
IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS
J. RECREATION

This section describes the existing condition of the proposed project area with respect to recreation and the availability of parks and recreational facilities that serve the community surrounding the project site and addresses the potential impacts that the proposed project would have on these facilities. This section also evaluates the consistency of the proposed project with applicable policies and recommendations of the Recreation and Community Services Element of the City's General Plan and the Community Sport Facilities Inventory and Needs Assessment for the City of Huntington Beach.

1. APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

a. City of Huntington Beach General Plan

The Recreation and Community Services Element of the City's General Plan defines goals, objectives, and policies for the provision of recreational amenities to serve residents of the City. The goals of the Recreation and Community Services Element that are relevant to the project site and/or the proposed project are:

RCS 2: Provide adequately-sized and -located active and passive parklands to meet the recreational needs of existing and future residents, and preserve natural resources within the City of Huntington Beach and its sphere of influence.

RCS 3: Develop park sites to provide diverse recreational and sports facilities that meet the residents' and visitors' active and passive recreational needs.

RCS 5: Provide parks and other open space areas that are efficiently designed to maximize use while providing cost-efficient maintenance and operations.

The specific policies of the Recreation and Community Services Element that are relevant to the project site and/or the proposed project are:

RCS 2.1.1: Maintain the current park per capita ratio of 5.0 acres per 1,000 persons, which includes the beach in the calculation.⁴⁰

RCS 3.1.4: Provide a balance between community needs and public financing constraints.

RSC 5.1.1: Review the parks and recreation facilities relationship to the local schools. The review should include:

- a. the concept of providing both school and recreation facilities and park facilities at the same site;
- b. information submitted by the school districts regarding the financial and fiscal impacts to the school districts in preserving closed schools for park purposes without adequate compensation to the school districts;
- c. the determination of each school's contribution in providing recreational opportunities to the neighborhood; and
- d. the identification of an "alternative" plan to provide the recreational opportunities in the event of a school closure.

Refer to Section IV.F., Land Use and Planning, for a discussion of relevant policies related to open space and conservation.

b. City of Huntington Beach Community Sport Facilities Inventory and Needs Assessment

The Community Sport Facilities Inventory and Needs Assessment was commissioned by the City of Huntington Beach, the Ocean View School District (OVSD), the Huntington Beach City School District, the Huntington Beach Union High School District, the Fountain Valley School District, and the Westminster School District.⁴¹ The Assessment is intended to provide an understanding of the sports facility issues facing the City of Huntington Beach, the various school districts which have facilities in Huntington Beach and the Huntington Beach youth sports organizations that utilize the facilities. Issues identified in the study include the City's need to provide additional parkland for its current and future citizens; the school district's need, in some cases, to sell or lease closed school sites, which may mean losing or relocating existing

⁴⁰ *The standard of five acres per 1,000 residents does not include all school property that is available for recreation by the general public, including the vast majority of youth sports groups*

⁴¹ *Community Sport Facilities Inventory and Needs Assessment prepared by the City of Huntington Beach Community Services Department and Save Our Kids, 2001.*

recreational amenities; and the youth sports organizations' need to accommodate their increasing enrollment. The Assessment includes recommendations that provide possible solutions to meeting the needs of the City, school districts and the youth sports organizations. The recommendations were developed based on consideration of: 1) the City's change in practice from requiring neighborhood parks in the school/park quarter section concept to concentrating on centralized facilities; 2) current estimated population plus a projected 9.8 percent population increase by the year 2010; 3) City and school districts financial situations; and 4) the lack of available parkland to meet the increased need for active sports fields. Policy recommendations within the Assessment that are pertinent to the proposed project include:

Recommendation No. 2: If closed schools were developed with other than school uses, there should be a requirement to mitigate the loss of recreation open space (sports fields) by providing replacement space either on-site or off-site.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

a. Existing Recreational Facilities

The City of Huntington Beach operates parks and recreation facilities in the project vicinity. Park and recreational assets in the City of Huntington Beach include parks, clubhouses, community centers, beach-related facilities, an art center, a City gym and pool, a senior center, a beach maintenance facility and special use assets (e.g., a pier, a golf course, a dog park, an amphitheater, an equestrian center, etc).⁴² These park and recreational assets comprise 906.7 acres. The 69 parks within the City occupy 803.6 acres, while non-park buildings occupy 4.6 acres and non-park special uses assets, which primarily consist of the Meadowlark Golf Course, occupy 98.5 acres.⁴³

