

CHAPTER 5

CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

Section 15126 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that all aspects of a project must be considered when evaluating its impact on the environment, including planning, acquisition, development, and operation. The EIR must also discuss (1) significant environmental effects of the proposed project, (2) significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the proposed project is implemented, (3) significant irreversible environmental changes that would result from implementation of the proposed project, and (4) growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project. Chapter 2, Summary, and Sections 4.1 through 4.7 of this EIR provide a comprehensive identification and evaluation of the proposed project's environmental effects, mitigation measures, and the level of impact significance both before and after mitigation. This section addresses the other required topics identified above, as well as cumulative impacts and project alternatives.

5.1 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

The State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines require a description of any significant impacts, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance (section 15126.2(b)). Where there are impacts that cannot be alleviated without imposing an alternative design, their implications and the reasons why the project is being proposed, notwithstanding their effect, should be described. This EIR identified no significant unavoidable project impacts.

5.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

The State CEQA Guidelines require a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes with project implementation, including uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project (section 15126.6(c)). The Guidelines indicate that use of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Irreversible damage can also result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Section 15227 further requires this discussion only for adoption of a plan, policy or ordinance by a public agency; the adoption by a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) of a resolution making determinations; and projects which require preparation of an EIS under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Since the proposed project consists of adoption of the Wharf Master Plan, a discussion of significant irreversible changes is provided below.

As indicated, in section 15126.2(c):

Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible, since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also, irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

According to section 15126.2(c), a project would generally result in a significant irreversible impact if:

- The project would involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources during initial and continued phase of the project;
- Primary and secondary impacts would generally commit future generations to similar uses;
- The project would involve uses in which irreversible damage could result from environmental accidents; or
- The proposed consumption of resources is not justified (e.g., the project involves the wasteful use of energy).

Future development accommodated by the Wharf Master Plan would result in expansion of the Wharf for public access and construction of three new public-use buildings. Expansion of existing commercial uses also could occur as a result of the Plan, as well as under existing conditions without the Plan. The Plan is consistent with directives in local area plans and the Local Coastal Program. Thus, the proposed Plan would not commit future generations to uses that do not already exist.

Future development would result in the permanent and continued consumption of electricity, natural gas, and fossil fuels as discussed in section 4.6 of this document. Development accommodated by the Wharf Master Plan would irretrievably commit nonrenewable resources to the construction and maintenance of buildings, infrastructure and roadways. Energy demands would result from construction, lighting, heating and cooling of new or expanded buildings, and transportation of people within, to and from the Wharf. However, the consumption of these resources would not represent unnecessary, inefficient, or wasteful use of resources given the implementation of City policies that address water, lighting and energy conservation measures. Several policies in the General Plan 2030 promote energy conservation, which could minimize or incrementally reduce the consumption of these resources. Specifically, GOAL NRC7 seeks to reduce energy use with a significant production and use of renewable energy. Its four policies and

accompanying actions would promote reduction of electricity and natural gas consumption, use of renewable energy sources, and use of energy-efficient lighting, vehicles, and water fixtures and appliances. See Section 4.6 for further discussion.)

In addition, new structures will be required to be constructed in accordance with specifications contained in Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, the City's Green Building Regulations and City regulations regarding water conservation. Anticipated changes in state building and energy efficiency requirements to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions will also reduce the rate of energy consumption increases. However, future construction activities would result in the irretrievable commitment of nonrenewable energy resources, primarily in the form of fossil fuels (including fuel oil, natural gas, and gasoline) for automobiles and construction equipment.

Irreversible changes to the physical environment could occur from accidental release of hazardous materials associated with future development activities. However, planned uses are public uses, such as visitor center, museums, and commercial/visitor-serving uses. Such uses are not expected to use hazardous materials. Other future development projects will be required to comply with and implement construction best management practices, and Mitigation Measures 4.4-1 in this EIR, to prevent release of hazardous and other construction materials into the Monterey Bay.

No other irreversible changes are expected to result from the adoption and implementation of the proposed amendments.

5.3 GROWTH INDUCEMENT

CEQA requires that any growth-inducing aspect of a project be discussed in an EIR. This discussion should include consideration of ways in which the project could directly or indirectly foster economic or population growth in adjacent and/or surrounding areas. Projects which could remove obstacles to population growth (such as major public service expansion) must also be considered in this discussion. According to CEQA, it must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental or of little significance to the environment.

The project consists of adoption and implementation of the Master Plan for the Wharf and subsequent construction of recommended structures and improvements, including two near-term projects: relocation of the Wharf entry and construction of the East Promenade. The project will not result in new residential development and will not directly or indirectly result in new population or population growth. The project will not result in displacement of housing units or residents as none exist on the Wharf. The expansion of the Wharf and new boating and public uses could indirectly foster additional visitation to the Wharf and economic growth for existing businesses.

The project does not include offsite improvements or extension of water or sewer into undeveloped areas, and thus, the project site would not remove obstacles to development and

population growth. Therefore, the project would not indirectly foster population growth and would indirectly foster economic growth.

5.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

5.4.1 State CEQA Requirements

The State CEQA Guidelines section 15130(a) requires that an EIR discuss cumulative impacts of a project “when the project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable.” As defined in Section 15355, a cumulative impact consists of an impact that is created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR together with other projects causing related impacts. As defined in section 15065(a)(3), “cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, other current projects, and probable future projects. Where a lead agency is examining a project with an incremental effect that is not “cumulatively considerable,” the lead agency need not consider the effect significant.

