

5.14 RECREATION

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) describes and evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed Section 31 Specific Plan Project (“Section 31 Specific Plan” or “Project”) to existing and future parks and recreation facilities that would be available to the Project Site. Since the Project Site is located within the City of Rancho Mirage (City), the potential for adverse impacts to recreational facilities were evaluated based on current facilities and existing usages of recreational parks and facilities in the City and County of Riverside. Please see **Section 9.0** for a glossary of terms, definitions, and acronyms used in this Draft EIR.

A. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

1. Existing Conditions

Regional

The Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District (Riverside County Parks) operate county-wide programs that encourage and provide recreational opportunities, as well as to preserve and protect the region’s natural, cultural, and historical characteristics. Riverside County Parks is broken down into three bureaus: Parks & Resources, Planning & Development, and Business Services.¹

The Parks and Recreation Bureau is responsible for providing an array of recreational activities for the County’s residents, such as aquatic centers, parks and playgrounds, sport complexes, campgrounds, and special events. The Resources Bureau is dedicated to preserving the County’s natural resources, ensuring that these resources are taken into account during planning and construction activities, and to promoting community outreach and educational opportunities. The Business Operations Bureau oversees the operation, administrative, and financials aspects of Riverside County Parks.

Joshua Tree National Park and Mount San Jacinto State Park fall within the Riverside County boundaries. These parks also provide a range of recreational opportunities for the region, such as hiking trails, campgrounds, and fishing. Joshua Tree National Park lies to the northeast of the City with the Little San Bernardino Mountains running through the southwestern portion of the park. Joshua Tree National Park is operated and maintained by the National Park Service, which has the mission to revitalize and conserve the Nation’s natural resources through securing properties. Mount San Jacinto State Park is located to the

1 Riverside County Parks, “About Us,” accessed April 2019, <https://www.rivcoparks.org/about-us/>.

west of the City of Rancho Mirage and encompasses the San Jacinto Mountains – the second highest mountain range in southern California.²

Additionally, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians (Tribe) manages the Indian Canyons, which are located to the south of Palm Springs along the eastern side of the San Jacinto Mountains. The Andreas, Murray, and Palm Canyons make up this area and provide a variety of recreation opportunities for the public, such as hiking, horseback riding, camping, scenic drives, picnicking, and sightseeing. The Indian Canyons hold an important site of ancestral heritage to the Tribe.

The Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District operates high-quality recreational opportunities and the preservation of the County’s natural, cultural, and historical heritage. The County’s eight major parks in and around the Coachella Valley are summarized in **Table 5.14-1: County of Riverside Parks and Recreation Facilities**.

Table 5.14-1
County of Riverside Parks and Recreation Facilities

Facilities	Location	Acres	Features
Lake Cahuilla Recreational Area	18.5 miles southeast of Project Site	1,888	Equestrian facilities/trails, fishing, hiking trails, overnight camping, and swimming facilities
Canal Regional Park	20.1 miles south by southeast of Project Site	369	Picnic facilities, radio control plane field
Coral Mountain Regional Park	18.5 miles southeast of Project Site in La Quinta	600	Under development; planned to include interpretive trails, picnic areas, and a learning center
Mecca Community Park & Community Center	27.1 miles southeast of Project Site	5	Community center, picnic facilities, swimming, sports fields/facilities
Mecca Hills Mini Park	27 miles southeast of Project Site	N/A	Picnic facilities, playground/tot lot
Thousand Palms Park & Community Center	3.3 miles north of Project Site	9	Community center, picnic facilities, playground/tot lot, sports fields/facilities
Desert Regional Park	5 miles south of Project Site	280	Planned
Indio Hills Park	5 miles northeast of Project Site	2,200	Picnic facilities, playground, sports fields, open space

Sources: County of Riverside General Plan Draft EIR, Section 4.16 Parks and Recreation, Table 4-16B: Existing and Proposed Parks and Recreation in Riverside County, February 2014; Desert Recreation District, “Community Fun,” accessed April 2019, <https://myrecreationdistrict.com/community-fun/la-quinta>.

Abbreviation: N/A = not available

² California Department of Parks and Recreation, “Mount San Jacinto State Park,” accessed April 2019, http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=636.

