off-site alternatives could reduce the impact.

16.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

16.3.2 ALTA SIERRA SITE – NO PROJECT/OTHER COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVE

Under the C1 zoning at the Alta Sierra site and based on the parcel size and site development standards (which would limit building size), the following uses could reasonably be developed upon County approval of a use permit or development permit: auto repair in an enclosed structure, bar, building supply sales and storage, car wash, fitness center, kennel (commercial), medical support services (e.g., ambulance, laboratory), retail plant nursery, offices and services, restaurants (including fast food), retail sales (this category applies to the proposed project), service station, or veterinary hospital/clinic.

If any of these other types of commercial uses were developed, they would require site preparation, including tree removal and grading. Construction activities would generate air and GHG emissions and would temporarily increase noise levels. Impacts on biological resources and cultural resources would be the same as with the proposed project because there would be ground disturbance. Hydrology and water quality (drainage) impacts would be similar to the proposed Alta Sierra project because new impervious surfaces would generate stormwater runoff. Aesthetics impacts would depend on the type of use and building. It should be noted that C1 zoning allows building heights of 45 feet or three stories. The proposed project building is proposed at approximately 27 feet high at its maximum point (roof parapet). Regardless of the type of use, there would be a permanent change in the site's visual character.

Different land uses have different trip generation rates. Some uses could result in more trips than the proposed Alta Sierra project, while some could result in fewer trips. Trucks could also make deliveries to the site, depending on the use, and the type of trucks and frequency of delivery would also depend on the use. Any occupied use on the site would require a septic system and connection to public water service. Noise levels during operation may be more or less than with the proposed project. For example, a car wash or auto repair shop could generate periodic noise from equipment, but an office-type use likely would not.

The No Project/Other Commercial Development Alternative would not be expected to result in environmental impacts that would differ substantially from those of the proposed project. It is unknown whether the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impact of the proposed project could be avoided or reduced because there are no site plans.

16.3.3 ALTA SIERRA SITE – REDUCED PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

Environmental Impacts That Would Be Reduced Compared to the Proposed Project

Aesthetics impacts would depend on the height of the building. However, with a smaller footprint for the building itself, there would be more options for site planning that could allow the building to be situated closer to Alta Sierra Drive, which could require less grading and a smaller retaining wall along Little Valley Road. A smaller retaining wall, more room for landscaping, and a greater setback from the roadway could substantially reduce the visibility of the project from Little Valley Road. Even with a reduction in building size, there would be a permanent change in the visual character of the site and vicinity, but it may be substantially reduced under this alternative. However, because a site plan that demonstrates adequate room on the site to achieve separation from Little Valley Road has not been developed, this impact is assumed to remain significant and unavoidable under this alternative.