CEQA requires an evaluation of cumulative impacts when they are significant. When the combined cumulative impact associated with the project’s incremental effect and the effects of other projects is not significant, the EIR shall briefly indicate why the cumulative impact is not significant and is not discussed in further detail in the EIR. Furthermore, according to the California State CEQA Guidelines section 15130 (a)(1), there is no need to evaluate cumulative impacts to which the project does not contribute.

An EIR may determine that a project’s contribution to a significant cumulative impact will be rendered less than cumulatively considerable and thus not significant when, for example, a project funds its fair share of a mitigation measure designed to alleviate the cumulative impact. An EIR shall examine reasonable, feasible options for mitigating or avoiding the project’s contribution to any significant cumulative effects.

The discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide detail as great as that provided for the impacts that are attributable to the project alone. The discussion should be guided by standards of practicality and reasonableness, and should focus on the cumulative impact to which the identified project contributes.

Discussion of cumulative impacts may consider either a list of past, present, and probable future projects producing cumulative impacts; or a summary of growth projections contained in an adopted plan that evaluates conditions contributing to cumulative impacts, such as those contained in a General Plan. If a lead agency determines that a cumulative effect has been adequately addressed in a prior EIR, that cumulative effect is not required to be examined in a later EIR pursuant to CEQA section 21094(e)(1). The section further indicates that cumulative

effects are adequately addressed if the cumulative effect has been mitigated or avoided as a result of the prior EIR and adopted findings or can be mitigated or avoided by site-specific revisions, imposition of conditions or other means in connection with the approval of the later project (subsection (e)(4)).

If a cumulative impact was addressed adequately in a prior EIR for a general plan, and the project is consistent with that plan or action, then an EIR for such a project need not further analyze that cumulative impact, as provided in the State CEQA Guidelines section 15183(j). Therefore, future projects that are determined to be consistent with the General Plan after it is adopted may rely on this analysis to streamline their environmental review.

The project site is designated Regional Visitor Commercial in the City's *General Plan 2030* and is zoned CB (Beach Commercial). According to the *General Plan 2030*, the Regional Visitor Commercial designation "applies to areas that emphasize a variety of commercial uses that serve Santa Cruz residents as well as visitors." The General Plan further states that the emphasis is on "visitor-serving commercial uses such as hotels, motels, restaurants, and amusement parks, as well as residential and mixed-use development in the Beach Area neighborhoods," and that the *Beach and South of Laurel Comprehensive Area Plan* (B/SOL Area Plan) provides detailed requirements for this area. The Wharf Master Plan was prepared consistent with the B/SOL Plan, which recommended that a comprehensive analysis of the Wharf be prepared that studied both maritime and economic aspects of the Wharf and looked at expansion of maritime activities and visitor amenities. The recommendations included studying the feasibility of expanding deck and mooring facilities and examining the feasibility for a marine discovery center. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the land use designation in the *General Plan 2030*, as well as recommendations in the B/SOL Area Plan.

5.4.2 Cumulative Analysis

Cumulative Growth

The Santa Cruz City Council adopted an updated General Plan 2030 in June 2012 after certifying the accompanying EIR. The analyses in the EIR provide an assessment of cumulative impacts within the City with projected growth in the City that could be accommodated by the General and University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) growth and development. The EIR considered construction of new housing units and non-residential uses in the City with an estimated buildout of 3,350 new residential units and approximately 1,090,000 square feet of commercial uses throughout the City (City of Santa Cruz, April 2012, DEIR volume). Since adoption of the General Plan, approximately 545,000 square feet of commercial building space have been constructed or approved throughout the City. Thus, the potential increase of 37,000 square feet of building space at the Wharf would be within the commercial buildout analyzed in the General Plan, of which 15,000 square feet would be for publicly-oriented uses.

The proposed project is located within the “Beach Area” neighborhood area that was identified in the General Plan EIR for the purposes of evaluating potential growth. The General Plan EIR identified additional development in the Beach Area to include 54 residential units, approximately 22,000 square feet of commercial space, and 230 hotel/motel rooms, including the La Bahia Hotel project. Since adoption of the General Plan, approximately 35,300 square feet of commercial space and 346 hotel/motel units have been constructed, are under construction, or have been approved in the Beach Area.

While the potential increased building square footage of 15,000 square feet of public use space and 22,000 square feet of commercial space that could result from implementation of the Wharf Master Plan would exceed the remaining Beach area commercial development accounted for in the General Plan EIR, these numbers were estimates, not caps, and the project would still be within city-wide buildout estimates in the General Plan EIR, and the project is within the citywide commercial buildout. With approved and pending development applications, commercial development since the General Plan EIR would total approximately 600,000 square feet. Thus, the potential increase of 37,000 square feet of building space at the Wharf would be within the commercial buildout analyzed in the General Plan, of which 15,000 square feet would be for publicly-oriented uses.

Because CEQA discourages “repetitive discussions of the same issues” (CEQA Guidelines section 15152(b)), and because the project is consistent with the City’s *General Plan 2030*, the City has determined the project meets the provisions of CEQA section 21083.3(b) and State CEQA Guidelines section 15183 and, therefore, the City’s *General Plan 2030* EIR has adequately addressed cumulative impacts for all topics, except for aesthetics and traffic as the building area accommodated by the Wharf Master Plan exceeds the amount considered in the General Plan EIR for the Beach area. The General Plan EIR identified four significant cumulative impacts related to population and housing, noise, traffic, and water supply. The proposed project does not include residential uses and would not contribute to cumulative population impacts. The Wharf is not in the area of the City where potential cumulative noise impacts were identified, and thus, would not contribute to this cumulative impact. Development resulting from the Wharf Master Plan would contribute to significant cumulative traffic and water impacts identified in the General Plan EIR, as well as cumulative aesthetics impacts in the vicinity of the Wharf. Therefore, cumulative aesthetics, traffic, and water supply impacts are further reviewed below. The City of Santa Cruz *General Plan 2030* and the General Plan EIR are available for review at the City of Santa Cruz Planning and Community Development Department (located at 809 Center Street, Room 101, Santa Cruz, California) during business hours: Monday through Thursday, 7:30 AM to 12 PM and 1 PM to 3 PM. The General Plan EIR is also available online on the City’s website at: <http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/Home/Components/BusinessDirectory/BusinessDirectory/102/1775>.

