

## **6.0 ALTERNATIVES**

CEQA (*CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126.6) requires that an EIR include a discussion of reasonable project alternatives that would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project while avoiding or substantially reducing any of the significant effects of the project. CEQA further states that the discussion of alternatives focus on alternatives that reduce project-related impacts, "...even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly." The analysis provided in Section 4.0 determined that traffic impacts at selected intersections, and short-term construction and long-term operational air quality impacts will remain significant after mitigation. All other impacts are considered less than significant or reduced to below the level of significance with mitigation. If the environmentally superior alternative is determined to be the No-Build Alternative, the EIR must also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives, if the analysis indicates that significant impacts can be avoided by one or more alternatives.

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide new retail to the Town of Yucca Valley. Implementation of the proposed project and Specific Plan will accomplish the following objectives:

- Provide development consistent with the Town's General Plan land uses and in conformance with municipal standards, codes, and policies;
- Provide for the orderly and master planned development of land uses within the project area to ensure that an economically viable project or projects can be developed;
- Allow the potential for development of high quality commercial uses within an undeveloped portion of the Town;
- Augment the Town's economic base by providing tax-generating uses that are currently leaving the Town; and
- Create employment-generating opportunities for the citizens of Yucca Valley and surrounding communities.

As evidenced by the analysis provided in Section 6.3, Alternative 2 (Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative) has been determined to be the environmentally superior alternative. The discussion of project alternatives follows.

### **6.1 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

The EIR should identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible. Factors to be considered when addressing the feasibility of alternative include failure to meet most of the project objectives; infeasibility; or inability to avoid significant environmental impacts. Factors to be considered when addressing the feasibility of alternatives include site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, jurisdictional or regulatory limitations, and whether the project proponent can reasonably acquire, control, or

otherwise have access to an alternative site. An EIR need not consider an alternative whose effect cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative.

In determining an appropriate range of alternatives to be evaluated in the EIR, a number of possible alternatives were initially considered and, for a variety of reasons, rejected. Alternatives were rejected because they could not accomplish the basic objectives of the project (which are stated in Section 3.4 of this EIR), would not have resulted in a reduction of potentially significant impacts, or were considered infeasible. Alternative off-site locations were considered feasible provided they were of sufficient size (approximately 25 acres) and zoned General Commercial (C-G). The reason for not selecting each of the rejected alternatives is discussed below.

### **6.1.1 No Build Alternative**

In some instances, the no project alternative equates to a “no build” alternative, which maintains the existing environmental condition. Where failure to proceed with the project will not result in the preservation of existing environmental conditions, the analysis should identify the practical results of the project’s non-approval and not create and analyze a set of artificial assumptions that would be required to preserve the existing physical environment.

The project site is located on the south side of SR-62, a commercial corridor home to a majority of the commercial enterprises in Yucca Valley. The project site has a General Plan designation of General Commercial and a “General Commercial District” (C-G) zoning designation. The purpose of the C-G land use designation is to accommodate a wide variety of smaller commercial centers, specialty retail shops, a broad range of clothing and apparel, jewelry stores, and a variety of personal service businesses. Development may range from freestanding retail buildings and restaurants, to planned commercial centers. The project site is flanked by existing commercial/office uses to the west and the proposed Home Depot center to the east.

In addition to local residents, retail facilities in Yucca Valley draw patrons from Joshua Tree, Morongo Valley, Landers, and—to some degree—Twentynine Palms. Yucca Valley also attracts significant retail expenditures from tourists, due mostly to the Town’s proximity to Joshua Tree National Park. Despite Yucca Valley’s status as the center of retailing activities in the Morongo Basin, the area’s existing inventory of retail facilities is not large enough to fully serve the shopping demands of Morongo Basin residents. Based on the size and location of the property, the property’s existing General Plan and zoning designations, current development trends, and an existing deficiency in local retail opportunities, it is reasonable to conclude that, in the absence of the proposed project, development of the project site under this alternative would consist of an equivalent amount of commercial uses as the proposed project.

While the sum of impacts associated with the development of the project would be eliminated if the site were to remain in its current condition, in light of the previously identified reasons, it is not reasonable to assume the long-term preservation of the site’s existing condition. Disallowing development of the site would impose conditions in conflict with the City’s existing vision for the site. This alternative would not represent the highest or best use of the commercially zoned site, nor would it fulfill the primary objectives of the proposed project. The substantial economic and social benefits derived from the development and operation of the proposed retail and community serving uses would be forfeited. Consequently, the No Build Alternative was rejected.

### **6.1.2 Alternative Use of Project Site**

Factors to be considered when addressing the feasibility of alternatives include failure to meet most of the project objectives; infeasibility; or inability to avoid significant environmental impacts. Factors to be considered when addressing the feasibility of alternatives include site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, and jurisdictional or regulatory limitations.

As previously identified, the project site is located on the south side of SR-62, a commercial corridor home to a majority of the commercial enterprises in Yucca Valley. The project site has been assigned a General Plan designation of General Commercial and a “General Commercial District” (C-G) zoning designation. This alternative would result in a non-commercial use of the entire 25+ acre project site.

While it would be possible to locate a wide variety of non-commercial uses on the site, CEQA requires avoidance of analyses that the lead agency determines to be speculative. Alternative use of the project site with an industrial use would conflict with the existing General Plan and zoning designation of the site and would require changes to the Town’s General Plan and Zoning Code. Development of single-family or multiple-family uses would require preparation of a planned development or Conditional Use Permit, respectively. The operation of institutional or recreational facilities on the 25.51-acre site would be subject to a Conditional Use Permit or site plan review.

Development of any non-commercial alternative would not only conflict with the existing General Plan and zoning designation of the site, but would fail to achieve the primary objectives of the proposed project. The employment opportunities, economic benefits, and consistency/continuity of land use derived from the proposed project would be eliminated; therefore, this alternative was not carried forward for further analysis.

## **6.2 ALTERNATIVES UNDER CONSIDERATION**

The lead agency is responsible for selecting a range of project alternatives for examination and must publicly disclose its reasoning for selecting those alternatives. The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a “rule of reason,” which requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. Of the alternatives considered, the EIR need examine in detail only the ones that the lead agency determines could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. Under CEQA, “feasible” has been defined as, “...capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors.” The following development scenarios have been identified as potential alternatives to implementation of the proposed project.

### **6.2.1 Alternative 1: No Project/Existing Zoning**

The purpose of describing and analyzing a No Project Alternative is to allow decision-makers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project. As defined in the *CEQA Guidelines*, the No Project discussion should consider

what is 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. Where a proposed action is a development on an identifiable property, the No Project Alternative is the circumstance under which the project does not proceed. If disapproval of the project under consideration would result in predictable actions by others, such as the proposal of some other project, this consequence should be discussed.

Under the No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative, the proposed project would not go forward. This alternative would allow development of the site according to the existing land use regulations in the Town's General Plan and Zoning Code. The project site is located on the south side of SR-62, a commercial corridor home to a majority of the commercial enterprises in Yucca Valley. The project site has a General Plan designation of General Commercial and a "General Commercial District" (C-G) zoning designation.

This alternative would allow development of square footage equal to that of the proposed project (233,000 square feet). Because of the range of uses permitted (by right) on-site, potential development scenarios for the site are numerous and varied. In the event of the denial of the proposed project, it is reasonable to conclude that a different national discount retailer may elect to develop the site. Other development scenarios may include a multi-tenant shopping center anchored by a number of mid-sized anchors (50,000 to 60,000 square feet) with smaller specialty retail and service outlets; a single supercenter anchor (125,000 to 150,000 square feet) with smaller specialty retail and service outlets; or a retail, entertainment, dining mix that could combine theater, dining (both fast-food and sit down restaurants), and smaller specialty retail and service uses. The location and configuration of uses would vary according to the unique characteristics associated with any alternative development scenario.

Based on the size and location of the property, the property's existing General Plan and zoning designations, current development trends, existing deficiency in local retail opportunities that would support a super center or similar large retail operation, and the construction of a driveway that will be shared jointly with the adjacent Home Depot Center, it is reasonable to conclude that, in the absence of proposed project, development of the site under this alternative will consist of retail uses of a similar size and configuration. Consequently, the No Project Alternative includes the same quantity of development as the proposed project, including signalization of the driveway on SR-62.

