

## 3.12 Public Services

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This section examines whether implementation of the General Plan will result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impact, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, and libraries.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### Fire Protection

The City contracts with the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) for fire protection service within the incorporated boundaries. OCFA also serves the unincorporated portions of the project area. One fire station is located on Avenida Aventura within the Rancho Santa Margarita Business Park. Two other stations are located just outside of the City including one on Trabuco Canyon Road (located just south of Trabuco Oaks) and a second station located at the intersection of Olympiad Road and Melinda Road in Mission Viejo. A third station, Ladera Station, is being built on Antonio Parkway. Several other stations located outside of the City respond to fire and other emergencies within the project area.

The City initiated service with OCFA on March 23, 2000, shortly after incorporation on January 1, 2000. In 2000, OCFA answered a total of 1,432 emergency calls, the majority of which (60%) were for medical emergencies. Other calls for emergency response included “other” calls (27%), false alarms (8%), hazardous material (2%), and fire (2%).

OCFA provides fire suppression, emergency medical, and rescue services, as well as public education programs for schools, businesses, community organizations, childcare providers and other members of the community. In addition, the OCFA works with the City to adopt and enforce codes and ordinances relative to fire and life safety, and reviews development projects within the City for potential impacts on fire protection services. The OCFA has established service goals and response times for emergency calls at 5 minutes, 80% of the time. The response times within the city currently meet this OCFA goal.

The OCFA has become concerned recently regarding the increasing demand for paramedic services within the City. With the proliferation of large senior care facilities within the City and surrounding region, demands for paramedic services have dramatically increased. This demand continues despite the implementation of a new paramedic unit last year in Talega/Fire Station 58. This unit provides service to portions of the City directly and as a backup/secondary unit to the entire City when others are busy. The OCFA projects that this increased demand for paramedic services may require

additional staff at an undetermined time in the future. The OCFA will continue to closely monitor the emergency fire and life safety service needs of the City.

#### **Police Protection**

Rancho Santa Margarita contracts with the Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD) for all of its law enforcement needs. OCSD is responsible for public safety and general law enforcement within both the City and unincorporated areas within the project area. To serve the public safety needs of the City, OCSD operates a Sheriff's Station at City Hall staffed with four personnel including a Chief of Police Services. Other personnel assigned to Rancho Santa Margarita originate from the Aliso Viejo station including five sergeants, 15 deputies, one motorcycle deputy, two traffic enforcement deputies, one deputy assigned to the Directed Enforcement Team, ~~and two three~~ community services officers, ~~and one crime prevention specialist~~. Public safety needs of unincorporated areas within the project area are met by the Sheriff's South Orange County Substation in ~~Aliso Viejo Laguna Niguel~~.

OCSD services include patrol services, traffic enforcement, and criminal investigations. The Sheriff's Department also provides a variety of community policing programs for the public, including crime prevention, Business Watch/Neighborhood Watch and community awareness programs.