The City provides recreational facilities for its residents and visitors, including golf courses, tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds, hiking trails, and campgrounds and recreational vehicle (RV) parks. The City's Park Master Plan was developed in order to assess the community's local park needs. As summarized in **Table 5.14-2: Park Classification and Service Area Standards**, this Park Master Plan categorizes different parks and trails that are accessible to the local community, including mini-parks, local parks, community parks, and multi-city recreation facilities. An important ingredient in the park needs analysis that supported the Master Plan was the inclusion of park facilities in Palm Desert, Cathedral City, and Indian Wells in recognition of the cross utilization of park and recreation facilities between cities. The City's current and planned future parks are summarized in **Table 5.14-3: City of Rancho Mirage Park and Recreation Facilities**.

**Table 5.14-2
Park Classification and Service Area Standards**

Component	Service Area	Size (acres)	Amount per 1,000 population (acres)	Desirable Uses	Site Characteristics
Mini-Park	N/A	Less than 1 acre	N/A	Playgrounds, city entry features, special purpose open space	Private open space or high-density residential areas
Local Park	1.5-mile radius	5 to 10	0.2	Picnicking, play area, athletic fields and courts	Suited for low residential densities and gated communities
Community Park	5-mile radius	20 to 40 acres	N/A	Multipurpose building, athletic field and courts, picnicking, open space areas	Suited for intense development with safe pedestrian access; intended to be used between multiple cities

Source: City of Rancho Mirage General Plan, Chapter 5: Conservation and Open Space, (November 2017).

Abbreviation: N/A = not available

**Table 5.14-3
City of Rancho Mirage Parks and Recreation Facilities**

Facilities	Location	Acres	Park Category	Features
Rancho Mirage Community Park	San Jacinto Drive along the Whitewater River Channel	8.8	Local Park	Athletic fields and courts, picnic facilities, playground, walking and fitness paths, life-size fire engine, children's play area, 1,000-seat amphitheater
Michael S. Wolfson Park	Da Vall and Frank Sinatra Drive	1.0	Mini-Park	Victorian theme with a Braille-marked trail and fragrance garden and a "Welcome" greeting from Dinah Shore and Frank Sinatra
Richard & Annette Bloch Cancer Survivors Park	Adjacent to City Hall along Highway 111	N/A	Mini-Park	Pyramid kiosk, inspirational plaques, sculptures, ponds, and a hillside waterfall; designed to give cancer survivors hope
Blixseth Mountain Park	East of the Magnesia Storm Channel and Rancho Mirage Elementary School	7.0	Local Park	Native desert landscaping and walking paths
Magnesia Falls Park	North of the Rancho Mirage Elementary School	1.3	Local Park	Playground equipment, shaded areas, picnic tables, and an informal ball field
Rancho Mirage Dog Park	The corner of Key Largo Avenue and Via Vail	4	Local Park	Gated grass areas for large and small dogs, shaded seating areas
Future Park	The corner of Key Largo Avenue and Via Vail	21		Planned
Future Park	The corner of 30th Avenue and Rattler Road	N/A		Planned

*Source: City of Rancho Mirage General Plan, Chapter 5: Conservation and Open Space, Exhibit 11 Parks Master Plan (November 2017).
Abbreviation: N/A = not available*

The State's established Quimby Act authorizes local jurisdictions to adopt standards upon new development for payment of impact fees to fund the maintenance and operation of local parks. The City Municipal Code Section 3.29.140 (Park Improvements Development Impact Fees) establishes park improvement development impact fees and Section 16.18.060 (Parks and Recreation Facilities) establishes parks and recreation fees and dedications. Buildout of the City's 2017 General Plan would not facilitate growth or development beyond the capacity of existing and planned parks to meet forecast demand.³

³ City of Rancho Mirage, *General Plan Update Addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Report*, October 2017.

Bikeways and Trails

The City has numerous bikeways, trails, and golf cart travel access ways all throughout the City. These are implemented as a part of the goals within the Conservation and Open Space Element to meet the active and passive recreation needs of all residents and visitors of the City.

Bicycle facilities are designed according to the Class I, II, and III categories in order to provide a diverse range of bicycle accessibility options for the community and to encourage other modes of transportation to that of the automobile. These paths are designed to maximize safety and ease of use by both bicyclists and pedestrians.

The hiking and equestrian trails are available as additional recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. Numerous unpaved trails, which follow various paths, dirt roads, or utility access routes within the foothills of Santa Rosa Mountains, are available to the public mainly within the Magnesia Falls area. These main trails are named (1) the Butler-Abrams Trail, (2) the Clancy Lane Trail, and (3) the Bighorn Overlook Trail. Protection of the bighorn sheep is balanced with recreational uses of the area as recommended with the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and the Tribal Habitat Conservation Plan. The City's equestrian trails are planned in neighborhoods that allow the keeping of horses. These trails tend to serve as a connection of the equestrian areas with Whitewater Channel and other mountain trails.