### **6.2.2 Alternative 2: Mixed Commercial/Office**

With the intent of avoiding or substantially reducing significant impacts created by the project, the EIR has considered a Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative. This alternative includes a general office building of approximately 115,000 square feet occupying half of the major retail square footage, a smaller retailer of approximately 115,000 square feet on the remaining major retail square footage (with no gas station), and the same 4,000-square foot fast-food restaurant fronting SR-62.

### **6.2.3 Alternative 3: Off-Site Location**

The Off-Site Location Alternative analyzes the impacts of the proposed project in a different location. An alternative site would require adequate land, access, and services, and must be compatible with

adjacent uses. Based on review of the available sites, there are three such properties. Two of the properties considered are the current Wal-Mart site and the vacant Kmart building, located approximately 2.75 miles and 3 miles, respectively, southwesterly of the project site on SR-62. Both of these sites are smaller than the proposed project.

The Kmart building is located at 57725 Twentynine Palms Highway (the southwest corner of Warren Vista Drive and SR-62). This store closed approximately three years ago as part of Kmart's chain-wide restructuring. The building owners have recently received approval to reconfigure the building to lease to multiple tenants. The reconfigured structure would total approximately 73,000 square feet. Because the Kmart building has recently received approval to reconfigure the building, it is not available as an alternative site location. The existing Wal-Mart is located in a multi-tenant center, south of the Yucca Valley Airport. Directly east of the existing Wal-Mart structure are other retail tenants. Because of the proximity of both the airport and other retail tenants, expansion of the existing 110,000 square foot Wal-Mart use at its present location is not feasible. Additionally, both sites will require the demolition of an existing building to implement the proposed project. Noise and air quality impacts associated with the demolition of the existing buildings, coupled with the inadequate lot size, makes the vacant Kmart and the current Wal-Mart sites unsuitable for the off-site location alternative.

The remaining site, located at the northwest corner of Balsa Avenue and Yucca Trail, is considered the off-site alternative location for purposes of this analysis. This off-site location consists of five undeveloped parcels totaling approximately 81 acres. Due to the large undeveloped area at this location and the configuration of the parcels, the proposed project could be situated on portions and/or combinations of several of the parcels.

This site is accessible from both Balsa Avenue and Yucca Trail, and is adequate in size for the implementation of the proposed project. The Town has designated the alternative site location "C-MU" (Mixed Use Commercial). This designation is intended for a mix of land uses, including commercial, professional office, recreational, and high density residential uses in and near the downtown area. The purpose of this district is to allow highly integrated commercial uses with residential development that can rely on pedestrian access to commercial services and employment centers, and to create new consumer retail markets in the downtown area. Development within areas designated C-MU requires preparation of a Specific Plan.

Residential uses are located east of the off-site alternative location. These uses are separated from the alternative site by Balsa Avenue. Additional scattered residential uses exist to the south of this location on the other side of Yucca Trail. Compared to the topography of other vacant lands in the Town, this location is the most suitable choice for an off-site location alternative.

#### **6.2.4 Alternative 4: Reduced Intensity Commercial**

This alternative was crafted to reduce operational air pollution emissions associated with development of the project site to below MDAQMD daily thresholds.

Under this alternative, the project site would be developed with approximately half of the 233,000 square feet of uses envisioned under the proposed project. The 115,000 square feet of commercial uses under the Reduced Intensity Commercial alternative would consist of a multi-tenant shopping

center hosting a single mid-size anchor (50,000–60,000 square feet). The balance of the developed uses would consist of smaller specialty retail and service outlets.

### 6.3 ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

The following discussion compares the impacts of each alternative with the impacts of the proposed project, as detailed in Section 4.0 of this EIR.

Seven of the seventeen environmental topics would result in the same level of impacts under the project and each of the alternatives. These topics include those issues for which the environmental impact is related to the conversion of the property to a developed state, and not related to the actual intensity of development or specific use of the property. These topics include Agricultural Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology/Soils, Land Use/Planning, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology (Drainage) and Water Quality, and Mineral Resources. The level of impact associated with these topics would be the same if developed as proposed by the project or if developed with any of the alternatives. The proposed project would have a less than significant impact with regard to these seven environmental topics. The alternatives, their respective impacts and a discussion of these topics are provided as follows.

- **Agricultural Resources.** The No Project/Existing Zoning, Mixed Commercial/Office, Off-Site Location, and Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternatives would require site development in the same manner as would be required for the proposed project. Consequently, impacts to agricultural resources resulting from the development of each alternative would be the same as identified for the proposed project. As identified for the proposed project, the development of each alternative would result in a less than significant impact to agricultural resources, with no mitigation required.
- **Cultural Resources.** The No Project/Existing Zoning, Mixed Commercial/Office, Off-Site Location, and Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternatives would require site development in the same manner as would be required for the proposed project. While the Off-Site Location Alternative would result in development at a different site, the potential for impacts to cultural and paleontological resources are expected to be similar to those at the proposed project site. Consequently, impacts to cultural resources resulting from development of each alternative would be the same as identified for the proposed project. As required for the proposed project, mitigation to address potential impacts to paleontological and archaeological resources unearthed during site excavation activities would also be required. As was identified for the proposed project, the alternatives would produce less than significant impacts to cultural resources with mitigation.
- **Geology and Soils.** The No Project/Existing Zoning, Mixed Commercial/Office, Off-Site Location, and Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternatives would require development in the same manner as would be required for the proposed project. While the Off-Site Location Alternative requires development at a different site, with the exception of the site's proximity to nearby faults (which is discussed under Alternative 3), the geology and soils are expected to be similar to those at the proposed project site. Consequently, impacts associated with geology and soils resulting from development of the No Project/Existing Zoning, Mixed Commercial/Office and the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternatives would be the same as identified for the proposed project. As required for the proposed project, mitigation to ensure that adequate

construction measures are conducted during site preparation would be required for each of the alternatives. As was identified for the proposed project, the No Project/Existing Zoning, Mixed Commercial/Office, and the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternatives would produce less than significant impacts associated with geology and soils with mitigation.

- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** The No Project/Existing Zoning, Mixed Commercial/Office, Off-Site Location, and Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternatives would require site development in the same manner as would be required for the proposed project. Development under any build alternative would still result in the on-site handling of hazardous substances, both during project construction and during retail operations. Impacts resulting from the transport, use, or sale of hazardous materials or potential emergency access requirements under any of the alternatives would be less than significant. Consequently, impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials resulting from development of each alternative would be the same as identified for the proposed project. The Off-Site Location Alternative is not located on a site contained on the Cortese List<sup>1</sup> nor does the site contain any existing development. While soil contamination is not expected at the off-site location, the Off-Site Location Alternative would require mitigation to ensure that on-site soils are tested and proper clean-up procedures are conducted, if necessary. Similar to the proposed project, the off-site location is located within Safety Review Area 3 of the *Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the Yucca Valley Airport*. The off-site location is not located within 0.25 of an existing or proposed school. As was identified for the proposed project, each alternative would produce less than significant impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials with mitigation.
- **Hydrology (Drainage) and Water Quality.** The No Project/Existing Zoning, Mixed Commercial/Office, Off-Site Location, and Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternatives would require site development in the same manner as would be required for the proposed project. While the Off-Site Location Alternative requires development at a different site, the potential for impacts to hydrology and water quality are expected to be similar to the proposed project. As required for the proposed project, mitigation to address potential impacts to hydrology and water quality would also be required. The project's drainage system has been designed to accommodate stormwater flows from the project site. The same, or similar, drainage system would be required for each alternative to handle local flooding and stormwater flows from the site, resulting in a less than significant impact.
- **Land Use/Planning.** The No Project/Existing Zoning, Mixed Commercial/Office, Off-Site Location, and Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternatives would result in similar land uses as the proposed project, consistent with the existing General Plan and existing site zoning. As identified for the proposed project, development of each alternative would result in a less than significant impact on land use and planning issues, with no mitigation required.
- **Mineral Resources.** The No Project/Existing Zoning, Mixed Commercial/Office, Off-Site Location, and Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternatives would require site development in the same manner as would be required for the proposed project. Consequently, impacts to mineral resources resulting from development of each alternative would be the same as identified for the proposed project. As discussed for the proposed project, each alternative would produce a less than significant impact on mineral resources, with no mitigation required.

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<sup>1</sup> State of California Department of Toxic Substance Control Hazardous Waste and Substances Sites List, <http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/>, site accessed on June 12, 2006.

For the remaining ten topics, the level of impact is related to the location of the site and/or the land use activity, so the impact could be different if developed under the alternatives. These topics include Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Traffic, Utilities and Service Systems, and Urban Decay. The level of impact for each of these topics is discussed for each of the alternatives as follows.

