## J. RECREATION

This section generally describes existing recreational facilities in San Francisco and within the vicinity of the project site. It also discusses impacts of the proposed project on local and regional recreational facilities.

## **SETTING**

The San Francisco Recreation and Park Department administers more than 200 parks, playgrounds, and open spaces throughout the city. The approximate 4,090 acres of citywide open space is fairly extensive ranging from large parks to undeveloped street rights-of-way. Recreation facilities include 15 recreation centers, nine swimming pools, five golf courses, and more than 300 athletic fields, tennis courts, and basketball courts. Based on San Francisco's estimated 2008 household population (824,525 persons), the 4,090 acres of parkland translates to approximately five acres per 1,000 city residents. The National Park and Recreation Association standard ratio is 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents in cities. However, due to the high density of the city and limited land mass, this ratio is difficult to achieve within San Francisco.

The project site is located in the Third Supervisorial District (District 3). District 3 comprises the densest residential area of the city and includes approximately 34.31 acres of open space. Due to the scarcity and high cost of vacant land in San Francisco, existing recreation facilities represent a major city resource. As opportunities to acquire new parkland and develop recreation facilities are limited, the Recreation and Open Space Element of San Francisco's *General Plan* has identified high-need areas which are given highest priority for the construction of new parks and recreation improvements. The North Beach/ Chinatown neighborhoods and downtown San Francisco near the project site have been identified as high-need areas in the *General Plan*.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A draft update to the Recreation and Open Space Element of the *San Francisco General Plan* has been released for public review.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> San Francisco Planning Department, 2000, Recreation and Open Space Element, Available at: http://www.sfgov.org/site/planning\_index.asp?id=41414, Accessed: December 30, 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> State of California, Department of Finance, 2008, E-5 Population and Housing Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State, 2001-2008, with 2000 Benchmark, May.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> San Francisco Planning Department, 2008, San Francisco General Hospital Seismic Compliance Final EIR, Hospital Replacement Program, June.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Neighborhood Parks Council, 2004, Total Open Space per District. Table 11. Available at: http://www.sfnpc.org/pdf/publications/Table11.pdf, Accessed: January 20, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> San Francisco Planning Department, 2000, Recreation and Open Space Element.

The project site is located in the Nob Hill neighborhood, a densely-developed urban area surrounded by mid- to high-rise residential, hotel, and institutional structures. The existing podium courtyard is 8,640 square feet and is privately owned and publicly accessible to hotel guests and visitors. The nearest public open space, Huntington Park, is located immediately west of the Fairmont Hotel, across from Grace Cathedral, and adjacent to the landmark Pacific Union Club. It is a popular destination for visitors. Huntington Park, together with the adjacent Pacific Union Club occupy the entire block bounded by Sacramento Street to the north, Mason Street to the east, California Street to the south, and Taylor Street to the west. Huntington Park has a lawn, trees, and a fountain, as well as public seating scattered throughout. This park provides passive recreational opportunities and is commonly used as a dog park and gathering area by Nob Hill residents. Other nearby recreational facilities and open spaces include the Willie "Woo Woo" Wong Playground located about 0.2 mile east of the project site; the Chinese Recreation Center located approximately 0.2 mile north of the project site; the Hooker Alley Community Gardens on Mason Street between Pine and Bush Streets approximately 0.1 mile south of the project site; St. Mary's Square located approximately 0.3 mile east of the project site; and Portsmouth Square located approximately 0.5 mile east of the project site. The Hooker Alley Community Gardens is owned by the DPW, while the other facilities are property of the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department. These recreational facilities provide children's play structures, basketball courts, tennis and volleyball courts, auditoriums, activity rooms, gymnasium, playgrounds, picnic areas, and passive recreational space.

## REGULATORY SETTING

The Recreation and Open Space Element of the *General Plan* includes Plan includes objectives and policies to meet San Francisco's needs for recreation and open space at regional, city-wide, and neighborhood levels. The proposed project would be consistent with the applicable objectives and policies of the Recreation and Open Space Element because it would not result in the loss of existing open space and would provide open space for the residential units and privately-own publicly accessible open space. New publicly-accessible open space in the form of a podium courtyard would be created on the podium level. The proposed residential tower would also fulfill the requirement of San Francisco Planning Code Section 135(d)(1), which states that 36 square feet of usable open space must be provided for each dwelling unit. Section 135(d)(1) would be met by providing 106 square feet in private balconies for 145 of the 160 residential units, as well as 9,800 square feet of open space in the form of a landscaped podium courtyard.

San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, 2002, *Park Facilities in District 3*, Available at: http://www.sfnpc.org/dpp/binders/d3/D3parks.doc, Accessed: December 30, 2008.

### **IMPACTS**

#### SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLDS

The thresholds for determining the significance of impacts in this analysis are consistent with the environmental checklist in Appendix G of the State *CEQA Guidelines*, which has been adopted and modified by the San Francisco Planning Department. For the purpose of this analysis, the following applicable thresholds were used to determine whether implementing the proposed project would result in a significant impact to recreation. The project would have a significant adverse recreation impact if it would:

- J.a Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facilities would occur or be accelerated;
- J.b Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment; or
- J.c Physically degrade existing recreational resources.

#### PROPOSED PROJECT

The project sponsor proposes to demolish the existing Fairmont Hotel tower and podium structure and construct a 26-story residential tower and five-story mid-rise residential component, both above a five-story podium structure. The demolition of the existing hotel tower and podium structure would cause removal of the existing podium courtyard. The existing podium courtyard level is divided into two sections: the western portion is occupied by mechanical equipment, which is screened from view by an eight-foot-tall wall, and the eastern landscaped portion is 8,640 square feet, with 15 potted trees and various small trees/bushes, that overlooks Powell Street (from 50 feet above Powell Street grade).

