

5. Environmental Analysis

5.7 RECREATION

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) evaluates the potential for implementation of the proposed project to impact public parks and recreational facilities.

5.7.1 Environmental Setting

5.7.1.1 REGULATORY BACKGROUND

State

Quimby Act of 1975

The Quimby Act of 1975 (California Government Code § 66477) requires the dedication of land and/or fees for public park and recreational purposes as a condition of approval for a tentative map or parcel map. The Quimby Act establishes procedures that can be used by local jurisdictions to provide neighborhood and community parks and recreational facilities and services for new residential subdivisions. It allows cities and counties to require up to five acres of park for every 1,000 residents.

California Public Park Preservation Act

The primary instrument for protecting and preserving parkland is California's Public Park Preservation Act of 1971. Under the Public Resources Code, cities and counties may not acquire any real property that is in use as a public park for any nonpark use unless compensation, land, or both are provided to replace the parkland acquired. This ensures no net loss of parkland and facilities.

Local

County of Los Angeles Municipal Code

Section 21.24.340, Residential Subdivisions-Local Park Space Obligation-Formula: It requires the subdivider of a residential subdivision to provide local park space to serve the subdivision, pay a fee in lieu of the provision of such park land in accordance with the provisions of Section 21.28.140, provide local park space containing less than the required obligation but developed with amenities equal in value to the park fee, or do a combination of the above in accordance with the requirements of the County Municipal Code Title 21.

5.7.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Project Site

The project site is developed with the existing Wedgeworth Elementary School, four baseball fields used by Hacienda Heights Little League, and vacant lot.

Wedgeworth ES has hardcourts, kindergarten playground, and turf playfields. The baseball fields and supporting facilities include small bleachers, two batting cages, dugouts, press boxes, storage containers, parking, and two of the four baseball fields are equipped with nighttime lighting.

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Surrounding Area

There are four County park facilities within a one-mile radius of the project site:

- Pepperbrook Park (1701 South Countrywood Avenue, Hacienda Heights, CA 91745)
- Thomas S. Burton Park (16493 East Santa Bianca Drive, Hacienda Heights, CA 91745)
- Countrywood Park (16817 East Cooper Hill Road, Hacienda Heights, CA 91745)
- Peter F. Schabarum Regional County Park (17250 East Colima Road, Rowland Heights, CA 91748)

5.7.2 Thresholds of Significance

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if the project:

- R-1 Would increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.
- R-2 Includes recreational facilities or requires the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

5.7.3 Plans, Programs, and Policies

Regulatory Requirement

- RR REC-1 The applicant for the residential development is required to comply with the Los Angeles County Municipal Code Section 21.24.340, Residential Subdivisions-Local Park Space Obligation-Formula, and pay a fee in lieu of the provision of local park in accordance with provisions of Section 21.28.140.

5.7.4 Environmental Impacts

5.7.4.1 IMPACT ANALYSIS

The following impact analysis addresses thresholds of significance for which the Initial Study disclosed potentially significant impacts. The applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after the impact statement.

Impact 5.7-1: The proposed project would generate additional residents that would increase the use of existing park and recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. [Threshold R-1]

The proposed residential development would increase population in the area, and therefore increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks. However, the required compliance with Los Angeles County Municipal Code Sections 21.24.340 and 21.28.140 would ensure that adequate recreational facilities are provided. Compliance with the regulatory requirements such as the County Municipal Code Sections 21.24.340 and 21.28.140 is required prior to approval of the residential subdivision pursuant to the provisions of the Subdivision Map Act.

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The proposed K-8 school would not use the area parks such as Pepperbrook Park, Thomas S. Burton Park, Countrywood Park, or the Peter F. Schabarum Regional County Park. Instead, the new K-8 school would include two soccer fields and hardcourts, thereby creating recreational value to the community.

Displacement of four baseball fields would require Hacienda Heights Little League to find other baseball fields. It should be noted that Highland Little League of Hacienda Heights originally played at Salto Field in the 1970s. However, when that District property was turned over to the County, baseball could no longer be played there. In April 1978, the Highlander Little League was allowed to access the vacant field owned by the District until a new permanent school is constructed there, which is the current project site. Wedgeworth ES was constructed in the early 1970s as a temporary facility for instruction until a permanent school could be built. However, by mid-1970s, student enrollment declined, and the decision to build a permanent facility was postponed. Therefore, for 40 years, since 1978, the District-owned fields have been used by Highlander Little League at no charge, with the initial understanding that field access would only be allowed until the District decides to build a permanent school facility. The project site is not zoned for public or recreational facilities, and the County's Parks and Recreation Department does not list these baseball fields as part of the County facilities.

The District is coordinating with Hacienda Heights Little League officials to locate replacement baseball fields for the league. Although it is anticipated that the replacement field would be one of the existing District-owned fields, the District has also contacted the County Parks and Recreation Department for alternative options. Some of the County parks with baseball fields that are within 5 miles from the project site include William Steinmetz Park, Allen Martin Park, San Angelo Park, Rimgrove Park, Pathfinder Community Regional Park, and Sunshine Park. In the event that the replacement field is identified as one of the County's facilities, it cannot be guaranteed that regular and adequate maintenance could be provided to ensure that physical deterioration of the existing facility is not accelerated with the additional usage of the fields.