### 6.3.1 Alternative 1: No Project/Existing Zoning

Although the proposed project would not go forward on this site, another development proposal with the similar commercial and retail uses would in all likelihood be developed.

**Aesthetics.** The No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would result in development of office and/or retail uses consistent with the existing zoning for the site, requiring construction of on-site lighting to accommodate night time activities and for safety purposes. Similar to the proposed project, the No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would produce potential impacts from spillover light onto adjacent properties and uses to the north and west would be separated from the project site by lighted roadways. As required for the proposed project, mitigation for this alternative in the form of glare shields, cut-off light optics, and the submittal of a photometric study to the City would be required, rendering the impact less than significant.

Additionally, under the No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative, the proposed project site would likely be developed with a project of similar size and configuration; therefore, impacts to scenic resources and scenic vistas will be similar to that of the proposed project. Under this alternative, development of the project site would be required to comply with design standards, such as setbacks, building height, lot dimensions, and maximum lot coverage contained in the Town's Development Code. The Town's Development Code<sup>1</sup> standards for development in the General Commercial land use designation include a maximum structure height of 40 feet, a front yard setback of 15 feet, side and rear yard setbacks of 10 feet, and street side setbacks of 15 feet.

Development under this alternative would partially block views of vicinity hillsides and ridges from vantage points near the project's roadway frontages similar to that identified for the proposed project. Development of the No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would result in the development of commercial uses on the project site, which would match the existing urban core/corridor that has developed along SR-62. When compared to the proposed project, aesthetic impacts under this alternative would be similar in magnitude as that identified for the proposed project. As was identified for the proposed project, this alternative would also result in less than significant impacts to aesthetics, with the implementation of mitigation measures for impacts associated with spillover lights.

**Air Quality.** The No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would require site development in the same manner as would be required for the proposed project. Consequently, short-term construction impacts associated with emissions of the criteria pollutants NO<sub>x</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> would also be created with

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<sup>1</sup> Town of Yucca Valley Development Code, Section 84.0350.

development of this alternative. Like the proposed project, impacts associated with the emission of these pollutants during construction would remain significant and unavoidable.

As identified in Table 6.A, long-term air quality impacts associated with operational emissions generated under this alternative would be the same as those identified for the proposed project. Operational emissions are expected to be approximately 2,100 lbs./day of CO, 176 lbs./day of ROC, 292 lbs./day of NOx, 2 lbs./day of SO<sub>2</sub>, and approximately 173 lbs/day of PM<sub>10</sub> under this alternative. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to air quality would be similar in magnitude as that identified for the proposed project. Because there is no mitigation that fully reduces the operational emission of these pollutants, air quality impacts associated with this alternative (as with the proposed project) would remain significant and unavoidable.

**Table 6.A – Comparison of Operational Emissions (lbs./day) – Alternative 1**

MDAQMD Significance Threshold	CO	ROC	NOx	SO <sub>2</sub>
	548	137	137	137
<b>Proposed Project</b>				
Emissions*	2,100	176	292	1.7
Do Emissions Exceed MDAQMD Threshold?	YES	NO	YES	NO
<b>Alternative 1: No Project/Existing Zoning</b>				
Emissions	2,100	176	292	1.7
Do Emissions Exceed MDAQMD Threshold?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Change from Proposed Project	0	0	0	0

\* Worst Case: CO, SO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> – summer; NOx, ROC – winter.  
Source: LSA Associates, Inc., 2004

**Biological Resources.** The No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would require site development in the same manner as would be required for the proposed project. Impacts to biological resources resulting from development of this alternative would be identical to those identified for the proposed project. As required for the proposed project, mitigation to address potential impacts to the desert tortoise would also be required for the No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to biological resources would be similar in magnitude as that of the proposed project. As was identified for the proposed project, this alternative would produce less than significant impacts to biological resources with the incorporation of mitigation measures.

**Noise.** It is anticipated the project site will be developed with a similar number of retail uses under the No Project Alternative. As with the proposed project, increases in future traffic noise ranging from 0.0 to 2.3 dBA would occur. In exterior environments, audible increases in noise levels generally refer to a change of 3.0 dBA or greater. Because the increase in the exterior noise environment does not result in an audible increase in noise levels, traffic noise impacts associated with this alternative would be less than significant. All operational noise impacts associated with the proposed project (stationary noise sources, loading/unloading, parking lot noise, compactor and HVAC noise) were determined to be less than significant at the noise sensitive uses nearest to the project site. With the

similar development that would occur under this alternative, noise impacts would be similarly less than significant. Under the proposed project, construction-related noise impacts were reduced to a less than significant level through the implementation of mitigation. Because the size and configuration of the project site under this alternative would be generally similar to the proposed project, with the implementation of similar mitigation, the short-term construction and long-term operational noise impacts associated with this alternative would be also be similar in magnitude as that of the proposed project.

**Population and Housing.** The No Project Alternative would result in the same level of retail development on the project site. As with the proposed project, new jobs would be created by development of the site with commercial retail uses. Under the proposed project, 329 new jobs would be created, while the 260 jobs existing at the current Wal-Mart would be moved over to the project site. However, under this alternative, jobs at the existing Wal-Mart would remain at the current Wal-Mart store. Therefore, all jobs created under this alternative at the proposed project site would be new jobs. The development of the site under this alternative would result in the creation of a larger number of jobs than the proposed project.

As identified for the proposed project, the increase in employment in Yucca Valley has not kept pace with the increase in population of the Town, resulting in residents of Yucca Valley seeking employment outside of the area or becoming unemployed. The increase in new jobs associated with development under this alternative may help the employment levels keep up with the population levels. As new jobs created under this alternative would most likely be filled by persons already living in the area, it is not expected that new jobs created under this alternative would result in new households relocating to the Town. Implementation of this alternative would not induce substantial population growth. As the project site does not contain any housing, implementation of this alternative will not result in the displacement of persons or housing. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to population and housing would be similar in magnitude as that of the proposed project. As identified for the proposed project, this alternative would produce less than significant impacts related to population and housing as it would not induce growth or displace any homes and/or residents.

**Public Services.** The No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would require the same level of public services as the proposed project. Under this alternative, the proposed project would not be built, but a similar project would be developed and would result in similar impacts related to the construction and provision of public services. This would result in a similar increase in demand on public services as the proposed project. Therefore, impacts to fire and police protection under this alternative would be similar to the impacts identified for the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, this alternative would also require mitigation measures, including the payment of fair share contribution fees and a looped water service to provide adequate fire flow. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to public services would be similar in magnitude as that of the proposed project. As identified for the proposed project, the No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would produce a less than significant impact on public services with implementation of mitigation measures.

**Recreation.** The No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would impact recreational facilities in a similar manner as the proposed project. While development of this alternative with retail and restaurant uses would generate employment opportunities, new positions are likely to be filled by persons already residing in the community. As the proposed project is unlikely to significantly increase local or regional populations, a less than significant increase in demand on existing or planned neighborhood/regional parks or other recreational facilities would occur. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to recreation would be similar in magnitude as that of the proposed project. As identified for the proposed project, the No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would result in a less than significant impact on parks and recreation with no mitigation required.

**Traffic.** The General Commercial district permits the development of a wide variety of commercial and retail uses. While the traffic associated with the mix of retail and commercial uses possible in the C-G zoning district may result in lower traffic volumes, CEQA requires the “No Project” alternative to analyze “...what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved” (§ 15126.6[e][2]). Because the project site is a commercially viable and desirable venue, in the absence of the proposed project, it is reasonable to forecast the project site would be developed with uses of a similar size and configuration. Because a similarly sized retail development would generate approximately the same volume of traffic as the proposed project, the magnitude of impacts to the vicinity circulation system would likewise be similar. Additionally, it is anticipated that the development of any similar sized project would include the signalization of the SR-62 driveway as part of its design, thereby ensuring the maintenance of impacts at a similar scale as the proposed project.

Development of the No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative is estimated to generate approximately 11,226 net daily trips, with 287 net trips in the a.m. peak hour and 989 net trips during the p.m. peak hour. Similar to the proposed project, implementation of this alternative would result in potentially significant impacts to five intersections in the opening day scenario: Inca Trail/Twenty-nine Palms Highway (SR-62); Old Woman Springs Road (SR-247)/Buena Vista Drive; Joshua Lane/Yucca Trail; Avalon Avenue/Twenty-nine Palms Highway (SR-62); and Palomar Avenue/ Yucca Trail. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to traffic would be similar in magnitude as that of the proposed project. As identified for the proposed project, mitigation would be required of this alternative to reduce impacts to a less than significant level at each of these intersections.

