

3.4 Parks, Recreation, and Public Open Space

This chapter presents the environmental setting and impact for parks, recreation facilities, and public open space. The City's existing and proposed park and open space setting, park standards, and their impacts are discussed in relation to applicable State and federal regulations. Agriculture and land impacts are evaluated in Section 3.1, while impacts on wetlands and biological resources are presented in Section 3.5.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

PHYSICAL SETTING

Existing Facilities

The City currently has two large community parks, one of which is the Soccer Complex at 19th Avenue, and the other being Heritage Park at Hanford Armona Road. Dispersed throughout the City are smaller neighborhood and pocket parks. A 140-acre municipally-owned golf course is located along Iona Avenue for recreation purposes.

Currently, Lemoore has around 117 acres of parkland (excluding the golf course) in the City. The City's ponding basins, including the one adjacent to West Hills College, provide an additional 38 acres of open space. The City has plans for the development of a joint Little League Park and Youth Football facility, involving the relocation of the Little League Field. The City's parks and recreation facilities offer a diverse range of services to meet the needs of the community. **Table 3.4-1** summarizes existing parkland by park type (In the table, the ponding basins are counted at less than half value because they are available for recreational use only on a seasonal basis). **Figure 3.3-1** illustrates existing parks and recreation facilities.

Significant existing open spaces within the Planning Area are composed primarily of various types of farmland to the north, north-east and south of the City. The next largest open space areas consist of wetlands around the vicinity of West Hills College. The wetlands, recently expanded to over 800 acres with the help of conservation easements, are frequently visited by birds and water fowl and are preserved as conservation areas.

Existing Service Standards

The existing City standard for parkland dedication established in the City Subdivision Ordinance is 5 acres of parkland per thousand residents. With a population of 23,390 residents in 2006, the City currently provides 5 acres of parkland per thousand residents, again, excluding the golf course. **Table 3.4-2** summarizes the existing acreage by park type and the acres per thousand residents as of 2006.

Table 3.4-1 Existing Public Parks and Recreation Facilities

<i>Name</i>	<i>Acreage</i>
Community Parks	
Soccer Complex	28
Heritage Park	24
Neighborhood Parks	
19 th Avenue Park	18
Bevalaqua Park	9
City Park	4
Lions Park	11
Little League Park	8
Rotary Skate Park	2
Pocket Parks	
Plaza Park	0.2
Train Depot Complex	2
Special Recreation Areas (Seasonal Use)	
Rainwater Detention Basins (at 50 percent)	12
Total	117

Source: City of Lemoore, 2006.

Table 3.4-2 Summary of Existing Recreation Facilities

<i>Park Type</i>	<i>Acreage</i>
Community Park/Soccer Complex	52
Neighborhood Park	51
Pocket Park	2.0
Special Recreation Areas	12
Total	117
Existing Parks Ratio (acres/1,000 residents)	5

Source: City of Lemoore, 2007.

In addition to public parkland, there is a joint use agreement between the Lemoore Union Elementary and High School Districts and the City to share facilities after school hours. However, school fields and facilities are not included as part of existing park land calculations shown above.

REGULATORY SETTING

The provision and management of parks, open space and landscaped areas is the responsibility of the City of Lemoore’s Parks and Recreation Department. The Department is assisted by the Parks and Recreation Commission which provides policy directives for the management, conduct, and care of the parks and playgrounds in the City.

The City is authorized by the 1975 Quimby Act (California Government Code Section 66477) to pass ordinances requiring that subdividers set aside land, donate conservation easements, or pay

fees for park improvements. Revenues generated through the Quimby Act cannot, however, be used for the operation and maintenance of park facilities. The Act states that the dedication requirement of parkland can be 3 acres per thousand residents, up to 5 acres per thousand residents, if the existing ratio is greater than the 3 acre minimum standard. Revenues generated through in lieu fees collected also cannot be used for the operation and maintenance of park facilities under the Act. In 1982, the Act was further refined to state acceptable uses of or restrictions on Quimby funds, provided acreage/population standards and formulas for determining the exaction, and indicated that the exactions must be closely tied (nexus) to a project's impacts.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Impacts of the proposed General Plan would be significant if buildout resulted in:

- A shortage of parks facilities for future residents based on the City park goal of 6 acres per thousand new residents;
- Increased use of existing parks such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated;
- Reduced accessibility of parks from residential neighborhoods.

