
3.12 PARKS AND RECREATION

INTRODUCTION

This section of the EIR addresses existing parks and recreational facilities within the County of San Benito, as well as planned park facilities within the Santana Ranch project. The potential impacts of the project related to existing park and recreational facilities, as well as any impacts resulting from the use of proposed facilities within the project, are evaluated and feasible mitigation measures are included where applicable. The following analysis is based on information supplied by the San Benito County Planning Department and the City of Hollister, other technical documents, and on information contained within the Santana Ranch Specific Plan.

3.12.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The County of San Benito provides park and recreational facilities and services to County residents. The principal County park in the project vicinity is the 35-acre Veterans Memorial Park, located one mile west of the project site at Hillcrest Road and Memorial Drive. This park includes a tot-lot, lighted softball fields, tennis courts and picnic areas. There are no neighborhood parks or school playgrounds in the immediate vicinity of the project site.

Other public recreational areas of regional importance include Pinnacles National Monument located 35 miles south of the project site, Fremont Peak State Park located eight miles to the southwest, and Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area, located six miles southwest of the project site. In the Tres Pinos area, seven miles to the southeast of the project site, the State of California 33rd Agricultural District operates Bolado Park, which includes the County fairgrounds and a nine-hole golf course. Adjacent to Bolado Park is the County Historical Park.

3.12.2 REGULATORY SETTING

Parks and recreational facilities in San Benito County are addressed within the *County of San Benito General Plan*. The following policies from the General Plan are relevant to potential park and recreational impacts of the proposed project:

Open Space and Conservation Element

Policy 45 Private Recreation Facilities

It will be the County's policy to utilize land use ordinances to encourage land owners to provide private recreational facilities and open space areas. It will also be the County's policy to allow for an economic return on land while it is being used as open space.

Policy 46 County and City Bike Plans

It will be the County's policy to require new development to provide easements for trails / bikeways identified in the City of Hollister Parks and Recreation Master Plan and to be consistent with the San Benito County Bike Plan.

Policy 47 Parks Master Plan

Develop a county-wide parks master plan to identify long-range recreational needs of the county, potential trail corridors, and areas for potential recreational tourist services / programs.

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Policy 48 Park Funding

Provide the optimum level of cost effectiveness and public use level at each park, recognizing that each facility has a different mission and a unique set of operating conditions associated with the natural or other available resources.

Policy 55 Recreation and Open Space Provide for Recreation

It shall be the County's policy to acquire, develop, operate, and maintain a comprehensive system of open space land uses and recreational facilities to provide for the low-intensity trails, picnicking, informal sports, park benches, and active recreational needs (sports fields for youth and adult league play) of the County population.

Policy 56 Ratio of Parks to Population

Recreational facilities for existing and new development in the unincorporated areas of the County shall be provided to meet the needs of the population based on a ratio of five acres of park land per 1,000 persons.

3.12.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following thresholds for determining park and recreational environmental impacts are based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. Impacts may be considered significant if implementation of the project will result in either of the following:

- An increase in the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities as a result of the project such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.
- Construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

METHODOLOGY

The analysis of potential park and recreational impacts is based upon the project plans, information supplied by the City of Hollister, San Benito County, and other technical documents.

PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Demand for Parks and Recreational Facilities

Impact 3.12-1 The proposed project will result in the development 1,092 new residences and approximately 65,000 square feet of new neighborhood commercial space, which will result in additional demand for parks and recreational facilities. This is considered a **potentially significant impact**.

The new homes proposed within Santana Ranch will result in an increase in the County population. The County General Plan requires that recreational facilities be provided at a ratio of five acres of parkland per 1,000 persons. Based on the projected population of 3,549

residents in the Santana Ranch project (approximately 3.25 persons per household), approximately 17.8 acres of parkland is required. The project includes 18.2 acres of formal park space, which exceeds the County requirements for park acreage. These park facilities are proposed to include 10.4 acres for a linear park that extends through the project site; two acres of neighborhood parks and the 5.8 acre Community Park (see **Figure 3.12-1**). Smaller “pocket” parks are also planned throughout the project where feasible. The location of the neighborhood and pocket parks will be further defined at the Tentative Map stage for each neighborhood. Neighborhood parks will be a minimum of 12,000 square feet and pocket parks will be a minimum of 5,000 square feet. Private, common interest recreational facilities within each multi-family neighborhood will be provided unless a public park is in close proximity, in addition to the 18.2 acres of formal park space proposed within the overall project. The project will also be developed with roadside trails, landscaped corridors, and naturally designed detention basins, all of which will contribute to the project’s recreational amenities.

