

4.11 PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

This section of the EIR evaluates potential impacts to public facilities and services resulting from implementation of the proposed project. Public services are those functions that serve residents on a community-wide basis. These functions include fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, libraries, and other facilities such as recreation centers, community centers, and senior centers.

4.11.1 Existing Conditions

Existing public facilities that serve the project area are described below and their locations are shown on Figure 4.11-1, *Existing Public Facilities*.

4.11.1.1 Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services

Fire protection services in La Mesa are provided by Heartland Fire and Rescue (Heartland Fire), an organization formed by a joint powers agreement (JPA) that includes the cities of La Mesa, El Cajon, and Lemon Grove. Heartland Fire and Rescue was established in 2010 to provide cooperative fire services for all three cities for a more efficient allocation of services. The JPA gives the participating cities greater flexibility in how these services are utilized by pooling resources and streamlining management procedures within each fire department, thereby enabling these departments to service a larger area.

Heartland Fire includes over 130 staff that serves a population of over 186,000 people and responds to over 22,000 calls for emergency service each year (Heartland Fire 2020). The La Mesa Operations Division is staffed with one Operations Division Chief, one Battalion Chief, 12 fire captains, 12 fire engineers, and 15 firefighters/paramedics (Heartland Fire 2020).

Heartland Fire operates eight fire stations, with three located in La Mesa. Station 11, located at 8034 Allison Avenue, serves the central and western sections of the City, and is staffed with three career personnel daily, including one captain, one engineer, and one firefighter/paramedic, one medic engine, one rescue engine, and one fire truck. Station 12, located at 8844 Dallas Street, serves the northern section of the City and employs three career personnel daily, including one captain, one engineer, and one firefighter/paramedic, and maintains one medic engine and one reserve engine on site (Dudek 2019). Station 13, located at 9110 Grossmont Boulevard, serves the eastern section of the City. Station 11 is the closest fire station to the project site, at approximately 0.75 mile to the southeast and would primarily serve the project.

4.11.1.2 Police Services

The City's Police Department provides police protection and general law enforcement services for the City. The Police Department's headquarters building is located at 8085 University Avenue, approximately 0.75 mile southeast of the project site. The City maintains three patrol shifts that provide 24-hour response to calls for assistance and traffic control. The Police Department has 69 sworn officers and 31 civilian employees, as well as a large contingent of retired senior volunteers, and answers over 100,000 calls for service each year (City 2020b). The Police Department includes a Patrol Division, Investigations Unit, Special Investigations Unit, Traffic Unit, School Resource Unit, and Crime Prevention/Community Resource Unit and provides services such as patrol, investigations, traffic, school resources, support services, animal control, parking enforcement, and community resources services.

4.11.1.3 Schools

The project area is served by the La Mesa Spring Valley School District for primary education. The La Mesa–Spring Valley School District serves approximately 12,400 students within 26 square miles and includes 22 schools comprising 17 elementary schools and 5 middle schools/academies (Education Data Partnership [Ed Data] 2020). Rolando Elementary School, located at 6925 Tower Street, and La Mesa Arts Academy, located at 4200 Parks Avenue, would serve elementary and middle school students generated from the proposed project. Rolando Elementary School had an enrollment of 550 students during the 2018-2019 school year, and the La Mesa Arts Academy had an enrollment of 1,085 students during the same school year (Ed Data 2020).

The project area is served by the Grossmont Union High School District for secondary education. The Grossmont Union High School District covers 465 square miles, including the cities of El Cajon, La Mesa, Santee, and Lemon Grove; a small portion of the City of San Diego; and the unincorporated areas of Spring Valley, Dulzura, Alpine, Jamul, and Lakeside. Grossmont Union High School District serves 21,342 students across nine traditional high schools, two charter schools, two alternative high schools, one continuation high school, and three special education programs (Ed Data 2020). The project site is within the boundaries for Grossmont High School, located at 1100 Murray Drive. High school students generated from the proposed project would be served by Grossmont High School. Grossmont High School had an enrollment of 2,219 students during the 2018-2019 school year (Ed Data 2020).

4.11.1.4 Parks

There are 14 public parks in the City of La Mesa encompassing a total area of approximately 136 acres of parkland. The City's General Plan categorizes parks into four different classifications: regional parks, community parks, neighborhood parks, and pocket parks. Regional parks typically serve several communities and have substantially more acreage than parks in individual communities. Regional parks have a variety of recreation facilities and larger scale uses such as golf courses and swimming pools. Harry Griffen Park, located 2.8 miles northeast of the project site, is an approximately 53-acre regional park with amenities including picnic tables, a children's play structure, an off-leash dog park, hiking trails, and a large amphitheater that is utilized for special events.

