

7. Alternatives to the Proposed Project

7.1 INTRODUCTION

7.1.1 Purpose and Scope

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that an environmental impact report (EIR) include a discussion of reasonable project alternatives that would “feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project, but would avoid or substantially lessen any significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives” (CEQA Guidelines § 15126.6[a]). As required by CEQA, this chapter identifies and evaluates potential alternatives to the proposed project.

Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines explains the foundation and legal requirements for the alternatives analysis in an EIR. Key provisions are:

- “[T]he discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly.” (15126.6[b])
- “The specific alternative of ‘no project’ shall also be evaluated along with its impact.” (15126.6[e][1])
- “The no project analysis shall discuss the existing conditions at the time the notice of preparation is published, or if no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced, as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services. If the environmentally superior alternative is the ‘no project’ alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.” (15126.6[e][2])
- “The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a ‘rule of reason’ that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. The alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project.” (15126.6[f])
- “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, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries..., and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to the alternative site (or the site is already owned by the proponent).” (15126.6[f][1])

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- “Only locations that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project need be considered for inclusion in the EIR.” (15126.6[f][2][A])
- “An EIR need not consider an alternative whose effect cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative.” (15126.6[f][3])

For each development alternative, this analysis:

- Describes the alternative.
- Analyzes the impact of the alternative as compared to the proposed project.
- Identifies the impacts of the project that would be avoided or lessened by the alternative.
- Assesses whether the alternative would meet most of the basic project objectives.
- Evaluates the comparative merits of the alternative and the project.

According to Section 15126.6(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, “[i]f an alternative would cause...significant effects in addition those that would be caused by the project as proposed, the significant effects of the alternative shall be discussed, but in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed.”

7.1.2 Project Objectives

As described in Section 3.2, the following objectives have been established for the proposed project and will aid decision makers in their review of the project, the project alternatives, and associated environmental impacts.

- Extend use of the existing varsity baseball field and varsity softball field into evening hours by providing sports lighting.
- Prevent disruption of baseball and softball games and practices by the new school start time of 8:30 am required by Senate Bill 328.
- Allow community use of the ballfields in the evening hours even after the new school start time of 8:30 am required by Senate Bill 328.

7.2 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED DURING THE SCOPING/PROJECT PLANNING PROCESS

The following is a discussion of the land use alternatives considered during the scoping and planning process and the reasons why they were not selected for detailed analysis in this SEIR.

7.2.1 Alternative Development Areas

CEQA requires that the discussion of alternatives focus on alternatives to the project or its location that are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project. The key question and first step in the analysis is whether any of the significant effects of the project would be avoided or substantially

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lessened by putting the project in another location. Only locations that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project need be considered for inclusion in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines § 15126[5][B][1]).

Providing ballfields lighting at another location would not meet the District's basic objectives of the proposed project, which are to extend the use of the existing varsity baseball and softball fields into evening hours and prevent disruptions to the existing baseball and softball programs by the new school start time of 8:30 am required by Senate Bill (SB) 328. An off-site alternative would require Del Norte High School students to travel to another ballfield with lights or construct sports lighting at an off-site location. The nearest District facility with baseball fields is at Mt. Carmel High School at 9550 Carmel Mountain Road, approximately 2.8 miles south of the project site. Considering the travel distance, this alternative location would result in greater vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and therefore greater operational air quality impact, greenhouse gas emissions impact, and transportation impacts compared to the proposed project. As stated above, only locations that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project need be considered for inclusion in the SEIR. Since the proposed project would not result in any significant effects and an alternative site would likely result in greater environmental impacts, further analysis of this alternative is not required under CEQA. Furthermore, any development of a similar type and number of poles on existing ballfields would have substantially the same impacts related to construction. Without a site-specific analysis, impacts on aesthetics cannot be evaluated. Moreover, the proposed project would result in less than significant light and glare impacts to adjacent residences so long as light poles are installed as proposed and post-installation measurements are taken to ensure that spill-light levels along the property line of the residences do not exceed 0.5 foot-candle. Therefore, an alternate location alternative was considered but rejected in this SEIR.