**Utilities and Service Systems.** Development of the No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would impact utilities and service systems in a similar manner as the proposed project. With development of the project site in a similar size and scale, the associated increase on water, wastewater, and solid waste services would be similar to those of the proposed project. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to utilities and services systems would be similar in magnitude as that of the proposed project. As identified for the proposed project, this alternative would result in a less than significant impact on solid waste disposal facilities, wastewater conveyance and treatment, and the provision of adequate water supplies.

**Urban Decay.** The No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would result in the same quantity of commercial retail space as the proposed project. However, it is likely that no grocery component would be included in the retail square footage. This alternative would result in a similar level of impact on general retail sales. Under this alternative, no market impact to competing grocery stores in the market area would be created and the potential for grocery store closures would be eliminated. However, it was determined that potential grocery and/or retail store impacts identified for the proposed project were not significant enough to create store closures. This would result in a less than significant impact because urban decay would not be created. The superstore would not exist under this alternative, but other retailers or commercial uses that sell a similar type and volume of goods would be developed instead. Therefore, this alternative would result in a similar level of impact associated with disinvestment, closure of businesses, property abandonment, and physical deterioration. When compared to the proposed project, potential aesthetic/urban decay impacts under this alternative would be the same as was concluded for the proposed project.

**Cumulative Impacts.** Under the No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative, the project site would be developed in the same manner as the proposed project. As was identified for the proposed project, cumulative air quality impacts resulting from the emissions of criteria pollutants would occur under this alternative. Additionally, these impacts are considered to be cumulative in nature since several of the criteria pollutants are designated non-attainment status or are key contributors toward the creation of non-attainment status air pollutants within the Mojave Desert Air Basin.

**Conclusion.** Under the No Project Alternative, similar impacts related to aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, noise, public services, recreation, traffic, utilities and service systems, and urban decay would occur as the same type and quantity of retail and commercial activities is anticipated for the project site even without the proposed project. Impacts related to population and housing, when compared with the proposed project, would be greater than those identified for the proposed project due to the creation of a larger number of jobs, but would have the same magnitude as the proposed project as there would still be the development of a retail center. Impacts related to urban decay would be less than those identified for the proposed project as no market impact to competing grocery stores would be created thereby reducing the potential for grocery store closures.

### **6.3.2 Alternative 2: Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative**

In comparison to the proposed project, this alternative would result in development of less intense commercial uses on the site, as permitted by the existing land use regulations in the Town's General Plan and Zoning Code (which allow for a range of development densities on the project site). In place of a single 229,000-square foot retail use, a general office building of approximately 115,000 square feet, and approximately 115,000 square feet of retail uses would be developed on-site. This alternative assumes the general office building will be constructed between the freestanding pads fronting Avalon Road and the retail use. In this alternative, no gas station will be developed on-site. As with the proposed project, the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would include the approximately 4,000 square feet of additional restaurant uses to be developed on the freestanding pads.

**Aesthetics.** The Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would result in development of office and retail uses consistent with the existing zoning for the site, but in reduced quantities in comparison to the proposed project, requiring construction of on-site lighting to accommodate nighttime activities and for safety purposes. Similar to the proposed project, the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would produce impacts from spillover light onto adjacent properties. As required for the proposed project, mitigation for this alternative in the form of glare shields and cut-off light optics would be required, rendering the impact less than significant.

Under this alternative, a general office building of approximately 115,000 square feet, and approximately 115,000 square feet of retail uses would be developed on-site. Development of the project site would be required to comply with design standards, such as setbacks, building height, lot dimensions, and maximum lot coverage contained in the Town's Development Code. The Town's Development Code<sup>1</sup> standards for development in the General Commercial land use designation include a maximum structure height of 40 feet, a front yard setback of 15 feet, side and rear yard setbacks of 10 feet, and street side setbacks of 15 feet. As with the proposed project, development under this alternative would partially block views of vicinity hillsides and ridges from vantage points near the project's roadway frontages.

The proposed office building would be located between the commercial uses and the freestanding pads fronting SR-62. While the placement of the office building closer to SR-62 would result in greater blockage of vicinity hillsides as viewed by persons on SR-62, development of the office building and retail buildings under this alternative would be required to adhere to Town development standards similar to the proposed project. When compared to the proposed project, impacts related to aesthetics would be similar in magnitude to that identified for the proposed project. As was identified for the proposed project, impacts related to aesthetics under this alternative would be reduced to a less than significant level with adherence to development standards and with implementation of mitigation measures for impacts associated with spillover lights.

**Air Quality.** The Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would require site development similar to that required of the proposed project. Consequently, short-term construction impacts associated with emissions of the criteria pollutants NO<sub>x</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> that were identified for the proposed project would also be created with development of this alternative, though possibly for a reduced number of days. This impact would remain significant and unavoidable, even after mitigation.

Under this alternative, average daily traffic volumes would be reduced by 4,266 daily trips (approximately 38%) in comparison to the proposed project. As identified in Table 6.A, the volume of each operational pollutant emitted during operation of this alternative would be correspondingly reduced. Despite this reduction, emissions of CO, NO<sub>x</sub>, and PM<sub>10</sub> would continue to exceed MDAQMD significance thresholds as identified for the proposed project, while emissions of ROC would be reduced to below the threshold of significance. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to air quality would be marginally reduced in magnitude as that identified for the proposed project. However, while the volume of pollutants emitted would be reduced, the long-term air quality impacts, resulting from this alternative would continue to be significant and unavoidable like the proposed project.

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<sup>1</sup> Town of Yucca Valley Development Code, Section 84.0350.

**Table 6.B – Comparison of Operational Emissions (lbs./day) – Alternative 2**

MDAQMD Significance Threshold	CO	ROC	NOx	SO <sub>2</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>
	548	137	137	137	82
<b>Proposed Project</b>					
Emissions*	2,100	176	292	1.7	173
Do Emissions Exceed MDAQMD Threshold?	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
<b>Alternative 2: Mixed Commercial/Office</b>					
Emissions	1,061	83	147	0.90	84
Do Emissions Exceed MDAQMD Threshold?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>
Change from Proposed Project	-1,039	-93	-145	-0.80	-89

\* Worst Case: CO, SO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> – summer; NOx, ROC – winter.  
 Source: LSA Associates, Inc., 2004

**Biological Resources.** The Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would require site development in the same manner as would be required for the proposed project. Impacts to biological resources resulting from development of this alternative would be identical to those identified for the proposed project. Development of the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would result in grading of the entire project site. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to biological resources would be similar in magnitude to that identified for the proposed project. As required for the proposed project, mitigation to address potential impacts to the desert tortoise would also be required for the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative. As was identified for the proposed project, this alternative would produce less than significant impacts to biological resources with mitigation.

**Noise.** Under the proposed project, construction-related noise impacts were reduced to a less than significant level through the implementation of mitigation. Under the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative, the size of the major retail use would be halved. In addition to the remaining, outlying fast-food restaurant use, approximately 115,000 square feet of office uses would be developed. Construction noise resulting from the construction of this mix of uses would be generally similar to the proposed project. With the implementation of mitigation similar to that required of the proposed project, the short-term construction-related noise impacts associated with this alternative would be similar.

The reduction in project-related traffic under this alternative would result in an incremental decrease in traffic noise. Under the proposed project, none of the increase in future traffic noise along local roadway segments would increase beyond the threshold of perception. Future increases in traffic-related noise under this alternative would also be below the threshold of perception. This alternative's contribution to future traffic noise would be reduced, thereby reducing overall mobile source noise impact as compared to the proposed project.

The reduced size of the major retail use would decrease the number and frequency of truck deliveries. Furthermore, the location of the office structure and the increased distance separating loading docks and noise-sensitive receptors would further attenuate noise originating from loading docks, trash

compactors, and truck traffic on drive aisles to below levels identified with the proposed project. Because office uses generally operate only during daytime/early evening hours, the amount of parking lot noise generated under the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative will be reduced in intensity, frequency, and duration when compared to the proposed project.

