

4.11 PUBLIC SERVICES AND RECREATION

4.11.1 Issues

Implementation of the Downtown Specific Plan would increase the total population and number and density of structures placing demands on fire service, police service, schools, parks/recreation, and libraries.

4.11.2 Setting

Fire Protection

The Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District (RAFPD) provides fire protection services to approximately 25,000 people in an area of 86 square miles in the vicinity of the cities of Rohnert Park and Petaluma. The service area encompasses the City of Cotati, the community of Penngrove, and areas of the Liberty Valley. The RAFPD provides firefighting and basic life support services to the planning area. Station 1 is located in the DSP area at La Plaza Park (see Figure 4.11-1). Station 1 houses five of the RAFPD's eleven vehicles – three larger engines, a smaller engine, and a water-tender.¹ The RAFPD employs 15 permanent staff members, 15 part-time firefighters, and is supported by six volunteers, including one part time chief. Response time to the DSP area is currently approximately three minutes.² However, response time can be variable, depending on traffic conditions, weather, and other factors. The majority of RAFPD calls are for emergency medical services. The RAFPD is primarily funded by property taxes.

The RAFPD has an Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating of 4 within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant; this rating is on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the best possible service level and 10 being no service at all. Without a fire hydrant, the rating is 8 within five miles of a station and 9 if beyond five miles of a station. These ratings are based on three factors: water supply, fire department, and communications. The current RAFPD staffing-to-population ratio for the District is 1.23 firefighters per 1,000 (based on 15 full-time and 15 part-time firefighting personnel). The RAFPD has identified deficiencies in their equipment and facilities.³ A bond measure was proposed to address these budget constraints, but failed in November 2006.⁴

The RAFPD has automatic aid agreements with most of its neighboring districts, including the California Department of Forestry (CDF). The CDF provides automatic aid for emergency incidents in the west portions of the District and to State Responsibility Area fires. CDF will also provide fire response to anywhere in the District at the District's request.⁵

The term "fire flow" refers to the pressure and volume or rate of water flow needed at a given location to combat a fire. The City does not currently have adequate water storage for fire flow, but is planning on increasing storage capacity with an upgraded tank. As of October 2005, the existing 100,000 gallon tank on Cypress Avenue was off-line and is in the process of being upgraded and expanded.⁶

All new projects must comply with the fire code, including certification of adequate fire flow, denoted hydrant locations, and provision of adequate emergency storage. City requirements for access, fire flows, hydrants, and fire sprinklers are addressed during the building permit stage for

¹ <http://www.ci.cotati.ca.us/sections/police/fire-services.cfm>, accessed 6/26/07.

² Bill Patten, Fire Marshall, personal communication, October 11, 2005.

³ <http://www1.arguscourier.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article? AID=/20061011/NEWS01/61010020>, accessed 6/26/07.

⁴ <http://www1.arguscourier.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article? AID=/20061115/NEWS01/61114022>, accessed 6/26/07.

⁵ Captain Dwayne Harris, personal communication, July 21, 2004.

⁶ LAFCO, Municipal Service Review: City of Cotati, February 2006.

individual projects. The DSP area is currently developed with a hydrant system. If determined to be inadequate at the building permit stage of individual projects, provisions for upgrading the hydrant system will be made.

