

6.1 PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

This section evaluates parks, recreation and open space impacts of the proposed City of Fortuna General Plan 2030 (proposed plan), including whether the proposed plan would: (1) result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered park or recreational facilities; (2) result in the increased use of existing parks or recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; and (3) create an increased demand for access to open space which cannot be met. This section is based, in part, on the 2007 City of Fortuna Background Report, Section 6.6, Parks and Recreation (Mintier & Associates, 2007). The Background Report is included as Appendix G of this PEIR.

Environmental Setting

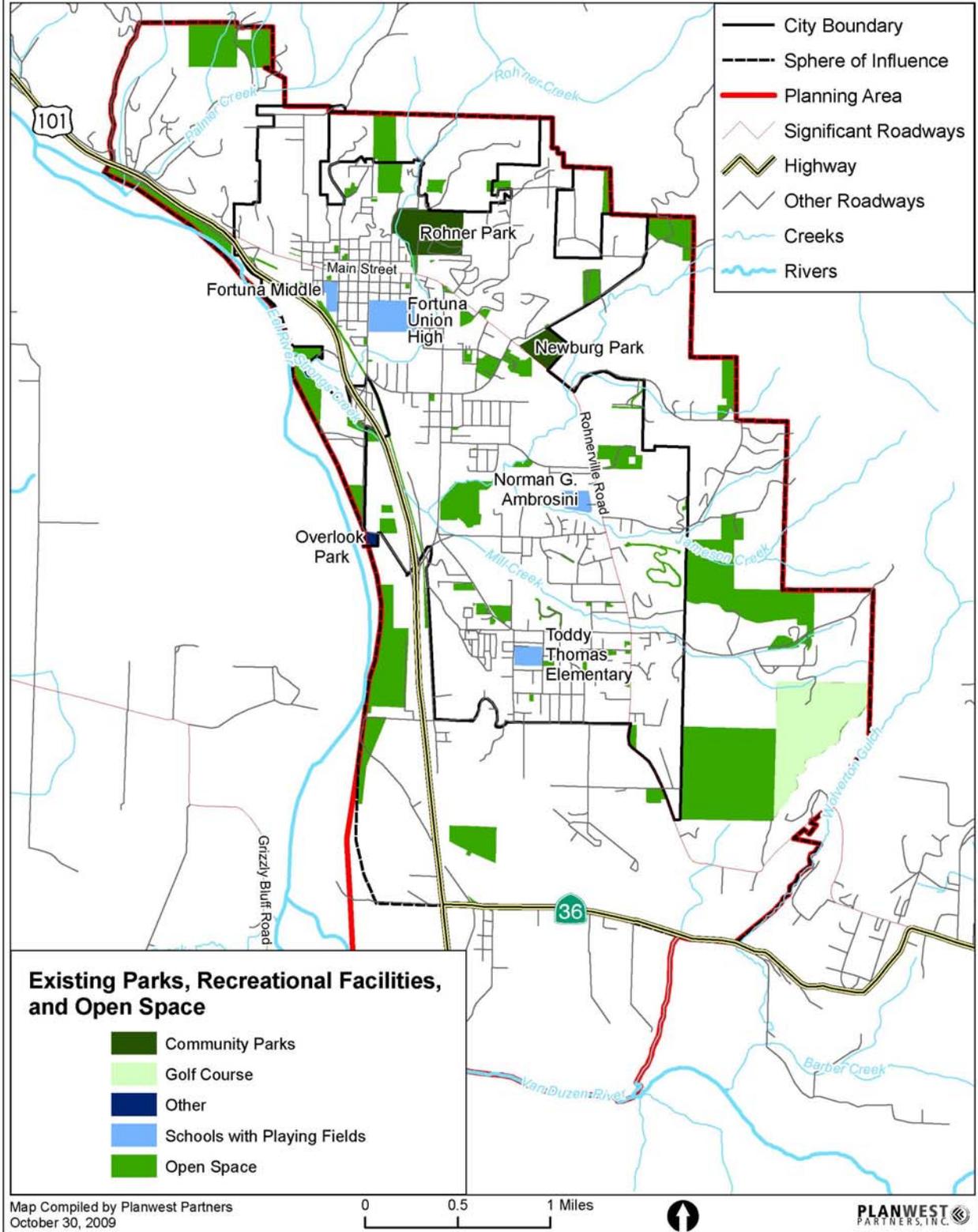
The City of Fortuna owns and maintains public parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities under a Parks and Recreation Department. The Parks and Recreation Department's responsibilities include managing and maintaining City parks and recreational facilities; coordinating recreation programs and activities that take place at the City parks and facilities; and planning for park and recreational facilities demand. The City has a Parks and Recreation Commission to assist the Director and staff of the Park and Recreation Department with planning and management issues regarding parks facilities in the City. An independent special district known as the Rohner Community Recreation and Park District (RCRPD) shares responsibility for managing park and recreation facilities in the City and provides community recreation services to unincorporated areas surrounding the City.

