6.0 ALTERNATIVES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that an environmental impact report (EIR) contain an analysis describing a range of reasonable alternatives to the project that could feasibly attain most of the objectives of the project while avoiding or substantially lessening any significant or potentially significant impacts. CEQA also states that~~,~~ "the EIR shall include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project" (*State CEQA Guidelines,* Section 15126.6). Generally, significant effects of an alternative shall be discussed, but in less detail than the proposed project. Alternatives that avoid or substantially reduce significant impacts are considered, even if these alternatives would impede the attainment of project objectives or would be more costly to the project applicant (*State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(b)). The alternatives do not need to consider less-than-significant impacts identified for the proposed project but should be focused on eliminating or reducing significant impacts.

An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project, but rather, it must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision-making and public participation (*State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(a)). As required by CEQA, this chapter also includes an analysis of the No Project alternative. All of the alternatives that were considered are discussed in the alternatives analysis presented below.

6.1.1 Impacts of the Proposed Project

To develop project alternatives, the EIR preparers and the County, as the Lead Agency, reviewed the significant impacts of the proposed project, identified those impacts that could be substantially avoided or reduced through an alternative, and determined the appropriate range of alternatives to be analyzed. **Section 4.0, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures**, of this EIR evaluates the potential for the proposed project to result in significant impacts to the following resource areas: aesthetics; biological resources; and geology and soils. Analysis of all other environmental topics, including air quality, noise, traffic, cultural resources, agricultural resources, hydrology, hazards, utilities, public services and mineral resources is contained in **Section 4.4, Other Resource Topics**. The analysis in **Section 4.0** revealed that implementation of the proposed project would result in potentially significant and significant impacts to three primary resource areas: geology, biological resources, and aesthetics. Additionally, the proposed project would create potentially significant impacts related to construction noise, construction-related air quality emissions, hazardous materials contamination, wastewater collection, and wildland fires. All of these impacts would be reduced in magnitude to a less-than-

significant level after incorporation of mitigation measures. A summary discussion of project impacts under each resource area analyzed in the EIR is presented below.

Aesthetics

Section 4.1, Aesthetics, of this EIR identified a less-than-significant impact related to the potential degradation of the existing visual character of the project site and surrounding area as a result of project construction (Impact AES-2). **Section 4.1** also identified less-than-significant impacts related to the potential obstruction of scenic views from existing off-site and residential areas, including a scenic road (Impact AES-1), and related to potential visual intrusion into an area having natural scenic qualities (Impact AES-3). Therefore, no significant and unavoidable aesthetic impacts were identified.

Biological Resources

Section 4.2, Biological Resources, of this EIR identified potentially significant effects related to: several special-status wildlife species (Impact BIO-2), the loss of protected trees (Impact BIO-3), potential impacts to willow scrub habitat (Impact BIO-5), the loss of stands of purple needlegrass, a sensitive plant community (Impact BIO-6), ~~and~~ clearing land that has slopes greater than 20 percent (Impact BIO-8), and possible disturbance of a wetland area (Impact BIO-9). These potentially significant impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with mitigation. Therefore, no significant and unavoidable impacts were identified for biological resources.

Geology and Soils

Section 4.3, Geology and Soils, of this EIR identified a potentially significant effect due to development on slopes steeper than 15 percent and exposure of people and structures to landslide hazards (Impact GEO-1), and determined that the project could result in a potentially significant impact related to location on a geologic unit that may be unstable or could become unstable as a result of the project (Impact GEO-2), and that the project could potentially expose residents to substantial risks to life or property from development on expansive soils (Impact GEO-4). The analysis also found that the project could result in a potentially significant impact related to development on expansive soils. Mitigation measures would reduce all geological impacts to less-than-significant levels. Therefore, no significant and unavoidable geology or soils impacts were identified.

Other Resource Topics

Section 4.4, Other Resource Topics, of this EIR identified potentially significant impacts related to construction noise, air quality emissions associated with construction, wildfires, hazardous materials, and

wastewater collection. Mitigation measures are included to reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, no significant and unavoidable impacts were identified for these resources.

6.2 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

6.2.1 Alternatives Considered But Not Evaluated in Detail

This section discusses alternatives that were considered for the project, but were not evaluated in detail because they did not meet project objectives or were found to be infeasible for technical, environmental, or social reasons. The "Development Consistent with Current Land Use Designation and Zoning" alternative presented in the December 2008 draft EIR has been removed from this recirculated draft EIR as Alternative 2 describes development consistent with the current zoning designation and available density credits.

Alternate Off-Site Locations

No feasible off-site locations for the proposed project were identified. The project site is a large parcel of approximately 99 acres of undeveloped land. The project applicant does not own or control any similar property within the County. Any off-site alternatives outside the County would be out of the jurisdiction of the County to review. It was determined that alternate sites in the County would likely require the assembly of several adjacent parcels to achieve a comparable land area~~,~~; were already being developed~~,~~; were too small to support ~~similar~~ a comparable project~~,~~; and/or would possess an equal or greater number of features that could potentially result in significant environmental impacts. ~~Since~~Due to the size of the open space portion of the proposed parcel, it is unlikely that ~~would be difficult to find in~~ other locations within the County would be found that could fulfill the project objectives to create a residential development within an established neighborhood with more than 90 acres of open space for passive recreational use. ~~and the current property proposed for residential development has been under negotiation for approximately 18 years, an alternate location is not a probable option.~~

It is conceivable that, from a regional perspective, other suitable parcels may exist for the project. Perhaps other sites could be available in the greater bay area, but the result would likely be the transfer of impacts of the project to another location and/or the introduction of new impacts, thereby not avoiding or reducing the magnitude of potentially significant impacts overall. Therefore, it was determined that a reasonable range of alternatives does not require the inclusion of an off-site location to reduce or avoid the proposed project's impacts.

