CHAPTER 5 ALTERNATIVES

The State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6) require that an EIR describe and evaluate the comparative merits of a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. The Guidelines further require that the discussion focus on alternatives that could avoid or substantially lessen any of the project's significant effects, including the "No Project" Alternative. Furthermore, if the environmentally superior alternative is the "No Project" Alternative, the EIR must also identify an environmentally superior alternative from among the other alternatives.

The project objectives are discussed in Chapter 3, Project Description. This discussion will focus on alternatives that could address the project's potentially significant impacts. The EIR identifies potentially significant impacts that can be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of mitigation measures.

Four alternatives are evaluated in this section:

- Alternative 1: No Project Alternative
- Alternative 2: Reduced Creek View Trail Alternative
- Alternative 3: Unpaved Trail System with Hagemann Gulch Bridge Alternative
- Alternative 4: Unpaved Trail System without Hagemann Gulch Bridge Alternative

5.1 SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1, the No Project Alternative, would keep the site in its existing condition. No Master Plan and no Santa Cruz Tarplant Adaptive Management Program would be adopted. Management actions would be limited and the *Arana Gulch Interim Management Plan* would remain in effect. No new trails would be developed on the site. This alternative would eliminate most of the project impacts but would not contribute to the achievement of any of the project objectives.

Alternative 2, the Reduced Creek View Trail Alternative, would include the same trail system as the proposed project but would not include any trail segments within Port District property. Trail access to Arana Gulch would continue to be provided by the existing trail segment along the western edge of the dry storage area at the Upper Harbor. This alternative would include the long-term Santa Cruz Tarplant Adaptive Management Program.

Alternative 3, the Unpaved Trail System with Hagemann Gulch Bridge Alternative, would have the same trails as the proposed project except that no trails would be paved and no

trails would comply with Americans with Disabilities (ADA) requirements. Due to unpaved surfaces and gradients, trails would not be accessible for wheelchairs and some types of street bicycles. Without funding for paved, multi-use trails, there would be uncertainty about funding and implementing the Santa Cruz Tarplant Adaptive Management Program.

Alternative 4, Unpaved Trail System without Hagemann Gulch Bridge Alternative, would provide unpaved trails and would not include the Hagemann Gulch Bridge proposed by the project. This alternative would provide public access for pedestrians and some bicyclists but would not comply with ADA requirements. Since no bridge across Hagemann Gulch would be constructed, this alternative would not provide a new west entrance or east-west trail connection. As with Alternative 3, all trails would remain unpaved. Without funding for paved, multi-use trails, there would be uncertainty about funding and implementing the Santa Cruz Tarplant Adaptive Management Program.

Table 5-1 summarizes the impacts of the alternatives after mitigation. Table 5-2 shows the extent to which each alternative would meet the project objectives.

5.2 ALTERNATIVE 1: NO PROJECT

Setting

The setting for the No Project Alternative would be the same as that described for the proposed project. Additional detailed information on existing site conditions is provided in the topic sections of the EIR (e.g., Hydrology and Water Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Aesthetics, Land Use and Planning, Noise).

Characteristics

Under this alternative, the project site would remain in its existing condition and the City would not have an adopted Master Plan with management strategies to protect on-site resources. For example, no Santa Cruz Tarplant Adaptive Management Program would be adopted. No new trails would be constructed and minimal resource management actions would be implemented. The *Arana Gulch Interim Management Plan* would remain in effect.

Impacts

The No Project Alternative would eliminate potentially significant impacts of the proposed project (e.g., impacts on biological resources, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality). However, the No Project Alternative would not provide the benefits offered by the proposed project, such as long-term resource management strategies, including the Santa Cruz Tarplant Adaptive Management Program, or a new west entrance and connection to the Seabright neighborhood. The site would remain in its current state as a "natural area," with existing unpaved trails, some of which have created erosion problems.