The 69 parks in the City consist of 9 mini parks, 48 neighborhood parks, 9 community parks, and 3 regional parks, which include City-owned and City-leased beaches. Mini parks are less than two acres in size and serve the Huntington Harbor and Seacliff areas.⁴⁴ Neighborhood parks consist of two to five acres and have been traditionally located next to a school. Community parks consist of ten to forty acres and provide for lighted active uses, such as softball, tennis, and tot lots, etc. Regional parks consist of 40 to 400 acres and include

⁴² *City of Huntington Beach Park Strategy and Fee Nexus Study, Final Report, prepared by Pulse Marketing, December 2001.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *City of Huntington Beach Community Sport Facilities Inventory and Needs Assessment, Prepared by City of Huntington Beach Community Services Department and Save Our Kids, 2001 .*

specialized facilities such as lakes, equestrian facilities, libraries, nature centers, open turf areas, etc.

Residential neighborhoods throughout the City are structured as quarter sections generally defined by a one-mile arterial grid and often focused on open space consisting of a school and park combination. Since the early 1950s, the city and school districts have been developing recreational open space in the school/park scenario within the City's quarter section neighborhoods. The combination of schools and parks was mutually beneficial because the City gained parkland, the school districts gained park facilities for school use, and the youth sports organizations gained recreational field space. However, the reduction in the school age population during the late 1970s and 1980s in certain areas of the City in addition to budget constraints forced the school districts to close many schools. Financial constraints continue to create a need for school districts to sell or lease closed school sites. As a result, existing open space and recreational facilities used by youth sports organizations and the surrounding community may be lost.⁴⁵ In addition, the growing youth sports participation together with the increased demand for year-round sports will further reduce the availability of sports fields.⁴⁶

The City of Huntington Beach General Plan has established a "parkland to population" ratio of five acres per 1,000 residents. Based on the City of Huntington Beach Park Strategy and Fee Nexus Study, the current population estimates of 190,746 together with the planning standard of 5.0 acres per 1,000 population results in an existing parkland requirement of 955.0 acres. As stated above, when including City-owned and City-leased beaches, the Meadowlark Golf Course and the acreage associated with non-park buildings, the City's existing parkland acreage totals 906.7 acres. Therefore, based on the City's standard, a deficit of 48.3 acres of parkland exists in the City. In addition, without any acquisitions of parkland and considering an anticipated population of 193,413 in 2006, the City's parkland deficit would be expected to increase to 58.3 acres by 2006.

The City, school districts, and youth sports organizations have created an informal partnership in the use of open space for recreational and youth sports activities on school property throughout the City. The informal partnership between the City, school districts, and youth sports organizations has resulted in the establishment of approximately 99 percent of all youth sport facilities on school property. Area A of the project site consists of the former Rancho View Elementary School property which contains six fields currently being used by youth sports organizations for Ocean View Little League baseball.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

As indicated in the *Community Sport Facilities Inventory and Needs Assessment*, the project site is located in Area 11 of the “Regional Parks & Beaches Map”. Area 11 is generally bounded by Heil Avenue to the north, Warner Avenue to the south, Magnolia Street to the east, and Beach Boulevard to the west. Based on the *Community Sport Facilities Inventory and Needs Assessment*, Area 11 population is approximately 3,853 and based on the City’s standard of five acres per 1,000 residents requires 19.3 acres of parkland. As indicated in Table IV.J-1 on page 212, Area 11 currently includes three park and recreational facilities comprised of one city park and two school facilities. These three facilities include Pleasant View Park and Pleasant View School recreational facilities to the east of the project site and Rancho View School recreational facilities within the project site. Together, these facilities provide a total of 14.4 acres of open space and recreational uses within Area A. When excluding the recreational open space acreage associated with Pleasant View and Rancho View Schools that is not classified as parkland, Area 11 contains only 2.0 acres of parkland. As a result, Area 11 has an existing shortfall of 17.3 acres of parkland.

