

IV.I.4 Recreation and Parks

1. INTRODUCTION

This section describes the impact of the Herald Examiner project on existing and future parks and recreation facilities in the City of Los Angeles. Where impacts are identified to be significant, mitigation measures are recommended to reduce these impacts to acceptable levels. Information for this section was derived from the City of Los Angeles General Plan, Central City Community Plan Element and the Conservation Element.

2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

a. Developed Park and Recreation Facilities

The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks owns and operates public parks and recreation facilities in the City. The department offers over 15,600 acres of parkland with 387 neighborhood and regional parks, 7 lakes, 176 recreation centers, 372 children's play areas, 13 golf courses, 387 tennis courts, 8 dog parks, 58 swimming pools and 7 skate parks.

The department also provides after school and day care for children, teen clubs, basketball, volleyball, softball and flag football games and leagues. Children's classes range from homework help to dance classes to field trips. Adult classes range from parenting to Samba. Senior programs provide field trips and classes as well as a lunch program with an average of 3,000 meals served each week.

In addition, the department offers special venues, activity centers, volunteer opportunities, a full range of sports activities, youth activity and sports programs, parks and outdoor activities, historic sites, museums, banquet facilities, beaches, horticulture centers and gardens.

The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks facilities, and their associated amenities, located closest to the proposed project sites are summarized in **Table IV.I.4-1, City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Facilities Closest to the Project Sites**. Locations of these facilities relative to the project sites are shown in **Figure IV.I.4-1, City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Facilities in the Project Vicinity**.

**Table IV.I.4-1
City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Facilities
Closest to the Project Sites**

Facilities	Miles from Project	Features
Toberman Recreation Center	1.5	Auditorium, BBQ Pits, Baseball Diamond, Basketball Courts, Children's Play Area, Community Room, Indoor Gym, Picnic Tables, Kitchen, Stage, Sports Programs and Other Programs.
Macarthur Lake	2.1	Swimming, Children's Play Area, Paddle Boats, Picnic Area and Walking Path.
Central Pool	2.3	Seasonal Swimming, Water Polo, Swim Team, Synchronized Swimming, Lifeguard Training and Swim Lessons.
Pico Union Park	2.4	Children's Play Areas, Picnic Tables.
Roosevelt Golf Course	7.8	9-Hole Golf Course, 2,400 yards, Par 33, Slope 106, Rating 31.1, Snack Bar, Practice Net, Practice Putting Greens and Restaurant.
Griffith Riverside Pay Tennis Complex	8.3	12-Court Facility.
Municipal Sports	17	Organized and Professional Staff Conducted and Administered Adult Sports Programs that include Baseball, Basketball, Soccer, Softball, Tennis and Volleyball.

Source: City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks official website, August 23, 2005, www.laparks.org.

Central City, the downtown area in which the project sites are located, contains Civic Square, Pershing Square and several neighborhood parks or centers, 6th and Gladys Street Park, City Hall South Lawn Park, Grand Hope Park, Maguire Gardens at the Central Library and Evergreen Recreation Center. Many of the large office and corporate buildings built in the last 20 years have also contributed open space by creating public plazas and landscaped gardens.

Although Downtown Los Angeles has the above facilities, the downtown area has the least amount of public open space of any major U.S. urban center. Even though a number of private building-related parks and plazas have been built in recent decades, deficiencies in parkland and public open space at every scale, from large recreational areas to neighborhood parks and pedestrian friendly streets, exist.¹

¹ City of Los Angeles, 2001, Central City Community Plan Element, p. III-10.

Figure IV.I.4-1

City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Facilities in the Project Vicinity

(See www.laparks.org for figure)

3. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

a. Planned Park Acquisition and Development

The Recreational and Cultural Facilities Program (RCFP) is responsible for the acquisition, development, improvements, restoration and maintenance of City parks, open spaces, recreation and community facilities and other youth-related projects. A majority of the funding is through Proposition K, an annual real property tax assessment on City residents over a 30-year period. Other funding sources include the Quimby Act and Propositions A, 12 and 40.