The City is in the process of seeking a five-year maintenance permit from regulatory agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) that would permit replacement of 40 damaged piles per year. The application is under review by the USACE. Replacement of damaged piles is an

existing ongoing maintenance activity undertaken by the City. The permit is to establish a multi-year program to streamline permitting associated with existing maintenance activities.

There are no other currently known cumulative projects that would affect the marine environment. It is acknowledged that the City's Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) includes consideration of desalination project as backup water source as part of the City's water supply planning based on recommendations of the Water Supply Advisory Committee (WSAC). However, at this time the City has not made a decision on whether to pursue desalination. However, as discussed in section 4.6 of this document, the City completed a recycled water feasibility study and a desalination project feasibility update in 2018. In November of 2018, City Council accepted staff recommendations to prioritize recycled water over desalination, understanding that if the other alternative water supply augmentation strategies being considered are not able to meet the plan goal, then desalination would be reconsidered. Specifically, the City determined to continue to evaluate the opportunities and benefits of replacement and expansion of the existing tertiary treatment facility at the Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) and to continue to evaluate treating wastewater to advanced treatment standards for potential groundwater replenishment and/or as surface water augmentation by sending to Loch Lomond Reservoir. Therefore, the cumulative analysis does not consider desalination or other supplemental supply projects because no probable future project has been identified and consideration of a project would be speculative at this time.

A mixed-use residential commercial project was recently approved at 190 West Cliff Drive on the existing parking lot for the Dream Inn in the project vicinity. The project would result in construction of 89 residential units and approximately 15,790 square feet of ground-level commercial building space. The environmental review document reviewed project impacts and concluded that the impacts were within the scope of analysis of the General Plan EIR and no new significant impacts were identified. However, this project is discussed where relevant to the cumulative analysis provided below (City of Santa Cruz, September 2019).

In addition, the following plans are included in the cumulative analysis in this EIR because they were not prepared at the time of preparation of the General Plan EIR or considered in the General Plan 2030 EIR.

- ❑ ***Downtown Plan Amendments.*** In 2017, the City Council approved a series of amendments to the Downtown Plan, General Plan, Local Coastal Program (LCP), and zoning code. The amendments primarily modified development standards in the Downtown Plan area with the main change being extension of the additional height zones. As a result, the EIR evaluated impacts associated with the Plan's indirect effects of accommodating additional development and growth in the downtown area, estimated as approximately 711 new residential units and approximately 15,000 square feet of additional commercial space.
- ❑ ***Parks Master Plan.*** The Parks Master Plan is a guidance document that assesses existing conditions and community needs and guides the short- and long-term planning of parks, recreational facilities, beaches, and open space-greenbelt lands. The Parks Master Plan

also will aid implementation of the City’s General Plan, and the plan’s recommendations are advisory. The Parks Master Plan includes goals, policies and actions for the provision of parks and recreational services. The Master Plan also provides specific recommendations for improvements at the City’s individual parks, beaches, open spaces, and recreational facilities. The proposed Plan identifies recommended improvements that, if implemented, could lead to improvements to or expansion of existing park and recreational facilities and uses and potential addition of new parks, facilities and recreational uses. The Parks Master Plan lays out recommendations for the next 15 years but is designed to be updated over time, providing a guiding framework while allowing for adjustments based on both presently anticipated and unforeseen future needs and community desires. A Draft EIR has been prepared and is in public review. It is anticipated that the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council will consider the EIR and Plan in late spring of 2020.

- ❑ **West Cliff Drive Adaptation Plan.** The City is currently preparing a plan for West Cliff Drive that will assess climate threats along 2.5 miles of West Cliff Drive and address coastal bluff erosion, sea level rise, and other land use issues. A draft plan is being prepared. The project will include a base assessment and an inventory of current conditions, as well as a cost benefit and funding strategies analysis, conceptual design of alternative options, and a final plan with actionable tasks and policies by the end of 2021.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

Aesthetics. The geographic area for consideration of cumulative aesthetics impacts would be vicinity of the Wharf, generally along Beach Street, particularly those areas from which the Wharf and other cumulative projects may be visible. This would include cumulative development on Beach Street, including the approved La Bahia Hotel. The certified EIR prepared for the La Bahia project concluded that the project would have less-than-significant impacts on scenic views, scenic resources, and the visual character of the surrounding area. While this project and parts of the Wharf would both be visible from some locations, particularly West Cliff Drive, the overall building scale and mass of the hotel and future Wharf developments are consistent with the scale of existing development in the Beach area, including the Boardwalk, Coconut Grove, Dream Inn, and with the overall building mass along Beach Street.