Additional neighborhood parks located in the adjacent quarter sections to the site include Lake View Park to the south and Oak View Center Park to the east. However, these parks provide minimal service to the project site since park users would be required to cross major arterials, Beach Boulevard to the west, Warner Avenue to the south, and Newland Street to the east, in order to access these parks. Area 11 is also served by Murdy Community Park, which is located approximately two miles from this quarter section and provides active recreation facilities and a recreation center. Murdy Recreation Center and Park provides a wide variety of recreation classes, sports leagues, and amenities.⁴⁷

The OVSD and the City of Huntington Beach have entered into an Agreement to relocate the Ocean View Little League fields to Park View, a closed OVSD school site, and to the adjacent Murdy Park. This Agreement will provide for the relocation of the six Ocean View Little League practice fields as well as accommodations for soccer and other sports.⁴⁸

3. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

a. Significance Threshold

A significant impact would be identified if the proposed project would:

⁴⁷ *Written communication, Dave Dominguez, Senior Recreation Supervisor – Development, City of Huntington Beach, August 23, 2000.*

⁴⁸ *Agreement Between the City of Huntington Beach and the Ocean View School District, September 5, 2000.*

Table IV.J-1**PARKS LOCATED WITHIN AREA 11 OF THE CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH**

Facility	Acres	Features
Pleasant View Park	2.0 acres	Picnic facilities and a children's play area
Pleasant View School	6.4 acres	Open space with three baseball/softball fields, two volleyball courts and two soccer/field hockey fields
Rancho View School	6.0 acres	Open space with three baseball fields, three softball/Little League fields, four basketball courts and one volleyball court

Source: City of Huntington Beach Community Sport Facilities Inventory and Needs Assessment, 2001

- Be inconsistent with adopted plans and policies;
- Result in the loss of the established recreational uses of the project site; or
- Result in the loss of open space for recreational use on the project site.

b. Project Level Impacts

The analysis is based on two types of recreational impacts: 1) loss of open space/parkland and 2) loss of organized recreation opportunities. This analysis also evaluates the project's consistency with applicable City plans and policies related to recreation.

(1) Impacts Associated with Loss of Open Space and Recreational Opportunities

As indicated above, the project site contains approximately six acres used by the Ocean View Little League. Development of the proposed project would replace the former school buildings and approximately six acres of open space/recreation area with the Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse buildings, a restaurant, and associated parking. This would result in the loss of the athletic fields and the open space area for passive recreational uses. The loss of community recreation sports fields for organized recreational opportunities, including the Ocean View Little League, is considered a significant impact of the proposed project. As indicated above, the OVSD and the City of Huntington Beach have entered into an Agreement to relocate the Ocean View Little League fields to Park View/Murdy Park. Therefore, the recreational activities that would be displaced by the project would be provided for at an alternative location. Implementation of this agreement together with Mitigation Measure R-1 provided below would reduce potential impacts associated with the loss of recreation uses to less than significant levels.

The elimination of six acres of grass fields on the project site would result in the loss of open space that can be used for non-organized recreational activities or serve as passive open space. The loss of open space for recreational use on both a local and City level resulting from

implementation of the proposed project would be considered a significant impact. Please refer to Section IV.F., Land Use and Planning, for a detailed discussion of this potential impact.

Development of the project would not result in a loss of parkland since the City does not classify the open space and recreation area within the project site as parkland. Therefore, impacts associated with the loss of parkland would not occur.

The proposed project does not include residential development and therefore, would not result in a direct demand for open space and recreational facilities. Although the project would result in an increase of on-site employees, it is anticipated that if individual employees utilize the City's organized recreational activities in the evenings, such use would only occur as space is available. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not substantially increase the demand for local parks and recreational facilities, and impacts would be less than significant.

c. Impacts Associated with Consistency with Applicable Plans and Policies

The following is an overall assessment of the proposed project's consistency with the applicable goals, policies, and implementation programs of the Recreation and Community Services Element of the City's General Plan. This section also evaluates the consistency of the proposed project with the recommendations included in the *Community Sport Facilities Inventory and Needs Assessment*.