Table 5-1: Comparison of Impacts of Project Alternatives (After Mitigation)

Environmental Issue Area	PP Proposed Project	ALT 1 No Project	ALT 2 Reduced Creek View Trail	ALT 3 Unpaved Trails with Hagemann Gulch Bridge	ALT 4 Unpaved Trails without Hagemann Gulch Bridge
Aesthetics	LTS	LTS	LTS-	LTS-	LTS-
Agricultural Resources	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Air Quality	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Biological Resources	SU	LTS	SU	LTS-	LTS-
Cultural Resources	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Geology/Soils	LTS	LTS+	LTS-	LTS	LTS
Hazards/Hazardous Materials	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Hydrology/Water Quality	LTS	LTS+	LTS-	LTS-	LTS-
Land Use/Planning	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Mineral Resources	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Noise	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Population/Housing	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Public Services	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Recreation/Public Access	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Transportation/Traffic	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS
Utilities/Service Systems/Energy	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS	LTS

Notes:

PP = Proposed Project

ALT 1 = No Project Alternative

ALT 2 = Reduced Creek View Trail Alternative

ALT 3 = Unpaved Trail System with Hagemann Gulch Bridge Alternative ALT 4 = Unpaved Trail System without Hagemann Gulch Bridge Alternative

LTS = Less than significant impact (with mitigation)
+ = Greater adverse impact than proposed project
- = Lesser adverse impact than proposed project

Source: A. Skewes-Cox, 2005.

Ability to Meet Project Objectives

The No Project Alternative would not support the achievement of the project objectives except the objective related to restricting dogs to on-leash.

5.3 ALTERNATIVE 2: REDUCED CREEK VIEW TRAIL ALTERNATIVE

Setting

The setting for this alternative would be the same as that described for the proposed project. Additional detailed information on existing site conditions is provided in the topic sections of the EIR (e.g., Hydrology and Water Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Aesthetics, Land Use and Planning, Noise).

Table 5-2: Relationship of Alternatives to Project Objectives

Project Objective	PP Proposed Project	ALT 1 No Project	ALT 2 Reduced Creek View Trail	ALT 3 Unpaved Trails With Hagemann Gulch Bridge	ALT 4 Unpaved Trails Without Hagemann Gulch Bridge
Protect sensitive riparian/wetland habitat areas	X	О	X	X	X
Implement an adaptive management program for Santa Cruz tarplant	X	О	X	О	О
Reduce sedimentation	X	О	X	X	X
Provide trail system for public access without significantly impacting habitat values	X	О	X	X	X
Provide ADA-compliant trails	X	О	О	О	О
Provide a new west entrance and east-west multi-use trail	X	О	X	X	О
Provide nature viewing areas and interpretive displays	X	О	X	О	О
Restrict dogs to on-leash	X	X	X	X	X
Close unauthorized, non-designated pathways	X	О	X	X	X

Notes:

PP = Proposed Project

ALT 1 = No Project Alternative

ALT 2 = Reduced Creek View Trail Alternative

ALT 3 = Unpaved Trail System with Hagemann Gulch Bridge Alternative ALT 4 = Unpaved Trail System without Hagemann Gulch Bridge Alternative

X = Alternative would meet project objective

O = Alternative would not meet project objective or would meet objective to a lesser extent than the proposed project (i.e., would not substantially meet the objective)

Source: A. Skewes-Cox, 2005.

Characteristics

The Reduced Creek View Trail Alternative would include all of the project-proposed trail system within the City-owned property but would not include the trail segment within Port District property. The new paved multi-use trail segment along the northern edge of the Upper Harbor dry storage area would be eliminated. Trail access from the harbor to Arana Gulch would continue to be provided by the existing trail segment along the western edge of the dry storage area.

Similar to the proposed project, this alternative would provide public access within Arana Gulch. It would also provide ADA-compliant north-south and east-west trail connections, as would the proposed project.

As with the proposed project, the bridge spanning Hagemann Gulch, Canyon Trail, and Creek View Trail within City property would be funded primarily from the CMAQ program

federal funding. This alternative would include implementation of the Santa Cruz Tarplant Adaptive Management Program as mitigation for paved, multi-use trails.

Impacts

This alternative would have impacts similar to those of the proposed project except that any impacts associated with trail construction on Port District property would be eliminated. No retaining wall would be constructed in the vicinity of the existing culverts at the base of Arana Gulch Creek (see Figure 4.5-6), and therefore biological, visual, geologic, and hydrologic impacts would be reduced, compared to the proposed project. No easements through Port District property would be required.

