

3.1.8 Recreation

This section addresses the potential recreation impacts associated with implementation of The Villages – Escondido Country Club Project (Project).

3.1.8.1 Existing Conditions

3.1.8.1.1 Environmental Setting

The Project site is privately owned land consisting of an abandoned 18-hole golf course. Development on the site consists of concrete paved golf cart paths, several shallow lakes, six wells, a bathroom facility, and a clubhouse with associated pool, tennis court, asphalt-paved parking lot, and other hardscape improvements. The site is surrounded by single-family residential homes and multi-family condominium units at varying densities.

The City of Escondido (City) provides recreational areas and facilities in the areas surrounding the Project site, as described below.

City Recreational Facilities

The City maintains 15 parks, which range in size from small urban neighborhood recreation areas to the over 3,000-acre Daley Ranch open space preserve. Amenities range from amphitheaters and ballfields and swimming pools to campgrounds and hiking opportunities. A full description of the facilities available at each park is available in the City's Park Directory and Park Map (City of Escondido 2016a). Three of the largest recreation facilities—Lake Wohlford, Dixon Lake, and Daley Ranch—are located in the far northeastern corner of Escondido and are operated by the City's Lakes Division. Together, these large facilities offer a range of active and passive recreation opportunities, including camping and picnic areas, as well as many trails for hiking, mountain bike, and equestrian use. In addition, both of the lakes described above offer a range of water-based recreation opportunities and are popular recreation destinations for local residents and visitors.

Local Parks

Local parks include neighborhood parks, community parks, and urban parks. The *City of Escondido General Plan* (General Plan; City of Escondido 2012) calls for a minimum of 5.9 acres of developed active Neighborhood, Community, and Urban parks in addition to 5.9 acres of passive park land/open space for habitat preservation and additional recreational opportunities totaling 11.8 active and passive acres per 1,000 dwelling units. The following discussion identifies existing local parks within 2 miles of the Project area.

El Norte Park

El Norte Park extends from El Norte Parkway to Stanley Way, and is a 2.5-acre park with children's play areas, picnic tables, barbecues, and an open turf area.

Jesmond Dene Park

Jesmond Dene Park, located at the intersection of North Broadway and Jesmond Dene Road, is named after the community of Jesmond Dene. The City of Escondido acquired the 35-acre park site in 1978. Jesmond Dene Park features 16 developed acres, two lighted Little League fields, one unlighted baseball field, concession stands, picnic tables, barbecues, playground, and restrooms.

Rod McLeod Park

Rod McLeod Park is one of the higher points of land in the northwest portion of the Project area and affords good views of the City's downtown area to the south and surrounding countryside to the north. Rod McLeod Park features 18 developed acres, picnic tables, a tot lot, restrooms, and playgrounds.

Mulberry Park

Mulberry Park is a 3.87-acre park that contains a tot lot, water "Sprayground," picnic tables, open play grass area, restrooms, and playgrounds.

Helen Bougher Memorial Park

Helen Bougher Park in San Marcos features the All Veterans Memorial. The park is located at the corner of Woodland Parkway and Borden Road. The City of San Marcos provides park space and ongoing maintenance of the site.

Woodland Park

Woodland Park is an 11-acre park located in the City of San Marcos. Woodland Park currently contains community buildings, public pools, tennis courts, kiosk, picnic tables, barbecues, picnic shelter, benches, turf play area, tot-lot, on-site caretaker, and a community garden.

Hollandia Park

Hollandia Park is a public 30-acre park. Hollandia Park's primary components include two baseball fields, two soccer fields, tennis courts, skate park, adventure playground, parking lots, amphitheater, caretaker residence, public restrooms, and other streetscape and landscape site amenities.

Walnut Grove Park

Walnut Grove Park is a 39-acre park located in the City of San Marcos. Walnut Grove Park contains barbecues, community building, equestrian facilities, an on-site caretaker, permanent restrooms, picnic shelter, picnic tables, soccer field (unlighted), turf play, large grass open play area, two horse arenas, picnic shelters, two tot lots, and Williams Barn. The barn has assembly style seating (capacity 270), dining capacity of 170, a pecan wood dance floor, a kitchenette, and a large covered patio.

Other Recreational Facilities

The following section describes recreational facilities, other than parks, which are available throughout the City of Escondido.