Lastly, golf cart travel is a very prominent mode of transportation within the Coachella Valley region for residents to access different neighborhoods, golf courses, and commercial and office facilities. Similar to the City's bike trails, golf cart facilities are categorized as I, II, or III. These paths can either be completely separated from the rest of automobile traffic (Class I) or be designated within automobile traffic under conditional street uses (Class III).

2. Regulatory Setting

State

Quimby Act

Government Code Section 66477, more commonly referred to as the Quimby Act, was enacted by the California legislature in 1965 to provide parks for the growing communities in California. The Quimby Act authorizes cities to adopt ordinances addressing parkland and/or fees for residential subdivisions for the

purpose of providing and preserving open space and recreational facilities and improvements.⁴ The Quimby Act also specifies acceptable uses and expenditures of such funds.

Regional and Local

Rancho Mirage General Plan

The Conservation and Open Space Element of the City's General Plan includes policies related to the parks and recreational services that are needed to support the City and its residents.⁵ The Element states that the City has adopted Quimby Act standards for local parks and have established a ratio of 3 acres per 1,000 residents as a standard for how facilities funding is planned for and implemented.⁶ It defines and establishes goals, policies, and programs toward preserving and effectively managing natural resources in the City of Rancho Mirage. The Element covers issues relating to the City's parks and recreation, biological, energy and mineral, water, and archaeological, and historic resources. These resources contribute to the quality of life for City residents and attract substantial tourism.

Rancho Mirage Municipal Code

In relation to recreational and park resources, the *Rancho Mirage Municipal Code* states various provisions to ensure that these resources are provided in consistency with the Conservation and Open Space Element. Title 3, Chapters 28 and 29 and Title 16, Chapter 18, Section 60 identifies City measures that will provide funding for recreation and park facilities as a result of the increased demand on existing services. For instance, a License Tax is imposed on new construction to collect revenue towards the City's General Fund. Development Impact Fees are used as a mitigation measure to collect additional funds from new development to finance parks and recreational facilities and improvements. Lastly, individual project proponents are required to pay a recreation and park fee in-lieu as a condition of approval for a tentative map.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. Thresholds of Significance

In order to assist in determining whether a project would have a significant effect on the environment, the City finds a project may be deemed to have significant impacts on park and recreational resources, if it would:

4 California Government Code, Sections 66477.

5 City of Rancho Mirage General Plan, Chapter 5: Conservation and Open Space Element, (November 2017).

6 City of Rancho Mirage Municipal Code, Title 3, Chapter 29, sec.140.

Threshold 5.14-1: 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.

Threshold 5.14-2: Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

2. Methodology

An assessment of the impact of the Project on park and recreation facilities in the City is provided below. The Project's assessment is based on City planning standards for park and recreation facilities and the increase in population that would result from the Project.

The potential for cumulative impacts associated with parks and recreation was assessed, based upon consideration of the Project and related projects in the City and its SOI. These related projects are identified in **Section 4.0: Environmental Setting**.

3. Project Design Features

The following Project Design Features (PDFs) are incorporated into the Project and would substantially reduce potential park and recreational impacts.

PDF 5.14-1: The Section 31 Specific Plan establishes open space requirements of 100 sq. ft. per unit for mixed-use residential development and 170 sq. ft. of combined private and common open space for multifamily residential buildings. A total of approximately 95 acres of open space in addition to the Grand Oasis lagoon will be provided on site. Open space requirements will be met through a combination of land dedication, improvements, private recreation, and in-lieu fees. The following parks and recreation aspects shall be included within the Project Site:

- Grand Oasis lagoon and promenade
- Landscaped edges
- Pedestrian trails
- Bicycle trails
- Golf cart linkages
- Neighborhood parks
- Water features

- Beaches
- Community club houses/pools/spas, plazas, courtyards, jogging paths

PDF 5.14-2: Parks developed within the Project Site will complement the natural desert environment of the Coachella Valley through the use of drought tolerant plants detailed in the Section 31 Specific Plan, Chapter 2, Section 2.5: Landscape.