RCFP's primary purpose is to combat the inadequacies and decay of the City's youth infrastructure, which has resulted in serious unmet needs for park, recreation, childcare and community facilities. As a result, this program performs such services as feasibility studies, site and building design, construction documents (plans and specifications), construction/project estimating, bid and award services and construction and project management for both new and existing facilities. Services are performed using City personnel or through consultants managed by City staff. In summary, the RCFP participates in the decision-making process for both City owned and non-City-owned recreational facilities. Funding for specified projects is designated in the original Proposition K ballot measure, as approved by the voters of the City of Los Angeles, as well as through a biennial open and competitive call for projects process.

As of June 2005, the RCFP is managing 151 projects and has completed a total of 98 projects.²

b. City of Los Angeles Applicable Policy Plans

According to the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, a satisfactory park and recreation system should measure up to standards in three respects: (1) sufficient land area reserved for parks and recreation; (2) appropriate distribution of park and recreation facilities throughout the City; and (3) a full complement of park and recreation facility types (i.e., active and passive recreation for all age groups) to accommodate a wide variety of users.³ Facilities should be provided at the neighborhood, community and regional levels.

Two sets of policy documents, the Public Recreation Plan (PRP) and individual Community/District Plans, establish planning efforts and activities related to parks, recreation facilities and open space areas in the City. The PRP provides Citywide goals, objectives and recommendations concerning parks and recreation facilities. The Community/District Plans provides community goals, objectives and recommendations concerning parks and recreation facilities.

² Los Angeles Department of Public Works Engineering Department website, August 2005, <http://eng.lacity.org>.

³ Public Recreation Plan, p. 2, City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks.

Public Recreation Plan

The PRP, a portion of Section 1 of the Service Systems Element of the City of Los Angeles General Plan, was adopted in 1980 by the City Council. The PRP focuses on physical facilities by emphasizing the provision of neighborhood and community recreation sites, community buildings, gymnasiums, swimming pools and tennis courts. The PRP largely focuses on facility planning in residential areas, as these areas generate the greatest demand and need for parks and recreational facilities. The PRP also establishes general locations for future facilities based on a proposed service radius and projected population levels.

The PRP states that the location and allocation of acreage for neighborhood and community park and recreational facilities should be determined on the basis of the service radius within residential areas throughout the City. No parks or recreational facilities should be diminished in size or removed from any service radius unless the required acreage is replaced elsewhere within the same service radius or unless the need is diminished due to population and/or land use changes.

An overall provision of 10 combined acres per 1,000 residents for total recreational facilities is recommended in the PRP. Further, the PRP recommends a minimum of 10 percent of the total land area be dedicated to public recreation or open space. As presented in **Table IV.I.4-2**, the 10 combined acres of recommended recreational/park area per 1,000 can be broken down by park category.

**Table IV.I.4-2
Parkland Standards**

Type	Overall Acreage	Minimum Size	Service Radius
Neighborhood	2 acres/1,000 residents	5 acres	1/2 mile
Community	2 acres/1,000 residents	15 acres	2 miles
Regional	6 acres/1,000 residents	50 acres	Not Applicable

Source: City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (1999) and Service Systems Element, Los Angeles General Plan, October 1980.

The desired long-range standard for both neighborhood and community park/recreation facilities is 2 acres (minimum) per 1,000 residents and, for regional parks, 6 acres per 1,000 residents. In addition to acreage requirements, the PRP identifies service distances for parks. For a neighborhood park, a walking or travel distance should be not greater than approximately one-half mile and, for a community park, not greater than 2 miles from a residence. No standard is provided for regional parks. The PRP recognizes that these standards may not be fully attained during the long-term life of the adopted PRP. As a result,

specific short-term and intermediate-term standards have been set for different Community Plan areas within the City.

c. Recreation Element of the General Plan and Community/District Plan

Open Space and Recreation Facility Service Standards

The Central City Community Plan and Conservation Element of the Los Angeles General Plan address the community's parks and recreation goals, policies, objectives and programs for implementation of these goals and objectives.

As discussed in the General Plan's Conservation Element, "Open Space" is a broad term that can include virtually anything from a sidewalk or lawn to the mountains and ocean. It is defined by the California General Plan Law (Government Code Section 65560) as "any parcel or area of land or water that essentially is unimproved and devoted to an open-space use," whether for preservation and protection of natural resources or for human activity.⁴ Therefore, streets or public rights-of-way improved with planting, paving, lighting, signage and furnishings act as pedestrian friendly, open space corridors.