City of Escondido Trails

Trails provide a linkage between parks and open space within the Project area. The *Master Plan for Parks, Trails, and Open Space* classifies trails within the City of Escondido into three trail types: urban, spur, and rural (City of Escondido 1999). Urban trails pass through the central core and suburban neighborhoods of the City of Escondido and have been coordinated with bike routes. Rural trails extend out into the less developed countryside. Spur trails connect the urban to the rural trails.

Golf Courses

The City developed its first municipal golf course in 1993, located east of Kit Carson Park (The Vineyard at Escondido) at the southeast corner of Bear Valley Parkway and San Pasqual Road. Within the City of Escondido, there are currently seven golf courses. Of the seven courses, two are municipal courses (Reidy Creek Golf Course and Vineyard at Escondido) and the rest are public courses (Eagle Crest Golf Club, Boulder Oaks Golf Club, Welk Resort San Diego Fountain Course, Welk Resort San Diego Oaks Course, and Castle Creek Country Club).

The Project site was formerly the Escondido Country Club golf course. Throughout its existence, the Escondido Country Club golf course experienced financial distress, which resulted in the property being purchased by a private residential developer in 2012. The golf course ceased operations in April 2013.

Equestrian Facilities

Private equestrian facilities operate in San Pasqual Valley, Eden Valley, Harmony Grove, North Broadway and Jesmond Dene areas, and adjacent communities. Limited equestrian staging

facilities have been incorporated into the trails system identified in the *Master Plan for Parks, Trails, and Open Space* to ensure that horseback riders have access to the system. Currently, equestrian access is provided by staging areas and multi-use trails in Daley Ranch.

3.1.8.1.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal

National Trails System Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-543)

The National Trails System Act instituted a nationwide system of interstate riding and hiking trails. At the state level, the California Department of Parks and Recreation has prepared the *California Recreational Trails Plan*. Federal and state governments realize the importance of preserving and developing new riding and hiking trails and adopted this legislation to protect existing trails and provide for new trails and related facilities.

State

California Department of Parks and Recreation

The California Department of Parks and Recreation manages 280 park units that protect and preserve a collection of culturally and environmentally sensitive areas. The department is responsible for almost one-third of California's scenic coastline, coastal wetlands, estuaries, beaches, and dune systems, in addition to wilderness areas, terrestrial reserves, and historical structures. It also manages nearly 1.59 million acres, with over 340 miles of coastline; 970 miles of lake, reservoir, and river frontage; 15,000 campsites; and 4,500 miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails (California DPR 2015 and 2016). The legal charter of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, as required by the California Public Resources Code and the California Code of Regulations, among others, calls for it to “administer, protect, provide for recreational opportunity, and develop the State Park System; to interpret the values of the State Park System to the public; to operate the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Program; to administer the California Historical Resources Protection Program; and to administer federal and state grants and bonds to local agencies.”

California Environmental Quality Act

Primary environmental legislation in California is found in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and its implementing guidelines (CEQA Guidelines), which require that projects with potential adverse effects (or impacts) on the environment undergo environmental review. Adverse environmental impacts are typically mitigated as a result of the environmental review process in accordance with existing laws and regulations.

Quimby Act

Cities and counties have been authorized since the passage of the 1975 Quimby Act (California Government Code, Section 66477) to pass ordinances requiring that developers set aside land, donate conservation easements, or pay fees for park improvements. Revenues generated through the Quimby Act cannot be used for the operation and maintenance of park facilities. The goal of the Quimby Act is to require developers to help mitigate the impacts of property improvements. The act gives authority for passage of land dedication ordinances only to cities and counties. Special districts must work with cities and/or counties to receive parkland dedication and/or in-lieu fees. The fees must be paid and land conveyed directly to the local public agencies that provide park and recreational services communitywide.

Landscaping and Lighting Act

The Landscaping and Lighting Act (California Streets and Highways Code, Section 22500 et seq.) enables cities, counties, and special districts to acquire land for parks, recreation, and open space. A local government may also use the assessments to pay for improvements and maintenance to these areas. In addition to local government agencies (i.e., counties and cities), park and recreation facilities may be provided by other public agencies, such as community service districts, park and recreation districts, etc. If so empowered, such an agency may acquire, develop, and operate recreational facilities for the general public.