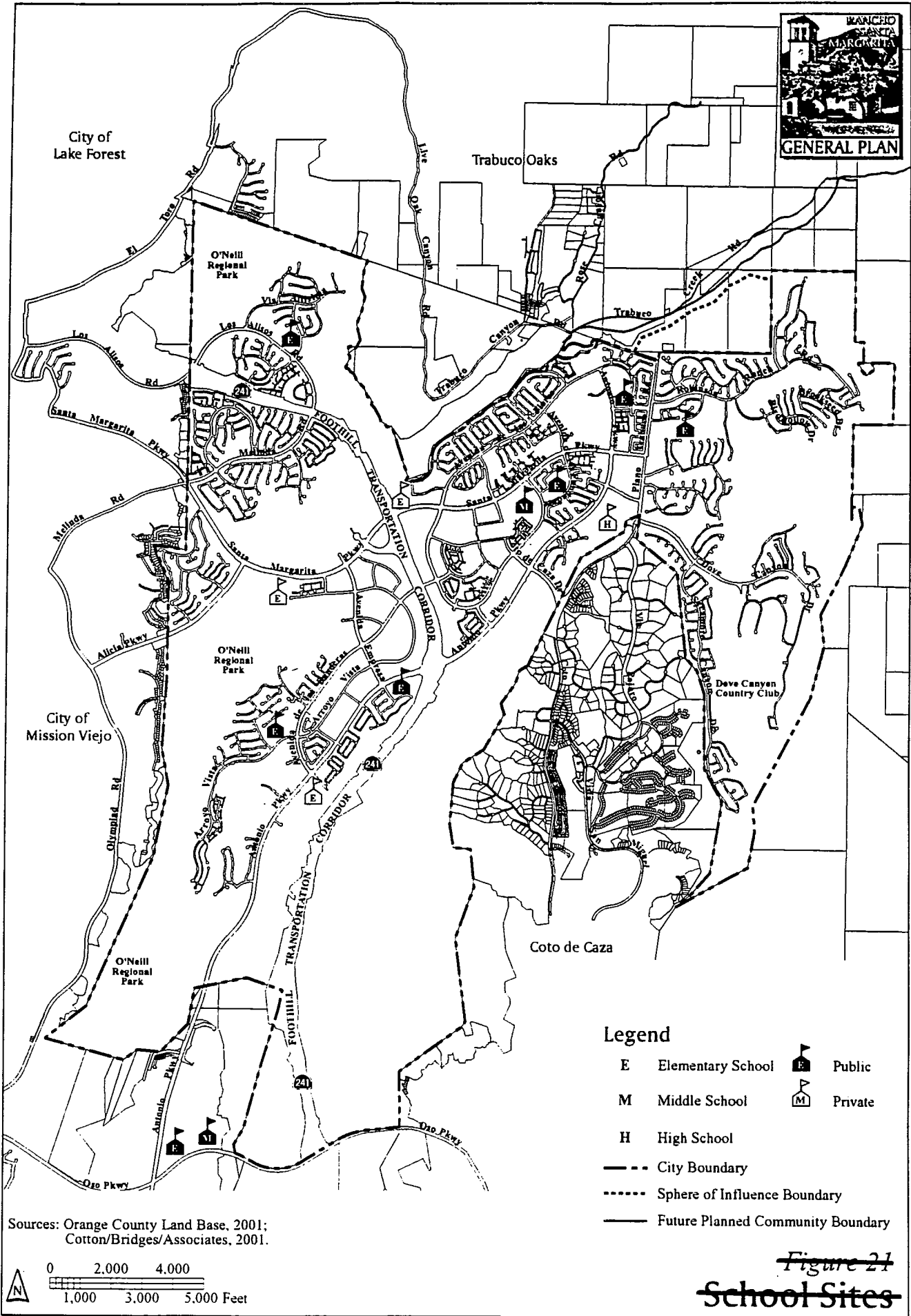
The Department has established ~~goals~~ for response times for emergency calls. Priority 1 calls, which are life threatening, are responded to in five minutes ~~or less~~ from the time of dispatch. Priority 2 calls, which are not immediately life threatening, are responded to in 12 minutes ~~or less from the time of dispatch~~. These response times are currently being met.

According to the Rancho Santa Margarita Chief of Police Services, there is a need for an additional Sheriff's station in southeast Orange County, since officers currently originate from the Substation in ~~Aliso Viejo Laguna Niguel~~ to patrol unincorporated areas near Rancho Santa Margarita. A station is being considered in Lake Forest that would serve Rancho Santa Margarita in addition to other southeastern Orange County cities.

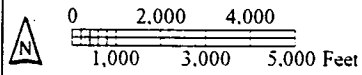
#### **Schools**

Rancho Santa Margarita public schools are operated by two K-12 districts: Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD) and Saddleback Valley Unified School District (SVUSD), as described below. In addition, the City is home to several prominent Orange County private schools, including Santa Margarita High School. There are no two- or four-year colleges located within the project area. The closest facilities are Saddleback College in Mission Viejo, and the University of California, Irvine. Figure 21 depicts the location of all schools (public and private) in Rancho Santa Margarita.

