

CHAPTER 4

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

4.0 CHAPTER 4 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a program-level analysis of the physical environmental effects of adoption and implementation of the *Parks Master Plan 2030* (Project). The following sections evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed Project:

- 4.1 Aesthetics
- 4.2 Air Quality & Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- 4.3 Biological Resources
- 4.4 Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources
- 4.5 Geology and Soils
- 4.6 Hazards - Wildfire
- 4.7 Hydrology and Water Quality
- 4.8 Noise
- 4.9 Public Services
- 4.10 Transportation and Traffic
- 4.11 Utilities and Energy Conservation
- 4.12 Land Use
- 4.13 Impacts Not Found to Be Significant

4.0.1 Scope of Analyses

Section Organization

Each section in this chapter describes the environmental setting, assesses impacts, and identifies mitigation measures for significant impacts.

Environmental Setting

The Environmental Setting sections provide a general overview of the existing conditions throughout the City, and describe the existing physical environment. Applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations relevant to a discussion of impacts in the topic category also are identified, when relevant.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures section identifies thresholds of significance used to evaluate whether an impact is considered significant, based on standards identified in or criteria derived from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and State CEQA Guidelines as amended at the end of 2018. In some cases, agency policies and regulations or professional judgment are used to further define CEQA standards of significance.

The Impacts section first identifies issues for which no impacts have been identified. The section then evaluates and analyzes significant or potentially significant project impacts, states the level of significance prior to mitigation. Mitigation measures are provided for identified significant impacts. A statement regarding the level of significance of each impact after mitigation follows the mitigation measures for that impact. For impacts found to be less than significant, mitigation measures are not required.

Significance Determinations

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), specifically, Public Resources Code Section 21068, a “significant effect on the environment” means a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment. The significance thresholds used for each environmental resource topic are presented in each section of Chapter 4 following the setting and before the discussion of impacts. For the impact analyses, one of the following significance determinations will be made:

- **No Impact (NI).** This determination is made if there is no potential that the Proposed Project could affect the resource at issue.
- **Less than Significant (LS).** This determination applies if there is a potential for some limited impact on a resource, but the impact is not significant in accordance with the significance criterion.
- **Less than Significant with Mitigation (LSM).** This determination applies if there is the potential for a substantial adverse effect in accordance with the significance criterion, but mitigation is available to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level.
- **Significant Unavoidable (SU).** This determination applies to impacts that are significant, but for which there appears to be no feasible mitigation available to substantially reduce the impact.

4.0.2 Overall Approach to Environmental Analyses

Section 15064(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines indicates that an evaluation of significant effects “shall consider direct physical changes in the environment which may be caused by the project and reasonably foreseeable indirect physical changes in the environment which may be caused by the

project.” This section further specifies that an indirect physical change in the environment is a physical change in the environment which is not immediately related to the project, but which is caused indirectly by the project. An indirect physical change is to be considered only if that change is a reasonably foreseeable impact which may be caused by the project.

The project consists of the proposed *Parks Master Plan 2030*, which is a guidance document to inform park and recreational facility planning and development within the City of Santa Cruz and to implement the parks and recreational goals set forth in the City’s *General Plan 2030*. The proposed Plan identifies a range of goals, policies, actions and recommended improvements that, if implemented, could lead to improvements to or expansion of existing park and recreational facilities and uses and potential addition of new parks, facilities and recreational uses, which are fully described in Chapter 3. Generally, these include the following:

- ❑ **Facility Improvements.** Most of the Parks Master Plan recommendations are improvements to existing parks and recreational facilities that would be considered an upgrade or enhancement to an existing facility with addition of amenities, landscaping or minor improvements, and in some cases, minor expansion of existing recreational uses. Recommendations at specific parks and facilities are summarized in Appendix B.
- ❑ **New or Expanded Development.** Facility recommendations that may result in new or expanded development include potential new trails, three areas of potential new parking, development of a small amphitheater at Harvey West Park, construction of restrooms and small buildings, and renovation of existing structures.
- ❑ **New Recreational Uses.** Potential new recreational uses and/or facilities recommended in the Parks Master Plan or recommended to be considered include additional recreational facilities, such as community gardens, off-leash dog use areas, a drone course, pickleball courts, and playgrounds. In most cases, specific site locations have not been identified for new uses.

The Parks Master Plan does not include specific proposals or details regarding the location, design, size or siting of specific recommended improvements, development or potential new uses. No project-specific site plans are proposed as a part of the Parks Master Plan for expanded or new facilities, and the Plan would not directly result in development. However, implementation of the policies, actions and recommendations in the Plan could lead to future improvement and development at City parks.

The analyses in the EIR are at a “program” level that includes the policies, actions and general recommendations for improvements and new/expanded facilities or uses. The *Parks Master Plan 2030* includes policies and actions to guide future selection and design of park and recreational facility improvements or expansion that would avoid or minimize potential environmental impacts. The Master Plan’s goals, policies and actions are measures built into the Project that would be implemented and, as a result, would serve in some cases to avoid potential impacts. Furthermore, future specific projects would be subject to project-level CEQA review.

The Plan recognizes that additional efforts will be necessary to determine if the future projects should be pursued. Most of the recommendations will require additional study, public input, planning and design, project-specific CEQA analysis, and funding prior to implementation. The *Parks Master Plan 2030* also acknowledges that while many policies and actions are aimed at improving environmental quality within the park system, some actions will require additional study before a specific project can be proposed. Feasibility studies are recommended for most new uses, such as athletic fields and trails, and no specific sites or trail alignments are identified in the Parks Master Plan. Upon future completion of these studies, any proposed site-specific projects would be subject to development of site plans and project-level CEQA environmental analysis once conceptual designs have been developed. The Plan also indicates that the Parks Master Plan neither replaces nor overrides the existing adopted management plans for the City’s open spaces. If future projects are pursued to meet needs that were not already identified within an existing park management or master plan, that plan may need to be amended and CEQA review would be necessary.

