

Section 4.12: RECREATION

**EARVIN “MAGIC” JOHNSON RECREATION AREA MASTER PLAN
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

4.12 RECREATION

This chapter describes the environmental setting and analyzes potential impacts related to existing parks and recreation, as they pertain to implementation of the proposed Project.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Maintenance of public parks and related areas is the responsibility of the County DPR. The existing EMJ Park is one of 174 parks operated by DPR. DPR maintains parks in the following categories:

- Community Regional Parks – provide larger facilities with youth and adult organized sports leagues and playing fields and walking clubs.
- Regional Parks – include lakes with boating and fishing, hiking trails, swimming, bicycling, hiking, and horseback riding.
- Nature Centers and Wildlife Sanctuaries – provide education on the native flora and fauna of the County.
- Municipal Golf Courses – 19 courses
- Hollywood Bowl

A Joint Project between California State Parks and DPR was signed October 4, 1977, creating the Willowbrook State Recreation Area. The purpose of the Joint Project of this property was to create a multi-use park for the region.

EMJ Park was developed in three phases. Phase One was completed in January 1982, and included grading, building two lakes with the connecting stream, partial landscaping and irrigation, and some walkways. Phase Two was completed in December 1983, and included two comfort stations, picnic areas, a playground, a senior

citizen area, more landscaping and irrigation, and the south parking lot. Phase Three was completed in May 1985, and included more picnic areas, walkways, landscaping and irrigation, and the north parking lot.

A Quit Claim Deed was filed by the State December 1, 1987 transferring the land to the County. The park was renamed in November 1992, to the Earvin “Magic” Johnson Park after a former Los Angeles Lakers professional basketball player. The Quit Claim Deed identified that the Project site is to be used as a public park and recreation area. The Quit Claim Deed requires conformance to Public Resources Code Section 5019.50-5019.80, which requires all units that are or shall become a part of the state park system, except those units or parts of units designated by the Legislature as wilderness areas pursuant to Chapter 1.3 (commencing with Section 5093.30), or where subject to any other provision of law, including Section 5019.80 and Article 1 (commencing with Section 36600) of Chapter 7 of Division 27, shall be classified by the State Park and Recreation Commission into one of the categories specified in the Public Resources Code. Any improvements to EMJ Park must conform to the Willowbrook State Recreation Area General Plan. However, that Plan may be amended in accordance with procedures for amending specific plans. Publicly noticed hearings must be conducted prior to any actions taking place by both the County Regional Planning Commission and the County Board of Supervisors. EMJ Park has been in operation since its initial development and is heavily used today.

EMJ Park is approximately 104 acres and is developed as a Community Regional facility with numerous amenities including two restrooms, picnic shelters, group picnic shelters, soccer fields, fitness par course, two artificial lakes, a play area designated for children ages 2 to 12, picnic tables, barbecues, drinking fountains, security lighting, and onsite lighted parking. EMJ Park is considered a passive park, with few formal recreational amenities.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

FEDERAL

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) published the following guidelines for communities to consider when planning various types of parks (e.g., regional, community, neighborhood, etc.).

- Community park 2 to 3 acres per 1,000 residents.
- Neighborhood park 1 to 2 acres per 1,000 residents.
- Mini-park 0.25 to 0.50 acres per 1,000 residents.

STATE

PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE

5019.56 State recreation units consist of areas selected, developed, and operated to provide outdoor recreational opportunities. The units shall be designated by naming, in accordance with Article 1 (commencing with Section 5001) and this article relating to classification.

In the planning of improvements to be undertaken within state recreation units, consideration shall be given to compatibility of design with the surrounding scenic and environmental characteristics. State recreation units may be established in the terrestrial or non-marine aquatic (lake or stream) environments of the state and shall be further classified as one of the following types:

- (a) State recreation areas, consisting of areas selected and developed to provide multiple recreational opportunities to meet other than purely local needs. The areas shall be

selected for their having terrain capable of withstanding extensive human impact and for their proximity to large population centers, major routes of travel, or proven recreational resources such as manmade or natural bodies of water. Areas containing ecological, geological, scenic, or cultural resources of significant value shall be preserved within state wildernesses, state reserves, state parks, or natural or cultural preserves, or, for those areas situated seaward of the mean high tide line, shall be designated state marine reserves, state marine parks, state marine conservation areas, or state marine cultural preservation areas. Improvements may be undertaken to provide for recreational activities, including, but not limited to, camping, picnicking, swimming, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, boating, waterskiing, diving, winter sports, fishing, and hunting. Improvements to provide for urban or indoor formalized recreational activities shall not be undertaken within state recreation areas.