Although the proposed project could increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks and other recreational facilities, the residential portion of the proposed project would be subject to the existing regulations that implement the County's goal of providing adequate recreational facilities for its residents (see RR REC-1). Regular maintenance of the fields would be necessary to reduce impacts related to the accelerated physical deterioration of the County facilities, if one of the County's field is selected as the replacement field. And it is anticipated that maintenance and/or usage fees will be necessary to provide additional maintenance. However, because assessment of such maintenance and/or usage fees for the County facilities cannot be guaranteed by the District, potential impacts to County facilities would be considered significant. Displacement of the existing baseball fields could potentially result in increased park usage at other District-owned or County fields.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: Potentially significant impact.

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Impact 5.7-2: Project implementation would result in environmental impacts to provide new and/or expanded recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. [Threshold R-2]

The new K-8 school would provide various recreational facilities, such as two soccer fields and hardcourts, and the potential environmental impacts associated with construction of these facilities are addressed throughout this EIR. The District is currently working with the Hacienda Heights Little League officials to find a suitable replacement baseball field within the existing District properties. However, displacement of four baseball fields may result in use of the existing County recreational facilities or development of baseball fields elsewhere. Although such a decision has not been made, and addressing such an impact would be considered speculative at this time, construction of a replacement field(s) elsewhere or use of the existing County-owned facilities could result in environmental impacts. While the baseball fields were constructed on the District's surplus lands with understanding that the use of these fields would not be permanent, the proposed project would nevertheless eliminate four existing baseball fields from the community, and relocation of the existing little league baseball team from the baseball fields could result in environmental impacts to provide new and/or expanded recreational facilities.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: Potentially significant impact.

5.7.5 Cumulative Impacts

The area considered for cumulative impacts for recreation is the community of Hacienda Heights. Demand for new recreational facilities is typically generated by population growth. The proposed project would directly increase number of residents in Hacienda Heights through residential development, thereby creating additional demands for recreational facilities in the area. However, as with other development in the unincorporated Count of Los Angeles, the residential subdivision would be required to comply with the County's Municipal Code Section 21.24.340, and pay appropriate park in-lieu fees to provide park facilities elsewhere. Expansion or construction of a public school is not a growth inducing project that could increase population growth, therefore, increasing demands for recreational facilities. However, the proposed elimination of four baseball fields would result in displacement of the existing little league baseball team, necessitating replacement field construction elsewhere which might have an adverse physical impact on the environment or use of the existing baseball fields that could accelerate the physical deterioration of an existing recreational facility elsewhere. Some of the County parks with baseball fields that are within 5 miles from the project site include William Steinmetz Park, Allen Martin Park, San Angelo Park, Rimgrove Park, Pathfinder Community Regional Park, and Sunshine Park. Therefore, the proposed project could have an individually significant recreational facilities impact. The required payment of park fees pursuant to the County's municipal code would be used to provide additional park amenities and reduce physical deterioration of recreational facilities for the residential development and other development in Hacienda Heights. If the replacement baseball field is selected among the County facilities, outside of the District properties, maintenance and/or usage fees could be assessed to reduce impacts from the additional demands. However, because assessment of such maintenance and/or usage fees for the County facilities cannot be guaranteed by the District, potential impacts to County facilities would be considered significant. When combined with other development projects in the County, the individual impact of the proposed project would remain

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significant, and the project's contribution to cumulative park and recreation impacts would also be considered significant and unavoidable.

5.7.6 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Without mitigation, the following impact would be **potentially significant**:

- **Impact 5.7-1** Displacement of the baseball fields could increase the use of other baseball fields or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.
- **Impact 5.7-2:** Displacement of the baseball fields could result in environmental impacts to provide new and/or expanded recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

5.7.7 Mitigation Measures

Impact 5.7-1 and 5.7-2

REC-1 The Hacienda La Puente Unified School District shall work with local baseball organization in identifying a replacement baseball field prior to closing of the existing fields.

5.7.8 Level of Significance After Mitigation

As required under Mitigation Measure REC-1, the District is committed in identifying a replacement baseball field for the Highlander Little League. However, it cannot be guaranteed that a replacement baseball field can be identified despite the coordination effort by the District. It could be that there are no available field use times or policy terms at other existing District facilities that meet the Highland Little League's needs, or it could be that there is not enough funding to construct new fields. In the event that no replacement park can be identified within the existing District facilities, field usage at other area baseball fields could increase, causing accelerated physical deterioration at other local/County facilities. Therefore, this recreational impact would remain significant and unavoidable.

5.7.9 References

Los Angeles, County of. County of Los Angeles Municipal Code.

https://library.municode.com/ca/los_angeles_county/codes/code_of_ordinances

_____. Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation, Find a Park. <https://parks.lacounty.gov/#>

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