The development of 65,000 square feet of new neighborhood commercial space as well as potential mixed uses within the RM-SR areas proposed for the project will indirectly affect how the proposed parks are used within the project. Although the County does not have a demand factor associated with commercial land uses, it can be expected that some employees and customers of local businesses will take advantage of nearby park facilities to recreate or take breaks during the day. Such patterns represent typical usage, however, and constitute a relatively minor proportion of overall park usage by the public. The presence of the new commercial uses within the project will therefore not exert unusual demands on new parks, cause the deterioration of existing parks, or cause the construction of new parks or recreational facilities beyond what is planned and proposed by the project.

The Santana Ranch Specific Plan contains the following policies addressing park and recreational facilities. These policies are incorporated into the project and further describe how parks will be designed and implemented.

6.11 Public Facilities and Services Policies

- School and public park sites shall be linked to the pedestrian and bike path system. The final design and location of these paths and the connections to the parkway system shall be determined during the tentative map process for specific Neighborhoods.
- The Developers will work with the County and the Hollister School District to explore possibilities for a joint use agreement for the Community Park site adjacent to the proposed elementary school site.
- Parks shall be designed to facilitate surveillance by adjoining residents, security services, and police.
- Parks shall be constructed by the Developers of each Neighborhood within the Plan Area in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Specific Plan.
- Neighborhood Parks shall be developed concurrently with development of the Neighborhoods in which they are located.
- The Developers shall offer to dedicate all parkland and related improvements identified in this Specific Plan to San Benito County in accordance with the provisions of applicable law.

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Proposed Park and Recreational Facilities

The proposed park and recreational facilities within Santana Ranch will provide a mix of small play areas, picnic areas and sports facilities to accommodate a wide range of activities. Turf areas will be provided within each park for formal and informal areas for activities such as soccer, football, and volleyball. The range of park facilities proposed for the project is described below:

The Community Park on the east side of the proposed Park Center Drive will encompass a total of 5.8 acres. Approximately 4.5 acres will be covered with turf for active uses that include a youth soccer field and informal baseball fields. A small tot lot and picnic area also will be located within the park. The Community Park will be located directly west of the proposed eight- to twelve-acre elementary school site, immediately adjacent to the school's planned recreational fields. This physical arrangement will maximize the recreational benefits of the individual facilities, allowing for the potential for joint use through an agreement between the project developers and the Hollister School District.

The proposed linear park encompasses 10.4 acres along an existing Pacific Gas and Electric utility easement that extends through the project site from the southeast to the northwest. The park is planned to vary in width from 50 to 200 feet and will serve as a link between neighborhood parks and the Orchard Park Road parkway. A Class I bike and pedestrian trail is proposed to meander through the linear park, and will be landscaped with a combination of turf, groundcover, and trees.

The planned neighborhood parks will encompass a total of two acres, and will be distributed throughout the project site. The neighborhood parks will include turf areas and tot lots. Additional pocket parks are anticipated throughout the project, and will be identified during the tentative map process for each Neighborhood.

In addition to the formally improved parkland within the project site, roadside trails, landscaped parkways and detention basins accommodating passive recreational uses will provide additional recreational and open space amenities. The Class I trail and sidewalks within landscaped corridors along the collector streets and Fairview Road, described in **Section 3.13, Traffic and Circulation**, also provide for passive and active recreational activities.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, while the project includes uses that would generate demand on existing facilities, the project is proposing to provide new park facilities, exceeding the County's park area standards, that will offset increased demand and ensure that substantial physical deterioration of existing facilities would not occur or be accelerated. To ensure that the construction and operation of these facilities is timed appropriately to coordinate with new demand resulting from occupancy of each phase of the project, and therefore minimize the potential for impacts on existing facilities outside the project boundaries, the following mitigation measures are included:

- MM 3.12-1a** Final certificates of occupancy shall not be issued for greater than 50 percent of the dwelling units for each phase of the project until the neighborhood and pocket park facilities associated with the specific phase are fully developed and available for use.

MM 3.12-1b Final certificates of occupancy shall not be issued for greater than 50 percent of the overall maximum number of dwelling units (545) within the Santana Ranch project until the linear park and Community Park are fully developed and available for use.

MM 3.12-1c The project's pedestrian and bicycle circulation network shall be developed in accordance with the project's phasing plan as approved by the Public Works Department.

With implementation of the above measures, the proposed park and recreational facilities for the project will be available to meet the demand of the residents of the project, minimizing the potential for impacts on existing park and recreational facilities outside the project boundaries, resulting in a **less than significant** impact to these facilities.

Construction of New Park and Recreational Facilities

Impact 3.12-2 The proposed project will result in the construction of new parks and recreational facilities, which may have an adverse effect on the environment. This is considered a **potentially significant impact**.