Local

City of Escondido General Plan

Community Health and Services Element

2. Parks and Recreation Policies

Goal 2: A complete system of park and recreational facilities and programs to serve all users.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.1: Regularly review and update park standards, facility plans and improvements, recreation services, funding programs, and other pertinent components of the Parks Master Plan.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.2: Provide an adequate system of neighborhood, community, urban, and regional parks and related recreational facilities/services for incorporation into the open space system.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.3: Provide a minimum of 5.9 acres of developed active Neighborhood, Community, and Urban parks in addition to 5.9 acres of passive park land/open space for habitat preservation and additional recreational opportunities totaling 11.8 active and passive acres per 1,000 dwelling units. School playground areas can be included as park acreage if these facilities are approved by the school district(s) and open to the public as determined by the City Council.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.4: Require new residential development to contribute fees to finance acquisition and development of park and recreational facilities in compliance with the standards stipulated by Parks and Recreation Policy 2.3. Allow credit for the on-site dedication of land or facilities to be used for public park purposes, consistent with city standards.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.5: Design and construct Urban, Neighborhood, Community, and Regional Parks consistent with the standards and guidelines in Figures V-4 and V-5 [of the General Plan].

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.6: Maintain a minimum of two (2) community centers and consider opportunities for additional centers commensurate with population growth to accommodate specialized recreational functions, the recreational needs of special populations, and/or indoor recreational activities that include, but are not limited to:

- a. Swimming pools;
- b. Lighted or unlighted athletic facilities;
- c. Classrooms, meeting rooms, etc.;
- d. Facilities for child care, teens, and seniors;
- e. Branch libraries;
- f. Golf courses;¹
- g. Community gardens; and
- h. Equestrian centers.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.7: Consider the provision of development incentives for private commercial, office, and other non-residential

¹ In the General Plan, the last three list items (f, g, and h in this document) appear as h, i, and j; there is no item f.

developments to provide onsite usable open space that is accessible to the public such as green rooftop parks, public plazas, and pedestrian trails.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.8: Require no net loss of total park acreage or facilities for property purchased for use as a public park that is subsequently redeveloped for another use. Require that all revenues generated from the sale of the park land be used for park development.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.9: Consider the development of vacant and underutilized city lands as potential sites for parks and recreational facilities.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.10: Prioritize park acquisition in areas with the greatest need, including the northern expansion of Grape Day Park, and in urban areas within a reasonable walking distance from transit.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.21: Evaluate all development proposals larger than 5 acres for appropriateness of public park land dedication.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.22: Consider private dedication of land for use as a public park as part of a planned development, if the proposed site meets city criteria.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.25: Require park or recreation facilities constructed as part of a private development and intended solely for use by its residents to be considered a private park.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.26: Consider alternate uses of public and private golf courses.

Parks and Recreation Policy 2.27: Incorporate energy and water efficient land development and maintenance practices, including the use of drought tolerant landscaping and reclaimed irrigation, in the design, development and operation of public parks and open space areas as appropriate (City of Escondido 2012).

City of Escondido Development Fees

Park Fee

Purpose: To ensure that the City's established park land and recreational facility standards are met with respect to the additional needs created by such development.

Applicable to: Residential projects only.

Fee Amount: \$4,129 per dwelling unit (City of Escondido 2016b).

3.1.8.2 Analysis of Project Effects and Determination as to Significance

3.1.8.2.1 Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

For purposes of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR), Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR 15000 et seq.) will apply to the direct, indirect, and cumulative impact analyses. A significant impact to recreation would result if the Project would:

- A. 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.
- B. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

3.1.8.2.2 Analysis

- A. ***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 closest parks to the Project site include Helen Bougher Memorial Park, Woodland Park, Jesmond Dene Park, and Hollandia Park, located approximately 0.3, 0.6, 1.05, and 1.15 miles away, respectively. The Project would replace an abandoned golf course and would result in an increase of approximately 392 single-family dwelling units in the City and provide approximately 48 acres of open space. The Project incorporates an extensive Open Space System that includes approximately 4 miles of walking trails, a series of pocket parks, and environmental drainage/landscape features that act as buffers. The greenbelt, which includes a series of pocket parks along the 4 miles of meandering trails that interconnect the three proposed residential villages, would contain approximately 29 acres. The walking trails and pocket parks would be open to the surrounding neighborhoods and the Escondido Country Club Community. The Project's recreational facilities would be privately developed and maintained; however, they are available for public use. More intensive active recreational facilities, including a gym, swimming pool, and tennis/pickle ball court(s), would be located on site in close proximity to the new Clubhouse. These private facilities would be available to the new residents that purchase homes and to nearby residents that choose to purchase membership in the Clubhouse.