~~***Development Consistent with Current Land Use Designation and Zoning***~~

~~This scenario could occur under the "No Action" alternative if another development proposal were brought forward. It could allow more intensive land use in other areas of the site with additional density allowances since the Resource Management zoning allows for residential uses, but any proposed development would still involve grading on steep slopes and would likely face opposition from the surrounding neighborhood, both of which would reduce the number of units that would ultimately be approved. Therefore, this scenario is unlikely. If more intensive development was pursued, this would likely increase some impacts relative to the proposed project because of the possibility of a higher number of units and a more extensive development area. Larger areas of grading would increase the grading-related and aesthetics impacts as compared to those identified for the proposed project. Any project involving a substantially larger development area would also have increased biological impacts related to tree removal, loss of additional habitat area, and the proximity of more people and domestic animals to sensitive animal and plant habitat. A larger project area would also expand the area of potential wildland fire risk and would increase the scale of construction and traffic related impacts. In addition, this alternative has already been explored to some degree through earlier versions of the proposed Highlands Estates project, which were all considered infeasible due to economic, social, or environmental constraints. This alternative was, therefore, rejected because it would not reduce the environmental impacts of the project, as required by CEQA.~~

6.2.2 Alternatives Considered in Detail

The focus of this alternatives analysis is on the ability of the alternatives presented below to avoid or minimize the potentially significant and significant impacts on biological resources; geology and soils; and aesthetics. Note that in the discussion below, resource areas where project impacts would <u>be</u> less than significant with mitigation are discussed to determine whether the alternatives would further reduce the magnitude of the impacts of the proposed project and also to determine whether the alternatives may result in a new potentially significant or significant impact not identified with the proposed project.

Alternative 1: No Project, No Build Alternative

Description

CEQA requires that a "No Project" alternative be considered. 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. The *State CEQA Guidelines* state that the No Project alternative represents the circumstance under which the project would not proceed. Under thi<u>s</u>~~s~~ <u>alternative</u>~~e No Build Alternative 1,~~ it is assumed no construction at all would occur on the project

site, regardless of current zoning allowances. The existing California Water Company tanks would remain in operation, but the remainder of the site would not include any structures. In the short term, the project site would likely maintain its open space character with some degree of site disturbance from the surrounding residential neighborhood. In the long term however, the project site could still be subject to some form of development as the County increases in population. The site may receive pressure to become more urbanized, as other properties in the area are being developed for residential and commercial uses.

Discussion of Impacts

Aesthetics

Under Alternative 1, no aesthetic impacts would occur because the site would remain vacant and would not be developed.

Biological Resources

Under Alternative 1, no biological resource impacts would occur because the site would remain vacant and would not be developed.

Geology and Soils

Under Alternative 1, no geology or soils impacts would occur because the site would remain vacant and would not be developed.

Other Resource Topics

This alternative would not result in any impacts related to construction noise, air quality emissions associated with construction, wildfires, ~~and~~ hazardous materials, and wastewater collection because this alternative would not involve any development.

Alternative 2: No Project, Residential Use Alternative

Description

According to the *State CEQA Guidelines*, the No Project alternative represents the circumstance under which the project would not proceed. Although a No Project alternative per CEQA requirements can consist of no new development as described above under the No Build Alternative, future development on the project site is likely, given that the project site is an available vacant lot within a ~~residentially~~ developed residential neighborhood and given the site's current zoning designations and ~~approved~~

available density credits. While the applicant under this alternative could request development/density bonuses, the potential granting of such bonuses by the County was not considered under this alternative. The primary difference between the No Project, Residential Use alternative and the Proposed Project is that the No Project, Residential Use alternative would not include a lot line adjustment, any re-zonings, or an RM District Zoning Text Amendment.

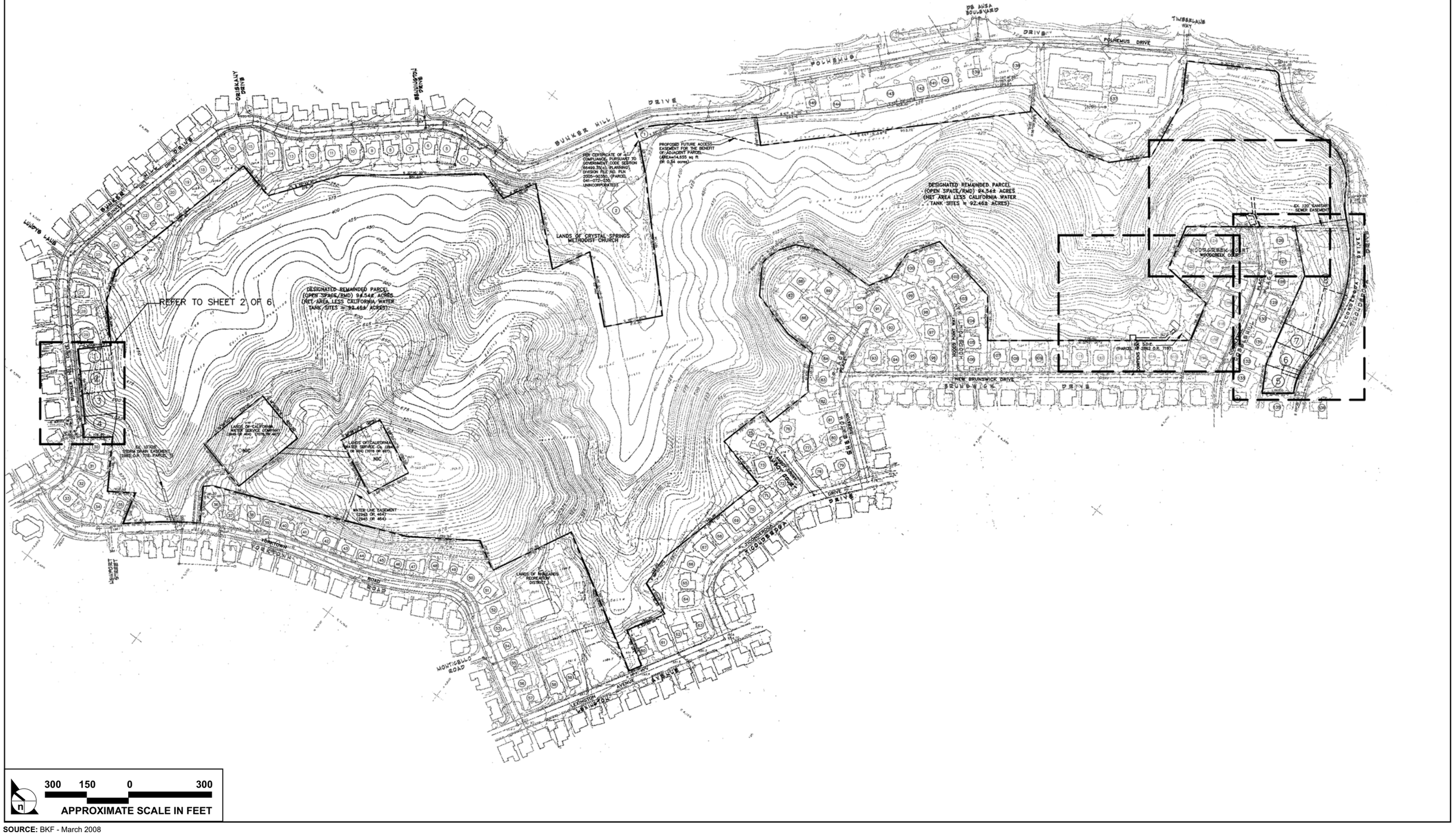
Based on current County allowances for development on the site, it is anticipated that ~~8 to or 9~~eight or nine residences would eventually be developed on separate lots ~~would still likely be developed~~ along Ticonderoga and Bunker Hill Drive, but that this development would be limited by the geological, biological, and aesthetic constraints of the site. Given the current site constraints posed by slopes, vegetation, drainage channels and limited access, only the most developable portions of the site would likely be developed under this alternative, in order to minimize construction costs. Due to these constraints, homes would still likely be constructed along Bunker Hill Drive and Ticonderoga Drive in areas where slopes are less severe and visual and biological limitations are fewer. It is conceivable that the 0.05-acre parcel on Bunker Hill (APN 041-072-030) could also be developed. However, given the site constraints of that parcel (including steep terrain and the presence of a drainage), development of this parcel could result in significant environmental impacts. Therefore, the development of this parcel is not considered under this alternative.

