

3.2 Population/Housing

This section examines whether implementation of the General Plan will induce substantial population growth either directly or indirectly. Through the Initial Study, issues regarding displacement of substantial numbers of existing housing and people were found to have a less-than-significant impact.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The majority of the project area is contained within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of Rancho Santa Margarita. The remainder of the project area is primarily undeveloped and contains no residential units and no major employment generating uses. As shown in Table 1 in the Project Description of the EIR, there are currently approximately 16,921 dwelling units in the project area with an associated population of 49,185 (assuming 2.95 persons per occupied dwelling unit based on California Department of Finance 2001 data). The California Department of Finance estimates the 2001 Rancho Santa Margarita population to be 48,336. Estimates of population vary somewhat depending on the method of calculation used and the assumed number of persons per dwelling unit.

The most recent set of growth projections are provided in *Orange County Projection 2000*, an extensive analysis of the regional economic and demographic conditions. *OCP-2000* provides estimates and forecasts of employment, population, and housing for the period 2000-2025. These forecasts serve as a basis for growth forecasts made by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) adopted with the Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide (RCPG) and the Regional Transportation Plan. SCAG adopted the growth management component of the RCPG to guide growth and development within the SCAG region. The region consists of six counties and 184 cities grouped into 13 subregions. The subregions are geographical areas that use a common planning approach for addressing multi-jurisdictional concerns. The project area for Rancho Santa Margarita lies within the Orange County Subregion.

OCP-2000 population and housing projections for 2000, 2010, and 2025 are shown in Table 2, as are modified projections. The *OCP-2000* were prepared prior to 2000 census data being available. With release of that data, *OCP-2000* estimates of year 2000 population were apparently low. Therefore, modified projections were derived by using 2000 Census population data as a baseline and then applying the *OCP-2000* growth rate. As shown in Table 2, population growth in Rancho Santa Margarita is projected to increase about 9 percent from 2000 to 2025. The number of housing units in Rancho Santa Margarita is expected to increase by about 4 percent during the same period.

**Table 2
Orange County Projections – 2000
and Modified Projections for
Rancho Santa Margarita**

	OCP-2000				Modified*			
	2000	2010	2025	Change	2000	2010	2025	Change
Population	40,995	43,424	44,755	9%	47,214	48,866	51,558	9%
Housing Units	13,823	14,308	14,373	4%	16,515	17,093	17,176	4%

* The OCP-2000 were prepared prior to 2000 census data being available. With release of that data, OCP-2000 estimates of year 2000 population were apparently low. Therefore, modified projections were derived by using 2000 Census population data as a baseline and then applying the OCP-2000 growth rate.
Source: OCP-2000 and Cotton/Bridges/Associates, February 2002.

THRESHOLDS USED TO DETERMINE LEVEL OF IMPACT

For purposes of this EIR, a significant impact will occur if implementation of the General Plan will induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly or indirectly.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Implementation of the General Plan will result in an increase of dwelling units and population within the project area. As shown in Table 1 in the Project Description section of this EIR, an increase of 687 dwelling units and a corresponding increase of 1,989 persons over existing conditions is anticipated based on the buildout of land uses proposed in the General Plan. New residents will relocate to Rancho Santa Margarita as a result of the construction of new residential units. The majority of these units, 612 of the 687, will be located in the Northeast Future Planned Community area. The availability of new employment opportunities resulting from the development of currently vacant land for employment generating uses will also draw additional residents to the City and surrounding areas. The actual rate of development that may occur pursuant to General Plan policy depends on market conditions and other factors, such as availability of infrastructure or environmental constraints. The estimated population for the project area at the time of buildout in the year 2020 is 49,403 living in 17,608 dwelling units. This is an increase of 4.1 percent for population and 4.1 percent for housing units. Impacts associated with population growth without commensurate housing unit construction, such as overcrowding, are not anticipated. Additionally, an ample amount of vacant land (over 261 acres) exists to accommodate housing unit construction. Therefore, no significant impact will result.

MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation measure is proposed as no significant housing and population impact has been identified.

LEVEL OF IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION

Future development pursuant to General Plan implementation will not result in a significant housing and population impact.

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