As indicated in Figure 6-1, the Planning Area contains two community parks, several small mini/pocket parks, several schools with playing fields open to the public, a golf course, several other recreational facilities, and open space. Each of these is described below.

Parks

Rohner Park. Rohner Park is a 55-acre multi-use City-owned community park located in the center of Fortuna's downtown district. The park contains a number of facilities including: the Depot Museum; Park office; Rodeo Arena; three Little League baseball fields; batting cages; a softball field; an outdoor basketball court; seven horseshoe pits; a volleyball court; a pistol range; a cook shack; a deep pit barbecue; two playgrounds; picnic areas; two public restrooms; and parking. The Fireman's Pavilion is a large hall, constructed in the 1930s, that is used for a range of activities including: rollerskating; basketball; private parties and special events; and classes and programs. The Parks and Recreation Department coordinates the reservations, leasing, and maintenance of the park facilities.

Fortuna General Plan 2030
Figure 6-1 Existing Parks, Recreational Facilities, and Open Space



Newburg Park. Newburg Park is a 20-acre City-owned community park located at the intersection of Rohnerville and Newburg Roads. Facilities include: baseball/softball fields; soccer fields; a picnic area; a playground; an all-weather walking path; public restrooms; and parking. The park is a large expanse of unobstructed open space that is also used for non-contact sport recreation and activities such as the flying of kites and model airplanes, informal ball practice, walking, and running.

Mini/Pocket Parks. There are two mini/pocket parks within the Planning Area; Chamber Park Overlook. Chamber Park is approximately 2,500 square feet in size and is located between the Chamber of Commerce building and the Fortuna Library. This park has a picnic table, drinking fountain and small garden and was dedicated to the Summerville family. Overlook Park is approximately 4,000 square feet in size and is located on the levee overlooking the Eel River just north of River Lodge. This park contains a small drought-resistant garden area and a picnic table.

Schools with Playing Fields. Many of the public schools in the Planning Area have playing and recreation facilities including collectively, indoor basketball courts, outdoor basketball hoops, handball courts, outdoor playgrounds, and soccer fields that are open to the public. Some schools have a track. The City's Parks and Recreation Department maintains a shared-use agreement with Fortuna's high school and elementary schools. The public has limited access to gym and school field facilities for community soccer, basketball, and football programs; reciprocal rights allow school teams to use Rohner and Newburg Parks for certain track and athletic events. This partnership allows the community to maximize its use of available parks and facilities.

Other Recreational Facilities

River Lodge. River Lodge is a meeting/conference facility with approximately 13,000 square feet of meeting space, located on the east bank of the Eel River and west of Highway 101, with spectacular panoramic views of the Eel River valley, agricultural fields, and coastal mountain range. The City owns, manages, and maintains the conference facility, which is rented out for community meetings, events, and private functions.

The Monday Club. The Monday Club is a meeting facility owned and maintained by the City. It is administered through the Parks and Recreation Department as a venue for community meetings and events. The Fortuna Business Improvement District (FBID), a nonprofit corporation that contracts with the City to perform economic development work, business promotion, and community event support, has its office in the building.

