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CHAPTER 6 Parks and Recreation Element

6.1 Introduction

Parks and recreational facilities in the ESGV Planning Area (Planning Area) contribute significantly to the quality of life for community members. These facilities serve local and regional needs, protect lands for the preservation of historical and cultural resources, and conserve natural and wildlife areas. In the ESGV, the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) operates and maintains about 3,700 acres of parks and recreational facilities in unincorporated areas and cities.

This Parks and Recreation Element analyzes existing parks and recreational facilities and addresses the need to increase the quantity and quality of parkland and recreation programs and improve existing park and recreational facilities. The overall vision that has guided the development of the Parks and Recreation Element consists of making parks, open spaces, trails, and other recreational facilities equitably accessible to the public; preserving lands for conservation of natural, historical, and cultural resources; informing and educating the public about the area’s indigenous history and present indigenous

communities; enhancing programming; and providing improved trail connectivity to local destinations and regional trail systems. This element establishes goals, policies, and strategies to address the specific and unique park and recreation needs of the ESGV.

6.2 Existing Conditions

DPR offers a wide variety of parks and recreation resources in the ESGV, ranging from vibrant community and regional parks to natural areas, trails, and open spaces, with varying types of active and passive recreational and educational opportunities. Overall, the ESGV has 2,113 acres of local park space and 20,839 acres of regional parks, including both facilities operated by cities and DPR. DPR operates approximately 3,700 acres of parkland in the ESGV.

There are also other park spaces that are owned and operated by cities, conservancies, local government agencies, joint powers authorities, and state and federal agencies. In some communities, schools also provide land and facilities for recreational use on a limited basis through joint use agreements. Below is a summary of the open space and parks resources in the Planning Area. See Appendix C, *Parks, Facilities, and Trails Operated by DPR in the ESGV*, for a full list of County-operated open space resources in the Planning Area.

Local Parks: DPR operates 23 local parks in the ESGV, including community and neighborhood parks. Local park spaces typically provide facilities for active recreation and gathering that meet neighborhood needs and are highly utilized. Facilities include picnic areas and playgrounds, and can accommodate a variety of organized sports, including soccer, baseball, tennis, volleyball, basketball, and skateboarding.

Regional Parks: Regional parks are over 100 acres in size and of regional importance, serving local residents and visitors throughout the county. These facilities contain active amenities such as athletic courts and fields, playgrounds, and swimming pools. They also offer opportunities for passive recreation, wildlife viewing, beautiful scenery, conservation, and outdoor recreation including hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. The types of regional facilities in the ESGV also include trails, trailheads, staging areas, equestrian parks, natural areas, and golf courses.

There are four regional recreation parks operated by DPR in ESGV: Bonelli Regional Park, Marshall Canyon Regional Park, Schabarum Regional Park, and San Dimas Canyon Community Regional Park. Currently under development, Phase I of the Puente Hills Regional Park will add 142-acres of regional parkland upon completion in 2026-27 by transforming a former landfill into the County's first new regional park in over 30 years.

Trails: ESGV offers about 180 miles of regional trails, which translates to 0.19 miles of regional trails per 1,000 residents—well below the countywide average of 0.33. These trails—primarily maintained by DPR—traverse regional parks, conservancy lands, and open spaces. The varied geographies across the ESGV provide users different trail experiences.

Equestrian trails are also featured in the ESGV and connect to equestrian neighborhoods and horse arenas. These trails run throughout the area, along neighborhood streets in equestrian districts to drainage channels, and sometimes along busy roads.

Parks Programming: DPR and cities in the ESGV offer a variety of recreational programs at park facilities. The programs include cultural and community events, which bring communities together around seasonal holiday celebrations and cultural gatherings. In addition, there are youth recreational, athletic, arts, and educational programs. The use of DPR facilities by community organizations expands park programming, provides benefits to the public, and increases access to park facilities. Through agreements, DPR forges collaborative partnerships with committed community-based organizations and program providers.

6.3 Challenges and Opportunities

The following provides a summary of overarching parks and recreation challenges and opportunities observed in the Planning Area. These challenges and opportunities, combined with regional planning guidance, inform the strategies, goals, and policies presented in this element.

A. PARK PLANNING FOR DIVERSE PARK NEEDS

In the ESGV, many communities lack safe access to quality parks within walking distance (a half-mile), and comprise a limited tree

canopy, a high percentage of paved and impervious surfaces, and excessively hot temperatures. These factors affect community health and well-being.

In addition, the 24 unincorporated communities in the ESGV are diverse and unique in terms of their demographics, geographies, and recreational preferences, which makes it impossible for any single park or recreational facility to meet all community needs. Thus, it is crucial to have a wide range and comprehensive system of facilities.

B. OPEN SPACE AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES PRESERVATION

Parks and open spaces provide habitat for wildlife, reduce air pollution, provide stormwater benefits, promote biodiversity, mitigate the urban heat island effect, stabilize temperatures, and preserve cultural and tribal cultural resources. Various parks and open spaces in the ESGV contain significant historic and natural resources that must be protected. Threats to these resources include intended and unintended acts, such as deferred maintenance, renovation or improvements that significantly alter or damage resources, vandalism and theft, or overuse by park visitors. Additionally, priority areas for environmental conservation have been identified in the *2022 Los Angeles Countywide Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Plus (PNA+)* which was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on December 6, 2022.