Community parks serve a larger population within either a single community area or multiple communities, and uses typically include amenities such as field sports, picnic areas, play areas, and community centers. MacArthur Park is an approximately 22-acre community park located 1.2 miles east of the project site. The park includes a municipal pool, a historic building used for special events, a community center, and a recreation center.

Neighborhood parks serve a smaller population within an area, but still include passive and active recreational facilities. Neighborhood parks may include tot lots, picnic facilities, and a multi-use court. Most of the City's parks are classified as neighborhood parks. The closest neighborhood park to the project site is Aztec Park, located approximately 0.6 mile northeast of the project site. This park consists of large, mature shade trees with large expanses of rolling turf. In addition, the park has picnic areas and a children's playground.

Pocket parks are less than one acre in size and are primarily made up of hardscape-type plazas and walkways that support a variety of recreational opportunities. Examples of pocket parks in the City include the historic La Mesa Depot Museum, which is a historical museum about the time when

Southern Pacific Railway trains traveled through the City, and the “Walkway of the Stars,” which is a pedestrian walkway that includes decorative art murals and seating areas.

4.11.1.5 Other Public Facilities

The project site and surrounding areas are served by the La Mesa Library for public library services. The La Mesa Library is a branch of the San Diego County Library system; however, the building is owned by the City and shares space with the La Mesa post office at the Civic Center complex at 8074 University Avenue. The library building is 17,725 SF with approximately 10,525 SF devoted to library space (City 2012a). The La Mesa Library circulates over 60,000 titles each month, making it one of the top circulating branches in the San Diego County Library system.

A community center and recreation complex are located within MacArthur Park at 4975 Memorial Drive that includes banquet facilities, a municipal pool, and a baseball field. The recreation center holds classes and activities primarily for youth, teens, and younger adults. The municipal pool provides aquatic activities and classes for all ages. The Kuhlken Baseball Field is used by youth sports organizations.

The La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center is located within Porter Park and offers a variety of classes, activities, and programs for adults to promote active, healthy aging. Activities include a broad range of individual and group services and activities for active mature adults, as well as access to many other community resources and agencies serving senior citizens. This includes educational, recreational, social and cultural events, daily lunch program, day and extended day trips, legal services, information and referral, health screenings, exercise, and dance.

4.11.2 Regulatory Setting

4.11.2.1 State

California Mutual Aid Plan

The California Mutual Aid Plan establishes policies, procedures, and responsibilities for requesting and providing inter- and intra-agency assistance in emergencies. The plan directs local agencies to develop automatic or mutual aid agreements, or to enter into agreements for assistance by hire (e.g., Schedule A contracts) where local needs are not met by the framework established by the Mutual Aid Plan.

Senate Bill 50

SB 50, or the Leroy F. Greene School Facilities Act of 1998, restricts the ability of local agencies to deny project approvals on the basis that public school facilities (classrooms, auditoriums, etc.) are inadequate. School impact fees are collected at the time when building permits are issued. Payment of school fees is required by SB 50 for all new residential development projects and is considered “full and complete mitigation” of any school impacts. School impact fees are payments to offset capital cost impacts associated with new developments, which result primarily from costs of additional facilities, related furnishings and equipment, and projected capital maintenance requirements. As such, agencies cannot require additional mitigation for any school impacts (Chapter 407, Statutes of 1998).

Quimby Act and Assembly Bill 1359

Cities and counties have been authorized since the passage of the 1975 Quimby Act (Government Code Section 66477) to pass ordinances requiring that developers set aside land, donate conservation easements, or pay fees for park improvements. Revenues generated through the Quimby Act cannot be used for the operation and maintenance of park facilities. The dedicated land or fees may only be used for the development or rehabilitation of neighborhood or community parks or recreational facilities in the subdivision they were provided for, according to AB 1359 (Chapter 412, Statutes of 2013), unless certain requirements are met, and an exception is made. The goal of the Quimby Act is to require developers to help mitigate the impacts of property improvements. The Act gives authority for passage of land dedication ordinances only to cities and counties. Special districts must work with cities and/or counties to receive parkland dedication and/or in-lieu fees. The fees must be paid, and land conveyed directly to the local public agencies that provide park and recreation services communitywide.

4.11.2.2 Local

City of La Mesa General Plan

The City's General Plan contains a Public Services and Facilities Element to address publicly managed and provided facilities and services. This element provides policies for financing, prioritization, developer, and City funding responsibilities for public facilities in the City. The Public Services and Facilities Element of the General Plan contains the following goals, objectives, and policies related to public services as they pertain to development:

Goal PSF-4: A safe community.