This alternative, as illustrated in **Figure 6.0-1, Alternative 2: No Project, Residential Use Alternative,** would be expected to include up to nine housing units based on consistency with current zoning and economic feasibility for site acquisition and development. The remaining open space portion of the site would be vacant and would be maintained for open space uses. Additionally this alternative would not include the RM zoning text amendment that is included in the proposed project. Therefore housing setbacks for the proposed residences would be subject to current RM zoning and would remain at 20 feet from the side yard and rear yard of the proposed residences.

Discussion of Impacts

Aesthetics

Under Alternative 2, views toward the site from various accessible public viewpoints could consist of more open space and fewer buildings than under the proposed project scenario. While fewer buildings may be visible on site under this alternative compared to the proposed project, implementation of this



SOURCE: BKF - March 2008

FIGURE **6.0-1**

Alternative 2: No Project, Residential Use Alternative

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alternative would still have the same less-than-significant effect on the existing visual character of the project area during construction (similar to the conclusion reached for the proposed project). Because current RM setbacks would still apply to residences under this alternative, setbacks would be greater by 30 feet than under the proposed project, reducing the project's ability to blend with the surrounding character of the neighborhood, which is subject to residential setback regulations. Although fewer buildings would be developed ~~However,~~ under this alternative, it would not reduce the amount ~~a smaller percentage~~ of the site that would be disturbed by landscaping~~ed~~ and grading~~ed~~ due to the application of larger front setbacks, resulting in larger driveways, required under the existing RM zoning ~~because the current RM setbacks would result in a larger footprint for each lot, and fewer trees would be removed~~. Under this alternative, as with the proposed project, the project would not visually intrude into an area having natural scenic qualities. In summary, aesthetics impacts under this alternative would occur on a slightly smaller scale than the proposed project because fewer houses are proposed, but would be largely comparable to the proposed project due to required conformance with current RM setbacks.

Biological Resources

Similar development and construction activities as described under the proposed project would occur with this alternative for a reduced square footage area on the project site (up to nine houses proposed instead of 11). However, because current RM setbacks would still apply to residences under this alternative, setbacks would be greater than under the proposed project and areas proposed for grading would be greater. This would result in larger areas of disturbance and would likely impact more biological resources on the project site at each property. Project construction under this alternative could still result in the potential direct loss of special-status species such as the San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat, Cooper's hawk, yellow warbler, California red-legged frog, and pallid bat as outlined in **Section 4.2, Biological Resources** or indirect impacts to these species due to construction noise. Similar to the proposed project, this would be a potentially significant impact, but could be of a greater or lesser magnitude depending upon the species identified in the proposed building pads. The same mitigation measures proposed for the project would apply to this alternative. Mature trees would also be removed on Ticonderoga Drive lots and the loss of protected trees would remain potentially significant under this alternative. However, protected trees on Cowpens Way lot would remain. Mitigation measures that are proposed for the current project for protected trees would also apply under this alternative and would reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level.

This alternative would also result in a potentially significant impact related to the loss of stands of purple needlegrass, which is a sensitive plant community. The same mitigation measures identified for the proposed project would apply to this alternative to reduce the~~se~~ impact~~s~~ to a less-than-significant level. Similar~~ly~~ to the proposed project, this alternative would still result in the clearing of land that has slopes

greater than 20 percent, because much of the project site feasible for development fits this criterion. The same mitigation measures as identified for the proposed project would be implemented under this alternative to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Implementation of Alternative 2 would not substantially reduce any biological impacts as compared to the proposed project and would not result in a new significant impact to biological resources. However, depending upon the proposed location of the nine residential housing units and the associated property setbacks, this alternative could result in increased or reduced impacts to special-status species. In all other respects, impacts to biological resources would be similar under this alternative to the proposed project.