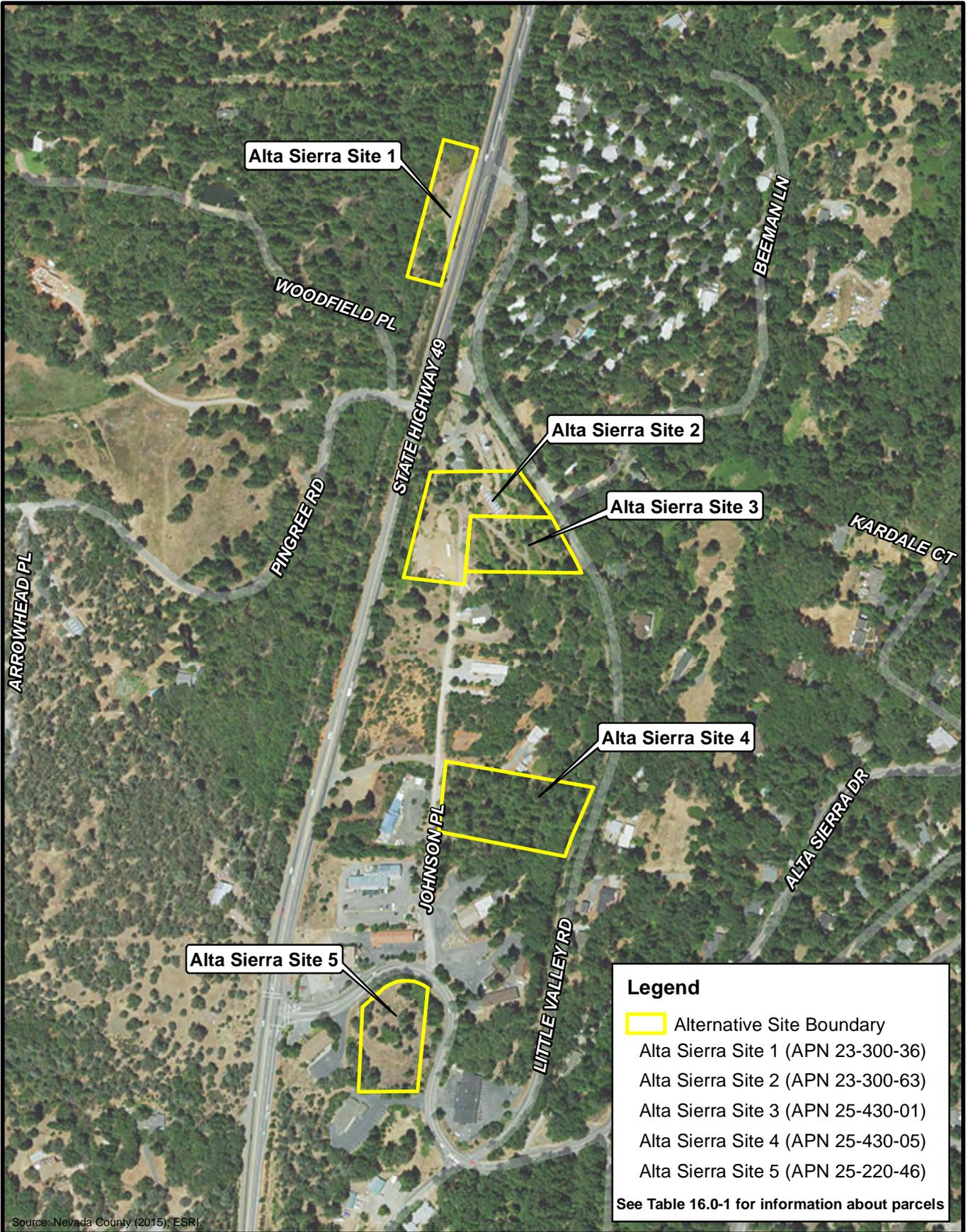


Figure 16.0-1
Alta Sierra Off-Site Alternative

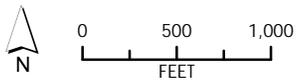
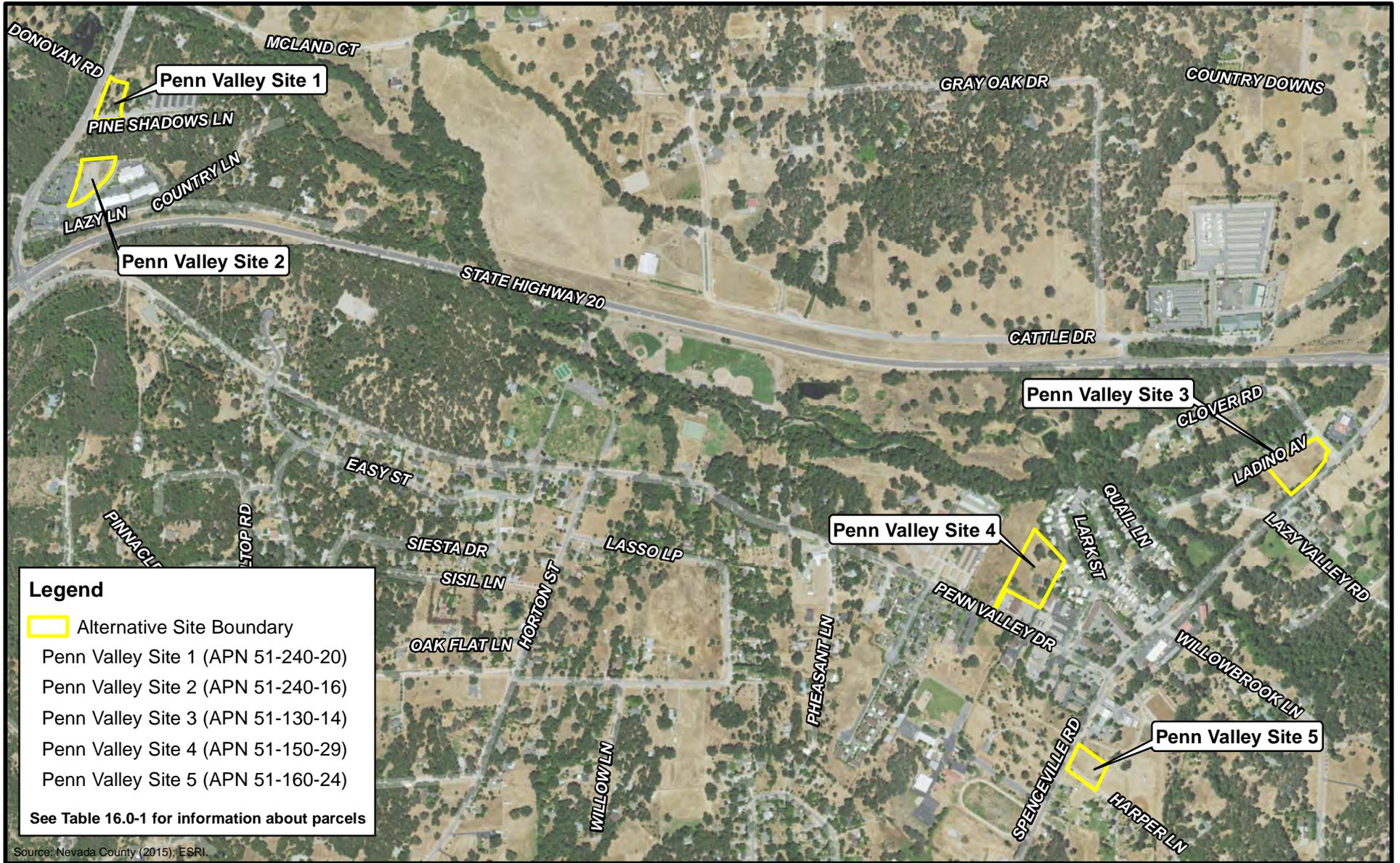