- **Objective PSF-4.1:** The City will maintain a Police Department that is adequately staffed and funded to ensure a safe community.
- **Policy PSF-4.1.1:** The City will monitor and prepare assessments of Police services to identify the level of Police staffing necessary to achieve the goal of a safe community, within budgetary constraints.

Goal PSF-5: A community where fire risk is minimal.

- **Objective PSF-5.1:** The City will provide fire suppression services and prevention information and services.
- **Policy PSF-5.1.1:** The Department will continue to provide first response medical emergency services.

Additionally, the Recreation and Open Space Element contains goals, objectives, and policies for the maintenance and enhancement of recreation and open space amenities, including parks. Relevant polices applicable to the project include the following:

Goal RO-1: A network of public parks throughout the City that will be convenient and beneficial to all segments of the community.

- **Objective RO-1.1:** Give priority to maintaining and improving the City's public park lands.

- **Policy RO-1.1.1:** Use standards established within the Parks Master Plan for improvements to existing and proposed park facilities.
- **Policy RO-1.1.4:** Continue to collect park in-lieu fees from developers to fund needed park improvements.
- **Objective RO-1.2:** Improve accessibility to parks.
- **Policy RO-1.2.1:** Situate park and recreation facilities and improve access to these facilities so that no resident is more than a 15-minute walk from an opportunity to engage in a recreational activity.

4.11.3 Methodology and Assumptions

Potential impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed project were evaluated based on relevant information from the General Plan (City 2012a), Parks Master Plan (City 2012b), La Mesa-Spring Valley School District, Grossmont Union High School District, Heartland Fire and Rescue, and La Mesa Police Department. Additionally, population estimates and other relevant demographic data, as well as aerial photography coverage, were reviewed and used in the analysis.

4.11.4 Significance Thresholds

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a significant impact related to public facilities and services would occur if implementation of the proposed project would result in any of the following:

1. Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:
 - fire protection?
 - police protection?
 - schools?
 - parks?
 - other public facilities?
2. 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?
3. 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?

4.11.5 Impact Analysis

4.11.5.1 Public Facilities

Threshold 1: Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

- *fire protection?*
- *police protection?*
- *schools?*
- *parks?*
- *other public facilities?*

Fire Protection

The project proposes the addition of up to 950 multi-family residential units and up to 15,000 SF of resident-serving commercial space, which would increase the demand for fire protection and emergency services in the service area and could potentially adversely impact current response times. Based on a persons per household of 2.37 for La Mesa, as identified by SANDAG demographic data (SANDAG 2019c), the project could result in an additional 2,252 people in the project area, although some project residents may be relocating from other areas within the City, potentially resulting a smaller actual population increase from the project. However, the project site is already served by Heartland Fire. Heartland Fire has facilities and staffing in the project area to adequately serve the project. Although the project would potentially result in increases in calls for fire protection and/or emergency service, no new facilities or improvements to existing facilities would be required as a result of the project. The proposed project is located in a highly developed urban area of La Mesa, which is not considered at high risk for wildland fires and is not adjacent to any undeveloped open land areas that are susceptible to wildland fires. Furthermore, the proposed project would comply with the City's Fire Code (La Mesa Municipal Code Title 11), including all applicable requirements for fuel management, brush clearance, and sprinklers for the proposed buildings to minimize on-site fire hazards. Heartland Fire provided input in the design of the proposed project to ensure that it meets state and local fire safety standards. Therefore, the project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered fire facilities. Impacts related to fire protection services would be less than significant.

Police Protection

The project proposes the addition of up to 950 multi-family residential units and up to 15,000 SF of resident-serving commercial space with up to approximately 2,252 residents, which would increase the demand for police protection services in the service area and could potentially adversely impact current response times. The project site is currently provided with police protection services by the La Mesa Police Department. The La Mesa Police Department has indicated that it has the capacity and capability to provide service to the project. The 40,000-SF Police Department Headquarters building, located at 8085 University Avenue, was constructed in 2010 and meets present space needs and includes currently underused capacity committed to house the expanded police service functions required to meet the needs of future development. Therefore, the project would not result in substantial adverse physical

impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered police facilities. Impacts related to police protection services would be less than significant.

Schools

The project proposes the addition of up to 950 multi-family residential units with up to approximately 2,252 residents, which would generate new students in the area that would need to be accommodated at nearby schools that serve the project site, including Rolando Elementary, La Mesa Arts Academy, and Grossmont High School. Capacity information for these three schools are presented in Table 4.11-1, *School Capacity and Enrollment Data*.