Ability to Meet Project Objectives

This alternative would meet all project objectives except the objective to provide an ADA-compliant trail through the Port District property.

5.4 ALTERNATIVE 3: UNPAVED TRAIL SYSTEM WITH HAGEMANN GULCH BRIDGE ALTERNATIVE

Setting

The setting for this alternative would be the same as that described for the proposed project. Additional detailed information on existing site conditions is provided in the topic sections of the EIR (e.g., Hydrology and Water Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Aesthetics, Land Use and Planning, Noise).

Characteristics

This alternative would provide the same trails as proposed by the project, but none of the trails would be paved. This alternative would provide public access for pedestrians and some bicyclists but would not comply with ADA requirements. Like the proposed project, this alternative would provide north-south and east-west trail connections. Due to unpaved surfaces and gradients, however, these trail connections would not be accessible to wheelchair users and some types of bicycles.

The cost of construction would be reduced if trail surfacing remained unpaved, as proposed under this alternative. It is uncertain, however, whether state and federal transportation grants previously received by the City would fund the Hagemann Gulch bridge if the multiuse trails were not paved. Therefore, under this alternative, the City would need to seek other funding for the Canyon and Creek View Trails. If the bridge were not funded by state and federal grants, it is uncertain when the bridge would be constructed. New funding for the bridge would need to be secured. Funding for the Santa Cruz Tarplant Adaptive Management Program would also be uncertain.

Impacts

This alternative would have impacts similar to those of the proposed project except that fewer impacts associated with construction of paved trails – such as effects on views, habitats, wetlands, and drainage – would result. Unpaved trails could lead to more erosion, as compared to paved trails. With a management plan in place, however, erosion would be monitored to minimize such impacts.

Compared to the proposed project, this alternative would have fewer impacts on the Santa Cruz tarplant due to the reduced amount of trail construction (i.e., no trail paving). Visual impacts would also be reduced since all trails would be unpaved.

It is assumed that the Port District property would not be used for trail construction and that the existing unpaved trail at the western edge of the Upper Harbor would be used for access to Arana Gulch. Therefore, impacts associated with the retaining wall at the south-eastern edge of the site would be eliminated.

Ability to Meet Project Objectives

This alternative would meet all project objectives except those for providing nature viewing areas and interpretive displays and providing ADA-compliant public access. Public access would be more restricted since wheelchair users and some bicyclists would not have access to the Arana Gulch area. Also, due to funding uncertainties, this alternative may not be able to meet objectives for protecting and enhancing habitat areas and implementing an adaptive management program for the Santa Cruz tarplant.

5.5 ALTERNATIVE 4: UNPAVED TRAIL SYSTEM WITHOUT HAGEMANN GULCH BRIDGE ALTERNATIVE

Setting

The setting for this alternative would be the same as that described for the proposed project. Additional detailed information on existing site conditions is provided in the topic sections of the EIR (e.g., Hydrology and Water Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Aesthetics, Land Use and Planning, Noise).

Characteristics

This alternative would provide unpaved trails and would not include the Hagemann Gulch Bridge proposed by the project. This alternative would provide public access for pedestrians and some bicyclists, but would not comply with ADA requirements. It would provide a north-south trail connection, like the proposed project, but would not include a new west entrance or east-west trail connection. Trails would not be accessible to wheelchair users.

All trails would remain unpaved. The north-south trail would be realigned to allow for restoration of the steep eroded slope near southern entrance. The north-south trail would be open to some bicyclists and pedestrians. Some types of street bicycles may not be able to use this trail due to unpaved surfaces. The Coastal Prairie Loop Trail and Marsh Vista Trail would be open to pedestrians only.

Under this alternative, funding for the Santa Cruz Tarplant Adaptive Management Program would be uncertain, as described for Alternative 3.

Impacts

This alternative would have impacts similar to those of the proposed project but with fewer impacts associated with construction of a bridge and paved trails, such as effects on habitats, wetlands, and drainage. Unpaved trails could lead to more erosion, as compared to paved trails. With a management plan in place, however, erosion would be monitored to minimize such impacts.