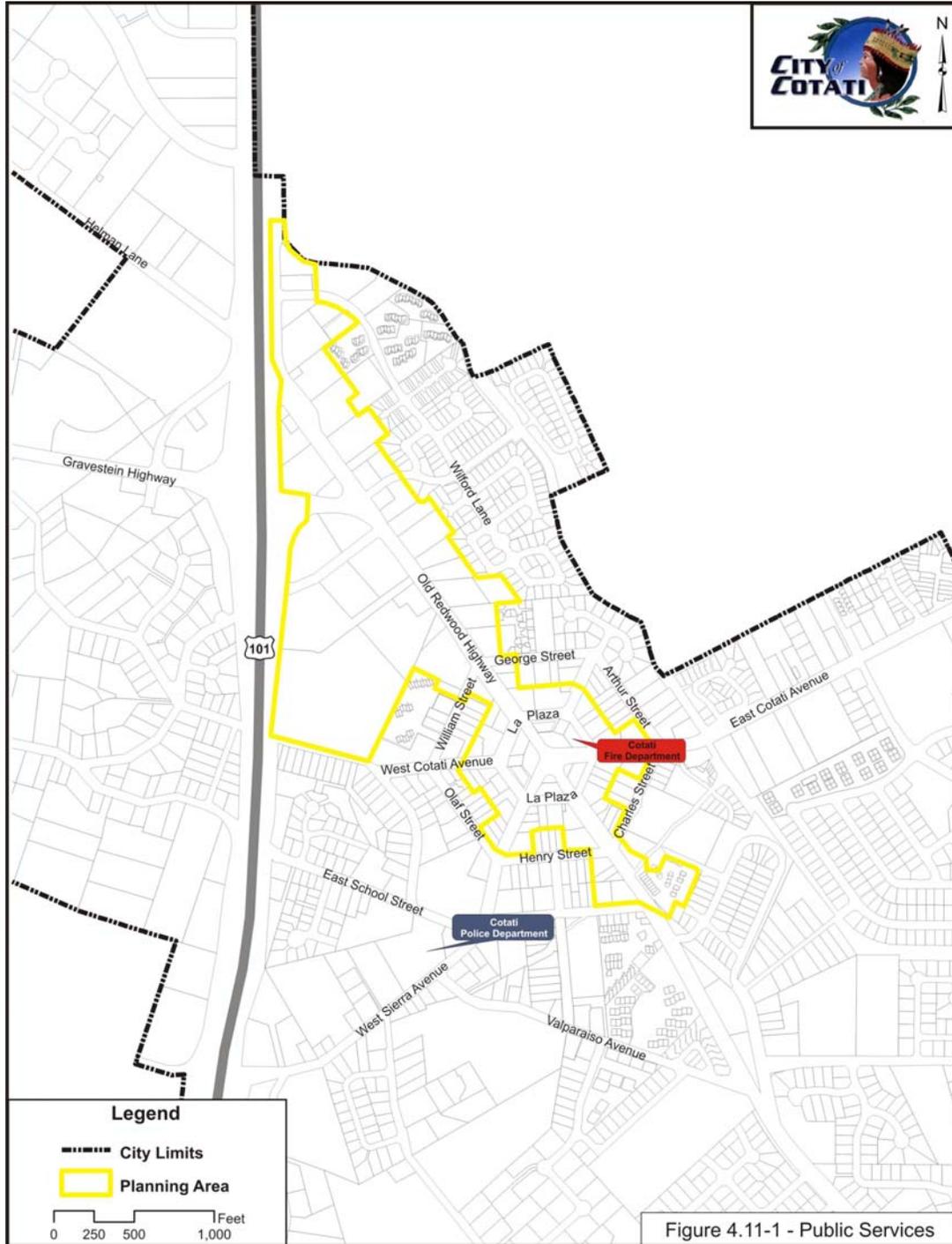
Police Protection

The Cotati Police Department (CPD) provides police protection to the DSP area. The CPD is linked with most law enforcement agencies in Sonoma County through a common computer system. Cotati dispatchers can communicate directly via radio with other agencies, including the Sonoma County Office of Emergency Services. The CPD includes a chief, four sergeants, seven police officers (a total of 11 officers), one police canine, one community services officer, five dispatchers, one support services supervisor, and one police service aide. Department services include dispatch, patrol, traffic enforcement, investigation, and community crime prevention. The current ratio of officers to resident population is approximately 1.46 per 1,000 persons. The Police Department is stationed in the planning area at 203 West Sierra Avenue (see Figure 4.11-1).

The principal crimes reported in the project area are burglary and larceny/theft. Table 4.11-1 shows statistics for the entire City from 2001 to 2005.⁷ The CPD is primarily funded by the City of Cotati's general fund. Additional funding is obtained through the collection of various fees for violations and permits, as well as grant funds.

Based on comments received from the CPD, the existing facilities are sufficient to maintain an acceptable level of service throughout the Department's jurisdiction. The Department has indicated it is understaffed by one position.

⁷ 2006 statistics are only preliminary and not available for cities below 100,000 in population and 2007 statistics are unavailable.



Category	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	Percent Change (2004 to 2005)
Violent Crime	44	43	35	NA	NA	2.3%
Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Rape	4	4	2	4	7	0.0%
Robbery	3	3	1	7	2	0.0%
Assault (aggr./simple)	37	36	32	16	13	2.8%
Property Crime	237	253	302	NA	NA	-6.3%
Burglary	50	43	72	56	50	16.3%
Larceny/ Theft	175	175	207	251	188	0.0%
Motor Vehicle Theft	12	35	23	18	15	-65.7%
Arson	2	1	1	0	8	100.0%

Source: Uniform Crime Reports website, available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm> (accessed 6/27/07).