**Table 4.11-1
SCHOOL CAPACITY AND ENROLLMENT DATA**

School	Design Capacity ¹	2018-2019 Enrollment ²	Resulting Excess/ (Deficit) Capacity
Rolando Elementary	575	550	25
La Mesa Arts Academy	1,156	1,085	71
Grossmont High School	2,586	2,219	367

¹ Reported school design capacities in the La Mesa General Plan Final Program EIR (City 2013a).

² Enrollment numbers from Educational Data Partnership (Ed Data 2020).

As shown, the three schools designated to serve the project are not operating at full capacity. While these schools may or may not have sufficient capacity in the near term to serve new students generated by the project, planning for future school facilities is the responsibility of the school districts.

Government Code Section 65995 and Education Code Section 53080 authorize school districts to impose facility mitigation fees on new development to address any increased enrollment that may result. SB 50, enacted on August 27, 1998, substantially revised developer fee and mitigation procedures for school facilities as set forth in Government Code Section 65996. The legislation holds that an acceptable method of offsetting a project's effect on the adequacy of school facilities is payment of a school impact fee prior to issuance of a building permit. Once paid, the school impact fees would serve as mitigation for any project-related impacts to school facilities. As such, the City is legally prohibited from imposing any additional mitigation related to school facilities, as payment of the school impact fees constitutes full and complete mitigation.

Both La Mesa–Spring Valley School District and Grossmont Union High School District collect developer fees for residential and commercial projects, and the project would be required to pay applicable school facilities fees prior to issuance of building permits. Payment of school fees would provide full and complete mitigation for impacts to school facilities in accordance with state law pursuant to Government Code Section 65996 and SB 50. Therefore, the project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered school facilities. Impacts related to schools would be less than significant.

Parks

The project proposes the addition of up to 950 multi-family residential units and up to 15,000 SF of resident-serving commercial space with up to approximately 2,252 residents, which would increase the demand for use of existing public parks in the project area. The Parks Master Plan (City 2012b) establishes population-based park standards for neighborhood and community parks, including one

neighborhood park per 5,000 residents and 1 community park per 20,000 residents. Based on the current population of La Mesa at 61,261 residents (SANDAG 2019c), 12.25 neighborhood parks and 3.06 community parks are needed to achieve the population-based park standards. The City currently provides 12 neighborhood parks and 1 community park and thus, a shortage of parkland currently exists.

Additionally, Policy RO-1.2.1 in the Recreation and Open Space Element of the General Plan states that no resident should be more than a 15-minute walk from an opportunity to engage in a recreational activity such as a park. As noted above in Section 4.1.1.4, the closest neighborhood park to the project site is Aztec Park, which is approximately 0.6 mile (as the crow flies) to the northeast; however, Aztec Park is located across I-8 and is not accessible on foot within the 15-minute accessibility goal. The closest park south of I-8 is MacArthur Park at a distance of approximately one mile to the southeast. Using the fastest pedestrian route on public streets (Alvarado Road to Guava Road to El Cajon to Baltimore Drive to University Avenue to Memorial Drive), Google Maps approximates that it would take approximately 35 minutes to walk to this park, which exceeds the 15-minute goal.

In order to generate funds for park improvements or to acquire land for parks, the City adopted two park development impact fees as part of the City's Municipal Code, including the Residential Parkland Dedication In-lieu Fee (Municipal Code Section 9.20.040) and the Residential Park Improvement Impact Fee (Municipal Code Section 9.20.050). These impact fees are designed for single and multi-family residential developments to mitigate the impact of new development on the City's existing facilities and infrastructure. Residential development projects are obligated to dedicate three acres of undeveloped parkland per one thousand people. The fees developed were based on population and growth projections, facility standards, amount/cost of facilities required to accommodate growth, and total cost of facilities per unit of development. By collecting these fees, the goals and priorities of the City's recreational space and facilities standards established in the Parks Master Plan and General Plan can be met. The project is subject to these fees. With payment of a parkland improvement fee to comply with the City's standards for parks, the project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered population-based parks. Impacts related to parks would be less than significant.