**Population and Housing.** The Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would result in the development of 115,000 square feet of office space, 115,000 square feet of commercial retail space, and 4,000 square feet of fast-food restaurant space. Utilizing employment factors of one employee for every 400 square feet of retail space, one employee for every 250 square feet of restaurant use,<sup>1</sup> and one employee for every 250 square feet of office use,<sup>2</sup> the proposed project is anticipated to generate approximately 764 jobs (460 office jobs, 288 retail jobs, and 16 fast-food restaurant jobs). A portion of these jobs would be retail jobs, while a portion of the jobs generated would be office jobs. The retail jobs are likely to be filled by persons already residing in the area. However, unlike retail jobs, which can often be filled by most working adults, office jobs under the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative may require the employment of persons in specialized fields, which may not include persons already living in the area. The proposed office use is anticipated to generate approximately 460 office jobs. Persons from outside of the area may be required to relocate to Yucca Valley to fill positions in the office space. This would result in a population increase for the Town.

Assuming that each office job is filled by a person who relocates to Yucca Valley, and 460 new households are added to the current population, utilizing a household population of approximately 2.5 people<sup>3</sup> the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would result in a population increase of approximately 1,150 people. Although development under the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would result in an increased number of new jobs created, there are approximately 1,000 vacant housing units located within the Town of Yucca Valley. If there were new employees who relocated to the Town of Yucca Valley, there appears to be adequate stock of housing available, and development under this alternative would not result in significant growth inducing impacts. As identified for the proposed project, this alternative would produce less than significant impacts on population and housing as it would not induce growth or displace a substantial number of homes and/or residents. However, when the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts related to population and housing would be greater in magnitude than the proposed project due to the potential for people relocating to Yucca Valley to fill jobs in the office portion of the alternative.

**Public Services.** The Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would require a similar level of public services at the project site as the proposed project. While approximately 115,000 square feet would be developed as office space with the remaining developed as commercial under this alternative, square footage developed would be similar to the proposed project. Under this alternative, the creation of office jobs is expected to result in population growth of approximately 1,150 people for the Town, which would place increased demand on public services, including fire protection, police protection,

<sup>1</sup> Burchell, Robert; Listokin, David; and Dolphin, William, Rutgers University's Center for Urban Policy Research, *Urban Development Impact Assessment Handbook*, 1994; Urban Land Institute.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Stan Hoffman, Stanley R. Hoffman Associates, communication dated September 9, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> State of California, Department of Finance, *E-5 Population and Housing Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State, 2001-2006, with 2000 Benchmark*. Sacramento, California, May 2006

school, and libraries. Therefore, when compared to the proposed project, development under this alternative would result in greater impacts associated with public services.

**Recreation.** The Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative does not include any residential development. Under the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative, new retail jobs would be created as well as office jobs. Similar to the proposed project, the retail jobs are likely to be filled by persons already residing in the area. However, unlike retail jobs, which can often be filled by most working adults, office jobs may require the employment of persons in specialized fields, which may not include persons already living in the area. As discussed above in the Population and Housing section, the proposed office use is anticipated to generate approximately 460 office jobs, and consequently could result in a population increase of approximately 1,150 people. With a population increase, the demand on existing parks and recreation would increase. Therefore, the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would result in greater impacts to parks and recreation as compared with the proposed project.

**Traffic.** Based on trip generation rates published in *Trip Generation*, the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would generate approximately 6,960 daily trips, 346 a.m. peak hour, and 667 p.m. peak hour trips (Table 6.C). In comparison to the proposed project, this alternative would result in a reduction in trip generation equivalent to 38 percent per day, as well as a 30 percent decrease during the p.m. peak hour, as well as a 21 percent increase in a.m. peak hour trips. Roadway and intersection level of service calculations, used to determine roadway improvement requirements, are assessed based on the highest one hour period throughout the day, which is typically the p.m. peak hour. During the p.m. peak hour, both ambient traffic volumes and estimated project trip generation are higher than the a.m. peak hour. With a reduction in p.m. peak hour trip generation equivalent to 30 percent, the magnitude of impacts to the vicinity circulation system would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project.

**Table 6.C – Comparison of Traffic Volumes**

	ADT	ADT Change from Proposed Project	Peak	
			A.M.	P.M.
Proposed Project	11,226	0	287	989
Alternative 2: Mixed Commercial/Office	6,960	-4,266	346	667

**Utilities and Service Systems.** As discussed above, the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative could result in population increase of approximately 1,150 people within the Town. Development of the project site with mixed commercial and office uses on approximately 233,000 square feet would require similar utility infrastructure and would result in similar water usage, wastewater generation and solid waste generation as compared to the proposed project. However, with an estimated population increase of approximately 1,150 people under this alternative, an increase in demand for water, wastewater, and solid waste services would occur with the relocation of people to the Town. When compared to the proposed project, the development of the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would result in greater impacts to utilities and service systems.

**Urban Decay.** The Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would produce a marginal reduction in impacts of blight or urban decay generated from grocery and/or retail store closures related to full absorption of the superstore's retail and grocery sales potential. Because the superstore would not exist under this alternative, and smaller retailers and commercial office uses that do not sell the type and volume of goods would be developed instead, the potential economic impact would be reduced. As a result of a reduction in the level of market competition, impacts associated with disinvestment, closure of businesses, property abandonment, and physical deterioration are also reduced. Aesthetic/urban decay impacts under this alternative would be less than significant when compared to the proposed project.

**Cumulative Impacts.** The proposed project would cumulatively increase traffic volumes in the project vicinity, increasing the number of vehicles traveling along local roadways, and contributing to a cumulative decrease in traffic operations at local intersections. Despite a reduction in the volume of air pollutants emitted under this alternative, several of the criteria pollutants would still contribute toward the creation of non-attainment status air pollutant levels within the MDAB. Therefore, air quality impacts resulting from this alternative are cumulatively significant. Additionally, any development of the project site, even the reduced intensity development cited in this alternative, would cumulatively increase noise levels in the project vicinity.

**Conclusion.** Under the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative, potential impacts associated with aesthetics/urban decay would be marginally reduced, although the impact would be less than significant, the same as the proposed project. Impacts related to short-term construction-related air quality and noise impacts would remain similar to those identified with the proposed project. Impacts related to traffic operations would be proportionally reduced in relation to the reduction in trip generation between the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative and the proposed project. While the volume of pollutants emitted during operation of the project under this alternative would be reduced, long-term air quality impacts would remain significant. The change in the vehicle noise achieved under this alternative would not be perceptible. Stationary noise impacts under this alternative would be better attenuated by the greater separation between the large retail use and sensitive receptors, and by the presence of an intervening office structure.

### **6.3.3 Alternative 3: Off-Site Location Alternative**

Under the Off-Site Location Alternative, the project would be relocated to a suitable site at the northwest corner of Balsa Avenue and Yucca Trail. The alternative would result in the same level of development as the proposed project, consisting of approximately 229,000 square feet of building area encompassing a major retailer, a 6-pump fueling station, and a fast-food restaurant. This site is accessible from both Balsa Avenue and Yucca Trail, and is adequate in size for the implementation of the proposed project. The Town has designated the alternative site location "C-MU" (Mixed Use Commercial). This designation is intended for a mix of land uses, including commercial, professional office, recreational and high density residential uses in and near the downtown area. Development within areas designated C-MU requires preparation of a Specific Plan.

**Aesthetics.** The Off-Site Location Alternative would result in development of retail uses consistent with the existing mixed-use commercial zoning for the site, requiring construction of on-site lighting to accommodate nighttime activities and for safety purposes. Similar to the proposed project, the Off-Site Location Alternative would produce impacts from spillover light onto adjacent properties. As required for the proposed project, mitigation for this alternative in the form of glare shields and cut-off light optics would be required, rendering the impact less than significant.

The Off-Site Location Alternative would consist of the same structures and uses as the proposed project, just on a different project site. The off-site location has a higher level of development within the surrounding area than the proposed project site. Therefore impacts to scenic resources and scenic vistas will be marginally reduced in comparison to the proposed project site. The viewsheds have already been impacted by the development to the south of the off-site location. The proposed project site would be adjacent to Highway 62 while the off-site location would set the project farther back from Highway 62. Under this alternative, development of the project site would still be required to comply with design standards contained in the Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan, such as setbacks, building height, lot dimensions, and maximum lot.

The Specific Plan standards for development of the project site include a maximum structure height of 40 feet from average finish grade to top of parapet or ridge, for every two feet of building height over 35 feet and additional two feet of front setback is required. Under this alternative, the building would be 35 feet, similar to the proposed project, would be under the maximum height of 40 feet allowed in the Specific Plan. Additional design standards contained in the Specific Plan include a front street setback of 15 feet, and interior side street setbacks and rear setbacks of 10 feet. As with the proposed project, development under this alternative would partially block views of vicinity hillsides and ridges from vantage points near the project's roadway frontages. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to aesthetics would be slightly reduced in magnitude as that identified for the proposed project. As was identified for the proposed project, this alternative would result in the less than significant impacts to aesthetics, with implementation of mitigation measures for impacts associated with spillover lights.