This EIR analyzes potential impacts that could occur based on the types of uses and/or improvements generally recommended, as well as for site-specific improvements where identified for existing parks and facilities. To the extent that future expanded uses or improvements may result in environmental impacts, the nature of the impact is addressed and evaluated. The Project Description, Chapter 3.0, describes the range of facilities and uses that are recommended in the Master Plan. Each impact discussion addresses potential impacts associated with new or expanded facilities or uses where relevant to the topic being addressed. Appendix B summarizes recommendations for existing facilities and identifies where sensitive resources and/or environmental impacts may occur, which are discussed in the EIR impact analyses.

The EIR considers all components of the Master Plan in the analyses, and appropriately analyzes potential indirect reasonably foreseeable impacts that could occur as a result of adoption and implementation of the Parks Master Plan and future development of specific projects. No “reasonably foreseeable” projects are known with regards to new or expanded trails, off-leash areas for dogs, improvements at Jessie Street Marsh, or development of a drone course, all of which were raised in previous public comments.

- ❑ **Expanding Multi-Use Trails.** Although the *Parks Master Plan 2030* calls for improvement, enhancement and expansion of trails, the Plan also clearly calls for evaluation of new trail uses through a public process to determine if they are appropriate for a specific space (Goal II-Policy F, Action 1a). Upon future completion of these studies, any proposed site-specific proposals would be subject to development of site plans and project-level environmental analysis.

The Parks Master Plan includes recommendations for consideration of new trails at Arroyo Seco, DeLaveaga Park, Moore Creek Preserve, and Pogonip, but does not identify specific trail locations or alignments. (The Plan does support implementation of the Sycamore Grove interpretive trail that is included in the *Pogonip Master Plan* and evaluated in the Pogonip Master Plan EIR.) Some potential new trail locations were conceptually identified for DeLaveaga and Pogonip during the public process of developing the Parks Master Plan,

however, these were intended for discussion purposes and no specific trail alignments are recommended in the Parks Master Plan. Therefore, there are no “reasonably foreseeable” trail projects. It is noted that the existing adopted DeLaveaga Park Master Plan identifies a trail network throughout the park, including a loop trail around the park.

Any future trail would be considered and studied in accordance with the Master Plan policies and actions that call for additional study. In addition, recommendations for Pogonip Open Space include conducting a trails assessment to evaluate existing trail connections and use issues that would help inform the determination of whether or not future trail modifications or improvements are appropriate, and the Parks Master Plan specifically indicates that potential impacts and mitigation measures related to new or expanded trails at Pogonip would be evaluated through the CEQA process conducted for future trail projects, if and when they might be proposed.

This EIR does address the types of impacts that could occur with development of new trails and identifies the proposed Parks Master Plan goals, policies and/or actions that include measures to avoid or minimize identified impacts. Impacts of trail development are addressed in the following sections: 4.1-Aesthetics; 4.2-Air quality (grading/emissions); 4-3-Biological Resources; 4.5-Geology and Soils (erosion); and 4.7-Hydrology and Water Quality.

- ❑ **Jessie Street Marsh.** The Parks Master Plan recommends improving the connection from Jessie Street Marsh to the Santa Cruz Riverwalk and hiring a consultant to work through design issues and public concerns with the Jessie Street Marsh Management Plan. The Master Plan also indicates that potential modifications to the management plan would be discussed through a public process. The City started the process of developing conceptual site plan options for the site in 2017 to address community desires and concerns and to help facilitate community discussion. The conceptual plans were developed to collect input during an iterative public outreach process. The City is currently working with a consultant to update the concepts based on feedback received during the meeting in addition to providing scenarios for additional wetland enhancement. Neither the Parks and Recreation Commission nor the City Council has provided input in the planning process, and the concepts do not represent development plans. The conceptual plans show a new accessible trail, native revegetation, and measures to expand/enhance the existing wetland, in keeping with the provisions of the Jessie Street Marsh Management Plan. However, at this time, a specific design has not been finalized or adopted by the City, and thus, a specific project cannot be analyzed in this EIR. However, impacts to potential wetland resources from subsequent potential improvements are addressed in the Section 4.3, Biological Resources.
- ❑ **Off-Leash Areas for Dogs.** Goal III-Policy I and supporting actions directs the City to seek opportunities to enhance off-leash dog use experiences while minimizing conflicts with other park uses and wildlife. Action 1 indicates that new formal off-leash dog use areas will be completely fenced and located in an underutilized area of a park. Action 2 calls for identifying a location for a fenced off-leash dog use area in the Lower Westside neighborhood. Specific sites for new facilities are not identified in the Master Plan, but these types of facilities are usually small and located on a portion of an existing park in a developed area and would be

fenced, thus avoiding sensitive resource areas. Potential issues related to enforcement of dog leash laws are addressed in Section 4.9, Public Services.

- **Drone Course.** The proposed plan calls for consideration of the establishment of a drone course (Goal III-Policy G, Action 1j), but the Master Plan does not propose a location or provide a description of facilities that might be considered. This type of facility would be for recreational use of small drones to provide a course for operating these devices, which are small (approximately one foot in length) and do not emit any sounds. Potential impacts of development of this type of facility are addressed in Section 4.3, Biological Resources.