Other approved cumulative projects in area are not located adjacent to the Wharf and would not be visible from vantage points where the Wharf is visible. The West Cliff Drive Mixed-Use project is within a mapped panoramic view from the Municipal Wharf, looking toward the City according to maps developed for the City’s *General Plan 2030* and included in the General Plan EIR (City of Santa Cruz, April 201-DEIR volume). The project site is not visible from the Wharf under existing conditions due to intervening development; the existing Dream Inn hotel ranges from 3 to 10 stories and blocks views of the site. Once operational, a portion of the project’s upper levels would be visible behind the Dream Inn from the Wharf, however, the project would not obstruct views of the ocean or distant mountain views from the Wharf or West Cliff Drive. Cumulative

development would not result in significant impacts to scenic views or resources and would not result in a substantial cumulative degradation to the visual character of the surrounding area as supported by photo simulations completed for both projects. Therefore, cumulative development would not result in a significant cumulative impact related to aesthetics.

Utilities - Water Supply. The geographical area for the analysis of cumulative water supply impacts includes the area served by the City's Water Department. Background on the existing and projected future demand and supplies is provided in Section 4.6, Water Supply – Service. As indicated, the 2015 UWMP predicts water supply shortfalls by the year 2035 of 40 approximately MGY in normal rainfall years, 528 MGY during a single dry year, and 1,639 MGY in multiple dry year periods even though demand is forecast to decrease. Without augmented water supplies, cumulative future water demand during dry periods is considered a potentially significant cumulative impact on water supplies. Water demand resulting from pending development projects as well as future development resulting from the Wharf Master Plan would be within the growth and water demand considered in the UWMP.

As discussed in Section 4.6, the City continues to administer its water conservation program, has completed a Conservation Master Plan, and is implementing a Water Augmentation Plan. The City has defined water supply augmentation strategies that are being studied in order to provide reliable production during drought shortages between 2020 and 2035 to address potential drought shortages. The plan includes the pursuit of the following portfolio of options: continued and enhanced conservation programs; passive recharge of regional aquifers; active recharge of regional aquifers; and a potable supply using advanced treated recycled wastewater or desalinated water (if recycled water did not meet City needs). A water transfer program is underway for the passive recharge strategy. Supply volumes for the other augmentation elements have not yet been defined, and specific projects have not been selected or constructed, as these prospective sources are still under evaluation. Thus, the long-term provision of augmented water supplies is under development, but uncertain.

The proposed project would result in a net increase in water demand of approximately 2.4 MGY, which is not considered substantial in relation to the estimated future demand in the City's water service area of approximately 3,200 MGY. New facilities and improvements implemented pursuant to the Wharf Master Plan would be subject to City requirements for installation of water conserving fixtures in accordance with City Municipal Code and building requirements. Additionally, under drought conditions, Wharf occupants and users, like other City customers, would be required to curtail water use by varying amounts, depending on the severity of the drought. The potential increase in Wharf water demand would not substantially exacerbate water supply reliability during a drought or due to cumulative growth because the amount of additional demand when spread across all service area customers would not result in any noticeable increase in the curtailment in customer use that would otherwise be implemented during drought conditions. The project water demand represents less than one-hundredth of one percent of the annual water demand. Therefore, the project's incremental contribution to a significant cumulative water supply impact would not be cumulatively considerable.

Traffic and Transportation. As indicated above, cumulative traffic impacts were analyzed in the *General Plan 2030* EIR based on estimated buildout accommodated by the General Plan, a number of approved and reasonably foreseeable projects, and long-range growth anticipated for the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC). The General Plan EIR found that cumulative development and growth would generate traffic that would result in unacceptable levels of service at 26 intersections, all of which could be improved to acceptable levels or improved operations (i.e., delays reduced to existing levels), except at 11 intersections, including five along state routes. Improvements would reduce delays below the level generated by cumulative traffic, but LOS would not be improved to meet City or Caltrans' standards at 11 intersections. Similarly, cumulative traffic along state highways would contribute to existing and future unacceptable levels of service. Therefore, the cumulative traffic would result in significant impacts at 11 intersections and along Highways 1 and 17. Funding availability for major facility improvements and expansion of transit service will likely remain constrained into the foreseeable future. Because implementation of recommended improvements and alternative transportation facilities cannot be assured, the General Plan EIR concluded that traffic impacts at identified intersections and along highway segments would remain significant under cumulative conditions (City of Santa Cruz, April 2012).

None of the cumulatively-affected intersections identified in the General Plan EIR are within the immediate vicinity of the Wharf. However, Wharf traffic could contribute to cumulative impacts at the Mission Street/Bay Street, Highway 1/Highway 9, and Ocean/Water intersections, but would not contribute to the significant cumulative impacts at the other intersections identified in the General Plan EIR. Improvements have been identified for the Highway 1/Highway 9 and Bay/Mission intersections in the City's Traffic Impact Fee (TIF) program. The Highway 1/Highway 9 improvement also is in the City's current Capital Improvement Plan; construction is programmed for 2018. The improvements are already required under existing conditions.

Cumulative growth from the City of Santa Cruz 2030 General Plan traffic model was updated as part of the traffic analysis conducted for this EIR to include the development resulting from the Wharf Master Plan. Traffic counts used in the General Plan were lower than existing counts, and, therefore, the 2017 turning movement counts are used to provide a conservative analysis of cumulative impacts. A 2019 traffic impact study for the 190 West Cliff Drive project also provided an updated cumulative analysis based on the General Plan EIR analysis, which included the Wharf.