While park and recreational facilities are generally considered to be beneficial environmental features of new development, there is potential for physical impacts to occur during the grading/construction phases of the facilities, as well as with the regular use of the facilities.

Construction/Grading Impacts

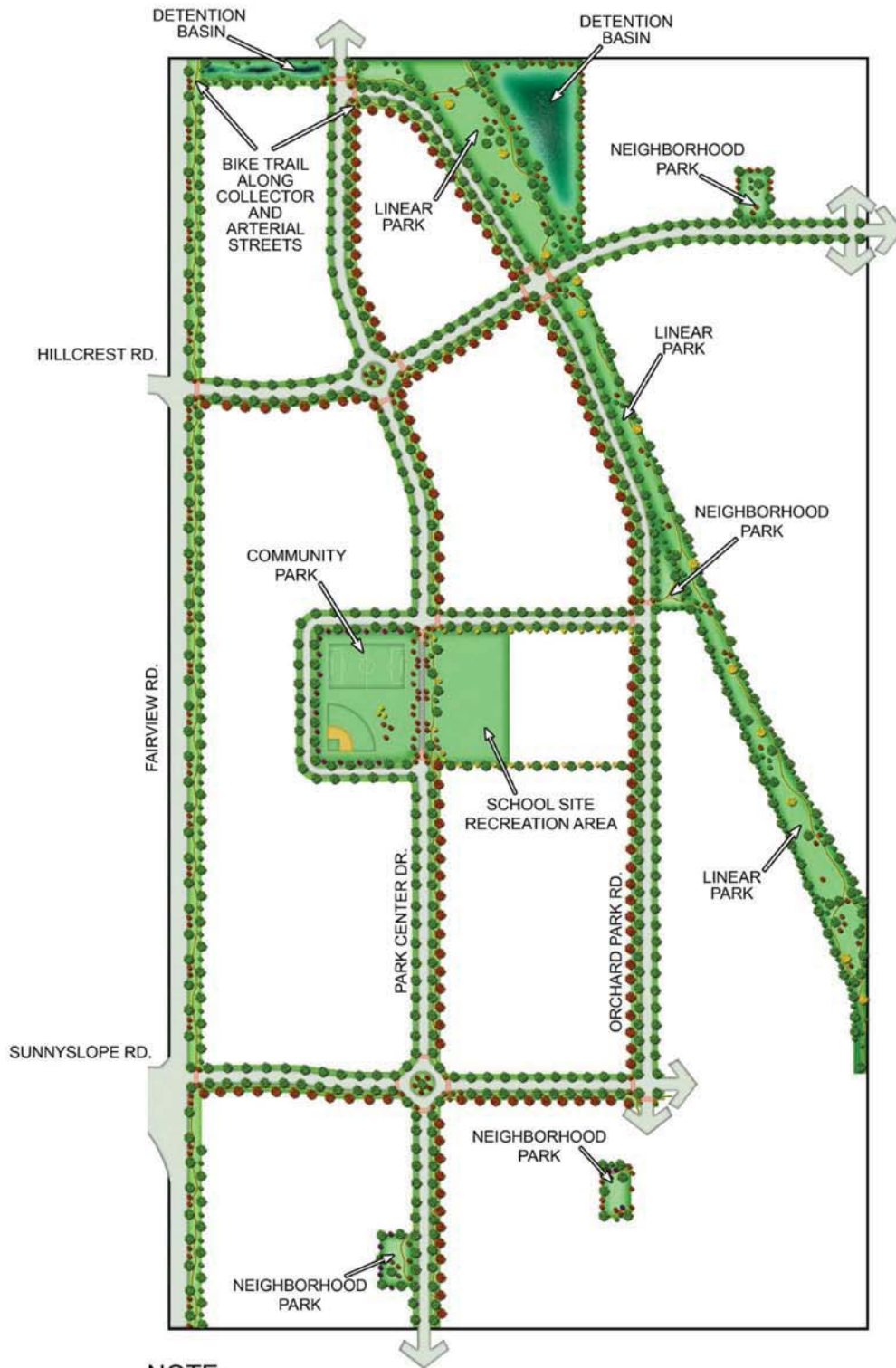
Park construction generally involves significant earthwork, which can result in dust emission impacts from grading equipment, as well as construction noise impacts, to nearby sensitive land uses. As discussed in **Section 3.3, Air Quality** and **Section 3.10, Noise** of this EIR, there are few existing uses in the immediate project vicinity which would be sensitive to dust, emissions and noise impacts. The existing residence at the northern boundary of the project site, however, could experience impacts from earthmoving activities. Additionally, newly-occupied dwelling units within the project itself could experience impacts should park development activities take place nearby. To ensure that park development impacts on existing and future residents of the project will be minimized, **Mitigation Measure 3.3-1 (Air Quality)**, addressing air quality impacts during construction, and **Mitigation Measure 3.10-1 (Noise)**, limiting the hours of construction, are also applicable to park development activities. With implementation of these measures, park earthmoving and development impacts are anticipated to be **less than significant**.