**Air Quality.** This alternative would result in the construction and operation of uses similar in type and scale as the proposed project. However, short-term construction impacts and long-term operational air quality impacts under this alternative would be marginally greater in magnitude when compared to those resulting from the proposed project due to the reduced distance between the off-site location and existing residences. As with the proposed project, impacts associated with the short-term emission of NO<sub>x</sub>, and PM<sub>10</sub> emissions during project construction and long-term operational (mobile and stationary source) emission of CO, NO<sub>x</sub>, and PM<sub>10</sub> emissions would still remain significant and unavoidable.

**Biological Resources.** The Off-Site Location Alternative would require site development in the same manner as would be required for the proposed project. Biological communities present at the off-site location would be relatively similar to biological communities present at the proposed project location; however, the potential exists for sensitive species like the desert tortoise to be present on-site. While the presence of desert tortoises on-site cannot be confirmed without a biological survey, if the desert tortoise were absent from the Off-Site Location project site, impacts would be the same as

the proposed project. However, if sensitive species such as the desert tortoise are present on the off-site location, impacts to biological resources resulting from development of this alternative would be greater in magnitude than the proposed project. As required for the proposed project, mitigation to address potential impacts to the burrowing owl would also be required. Because of the unknown impacts to sensitive species, this alternative would result in greater impacts to biological resources than what was concluded for the proposed project.

**Geology.** A portion of the proposed site for the Off-Site Location Alternative is located within the boundaries of Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zone (A-P Zone) for the Eureka Fault. Development of the project site is still possible as it would be required to comply with development requirements for an A-P Zone. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to geology would be greater in magnitude as that identified for the proposed project due to the proximity of the Eureka Fault.

**Noise.** The nearest noise-sensitive receptors to the Off-Site Location Alternative site are located directly across Yucca Trail and Balsa Avenue from the site. Property east of the alternative project site is zoned "R-S-2" (Residential, single-family: 0-2 dwellings per acre), while property south of the site is zoned "R-L-1" (Rural Living: 1 dwelling unit per acre). Under this alternative, noise-sensitive uses would be located adjacent to noise-generating uses associated with retail development at this location.

Development under this alternative would require on-site grading and construction activities, thereby generating short-term noise at adjacent sensitive receptors similar to that resulting from the proposed project. Noise levels during construction of this alternative would be approximately the same as for the proposed project. Because residential uses would be closer to the path of construction noise, impacts would be incrementally greater. Under this alternative, development would occur approximately 85 feet away from existing residences. Nearby residences would be subject to noise at 87 dBA which exceeds the threshold prescribed by the Town. Like the proposed project, significant construction-related noise impacts under this alternative would occur, but would be reduced to a less than significant level by mitigation. Adherence to similar mitigation would reduce construction-related noise impacts to a less than significant level, as concluded for the proposed project.

Existing and future (year 2006 and 2030 without project) traffic noise (CNEL dBA from centerline of outermost travel lane) along Yucca Trail was identified as 61.9, and 65.8 dBA, respectively. Increases due to project-related traffic would total, 2.0 and 0.4 dBA for years 2006 and 2030, respectively. This increase is below the threshold of perception in an exterior environment and is considered less than significant. While the number of daily vehicle trips generated under this alternative would be similar to that associated with the proposed project, development of the proposed retail center at the alternative site would result in the redistribution of traffic, most likely increasing the number of vehicle trips on Yucca Trail and other nearby or adjacent roadways. Compared to the proposed project, this alternative would increase vehicle noise in areas that are predominantly zoned for residential uses.

The stationary noise levels (loading, trash compactor, parking lot noise, and HVAC equipment noise) associated with development of the project at the off-site location would be similar. However,

because the adjacent residential uses would be located closer to on-site noise sources, noise impacts at adjacent sensitive receptors would be increased beyond those identified for the proposed project. The noise impacts associated with HVAC units would generate approximately 56 dBA at 100 feet away from residents. The noise impacts associated with garbage compactors would generate approximately 46 dBA at 96 feet away from the residents. The noise associated with the loading and unloading of trucks would generate approximately 69 dBA at 100 feet away from the residents. When compared to the proposed project, impacts related to noise would be marginally greater due to the close proximity of residences to the off-site location. However, as identified for the proposed project, noise reduction measures would be required under this alternative.

**Population and Housing.** The Off-Site Location Alternative would result in the same level of retail development. Under this alternative, the proposed project will generate approximately 589 jobs. As with the proposed project, approximately 260 of these jobs are expected to be filled by persons working at the existing Wal-Mart in Yucca Valley, while approximately 329 new jobs are expected to be created. As previously stated, the increase in employment in Yucca Valley has not kept pace with the increase in population for the Town. Therefore, the new jobs created by this alternative are likely to be filled by persons already living within the Town. The Off-Site Alternative Location project site does not contain any existing residences and would not result in the displacement of any persons or housing. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to population and housing would be similar in magnitude as that of the proposed project. As identified for the proposed project, this alternative would produce less than significant impacts on population and housing as it would not induce growth or displace any homes and/or residents.

**Public Services.** The Off-Site Location Alternative would require the same level of public services as the proposed project. As this alternative would result in development with the same square footage and the same number of employees as the proposed project, the demand for public services would be identical to the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, this alternative would require mitigation measures, including the payment of fair share contribution fees and a looped water service to provide adequate fire flow, to reduce impacts to a less than significant level. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to public services would be similar in magnitude as that identified for the proposed project.

**Recreation.** The Off-Site Location Alternative would impact recreational facilities in a similar manner as the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, the Off-Site Location Alternative would result in the development of retail uses which would create new jobs. As discussed for the proposed project, with the existing employment rate in Yucca Valley, most of the new retail jobs will likely be filled by residents already living in the area. As the Off-Site Location Alternative would not induce population growth and no corresponding increase in households within Yucca Valley would occur, impacts associated with increased usage or increased needs for recreational facilities would not occur under this alternative. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to parks and recreation would be similar in magnitude as that of the proposed project. As identified for the proposed project impacts to parks and recreation would be reduced to a less than significant level with no mitigation required.

**Traffic.** The proposed project site is located on SR-62, which predominantly fronts commercial zoned property. Under the Off-Site Location Alternative, the retail project would front Yucca Trail, which in this area is fronted primarily by residentially zoned properties. SR-62 is identified as the “transportation backbone of the Town and the entire Morongo Basin” in the Town’s General Plan, exists as a four-lane divided highway, and is planned for an ultimate cross-section of six travel lanes with a controlled (raised median) center turn lane. Yucca Trail is designated in the Town’s General Plan as an “arterial” and currently exists as a two-lane roadway with varying roadway widths. Trip generation for this alternative would be the same as for the proposed project (11,226 average daily trips, with 287 trips occurring in the a.m. peak hour and 989 trips occurring in the p.m. peak hour). While the number of daily vehicle trips generated under this alternative would be similar to that associated with the proposed project, development of the proposed retail center at the alternative site would result in the redistribution of traffic, most likely increasing the number of vehicle trips on Yucca Trail and other nearby or adjacent roadways. Any such increase in vehicle volumes would significantly exceed current conditions and the traffic volumes for these roadways forecast for the proposed project. In the absence of the signalization that exists along SR-62, it is likely that intersection operations in the vicinity of the off-site location would worsen without improvements or other traffic mitigation. Furthermore, the substantial increase in traffic volumes on Yucca Trail, Balsa Avenue, and other roadways, combined with the proximity of residential uses, would increase the potential for adverse contact between vehicles and pedestrians. When compared to the proposed project, impacts related to traffic are greater in magnitude under this alternative.

**Utilities and Service Systems.** Under this alternative, the proposed development would be identical to the proposed project; therefore, the associated increase on water, wastewater, and solid waste services would be similar to those of the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, the Off-Site Location Alternative would be located within Phase I of the Hi-Desert Water District’s wastewater treatment facility. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to utilities and services systems would be similar in magnitude as that of the proposed project. As identified for the proposed project, the Off-Site Location Alternative would result in a less than significant impact on solid waste disposal facilities, wastewater conveyance, wastewater treatment, and the provision of adequate water supplies.

**Urban Decay.** The Off-Site Location Alternative would produce the same potential impacts related to the visual character or quality of commercial development within the project vicinity. Because the superstore would exist under this alternative, the same type and volume of goods would be sold resulting in a similar economic impact on the surrounding area.