Cumulative intersection LOS in the vicinity of the Wharf is summarized on Table 5-1. As shown, vicinity intersections would continue to operate at acceptable levels of service, except for the West Cliff Drive/Bay Avenue intersection that would deteriorate from an E to F LOS under cumulative conditions. The West Cliff/Bay intersection can be improved to an acceptable LOS of A with installation of roundabout or traffic signal. Improvements to the West Cliff/Bay intersection are planned as part of the City's TIF program, and the mini-roundabout improvement was approved by the City Council as part of the approval of the 190 West Cliff Drive mixed-use project. A remodel/expansion of an existing hotel on Second Street with a net increase in 40 hotel rooms

is under construction. However, PM peak traffic from this potential project, when distributed on local streets would result in small increment of additional peak hour trips of 7 to 9, which would not be great enough to change the results of the cumulative LOS analysis (Marquez, personal communication, October 2017).

TABLE 5-1: Weekday Cumulative PM Peak Hour Intersection Level of Service

#	Intersection	Existing Conditions		Cumulative Conditions With Project	
		PM Peak Hour		PM Peak Hour	
		Delay [1]	LOS	Delay	LOS
1	Pacific Avenue-Wharf Entrance/Beach Street	5.5	A	6.9	B
2	Pacific Avenue / Center Street	7.9	A	10.5	B
3	West Cliff Drive/Bay Avenue	41.2	E	80.8	F

[1] Delay indicated in seconds/vehicle.

SOURCE: Pinnacle Traffic Engineering, 2010; Ron Marquez, Traffic Engineer, September 2017 for West Cliff/Bay

Based on General Plan 2030 EIR cumulative analyses, development resulting from the Wharf Master Plan would contribute to significant cumulative traffic impacts at one location in the project vicinity and would contribute to significant cumulative traffic impacts at the Mission/Bay, Highway 1/Highway 9, and Ocean/Water intersections, as well as along state highways. However, increased vehicle trips are expected to be partially offset by use of other transportation modes as promoted in the Master Plan and with provision of an expanded pedestrian promenade and additional bicycle parking spaces on the Wharf. Future development projects are required to pay the City's traffic impact fee that is used to fund improvements for intersection improvements, which would mitigate a project's contribution to a significant cumulative impact. The City Traffic Impact Fee Program includes an approximate 20% City share of the total for the proposed projects. This in combination with project elements to increase non-auto transportation travel modes to the Wharf would mitigate the project's contribution to a significant cumulative traffic impacts identified in the General Plan 2030 EIR, and thus, the project's incremental contribution would not be cumulatively considerable.

As discussed in section 4.5, the pursuant to changes in the State CEQA Guidelines, effective in 2019, a project's effect on automobile delay shall not constitute a significant environmental impact. The City has not yet adopted a VMT standard. However, the City's existing VMT is over 15 percent lower than the regional per capita VMT. Technical guidelines published by the California Office of Planning and Research indicate a project that falls below an efficiency-based threshold that is aligned with long-term environmental goals and relevant plans would have no cumulative impact distinct from the project impact (California Office of Planning and Research, December 2018). Accordingly, a finding of a less-than-significant project impact would imply a less than significant cumulative impact, and vice versa. As discussed in section 4.5, project-related VMT would be expected to decrease with planned improvements to enhance pedestrian and bicycle

access. Therefore, the Project’s contribution to cumulative transportation impacts would be less than significant and would not be cumulative considerable.

5.5 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

According to State CEQA Guidelines (section 15126.6), an EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. The guidelines further require that the discussion focus on alternatives capable of eliminating significant adverse impacts of the project, or reducing them to a level of insignificance even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly. The alternatives analysis also should identify any significant effects that may result from a given alternative. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather, it must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision-making and public participation. An EIR is not required to consider alternatives which are infeasible.

The lead agency is responsible for selecting a range of potentially feasible project alternatives for examination, and must publicly disclose its reasoning for selecting those alternatives. The range of alternatives is governed by a “rule of reason” that requires the EIR to set forth only those potentially feasible alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. The alternatives shall be limited to those that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. Of those alternatives, the EIR need examine in detail only those that the lead agency determines could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. An EIR need not consider an alternative whose effect cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative. Alternatives in an EIR must be “potentially feasible.” Agency decision makers ultimately decide what is “actually feasible.”

“Feasible” means capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors (State CEQA Guidelines, section 15364). Among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries (projects with a regionally significant impact should consider the regional context), and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control, or otherwise have access to the alternative site (or already owns the alternative site). None of these factors establishes a fixed limit on the scope of reasonable alternatives. The concept of feasibility also encompasses the question of whether a particular alternative or mitigation measure promotes the underlying goals and objectives of a project. Moreover, feasibility under CEQA encompasses “desirability” to the extent that desirability is based on a reasonable balancing of the relevant economic, environmental, social, legal, and technological factors.

5.5.1 Summary of Significant Impacts and Project Objectives

Significant Project Impacts

The following potentially significant impacts have been identified, all of which can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level.

- ❑ BIO-1a: *Biological Resources, Special Status Aquatic Species-Pile Installation*. Implementation of the Wharf Master Plan would lead to future expansion of the Wharf and structural improvements that would require installation of additional piles. Underwater sound levels resulting from pile installation could indirectly harm fish and marine mammals, including special status and protected species, if any are present at the time of construction and pile installation.
- ❑ BIO-4: *Biological Resources, Wildlife Movement and Breeding*. Construction of future improvements at the Wharf could result in disturbance to nesting birds if any are present at the time of construction.
- ❑ HYD-2: *Water Quality*. Implementation of the Wharf Master Plan and construction of proposed facilities would result in expansion of the Wharf, but with implementation of stormwater treatment features recommended in the Engineering Report and project-level construction best management practices, future construction of new facilities and improvements would not result in a substantial degradation of water quality, although inadvertent discharge of construction debris into marine waters could occur without proper controls.