Figure 16.0-2
Penn Valley Off-Site Alternative

Construction-related impacts, such as construction vehicle and equipment emissions and construction noise, would be less than with the proposed project because the area of construction would be smaller and the timeline for construction could likely be reduced.

With a smaller retaining wall and a greater setback, there would be less cut and fill, and potential construction-related erosion impacts could be reduced.

Impacts on biological resources and cultural resources would be less than with the proposed project because it is assumed there would be less ground disturbance needed to accommodate the building and associated improvements, such as parking.

Hydrology and water quality (drainage) impacts would be reduced compared to the proposed project because there would be less impervious surface generating stormwater runoff. Potable water demand would be less for the Reduced Project Alternative.

As noted above, it is assumed that a smaller store would carry less inventory and result in reduced patronage. Using the same trip generation rate as for the proposed project (64.03 trips per 1,000 square feet), this alternative would generate 448 daily trips compared to 583 daily trips for the proposed project. The reduction in trips would result in corresponding decreases in air quality and GHG emissions, project traffic-generated noise, and parking lot noise.

Environmental Impacts That Would Be Similar to the Proposed Project

Septic system improvements, and associated environmental impacts, would be similar to the proposed project.

The traffic hazards and emergency access impact identified for the proposed project (Impact 15.1.2[AS]) would be the same for the Reduced Project Alternative. Although there would be fewer trips, customers and delivery trucks would still make the same turning movements onto Alta Sierra Drive. The Reduced Project Alternative would also result in the need for a construction traffic control plan.

Environmental Impacts That Would Be More Severe than the Proposed Project

There would be no environmental impacts of a Reduced Project Alternative that would be greater than those of the proposed project.

16.3.4 ALTA SIERRA SITE – OFF-SITE ALTERNATIVES

Table 16.0-1 summarizes the key environmental conditions and impact considerations for the five Alta Sierra site off-site locations. **Figure 16.0-1** shows the location of the five alternative sites considered for the Alta Sierra project. Because the only significant and unavoidable impact identified for the Alta Sierra site is related to aesthetics, the analysis below discusses the extent to which the alternative sites would reduce visual impacts and discusses where other effects may differ substantially from the proposed project.

