



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Planning Commission

DATE ISSUED: March 15, 2019 REPORT NO. PC-19-025
HEARING DATE: April 4, 2019
SUBJECT: Navajo, Tierrasanta, and East Elliott Community Plans, Rancho Encantada Precise Plan, and General Plan Amendments Related to the Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan Update and Mission Trails Regional Park Natural Resource Management Plan – Process Five Decision

SUMMARY

Issue: Should the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council approval of the Navajo, Tierrasanta, and East Elliott Community Plans, Rancho Encantada Precise Plan, and General Plan Amendments related to the Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan Update and Mission Trails Regional Park Natural Resource Management Plan (Proposed Amendments)?

Staff Recommendations:

1. RECOMMEND to the City Council **CERTIFICATION** of Program Program Environmental Impact Report Project No. 349988/Sch No. 2014041011 and adopt the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program.
2. RECOMMEND to the City Council **APPROVAL** of the Proposed Amendments related to the Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan Update and Mission Trails Regional Park Natural Resource Management Plan.

Advisory Recommendations:

The Proposed Amendments were reviewed by the applicable recognized community planning groups (Attachment 1, Regional Location Map). The community planning groups provided the following recommendations:

On February 8, 2017, the Navajo Community Planners recommended approval (10-0-0) of the amendments to the Navajo Community Plan.

On February 15, 2017, the Tierrasanta Community Planning Group recommended approval (9-0-0) of the amendments to the Tierrasanta Community Plan.

On March 2, 2017, the Scripps Ranch Planning Group recommended approval (17-0-0) of the amendments to the Rancho Encantada Precise Plan. Rancho Encantada is within the Scripps Miramar Ranch community planning area.

The East Elliott planning area does not have a community planning group.

Environmental Review: The City of San Diego, as Lead Agency under CEQA has prepared and completed an Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR No. 349988/SCH No.

2014041011) and Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for the Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan Update/Natural Resource Management Plan/Community Plan Technical Amendments. The MMRP includes a Mitigation Framework that will be implemented to reduce potential impacts identified in the PEIR (Attachments 2, 3 and 4). A Notice of Preparation (NOP) soliciting input on the scope of the PEIR was issued on April 4, 2014. The Draft PEIR 45-day public review completed on March 8, 2019 and the Final PEIR has been distributed with this report and can be found online at: <https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/programs/ceqa>.

Housing Impact Statement: This action would not directly affect housing; however, implementation of the Proposed Amendments would provide increased recreational opportunities for residents.

BACKGROUND

Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) is a natural resource-based park located within the east-central region of San Diego. MTRP currently encompasses 5,380 acres and is one of the largest urban parks of its kind. Although largely surrounded by residential development, MTRP contains mountains, valleys, two lakes, a major river and scenic gorge, historic landmarks, wildlife habitats, and cultural resources. MTRP provides a unique natural park experience relatively accessible to the region's urban population. The Mission Trails Regional Park Master Development Plan was adopted in 1985, and serves as the existing master plan for MTRP.

The City's Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the operations of MTRP within the City of San Diego. However, multiple government agencies have regulatory and ownership responsibilities within MTRP. A portion of MTRP is within the City of Santee, and the County of San Diego owns multiple parcels within MTRP that are managed under a Joint Powers Agreement between the City and County of San Diego. In recognition of the complexities associated with the inter-governmental responsibilities of implementing the park master plan, the Mission Trails Regional Park Task Force was established in 1977, as an interagency task force fostering collaboration.

The Task Force was responsible for recommending the adoption of the 1985 Mission Trails Regional Park Master Development Plan, and currently recommends updates and amendments to the City Council. The Task Force also approves acquisition of property within MTRP and the formulation of improvement and operation plans for MTRP.

An advisory committee with defined duties was also established by the Task Force in 1977, as an additional forum for public input. In their capacity as advisory committee to the Task Force, the Mission Trails Regional Park Citizens Advisory Committee considers and makes recommendations on items referred by the Task Force, reviews and evaluates staff proposals, develops proposals for the Task Force to consider, and provides an additional forum for public input.

The City initiated an update to the Mission Trails Master Plan in late 2010, to address the current development status of MTRP and evolving environmental protection requirements. A Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) has been prepared concurrent with the update to meet requirements of the City's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), a federal Habitat

Conservation Plan and a State of California Natural Communities Conservation Plan, which was adopted in 1997. The MTRP Master Plan Update and NRMP have been developed as an integrated set of management guidelines for MTRP, with the MTRP Master Plan Update focusing on public access and recreation, and the NRMP focusing on natural resources protection and management (<https://www.sandiego.gov/department/mission-trails-regional-park-plan-updates-0>). The MTRP Master Plan Update also addresses the potential increase of MTRP to approximately 9,780 acres with the potential acquisition of additional property within East Elliott and inclusion of property within West Sycamore (part of the Rancho Encantada planning area). A Programmatic Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) has been prepared for both plans and the associated actions.