Schools

Students in the planning area are served by La Fiesta School and Thomas Page School at the elementary level, Mountain Shadows Middle School, and Rancho Cotate High School. These schools are part of the Cotati-Rohnert Park School District. Table 4.11-2 shows school enrollment and capacity statistics.

School	Level	Permanent Capacity	Enrollment (2006-07)	Percent Capacity Utilized
La Fiesta	Elem	325	445	73%
Thomas Page	Elem	229	360	64%
Mountain Shadows	Midd	881	1,193	74%
Rancho Cotate	High	1,746	2,160	81%

Sources: Sandra Devine, personal communication, 6/29/07; also California Department of Education Enrollment 2006-07, available at <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/>.

Operating revenue for school districts is provided by local property taxes accrued at the state and allocated to each school district based on the average daily student attendance. Capital funding for facility improvements to accommodate new students comes primarily from fees charged to new development projects.

California Government Code §53080, 65995, and 66001 authorizes school districts to collect fees from new residential and commercial/industrial development. The statutory fees are currently \$2.24 per square foot of new residential and \$0.36 per square foot of commercial and industrial development.⁸ According to CEQA, land use approvals cannot be denied based on their impact

⁸ Sandra Devine, personal communication, 6/29/07.

on school capacity. Once a fee has been exacted, the impacts of a project are considered mitigated (Government Code §65996[b]).

Parks

The La Plaza Park is the only public park (3.34 acres) in the planning area.⁹ Other parks available to planning area residents and employees are listed in Table 4.11-3.

The General Plan sets a goal of one acre of recreational area per 200 residents (or five acres per 1000 people). Based on the latest population estimate,¹⁰ the City currently provides 4.11 acres per 1,000 residents (31 acres per 7,535 residents). The city has added 4.37 acre park located at 175 W. Sierra Ave. through a \$3,135,000 Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space district grant.

Parks and other recreational facilities are primarily funded by the City's general fund. Additional funding has been obtained through grants, shared use arrangements (such as with the school district), and other funding mechanisms. The City also uses Quimby fees, which allow a municipality to require the payment of funds to provide for park acreage elsewhere if not provided onsite (see 4.11.3 Regulatory Setting below).

Libraries

The planning area is served by the Rohnert Park-Cotati Regional Library, located at 6250 Lynne Conde Way in Rohnert Park. It encompasses 24,000 square feet and more than 100,000 volumes. Based on general library planning standards, a city the size of Cotati would need between approximately 25,000 and 37,000 books in stock, as well as between approximately 5,500 and 6,000 square feet of floor space.¹¹ Based on these standards, the library is adequate for the current population.

4.11.3 Regulatory Setting

Fire

Fire hazards are addressed mainly through the application of the State Fire Code and the Uniform Building Code (UBC). The Fire Code addresses access, including roads, and vegetation removal. The UBC, adopted by reference by the City, requires development to show proof of nearby water sources and adequate fire flows. The Fire Protection District sets standards for fire flow based on a number of factors including type of development and setting.

The General Plan includes polices and programs to minimize potential damage and hazards resulting from fire including, but not limited to, the following:

Goal 7: maintain a safe environment by providing adequate protection from traffic, fire, crime, natural disaster and hazardous materials.

Objective 7.1: Ensure that essential facilities are located and designed so that they will remain operable in the event of an emergency or natural disaster.

⁹ A private field exists at 150 St. Joseph Way, owned by St. Joseph Church.

¹⁰ Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit, Population Estimates. Available at: <http://www.dof.ca.gov/HTML/DEMOGRAP/ReportsPapers/Estimates/E4/E4-01-06/HistE-4.asp>. Accessed 8/05/07.

¹¹ DeChiara, Joseph, Urban Planning and Design Criteria, 1982, p. 392.