Geology and Soils

Under this alternative, the project would be located on a geologic unit that may be unstable or could become unstable as a result of the project. This alternative would still involve development on steep slopes and could lead to development on unstable soils. Similar~~ly~~ to the proposed project, this alternative would involve potential development on slopes steeper than 15 percent and in areas that could potentially contain deep fill soils. Therefore, impacts would be potentially significant and the same mitigation measures that are proposed for the project would be required to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Additionally, because current RM setbacks would still apply to residences under this alternative, setbacks would be greater than under the proposed project and areas proposed for grading would be larger. This could result in additional slope stability, expansive soil, and erosion impacts under this alternative. Since the proposed residential lots along Bunker Hill Drive and Ticonderoga Drive would still be included in this alternative and development would still be proposed in areas subject to a seismic event that could create landslide impacts ~~would still be proposed~~, impacts related to landslide hazards would remain potentially significant and the same mitigation measures that are proposed for the project would be required to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Additionally, development under this alternative could potentially expose residents to substantial risks to life or property from development on expansive soils. Impacts would be potentially significant, as under the proposed project, and the same mitigation measures that are proposed for the project would be required to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Overall, geology impacts for this alternative would remain largely the same, but could potentially be greater than under the proposed project. However, fewer houses would be developed than under the proposed project, therefore, this alternative has the potential to reduce the impact related to exposure of new development and people to landslides and seismic events, but would not eliminate this impact.

Other Resource Topics

Development under this alternative would be likely to result in many of the same potentially significant impacts as the proposed project related to construction noise, air quality emissions associated with construction, wildfires, ~~and~~ hazardous materials, and wastewater collection, but on a smaller scale because this alternative would involve less residential development (9 houses versus 11). Mitigation measures that are included to reduce these impacts a less-than-significant level for the project would also apply under this alternative. Impacts to other resources ~~topics~~ under this alternative would be less than the impacts of the proposed project.

Alternative 3: Alternative Project Scheme

Description

Alternative 3, as shown in **Figure 6.0-2, Alternative 3: Alternative Project Scheme,** would involve the reconfiguration of all or part of the proposed 11 lots and reconfiguration of the remaining ~~the~~ open space portion of the site. This alternative would not reduce the number of residential lots proposed, but would be intended to minimize environmental impacts by relocating development to an area other than the proposed Ticonderoga Drive location (including lots 5-8). This would reduce the number of homes located within an area where ~~former~~ two small landslides have been identified ~~and could potentially minimize aesthetics impacts to off-site views of the project~~. Instead of the current housing configuration, this a~~A~~lternative would eliminate the four houses proposed along Ticonderoga Drive, and propose four additional units at Cobblehill Place, and would include currently proposed housing along Bunker Hill Drive and Cowpens Way. Under this scenario, six houses along Cobblehill Place, four houses along Bunker Hill Drive, and the single house along Cowpens Way would be developed. The change in lot sizes under this alternative would require lot line adjustments and a possible zone change to allow smaller setbacks and side yards.