Summary of Project Objectives

1. Enhance opportunities for recreational use and public access.
2. Expand and enhance maritime activities.
3. Integrate education and research initiatives.
4. Promote sustainable development and sound green building practices.
5. Enhance the pedestrian environment and provide improved bicycle facilities.
6. Prepare design approaches that will provide guidance and elevate the quality of buildings and public spaces.
7. Improve parking control systems and create a more inviting arrival experience.
8. Improve service and maintenance operations.
9. Enhance public safety.

10. Improve business and economic development opportunities.
11. Increase the effectiveness of leasing, marketing and regulatory practices.

The Plan presents the following three strategies to address these objectives:

- 1) *Engage the Bay and Expand Public Access, Recreation and Boating.* The first strategy calls for the physical expansion of the perimeter of the Wharf for public access, recreation, fishing and boating. Planned improvements include a wide promenade on the east side of the Wharf, two new boat landings, overlooks, and the completion of a walkway on the west side of the Wharf.
- 2) *Enhance Existing Public Space and Activities, Circulation and Parking.* The second strategy is aimed at enhancing the existing public areas on the Wharf, including the area devoted to vehicular circulation and parking. This strategy includes the reorganization of existing parking areas for greater efficiency, to reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflicts, and to create a more attractive entrance. For the key underutilized public spaces, the strategy is aimed at expanding opportunities for publicly-oriented activities and creating a built form that gives orientation to the visitor experience and adds diversity to the Wharf's venues.
- 3) *Improve Commercial Vitality and Building Design.* The third strategy calls for expanding the number, mix and attractiveness of commercial uses on the Wharf within the existing footprint devoted to these purposes with preparation of a marketing plan to guide City efforts for outreach to potential tenants.

5.5.2 Alternatives Considered

Section 15126.6(c) of State CEQA Guidelines indicates that the range of potential alternatives shall include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic objectives of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects. The EIR should briefly describe the rationale for selecting the alternatives to be discussed. In developing the alternatives, consideration was given to modification and/or elimination of Master Plan elements or recommendations that would eliminate or substantially reduce identified significant impacts while attaining most of the project objectives.

The EIR also should identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible, and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination. Among the factors that may be used to eliminate alternatives from detailed consideration in an EIR are: (1) failure to meet most of the basic project objectives, (2) infeasibility, or (3) inability to avoid significant environmental impacts.

The City considered modification of two Master Plan recommendations: 1) modification and/or elimination of the either the Small Boat Landing or South Landing; and 2) an alternative pile treatment, consisting of wrapped piles. Elimination or modification of either boating feature was

eliminated from further consideration as it would not meet the one of the three basic strategies identified in the Master Plan to meet project objectives, which is to provide physical expansion for public access, recreation and boating. The small boat landing provides a better designed and more efficient facility for existing small boat uses and rentals at the Wharf. The South Landing responds to key directives in the City’s LCP for expanding maritime activity. The maritime element of the plan is a fundamental component that the City’s Local Coastal Program (LCP) indicates should be considered in a comprehensive analysis of the Wharf, including additional or expanded maritime activity (LCP-Beach/South of Laurel Policy LU 2.7). The LCP Design Guidelines also supports building a “major public landing for boat access beneath new deck area.” Therefore, elimination of either of these features was not considered appropriate.

An alternative pile treatment was not considered further as the EIR analyses did not identify a significant impact related to the current method of treatment of the timber piles (see DEIR pages 4.2-37 to 4.2-40). Additionally, the use of wrapped piles could potentially alter the historic qualities of the Wharf, resulting in a potentially new significant impact. The Master Plan’s policies and actions support the preservation and continual maintenance of the Wharf’s timber piles and wood sub-structure as being essential to its identity and historic character.

A reduced width of the Westside Walkway also was considered, but given the already narrow width of 10-12 feet with two supporting piles on each side, a further reduction in width would not change the required number of piles. As the installation of piles is what creates the need for construction mitigation, a reduced walkway width with an equivalent number of piles would not reduce any identified potentially significant impact.

Based on the above discussion, the following section evaluates the following alternatives:

- No Project – Required by CEQA
- Alternative 1 – Reduced Project
 - Reduced width of East Promenade
 - Reduced height and size of the new public use buildings
- Alternative 2 – Modified Project
 - Eliminate Westside Walkway
 - Reduced height and size of the new public use buildings

Each alternative is described and analyzed below, and the ability to meet project objectives also is addressed.

No Project Alternative

Section 15126.6(e) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that the impacts of a “no project” alternative be evaluated in comparison to the proposed project. Section 15126(e) also requires that the No Project Alternative discuss the existing conditions that were in effect at the time the

Notice of Preparation was published, as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services.

Project Description. Under the No Project Alternative, the Wharf Master Plan would not be adopted or implemented, including the Design Guidelines included in the Plan. However, continued remodeling of the Wharf, including potential second floor development is likely to occur as is possible without the project under existing conditions and zoning regulations. Based on estimates in the Master Plan, approximately 12,000-18,000 square feet of additional commercial space could be added to existing buildings, including potential infill development identified in the Master Plan and potential remodeling and expansion of the existing Lifeguard Headquarters.

Some improvements, such as relocation of the entrance gates could occur without adoption of the Wharf Master Plan. Similarly, there is nothing that would preclude future implementation of other improvements, especially those that are consistent with LCP policies; however it would be speculative to determine which improvements from the Master Plan might be proposed in the future. Additionally, future proposed projects would require approval of a coastal permit from the California Coastal Commission. For the purpose of the Alternatives discussion, the No Project Alternative assumes that in the foreseeable future development at the Wharf would include some second story building additions at unknown locations and continued replacement of piles as needed as part of ongoing maintenance, but no other improvements recommended in the Master Plan would be developed.