Compared to the proposed project, this alternative would have fewer impacts on the Santa Cruz tarplant due to the reduced amount of trail construction (i.e., no trail paving). Visual impacts would be reduced since the Hagemann Gulch bridge would not be constructed. Without the bridge, fewer impacts on biological resources would occur.

It is assumed that the Port District property would not be used for trail construction and that the existing unpaved trail at the western edge of the Upper Harbor would be used for access to Arana Gulch. Therefore, impacts associated with this trail segment would be eliminated.

Less park use may occur under this alternative because there would be no west entrance. With reduced use, less parking demand may occur.

Ability to Meet Project Objectives

This alternative would meet some project objectives but would not meet objectives related to providing ADA-compliant trails and nature viewing areas and interpretive displays. Public access would be more restricted since there would be no ADA-compliant trails and no east-west connection would be available. Also, due to funding uncertainties, this alternative may not be able to meet objectives for protecting and enhancing habitat areas and implementing an adaptive management program for the Santa Cruz tarplant.

5.6 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

The No Project Alternative would not be the environmentally superior alternative because the site would be left without an effective management plan that includes implementation measures to protect on-site resources. Of the other three alternatives, the Unpaved Trail

System without Hagemann Gulch Bridge Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative, because it provides for the least amount of construction at the site. Thus, on-site resources such as Santa Cruz tarplant, wetlands, and other habitat would be least affected. With unpaved trails, fewer soils and hydrologic impacts may occur except that erosion on unpaved trails would have to be carefully monitored and mitigated. This alternative would not meet the project objectives of providing ADA-compliant, multi-use trails and would not provide a new west entrance and connection to the Seabright neighborhood. Thus, access within Arana Gulch would be significantly limited compared to the proposed project. Additionally, funding may not be available for long-term resource management of the site, specifically the Santa Cruz Tarplant Adaptive Management Program.

CHAPTER 6 CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

As required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this chapter provides an overview of the impacts of the proposed project on several technical topics. The topics covered in this chapter include four effects which span the specific environmental topics considered through Chapter 4: growth-inducing impacts; significant irreversible changes; and cumulative impacts.

B. GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

Growth-inducing impacts from the project could occur if major utility lines were extended across undeveloped lands to serve the site, or if the project would result in an increased demand for local housing or commercial services. No utility lines would be extended to or through the site as part of the project. The project would serve existing residents and would not result in any growth-inducing impacts. The project site is surrounded by urban development within the City boundaries and adjacent County lands to the east.

C. SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE IMPACTS

CEQA states that impacts associated with a proposed project may be considered to be significant and irreversible for the following reasons:

- Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible, since a large commitment of such resources makes the removal or non-use thereafter unlikely;
- Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as a highway improvement that provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses; and
- Irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project.

This project would include the adoption of a master plan that would guide future uses of Arana Gulch and that would include management guidelines aimed at the protection of the existing natural resources on the site.

The construction of paved multi-use trails, retaining walls, and the bridge over Hagemann Gulch would constitute an irreversible use of these lands, as it is unlikely that the improvements would be removed. However, the bridge is the only main new structure that would be constructed within Arana Gulch. The proposed project would irretrievably commit materials to the construction and maintenance of these facilities. In addition, the construction of the proposed project improvements would result in the use of energy, including fossil fuels.

The project is not expected to result in any activities likely to result in accidents that could lead to irreversible environmental damage.

D. SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

All potential impacts identified for the project could be mitigated to a less-than-significant level except for impacts to the Santa Cruz tarplant (SCT). Trail construction through or near the SCT areas, coupled with increased human activity in the area, may result in impacts on the SCT. A seed bank may still be present throughout historic areas of tarplant occurrence.

Project activities such as trail construction would avoid areas that have been more recently noted (see Figures 4.2-4 and 4.2-5). However, construction of trails through any historic areas of tarplant would result in permanent loss of tarplant habitat within the width of the trail. Additional habitat for 1 to 2 feet outside the trail footprint could also be disturbed if pedestrians and bicyclists do not stay strictly within the trail width. The removal of unauthorized pathways that currently exist in the vicinity of or through historic tarplant areas would reduce impacts on the Santa Cruz tarplant. Loss of tarplant habitat, however, would be relatively greater with the multi-use trails (Canyon Trail, Arana Meadow Trail, and Creek View Trail) because these trails would be 8 feet wide and paved, as compared to the existing earthen, unauthorized pathways that are narrower.

