6. PROJECT ALTERNATIVES
1. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a), an EIR is required to 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 discussion of alternatives need not be exhaustive, but rather it must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision-making and public participation. An EIR must also evaluate a "no project" alternative. An EIR is not required to consider alternatives that are infeasible.

Analytical Assumptions and Methodology

The level of detail required in the alternatives analysis does not need to be as detailed as required for the environmental analysis of the Proposed Project. Rather, an EIR should include "sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project." As such, the alternatives analysis is presented as a comparative qualitative and quantitative analysis to the Proposed Project, and assumes that all applicable mitigation measures proposed for the Proposed Project would apply to each alternative. Impacts associated with each alternative are evaluated in comparison to the Proposed Project's impacts and are classified as increased, reduced, or essentially equivalent to the level of impact associated with the Proposed Project.

Alternatives Considered But Rejected From Further Study

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(b) states that "the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly." Thus, the consideration of feasible alternatives was focused on lessening or avoiding the Project's significant unavoidable impacts associated with air quality and construction noise and vibration.

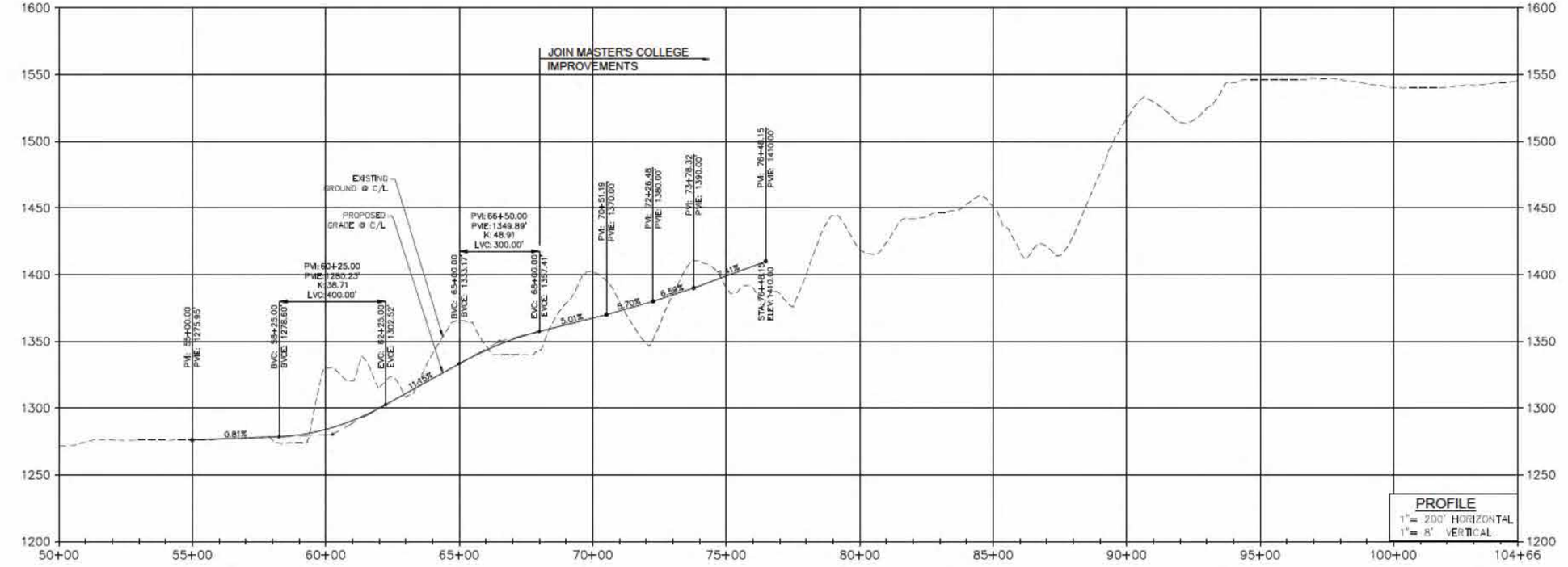
In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(c), there were three alternative alignments that were considered by the Lead Agency but rejected as infeasible during the scoping process. The alternatives considered but rejected included (1) connecting Dockweiler Drive to Railroad Avenue via Market Street (2) extending Lyons Avenue to Dockweiler Drive with a bridge over the railroad right-of-way, and (3) extending Lyons Avenue to Dockweiler Drive with a below grade underpass under the railroad right-of-way. The physical constraints associated with each of these alternatives that led to them being rejected without further evaluation are addressed below.