Native American stakeholders expressed the need to expand access to parks and open spaces for ceremonies, gatherings, and events for indigenous-led education centers and activities. Visitor centers and museums can also be used to inform the public about Native American history and culture in the ESGV.

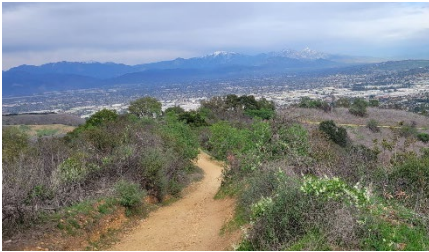
C. PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION AND PLANNING

All residents in the ESGV should have equitable access to parks and open spaces. Additional parkland and recreational amenities are necessary to address the growing and diverse needs of ESGV residents. Parks are not equally accessible to all communities in the Planning Area—many in the valley flatlands and western parts of the

Planning Area suffer from high pollution burdens and have high park needs.

Multi-benefit parks can address multiple needs and offer diverse benefits which is important as land for parks becomes limited. They can improve water and air quality, improve flood risk, provide habitat protection and biodiversity, improve public health, offer varied recreational amenities, among other benefits.

Multi-benefit parks



A good community parks and recreation system is based on the quality of facilities and services provided, as well as the ability to anticipate and respond to changing trends. Given the constraints on and competing needs for land use, one of the County's goals is to develop **multi-benefit parks** accessible to communities with limited parks access that can serve a diverse range of needs.

D. TRAIL CONNECTIVITY AND GREEN CONNECTIONS

Residents of the ESGV rely heavily on their vehicles to access parks and recreational facilities. This emphasizes the need to provide improved and additional transportation options and infrastructure to promote walking and biking. Certain utility corridors and transportation rights-of-way may be converted to accessible green spaces and corridors. While the ESGV is home to numerous trails, there remains a need to expand the trail network and improve connectivity between trails and community destinations. There are also opportunities to extend the trail system by connecting to waterways, spillways, and easements.

The community has voiced concerns about trails, including the need for better connectivity, improved upkeep and maintenance of trails, increased ranger presence, improved safety and cleanliness at trailheads, and protection of native habitat and wildlife from the impacts of trails use.

E. IMPROVED PARKS ACCESS AND SERVICES

Community members also recommended the following to increase and improve visits to recreational parks and facilities:

- **Transit Options.** Provide free and more frequent transit, including direct bus routes and shuttles, to parks and recreational facilities within the ESGV and beyond.
- **Better Access to Information.** Provide easily accessible multi-format and multilingual information about events at regional parks, available amenities, nearby recreation facilities, and opportunities to provide input.
- **Additional Staff.** Hire more park guides and maintenance staff to maintain trails and park infrastructure.

- **Better Access to Programs.** Improve and standardize the online reservation system, gather community input to improve the variety of recreation classes, and provide affordable equipment and classes for all ages, especially youth and seniors.
- **Expand Concessions.** Allow local food vendors and set up more hydration locations in parks and facilities.

6.4 Parks and Recreation Element Goals and Policies

Goals and policies for parks and recreation are organized to implement relevant Vision Statements as presented in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, and are referenced as “VS.” See Chapter 8, *East San Gabriel Valley Unincorporated Communities*, for goals and policies associated with specific unincorporated communities. See Chapter 9, *Implementation Programs and Actions*, for implementing programs and actions corresponding to each goal and policy.

VS 3 – Connected and Active Communities

Goal PR-1: Enhance parks and recreational opportunities and provide equitable access to park resources.

Policy PR-1.1: Participatory Park Planning. Provide opportunities for public participation in designing and planning parks, recreation spaces, and programs. Address barriers to participation and park use, as well as the needs and desires communicated by park users and community members. Prioritize engaging residents of disproportionately affected communities with high park needs.

Policy PR-1.2: Educational Signage. Incorporate multi-lingual and multi-format educational signage and messaging into County-operated parks and trails.

Policy PR-1.3: Increase Public Awareness of Parks. Develop multi-lingual and multi-format messaging in partnership with other organizations and agencies to increase community awareness of nearby parks and open space resources, as well as safe and efficient transit/bike/pedestrian routes to access these facilities. Prioritize engaging disproportionately affected communities with high park needs.

Policy PR-1.4: Removing Barriers to Access. Remove barriers to regional recreational access, including cost, perception of safety, ease of access, limited access to information, limits due to age and ability, and feelings of being unwelcome. Engage disproportionately affected communities in developing programs and messaging regarding barriers to access.

See Chapter 7, *Mobility Element*, for related policies on transit and active transportation.

Policy PR-1.5, PR-1.6

Policy PR-1.5: Improved Park Access. Develop transit stops within 0.5 miles of trailheads and entrances to regional parks and open space facilities, with wayfinding signage and clearly designated active transportation pathways leading to park facilities. Prioritize access for disproportionately affected communities.