7.3 ALTERNATIVES SELECTED FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

Based on the criteria in Section 7.1.1, the following two alternatives were determined to represent a reasonable range of alternatives. Because the proposed project would not result in any significant impacts that cannot be avoided, only one alternative other than the No Project Alternative was selected for further review. The proposed project included only one mitigation measure to reduce the light and glare impact of the project. Therefore, an alternative was selected that would reduce the aesthetics impact and would also have the potential to feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. The alternatives are analyzed in detail in the following sections.

- No Project Alternative
- Baseball Field Lighting Only Alternative

An EIR must identify an “environmentally superior” alternative, and where the No Project Alternative is identified as environmentally superior, the EIR is then required to identify as environmentally superior an alternative from among the others evaluated. Both alternatives’ environmental impacts are compared to the proposed project and determined to be environmentally superior, neutral, or inferior. Section 7.6 identifies the Environmentally Superior Alternative. The preferred land use alternative (proposed project) is analyzed in detail in Chapter 5 of this DSEIR.

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7.4 NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

The CEQA Guidelines requires the analysis of a No Project Alternative. This analysis must discuss the existing site conditions as well as what would be reasonably expected in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved. Under the No Project Alternative, the varsity baseball and softball fields would not be lighted. The existing ballfields would continue to be used only during the daytime hours, and with the later school start time, the District would need to find other ways to accommodate the existing baseball and softball programs, such as traveling to other ballfields with lights, sharing fields, and/or reducing practice hours and programs. This alternative would not meet any of the project objectives.

7.4.1 Aesthetics

Under this alternative, there would be no changes to the existing ballfields. No tall light poles would be visible during the day, and no spill-light and glare impacts would occur. This alternative would have less impact related to aesthetics. Aesthetics is not a significant and unavoidable impact of the proposed project.

7.4.2 Air Quality

No construction would be required under this alternative; therefore, no construction-related air quality impacts would occur. Typical long-term air pollutant emissions generated by a land use would be generated by area sources (e.g., landscape fuel use, aerosols, and architectural coatings), mobile sources from vehicle trips, and energy use associated with the land use. The proposed project is not anticipated to generate long-term operational air quality impacts related to vehicle trips but would generate nominal air pollutant emissions from lighting equipment use. This nominal operational air emissions would be eliminated under the No Project Alternative. No Project Alternative would have less construction and operational air quality impacts compared to the proposed project. Air quality impact is not a significant and unavoidable impact of the proposed project.

7.4.3 Noise

No construction would be required under this alternative; therefore, no construction-related noise impacts would occur. Under this alternative, no vehicle trips would be shifted past daytime hours, and operational noise impacts identified under the proposed project would be eliminated. The No Project Alternative would have less construction and operational noise impacts compared to the proposed project. Noise impact is not a significant and unavoidable impact of the proposed project.

7.4.4 Transportation

No construction would be required under this alternative; therefore, no construction-related transportation impacts would occur. For the long-term impact, there would be no changes to the existing transportation system, trips, patterns, and VMT, and no impact would occur. Therefore, this alternative would lessen impacts related to transportation. Transportation impact is not a significant and unavoidable impact of the proposed project.

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7.4.5 Conclusion

The No Project Alternative would lessen the proposed project's environmental impacts in all areas (i.e., aesthetics, air quality, noise, and transportation). However, this alternative would not meet any of the project objectives listed in Section 7.1.2.

7.5 BASEBALL FIELD LIGHTING ONLY ALTERNATIVE

The proposed project concluded that only the aesthetics (light and glare) impacts of the proposed project could potentially result in a significant impact without mitigation and incorporated a mitigation measure. All other impacts were determined to have no impact or less than significant impact without mitigation. Therefore, this alternative has been selected to reduce the light and glare impacts of the proposed project. Under this alternative, only the varsity baseball field would be lighted with eight light poles, and the varsity softball field would remain as is. This alternative would require that the varsity baseball field be shared and accommodate the uses proposed for the varsity softball field as well. This would require the lighted varsity baseball field to be used more and for longer hours. For example, under this alternative, the lights could be on until 10 pm daily from February to June, instead of the proposed 8 pm, and until 10 pm daily from August to November, instead of the proposed 9 pm three times a week. However, this alternative would not be able to accommodate all of the scheduling demands for the varsity softball field and would require some of the practices and games to be played elsewhere with lights. This alternative would only partially meet the project objectives.