- (b) Underwater recreation areas, consisting of areas in the non-marine aquatic (lake or stream) environment selected and developed to provide surface and subsurface water-oriented recreational opportunities, while preserving basic resource values for present and future generations.
- (c) State beaches, consisting of areas with frontage on the ocean, or bays designed to provide swimming, boating, fishing, and other beach-oriented recreational activities. Coastal areas containing ecological, geological, scenic, or cultural resources of significant value shall be preserved within state wildernesses, state reserves, state parks, or natural or cultural preserves, or, for those areas situated seaward of the

mean high tide line, shall be designated state marine reserves, state marine parks, state marine conservation areas, or state marine cultural preservation areas.

- (d) Wayside campgrounds, consisting of relatively small areas suitable for overnight camping and offering convenient access to major highways.

QUIMBY ACT OF 1975

California Government Code Section 66477, known as the Quimby Act, enacted in 1975 and amended in 1982, authorizes cities and counties to pass ordinances requiring developers set aside land, donate easements for conservation, or pay fees that can be applied to parkland uses. The land, fees, or any combination thereof is to be used solely for the purpose of developing new or rehabilitating existing recreational facilities. The use of revenues from the Quimby Act for operations and maintenance of facilities is not a permitted use. The Quimby Act set the standard of 3 to 5 acres per 1,000 residents as "adequate" open space/parkland acreage in jurisdictions.

LOCAL

LOS ANGELES COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

Conservation and Open Space Element

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| Policy 28 | Develop local parks in urban areas as part of urban revitalization projects, wherever possible. |
| Policy 34 | Encourage the maintenance of landscaped areas and pollution-tolerant plants in urban areas. Integrate landscaping and open space into housing, commercial, and industrial developments, especially in urban revitalization areas. Use drought-resistant vegetation. |
| Policy 35 | Support preservation of heritage trees. Encourage tree planting programs to enhance the beauty of urban landscape. |

IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

METHODOLOGY

When considering the significance of an individual impact, the EIR considers the existing local, State and Federal regulations, laws and policies in effect, including applicable General Plan policies. In addition, the impact analysis considers the Project design features that have been incorporated into the Project to avoid, reduce or offset potential impacts. In cases where existing regulations and policies and Project design features may not adequately reduce Project impacts, the County has proposed additional mitigation measures to reduce, avoid or offset Project-related impacts. For purposes of this analysis, the recreation study area is confined to the proposed Project study area described in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, of this EIR.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following thresholds of significance are based, in part, on CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. For purposes of this EIR, implementation of the proposed Plan may have a significant adverse impact on recreation if it would do any of the following:

- Would the Project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated;
- Does the Project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

<i>Threshold:</i>	<i>Would the Project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?</i>
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Impact 4.12-1 **Implementation of the Project would not increase the use of existing neighborhood or regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. This impact would be *less than significant*.**

The Project proposes numerous improvements to EMJ Park that would likely increase the number of visitors on a daily basis. Proposed improvements to EMJ Park anticipated to cause an increase in usage include a 20,000 sq. ft. community center, a 21,000 sq. ft. gymnasium, an equestrian facilities center, a 25,000-35,000 sq. ft. aquatic center, walking trails, and additional restroom facilities and picnic areas. However, the proposed facilities would result in a beneficial impact because they represent an improvement to, and expansion of, the existing capacity of recreational facilities. As a result, the Project is not anticipated to result in an increased use and subsequent accelerated physical deterioration of other existing parks in the region. Additionally, many of the proposed amenities would generate revenue for the Project site, which would be partially utilized for maintenance and upkeep of the proposed amenities. In addition, the maintenance and operations of the proposed amenities would be provided directly onsite from the South Agency Headquarters and Corporate Yard. Since the maintenance operations would be housed onsite, this would provide for a more efficient and continuous maintenance of the improved EMJ Park.

The expansion of EMJ Park would include the incorporation of the former UVA site, which is currently abandoned and has been demolished to its foundation. The expansion may also incorporate the adjacent UHC property, for a new total park area of 126 acres of land. An enlarged park represents an important accomplishment in the preservation and expansion of recreational sites in the Project area because EMJ Park is

completely surrounded by high-density urbanization in all directions and is the primary regional park serving this area.