Alta Sierra Site 1, located at 15156 State Route 49, is an approximately 1-acre parcel west of the intersection of SR 49 and Little Valley Road. Development of the building as proposed for Alta Sierra may be visible from residences located east of SR 49, but given the site's flat topography, the scale of the building from these residences would be substantially less than at the proposed site. However, as discussed in Section 4.0, Aesthetics, SR 49 is a designated scenic highway through the entire county. A large-scale commercial building with illuminated signage and other

16.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

operational lighting could result in a substantial change on this portion of the scenic highway. Consequently, the impacts on visual resources, though different from those of the proposed project, would also be significant.

Given the site's location on SR 49, access to Alta Sierra Site 1 would require changes to the local circulation to accommodate ingress and egress from northbound vehicles. Changes to the circulation on SR 49 would require approval from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Other impacts associated with development of this site would be similar to the proposed project, though fewer trees would be removed, so potential biological effects would be reduced. However, for the reasons noted above, development of the project on this site would result in more severe impacts than the proposed project.

Alta Sierra Sites 2 and 3 are not within line of sight of residential areas due to existing vegetation; thus, these alternative sites could avoid the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impact of the proposed project. Alta Sierra Site 2 is closer to SR 49, but there is adequate room on the site to position the building so it is not as close to SR 49 as Site 1, and it would not substantially affect views on scenic State Route 49. Sites 2 and 3 would require tree removal, but less than required for the proposed project, and would also require less grading. Operational impacts would be the same as with the project, though to the extent that trips to the site are not pass-by trips, the traffic could increase along the residential roads and result in a corresponding increase in traffic noise in those areas. However, it is not anticipated that the traffic noise would exceed standards. Given the width of Little Valley Road, access to these sites would require improvements along Little Valley Road to ensure safe customer and delivery access.

Alta Sierra Site 4 is located between Johnson Place and Little Valley Road. It is assumed that access would be via Little Valley Road. Like the project site, extensive tree removal would be required on Site 4 and mitigation would be similar to the project. Because of the site's size, it is assumed the building could be set back farther from Little Valley Road and the reduced slope of the site at Little Valley Road could reduce the amount of grading required, compared to the proposed project. Therefore, the impact of views of the building (and retaining wall) from Little Valley Road would be reduced compared to the project and would likely be eliminated. Like Sites 2 and 3, operational impacts would be the same as those of the project, though traffic and associated noise could increase along Little Valley Road. Similarly, it is not anticipated that the traffic noise would exceed standards. Access at Site 4 would also require improvements along Little Valley Road to ensure safe customer and delivery access.

Alta Sierra Site 5 is located on Alta Sierra Drive west of the project site. Development on this site would require less tree removal and less grading than the proposed project site. This site is not within the viewshed of residential areas and would therefore not result in the significant visual impact identified for the project. Although it is closer to SR 49, the site is in a developed commercial area so it would not result in a substantial change in the character of a scenic highway. Access to the site would be along Alta Sierra Drive, which would provide good visibility from the west, but there would be limited visibility from the east, which could affect westbound ingress and egress. Operational impacts would be similar to the project, though development on this site would not require construction of a soundwall as the proposed project would.

In summary, Alta Sierra Site 1 and Site 4 would not reduce the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impact identified for the project. Development on Alta Sierra Sites 2, 3, and 5 would avoid or reduce the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impact identified for the project.

16.3.5 ALTA SIERRA SITE – ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

For the Alta Sierra site, the No Project/No Build Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative because it would avoid all of the impacts of the proposed project. It would not meet project objectives. The No Project/Other Commercial Development Alternative may not be considered as environmentally superior because there is no specific project, and the environmental impacts of this alternative compared to the proposed project cannot be determined based on available information. The Reduced Project Alternative could reduce visual effects compared to the project, but it cannot be determined to be reduced to a less than significant level. Among the remaining alternatives, four of the off-site alternative locations could eliminate the aesthetic impact identified for the proposed project. Among those four, Alta Sierra sites 2 or 3 would be the environmentally superior alternative because, given their location, these would have the least potential to change the character of the residential area along Little Valley Road, would not affect views along a scenic highway, and would have fewer sight distance and access issues than the proposed project.

16.4 PENN VALLEY SITE – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The potential environmental impacts of the Penn Valley site alternatives compared to the proposed project's impacts are summarized in **Table 16.0-3**. As noted above, all impacts would be less than significant or no impact, and all potentially significant impacts could be mitigated to less than significant levels. No significant and unavoidable impacts were identified.