Private Recreational Facilities. There are several recreation facilities and resources within the Planning Area that are privately-owned and operated. These include: the Redwood Empire Golf Course (18-hole regulation length golf course); three gyms/exercise facilities; Fortuna Senior Services providing meals and recreational opportunities; and service and sporting clubs listed with the Parks and Recreation Department. For example, Fortuna Physical Therapy, a privately-owned business located next to Newburg Park, has a small swimming pool and exercise equipment.

Open Space

The Planning Area contains approximately 563 acres of open space consisting of timberland, meadows, bluffs, wetlands, riparian areas and open (non-agricultural) fields. As indicated in Figure 6-1, although the open space is concentrated within the northern and eastern sections of the City's sphere of influence (SOI), there is some open space found in several small pockets of the city's urban core. For the most part this open space is privately owned, some of it containing hiking and equestrian trails within public access easements.

Applicable Plans, Policies, Codes and Regulations

State

State Public Park Preservation Act. The State Public Park Preservation Act protects and preserves public parks. Under the Public Resource Code, local jurisdictions are not permitted to take possession of existing parkland and convert it to a non-park use unless compensation and/or land are provided to replace the parkland acquired. This requirement enforces a statewide "no net loss" policy for parkland and facilities.

Quimby Act. The Quimby Act (California Government Code §66477), adopted in 1975 and amended in 1982, authorizes cities and counties, in order to acquire additional park land as the community grows, to pass land dedication ordinances requiring developers to set aside land, cash-in-lieu of land, and/or impact fees as impact mitigation for land development. The Act (California legislation AB 1600, California Government Code §66025) is intended to provide for "adequate" open space acreage using acreage/population ratios or formulas in calculating exaction fees tied to a project's impacts, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Quimby Act guidelines recommend a ratio of from three to five acres of park land per 1,000 residents.

Local

City of Fortuna. The 1975 City of Fortuna General Plan, amended in July 1993, does not include a parks and recreation element. The City does not have an ordinance specifying park dedication guidelines and requirements.

Methodology

Policy Background

The following policy background is used to assess the park, recreation and open space impacts of the proposed plan:

- Demand for parks and recreational facilities will increase within the Planning Area with increased development and population growth.

- The City's existing General Plan does not specify a desired park to population ratio, and the City does not have a park dedication requirement. Therefore, the upper limit of the State Quimby Act guideline (e.g., five acres of parkland per 1,000 residents) is used in this analysis to assess park demand under the proposed plan.

Thresholds of Significance

Proposed General Plan implementation will have significant parks, recreation and open space impacts if it:

- Results in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered park and recreational facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable performance objectives;
- Results in the increased use of existing parks or recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facilities will occur or accelerate; or
- Create an increased demand for access to open space that cannot be met.

Implications of the Draft Land Use Diagram

Proposed General Plan implementation will have the potential to impact parks, recreation, and open space facilities in the Planning Area. The residential population under the proposed plan will increase from 11,489 to 24,904 persons (an additional 13,415 residents). Based on the upper limit of the State Quimby Act guideline of five acres of park land per 1,000 residents, this population increase will create a demand for approximately 67 acres of new community parkland within the Planning Area. This will also increase demand for recreational facilities and open space opportunities (i.e., access to open space areas).

General Plan Policy Response

The proposed General Plan includes the following policies and programs relevant to parks, recreation, and open space.

Parks

Policy PROS-1.1 Balanced Park System. The City shall develop and promote the use of its park system to include a balance of passive and active recreational opportunities (e.g., parks connected by natural greenways or bike paths).

Policy PROS-1.2 Needs Assessment. The City shall periodically assess park and recreation needs, with community input, to ensure that park service levels and facilities are adequate to accommodate population growth and parkland usage. This assessment will include recommendations for existing and new facilities (e.g., swimming pool).

Policy PROS-1.3 Park Maintenance. The City shall maintain and update park equipment and facilities as needed, including playground equipment, park benches, picnic tables, access, ball fields, landscaping, and group activity areas.

Policy PROS-1.4 Acquire Adjacent Parkland. The City shall enhance parklands and resource protection opportunities through acquisition of lands adjacent to existing parkland, wherever feasible.