As indicated above, the Recreation and Community Services Element of the City's General Plan contains several goals and policies that are relevant to the proposed project. Although the development of the proposed project would result in the loss of six acres which function as open space/parkland, the project site is not classified as City parkland and is not under control of the City. On March 28, 1997, OVSD sent a notice to the City in accordance with Government Code Section 64502c, indicating that the Rancho View School site was available for purchase. The City was given the first right of refusal to purchase the Rancho View Elementary School site from the OVSD. Based on a review of the project site, the City's recreation needs, the estimated acquisition cost, and the cost of maintaining the site as open space, the City declined the purchase of the property. Since the City does not have control of the site and the site is not classified by the City as parkland, implementation of the proposed project would not be inconsistent with the City's General Plan goals identified above that relate to preservation of active and passive parkland, development of park sites or provision of parks and other open space areas that are efficiently designed (Goals RCS 2, RCS 3 and RCS 5). In addition, since the project site does not include parkland, implementation of the project would not conflict with the policy to maintain a park per capita ratio of 5 acres per 1,000 persons (Policy RCS 2.1.1). Finally, as the existing ball fields would be relocated to Parkview School/Murdy Park through an agreement between the City and District OVSD, implementation

of the project would be consistent with the City's policy to provide a balance between community needs and public financing constraints (Policy RCS 3.1.4) and the City's policy to identify an alternative plan to provide the recreational opportunities in the event of a school closure (Policy RSC 5.1.1). Therefore, impacts associated with inconsistency with the City's goals and policies regarding recreation would be less than significant.

Implementation of the project would result in an inconsistency with the City's goals and policies regarding preservation of open space areas within the City. Please refer to Section IV.F., Land Use and Planning, for a detailed discussion of this potential impact.

d. Program Level Impacts

Future development of Area B1 would not displace any parkland, open space or recreation area. Future development would be comprised of commercial square footage, including office, retail, and restaurant space. Such development would result in an increase in employees on the project site but would not increase the direct demand for open space and recreational facilities. In fact, nine residential units would be removed, potentially reducing the demand for parkland, open space and recreational opportunities. Therefore, the future development of Area B1 would not result in impacts associated with the loss or demand for parkland, open space or recreational opportunities. Accordingly, future development of Area B1 is not anticipated to result in inconsistencies with the goals and policies of the Recreation and Community Services Element.

4. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Development of several of the related projects identified in Section III.B would result in the provision of additional recreational uses within the City. However without mitigation, development of the proposed project together with the recently constructed Wal Mart project would result in significant cumulative impacts associated with the loss of existing recreational uses. In addition, development of the project together with the recently constructed Wal Mart project would result in significant impacts associated with the loss of open space. However, development of the project and related projects would not result in significant cumulative impacts associated with the loss of parkland as classified by the City.

5. STANDARD CITY POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

There are no standard City policies or requirements regarding recreation that are applicable to the proposed project.

6. LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE BEFORE MITIGATION

Without mitigation, the proposed project will result in the loss of ball fields that are currently used by youth sport teams. The loss of this opportunity is considered a significant project impact.

7. MITIGATION MEASURES

As indicated above, the OVSD and the City of Huntington Beach have entered into an Agreement regarding the relocation of the Ocean View Little League fields to Park View/Murdy Park. The following mitigation measure would assist in mitigating potential project impacts associated with the loss of recreational uses:

- R-1 Prior to the issuance of building permits for the proposed project, the goal of OVSD should be to insure that all six Ocean View Little League fields within the former Rancho View School site are relocated at one site or in a manner that practically accommodates Ocean View Little League's programs without undue hardship.

8. LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Implementation of the existing agreements between the OVSD and the City together with Mitigation Measure R-1 would reduce project-specific and cumulative impacts associated with the loss of recreational uses to less than significant levels.