This same level of market shift would occur, resulting in the same potential impact associated with disinvestment, closure of businesses, property abandonment, and physical deterioration. When this alternative is compared to the proposed project, impacts to urban decay would be similar in magnitude as that of the proposed project. Since the level of market competition would remain the same in regards to the proposed project, impacts associated with disinvestment, closure of businesses, property abandonment, and physical deterioration would also remain under this alternative. However, as was concluded for the proposed project, potential aesthetic/urban decay impacts under this alternative would be less than significant.

**Cumulative Impacts.** Under the Off-Site Location Alternative, cumulative impacts associated with short-term construction air quality impacts and long-term operational air quality impacts would be the same as the proposed project. These impacts are considered to be cumulative in nature since several of the criteria pollutants are designated non-attainment status or are key contributors toward the creation of non-attainment status air pollutants within the Mojave Desert Air Basin.

**Conclusion.** Under the Off-Site Location Alternative, potential impacts associated with aesthetics/urban decay would be the same as the proposed project. Because the Off-Site Location Alternative would place retail uses in closer proximity to residential uses and because the roadways accessing the alternative site are not presently configured to support the increased traffic volumes associated with this development, air quality, traffic and noise impacts would exceed those identified with the proposed project. Because impacts to the desert tortoise and Joshua tree are unknown, impacts associated with biological resources may be greater under this alternative than the proposed project. Because the type and scale of development equals that which would occur on the Avalon Avenue/SR-62 site, no reduction in the emission of construction or operational air pollutants would occur. Additionally, development of this alternative would not complement the existing retail base along SR-62 and it would be a less desirable location for local shoppers.

#### **6.3.4 Alternative 4: Reduced Intensity Commercial**

This alternative was crafted to reduce operational emissions associated with development of the project site to below MDAQMD daily thresholds. Under this alternative, the project site would be developed with approximately half of the 233,000 square feet of uses envisioned under the proposed project. The 115,000 square feet of commercial uses under the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would consist of a multi-tenant shopping center hosting a single mid-size anchor (50,000–60,000 square feet). The balance of the developed uses would consist of smaller specialty retail and service outlets. The commercial uses envisioned under this alternative will be located along the eastern boundary of the project site. Parking areas will be located between the commercial uses and Avalon Avenue.

**Aesthetics.** The installation of on-site lighting to accommodate nighttime activities and for safety purposes would still be required under this alternative. Because of its smaller size, the uses proposed under this alternative would occupy less of the site and have a reduced aesthetic impact on the surrounding ridgelines and hillside views compared to the proposed project. Despite this reduction, this alternative would still result in the alteration of the existing visual character of the site. Development of the project site would be required to comply with design standards, such as setbacks, building height, lot dimensions, and maximum lot coverage contained in the Town's Development Code. The Town's Development Code standards for development in the General Commercial land use designation include a maximum structure height of 40 feet, a front yard setback of 15 feet, side and rear yard setbacks of 10 feet, and street side setbacks of 15 feet. As with the proposed project, development under this alternative would partially block views of vicinity hillsides and ridges from vantage points near the project's roadway frontages. Under this alternative, impacts related to aesthetics would be reduced in magnitude when compared to the proposed project. However,

mitigation measures identified for the proposed project would still apply to impacts generated under this alternative.

**Air Quality.** The Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would require site development similar to that required of the proposed project. Consequently, short-term construction impacts associated with emissions of the criteria pollutants NO<sub>x</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> that were identified for the proposed project would also be created with development of this alternative, though possibly for a reduced number of days. However, like the proposed project, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable after mitigation.

Using the trip generation factor for “shopping center” uses, this alternative would generate 4,938 daily vehicle trips, which is approximately 44 percent of that associated with the proposed project. As identified in Table 6.D, the volume of each operational pollutant emitted during operation of this alternative would be correspondingly reduced. Under this alternative emissions of ROC, NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>x</sub>, and PM<sub>10</sub> would be below MDAQMD daily thresholds. The traffic increases under the proposed project did not contribute to CO concentrations in excess of the State or Federal standards. Because traffic under this alternative is reduced from that identified with the proposed project, despite total CO operational emissions in excess of MDAQMD thresholds, CO concentrations at local intersections are not anticipated to exceed the State or Federal one- and eight-hour standards. Because no CO hot spots would occur, the alternative would not have a significant impact on local air quality for CO. When compared to the proposed project, impacts related to operational emissions under this alternative are reduced in magnitude.

**Table 6.D – Comparison of Operational Emissions (lbs./day) – Alternative 4**

MDAQMD Significance Threshold	CO	ROC	NO <sub>x</sub>	SO <sub>2</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>
	548	137	137	137	82
<b>Proposed Project</b>					
Emissions*	2,100	176	292	1.7	173
Do Emissions Exceed MDAQMD Threshold?	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
<b>Alternative 4: Reduced Intensity Commercial</b>					
Emissions	659	68	93	0.56	55
Do Emissions Exceed MDAQMD Threshold?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>
Change from Proposed Project	-1,441	-108	-199	-1.12	-118

Source: LSA Associates, Inc., 2006.

**Biological Resources.** The Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would still require development of the entire project site. When compared to the proposed project, biological resource impacts under this alternative would be similar in magnitude. However, mitigation to address potential impacts to the burrowing owl would still be required. As implementation of the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would result in development of the same area as the proposed project, and desert tortoises were determined to be absent from the project site, no impacts to desert tortoises would occur. As was identified for the proposed project, this alternative would produce less than significant impacts to biological resources with mitigation.

**Noise.** Under the proposed project, construction-related noise impacts were reduced to a less than significant level through the implementation of mitigation. Under the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative, the size of the retail use would be halved. Construction noise resulting from the construction of this mix of uses would be generally similar to the proposed project. With the implementation of mitigation similar to that required of the proposed project, the short-term construction-related noise impacts associated with this alternative would be also be reduced.

The reduction in project-related traffic under this alternative would result in an incremental decrease in traffic noise. Under the proposed project, none of the increase in future traffic noise along local roadway segments would increase beyond the threshold of perception. Under the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative, future increases in traffic-related noise would be below the threshold of perception due to a decreased contribution of future traffic volumes. When compared to the proposed project, this alternative's contribution to future traffic noise would be reduced, thereby reducing overall mobile source noise impact within the area.

Under this alternative, the on-site commercial uses will be located along the eastern property boundary. A large parking area will separate the on-site uses from noise-sensitive receptors (residential uses) located directly to the southwest. The reduced size of the major retail use would decrease the number and frequency of truck deliveries. Furthermore, because loading areas will be located on the eastern side of the structures, the buildings envisioned under this alternative will provide greater noise attenuation than the proposed project. Noise generated during loading/unloading, trash compacting, and truck movements will be reduced from the levels identified with the proposed project.

As with the proposed project, parking areas will be located at the southwestern portion of the project site. The amount of parking lot noise generated under the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative will likely be reduced to that associated with operation of the proposed project. As identified for the proposed project, parking lot noise impacts under this alternative would remain less than significant.

**Population and Housing.** The Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would result in the development of 115,000 square feet of new retail space. Utilizing employment factors of one employee for every 400 square feet of retail space, the proposed project is anticipated to generate approximately 288 jobs. Although development under the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would result in an increased number of new jobs created, there are approximately 1,000 vacant housing units located within the Town of Yucca Valley. As new jobs created under this alternative would most likely be filled by persons already living in the area, it is not expected that new jobs created under this alternative would result in new households relocating to the Town. However, if there were any new employees who relocated to the Town of Yucca Valley, there appears to be adequate stock of housing available and development under this alternative would not result in significant growth inducing impacts. When compared to the proposed project, impacts related to population and housing under this alternative are similar in magnitude. As identified for the proposed project, this alternative would produce less than significant impacts on population and housing as it would not induce growth or displace a substantial number of homes and/or residents.

**Public Services.** The Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would result in the development of approximately 115,000 square feet of commercial uses. This alternative would result in the development of commercial uses with less square footage, and would therefore, result in a reduced impact on public services when compared to the proposed project.

**Recreation.** Although the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would result in approximately half the amount of square footage on the site as compared to the proposed project, impacts on recreation would be similar. No residential development is proposed under each of the alternatives. Similar to the proposed project, the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would result in the development of retail uses, which would create new jobs. Jobs created under this development scenario would be reduced as compared to the proposed project. However, as discussed for the proposed project, most of the new retail jobs will likely be filled by residents already living in the area. As the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would not induce population growth nor result in a corresponding increase in households within Yucca Valley, impacts associated with increased usage or increased needs for recreational facilities would not occur. When compared to the proposed project, the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would produce a similar impact to parks and recreation, resulting in a less than significant impact, with no mitigation required.