Market Street Alignment

The Dockweiler Drive to Market Street alignment was considered as another option that would indirectly connect Dockweiler Drive to Lyons Avenue without resulting in an additional at-grade crossing. Under this alternative alignment, Dockweiler Drive would connect to Railroad Avenue via Market Street as shown in Figure 6.1-1, Market Street Alignment. This alignment would indirectly connect to Lyons Avenue via Railroad Avenue, Main Street, Walnut Street or Newhall Avenue. This alternative was rejected from further consideration due to the resulting 11.15% gradient of the roadway profile resulting from the existing topographical gradient between Market Street and Dockweiler Drive, the relatively sharp curve at the base of an include where the alignment would connect to Market Street. A gradient of 11.15% would not meet the street standards of a secondary highway and would potentially result in unsafe roadway conditions. Additionally, Market Street is a local residential street that directly abuts and provides access to single and multi-family residential land uses. The proposed alignment of Dockweiler Drive through this existing residential neighborhood would not be consistent with the alignment identified within the Circulation Element and would not be compatible with respect to public safety and local residential street standards. For this reason, this alternative alignment was rejected as infeasible.

Lyons Avenue Overpass Extension to Dockweiler Drive

The Lyons Avenue Overpass Extension to Dockweiler Drive was considered as a potential option to provide a direct connection from Lyons Avenue to Dockweiler Drive without an at-grade crossing. An illustration of the Lyons Avenue connection to Dockweiler Drive with an overpass crossing Railroad Avenue and the railroad right-of-way is shown in Figure 6.1-2, Lyons Avenue Overpass Alignment. As shown in Figure 6.1-2, Lyons Avenue starts ascending at the Chestnut Street / Lyons Avenue intersection at a 5% slope, passes above Railroad Avenue, the railroad tracks and Newhall Creek, and descends at a 5% grade to touch down on the existing ground approximately 600’ east of the creek. Lyons Avenue would need an overhead bridge over Railroad Avenue, the railroad tracks, and Newhall Creek. In order to provide sufficient vertical clearance for the passing trains, Lyons Avenue will be raised approximately 30’ above the railroad tracks. Two connections via Walnut Street / 9th Street and Walnut Street / 11th Street between Lyons Avenue and Railroad Avenue will be established to replace the existing intersection.