Table 4.11-3: Existing Park Facilities			
Park	Location	Acreage	Facilities
Civic Center	East School Street & West Sierra Avenue	5	Baseball field, basketball courts, proposed skate park, bicycle/pedestrian path, picnic tables, BBQs, open space, restrooms
Delano	Valparaiso Avenue & Page Street	1.5	Bicycle/pedestrian paths
Draper	Wilford Avenue	1.5	Picnic tables, BBQs, bicycle/pedestrian paths
Falletti	Gravenstein Way and Village Court	1.5	BBQs, picnic tables, playground, bicycle/pedestrian paths, open space for close-proximity games (i.e., Frisbee)
Kotate	LaSalle & Lincoln Avenues	2.5	Playground, bicycle/pedestrian paths, open space for activities requiring more space (i.e., soccer)
La Plaza	Planning area	2.5	Bandstand, picnic tables, playground, restrooms, bicycle/pedestrian pathways
Putnam	Myrtle Avenue	12	Baseball field, dog park, picnic tables, playground, restrooms, soccer field, bicycle/pedestrian pathways, BBQs, open space for close proximity games and games requiring more space
Sunflower	East Cotati Avenue & Sunflower Drive	1.5	Tennis courts, open space for close-proximity games
Veteran's	Park Avenue & Old Redwood Highway	1	BBQs, picnic tables, horseshoe pits, sand volleyball court, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, restrooms
Thomas Page	Madrone Avenue	2	Adjacent to Thomas Page Elementary, open space for activities requiring more space
New Park	175 W. Sierra Avenue	4.37	
Total		35.37	
<i>Source: City of Cotati, 2005</i>			

Objective 7.4: Maintain high quality fire protection and police services.

Policy 7.4.1: Assure adequate staff and equipment in the Fire Protection District to accommodate population growth in Cotati.

Policy 7.4.4: New development shall be constructed to minimize the risk of fire.

Policy 7.4.5: All new development shall be served with adequate water for fire protection.

a) As part of the permit process, and before a building permit is issued, the Building Department shall confer with the Fire Protection District in order to determine that there is adequate water for fire protection, consistent with the level of development proposed, as stipulated by the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) and the State Fire Marshall standards.

Police

The Safety Element of the General Plan contains policies and programs that encourage consideration of crime prevention in physical planning, while supporting the need for sufficient facilities.

Goal 7: Maintain a safe environment by providing adequate protection from traffic, fire, crime, natural disaster and hazardous materials.

Objective 7.4: Maintain high quality fire protection and police services.

Objective 7.4.6: The Police Department shall have adequate staff and equipment to accommodate population growth in Cotati.

Schools

See "School Funding" above.

Parks

The City has adopted an ordinance to fund parks and recreation in accordance with Section 66477 of the Subdivision Map Act (the Quimby Act). The City's Quimby Ordinance allows the City to require the payment of a fee or the dedication of an equivalent area of parkland when new residential subdivisions are proposed. The law states that "the dedication of land or the payment of fees, or both, shall not exceed the proportionate amount necessary to provide three acres of park area per 1,000 persons residing within a subdivision subject to this section, unless the amount of existing neighborhood and community park area, as calculated pursuant to this subdivision, exceeds that limit, in which case the legislative body may adopt the calculated amount as a higher standard not to exceed five acres per 1,000 persons residing in a subdivision subject to this section." In addition to Quimby fees, facilities can be provided by grants, donations, user fees, community fund raising events, joint ventures, and joint use agreements.

The Cotati General Plan has the following objective and policies regarding provision of public services and parkland rate.

Objective 8.4: New development shall not unnecessarily burden existing public services and facilities.

Policy 8.4.1: The City shall approve development only in those areas where adequate city facilities are available or will be provided by the development.

Policy 8.4.3: Public land for parks shall be provided at the rate of one acre of parkland per 200 residents (1:200).

Draft DSP Policies Related to Public Services and Recreation

The DSP addresses public services and recreation in a number of locations in the Plan, including the following:

Plan-wide Policies

SP1 – Ensure that public open space is integrated into the Downtown: Make great public spaces.

Northern Gateway Objectives

NG-3 – Provide a variety of open space.

La Plaza Park

LP-2 – Plan development and infrastructure to accommodate a unified La Plaza Park.

LP-3 – Over time, as financing and development allow, reconfigure La Plaza park to maximize and enhance use.

Open Space Objectives

OS-6 – *The open space system shall be complex and usable for a variety of active and passive purposes to serve a wide cross section of ages and abilities.*

4.11.4 Methodology

The potential demand from DSP buildout was compared to the ability of the service provider to accommodate the demand. This includes facilities that would be built or expanded upon to accommodate any increase in demand in order to maintain current acceptable levels of service, or to reach applicable service goals.