Policy PROS-1.5 Parkland Standards and Dedication. The City's Parkland Standard shall be a ratio of five acres per 1,000 residents. Additional parkland may be acquired through donations, joint development of public facilities, private recreational facilities, and school facilities.

Policy PROS-1.6 Quimby Act. The City shall adopt an ordinance enacting the powers of the State Quimby Act to improve and expand existing parklands and recreational facilities.

Policy PROS-1.7 Park Funding. The City shall ensure that appropriate funding mechanisms are identified to adequately fund the development and maintenance of new and existing parks and recreational facilities and the redevelopment of existing parks and recreational facilities.

Policy PROS-1.8 Public/Private Partnerships. The City shall encourage civic and business organizations to assist with park improvement projects.

Policy PROS-1.9 Agency Coordination. The City shall coordinate and cooperate with the Rohner Community Recreation and Park District (RCRPD) and other municipal, County, State, and Federal agencies in planning, developing, protecting, and managing park resources, to minimize duplication and competition.

Policy PROS-1.10 Encroachment Protection. The City shall strive to protect parklands from encroachments and minimize adverse human impacts to natural recreation areas.

Policy PROS-1.11 Park Location. When possible, the City shall locate parks conveniently to neighborhoods and areas with good pedestrian or trail access.

Policy PROS-1.12 Park Linkages. The City shall improve open space corridors with linkages between parks and existing corridors suitable for both pedestrian and bicycle use.

Policy PROS-1.13 Joint Use of School Facilities. The City shall continue to share park facilities with the Fortuna School Districts at school properties.

Policy PROS-1.14 Special-Use Facilities. The City shall identify community needs and provide areas and/or facilities for special recreational uses such as ball fields, community swimming pool, skateboard park, dog park, bicycle paths, and walking trails.

Policy PROS-1.15 Recreational Lake. The City shall encourage the creation of a recreational lake on land immediately south of the River Lodge.

Policy PROS-1.16 Riparian Corridors. The City shall require the dedication and development of riparian corridors for recreational activities and natural resource protection, including trails, native landscaping, buffers from adjacent development, and developed park-like landscaping in high-use areas such as riparian corridor access points.

Policy PROS-1.17 Park Size. The City shall strive to meet the following minimum size recommendations for parks:

- Mini/Pocket Parks – ¼ acre to 5 acres,
- Neighborhood Park – 5 to 10 acres,
- Community Park – 10 to 60 acres, and
- Regional Park – 60 to 500 acres.

Policy PROS-1.18 Park Identification. The City shall design parks with clearly marked entrances and unified signage.

Policy PROS-1.19 Effects on Surrounding Neighborhoods. The City shall minimize disturbances to surrounding neighborhoods through careful park planning, site design, management, and operations.

Policy PROS-1.20 Compatible Development Design. The City shall encourage designs for development adjacent to park property that minimize the potential impacts and are complimentary to the natural resource values of the parklands.

Policy PROS-1.21 Linear Park System. The City shall seek to establish and maintain a linear park system of waterways, greenbelts, bicycle paths, and pedestrian walkways that link City park facilities and other key destinations.

Policy PROS-1.22 Park Design Criteria. The City shall consider the following factors in the design of new parks:

- Safety,
- Security,
- Maintenance,
- Accessibility,
- Landscaping complimentary to the surrounding environment,
- Travel distance of users,
- Passive versus active use areas,
- Restroom facilities,
- Citizen input,
- Adequacy of off-street parking, and
- Flexibility for programming activities.

Policy PROS-1.23 Adaptable Facilities. The City shall ensure that the location and design of park and recreational facilities are adaptable to changing recreational, demographic, and economic trends (e.g., changeable fields, multi-purpose structures).

Policy PROS-1.24 Wildlife Habitat. The City shall maintain wildlife habitat values during design and ongoing maintenance of new park facilities through provision of open space, wildlife corridor areas, and the protection of native vegetation.

Policy PROS-1.25 Landscaping. The City shall encourage the installation and maintenance of non-irrigated landscapes and native species in new and existing park development.