Source: David Evans & Associates, Inc. May 2017

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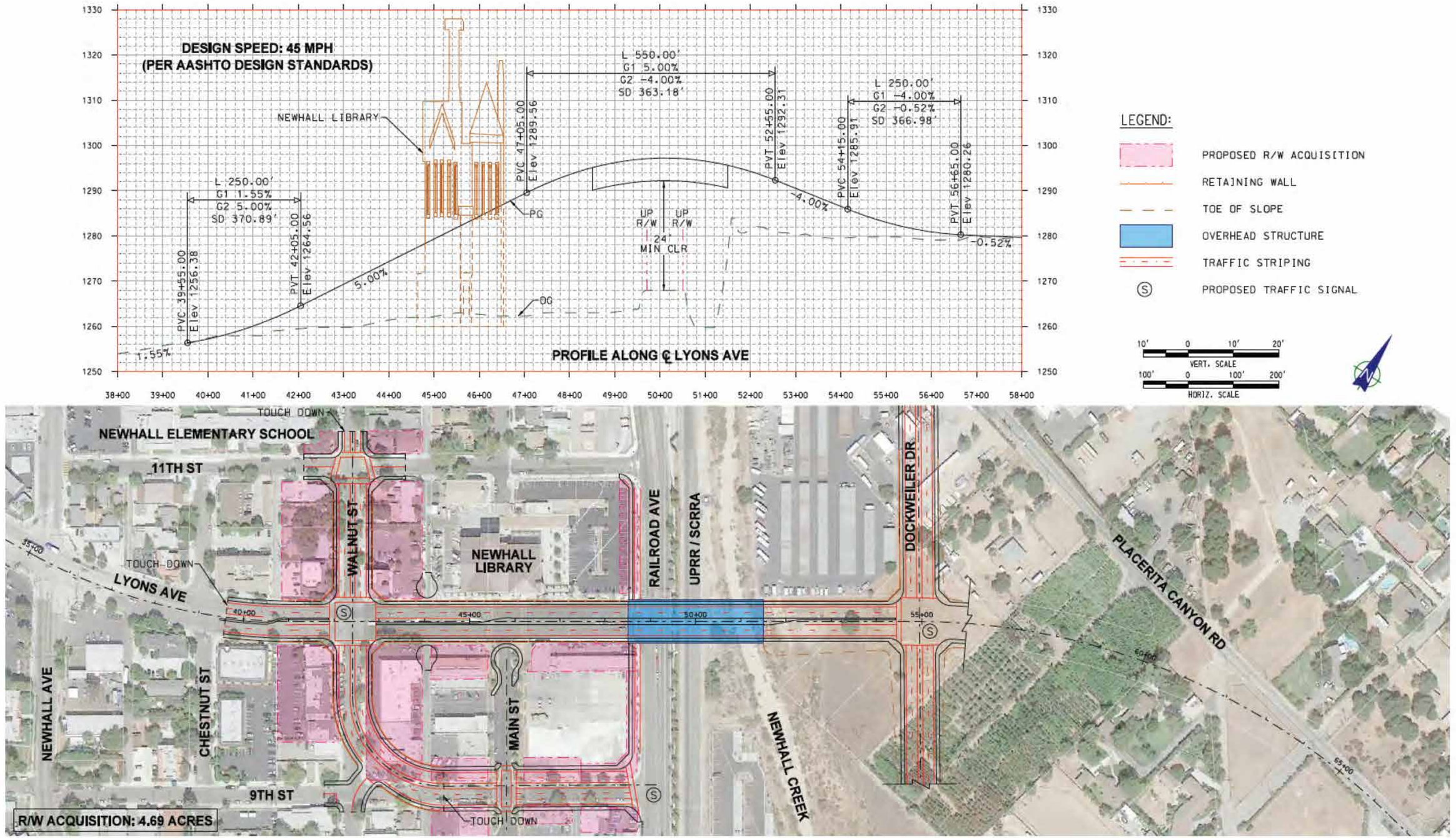
Figure 6.1-1
Market Street Alignment



Source: David Evans & Associates, Inc. May 2017

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Figure 6.1-2
Lyons Avenue Overcrossing

With respect to traffic circulation, the existing configuration of a direct intersection connection between Lyons Avenue and Railroad Avenue could not be kept for all of the grade separation alternatives. In order to maintain traffic circulation between the two major streets, two connector roads, one on each side of Lyons Avenue, would have to be established. Although the connection between the two major roads could be re-established, traffic would need to make additional turning movements to go from one street to another. This new configuration will provide unnecessary delays and will create congestion within the area.