Absence of a comprehensive plan and approved environmental review for the Wharf, has proven to be a limiting factor in the past; when the City has sought grant funding for Wharf projects. It is likely, that without approval of the Wharf Master Plan, the City would continue to have difficulty securing financing for major infrastructure needs on the Wharf, including rehabilitation of existing infrastructure.

Impacts. The No Project Alternative would not result in construction of major improvements identified in the Master Plan: the entrance gate relocation, the East Promenade and Terraced Overlook, the Small Boat and South Landings, the Westside Walkway, and three new public use buildings. All three identified significant construction-related biological resource and water quality impacts would be eliminated with this alternative. No new significant impacts would occur under this alternative.

- **Aesthetics:** Under this alternative the less-than-significant impact related to impacts on the visual character of the surrounding area would be eliminated with the elimination of the three new public-use buildings recommended in the Master Plan. Existing building expansion could occur with upper floor additions up to 40 feet in height based on existing zone district standards. While the No Project Alternative would not result in introduction of a new substantial source of light and glare, existing lighting would not be moved further

from the water as would occur with the proposed project and Wharf expansion with the East Promenade.

- **Biological Resources:** Elimination of the Wharf entrance gate relocation, East Promenade, Westside Walkway, and boat landings would eliminate installation of nearly 800 new piles and avoid the potentially significant biological impact to marine mammals related to underwater noise disturbance during pile installation. Routine maintenance and pile replacement would continue as needed. Similarly, potential significant impacts to nesting birds would be eliminated with the No Project Alternative.
- **Geology-Hydrology-Water Quality:** Elimination of the Wharf entrance gates relocation, East Promenade, Westside Walkway, and boat landings would eliminate expansion of the Wharf and the installation of nearly 800 new piles. As a result, potential inadvertent discharge of construction debris during construction would be avoided with the No Project Alternative. Other less-than-significant impacts would be avoided with the elimination of major improvements. The additional structural strength provided by the South Landing and East Promenade would be eliminated as would the buffer provided by the Westside Walkway.
- **Cultural Resources:** The less-than-significant impact would be eliminated.
- **Public Services, Traffic, Air Quality and Noise:** The less-than-significant impacts identified in the EIR would be eliminated with the elimination of the three new public-use buildings. Potential building development would be approximately fifty percent less than with the proposed project. Construction-related noise impacts would be substantially reduced with elimination of the wharf expansion and other improvements recommended in the Master Plan.

Ability to Meet Project Objectives. The No Project alternative would not meet most of the project objectives (#1-3, 5-6, 8-10) as the Wharf Master Plan provides specific recommendations for future facilities that would improve economic opportunities, enhance opportunities for recreational use and public access, enhance the pedestrian and bicycle use, and improve operations and public safety. It is likely that three objectives could be addressed as part of the incremental redevelopment on the Wharf (#4, 7, 11).

Alternative 1 – Reduced Project

Project Description. Under the Alternative 1-Reduced Project, the East Promenade would be reduced in size from approximately 21 to 14 feet, which is the minimum size that would provide for public and emergency vehicle access. As a result, it is estimated 145 piles would be eliminated, reducing total potential pile installation from approximately 810 to 665. This alternative also includes a reduced building height for the three new public-use buildings from 45 to 40 feet. This reduction is consistent with existing zone district regulations, which allow a building of three stories and 40 feet. With a reduction in height of the three new buildings, this alternative also assumes a slight reduction in building size of approximately 5-10%, resulting in new public building

square footage of approximately 13,500-14,250 square feet instead of 15,000. All other potential development identified in the Master Plan would continue to be included in the Master Plan and would be expected to occur for purpose of the evaluation of this alternative.

Impacts. Under this alternative, all three identified significant construction-related biological resource and water quality impacts would be reduced, but not eliminated. No new significant impacts would occur under this alternative.

- **Aesthetics:** Under this alternative the less-than-significant impact related to impacts on the visual character of the surrounding area would be reduced slightly with a 5-foot reduction in building height. This may not be highly perceptible from some locations. Existing building expansion could occur with upper floor additions, however, buildings heights would be limited to 35 feet as set forth in the Master Plan Design Guidelines, instead of up to 40 that is permitted in existing zone district standards.
- **Biological Resources:** The reduced width of the East Promenade and Wharf expansion would reduce total pile installation by nearly 20%. Thus, the potentially significant biological impact to marine mammals related to underwater noise disturbance during pile installation would be slightly reduced, but not to a less-than-significant level, with installation of fewer piles. Mitigation would continue to be required as would approval of an Incidental Harassment Authorization. Similarly, potential significant impacts to nesting birds would be reduced, but not to a less-than-significant level, with this alternative. Mitigation would be required as with the proposed project.
- **Hydrology-Water Quality:** The reduced width of the East Promenade would slightly reduce the expansion area of the Wharf. As a result, potential inadvertent discharge of construction debris during construction would be reduced, but not to a less-than-significant level, with this alternative. Mitigation would continue to be required.
- **Other Impacts:** The other remaining identified less-than-significant impacts (geology, public services and utilities, traffic, air quality and noise) would remain the same or be slightly reduced.

Ability to Meet Project Objectives. Alternative 1 would meet most of the project objectives, except for three objectives that would be partially met (#1, 5, and 9) with the reduced width of the East Promenade.