The key objectives of the MTRP Master Plan Update and NRMP include:

- 1) Provide a structure for ongoing land and resource management actions required to maintain the Park and protect its resources ;
- 2) Identify unsafe or unsustainable sections of recreational trails and provide guidance for the types of management action required;
- 3) Identify missing or constrained linkages within the Park and provide new or alternative routes to improve the recreational connectivity while protecting the Park's natural and cultural resources;
- 4) Integrate the management actions identified in the NRMP with the recreational trails network throughout the Park;
- 5) Provide amenities that support the recreational uses that currently exist or are proposed as part of the Plans.

The MTRP Master Plan Update proposes changes to the 1985 Mission Trails Regional Park Master Development Plan. These changes require amendments to various land use plans affected by these changes. Amendments are proposed to the Navajo, Tierrasanta, and East Elliott Community Plans, and the Rancho Encantada Precise Plan. The community plans and precise plan contain content related to Mission Trails Regional Park, or are within the area affected by the proposed expansion of the MTRP.

DISCUSSION

Proposed Amendments:

The Mission Trails Regional Park Master Development Plan was adopted in 1985, as the master plan for MTRP. The City's land use plans for the planning areas in or adjacent to MTRP contain maps and text that reflect their relationship with MTRP and also contain specific recommendations related to MTRP. These land use plans were reviewed as part of the MTRP Master Plan Update to align planning concepts, as well as details contained in maps and texts between the various documents. Accordingly, the Proposed Amendments include map and text revisions to resolve inconsistencies with the MTRP Master Plan Update (Attachment 5).

The Proposed Amendments would amend the Navajo Community Plan (https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/attachment_4_navajo_community_plan_technical_ame)

[ndment.pdf](#)) to change the reference to the MTRP acreage to be consistent with the MTRP Master Plan Update expansion of MTRP boundaries to include both the East Elliott community and the West Sycamore area of Rancho Encantada, for a total acreage of 9,780. Recreational amenities identified in the community plan that occur within MTRP are reflected in the MTRP Master Plan Update, and therefore do not require changes to the Navajo Community Plan. The amendments to the Navajo Community Plan are included as Attachment 6.

The Proposed Amendments would amend the Tierrasanta Community Plan (https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/tierrasanta_cp_revisions.pdf) to remove specific recommendations and figures from the 1985 Mission Trails Regional Park Master Development Plan because they are either outdated or will be superseded by similar content included in the MTRP Master Plan Update. The amendments to the Tierrasanta Community Plan are included as Attachment 7.

The Proposed Amendments would amend the 2001 Rancho Encantada Precise Plan (https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/rancho_encantada_pp_master_trails_figure_revisions.pdf) to align the Precise Plan's recommendation for adjunct expansion of regional parkland into MTRP with the actual expansion proposed in the MTRP Master Plan Update. The Rancho Encantada Precise Plan currently identifies 1,150 acres to be deeded to the City as Mission Trails North Regional Park; the City subsequently acquired these acreages in 2012. The Proposed Amendments also include revisions to the Rancho Encantada Precise Plan to recognize a name change of the area to the "West Sycamore Area of Mission Trails Regional Park," as well as to identify ownership and management responsibilities for this area. Recommendations for recreational amenities between the two plans, including minor trail modifications to discourage trespass and providing loop trails within MTRP and connecting trails to adjacent regional trail systems, would remain the same. The amendments to the Rancho Encantada Precise Plan are included as Attachment 8.

The Proposed Amendments would include amendments to the East Elliott Community Plan (https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/east_elliott_cp_revisions.pdf) to revise maps and text to incorporate the community planning area into MTRP. The planning area is largely undeveloped and has various constraints to provide public roadways needed for development. The planning area is home to rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species and their habitats, and was included within the MSCP Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA). To date, the City has acquired approximately 735 acres for conservation within the East Elliott planning area, and as additional funding becomes available, will continue to solicit voluntary private property acquisition. The master plan update would not place further restrictions on private development potential allowed in accordance with the East Elliott Community Plan and the MSCP, but it is anticipated that City staff would work with property owners during the development process to balance the additional goals and objectives of the MTRP Master Plan Update with those of the Rancho Encantada Community Plan and MSCP. The amendments to the East Elliott Community Plan are included as Attachment 9.

The Proposed Amendments are technical community plan amendments because they are required to update or correct maps and community plan language where information is omitted or outdated related to the MTRP Master Plan Update. The General Plan provides that technical amendments are to be initiated at the staff level, but that plan amendment is to be processed and brought forward to a public hearing for approval.