Pursuant to the City's General Plan requirement as stated in Section 3.1.8.1.2, Regulatory Setting, the City requires 11.8 active and passive recreation acres per 1,000 dwelling units. The

Project would provide a total of 29 acres of greenbelt that includes parkland along a 4-mile-long walking trail system, which would count toward this requirement. Additionally, the developer would be required to pay the City's park fee of \$4,129 per dwelling unit, minus the eligible parkland provided on site by the Project. This payment of \$1,618,568 would ensure that the City's established park land and recreational facility standards are met with respect to the additional needs created by the development. Due to the payment of the park fees and the development of on-site open space and recreation areas, increase in the use of existing neighborhood parks is not expected to result in substantial deterioration or adverse effects to the existing parks. Therefore, impacts would be **less than significant**.

B. 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 includes construction of a clubhouse, a greenbelt, open space areas, and additional recreational facilities. The developer would also be required to pay the City's park fee of \$4,129 per dwelling unit, which would ensure that the park land and recreational facility standards established by the City are met with respect to the additional needs created by the development. Thus, construction of the Project would not require the construction or expansion of existing recreational facilities. Therefore, impacts would be **less than significant**.

3.1.8.3 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The geographic scope of the cumulative impact analysis for recreational facilities is limited to those projects within the City limits (see Figure 1-10, Cumulative Projects, and Table 1-3, Cumulative Projects, in Chapter 1, Project Description, of this EIR). Cumulative projects in the City of Escondido would have the potential to result in a significant cumulative impact if they would, in combination, result in the deterioration of parks and recreational facilities due to increased usage or necessitate the construction of new parks or recreational facilities. Some cumulative projects would have the potential to increase the demand for recreational facilities, which could result in deterioration of existing facilities. These cumulative projects include Latitude II (112 units), Veterans Village (48 units), Oak Creek (65 single-family residential lots), SUB 15-0002 (55 single-family residential lots), Pradera (70 single-family residential lots), and PHG 15-0009 (33 affordable units). However, the deterioration that would occur to parks and recreational facilities from regional population growth would be partially offset with funding from new development such as in-lieu fees for parks or donation of parkland pursuant to the Quimby Act. Each residential project within the City would be required to pay the City's park fee of \$4,129 per unit. The Project would provide park facilities and open space that would be adequate to meet the needs of its residents and would also pay the City's park fee of \$4,129 per residential unit. Therefore, residents of the Project

would not overburden existing park and recreation resources or planned park and recreation resources needed to serve future growth.

Only residential cumulative projects would create demand for recreational facilities. All past, present, and future residential projects in the surrounding area would be required to provide parkland or pay fees to the City. If each cumulative project was not able to provide park land, then payment of the City's park fee would ensure that the City's established park land and recreational facility standards are met with respect to the additional needs created by individual developments. In addition, the majority of cumulative projects would be required to demonstrate compliance with CEQA prior to Project approval, which would help ensure that potential environmental impacts are adequately addressed at the Project level, thereby minimizing the potential for cumulative impacts.

Furthermore, the Project includes amenities such as a gym, swimming pool, and tennis/pickle ball court for use by residents and guests. Due to the availability of existing recreational facilities, payment of the City's park fee, and the provided Project amenities, implementation of the Project in conjunction with cumulative projects would not cause a substantial increase in use on existing facilities. Impacts **would not be cumulatively considerable**.

3.1.8.4 Conclusion

Payment of the City's park fee and construction of new recreational facilities associated with the Project would ensure that recreational facilities throughout the City are adequately supported. Furthermore, it is anticipated that residents would mainly use the new recreational facilities associated with the Project, thus lessening the deterioration of City-wide recreational facilities. As such, all impacts associated with recreational facilities would be less than significant.