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Operational Impacts

Because the park facilities will be developed within the Santana Ranch project for use primarily by the residents of the development, it is anticipated that environmental impacts outside the project boundaries associated with operation of the park facilities will be minimal. However, as discussed in the Noise section of this EIR, there is potential for noise impacts to the future residents of the project resulting from park activities, in particular, from amplified noise and landscape maintenance equipment. **Mitigation Measure 3.10-2c (Noise)**, however, prohibits the use of noise amplification equipment in the parks and limits landscape maintenance activities to less sensitive daytime hours, therefore, noise impacts are anticipated to be **less than significant**.

The park facilities will require irrigation to maintain the landscaped areas, which will increase water demand. This demand has been accounted for in the Water Supply Assessment (WSA) prepared for the project. The WSA determined that adequate water supplies exist for the project. Additionally, reclaimed water lines (i.e. purple pipe) will be installed within the project to allow for park and open space irrigation with reclaimed water, at such time reclaimed water is made available to the project. Parkland irrigation impacts on the water supply, therefore, will be **less than significant**. For detailed discussion, please refer to **Section 3.14, Wet and Dry Utilities**.



NOTE:

Locations of neighborhood parks are conceptual and may vary. Actual locations will be determined at neighborhood tentative map stage.

Source:



Figure 3.12-1

Parks

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CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Regional Demand for Park and Recreational Facilities

Impact 3.12-3 The proposed project will result in the development of new residences and new neighborhood-serving commercial and mixed uses, which could, in combination with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable, probable future projects, contribute incrementally to demand for parks and **recreational** facilities in the area. This is considered a **less than significant** impact.

The increase in population resulting from the project will contribute incrementally to the demand for park and recreational facilities in the Hollister urban area, as other planned projects are developed along the eastern side of Fairview Road and within the City of Hollister. These additional projects include the approved Award Homes project on the east side of Fairview Road, the planned Gavilan College project at the northeast corner of Fairview Road and Airline Highway, as well as the other projects within the Hollister urban area listed within **Chapter 5.0, Cumulative Impacts Summary**. This additional incremental demand, in combination with the demand of other projects, could result in the deterioration of existing park and recreational facilities serving the area, as a result of increased use of the facilities. This incremental impact of the project, however, will be mitigated by the provision of adequate park and recreational facilities within the proposed project to serve the future residents of Santana Ranch. Additionally, the other projects in the cumulative scenario will be required to satisfy the park requirements of San Benito County or the City of Hollister, as applicable, to mitigate impacts. Therefore, cumulative impacts to existing park and recreational facilities are not anticipated as a result of the project.

Irrigation Demand for Parkland

Impact 3.12-4 The proposed project will include the operation of new park and recreational facilities, which could, in combination with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable, probable future projects, contribute incrementally to water supply impacts within the groundwater basin serving the project. This is considered a **less than significant** impact.

Operation of the proposed park and recreational facilities within the project could, in combination with other planned projects within the groundwater basin, contribute incrementally to water supply impacts within the basin, due to the need to irrigate park landscaping. These additional projects include the approved Award Homes project on the east side of Fairview Road, the planned Gavilan College project at the northeast corner of Fairview Road and Airline Highway, as well as the other projects within the Hollister urban area listed within **Chapter 5.0, Cumulative Impacts Summary**. The Water Supply Assessment prepared for the project, however, indicates that adequate water supplies exist for the overall Santana Ranch project, including parkland irrigation needs, in combination with other existing and planned projects within the groundwater basin serving Santana Ranch. Similarly, the projects in the cumulative scenario also will be required to provide evidence of adequate water supplies, including water supplies required for park maintenance, either through approval of a water supply assessment, or a finding of consistency with the approved Hollister Area Urban Water Management Plan. The proposed park and recreational facilities within the project, in combination with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable, probable future projects are therefore not anticipated to result in a substantial cumulative impact on water supply.

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REFERENCES/DOCUMENTATION

County of San Benito. *General Plan, Open Space and Conservation Element*, Adopted 1995.

County of San Benito. *Santana Ranch Draft Specific Plan*, November 2009.

Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State of California. *Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act*, as amended. 2009.