Open Space and Recreation Goals, Policies and Objectives

Under the Central City Community Plan Element in the Land Use Policies and Programs section, objectives, policies and programs for open space and recreation are addressed. The objectives, policies and programs are listed in **Table IV.I.4-3, Central City Community Plan Open Space and Recreation Objectives, Policies and Programs**. The programs listed below are designed to implement the objectives and policies for Open Space and Recreation in the Central City Community Plan.

⁴ City of Los Angeles General Plan, 2001, Conservation Element, p. II-56

**Table IV.I.4-3
Central City Community Plan Open Space and Recreation Objectives, Policies and Programs**

Objective #1:	Objective #2:	Objective #3:	Objective #4:
Encourage the expansion and additions of open spaces as opportunities arise.	Maximize the use of the City's existing and envisioned open space network and recreation facilities by providing connections to the open space system.	Encourage increased use of existing park and recreational facilities.	Encourage traditional and non-traditional sources of open space by recognizing and capitalizing on linkages with transit, parking, historic resources, cultural facilities and social services programs.
Policies:			
Review existing open space standards in order to expand the range of potential open space resources at the neighborhood and community levels.	Foster physical and visual links between a variety of open spaces and public spaces downtown.	Review existing park and recreational space usage in order to determine factors impacting low use of certain facilities.	Improve downtown's pedestrian environment in recognition of its important role in the efficiency of downtown's transportation and circulation systems and in the quality of life for its residents, workers and visitors.
Program #1:			
Create or maintain public open space to serve as focal point in each of downtown's neighborhoods and districts.	Implement the Civic Center Shared Facilities and Enhancement Plan.	Conduct site analysis of existing and future spaces and determine any physical, social or marketing modifications necessary to increase and maximize use of space.	Develop and adopt "non-standard" alternatives to City requirements related to placement of street lights, street trees, sidewalk and other paving material, street furniture, bus shelters and other features that enhance the pedestrian environment as their primary standard.
Program #2:			
Implement the Los Angeles Sports and Entertainment District Specific Plan. Encourage use of the project's public plaza as an identifiable focal point and gathering place for downtown residents and visitors.	Implement the Metropolitan Transit Authority's Angel's Walk Pedestrian Master Plan.		Develop a coordinated team approach to assist property owners and assessment districts develop on going activities for necessary care of pedestrian/open space projects.

Source: City of Los Angeles General Plan, 2001, Central City Community Plan Element, p. III-10.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

a. Significance Criteria

The *L.A. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Thresholds Guide* indicates that the determination of significance shall be made on a case-by-case basis, considering the following:

- The net population increase resulting from the proposed project;

- The demand for recreation and park services anticipated at the time of project buildout compared to the expected level of service available. Consider, as applicable, scheduled improvements to recreation and park services (renovation, expansion or addition) and the project's proportional contribution to the demand; and
- Whether the project includes features that would reduce the demand for recreation and park services (e.g., on-site recreation facilities, land dedication or direct financial support to the Department of Recreation and Parks).⁵

b. Project Impacts

- *The net population increase resulting from the proposed project.*

As discussed in **Section IV.B, Population and Housing**, implementation of the proposed project would introduce 1,087 new residents into the South Park area of Downtown Los Angeles through the development of 575 new residential units. In this analysis we are assuming the increase in population is due to immigration of people into the City of Los Angeles rather than relocation of people within the City. Additionally, approximately 260 individuals would be employed at the proposed retail, commercial and office uses for the project.

- *Impacts related to recreation and parks are considered significant based on the demand for recreation and park services anticipated at the time of project buildout compared to the expected level of service available. Consider, as applicable, scheduled improvements to recreation and park services (renovation, expansion or addition) and the project's proportional contribution to the demand.*

The Central City Community Plan of the General Plan recognizes that the provision of streetscape improvements and open space in Downtown Los Angeles, such as the public open space and recreation facilities, should be incorporated into the design of a project. The proposed project would feature the following recognized open space and recreational facilities: the Hill Street and 12th Street sites of the Herald Examiner project would provide a roof deck, a plaza over the garages, private decks, two health clubs and two pools. A plaza would be erected creating a functional open space for patrons and residents as well as a connection to the adjacent Broadway building between the rehabilitated Broadway building and the newly constructed Hill Street building. These open space and recreational facilities would provide both the daytime population and project residents with passive recreation opportunities and an improvement to quality of life. The open space and recreational facilities would also meet the needs of the new downtown residents that would be introduced by the proposed project as well as help reduce additional demand for public recreation facilities generated by the population increase associated with project implementation.