16.4.1 PENN VALLEY SITE – NO PROJECT/NO BUILD ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Project/No Build Alternative, the Penn Valley site would remain in its existing vacant and undeveloped condition. There would be no environmental impacts at the site because construction or operation would not occur. This alternative would not achieve any of the proposed project objectives.

16.4.2 PENN VALLEY SITE – NO PROJECT/OTHER COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVE

Under the C2-SP zoning at the Penn Valley site and based on the parcel size and site development standards (which would limit building size), the following uses could reasonably be developed upon County approval of a use permit or development permit: auto repair in an enclosed structure, auto and truck sales and leasing, bar, building supply sales and storage, car wash, convalescent home, equipment rental and leasing, fitness center, kennel (commercial), medical support services (e.g., ambulance, laboratory), retail plant nursery, offices and services, restaurants (including fast food), retail sales (this category applies to the proposed project), service station, or veterinary hospital/clinic. Any of these uses would also be subject to Site Performance Combining District development standards and the Penn Valley Village Area Plan design guidelines for commercial development.

16.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

TABLE 16.0-3 PENN VALLEY SITE ALTERNATIVES – SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT COMPARISON

Impact	Proposed Project (Significance)	No Project/No Build (Comparison)	No Project/Other Development (Comparison)	Reduced Project (Comparison)	Off-Site Alternative (Comparison)
Aesthetics	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Air Quality	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Biological Resources	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Cultural Resources	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Geology and Soils	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Hydrology and Water Quality	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Land Use and Planning	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Noise	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Public Services and Utilities	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Traffic and Transportation	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact

Note: Significance is identified by the following: LS: less than significant.

If any of these other types of commercial uses were developed, they would require site preparation, including vegetation removal and grading. Construction activities would generate air and GHG emissions and would temporarily increase noise levels. Impacts on biological resources and cultural resources would be the same as with the proposed project because there would be ground disturbance. Hydrology and water quality (drainage) impacts would be similar to the proposed project because new impervious surfaces would generate stormwater runoff that would drain to the on-site wash that discharges to Squirrel Creek. Aesthetics impacts would depend on the type of use and building. It should be noted that C2 zoning allows building heights of 45 feet or three stories. The proposed project building would be approximately 27 feet high at its maximum point (roof parapet). Regardless of the type of use, there would be a permanent change in the visual character of the site.

Different land uses have different trip generation rates. Some uses could result in more trips than the proposed Penn Valley project, while some could result in fewer trips. Trucks could also make deliveries to the site, depending on the use, and the type of truck and frequency of delivery would also depend on the use. Any occupied use on the site would require connection to public water and sewer service. Noise levels during operation may be more or less than with the proposed project. For example, a car wash or auto repair shop could generate periodic noise from equipment, but an office-type use likely would not.

The No Project/Other Commercial Development Alternative would not be expected to result in environmental impacts that would differ substantially from those of the proposed project.

16.4.3 PENN VALLEY SITE – REDUCED PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

Environmental Impacts That Would Be Reduced Compared to the Proposed Project

A smaller project footprint could reduce the amount of ground disturbance, which could result in fewer construction-related impacts such as grading, air quality and GHG emissions, and noise.

Impacts on biological resources and cultural resources would be less than with the proposed project because it is assumed there would be less ground disturbance needed to accommodate the building and associated improvements, such as parking.

Hydrology and water quality (drainage) impacts would be reduced compared to the proposed project because there would be less impervious surface generating stormwater runoff. Potable water demand and wastewater disposal would be less for the Reduced Project Alternative.

As noted above, it is assumed that a smaller store would carry less inventory and result in reduced patronage. Using the same trip generation rate as for the proposed project (64.03 trips per 1,000 square feet), this alternative would generate 448 daily trips compared to 583 daily trips for the proposed project. The reduction in trips would result in corresponding decreases in air quality and GHG emissions, project traffic-generated noise, and parking lot noise.

Environmental Impacts That Would Be Similar to the Proposed Project

The traffic hazards and emergency access impact identified for the proposed project (Impact 15.2.2[PV]) would be the same for the Reduced Project Alternative. Although there would be fewer trips, customers and delivery trucks would still make the same turning movements onto Penn Valley Drive. The Reduced Project Alternative would also result in the need for a construction traffic control plan.

16.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

Environmental Impacts That Would be More Severe than the Proposed Project

There would be no impacts of a Reduced Project Alternative that would be greater than the proposed project.