METHODOLOGY AND ASSUMPTIONS

To evaluate potential impacts on parks, recreation and open space, the acreages for both existing and proposed future parkland were calculated using land use maps. Parkland ratios at buildout were derived by dividing total parkland (295 acres) by the existing and projected population, and then multiplying by 1,000. To compare accessibility to parks and recreation facilities, a ¼ mile radius was drawn around all neighborhood and pocket parks, and a ½ mile radius was drawn around all community parks. Residential land within the radius is compared with total residential land to derive percentage of residents living within walking distance of a park.

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in an increase in demand for park and recreation facilities due to population growth from 23,390 to 48,250 residents. While new parks can be added for residents living in new development areas, those living in the City center will generally use existing parks. The deterioration of park facilities from increased use is a concern. Another concern is the possibility that park development will meet the requirement of 5 acres per thousand residents but still fall short of the City's new goal of 6 acres per thousand residents. Nonetheless, the increase of parkland provision above 5 acres per thousand residents by itself represents an increase in service standards, thus making this a less than significant impact. Additionally, the location of parks and recreation facilities within walking distance of neighborhoods will facilitate access and use of park resources.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact

3.4-1 Buildout of the General Plan will increase the ratio of parkland from the existing 5 acres per thousand residents but still fall short of the City’s goal of 6 acres per thousand residents. (*Less than Significant*)

The proposed General Plan contains a parks policy that calls for parks acquisition and development to reach a goal of 6 acres of parkland per thousand residents. The City’s existing subdivision regulations only require a provision of 5 acres per thousand residents. The plan is to maintain the current ratio at 5 acres per thousand residents through subdivider land dedication and payment of fees in lieu of land, and achieve the higher goal of 6 acres per thousand residents through other funding sources such as public grants, park land bonds or private contributions (See Table 3.4-3). The proposed General Plan Land Use Diagram depicts almost 180 acres of parkland to be provided as neighborhood parks in residential areas and community parks along arterial streets. This does not preclude more parkland to be added through other funding sources.

Since the additional 1 acre per thousand residents is dependent on private contributions and whatever funding the City may have available, there is a possibility that funding shortages may prevent the City from reaching its goal of 6 acres per thousand residents. Nevertheless, any parkland ratio above 5.0 acres per thousand should be considered a surplus as it improves upon the existing ratio. Therefore, even though there may be a shortfall from the goal of 6 acres per thousand residents, the overall impact to the City is less than significant.

Table 3.4-3 Summary of Proposed Parks in Lemoore

	Acres
Existing Parks and Recreation Areas	117
Proposed Parks	178
Total Parkland at Buildout	295
Parkland Ratio Provided by the General Plan (acres/1,000 residents)	6

Source: Dyett & Bhatia 2007.

Proposed General Plan Policies that Provide Parks:

PSCF-I-1 Establish a goal of 6 acres of parkland per thousand residents which will be met by:

- Dedication and reservation requirements, consistent with the Quimby Act, for development of landscaped open spaces, parks, trail systems, and/or special community service facilities in new residential developments based on a standard of 5 acres of developed parkland per thousand residents; and
- A standard of one acre per thousand residents to be met with an impact fee for City-owned and operated parks and special recreation areas that serve all residents.