⁵ L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide, City of Los Angeles, Environmental Affairs Department, May 14, 1998, pp. J.4-2 and J.4-3.

The public open space and private recreation facilities included in the project would not, however, meet the needs of the residents of the project for neighborhood or community parks. The increase in local population generated by the project would incrementally increase the use of existing neighborhood and community parks in the Downtown Los Angeles area of the City.

Existing park facilities in the project vicinity are currently heavily used due to the deficit of public parkland and open space in Downtown Los Angeles. The increase in use of neighborhood and community parks in the downtown area that would potentially result from the increase in residents associated with the project is considered significant, as an acceleration of the physical deterioration of existing parks could potentially result. However, a mitigation measure listed below will reduce the impacts to a less than significant level.

- *Impacts related to recreation and parks are considered significant if based on whether the project includes features that would reduce the demand for recreation and park services (e.g., on-site recreation facilities, land dedication or direct financial support to the Department of Recreation and Parks).*

The proposed project would include features that would reduce the demand for recreation and park services. The Hill Street and 12th Street sites would provide recreation and open space by including a roof deck, plaza over the garages, private decks, two health clubs and two pools. Between the rehabilitated Broadway building and the newly constructed Hill Street building would be a plaza that would create functional open space for patrons and residents as well as a connection to the adjacent Broadway building. The Central City Community Plan of the General Plan recognizes that the provision of streetscape improvements and open space in downtown, such as open space and recreation facilities included within the project, would provide both the daytime population and project residents with passive recreation opportunities and would constitute a quality of life improvement with landscaped streetscape.

The project would also provide residents and their guests with a fitness center and pool in both the Hill Street and 12th Street buildings, which would partially serve to meet the needs and demands of the new downtown residents and serve to partially reduce demand for public recreation facilities potentially generated by the proposed project. However, due to the existing deficit of public parks and open space in the South Park and Downtown Los Angeles areas, the project would still contribute additional demand for recreational and park facilities. As such, implementation of the proposed project has the potential to result in significant impacts to recreation and parks. However, with implementation of mitigation listed below, impacts can be reduced to a less than significant level.

c. Cumulative Impacts

Implementation of the proposed project and the list of related projects identified in **Section III, General Description of Environmental Setting**, would increase the demand for and use of existing parks and recreational facilities in the City of Los Angeles. Given the existing deficiency of parks and recreational facilities in Downtown Los Angeles, both the individual project and the combined effects of the proposed projects in the Downtown Los Angeles area on existing facilities is considered cumulatively significant because the use of existing facilities would increase, thus contributing to an acceleration in the physical deterioration of these facilities. The contribution of the proposed project to this impact is cumulatively considerable; however, through implementation of the mitigation measure identified below, the project's individual contribution to the cumulatively significant impact can be mitigated to a less than significant level. Through this mitigation, adequate parkland and/or open space either on the project sites, or within the vicinity of Downtown Los Angeles, would be provided as a result of project implementation.

In order to accommodate the proposed development projects in the Downtown Los Angeles area, as well as the existing deficiency in public open space, the City's RCFP program is responsible for the acquisition and development of recreational facilities throughout downtown. As RCFP projects are defined and proposed, these projects will undergo CEQA review, and project-specific impacts associated with the development of each park and/or recreational amenity project would be mitigated to the extent feasible. As a result, cumulative impacts associated with the construction of new recreational facilities are expected to be less than significant.

d. Mitigation Measures

MM-REC-1. In accordance with the requirements of the City of Los Angeles (Ordinance No. 141422, amending Chapter 1, Article 7 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code), the project applicant shall either pay the in-lieu fee to the City and/or develop public park or recreation land on the project sites using equivalent funding or greater. The proportion of total land on the site to be set aside for park and recreation, or the amount of in-lieu fees to be paid, shall be determined by the City at the time of final plan approval.

e. Adverse Effects

Payment of in-lieu fees to the City and/or parkland and open space dedication on the project sites will allow for reducing both project-level and cumulative impacts associated with accelerating the physical deterioration of existing parks in the Downtown Los Angeles area. Payment of the in-lieu fees would reduce project and cumulative impacts to a less than significant level. Therefore, no adverse effects are anticipated as a result of the development of the proposed project.