**Traffic.** Based on trip generation rates published in *Trip Generation*, the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would generate approximately 4,938 daily trips and 431 p.m. peak hour trips (Table 6.E). Under this alternative, traffic volumes on local roadways and intersections would be reduced. In comparison to the proposed project, this alternative would generate approximately 44 percent of the daily and p.m. peak hour traffic. Roadway and intersection level of service calculations, used to determine roadway improvement requirements, are assessed based on the highest one hour period throughout the day, which is typically the p.m. peak hour. With a reduction in p.m. peak hour trip generation approximating 56 percent, the magnitude of impacts to the vicinity circulation system would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project.

**Table 6.E – Comparison of Traffic Volumes**

	ADT	ADT Change from Proposed Project	Peak	
			A.M.	P.M.
Proposed Project	11,226	0	287	989
Alternative 2: Reduced Intensity Commercial	4,938	-6,288	118	431

**Utilities and Service Systems.** The Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would result in approximately half the amount of square footage developed on the site as compared to the proposed project. With this reduction in square footage of development, water usage, wastewater flow, and solid waste generated would be reduced by approximately half as compared to the proposed project. With a reduction of approximately half, development of the Reduced Intensity Alternative would result in reduced impacts as compared to the proposed project.

**Urban Decay.** Though it is unknown what mix of uses would be located within the shopping center under this alternative, the size of either the “major” tenant or smaller tenants would be insufficient to accommodate a superstore. Because of the smaller retailer uses, potential economic impacts to existing retailers would be reduced. Consequently, the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would produce slightly less of a potential impact in the form of blight or urban decay resulting from grocery and/or retail store closures following full absorption of the superstore’s retail and grocery sales potential. This reduction in the potential for store closure would in turn lead to a marginally reduced impact associated with disinvestment, closure of businesses, property abandonment, and physical deterioration. When compared to the proposed project, impacts related to blight and urban decay would be reduced in magnitude. As was identified for the proposed project, impacts related to urban decay under this alternative would be less than significant.

**Cumulative Impacts.** The proposed project would cumulatively increase traffic volumes in the project vicinity, increasing the number of vehicles traveling along local roadways, and contributing to a cumulative decrease in traffic operations at local intersections. Despite a reduction in the volume of air pollutants emitted under this alternative, several criteria pollutants would still contribute to pollutant levels within a non-attainment basin. Therefore, air quality impacts resulting from this alternative are cumulatively significant. Development of the project site, even the reduced intensity development cited in this alternative, would cumulatively increase noise levels in the project vicinity.

**Conclusion.** Under the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative, visual resource impacts would be reduced. Impacts related to short-term construction-related air quality and noise impacts would remain similar to those identified with the proposed project. Because of the reduction in vehicle trips achieved under this alternative, impacts to the operation of local roadways and intersections would be proportionally reduced from the proposed project. This reduction in traffic would ensure that emissions of NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>x</sub>, ROC, and PM<sub>10</sub> do not exceed MDAQMD daily thresholds. Emissions of CO, while exceeding the total daily amount allowed, would not create or contribute to CO concentrations in excess of State or Federal 1-hour or 8-hour standard. The significant air quality impacts associated with the proposed project would not occur under this alternative. Due to its smaller size, and the attenuation received from the siting of the building along the eastern project boundary, operational noise levels would be reduced from that identified with the proposed project.

## 6.4 COMPARISON OF PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

This section provides a conclusion for each impact as to whether the alternative results in the following:

- (1) Reduction or elimination of the impact;
- (2) A greater impact than the project;
- (3) The same impact as the project; and/or
- (4) A new impact in addition to the proposed project impacts.

Table 6.F compares the impacts of the alternatives with those of the proposed project and identifies the Environmentally Superior Alternative.

**Table 6.F – Summary of Comparison of the Project Alternatives to the Proposed Project**

Environmental Issue	Proposed Project	Alternative 1 No Project/ Existing Zoning	Alternative 2 Mixed Commercial/ Office	Alternative 3 Off-Site Location	Alternative 4 Reduced Intensity Retail
Aesthetics	⇐	↔	↔	←	←
Agricultural Resources	⇐	↔	↔	↔	↔
Air Quality	⇒	↔	←	→	←
Biological Resources	⇐	↔	↔	→	↔
Cultural Resources	⇐	↔	↔	↔	↔
Geology/Soils	⇐	↔	↔	→	↔
Hazards/Hazardous Materials	⇐	↔	↔	↔	↔
Hydrology (Drainage)/Water Quality	⇐	↔	↔	↔	↔
Land Use/Planning	⇐	↔	↔	↔	↔
Mineral Resources	⇐	↔	↔	↔	↔
Noise	⇐	↔	←	→	←
Population and Housing	⇐	↔	→	↔	↔
Public Services	⇐	↔	→	↔	←
Recreation	⇐	↔	→	↔	↔
Utilities and Service Systems	⇐	↔	→	↔	←
Traffic	⇐	↔	←	→	←
Urban Decay	⇐	↔	←	↔	←

Notes: ⇐ = Less than significant impact, with or without after mitigation.  
 ⇒ = Greater than significant impact, with or without after mitigation.  
 ← = As compared to the proposed project, the impact is reduced.  
 → = As compared to the proposed project, the impact is greater.  
 ↔ = As compared to the proposed project, the impact is similar.

**Alternative 1.** The No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative would allow development of the site according to the existing land use regulations in the Town’s General Plan and Zoning Code, consistent with the proposed project. Development under this alternative would result in impacts that are similar as compared to the proposed project for 16 of the 17 topics analyzed, with impacts associated with urban decay reduced under this alternative.

**Alternative 2.** The Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would allow development of the project site with a general office building of approximately 115,000 square feet occupying half of the major retail square footage, a smaller retailer or retailers of approximately 115,000 square feet on the remaining major retail square footage, and a 4,000-square foot fast-food restaurant fronting SR-62. Development under the Mixed Commercial/Office Alternative would result in impacts that are similar as compared to the proposed project in nine of the topic areas (aesthetics, agricultural resources,

biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology, land use and planning, and mineral resources). Development under this alternative would result in reduced impacts as compared to the proposed project for the four of the six remaining topic areas (air quality, noise, traffic and urban decay), and would result in greater impacts for the remaining four topic areas (population and housing, public services, recreation, and utilities and service systems).

**Alternative 3.** Development under the Off-Site Location Alternative would result in impacts that are similar as compared to the proposed project in eleven of the topic areas analyzed (agricultural resources, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, utilities and service systems, and urban decay). Development under this alternative would result in reduced impacts as compared to the proposed project for the one of the five remaining topic areas (aesthetics), and would result in greater impacts for the remaining five topic areas (air quality, biological resources, geology and soils, noise, and traffic).

**Alternative 4.** Development under the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would result in impacts that are similar as compared to the proposed project in ten of the topic areas analyzed (agricultural resources, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology, land use and planning, mineral resources, population and housing, and recreation). Under the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative, the remaining seven of the topic areas analyzed would result in reduced impacts as compared to the proposed project (aesthetics, air quality, noise, public services, utilities and service systems, traffic, and urban decay). The smaller building footprint that would result under this alternative would reduce aesthetic impacts on-site. Impacts related to short-term construction-related air quality and noise impacts would be marginally reduced to those identified with the proposed project. Because of the reduction in vehicle trips achieved under this alternative, impacts to the operation of local roadways and intersections would be proportionally reduced from the proposed project. This reduction in traffic would reduce pollutant emissions in proportion to the reduction in traffic generation, resulting in long-term air quality impacts that will be reduced in comparison to the proposed project. Due to its smaller size, and the attenuation received from the siting of the building along the eastern project boundary, operational noise levels would be reduced from that identified with the proposed project. The potential for market impacts that would lead to urban decay would be reduced under this alternative resulting in a less than significant impact, although this significance determination would be the same as identified for the proposed project.

## 6.5 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(e)(2) requires the EIR to identify the environmentally superior alternative. Based on the preceding analysis, the environmentally superior alternative is the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative. Although development of the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative would result in similar significant unavoidable noise and construction-related air quality impacts when compared to the proposed project, development of this alternative would substantially reduce significant operational air quality emissions. Accordingly, the Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternative is deemed the environmentally superior alternative.