**Capistrano Unified School District:** CUSD serves the south and west portions of Rancho Santa Margarita with two schools located within the City: Arroyo Vista



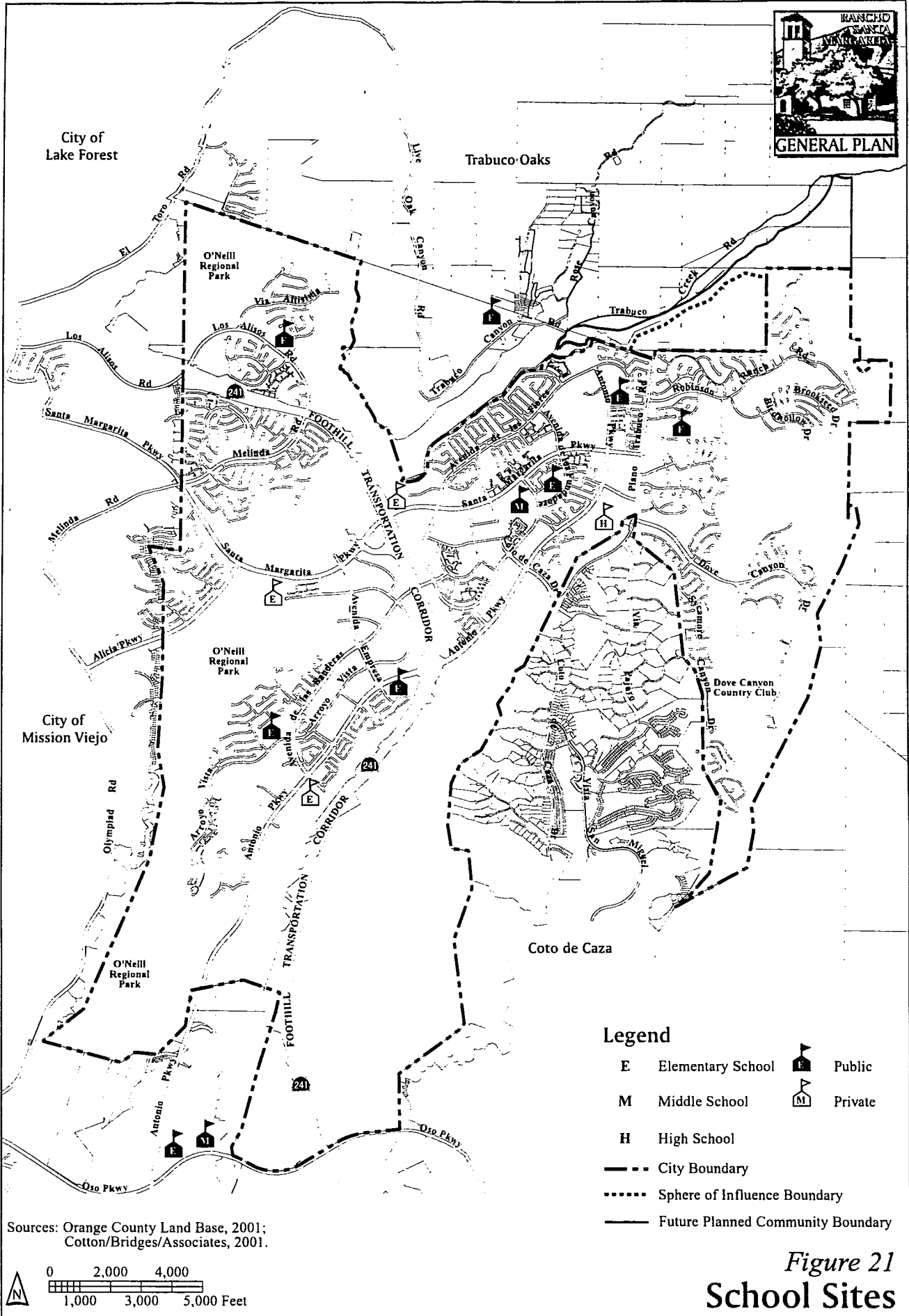
Sources: Orange County Land Base, 2001;  
Cotton/Bridges/Associates, 2001.