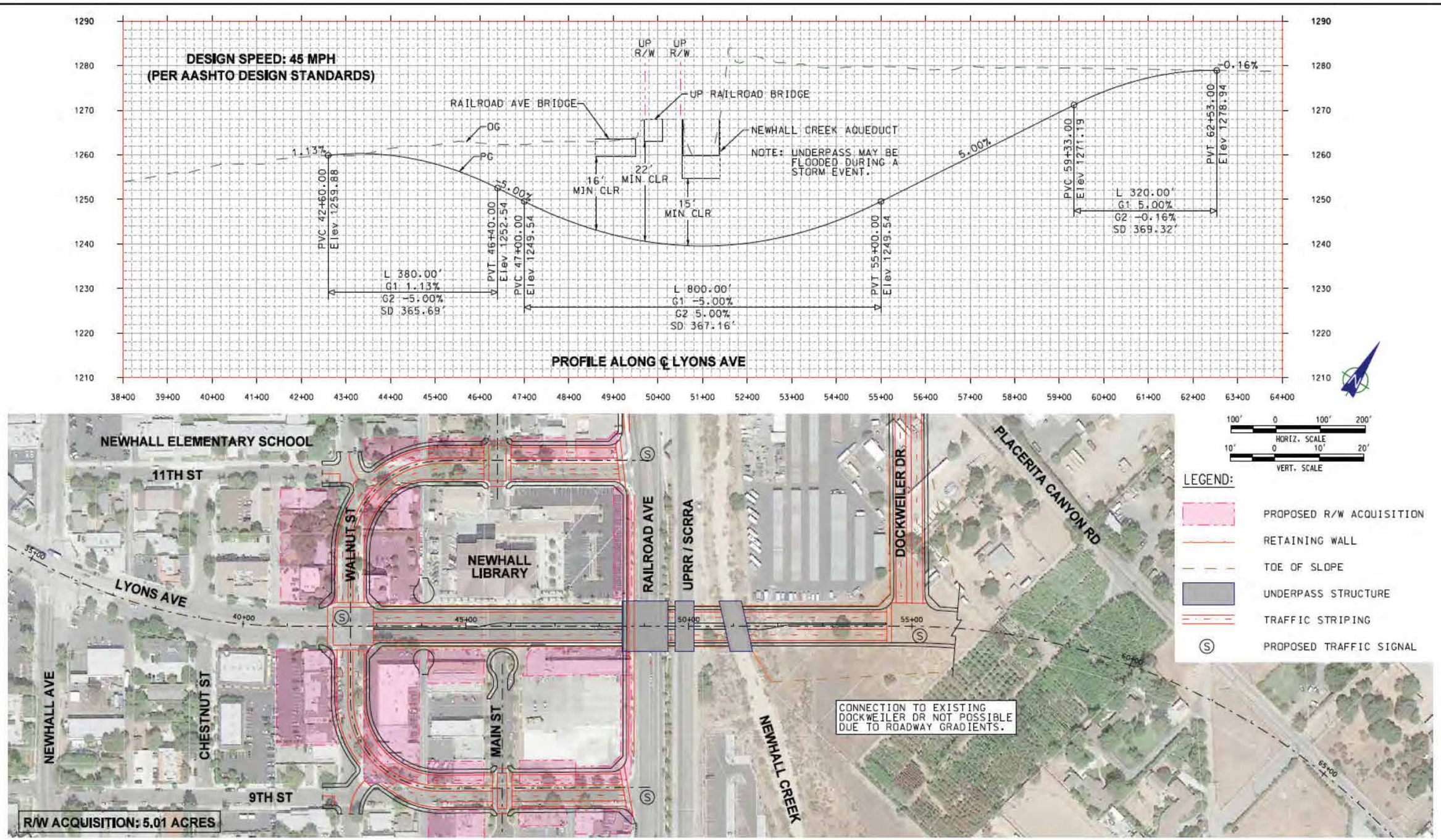
Different utilities such as sewer, water, gas, found within Lyons Avenue and Railroad Avenue would need to be relocated and/or abandoned. In order to build a grade separation with an overhead crossing, most of the utilities within the construction limits would be impacted and would need to be relocated at a significant cost.

With respect to impacts upon Newhall Elementary School, as shown in Figure 6.1-2, the southeast corner of Newhall Elementary School might be impacted by the reconfiguration of Walnut Street and 11th Street for the grade separation option. Walnut Street and 11th Street, which would be the necessary link between Lyons Avenue and Railroad Avenue for the grade separation, would have heavier traffic than their current configuration and this might potentially pose a risk to the nearby school route.