Discussion of Impacts

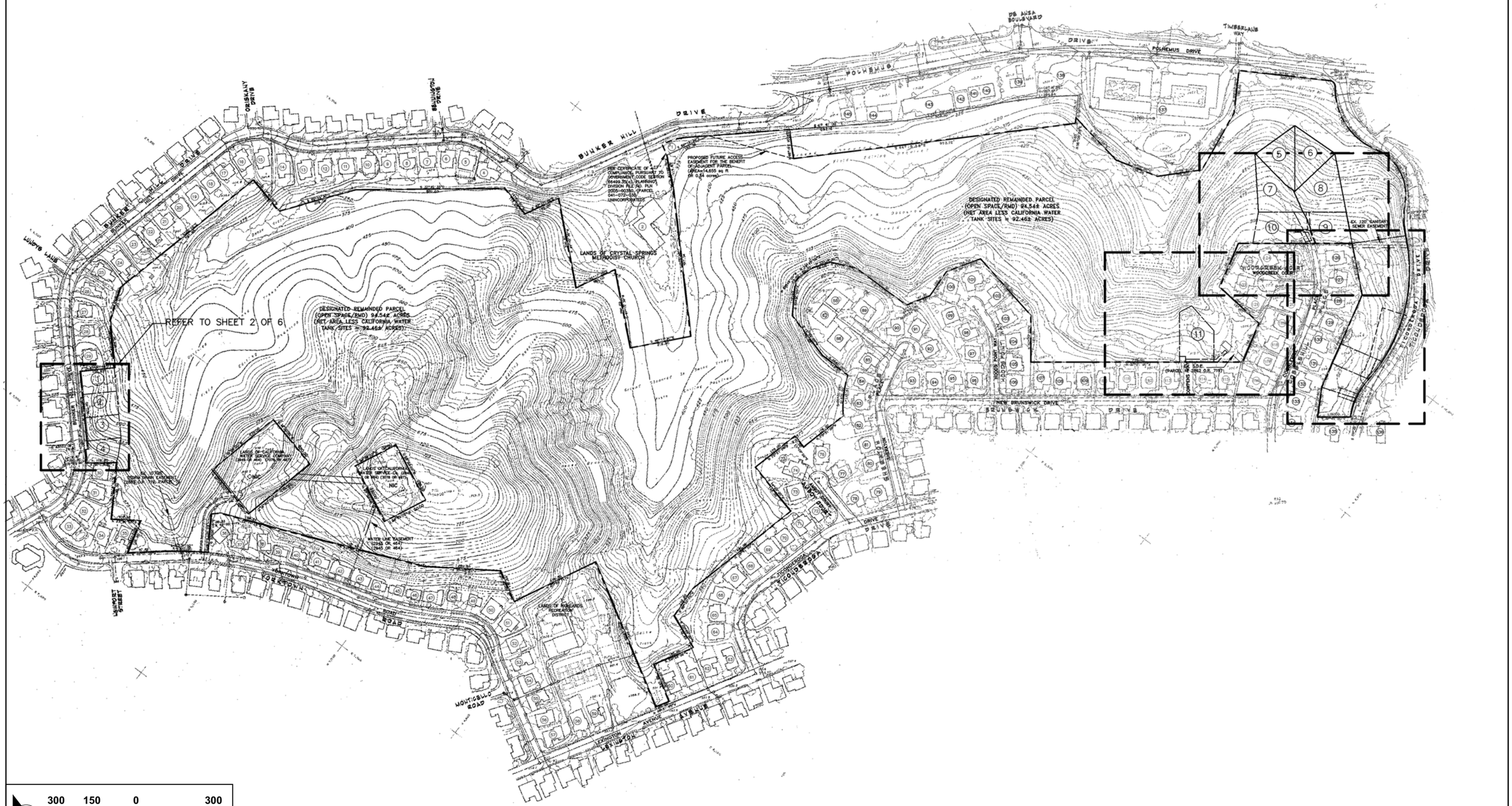
Aesthetics

Under Alternative 3, views toward the Ticonderoga Drive site from various accessible public viewpoints w~~c~~ould consist of more open space and fewer buildings than under the proposed project scenario. ~~This would particularly be true of the site as viewed from Ticonderoga Drive~~ However, more buildings along Cobblehill Place would be visible from off-site locations such as Polhemus Road and Crown Court. ~~Although a~~Additional houses ~~would be~~ developed along Cobblehill Place under this alternative~~, these houses~~ would not likely be visible from the roadway or adjacent residences, but portions of the houses near the bottom of the hill, such as lots 5 and 6, would likely be visible from Polhemus Road, and the

rooflines of the homes on lots 7, 8, 9, and 10 would likely be visible from Crown Court (refer to **Figure 4.1-13, View from Timberlane Way – Cobblehill Place Site**, and **Figure 4.1-15, View from Crown Court**, respectively). ~~Based on the visual simulation shown in **Figure 4.1-10, Cobblehill Place -Viewpoint 1, Pre- and Post-Construction,** t~~This alternative would be expected to result in greater~~reduce the~~ view impacts from off-site viewing~~s~~ locations ~~to be less~~greater ~~than those associated with~~ than the current proposed project, but the effects would still be less than significant. While fewer buildings may be visible on site compared to the proposed project, implementation of this alternative would still have the same less-than-significant effect on the existing visual character of the project area (similar to the conclusion reached for the proposed project). Additionally, under this alternative the same percentage of the site would be landscaped, graded, and a similar number of trees would likely be removed. Under Alternative 3, the project would not visually intrude into an area having natural scenic qualities. In summary, aesthetics impacts would be greater along Cobblehill Place and reduced along Ticonderoga Drive~~slightly reduced~~ under this alternative as compared to the proposed project, but in both cases the impacts would be less than significant.

Biological Resources

Similar development and construction activities to the proposed project would occur at a slightly smaller square footage under this alternative, because lots at Cobblehill Place would be limited by developable space. Because this alternative would involve the development of more lots than presently studied on Cobblehill Place under the proposed project, project construction with this alternative might also alter the extent of special-status species loss such as the San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat, Cooper's hawk, yellow warbler, California red-legged frog, and pallid bat as outlined in **Section 4.2, Biological Resources** or increase the indirect impacts to these species due to construction noise. Similar to the proposed project, this would be a potentially significant impact but under this alternative, impacts could either be expanded or reduced depending upon the species identified in the proposed building pads. The same mitigation measures proposed for the project would apply under this alternative. Five ~~M~~mature trees would remain on Ticonderoga Drive lots. However, two protected trees would still ~~also~~ be removed. ~~and the loss of protected trees as well as e~~Effects on willow scrub habitat that would result from development on lot 11 on Cowpens Way would remain potentially significant under this alternative. Mitigation measures that are proposed for the current project for protected trees would also apply under this alternative and would reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level.



SOURCE: BKF - March 2008

FIGURE **6.0-2**

Alternative 3: Alternative Project Scheme

This alternative would also result in a potentially significant impact relative to the loss of stands of purple needlegrass, which is a sensitive plant community. The same mitigation measures identified for the proposed project would apply to this alternative to reduce the~~se~~ impact~~s~~ to a less-than-significant level. Similar~~ly~~ to the proposed project, this alternative would still result in the clearing of land that has slopes greater than 20 percent, because much of the project site ~~possible for~~where development is feasible fits this criterion. Potential indirect impacts to a wetland area could occur under this alternative, similar to the proposed project, due to the location of lot 11 near an existing creek with willow scrub. The same mitigation measures as identified for the proposed project would be implemented under this alternative to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Implementation of Alternative 3 would not substantially reduce any biological impacts as compared to the proposed project and would not result in a new significant impact to biological resources. However, because the exact location of special-status species would still need to be identified within the four additional proposed building sites on Cobblehill Place, this alternative could result in increased or reduced impacts to special-status species. All other impacts to biological resources would be comparable under this alternative to the proposed project.

Geology and Soils

Under this alternative, the project would be located on a geologic unit that may be unstable or could become unstable as a result of the project. This alternative would still involve development on steep slopes and could lead to development on unstable soils. Similar~~ly~~ to the proposed project, this alternative would involve potential development on slopes steeper than 15 percent and in areas that could potentially contain deep fill soils. Therefore, impacts would be potentially significant and the same mitigation measures that are proposed for the project would be required to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. This alternative could potentially reduce the exposure of people and structures to landslide hazards on a portion of the project site. Since development would no longer be proposed along Ticonderoga Drive under this alternative, an area that contains identified landslide deposits, the scope of potential impacts related to landslides could be reduced. However, the lots along Bunker Hill Drive and other areas that are proposed for development under this alternative ~~subject to a seismic event that~~ could be subject to seismically induced landslide impacts ~~would still be proposed for development under this alternative~~. Therefore, impacts related to landslide hazards would remain potentially significant and the same mitigation measures that are proposed for the project would be required to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Additionally, development under this alternative could potentially expose residents to substantial risks to life or property from development on expansive soils. Impacts would be potentially significant, as under the proposed project, and the same mitigation measures that are proposed for the project would be required to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Overall, geology and soils related impacts for this alternative would be similar to the proposed project, with the exception of risks associated with landslide hazards. In the case of landslide hazards, this alternative has the potential to reduce the number of areas subject to landslides, but would not eliminate this impact entirely.