Upon development of the proposed project, the new mid-rise residential component would enclose a new podium courtyard level along the east and south sides. This proposed new landscaped podium courtyard would provide approximately 9,800 square feet of open space to hotel guests and residents on-site, a net increase of approximately 1,160 square feet of open space compare to the existing podium courtyard. This proposed podium courtyard would be directly connected to the renovated Venetian Room in the historic 1906 Fairmont Hotel. In addition, the proposed project would provide approximately 17,000 square feet of private usable facilities for hotel guests and new on-site residents in the form of a pool and spa.

#### IMPACT EVALUATION

Impact RE-1 The proposed project would not physically degrade existing recreational resources or increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facilities would occur or be accelerated. (Less than Significant) [Criteria J.a and J.c]

The proposed residential units would be within walking distance of Huntington Park and other nearby Recreation and Park Department facilities. The proposed project would provide a new approximately 9,800 square feet landscaped courtyard above the new five-story, 50-foot-tall podium structure for the residents and hotel guests. This new landscaped courtyard would replace the existing 8,640 square foot courtyard for a net increase of approximately 1,160 square feet, and would remain privately owned open space. The new courtyard would be publicly accessible to residents, hotels guests, and visitors. As shown on Figure III-18, p. III-43, the new 9,800 square foot landscaped courtyard would be located on the western portion of the podium structure at the Lobby/Podium Courtyard Level. It would be enclosed along the east and south by the mid-rise residential component, and along the north by the residential tower.

In addition, the proposed project would provide approximately 17,000 square feet of private usable recreation space for the hotel and residents in the form of a pool and spa. Residents and guests would have convenient access to on-site open space and private recreational facilities. Only the podium courtyard would be publicly accessible.

Hotel patrons, residents and employees would also be within walking distance of nearby parks and open space, such as Huntington Park and St. Mary's Square. As described in Section IV.C, Population and Housing, p. IV.C-5, the introduction of residential uses would result in an on-site population increase of approximately 283 to 368 new residents in the project area. At the same time, the amount of hotel guests would be reduced by 303, 191 less guests than existing conditions, some of which would have used City recreational facilities. While project-related residents and hotel guests may use surrounding parks and recreational facilities, the incremental increase in demand associated with the project's uses is not likely to result in the need to expand existing recreational facilities or construct new facilities, or cause the physical deterioration of the nearby open spaces. The proposed project would not substantially increase demand for, or use of, neighborhood parks, or citywide recreational facilities, such as Golden Gate Park, in a manner that would cause substantial physical deterioration of these facilities. The proposed project

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The range of 283 to 368 is derived by using the average household size of 1.77 (for Census Tract 112) and the 2000 U.S. Census average household size of 2.30 for the City and County of San Francisco multiplied by the proposed new 160 units.

would not require the construction of new recreational facilities or the expansion of existing facilities. Therefore, the proposed project would have less-than-significant impacts on existing recreational facilities.

Impact RE-2 The proposed project would not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. (Less than Significant) [Criterion J.b]

The proposed project would meet the Planning Code Section 135(d)(1) requirement of providing 36 square feet of private open space per dwelling unit. Approximately 145 of the 160 proposed units would exceed the Planning Code requirement of 36 square feet of private open space per dwelling unit, for these units, because an average of 106 square feet of private usable open space would be provided for these units. The remaining 15 units would have access to open space in the form of a landscaped courtyard. As discussed in Impact RE-1 above, the proposed project would not require the construction of new recreational facilities or the expansion of existing facilities, and adequate on-site open space and recreation facilities would be provided for hotel patrons, employees, residents and visitors to the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less-than-significant impact related to this issue.

## **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Recreational facility use could incrementally increase with the proposed project and cumulative projects. However, compliance with Planning Code open space requirements for all future cumulative development would ensure that impacts to recreation resources are not cumulatively considerable. The proposed project would not have a significant impact on recreation or community facility resources, nor would the project contribute to any cumulatively considerable impacts to recreational resources.

As described in Section IV.A, Land Use, the proposed project and other cumulative projects that are under construction, proposed, or reasonably foreseeable in the future in the project site vicinity would provide a total of approximately 223 units in the future. The 63 units proposed by other cumulative projects such as the 23 dwelling units at 850 Bush Street, 23 dwelling units at 851 California Street, 15 dwelling units at 1001 California Street, and 2 dwelling units at 915 Jackson Street would result in a population increase of approximately 111 to 145 people in the project area.<sup>9</sup>

The increased residential population from cumulative project would be expected to result in increased use of nearby parks, open space, and recreational facilities in the city. The proposed project and other projects

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The range of residents is derived by using the average household size of 1.77 (Census Tract 112) and the 2000 U.S. Census average household size of 2.30 for the City and County of San Francisco multiplied by the 63 units.

IV. Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation

J. Recreation

are within a developed urban area served by existing parks, open space, recreational facilities, and recreation. Demand for recreational facilities created by the proposed project and other cumulative developments would be distributed through the project area and city. Therefore, impacts on these facilities would not be cumulatively considerable.

# **MITIGATION AND IMPROVEMENT MEASURES**

As described above, the proposed project would have less-than-significant impacts on recreational facilities. No mitigation or improvement measures would be required.