16.4.4 PENN VALLEY SITE – OFF-SITE ALTERNATIVE

As noted above, all of the environmental impacts at the Penn Valley site would be less than significant or could be mitigated to less than significant levels. As such, most of the environmental impacts at the five alternative sites would be similar to those of the proposed project, with some exceptions, which are described below.

Penn Valley Site 1 is in a commercial area surrounded by nonresidential development. Aesthetics impacts would be reduced compared to the proposed project. The site is sloped and would require cut and fill, which would not occur with the proposed project. This could result in more construction air quality and GHG emissions impacts than with the proposed project. There are no apparent wetland features. The site has more trees than the project site, and tree removal would result in the need for mitigation (as with the proposed project) for nesting birds and raptors. There would be no sensitive receptors that could be exposed to construction air emissions or noise, or noise from customer traffic and delivery trucks. The site is accessible from SR 20 via Pleasant Valley Road, which provides access to the immediate area where truck traffic serving the mix of commercial and industrial uses already occurs. No intersection operational impacts were identified for the proposed project at that intersection (**Table 15.0-5**), but additional study would likely be required to address truck turning movements into and out of the site.

Penn Valley Site 2 is a highly disturbed site with a combination of gravel parking areas and grass with a few shrubs. It is in the same commercial area as Site 1. Aesthetics impacts would be reduced compared to the proposed project. Biological resources and cultural resources impacts would be reduced compared to the proposed project because of existing site disturbance. There would be no sensitive receptors that could be exposed to construction air emissions or noise, or noise from customer traffic and delivery trucks. As with Site 1, no intersection operational impacts were identified for the proposed project (**Table 15.0-5**), but additional study would be required to address truck turning movements into and out of the site.

Penn Valley Site 3 is a flat, mostly grass-covered site with direct access from Penn Valley Drive, similar to the proposed project site. Surrounding uses are a combination of residential and nonresidential uses, similar to the proposed project site. Environmental impacts at this site would generally be similar to the proposed project. Additional study would be required to evaluate site access and turning movements.

Penn Valley Site 4 is a flat, partially vegetated site that adjoins the proposed project site to the northeast behind the post office. It is closer to the mobile home park than the project site, and therefore construction-related air emissions and noise could have a greater (but still temporary) impact. Aesthetics impacts may also be greater, but could be mitigated through design review and appropriate lighting. Depending on the site layout, delivery trucks would likely be closer to the residential use, which could result in a greater noise impact than the proposed project. All other environmental impacts would generally be similar to those of the proposed project.

Penn Valley Site 5 is a flat, predominantly grass-covered site surrounded by a sparse mix of residential and nonresidential development and vacant land along Spenceville Road. Environmental impacts at this site would generally be similar to those of the proposed project. Additional study would be required to evaluate delivery truck travel on Spenceville Road.

16.4.5 PENN VALLEY SITE -- ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

For the Penn Valley site, the No Project/No Build Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative because there would be no environmental impacts, but it would not meet project objectives. The No Project/Other Commercial Development Alternative may not be considered as environmentally superior because there is no specific project, and the environmental impacts of this alternative compared to the proposed project cannot be determined based on available information. Although no significant impacts were identified for the proposed Penn Valley site, among the remaining alternatives, the Reduced Project Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative. The Reduced Project Alternative would further lessen project impacts, it would not result in any new or more severe environmental impacts when compared to potential impacts that may occur at some of the off-site alternative locations, and it would meet project objectives.

16.5 ROUGH AND READY HIGHWAY SITE – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The potential environmental impacts of the Rough and Ready Highway site alternatives compared to the proposed project's impacts are summarized in **Table 16.0-4**. As noted above, two significant and unavoidable impacts were identified for the Rough and Ready Highway site related to aesthetics and land use compatibility. All other impacts would be less than significant or have no impact, and all potentially significant impacts, other than visual character and land use compatibility, could be mitigated to less than significant levels.

16.5.1 ROUGH AND READY HIGHWAY SITE – NO PROJECT/NO BUILD ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Project/No Build Alternative, the Rough and Ready Highway site would remain in its existing condition with the vacant commercial building and parking lots. There would be no environmental impacts at the site because construction or operation would not occur. The No Project/No Build Alternative would avoid the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impacts at the Rough and Ready Highway site. This alternative would not achieve any of the proposed project objectives.