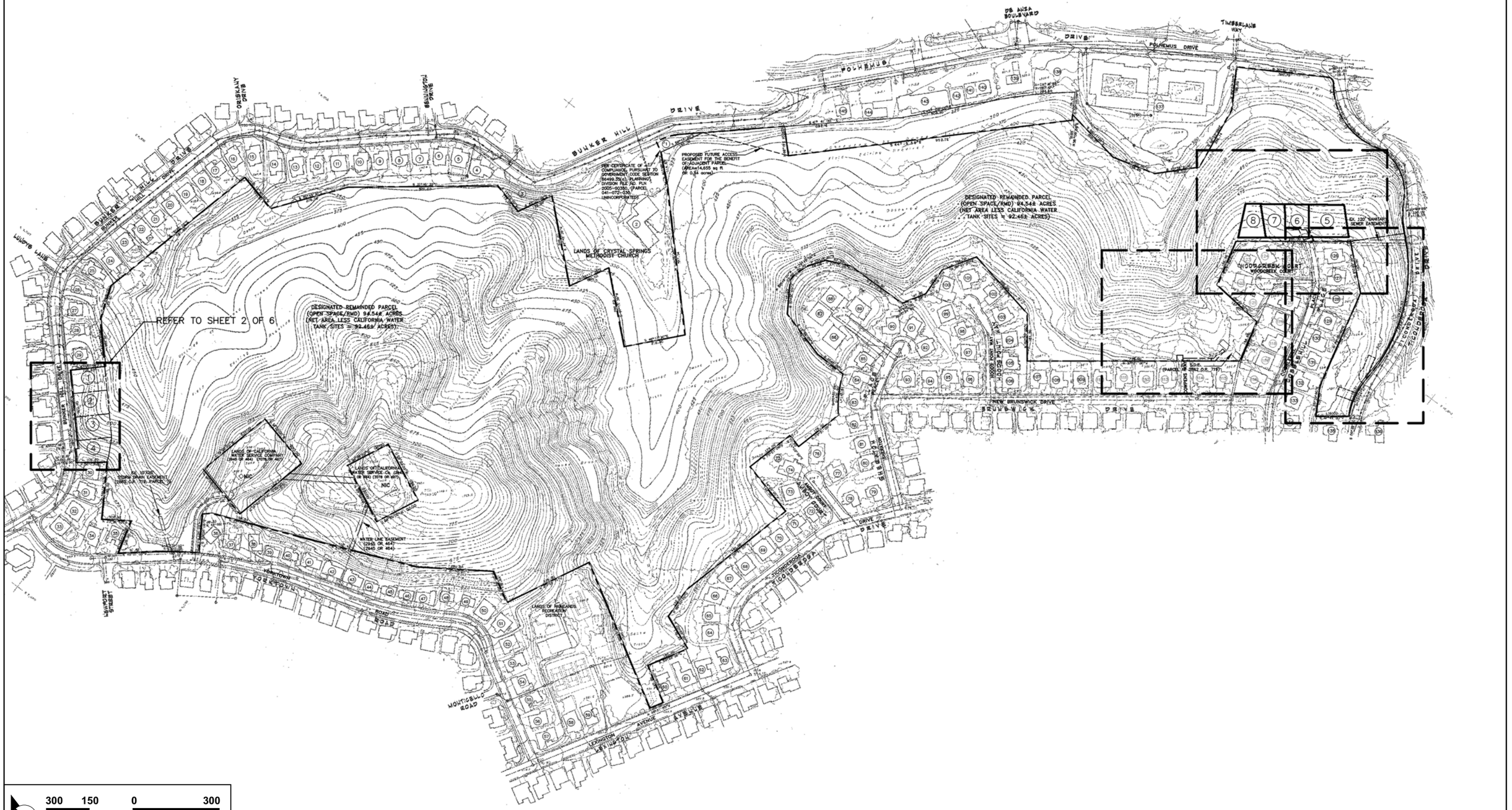
Other Resource Topics

Development under this alternative would be likely to result in many of the same potentially significant impacts as under the proposed project related to construction noise, air quality emissions associated with construction, wildfires, ~~and~~ hazardous materials, and wastewater collection because this alternative would involve the same total ~~amount~~ number of proposed residences. Mitigation measures that are included to reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level for the project would also apply under this alternative. Impacts ~~for~~ to these other resources ~~topics~~ under this alternative would be ~~relatively~~ identical to the impacts of the proposed project.

Alternative 4: Reduced Density Alternative

Description

Alternative 4 would involve a similar layout to Alternative 3 described above, with houses located along Bunker Hill Drive and Cobblehill Place, but would eliminate the currently proposed lot 11 at Cowpens Way. This would result in a total of eight houses proposed under this alternative, four ~~at~~ on Bunker Hill Drive and four ~~at~~ on Cobblehill Place. This alternative was developed with the goal of reducing or avoiding identified potentially significant impacts related to geology as well as impacts to biological resources including tree removal, and to a lesser extent reducing overall project impacts related to construction. Alternative 4 would still require zoning changes and lot line adjustments, but would reduce the density of the overall residential units ~~proposed~~. Under this alternative, the total residential portion of the project proposed for development would be 3.26 acres and the open space portion of the site would be approximately 94 acres (see **Figure 6.0-3, Alternative 4 Reduced Density Alternative ~~Site Plan~~**). ~~However, this alternative would still leave three current density credits available for this site, per the County's discretion, that may be developed in future with unknown environmental impacts.~~