In regards to community impacts, most of the properties adjacent to Lyons Avenue, Walnut Street, 9th Street and 11th Street, shown as pink shading on Figure 6.1-2, would be fully acquired for the grade separation option due to change of grade on Lyons Avenue and loss of access routes. The adjacent residents and businesses would be relocated. In addition, the grade separation option is not consistent with the City's Old Town Newhall Specific Plan. The grade separation will divide the community and cause an unnecessary burden to the residents within the impacted area. Additionally, raising Lyons Avenue over Railroad Avenue, the railroad tracks, and Newhall Creek would physically bisect the existing Newhall community and create a disconnect to the properties on either side of Lyons Avenue. Especially for residents living south of Lyons Avenue, it would require more effort to get to the Old Town Newhall Library on the north side of Lyons Avenue. The front view of the library would be blocked by a retaining wall supporting the roadway embankment of the grade separation. Additionally, 24 parking stalls in the library parking lot would be lost due to the necessary widening on Railroad Avenue for the grade separation. Because this alternative would be disruptive to the existing established community of Old Town Newhall and for the reasons addressed above, this alternative was rejected from further consideration.

Lyons Avenue Underpass Extension to Dockweiler Drive

The Lyons Avenue Underpass Extension to Dockweiler Drive was considered as another alternative to provide a direct connection from Lyons Avenue to Dockweiler Drive without an at-grade crossing. An illustration of the Lyons Avenue connection to Dockweiler Drive with an underpass crossing Railroad Avenue, the railroad right-of-way, and Newhall Creek is shown in Figure 6.1-3, Lyons Avenue Underpass. As shown in Figure 6.1-3, Lyons Avenue starts descending from the Lyons Avenue / Walnut



Source: David Evans & Associates, Inc. May 2017

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Figure 6.1-3
Lyons Avenue Undercrossing

Street intersection at a 5% slope and goes beneath Railroad Avenue, the railroad tracks and Newhall Creek. After the new lowered Lyons Avenue passes below Newhall Creek, it starts ascending to existing ground level approximately 1,100' east of the creek. A roadway bridge for Railroad Avenue, a railroad bridge for railroad tracks and a water bridge for the creek are needed for the underpass. In order to maintain enough vertical clearance from the underpass to the soffits of the bridges, the underpass near the railroad tracks will be approximately 28' below the existing ground. To maintain traffic circulation between Lyons Avenue and Railroad Avenue, two loop connectors via Walnut Street and 11th Street to the north, and Walnut Street and 9th Street to the south, will be needed. Minor streets such as Main Street will be cul-de-sacs at Lyons Avenue.

For the underpass alternative, a bridge to carry storm water from Newhall Creek would be required so the lowered Lyons Avenue could pass underneath. However, Newhall Creek is a natural flood control channel, instead of a man-made water channel such as the California Aqueduct whose flow volume is controlled. The amount of storm water flowing though the bridge would be hard to predict. If a larger storm occurred than the bridge could handle, the underpass would be flooded and traffic would be interrupted. Moreover, the bridge or the underpass would be susceptible to damage during storm events.

Similar to the overpass alternative described above, the underpass alternative would be equally disruptive to the existing established community with respect to traffic circulation, relocation of utilities, impacts to Newhall Elementary School, and community disruption as described above for the Lyons Avenue overcrossing alternative. Therefore, for these reasons the underpass alternative was rejected from further consideration.

Selection of Alternatives

The objective of the project alternatives analysis, as directed by CEQA, is to identify alternatives that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. Based on this directive, the Project Alternatives evaluated within the scope of this EIR are as follows:

1. No Project Alternative;
2. Alternative 1 (Proposed Alignment With Improvements at the 13th Street Rail Crossing); and
3. Alternative 2 (Proposed Alignment to Arch Street Without Lyons At-Grade Crossing).

A detailed description and environmental analysis for each of these alternatives is provided within Section 6.2 through Section 6.4 The identification of the alternative that would be most capable of reducing the Proposed Project's adverse environmental impacts is presented in Section 6.5, Environmentally Superior Alternative.