16.5.2 ROUGH AND READY HIGHWAY SITE – NO PROJECT/OTHER COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVE

Under the C1 zoning at the Rough and Ready Highway site and based on the parcel size and site development standards (which would limit building size), the following uses could reasonably be developed upon County approval of a use permit or development permit: auto repair in an enclosed structure, bar, building supply sales and storage, car wash, fitness center, kennel (commercial), medical support services (e.g., ambulance, laboratory), retail plant nursery, offices and services, restaurants (including fast food), retail sales (this category applies to the proposed project), service station, or veterinary hospital/clinic.

16.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

TABLE 16.0-4 ROUGH AND READY HIGHWAY SITE ALTERNATIVES – SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT COMPARISON

Impact	Proposed Project (Significance)	No Project/ No Build (Comparison)	No Project/ Other Development (Comparison)	Reduced Project (Comparison)	Off-Site Alternative ¹ (Comparison)
Aesthetics	SU	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Reduced impact
Air Quality	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Biological Resources	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Cultural Resources	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Geology and Soils	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Hydrology and Water Quality	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Land Use and Planning	SU	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Reduced impact
Noise	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Public Services and Utilities	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact
Traffic and Transportation	LS	Reduced impact	Similar impact	Reduced impact	Similar impact

Notes: Significance is identified by the following: LS: less than significant, SU: significant and unavoidable

¹. The off-site alternative for the Rough and Ready Highway site is the proposed Penn Valley project, for which all impacts were determined to be less than significant

If any of these other types of commercial uses were developed, they would require site preparation, including tree removal and grading. Construction activities would generate air and GHG emissions and would temporarily increase noise levels. Impacts on biological resources and cultural resources would be the same as with the proposed project because there would be ground disturbance. Hydrology and water quality (drainage) impacts would be similar to the proposed project because new impervious surfaces would generate stormwater runoff. Aesthetics impacts would depend on the type of use and building. It should be noted that C1 zoning allows building heights of 45 feet or three stories. The proposed project building would be approximately 27 feet high at its maximum point (roof parapet). Regardless of the type of use, there would be a permanent change in the visual character of the site. Different land uses have different trip generation rates. Some uses could result in more trips than the proposed project, while some could result in fewer trips. Trucks could also make deliveries to the site, depending on the use, and the type of truck and frequency of delivery would also depend on the use. Any occupied use on the site would require a septic system and connection to public water service. Noise levels during operation may be more or less than with the proposed project. For example, a car wash or auto repair shop could generate periodic noise from equipment, but an office-type use likely would not.

The No Project/Other Commercial Development Alternative would not be expected to result in environmental impacts that would differ substantially from those of the proposed project. It is unknown whether the significant and unavoidable aesthetics impact of the proposed project could be avoided or reduced because there are no site plans.

16.5.3 ROUGH AND READY HIGHWAY SITE – REDUCED PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

Environmental Impacts That Would Be Reduced Compared to the Proposed Project

A smaller project footprint could reduce the amount of ground disturbance, which could result in fewer construction-related impacts such as grading, air and GHG emissions, and noise.

Impacts on biological resources and cultural resources would be less than with the proposed project because it is assumed there would be less ground disturbance needed to accommodate the building and associated improvements, such as parking.

Hydrology and water quality (drainage) impacts would be reduced compared to the proposed project because there would be less impervious surface generating stormwater runoff. Potable water demand would be less for the Reduced Project Alternative.

As noted above, it is assumed that a smaller store would carry less inventory and result in reduced patronage. Using the same trip generation rate as for the proposed project (64.03 trips per 1,000 square feet), this alternative would generate 448 daily trips compared to 583 daily trips for the proposed project. The reduction in trips would result in corresponding decreases in air quality and GHG emissions, project traffic-generated noise, and parking lot noise.

Environmental Impacts That Would Be Similar to the Proposed Project

Aesthetics impacts would depend on the height of the building. However, with a smaller footprint for the building itself, there would be more options for site planning that could allow the building to be situated where it may appear less visually intrusive. Even with a reduction in building size and development footprint, however, there would be a permanent change in the visual character of the site and vicinity. Therefore, the aesthetics and land use compatibility impacts are assumed to remain significant and unavoidable under this alternative.