To the extent that the new paved, multi-use trails cannot be routed to fully avoid the historic tarplant areas, this direct impact cannot be fully mitigated and would be significant and unavoidable. Nevertheless, mitigation measures are recommended to reduce the potential impacts. For example, trail segments avoid the most recently-mapped populations; the Santa Cruz Tarplant Adaptive Management Program would be fully implemented; and soil within the vicinity of historic tarplant areas would be gathered and redistributed to avoid loss of the seedbank. These measures are described in Section 4.2 of the Draft EIR.

E. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts are addressed at the end of each subsection of Chapter 4 of this EIR. No significant cumulative impacts were identified. The cumulative project list shown in Table 6-1 was the basis of the cumulative analysis. This list was provided by staff of the City of Santa Cruz and the County of Santa Cruz, and addresses pending, approved, and permitted projects that are not yet constructed and that could occur at the same time as the proposed project. Figure 6-1 illustrates the location of the cumulative projects.

Table 6-1: Active/Pending Projects in City and County of Santa Cruz near Arana Gulch – As of September 29, 2005^a

Map Code	Project Name (If Any)	Addressb	Project Scale	Status
CITY	PROJECTS			
1		1430 North Branciforte Drive	5 single-family units	Not built
2		175 Belvedere Terrace	4 multi-family units	Not built
3		708-716 Frederick Street	22 multi-family units (condos)	Not built
			1,600 square feet office	
4	Reed Street Cottages	719 Water Street (at Reed Street)	18 single-family units	Under con- struction
5		1226 Soquel	9 multi-family units	Approved
6		Market Street/Isabel Drive	646 single-family units	
7			4 single-family units	
8	Branciforte Commons	630 Water Street	48 single-room-occupancy (SRO) units 5 multi-family units 1,000 square feet office/retail	Under construction
9		1205 Seabright	4 multi-family units (condos)	Under con- struction
10		119/125 Blaine St.	13 multi-family units (condos)	Under con- struction
11		269 Goss	8 single-family units	Under con- struction
12		716 Seabright Avenue	12 multi-family units (condos)	Approved
13		132 Clay Street	16 multi-family units (condos) and 3 single-family units	Pending application
		CITY TOTALS	684 single-family homes 85 multi-family homes 48 SRO units 2,600 square feet office/retail	
COUN	TY PROJECTS			
14	Harbor Vista	NA	11 single-family lots	Not built
15	Harbor Beach	NA	11 single-family lots	Not built
16	Harbor Square	NA	1 unbuilt lot	Not built
17	Santina Court	NA	10 single-family lots	Not built
18	Santa Cruz Gardens	NA	1 single-family lot	Not built
19	Yacht Harbor Oaks	NA	16 single-family lots	Not built
		COUNTY TOTALS	50 single-family lots	

Note: NA = Not available.

Source: City of Santa Cruz Planning Department, 2005.

^a Refer to Figure 6-1 for Locations of Projects

^b The distance of these projects from Arana Gulch is quite variable.

Figure 6-1: Cumulative Projects

CHAPTER 7 REPORT PREPARATION

The Draft EIR was prepared by the following CEQA consultants under the direction of the City of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department, the City Public Works Department, and the City Planning Department:

Amy Skewes-Cox, AICP: Overall EIR Preparation and Management; Transportation; Hazardous Materials, Agricultural Resources; Land Use and Planning; Aesthetics

EcoSystems West: Biological Resources

Natalie Macris: Noise, Services, Utilities, Population/Housing, Mineral Resources, Recreation and EIR Editing

Vanessa Bulkacz: Aesthetics, Land Use and Planning, Cultural Resources, and EIR Editing

Fall Creek Engineering: Hydrology and Water Quality; Geology, Soils, and Seismicity

Environmental Vision: Visual Simulations

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2/8/2006 7-1

2/8/2006 7-2

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