In addition to new parkland dedicated by developers, the City will continue to acquire or re-develop parklands as needed, subject to availability of funding. It is the City's intent to meet the parkland goal with functional public acreage only. Restricted recreation facilities (such as golf courses, raceways, and on-site school recreational facilities) are not included in this parkland total. The City also will maintain flexibility in the location and design of parks. In-lieu fees will only be acceptable where an exemption from providing a neighborhood park facility would not adversely affect local residents because an existing park is nearby.

- PSCF-I-3 Require non-residential developers to contribute to the City's parks and open space system based on proportional share of needs generated and use of facilities, in compliance with the State Mitigation Fee Act and other applicable laws.

A "nexus" study will be undertaken to establish impact fees based on surveys of park use during the workday by employees of nearby development. Exemptions for small infill projects may be granted.

- PSCF-I-13 Adopt and implement a 10-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan to be reviewed biennially and updated quadrennially.

The Parks and Recreation Department of Lemoore will be responsible for implementing the Master Plan, and ensuring that the development of parks and recreational facilities proceeds as planned.

Implementation of the policies listed above reduces Impact 3.4-1 to a level that is less than significant. No additional mitigation is needed.

Impact

- 3.4-2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan will increase the percentage of residents living within ½ mile of a community park and ¼ mile of neighborhood or pocket park (*Beneficial*).

One of the main goals of the General Plan is to improve walkability within neighborhoods, particularly convenient access to parks, schools and neighborhood retail. As such, parks and open space are designed close to areas of residential development. Figure 3.3-1 shows local accessibility to all park sites by identifying a ¼ mile radius from neighborhood and pocket parks, and a ½ mile radius from community parks. Overall, 96 percent of all residential development would be within walking distance of a park. This is an improvement from existing conditions, where only 31 percent of residential land is within walking distance. Also, the proposed bicycle system improves connectivity between parks, encouraging residents to walk and cycle from their homes. The increased accessibility is considered a beneficial impact. No mitigation is required.

Related Proposed General Plan Policies

PSCF-I-2 Require that at least 75 percent of new residents live within a half mile or less of a public park facility, using the development permit review and approval processes.

The only exemptions would be for residents in very low density development.

PSCF-I-7 Develop a system of consistent, recognizable and pedestrian-scale signage for the parks and trail system throughout the City, including bikeways, pathways and sidewalks that link key community resources (e.g. schools, public facilities, and transit) to the parks and open space network.

Policies PSCF-I-1, PSCF-I-3, and PSCF-I-13 under Impact 3.4-1 also help to increase accessibility. No additional mitigation is needed.

Impact

3.4-3 Buildout of the General Plan will result in the increase in use of existing parks such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility could occur or be accelerated. (*Less than Significant*)

The proposed General Plan, through infill development or land use changes, will increase population in locations where new parkland cannot be provided due to a lack of open space. This may result in an increase in frequency of use of existing park facilities. However, proposed Plan policies requiring developer dedications at a ratio of 5 acres per thousand residents, and new parkland through City funds to reach a goal of 6 acres per thousand residents will result in an overall net increase in parkland at the citywide level. Furthermore, the Plan has policies on facilities maintenance to ensure any physical deterioration of existing facilities is kept to a minimum. Considering the additional facilities that will be provided through the implementation of proposed General Plan policies, impacts to existing recreational facilities will be less than significant.

Proposed General Plan Policies that will Reduce the Impact

PSCF-I-4 Develop new parks with high quality facilities, universal accessibility, durability and low maintenance in mind. Existing parks will be improved, if feasible and economically justified, to reduce maintenance cost and water use, as well as improve park safety and aesthetics.

PSCF-I-10 Improve the 19th Avenue Park and other existing parks that are not fully developed with features such as landscaping, trails, children's play areas, and a hedge or wall where the park adjoins the freeway.

Future improvements made should be based on the ponding requirements and future footprint of the new interchange anticipated to start construction in 2013.

Policies PSCF-I-1, PSCF-I-3, and PSCF-I-13 under Impact 3.4-1 also help to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. No additional mitigation is needed.

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