16.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

The Reduced Project Alternative would result in the need for mitigation for a traffic signal, as identified for the proposed project (Impact 15.3.1 [RR]) because with the addition of the project and other approved projects, the intersection of Rough and Ready Highway and Ridge Road would operate at an unacceptable level of service during the morning peak hour.

The traffic hazards and emergency access impact identified for the proposed project (Impact 15.3.2 [RR]) would be the same for the Reduced Project Alternative. Although there would be fewer trips, customers and delivery trucks would still make the same turning movements onto Rough and Ready Highway. The Reduced Project Alternative would also result in the need for a construction traffic control plan.

Environmental Impacts That Would Be More Severe than the Proposed Project

There would be no impacts of a Reduced Project Alternative that would be greater than the proposed project.

16.5.4 ROUGH AND READY HIGHWAY SITE – OFF-SITE ALTERNATIVE

As described above, based on the County's criteria for potential off-site alternative locations, no parcels in the Rough and Ready community were identified as alternative locations for an off-site alternative. Given the proximity to Penn Valley, the proposed Penn Valley project site would be the off-site alternative for the Rough and Ready Highway site. The environmental impacts of the Penn Valley site were evaluated in Sections 4.0 through 15.0 of this Draft EIR and are summarized in **Table 16.0-3**. Only the proposed Penn Valley site, if approved, would be considered for the off-site alternative to the Rough and Ready Highway site; the County would not select one of the Penn Valley off-site alternatives for the Penn Valley site under this scenario.

16.5.5 ROUGH AND READY HIGHWAY SITE – ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

For the Rough and Ready Highway site, the No Project/No Build Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative because it would avoid all of the impacts of the proposed project. However, it would not meet project objectives. The No Project/Other Commercial Development Alternative may not be considered as environmentally superior because there is no specific project, and the environmental impacts of this alternative compared to the proposed project cannot be determined based on available information. The Reduced Project Alternative would result in fewer trips, air quality and GHG emissions, and noise. The magnitude of change in visual character on the site could be subjectively perceived as less because the building mass and height would be reduced, although this still would conservatively be considered a significant and unavoidable impact because of the change in the site relative to its surroundings. The Reduced Project Alternative would meet project objectives.

Among the remaining alternatives, the Off-Site Alternative, which would consist of developing the project at the Penn Valley site, would be the environmentally superior alternative because it would eliminate the significant and unavoidable aesthetics and land use compatibility impacts identified for the Rough and Ready Highway site. In addition, no off-site improvements for fire flow would be required, a new septic system would not need to be installed, and no building demolition would be necessary. This could result in reduced construction-related impacts. The Off-Site Alternative (Penn Valley site) would meet all of the project objectives.

16.6 OFF-SITE ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED BUT NOT SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

The Higgins Marketplace is an approved project in Higgins Corner at the intersection of Combie Road and SR 49 in the Lake of the Pines area. The project consists of an 86,500-square-foot shopping center (with 41,000 square feet of office space). The tentative parcel map has not been recorded; however, Parcels 2, 3, and 4 in the tentative parcel map meet the criteria that were used to identify the off-site alternatives for Alta Sierra and Penn Valley, and could be modified prior to map recordation to accommodate a Dollar General project. The parcels are zoned C2-SP-SC and have a General Plan designation of CC. The project is entitled and waiting for tenant commitments prior to proceeding with development. The environmental impacts of construction and occupancy of the Higgins Marketplace project were evaluated in an EIR, which the County certified in August 2009 (SCH #2005022022).

The Higgins Marketplace is 15.5 miles south of the existing Dollar General store in Grass Valley and 7.6 miles south of the Alta Sierra site. The Higgins Marketplace project is beyond the 12.5-mile geographic range identified in the proposed project's economic study as the area most likely to generate demand for retail sales in Grass Valley, including beyond a more specific market area for the Alta Sierra project (ALH 2015). This location would be considered an "other retail node" and would be too far away to meet the project objectives to provide a commercial development that serves the local market in the areas identified for the proposed projects. As such, this off-site alternative was eliminated from further analysis.

16.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

REFERENCES

ALH (ALH Urban & Regional Economics). 2015. Dollar General Economic Analysis in Alta Sierra, CA. <https://www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/cda/planning/docs/DOLLAR%20GENERAL/Alta%20Sierra/AS%20-%20Economic%20Analysis%202015-03-27%20ALH.pdf>.