4.11.5 Significance Thresholds

The project would have a significant impact related to public services if it would:

- a. 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:
 1. Fire protection
 2. Police protection
 3. Schools
 4. Libraries
- b. Increase the use of existing neighborhood, regional, or State parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility, including maintenance, would occur or be accelerated.
- c. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

4.11.6 Impacts and Mitigation Measures**Less than Significant Impacts**

Fire (threshold a-1). The Fire Protection District has stated that increasing the population in the project area would require additional staffing to ensure adequate fire protection, as well as additional equipment, namely a ladder truck with a longer extension to reach taller buildings proposed under the plan.¹² Development projects undertaken pursuant to the proposed plan would result in the payment of property taxes, including a special parcel tax¹³ to the Fire Protection District, which would result in additional revenue available to the Fire Protection District. The increase in revenue to the Fire Protection District as development increases in the planning area will address the Fire District needs presented by the DSP. Impacts of the DSP to fire services are less than significant because the DSP demand for fire services will not result in substantial adverse physical impacts due to the construction of new or physically altered fire district facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives.

Police (threshold a-2). The development of additional residential and retail units in the planning area would likely increase the number and frequency of calls for police service. Additional officers

¹² Harris, Dwayne, Fire Captain, personal communication, July 21, 2004.

¹³ LAFCO, Municipal Service Review: City of Cotati, February 2006, p. 17. Note: The special parcel tax is calculated at \$10 per unit of risk (a single family home is assigned 4 units of risk).

would be needed in order not only to meet existing needs, but to meet the future demand for police services. The CPD’s response time is under two minutes. Since the department facility is located near the planning area, development would not significantly affect the response time of the police to this area. However, with a higher number of calls, it may require an increase in the number of officers. The current officer-to-population ratio is 1.46 per 1,000 persons. In order to maintain the same ratio for the net new population of 925, approximately 1.2 new officers would be needed.

Development projects undertaken pursuant to the proposed plan would result in the payment of developer’s fees and property taxes, both of which would result in additional revenue available to the City and the Police Department. As increased property tax revenues are made available to the Police Department, the required improvements in staff, equipment, and facilities will be undertaken. Impacts of the DSP to police services are less than significant because the DSP demand for police services will not result in substantial adverse physical impacts due to the construction of new or physically altered police district facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives.

Schools (threshold a-3). The project will result in the addition of approximately 331 multi-family dwelling units to the planning area. Student generation is based on factors outlined in Table 4.11-4. Since a defined mix of residential unit types is not provided in the DSP, an average mix was used for the student generation analysis. Based on the rates below, approximately 386 school-aged students would be generated by development accommodated by the DSP upon buildout. Since all the schools serving the DSP area are under-utilized and are experiencing decreasing enrollment (see Table 4.11-2, above), there would be no significant impact. There are currently 414 available spaces within the school district, leaving 27 available spaces if all the expected students from the DSP were to be instantly enrolled. Developers are required to pay applicable school impact fees pursuant to Government Code §65995. By law, payment of school impact fees provides full mitigation for any project impacts to school facilities.

Table 4.11-4: Student Generation Rates			
School Level	Single-Family Detached	Single-Family Attached	Multi-Family Attached
Elementary	0.32	0.26	0.71
Middle	0.13	0.10	0.24
High	0.11	0.10	0.22

Note: The School District has stated that due to declining enrollment, student generation rates are not used or available (Source: Sandra Devine, personal communication, 8/05/07). In lieu of local student generation rates, California rates are used (Source: <http://www.dataplace.org/newsarticle.html?aid=59>, accessed 8/05/07).

Libraries (threshold a-4). The additional population accommodated under the DSP would generate customers of the City’s library. However, as indicated above, the existing City library contains more than adequate square footage and volumes for the anticipated population. Since the increased demand from the anticipated new DSP population of 925 could be easily accommodated by the existing facility and not require expansions or new facilities, the impact is considered less than significant.

