

D. No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, the title of the proposed site would return to the City of Santa Ana, and no federal courthouse building would be constructed there, or any other location. The U.S. Court for the Central District of California would either reduce its space needs in the Santa Ana area, or accommodate its future growth by some other means. The projected increase in the federal presence in Santa Ana is not contingent upon the construction of a Federal Building-Courthouse. The rate of growth in all categories of federal employees (including judicial and executive branch agencies) is projected to be the same, regardless of whether the proposed building is constructed.

II. Criteria for Evaluating EIS Alternatives

Selection of an alternative site involves the weighing and balancing of many complex, interrelated and often competing policy factors. An alternative superior to others in one environmental respect may be inferior in another. Several factors were key in evaluating each of the alternatives. These are identified below:

1. The first project criterion is to provide for the expansion of the federal courts and related agencies and consolidate their functions in one location in Santa Ana. Current facilities housed in the leased modular building and the Federal Building in Santa Ana are insufficient. Leasing additional space piecemeal to make up for the shortfall at these facilities would not be an efficient means of providing court space. Alternative project site and lease consolidation possibilities were therefore examined for their ability to meet existing court needs as well as their suitability for future expansion.

2. The second project criterion is to promote local government redevelopment goals, which can often be greatly assisted by the implementation of large projects such as the high-profile federal courthouse building.

3. The third project criterion is to minimize adverse environmental effects.

4. The fourth project criterion is to provide an appropriate location for the facilities which are readily accessible to the general public. Some sites are more suitable due to their proximity to public transportation and amenities, the City's Central Business District, retail areas, and existing Federal, State, and local facilities.

III. Environmental Impact

Implementation of the proposed action or alternatives would result in a

variety of short-term and long-term impacts. During the construction period, surrounding land use would be temporarily impacted by dust, construction equipment emissions and noise, and adverse visual impact. Short-term erosion may occur until project landscaping is established. These impacts are considered temporary and would be mitigated to less than significant levels through measures recommended in Section 4.1 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, dated June 1994 (FEIS). The long-term effect of the proposed action or alternatives would be the introduction of an urban structure, associated parking areas, and other amenities to a currently undeveloped sites. Construction of the project would constitute a change in land use for any of the development sites, and, in general, would serve as appropriate in fill. The characteristics of the physical, aesthetic and human environment would be impacted, as with any form of land use intensification. Consequences of this urbanization would include increased traffic volumes, incremental degradation of local and regional air quality, additional noise, alteration of the visual character of the sites, and incremental increases in demand for public services and utilities. Nonetheless, the proposed project would benefit the local community and federal government by providing much needed additional courtroom facilities. Implementation of mitigation measures, as proposed in the FEIS, would reduce impacts to the maximum extent feasible.

IV. Mitigation Measures

All practicable means to avoid or minimize impacts to the area are being considered in the development of the project. GSA received a number of comments and mitigation suggestions from concerned citizens, and interested and responsible local, State, and Federal agencies. Mitigation measures were set forth in the FEIS and those that can be implemented were adopted by GSA.

A. Geology and Landform

Due to its location within a seismically active region of Southern California, the proposed project site would be subject to potential long-term geologic hazards associated with seismic activity. Mitigation measures are adopted as specified in Section 4.1.1.2 of the FEIS to reduce those impacts to less than significant.

B. Natural Hazards

The proposed project site is not located within the 100-year or 500-year flood plain. Project implementation at

the proposed site would not result in any significant impacts associated with flooding hazards.

The proposed project site does not receive drainage from the surrounding areas. Project implementation would result in changes to existing flow paths and would increase storm runoff volumes, peak flows and velocities due to placement of structures and the increase of impervious surface areas. Surface runoff would be controlled by drainage facilities incorporated into project design. Mitigation measures are adopted as specified in Section 4.1.3.2 of the FEIS to reduce the impacts to a less than significant level.

C. Air Quality

Air quality impacts would occur from site preparation and building erection activities associated with construction of the project. The emissions of construction equipment and vehicles would be short-term and consist of fugitive dust and exhaust emissions. Those impacts are mitigated to a less than significant level by GSA adopting all mitigation measures as identified in the FEIS section 4.1.4.2 except for:

- Restriction of construction activities that affect traffic flow to off-peak hours from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This cannot be adopted because it is not economically feasible for construction of a project this size. The hours of construction operation will be limited to 6:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Weekend construction activities will occur only under special circumstances if required.

- Trucks shall not idle for more than 2 minutes. This measure will not be adopted in full because it is not practical to measure and oversee. However, trucks arriving at the jobsite, and not being utilized will be shut down until required. GSA's general contractor will monitor to ensure that they do idle for an excessive period of time.

- Excavation and grading shall be suspended when the wind speed (as instantaneous gusts) exceeds 25 miles per hour. This measure will not be adopted because occurrence of wind at 25 miles per hour speed is often encountered in the area. If adopted, this measure would impede severely construction activities. Instead, the excavation contractor will be responsible for determining if the wind conditions are acceptable for construction activities. If the winds create conditions which are deemed to be unsafe for the construction or adjacent buildings and neighbors, then all work will be suspended. Also, the Government representatives on site have the authority to stop construction work