The combination of the renovation of EMJ Park, including major improvements to facilities on the property and the addition of new amenities, along with an expansion of the EMJ Park itself through the addition of the one adjacent property (former UVA site) and potentially another property in the future (UHC site), would result in an increased size of the facility. Although implementation of the Project is anticipated to result in an increased use of EMJ Park and amenities, substantial deterioration of the new facilities is not anticipated because operation and maintenance would be provided onsite on an ongoing basis. As discussed above, the Project is not anticipated to increase the use of other parks in the area, nor would the Project result in the potential deterioration of those facilities. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

<i>Threshold:</i>	<i>Does the Project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?</i>
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Impact 4.12-2 Implementation of the Project includes the expansion of a recreational facility and construction of additional amenities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. This impact would be *significant and unavoidable even with mitigation incorporated.*

Due to both fiscal and environmental constraints, it is anticipated that development of the proposed Project would occur in phases, and construction of the various amenities proposed as part of the EMJ Park Master Plan would be phased as well. It is the County's intention to maintain the accessibility of as many of the existing facilities (including the walking paths, picnic areas, and play area) until such time when the new facilities are built. However, it is anticipated that during construction, the existing amenities may be temporarily inaccessible to the general public for a short duration, depending on the type of construction being done. Additionally, for safety purposes, portions of EMJ Park may be inaccessible during construction to maintain visitor safety

by separating visitors from potentially hazardous activities such as open trenches, construction equipment, and building materials. It is anticipated that development of the proposed Project components would occur in approximately six phases as outlined below and shown in Exhibit 3.0-8, *CEQA Conceptual Development Plan*, with ultimate buildout of the Project site anticipated to occur by 2030. The phases include six smaller areas of the site that could be developed independently from a site design perspective (i.e. functional grading phases and construction logistics) as remediation phases are completed and funding for construction of amenities becomes available. The first phase, Phase I is generally located in the center of the site and has a low level of remediation constraints and provides a wide range of recreational activities and from a design and planning perspective is a logical first phase. The remaining five areas of the site could be developed in a variety of different sequences that is yet to be determined and thus they are not numbered in sequential order but rather just listed below.

- Phase I: Community Event Center; Gymnasium; Amphitheatre; Splash Pad; Model Boat Pond; Reflecting Pool; Sculpture Garden; Civic Plaza; Wedding Pavilion
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- Children's Play Area; Lake; Fishing Docks; Paddle Boats/Kayak Launch; Promenade; Picnic Shelter
- Multi-Purpose Stadium and Outdoor Athletic Fields; Skate Park and Outdoor Basketball Areas
- Equestrian Center
- South Agency Headquarters; Dog Park
- Aquatic Center

Mitigation Measure REC-1 would require that during construction, the County implement a Pedestrian Safety Plan that includes appropriate signage and detour routes to enable visitors to access other various amenities. With implementation of Mitigation Measure REC-1, short-term construction-related impacts would be less than significant.

MM REC-1 *Prior to construction, the County shall implement a Pedestrian Safety Plan that would include signage to identify routes of minimal impact, potential amenity closures, and permitted hours of construction activity. The Pedestrian Safety Plan may also include plans for installing fencing as appropriate or other barriers to assure that open trenches are not accessible, and rerouting pedestrian traffic away from potentially hazardous construction areas or conditions.*

The potential for the proposed Project, which includes the expansion of the EMJ Park boundary and construction of additional amenities, as detailed in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, of this EIR, to result in adverse physical impacts to the environment is evaluated in various sections of this DEIR, including Sections 4.2, *Air Quality*, 4.3, *Biological Resources*, 4.4, *Cultural Resources*, 4.6, *Greenhouse Gases*, 4.7, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, etc. Each section includes a detailed evaluation of the Project's potential to impact the environment. As identified in Section 4.10, *Noise*, the proposed Project would result in a significant and unavoidable impact regarding vibration.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The cumulative effect of projects in the County would have the potential to result in the loss of recreational resources through the physical alteration of a recreational amenity or its immediate surroundings. Projects in the County are regulated by Federal, State, and local regulations as discussed the regulatory section of this Section.

The Project proposes to improve an existing park with additional amenities to service both the local and regional communities. Therefore, although alterations to an existing park would occur, the Project site would remain open space and would provide additional recreational opportunities. Additionally, the proposed Project would meet the needs of additional new housing development in the region. As previously discussed, there could be a temporary impact to existing recreational amenities during construction of the proposed amenities. However, with implementation of Mitigation Measure REC-1, construction-related impacts would be reduced to a less than

significant level. These impacts are anticipated to be temporary in nature and would cease upon completion of construction.

In addition, the Project and other cumulative projects in the County would be required to be consistent with local regulations regarding recreational facilities. Each future development project must comply with all applicable state laws, and each development project must address site-specific recreational issues to County standards through implementation of recommendations outlined in site-specific recreation evaluations. Therefore, the proposed Project, in combination with cumulative projects, would have a less than significant cumulative impact on recreation.

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