Policy PROS-1.26 Construction Materials. The City shall require the use of permeable pavements, non-toxic materials, recycled materials, locally manufactured products, locally available materials, and low energy-requiring facilities and technologies to the greatest extent practicable in the construction and maintenance of park facilities

Policy PROS-1.27 Forest Best Management Practices. The City shall conserve and use Best Management Practices to protect the forest resources contained in the Rohner Park's Community Forest.

Policy PROS-1.28 Community Forest Expansion. The City shall expand the size of the Community Forest through the annexation and acquisition of adjacent forested land.

Program PROS-1. The City shall develop a City-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan to assess service areas, level of service, maintenance and upgrade schedules, ADA compliance, stewardship guidelines, and future facility needs.

Program PROS-2. The City shall adopt an ordinance enacting the powers of the State Quimby Act to improve and expand upon parks and recreational facilities.

Program PROS-3. The City shall adopt an ordinance enacting parkland dedication requirements or in-lieu fees from new development to improve and expand upon parks and recreational facilities. The Ordinance shall require parkland dedication at a ratio of five acres of parkland per 1,000 residents or payment of comparable in-lieu fees.

Program PROS-4. The City shall encourage responsible pet ownership by providing supplies for dog waste clean-up at all parklands that allow canine use.

Program PROS-5. The City shall draft written agreements between the school districts and the City outlining the shared use of facilities.

Program PROS-6. The City shall periodically update a list of desirable special use facilities.

Recreation

Policy PROS-2.1 Community Center. The City shall encourage the development of a community center for teens, seniors, and other residents, with sufficient space for outdoor activities, classes, meetings, and special events.

Policy PROS-2.2 Joint School and Community Facilities. Whenever appropriate, the City shall consider joint-use facilities that combine community center functions with schools.

Policy PROS-2.3 Monitor Facility Usage. The City shall monitor the use of athletic fields and facilities to determine additional needs.

Policy PROS-2.4 Cultural Programs and Festivals. The City shall support cultural programs and festivals in conjunction with local groups and organizations.

Policy PROS-2.5 Increase Senior and Teen Programs. The City shall participate with other public agencies and private non-profit organizations to provide recreational programs for seniors, teens, and other groups.

Policy PROS-2.6 Volunteer Opportunities. The City shall encourage volunteer opportunities in the delivery of the City's various programs and the enhancement of City facilities.

Policy PROS-2.7 Community Pool. The City shall support efforts by the community to identify suitable locations for a community pool and pursue potential partnerships, (e.g., schools) to share development and operational costs.

Policy PROS-2.8 Persons with Disabilities. The City shall strive to provide recreational opportunities and facilities for people of all ages and abilities, including meeting the requirements of the ADA.

Program PROS-7. The City shall create opportunities and incentives, such as public acknowledgement plaques and signs, for volunteers, private businesses, non-profit organizations, and agencies that participate in recreation program delivery and facility enhancement activities.

Open Space

Policy PROS-3.1 Land Use Incentives. The City shall encourage private landowners to protect environmental, historical, and cultural resources through a variety of incentives and programs.

Policy PROS-3.2 Open Space Dedication. The City shall require developers to protect riparian vegetation and foothill scenic resources of the City through dedication of land for open space.

Policy PROS-3.3 Eel River Floodplain. The City shall maintain areas in and adjacent to the Eel River floodplain as open space, provide public access, and encourage trail development.

Policy PROS-3.4 Common Open Space Requirements. The City shall require common open space in all planned developments, including single-family projects.

Policy PROS-3.5 Rohner and Strongs Creek Improvements. The City shall investigate improvements to Rohner and Strongs Creek, to upgrade capacity as multi-use open space, recreational activities, and flood-control and stormwater channels.

Policy PROS-3.6 Retention in Natural Condition. The City shall cooperate and coordinate with appropriate agencies to maintain and preserve the quality of streams, marshes, and wetland areas and, to the extent possible, retain in their natural condition.

Policy PROS-3.7 Public Education. The City shall develop interpretive and educational information to build community-wide support for public use of open space areas.

