5.0 CEQA IMPACT OVERVIEW

5.1 GROWTH INDUCEMENT

With respect to potential growth inducing impacts, the CEQA *Guidelines* requires a discussion of the ways in which a project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing in the surrounding environment. Such discussion should include the characteristics of a project, which may encourage and/or facilitate future growth that, either individually or cumulatively, could significantly affect the environment. CEQA emphasizes that growth in an area should not be considered beneficial, detrimental or of little significance.

Growth-Inducing Criteria

In general terms, a project may foster population growth in a geographic area if it meets any one of the criteria that are identified below.

- The project results in the urbanization of land in a remote location ("leap frog" development), creating an intervening area of open space which then induces growth pressure on that open space.
- The project results in the removal of an impediment to growth (e.g., the establishment of an essential public service, the provision of new access to an area, or a change in zoning or general plan designation).
- Economic expansion, population growth, or the construction of additional housing occurs in the surrounding environment in response to the project, either directly or indirectly (e.g., changes in revenue base, employment expansion, etc.).

Should a project meet any one of these criteria, it can be considered growth inducing. An evaluation of this project compared against these growth-inducing criteria is provided below.

It must be emphasized that the CEQA *Guidelines* require an EIR to "discuss the ways" [emphasis added] a project could be growth inducing and to "discuss the characteristics of some projects that may encourage...activities that could significantly affect the environment" [emphasis added]. However, the CEQA *Guidelines* do not require that an EIR predict (or speculate), specifically where such growth would occur, in what form it would occur, or when it would occur. Clearly, the answers to such questions require great speculation, which CEQA discourages (see CEQA *Guidelines* §15145).

Growth Inducement Potential

Urbanization of Land in Isolated Localities ("leap-frog" development)

This growth inducement criterion generally applies to development projects that encroach into areas of open space distant from current urban development of services. Implementation of Alternative 1, 2 or 3 would occur within a heavily urbanized area. Uses within the downtown Los Angeles Civic Center area predominately include city, county, state, and federal buildings. In the immediate vicinity of the Hall of Justice, the Federal Courthouse is located to the east across Spring Street, the Criminal Courts building to the south across Temple Street, the County of Los Angeles Central Heating and Refrigeration Plant to the west across North Broadway, and the 101 Freeway is to the north, across Aliso Street. Consequently, none of the alternatives are considered to be a "leap-frog" development and is not considered to be growth inducing.

Removal of an Impediment to Growth

Growth in an area may result from the removal of physical impediments or restrictions to growth, as well as the removal of planning impediments resulting from land use plans and policies. In this context, physical growth impediments may include nonexistent or inadequate access to an area or the lack of essential public services (e.g., water service), while planning impediments may include restrictive zoning and/or general plan designations.

The project area contains established land uses and supporting infrastructure. Construction of the uses proposed on the project site might require the modification and/or replacement of existing infrastructure in order to support the reuse of the Hall of Justice building. However, the needed water, sewer, and energy (electricity and natural gas) infrastructure required to support the proposed project would be available to the project site along Temple Street, Spring Street, Aliso Street, and North Broadway. In addition, an established transportation network exists in the surrounding area that offers local and regional access to the project site. Consequently, the implementation of Alternative 1, 2 or 3 would not induce growth within the area.

Economic Growth

The final criterion by which growth inducement can be measured involves economic considerations. In the short-term, the development of Alternative 2 or 3 would provide construction employment opportunities associated with the development on the project site. It is assumed that some of these

temporary employment opportunities (i.e., estimated to be 500 construction workers) could result in a few people temporarily moving into the City and/or County of Los Angeles. The introduction of these construction workers would not result in a significant increase in the local population and is not considered to be growth inducing. No temporary employment opportunities would occur under Alternative 1, and thus no increase in local population is anticipated. The repair and reuse of the Hall of Justice would allow for the relocation of employees from other locations within downtown Los Angeles and adjacent areas. No significant increase in the number of County employment is anticipated as a result of Alternative 2 or 3. The relocation of these existing County employees would not result in a significant increase in the local population and is not considered to be growth inducing. No relocation of County employees would occur under Alternative 1, and thus no increase in local population is anticipated.