Alternative 2 – Modified Project

Project Description. Under the Alternative 2-Modified Project, the Westside Walkway would be eliminated. Elimination of the Westside Walkway would reduce total project pile installation from approximately 810 to approximately 700. This alternative also includes a reduced building height for the three new public-use buildings from 45 to 40 feet. This reduction is consistent with existing zone district regulations, which allow a building of three stories and 40 feet. With a reduction in height of the three new buildings, this alternative also assumes a slight reduction in building size

of approximately 5-10%, resulting in new public building square footage of approximately 13,500-14,250 square feet instead of 15,000. All other potential development identified in the Master Plan would continue to be included in the Mater Plan and would be expected to occur for purpose of the evaluation of this alternative.

Impacts. Under this alternative, all three identified significant construction-related biological resource and water quality impacts would be slightly reduced, but not eliminated. No new significant impacts would occur under this alternative.

- ***Aesthetics:*** Under this alternative the less-than-significant impact related to impacts on scenic views and the visual character of the surrounding area would be reduced, but not eliminated, with the 5-foot reduction in building height for the three new buildings. The alternative would be consistent with existing City regulations. The height reduction may not be perceptible from some distant locations. Existing building expansion could occur with upper floor additions, however, buildings heights would be 35 feet as set forth in the Master Plan Design Guidelines, instead of up to 40' that is permitted in existing zone district standards.
- ***Biological Resources:*** The elimination of the Westside Walkway would reduce total pile installation by nearly 15%. Thus, the potentially significant biological impact to marine mammals related to underwater noise disturbance during pile installation would be slightly reduced, but not to a less-than-significant level, with installation of fewer piles. Mitigation would continue to be required as would approval of an Incidental Harassment Authorization. Similarly, potential significant impacts to nesting birds would be reduced, but not to a less-than-significant level, with this alternative. Mitigation would be required as with the proposed project.
- ***Hydrology-Water Quality:*** The elimination of the Westside Walkway would slightly reduce the expansion area of the Wharf. As a result, potential inadvertent discharge of construction debris during construction would be reduced, but not to a less-than-significant level, with this alternative. Mitigation would continue to be required.
- ***Other Impacts:*** The other remaining identified less-than-significant impacts (geology, public services and utilities, traffic, and air quality and noise) would remain the same as with the proposed project, except that less-than-significant impacts related to public services, utilities and traffic would be slightly reduced with elimination of the Landmark Building. Elimination of the Westside Walkway would not increase the lateral resiliency of the Wharf, as would occur with realization of the walkway in the full project proposal.

Ability to Meet Project Objectives. Alternative 2 would meet all of the project objectives.

Environmentally Superior Alternative

According to CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6(e), if the environmentally superior alternative is the “no project” alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives. Furthermore, Sections 21002 and 21081 of CEQA require lead agencies to adopt feasible mitigation measures or feasible alternatives in order to substantially lessen or avoid otherwise significant adverse environmental effects, unless specific social or other conditions make such mitigation measures or alternatives infeasible. Where the environmentally superior alternative also is the no project alternative, CEQA Guidelines in Section 15126(d)(4) requires the EIR to identify an environmentally superior alternative from among the other alternatives.

Table 5-2 (on the next page) presents a comparison of project impacts between the proposed project and the alternatives. Alternative 1 – No Project Alternative would reduce the three significant impacts to a less-than-significant level. The other alternatives also would reduce significant impacts, but not to a less-than-significant level. Of the alternatives considered, Alternative 2 would best achieve project objectives, while also reducing the severity of identified significant impacts and therefore, is considered the environmentally superior alternative of the alternatives reviewed.

Table 5-2: Comparison of Impacts of Project Alternatives

Environmental Issue	PP	NP	ALT 1	ALT 2
Aesthetics AES-1: Scenic Views	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Aesthetics AES-2: Scenic Resources	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Aesthetics AES-3: Degradation of Visual Character	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Aesthetics AES-4: Light and Glare	LS	LS+	LS -	LS -
Biological Resources BIO-1a: Aquatic Species – Pile Installation	LSM	LS	LSM-	LSM-
Biological Resources BIO-1b: Aquatic Species – Pile Coating	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Biological Resources BIO-1c: Coastal Birds	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Biological Resources 4.2-2: Sensitive Habitat	NI	NI	NI	NI
Biological Resources 4.2-2: Sensitive Habitat	NI	NI	NI	NI
Biological Resources BIO-4: Nesting Birds	LSM	LS	LSM-	LSM-
Biological Resources BIO-7: Wildlife Impacts	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Cultural Resources CUL-1: Historical Resources	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Geology, Hydrology, Water Quality GEO-1: Geologic Hazards	LS	LS+	LS -	LS -
Geology, Hydrology, Water Quality HYD-1: Stormwater Drainage	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Geology, Hydrology, Water Quality HYD-2: Water Quality	LSM	LS -	LSM-	LSM-
Geology, Hydrology, Water Quality HYD-3: Coastal Flood Hazards	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Transportation TRA-1: Traffic	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Water Supply/Utilities UTIL-1: Water Supply	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Water Supply/Utilities UTIL-4: Wastewater Treatment	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Water Supply/Utilities UTIL-5: Solid Waste	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Water Supply/Utilities UTIL-7: Energy	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
Air and Noise	LS	LS -	LS -	LS -
New Significant Impacts		None	None	None
Notes:				
PP = Proposed Project				
NP = No Project				
ALT1 = Reduced Project				
ALT2 = Modified Project				
Impact without Mitigation / Impact with Mitigation				
NI = No Impact				
LS = Less than significant impact				
S = Significant				
LSM = Less than significant with mitigation				
SU = Significant unavoidable impact				
+ = Greater adverse impact than proposed project				
- = Lesser adverse impact than proposed project				

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