Policy PR-1.6: Limit Vehicular Access Impacts. To limit impacts of vehicular access to regional parks and open space, focus on expanding transit and active transportation access for all abilities, including free or low-cost park shuttles and other programs in partnership with other agencies, non-profits, and interested groups.

Policy PR-1.7: Environmental Education. Develop free or low-cost multi-lingual and multi-format programs and experiential learning opportunities, in partnership with other organizations, to enhance connections to local open space, foster knowledge and stewardship of native habitat, and provide understanding of local ecological history, watersheds, and unique and rare species in the Planning Area.

Goal PR-2: Conserve priority habitat areas and restore degraded lands to preserve and enhance ecosystem services and well-being.

Policy PR-2.1: Priority Conservation Areas. Collaborate with other agencies, non-profits, conservancies, and interested groups to acquire parkland for conservation in high priority habitat areas, including South Diamond Bar, Puente Hills, and San Gabriel Mountain foothills, as identified in the 2022 PNA+ Final Report.

Policy PR-2.2: Conserve Resource and Hazard Lands. Prioritize land designated Significant Ecological Areas and Fire Hazard Severity Zones for conservation land.

Policy PR-2.3: Restoration of Oil and Gas Land. Seek funding and develop programs in partnership with other agencies, non-profits, conservancies, and interested groups for environmental restoration of oil and gas operations as they phaseout of use in line with County regulations.

Policy PR-2.4: Restore Degraded Lands. Focus restoration of defunct industrial and extractive uses, brownfields, and other degraded land in areas of high environmental burden, as identified by the 2022 PNA+ Final Report, to create new multi-benefit parks, expand access to recreational resources, and provide environmental benefits and ecosystem services to communities adversely impacted by a history of proximate noxious uses.

Goal PR-3: Equitable access to connected, comprehensive, clearly signed, and buffered non-motorized pathways and trails.

Policy PR-3.1: Trail Access and Safety. Regularly monitor trail access points for safety issues. Increase law enforcement presence as needed.

Policy PR-3.2: Connective Multi-Use Trails and Pathways. Develop clearly designated and protected multi-use trails and pathways that connect neighborhoods to public services and facilities, neighborhood services, community destinations, greenways, trailheads, parks, and open spaces that are regularly maintained with locally native vegetation and environmentally sustainable surfaces.

See Chapter 7, *Mobility Element*, for related policies on transit and active transportation.

Policy PR-3.2, PR-3.3

Policy PR-3.3: Enhanced Multi-Use Pathway and Trail

Connectivity. Improve connectivity for non-motorized travel, incorporating design features that improve the perceived safety of trail- and pathway-crossings for heavily trafficked roads, train crossings, and highway under/overpasses for humans and equines. Where possible, route trails and pathways away from heavily trafficked roads and other high noise environments.

Policy PR-3.4: Pathways, Trails, and Water Resources.

Incorporate multi-use trails and pathways as components of river and water resource planning and management projects and ensure connectivity to active transportation networks linking communities, open spaces, and destinations distributed throughout the Planning Area and adjacent regions.

VS 6 – Sustainable Built and Natural Environment

Goal PR-4: Parks and open space facilities are designed, constructed, and managed to ensure natural resource, habitat, and species protections.

See Chapter 5, *Natural Resources, Conservation, and Open Space Element*, for policies related to biological resources.

Policy PR-4.1, PR-4.2

Policy PR-4.1: Protect Biological Resources. In biologically sensitive areas—including areas of seasonal sensitivity, such as during nesting season—manage parks and open spaces, such that the protection of sensitive habitat areas and biological resources takes precedence over recreational access.

Policy PR-4.2: Trail Design. Design and route trails and access points to avoid biologically sensitive areas and species, including areas of seasonal sensitivity, such as during nesting season.

Policy PR-4.3: Riparian Trail Design. Minimize riparian trail crossings to limit disturbance to sensitive resources areas.

Policy PR-4.4: Trail Closure or Rerouting. Design trails and public access recreation areas to minimize habitat fragmentation. Close or reroute trails if negative impacts to threatened or endangered species or sensitive habitats occur because of recreational access and activities.

See Chapter 5, *Natural Resources, Conservation, and Open Space Element*, for related policies.

Policy PR-4.3, PR-4.4

Policy PR-4.5: Trail User Education. Support use of multi-lingual educational signage, messaging, and programming to ensure trail users learn and understand trail use guidelines to minimize potential impacts of recreational use.

Policy PR-4.6: Minimize Impact of Trail and Open Space Users. Increase ranger presence in open space and trail areas to ensure users follow trail use guidelines and best practices, such as following the “Leave No Trace” ethic to minimize the impact of recreational use of designated open spaces and trails.

Policy PR-4.7: Ranger and Law Enforcement Collaboration. Support ranger and law enforcement collaboration, increased nighttime presence, and enforcement to reduce the occurrence of nighttime parties and shutdown party sites in open space recreation areas. Such activity disturbs wildlife, neighborhoods, and presents wildfire threats.