Policy PROS-3.8 Acquire Significant Natural Resources. The City shall identify and prioritize acquisition of lands with significant natural resources, including areas connected to other open space and park facilities, to ensure they are reserved and enhanced for public use.

Program PROS-8. The City shall coordinate and cooperate with the County, local schools, BLM, California Parks and Recreation, and other appropriate agencies to develop educational programs and materials that encourage natural resource stewardship and highlight the significance of open space resources in and around Fortuna, including the Headwaters Forest.

Program PROS-9. The City shall conduct a feasibility study of the Rohner, Strongs and Jamison Creek riparian corridors to upgrade flow capacity for multiuse open space, recreation, and flood control.

Impacts and Mitigation

Impact 6.1-1: Increased Demand for Public Parks

Implementation of the Proposed General Plan will require new or physically altered park and recreational facilities in order to maintain acceptable performance objectives, but the construction of these facilities will not cause significant environmental impacts.

Discussion

The proposed plan will create demand for 67 acres of new community parkland within the Planning Area based on the upper limit of the Quimby Act guidelines (five acres of parkland per 1,000 residents). However, the proposed plan includes five policies and programs designed to ensure the provision of adequate parkland.

- (1) Policy PROS-1.2 requires the City to periodically assess park and recreation needs to ensure that park service levels and facilities are adequate to accommodate population growth;
- (2) Policy PROS-1.5 establishes a City Parkland Standard of five acres of park per 1,000 residents;
- (3) Policy PROS-1.14 requires the City to identify community needs and provide areas and/or facilities for special recreational uses (ball fields, community swimming pools, skateboard parks, dog park, and trails);
- (4) Program PROS-1 requires the City to develop a City-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan to assess service areas, level of service, maintenance and upgrade schedules, ADA compliance, and future facility needs; and
- (5) Program PROS-3 requiring the City to adopt a parkland dedication ordinance that requires park dedication at a ratio of five acres per 1,000 residents or payment of in-lieu fees.

Under the proposed parkland dedication requirement, 67 acres of new parkland would be provided to serve an additional 13,415 residents at proposed plan buildout. This increased acreage meets the projected demand. In addition, the proposed policies will improve the City's park planning and the monitoring of park facility needs to ensure an adequate level of service. Therefore, the proposed plan will provide adequate parkland, and no impact will occur.

The park dedication requirements of the proposed plan will require the development of 67 acres of new park land. Policy PROS-1.17 identifies ten acres as the minimum size for a community park and/or the maximum size for a neighborhood park. Assuming 10 acres per park, the proposed plan will result in the development of 7 new parks. No specific development projects or park facilities are proposed under the proposed plan, so the specific environmental effects associated with constructing these new parks cannot be identified at this time. CEQA guidelines encourage local jurisdictions to not speculate about potential environmental effects. Section 15145 states that if after evaluation, a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. Section 15146(b) states that a PEIR should focus on the secondary effects that can be expected to follow from its adoption, but that the PEIR need not be as detailed as an EIR for a specific construction project that might follow. At the time that specific park facility improvements are proposed, the environmental effects of those improvements will be evaluated in accordance with CEQA.

Determination of Level of Significance

No Impact

Mitigation

No mitigation necessary

Impact 6.1-2: Increased Use of Existing Park and Recreational Facilities

Proposed General Plan implementation would not result in the increased use of existing parks or recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.

Discussion

Proposed park dedication requirements ensure that an incremental increase in population will be adequately served by new park facilities. In addition, the proposed plan includes four policies and programs to ensure that existing park/recreation facilities are adequately maintained to accommodate increased use.

- (1) Policy PROS-1.2 requires the City to periodically assess park and recreation needs to ensure that park service levels and facilities are adequate to accommodate population growth and parkland usage;

- (2) Policy PROS-1.3 requires the City to maintain and update park equipment and facilities as needed;
- (3) Policy PROS-1.7 requires the City to ensure that appropriate funding mechanisms are identified to adequately fund the maintenance and/or redevelopment of existing parks and recreational facilities; and
- (4) Program PROS-1 requires the City to develop a City-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan to assess service areas, level of service, maintenance and upgrade schedules, ADA compliance, stewardship guidelines, and future facility needs.