SOURCE: BKF - March 2008

FIGURE **6.0-3**

Alternative 4: Reduced Density Alternative

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Discussion of Impacts

Aesthetics

Under Alternative 4, views toward the site from various accessible public viewpoints would include more open space and fewer buildings than under the proposed project scenario. This would particularly be true of the site as viewed from Ticonderoga Drive and Cowpens Way. Although two additional houses would be developed along Cobblehill Place under this alternative development scenario, these houses would not likely be visible from the roadway, ~~or~~ adjacent residences, or Polhemus Road. Similar to the proposed project, the rooflines of the proposed homes on Cobblehill Place would likely be visible from Crown Court under this alternative (refer to **Figure 4.1-15**). Based on the visual simulation shown in **Figure 4.1-10, Cobblehill Place-Viewpoint 1, Pre- and Post-Construction**, this alternative would be expected to reduce construction impacts on the visual character of the project site to less than the current proposed project. Under this alternative, the portion of the site proposed for development including landscaping, grading, and other construction activities would be reduced since fewer units are proposed. Although fewer buildings would be visible on site compared to the proposed project, implementation of this alternative would still have the same less-than-significant effect on the existing scenic views (similar to the conclusion reached for the proposed project). Under Alternative 4, impacts related to visual intrusion into an area having natural scenic qualities would also be reduced since less housing is proposed. In summary, aesthetics impacts related to visual character and areas of natural scenic quality would be reduced under this alternative as compared to the proposed project or the other alternatives.

Biological Resources

Under this alternative, the total construction area would be reduced to eight lots (three less than the proposed project). Because construction would occur on a smaller scale under this alternative, less-than-significant impacts related to common wildlife species, effects on native habitats, and interference with the movement of wildlife would be further reduced under this alternative. Project construction with this alternative might still result in additional loss of special-status species such as the San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat, Cooper's hawk, yellow warbler, California red-legged frog, and pallid bat as outlined in **Section 4.2, Biological Resources** or indirect impacts to these species due to construction noise. Under this alternative, impacts to these special-status species would likely be reduced since fewer units are proposed, depending upon the particular species identified in the proposed building pads. The same mitigation measures for impacts to special-status species proposed for the project would also apply under this alternative. Mature trees would also be removed under this alternative, but this impact would also be minimized with fewer proposed building sites. This alternative

would also eliminate potential impacts to willow scrub habitat that would result from development on lot 11 on Cowpens Way.

This alternative would still result in a potentially significant impact relative to the loss of stands of purple needlegrass, which is a sensitive plant community. However, this impact is also likely to be reduced because of the smaller area proposed for construction. The same mitigation measures identified for the proposed project would apply to this alternative to reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level. Potential indirect impacts to a wetland area would also be eliminated and two protected trees located in the development area of the proposed project would not be removed under this alternative, because lot 11 would not be developed. Similar to the proposed project, this alternative would still result in the clearing of land with slopes greater than 20 percent, because much of the project site ~~for~~ where development is feasible fits this criterion. However, with a smaller area of disturbance on the site because of fewer proposed units, implementation of Alternative 4 would substantially reduce biological impacts as compared to the proposed project and would not result in any new significant impact to biological resources.

Geology and Soils

Under this alternative, development would be located on a geologic unit that may be unstable or could become unstable as a result of the project, similar to the proposed project. This alternative would also involve development on slopes steeper than 15 percent and could lead to development on unstable soils or in areas that could potentially contain deep fill soils. However, slope stability impacts would be reduced under this alternative because fewer units are proposed for development. This alternative would also reduce the exposure of people and structures to landslide hazards on the Ticonderoga Drive portion of the project site. Since development would no longer be proposed along Ticonderoga Drive under this alternative, an area of identified landslide deposits, the scope of potential impacts related to landslides could be reduced. However, lots along Bunker Hill Drive would still be included in this alternative and development would still be proposed in ~~other~~ areas ~~subject to a seismic event that could create~~that could experience seismically induced landslide impacts ~~would still be proposed~~. Therefore, impacts related to landslide hazards would remain potentially significant under this alternative and the same mitigation measures that are proposed for the project would be required to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Additionally, development under this alternative could potentially expose residents to substantial risks to life or property from development on expansive soils. Impacts would be reduced under this alternative ~~from~~ compared to the proposed project ~~under this alternative~~ since fewer units would be exposed to the risk, but impacts would remain potentially significant. The same mitigation measures that are proposed

for the project would be required to reduce expansive soil impacts to a less-than-significant level. Geology and soils impacts of this alternative would remain potentially significant and the same mitigation measures that are proposed for the project would be required to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. However, the extent of the geologic impacts for this alternative would be reduced due to the fewer units proposed. For example, in the case of landslide hazards this alternative has the potential to reduce the number of areas subject to landslides. Similarly, the number of people subject to slope stability and seismic safety risks would be reduced under this alternative. Therefore, the scope of all geology and soils impacts would be reduced, but would remain potentially significant similar to the proposed project.

Other Resource Topics

Development under this alternative would likely ~~to~~ result in a reduction of potentially significant impacts related to construction noise, air quality emissions associated with construction, wildfires, ~~and~~ hazardous materials, and wastewater collection because the Reduced Density Alternative would involve less residential development than under the proposed project and less than or equal development as the other alternatives. Mitigation measures that are included to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level for the project would also apply under this alternative.

6.3 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

CEQA requires the identification of the environmentally superior alternative among the alternatives to the project. The environmentally superior alternative must be an alternative to the project that reduces some of the environmental impacts of the project, regardless of the financial costs associated with the~~is~~ alternative. Identification of the environmentally superior alternative is an informational procedure and the alternative identified as the environmentally superior alternative may not be that which best meets the goals or needs of the project. Additionally, if the No Project Alternative is determined to reduce most impacts, CEQA requires that the EIR identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives (*State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(e)).