5.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Section 15126 of the CEQA *Guidelines* states that use of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of a proposed project may be irreversible if a large commitment of these resources makes their removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. This section of the EIR evaluates whether the project would result in the irretrievable commitment of resources, or would cause irreversible change in the environment. Also, this section identifies any irreversible damage that could result from environmental accidents associated with the proposed project.

Irreversible Commitment of Resources

Construction and operation of Alternative 2 or 3 would contribute to the incremental depletion of resources, including renewable and non-renewable resources. The incremental depletion of resources would not occur under Alternative 1.

Resources, such as lumber and other forest/agricultural products, as well as water (i.e., dust suppression), are generally considered renewable resources. Such resources would be replenished over the lifetime of the project. For example, lumber supplies are increased as seedlings mature into trees, while water supplies are replenished as water is redistributed through the action of the hydrologic cycle. As such, the development of Alternative 2 or 3 would not result in the irreversible commitment of renewable resources. Nevertheless, there would be an incremental increase in the demand for these resources over the life of either Alternative 2 or 3.

Non-renewable resources, such as natural gas, petroleum products, asphalt, petrochemical construction materials, metal, sand, and gravel are considered to be commodities, which are available in a finite supply. The processes that created these resources occur over a long period of time. Therefore, the replacement of these resources would not occur over the life of Alternative 2 or 3. To varying degrees, the aforementioned materials are all readily available and some materials, such as asphalt or sand and gravel, are abundant. Other commodities, such as metals, natural gas, and petroleum products, are also readily available but are finite in supply, given the length of time required by the natural process to create them.

The demand for all such resources is expected to increase regardless of whether or not Alternative 2 or 3 is developed. The State Department of Finance indicates that the population of southern California will increase 62 percent over the 30-year period between 1990 and 2020. These increases in population will directly result in the need for more office facilities to provide the needed services associated with this growth. If not consumed by this project, these resources would likely be committed to other residential, commercial, public service, or industrial projects in the region. Furthermore, the investment of resources for the implementation of either Alternative 2 or 3 would be typical of the level of investment normally required to repair and reuse a facility of this scale. No wasteful use of energy or construction resources is anticipated, provided that all standard building codes, including energy conservation standards, are followed.

Irreversible Environmental Changes

Long-term changes associated with Alternative 2 or 3 would include a change in the use of the facility from a vacant jail facility to an office facility. Irreversible environmental changes would include a small increase in local and regional vehicular traffic and the resultant increase in air pollutants and noise emissions generated by this traffic, among other impacts. These impacts would not occur under Alternative 1, since the building would remain vacant. Mitigation measures are proposed in this EA/EIR that would minimize or avoid the significant effects of the environmental changes associated with Alternatives 2 and 3.

5.3 POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE FROM ACCIDENTS

Neither Alternative 1, 2 nor 3 proposes any uniquely hazardous uses and its operation would not be expected to cause environmental accidents that would affect other areas. The project site is located within a seismically active region and would be exposed to ground shaking during a seismic event. Implementation of Alternative 1 would leave the existing building in its current state and pose potential

health and safety problems in the event of another earthquake. Alternative 2 would, to the extent feasible, conform with the regulatory provisions of the County Building Code, pertaining to construction standards, which would minimize the damage to the building in the event of such an occurrence. Alternative 3 would include the rehabilitation of the building to Secretary of Interior Standards, which would substantially, limit the amount of seismic retrofitting that could occur under this alternative.

During the preparation of the Hazardous Materials Survey, asbestos-containing material (ACM), lead paint, and light ballasts/polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) were a concern on the project site. Because the development of the either Alternative 2 or 3 would require the dismantling and repair of building structural elements, these materials could cause health and safety problems to onsite construction workers and the community. Prior to the dismantling/demolition activities, the developer will remove and/or encase all ACM, lead paint, and polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) containing light ballast in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations. Removal and encasing of these materials would reduce impacts to a less than significant level. These materials would remain with the implementation of Alternative 1 and may pose a public health risk. In conclusion, it is very unlikely that either Alternative 2 or 3 would create a situation where irreversible environmental damage could be caused by accidents on the project site.