These policies and programs will ensure that physical deterioration of existing park/recreation facilities will not occur.

Determination of Level of Significance

Less-Than-Significant

Mitigation

No mitigation necessary

Impact 6.1-3: Increased Demand for Access to Open Space

Proposed General Plan implementation would increase the demand for access to open space, but the proposed plan would provide such increased access.

Discussion

Under the proposed plan the population within the Planning Area will increase from 11,489 to 24,904 residents (an increase of 13,415 persons) adding to the demand for access to open space.

Table 3.1-2 in Section 3.1 of this PEIR identifies 563.1 acres of open space (e.g., timberland, meadows, bluffs, and (non-agricultural) open fields,) within the Planning Area. Table 3.1-5 in Section 3.1, (proposed Land Use Diagram) designates 778.4 acres as Open Space (OS). This does not represent an increase in open space, as existing urban areas will not be converted to open space. Rather, several areas currently vacant or designated for agricultural and timber use will be designated Open Space (OS) to protect some of the inherent natural values of the land. In addition, the proposed plan includes at least seven policies and programs designed to protect open space values.

- (1) Policy PROS-3.2 requires developers to protect riparian vegetation and foothill scenic resources through the dedication of land for open space;
- (2) Policy PROS-3.3 requires the City to maintain areas within and adjacent to the Eel River floodplain as open space;

- (3) Policy PROS-3.4 requires planned-unit developments (PUD) to include common open space;
- (4) Policy PROS-3.5 and Program PROS-9 require the City to investigate improving the areas along Rohner, Strongs and Jamison Creeks to provide for multi-use open space and creational facilities;
- (5) Policy PROS-1.28 requires the City to expand the size of the Community Forest through the annexation and acquisition of adjacent forested land; and
- (6) Program NCR-14 requires the City to establish Streamside Management Areas (SMAs) along creeks in the Planning Area to conserve the associated riparian corridors; and
- (7) Additional policies and programs designed to preserve the biological, water quality and aesthetic values of wildlife habitat, wetlands, riparian areas, bluffs, timber areas, and other open space areas within the Planning Area (see Sections 5.1, 5.2 and 6.2 of this PEIR for specific policies and programs).

With the implementation of the proposed Land Use Diagram and the proposed policies and programs listed above, existing open space values in the Planning Area will be more effectively protected. Therefore, a beneficial impact will occur.

Currently, because of private land ownership, public access to open space in the Planning Area is limited. A larger population, as projected under the proposed plan, will increase public demand for access to open space. The proposed plan includes at least eight policies and programs designed to increase open space/trail connectivity and access to open space.

- (1) Policy PROS-1.1 requires the City to develop and promote a park system connected by natural greenways and bike paths;
- (2) Policy PROS-1.12 requires the City to provide linkages between parks and open space corridors;
- (3) Policy PROS-1.16 requires the dedication of riparian corridors for recreational activities, trails and natural resource protection;
- (4) Policy PROS-1.21 requires the City to establish and maintain a linear park system of waterways, greenbelts, bicycle paths, and pedestrian walkways that link City park facilities and other key destinations;
- (5) Policy PROS-3.3 requires the City to maintain areas in and adjacent to the Eel River Floodplain as open space, provide public access, and encourage trail development;
- (6) Policy TC-4.7 requires the City to loop and interconnect pedestrian trails where and when feasible;
- (7) Policy TC-4.9 and Program TC-15 require the City to work with surrounding landowners and to pursue funding for design, engineering and construction to provide for a Strongs Creek Parkway connecting the Riverwalk District with the eastern City limits; and
- (8) Policy TC-5.9 requires the City to acquire trail rights-of-way from the Riverwalk District to the Headwaters Forest along the Strongs Creek corridor.

With implementation of these proposed policies and programs, connectivity and access to open space will be substantially increased, and a beneficial impact will occur.

Determination of Level of Significance

Beneficial Impact

Mitigation

No mitigation necessary

References Cited

Mintier & Associates. 2007. City of Fortuna General Plan Background Report.