Parks and recreational facilities (thresholds b and c). Buildout under the DSP will increase the planning area population, which in turn will increase the demand for park facilities. The proposed project would introduce 825 new residents in the planning area at buildout. Using the current 5 acres per 1,000 people standard, the projected population would require 5.33 acres of parkland. The DSP proposes redevelopment and enhancement of La Plaza Park (2.5 acres) and development of additional park/recreational spaces of 0.53 acres. In addition to the park acreage proposed in the DSP, the plan also provides for pedestrian-oriented streets, bikeways, and other outdoor features. Development in the DSP will be required to pay park in-lieu fees to mitigate for any shortage of parkland in a proposed development. Through a combination of parks provided under the DSP and required payment of in-lieu fees for new development, the DSP will meet current General Plan requirements for parkland and the impact will be less than significant. However, the City uses in-lieu fees to mitigate for any lack of parkland in a proposed development.

Construction-related impacts associated with new park and recreation facilities in DSP area are addressed in related sections of this chapter (noise, air quality, traffic, etc.) and will be less than significant based on mitigation measures described in those chapters

The DSP will add population to the area which will increase the use of existing parks resulting in some physical deterioration of parks and increased costs for maintenance. Standard City maintenance has been sufficient to manage the use of parks in Cotati.

4.11.7 Cumulative Impacts

Implementation of the DSP would not make a cumulatively considerable contribution to any significant cumulative public services or recreation impacts in the region. Cumulative development in the City will increase the structures, residents, and employees requiring police protection. The police department is reportedly under-staffed. Increased development within current City limits would increase the rate and volume of calls for police department assistance.

Cumulative development in the City will increase the structures, residents, and employees requiring fire protection. The fire department is reportedly under-staffed. Continued development both inside and outside the City would increase the rate and volume of calls for police assistance, since the Fire Protection District provides service to areas outside the City limits.

Both police and fire receive funding through property taxes (fire through a special parcel tax). Normally, it is assumed that new development generates revenue for these public agencies so that they can fund continued operations and maintain goals and standards for adequate levels of service. In normal circumstances this might serve to mitigate the cumulative effects of projects; however, in this case the Specific plan would be exacerbating the present inadequate situation if only property taxes were relied upon to mitigate the impacts. Revenues which, according to City fire personnel, are presently considered insufficient for fire protection services are not expected to adequately serve the needs of growth.¹⁴ However, with fees continuing to be adjusted and assessed and improvements in facilities made concurrent with or in advance of new development, cumulative impacts to police and fire are considered less than significant.

Cumulative development in the City will continue to increase the number of students attending local schools and other educational facilities. However, as indicated above, the school district expects enrollment to continue to decline. With the payment of appropriate statutory school impact fees, impacts are considered fully mitigated by law. Also, declining enrollment in the school district and slowing growth in Cotati (in addition to the accumulation of impact fees as the school district's service area continues to be built-out) show the impact from cumulative development is likely less than significant. With the payment of required school fees from new development, the

¹⁴ LAFCO, Municipal Service Review: City of Cotati, February 2006, p. 18.

DSP will have a less than cumulatively considerable contribution to any significant cumulative impact on schools.

Based on the latest population estimate,¹⁵ the City currently provides 4.11 acres per 1,000 residents. This is insufficient to meet the present General Plan standard of 1 acre per 200 persons, or 5 acres per 1,000. The only public park facility in the planning area at the present time is La Plaza Park. The DSP proposes a total of 3.03 net new park acreage, providing 4.61 acres within the planning area. This would raise the current City park acreage to 32.3, yielding a ratio of 3.75 acres per 1,000 in population, which is still less than the General Plan goal of 5 acres per 1,000 in population. As far as areas that can be strictly defined as park, the Specific Plan does not meet current General Plan requirements. However, the City uses in-lieu fees to mitigate for any lack of parkland in a proposed development. In addition, the Plaza Park will be enhanced with the removal of the central intersection. Paving will be replaced with grass and sidewalks.

There are no cumulative impacts to library resources. This conclusion is based in part on the conclusion in the EIR for the current Cotati General Plan. The General Plan EIR concluded that there would not be significant impacts to these resources.

The DSP's impacts are less than significant and it does not result in a significant cumulative impact. Specifically, the impact of the project will not make a cumulatively considerable contribution to the significant cumulative impact.

4.11.8 References

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¹⁵ Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit, Population Estimates. Available at: <http://www.dof.ca.gov/HTML/DEMOGRAP/ReportsPapers/Estimates/E4/E4-01-06/HistE-4.asp>. Accessed 8/05/07.

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