4. Project Impacts

Threshold 5.14-1: *Would the project 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?*

The Project would develop up to 1,932 residential dwelling units that would generate approximately 3,913 residents⁷ within the Project Site. Approximately 95 acres of open space in addition to the Grand Oasis would be provided within the Project Site for private parks and open space. As the Project Site is located within the City, it would have direct impacts to the City's recreational and park facilities.

This increase in population would incrementally increase the demand of existing neighborhood and community parks in Rancho Mirage as well as within the Cove Communities. This increased demand placed on recreational on park facilities would be met through a combination of on-site improvements, private recreation, and payment of fees to the City. As the Project Site is entirely within the City's jurisdiction, the developer will pay the City's in-lieu parkland fee, as identified by Mitigation Measure **MM 5.13-1**, subject to partial credit for the public and private recreational facilities constructed on the Project Site. Implementation of **MM 5.13-1** would mitigate potential impacts to City parks and recreation facilities. Accordingly, impacts would be less than significant.

Parkland within the Project Site would complement the natural desert context of the Coachella Valley and would incorporate public art and water features combined with enhanced vegetation providing recreational opportunities within the development, as identified in PDF 5.14-2.

The Project would provide an extensive private parks and open space component of approximately 95 acres, in addition to the Grand Oasis lagoon. The Project would consist of a combination of neighborhood parks, trail linkages, water features, clubhouses, plazas, courtyards, jogging paths, and beaches as identified in PDF 5.14-1. The nature of development within the Project would be a master planned

⁷ Average residential household size in the City of Rancho Mirage is 2.025 persons. 1,932 dwelling units x 2.025 persons per dwelling unit = 3,913 residents.

community that would have a variety of private streets and recreational open space available to onsite residents, as well as the general public for a nominal fee.

Open space and landscaping would be used to provide people with places to sit, relax, and gather. This incorporation of parkland and recreational amenities within the Project Site would minimize the demand of the future on-site residents on the City's existing parks and recreational facilities. The recreational amenities are integrated into the design of the Project and would be constructed consistent with City guidelines; therefore, impacts are considered to be less than significant.

Threshold 5.14-2: Would the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

The Project would include recreational amenities throughout the development which would consist of neighborhood parks, trail linkages, water features, clubhouses, plazas, courtyards, jogging paths, and beaches. These recreational amenities are incorporated into the design of the Project and would be constructed concurrently with the Project. The short-term impacts, applicable Project Design Features, and Mitigation Measures associated with the construction of these facilities are addressed in **Sections 5.2: Air Quality; 5.5: Energy, 5.6: Geology and Soils; 5.7: Greenhouse Gas Emissions; 5.8: Hazards and Hazardous Materials; 5.9: Hydrology and Water Quality; 5.11: Noise; and 5.14: Traffic and Transportation** of this Draft EIR. Construction of the recreational amenities would not result in significant impacts, but would contribute to the overall construction impacts. As described in the Draft EIR sections listed above, impacts would be less than significant.

5. Cumulative Impacts

Implementation of the Project and related projects, along with the buildout of the City and County of Riverside General Plans and the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation (Reservation), would increase the use of existing recreational facilities in the City, County, and Reservation. This increase in population would put an additional demand on the existing parks and recreational facilities that serve the City, County, and the Reservation. All of these projects would be subject to development impact fees, and developer in-lieu fees, or their equivalent, as established in the City's Municipal Code, and by the County and Reservation. Development of the related projects would not demand any unanticipated construction or expansion of park and recreational facilities within the City, County, or Reservation as those amenities would be incorporated within each Project design, and in each jurisdiction's General Plan. As noted above, the planned future parks in the City are adequate to serve full buildout of the City. Therefore, the cumulative impacts on parks and recreation would be less than significant.

C. MITIGATION MEASURES

In addition to the PDFs identified in *Chapter B.3*, the following Mitigation Measure has been identified to mitigate parks and recreation impacts:

MM 5.14-1: Prior to the issuance of building permits, individual project proponents shall pay applicable in-lieu parkland fees, or equivalent, to ensure adequate funding for parks and recreation improvements, as specified in the Development Agreement.

D. LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Mitigation Measure **MM 5.14-1** requires payment of in-lieu parkland fees, or their equivalent, to minimize the Project's impact on parks and recreation land and facilities within the City. Therefore, payment of these fees and **PDF 5.14-1** and **PDF 5.14-2** would result in less than significant impacts to existing and future parks and recreational facilities. Cumulative impacts would similarly be less than significant.