Other Public Facilities

The project proposes the addition of up to 950 multi-family residential units, which could increase the demand for public facilities such as libraries, community centers, and senior centers. As stated above in Section 4.11.1.5, the project site and surrounding areas are served by the La Mesa Library for public library services, which includes 10,525 SF of library space at the Civic Center complex. A minimum space service goal for the San Diego County Library system is 0.50 SF per capita (County of San Diego 2011). The La Mesa Library provides approximately 0.17 SF per capita based on the 2018 City population of 61,261 (SANDAG 2019c). Using the San Diego County Library system size metric, the La Mesa Library would need to be 30,631 SF to meet the current need, which is 20,106 SF more than the existing space. Therefore, the La Mesa Library is already below the San Diego County Library system space service goal. Based on a persons per household of 2.37 for La Mesa, as identified by SANDAG demographic data (SANDAG 2019c), the project could result in an additional 2,252 people in the project area, although some project residents may be relocating from other areas within the City, potentially resulting a smaller actual population increase from the project. Nonetheless, the project's introduction of 2,252 residents to the area would not cause a substantial change or increased demand for additional library services. With the additional 2,252 residents, the library space service goal would decrease by a negligible amount of 0.006 (from 0.172 to 0.166 SF per capita). Similarly, the additional project residents

would not substantially increase the demand for other public facilities within the City (such as the community center, recreation center, municipal pool, baseball field, and Adult Enrichment Center) such that new or expanded facilities would be required as a result of the project. Implementation of the project therefore would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered library or other public facilities. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.11.5.2 Deterioration of Existing Neighborhood Parks and Recreational Facilities

Threshold 2: 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?

As discussed above in Section 4.11.5.1, the project would increase the demand for use of existing public parks and recreational facilities in the project area due to the addition of up to 950 new residential units and 2,252 residents, which could potentially result in physical deterioration of such facilities. However, the project would be required to pay a parkland improvement fee pursuant to Municipal Code Section 9.20.040 and 9.20.050. These impact fees are designed for single and multi-family residential developments to mitigate the impact of new development on the City's existing facilities and infrastructure. With payment of a parkland improvement fee, the project would not 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. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.11.5.3 Construction or Expansion of Recreational Facilities

Threshold 3: 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?

The project would include on-site recreational amenities for project residents. The proposed buildings would include interior project amenity facilities and active outdoor spaces on the podium deck levels. Building amenities are anticipated to include clubhouses, pools, and gymnasiums, as well as patios and balconies. Outdoor recreation areas would include a pedestrian promenade, courtyards, public gathering spaces, seating areas, and observation areas (e.g., seating and/or interpretive signage at Alvarado Creek overlook areas). A pedestrian promenade would be located along the interior of the project site and much of it would be adjacent to the enhanced Alvarado Creek. The environmental effects resulting from implementation of the proposed on-site recreational amenities are evaluated in this EIR and where potential adverse physical effects could occur, mitigation is identified that would reduce impacts to below a level of significance.

As discussed in Section 4.11.5.1, the project would contribute to the existing citywide need for additional park and recreational facilities. The project would require payment of a parkland improvement fee pursuant to Municipal Code Section 9.20.040 and 9.20.050 to offset the impact of new development on the City's existing facilities and infrastructure. Payment of a parkland improvement fee would not result in physical effects on the environment. Accordingly, impacts associated with construction or expansion of recreational facilities would be less than significant.

4.11.6 Mitigation Measures

4.11.6.1 Public Facilities

No significant impacts related to public facilities, including fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, libraries, or other public facilities would result from the implementation of the proposed project. Therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

4.11.6.2 Deterioration of Existing Neighborhood Parks and Recreational Facilities

No significant impacts related to deterioration of existing parks and recreational facilities would result from the implementation of the proposed project. Therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

4.11.6.3 Construction or Expansion of Recreational Facilities

No significant impacts related to the construction or expansion of recreational facilities would result from the implementation of the proposed project with implementation of mitigation measures identified throughout this EIR. Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required.

4.11.7 Significance Determination

The significance of public facilities and services impacts before and after mitigation is summarized in Table 4.11-2, *Significance Determination Summary of Public Facilities and Services Impacts*.

Implementation of the proposed project would not result in any significant impacts to public facilities and services. Impacts related to public facilities and deterioration of existing neighborhood parks and recreational facilities would be less than significant. Impacts associated with construction or expansion of recreational facilities would also be less than significant with implementation of mitigation measures identified throughout this EIR such that no additional mitigation is required.

**Table 4.11-2
SIGNIFICANCE DETERMINATION SUMMARY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES IMPACTS**

Issue	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	Significance After Mitigation
Public Facilities			
Fire Protection	Less than significant	None required	Less than significant
Police Protection	Less than significant	None required	Less than significant
Schools	Less than significant	None required	Less than significant
Parks	Less than significant	None required	Less than significant
Other Public Facilities	Less than significant	None required	Less than significant
Deterioration of Existing Neighborhood Parks and Recreational Facilities	Less than significant	None required	Less than significant
Construction or Expansion of Recreational Facilities	Less than significant	No additional measures required	Less than significant