7.5.1 Aesthetics

Under this alternative, only eight light poles would be constructed instead of the proposed 14 light poles. Therefore, daytime visual impacts would be less than the proposed project. As shown on Figure 5.1-5, *Near-Sidewalk Horizontal-Spill-Light Levels*, the highest spill light level along the west side of Deer Ridge Road is near the light pole "C3" for the varsity softball field with 2.88 foot-candles (fc). Without the softball field lighting, the highest spill-light level along the west side of Deer Ridge Road would be 0.81 fc near the light pole "C2." However, the same mitigation measure would be required under this alternative to ensure that spill-light levels after installation of the lights do not exceed 0.5 fc along the along the residential property line. Nevertheless, under this alternative, the spill light impact would be reduced compared to the proposed project. Aesthetics is not a significant and unavoidable impact of the proposed project.

7.5.2 Air Quality

Under this alternative, construction-related air emissions would be reduced because only eight light poles would be installed instead of the proposed 14 light poles. The construction schedule would be reduced, and the equipment would be used for a shorter period, reducing the construction air quality impact. With eight poles, operational air emissions from the lighting equipment would be reduced. Air emissions from operational mobile sources would slightly increase because some of the practices and/or games for the varsity softball team would need to be played elsewhere with light. Traveling to another location for practices and games would increase VMT, and therefore result in additional operational air quality impact. This

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alternative would lessen the construction air quality impact but would likely slightly increase the operational air quality impacts compared to the proposed project. Air quality impact is not a significant and unavoidable impact of the proposed project.

7.5.3 Noise

Under this alternative, construction-related noise impacts would be reduced because only eight light poles would be constructed instead of the proposed 14 light poles. For operational noise impacts, the number of users from 6 pm to 8 pm would decrease from the proposed project because only one field would be lighted. This would reduce noise levels, but the noise would be extended for a longer period. Therefore, operational noise impacts would be neutral compared to the proposed project.

7.5.4 Transportation

Under this alternative, construction-related traffic would be reduced because only eight poles would be constructed. During operation, the VMT would slightly increase from the proposed project because some of the games and practices would have to be played at other fields with lights. Note that there is no nearby District-owned ballfield with nighttime lighting. The District does not own a lighted ballfield within a minimum of three-mile radius of the project site, and the closest ballfields with lights are at the 4S Ranch Sports Park, approximately 0.45 mile to the south. Therefore, even if students can use the 4S Ranch Sports Park, this would still increase the VMT. The operational transportation impact would be greater than for the proposed project. Transportation is not a significant and unavoidable impact of the proposed project.

7.5.5 Conclusion

The Baseball Field Lighting Only alternative would lessen the proposed project's environmental impacts related to aesthetics and construction-related air quality, noise, and transportation impacts. However, it would have greater operational air quality and transportation impacts and neutral operational noise impacts. This alternative would partially meet the project objectives listed in Section 7.1.2.

7.6 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

CEQA requires a lead agency to identify the “environmentally superior alternative” and, in cases where the “No Project” Alternative is environmentally superior to the proposed project, the environmentally superior development alternative must be identified. One alternative has been identified as “environmentally superior” to the proposed project:

-  No Project Alternative

The proposed project would not result in any significant and unavoidable impact, and only the light and glare impact has been identified as the potentially significant impact that requires mitigation. All other impacts have been determined to have no or less than significant impact without mitigation. Although the Baseball Field Lighting Only alternative would reduce impacts related to potentially significant light and glare impact, and

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meet some of the project objectives, it is not an environmentally superior alternative. Therefore, this alternative is rejected, and the No Project Alternative is the only environmentally superior alternative.

“Among the factors that may be used to eliminate alternatives from detailed consideration in an EIR are: (i) failure to meet most of the basic project objectives, (ii) infeasibility, or (iii) inability to avoid significant environmental impacts” (CEQA Guidelines § 15126.6[c]). The No Project Alternative would not meet any of the project objectives.

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