Master Plan Update and NRMP Issues:

East Elliott is an area proposed for inclusion into MTRP which is of note to both recreational trail users and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Wildlife Agencies). The majority of lands at MTRP are located within the MHPA. The Draft MTRP Master Plan Update and PEIR initially contained several proposed trail alignments based on input from recreational stakeholders; however, these trails were not supported by the Wildlife Agencies due to existing wildlife habitat and potential environmental impacts within the MSCP MHPA. The City and County of San Diego, together with recreational user groups and environmental stakeholders, worked together for over two years to reach a compromise in an effort to balance recreational use and wildlife habitat preservation in areas throughout East Elliott (Attachments 10 and 11). This compromise included closing numerous existing trail alignments to avoid wildlife habitat areas, re-routing trails to avoid environmentally sensitive areas, and proposing the construction of new trail alignments in less sensitive areas. The following details the specific trail alignments that were developed and realigned based on additional wildlife studies that were completed with new or preferred alignments recommended. These alignments are reflected in the MTRP Master Plan Update being brought forward for consideration by City Council, and the focused follow up studies are included in the Final PEIR.

The first subject area reviewed with the recreational user groups and the Wildlife Agencies was identified in the Draft MTRP Master Plan Update and PEIR in Oak Canyon within the westernmost area of East Elliott. The proposed Oak Canyon trail connection was comprised of a combination of existing (1.23 miles) and proposed (2.09 miles) trails to create a 3.33-mile Hike/Bike trail from the SR-52 Overpass, within the canyon along the western boundary of MTRP connecting at the north end to the utility access road along the ridgeline. The revised alignment, incorporated into the MTRP Master Plan Update and Final PEIR, has been relocated outside of the bottom of Oak Canyon and positioned adjacent to the ridgeline utility road. This newly revised alignment includes a combination of existing (0.62 miles) and proposed (1.60 miles) trails to create a 2.22-mile Hike/Bike trail.

The second subject area and alignment connect the Mast Boulevard parking and staging area through Spring Canyon to the Boulders area east of the existing Sycamore Landfill, and beyond to the Stowe Trail. This connection included a proposed 2.13-mile multi-use trail from the utility access road in Spring Canyon eastward, traversing the terrain between the existing landfill and SR-52. As documented in the Draft PEIR, as well as the prior environmental documents for the landfill expansion and the extension of SR-52, this area is an existing wildlife corridor that is disrupted by the existing Sycamore Landfill access road that generally runs north to south. Further, the area is bounded by the operating landfill to the north and SR-52 to the south.

The revised trail alignment would relocate a portion of trail that extended around areas identified for mitigation for the expansion of the landfill, creating a more direct connection parallel, but outside of the Caltrans SR-52 right-of-way. Further, this realignment would reduce not only the bisecting of the wildlife corridor, but also the proposed trail length by over 0.5 mile, to 1.50 miles. In order to ensure continued interagency collaboration, Recommendation EE-R40 was revised to include the following a policy stating that during implementation of this new trail segment, coordination with wildlife agencies to identify opportunities to minimize edge effects would occur. The revised alignment is reflected in the MTRP Master Plan Update and the Final PEIR. Although

access to the Sycamore Landfill portion of this trail is not currently available, the trail alignment remains a part of the long-term implementation of the MTRP Master Plan Update to allow for that future connection during implementation. Please see Attachment 12 for comments from California Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding this alignment.

The MSCP MHPA includes regional wildlife corridors and core biological areas that are targeted for conservation including areas within MTRP. Conditionally compatible uses within the MHPA include trails and passive recreation (MSCP Subarea Plan Section 1.4.1). MSCP Subarea Plan Section 1.5 provides additional guidance and management directives on trail design and siting which were considered as a part of the MTRP Master Plan Update process and incorporated into the recommendations accordingly.

Planning for the expansion of MTRP in East Elliott is of critical importance. This planning effort seeks compromise and balances recreational user needs and safety, while maintaining areas of wildlife corridors and protection of environmentally sensitive areas within the City and San Diego region.

Conclusion:

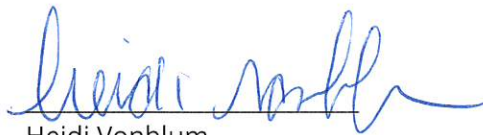
Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend City Council approval of the Proposed Amendments and certification the Programmatic Program Environmental Impact Report No. 349988 and the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program.

The Proposed Amendments would ensure that the design, permitting, and development of future park and recreation facilities are consistent with the Navajo, Tierrasanta, and East Elliott Community Plans, and the Rancho Encantada Precise Plan. Additionally, policy recommendations related to MTRP management would be aligned with updated policies in the MTRP Master Plan Update to ensure that implementation of the park master plan would not require future community plan or precise plan amendments.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments:

1. Regional Location Map
2. Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR No. 349988/SCH No. 201404101)
3. Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program
4. Draft City Council Resolution – EIR
5. Draft City Council Resolution – Plan Amendments

6. Navajo Community Plan Technical Amendment
7. Tierrasanta Community Plan Technical Amendment
8. Rancho Encantada Precise Plan Technical Amendment
9. East Elliott Community Plan Technical Amendment
10. Revised Conceptual Trail Alignments
11. County of San Diego Comment Letter
12. California Department of Fish and Wildlife Comment Letter