The criteria for identifying of the environmentally superior alternative were based on comparison of the alternatives that would most substantially reduce or avoid the significant and potentially significant impacts identified for the proposed project. Because the No Project, No Build Alternative (Alternative 1) would result in no impacts to geology and soils, wildlife habitat, visual resources, traffic, and all other resources because the project site would not be developed, it would be the environmentally superior alternative. However, since the No Project, No Build Alternative would eliminate all impacts and is the

environmentally superior alternative, CEQA requires identification of another alternative as environmentally superior.

The No Project, Residential Use Alternative would be likely to produce much the same results as the proposed project, resulting in nearly identical impacts. Given the comparison of alternatives identified below in **Table 6.0-1, Lot Distribution by Roadway**, and **Table 6.0-~~1~~2, Summary Comparison of Project Alternatives Relative to Major Resource Areas**, Alternative 4: Reduced Density Alternative, would reduce impacts to biological resources and geological and aesthetic impacts identified for the proposed project. Alternative 3 would also reduce geology and soil impacts and aesthetics impacts, but Alternative 4 would more comprehensively reduce or avoid all significant impacts including impacts to other resources.

Pursuant to CEQA, Alternative 4, Reduced Density Alternative, is determined to be the environmentally superior alternative. This alternative would reduce potentially significant impacts identified for the proposed project related to geology and would reduce impacts to visual resources. Alternative 4 would also reduce the less-than-significant impacts such as the amount of traffic trips generated by the proposed project, noise, and air quality impacts, and would eliminate potential indirect impacts to wetlands and willow scrub habitat. Additionally, this alternative would further reduce the magnitude of construction and operational impacts by reducing total number of units. For these reasons, Alternative 4 is the environmentally superior alternative to the project. Nevertheless, this a~~A~~lternative would not meet the primary objectives of the proposed project~~ and may still involve the potential for development of three additional residential units in the future, per the County's discretion regarding existing density bonuses for the site~~.

Table 6.0-1
Lot Distribution by Roadway

	Proposed Project	Alternative 1 No Project, No Build	Alternative 2[1] No Project, Residential Use	Alternative 3 Alternative Project Scheme	Alternative 4 Reduced Density Alternative
Ticonderoga Drive	4	0	4	0	0
Bunker Hill Drive	4	0	5	4	4
Cobblehill Place	2	0	0	6	4
Cowpens Way	1	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	**11**	**0**	**9**	**11**	**8**

[1] *Four lots were assigned to Ticonderoga Drive and five lots to Bunker Hill Drive, arbitrarily, for a total of nine lots. Up to nine homes could be developed under Alternative 2 as there are nine density credits available; however, it is possible that fewer homes would be developed under this alternative due to physical constraints, as discussed above.*

Table 6.0-~~1~~2
Summary Comparison of Project Alternatives Relative to Major Resource Areas

	Highland Estates Project Impact	Proposed Project Impact (Before Mitigation)	No Project, Residential Use Alternative	Alternative Project Scheme	Reduced Density Alternative
AES-1	The proposed project would alter project views but would not obstruct scenic views from existing off-site and residential areas.	LS	--	--	--
AES-2	The proposed project would construct single-family residences on an undeveloped site in a residential neighborhood but would not degrade the existing visual character of the site.	LS	=	=	--
AES-3	The proposed project would construct new homes on a site that is currently undeveloped but would not visually intrude into an area having natural scenic qualities.	LS	=	=	--
BIO-1	The proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on special-status plant species.	LS	=	=	--
BIO-2	The proposed project could result in a substantial adverse effect on special-status wildlife species.	PS (Less than significant with Mitigation)	=/-	=/-	--
BIO-3	The implementation of the proposed project could result in the loss of protected trees.	PS (Less than significant with Mitigation)	=	=	NI
BIO-4	The proposed project would not significantly effect common fish, wildlife, reptiles, or plant life.	LS	=	=	--

	Highland Estates Project Impact	Proposed Project Impact (Before Mitigation)	No Project, Residential Use Alternative	Alternative Project Scheme	Reduced Density Alternative
BIO-5	The proposed project could have a substantial adverse effect on willow scrub habitat (a riparian and sensitive plant community) bordering lot 11.	PS (Less than significant with Mitigation)	=	=	NI
BIO-6	The implementation of the proposed project would result in the loss of stands of purple needlegrass, which is a sensitive plant community.	PS; (Less than significant with Mitigation)	=	=	--
BIO-7	Increased human presence would not adversely affect native habitats in the open space area.	LS	=	=	--
BIO-8	The proposed project would include clearing land that has slopes greater than 20%.	PS; (Less than significant with Mitigation)	=	=	=
BIO-9	The implementation of the proposed project could have a substantial adverse effect on a federally protected wetland.	PS; (Less than significant with Mitigation)	=	=	NI
BIO-10	The proposed project would not interfere substantially with the movement of wildlife.	LS	=	=	--
GEO-1	The proposed project would involve development on slopes steeper than 15 percent and could expose people and structures to landslide hazards.	PS; (Less than significant with Mitigation)	--	--	--

	Highland Estates Project Impact	Proposed Project Impact (Before Mitigation)	No Project, Residential Use Alternative	Alternative Project Scheme	Reduced Density Alternative
GEO-2	The proposed project is located on a geologic unit that may be unstable or could become unstable as a result of the project.	PS; (Less than significant with Mitigation)	=	=	--
GEO-3	The proposed project would not result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil from grading activities.	LS;	=	=	--
GEO-4	The proposed project could expose people or structures to potential adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving strong seismic groundshaking.	PS; (Less than significant with Mitigation)	=	=	--
GEO-5	The proposed project could potentially expose residents to substantial risks to life or property from development on expansive soils.	PS (Less than significant with Mitigation)	=	=	-

KEY
PS Potentially significant impact
LS Less than significant impact
NI No Impact
= Impact similar to proposed project
-- Impact less than proposed project
+ Impact greater than proposed project
Source: Impact Sciences 2008.