- Legend**
- E Elementary School
  - M Middle School
  - H High School
  - Public (house icon)
  - Private (school icon)
  - City Boundary
  - ..... Sphere of Influence Boundary
  - Future Planned Community Boundary

*Figure 21*  
**School Sites**

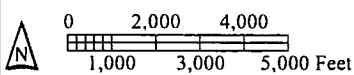
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**Legend**

- E Elementary School Public
- M Middle School Private
- H High School
- City Boundary
- ..... Sphere of Influence Boundary
- Future Planned Community Boundary

Sources: Orange County Land Base, 2001;  
Cotton/Bridges/Associates, 2001.



*Figure 21*  
**School Sites**

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Elementary and Tijeras Creek Elementary. Reilly Elementary, Las Flores Elementary, Wagon Wheel Elementary, Las Flores Middle School, and Tesoro High are located outside the City and serve the City. Many of these schools are overcrowded, and the District has limited or no space for additional growth within its existing sites. Therefore, the District continues to look for alternative sites within the project area to accommodate future student growth.

**Saddleback Valley Unified School District:** SVUSD serves the north and east portions of Rancho Santa Margarita with five schools ~~located in the City:~~ Cielo Vista Elementary, Melinda Heights Elementary, Robinson Elementary, Trabuco Mesa Elementary, and Rancho Santa Margarita Intermediate School. ~~Trabuco Mesa Elementary (in the Canyon) is located outside the City limits. (Robinson Elementary is located outside the City and serves the City.)~~ The school facilities are adequate to accommodate the existing student population. SVUSD serves the Northeast Future Planned Community.

#### **Parks**

Section 3.14 – Recreation of this EIR addresses environmental setting with regard to parks.

#### **Libraries**

The Orange County Public Library (OCPL) system serves the project area. The library system has a mission “to provide a framework for the delivery of relevant resources meeting their educational, cultural, civic, business and life-long learning needs to residents of all ages of member communities through a network of locally-focused libraries in which knowledgeable, service-oriented staff members offer access to information, books and other materials in a variety of formats using contemporary technology, and which encourage and foster reciprocal community involvement to educate, inform and enrich the lives of a diverse population.” The OCPL services residents of the City through the Rancho Santa Margarita Branch Library, located at 30902 La Promesa, near the corner of Alma Aldea in the Town Center. The OCPL has adopted the standard of providing 1.5 books and 0.2 square feet of library space per capita. Based on this standard, the Rancho Santa Margarita Library would need to be 9,673 square feet in size with 72,550 volumes. Currently, the Rancho Santa Margarita Branch Library exceeds the OCPL standard for size and number of books with a 16,300 square foot facility and 89,000 volumes.

### **THRESHOLDS USED TO DETERMINE LEVEL OF IMPACT**

For purposes of this EIR, a significant impact would occur if implementation of the General Plan would result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impact, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or

other performance objectives for fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, and libraries.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

### Fire Protection

Implementation of the General Plan will result in an increase of development in the project area. New development will include residential, commercial, and office space, as well as institutional and public facilities. This increase in development and population will require additional fire protection services.

As indicated in Section 1.0 – Project Description, approximately 261 undeveloped acres outside of the City in the Northeast Future Planned Community are designated for residential and non-residential uses, which would accommodate new public facilities. As such, this land use designation could accommodate a new fire station if warranted. However, the OCFA has indicated that no new fire facilities are proposed and additional services, if any, would be added to existing facilities.

The specific environmental impact of expanding existing facilities, if warranted, cannot be determined at this program-level analysis.

The Land Use Element contains the following goal and policies to ensure that fire protection services are provided at acceptable levels of service to meet the community's needs:

**Goal 9:** *Provide effective and responsive fire protection and emergency response service.*

**Policy 9.1:** Provide a sufficient level of fire protection, public education and emergency response service (including facilities, personnel, and equipment) through the Orange County Fire Authority.

**Policy 9.2:** Implement and enforce regulations, such as the most recent building codes, to ensure existing and new development is constructed and maintained to minimize potential fire hazards.

**Policy 9.3:** Coordinate with Homeowners Associations and community foundations to ensure that street widths and clearance areas are sufficient to accommodate fire protection equipment and emergency vehicles.

With implementation of this goal and policies, an otherwise potentially significant impact can be reduced or avoided.

### Police Protection

Implementation of the General Plan will result in an increase of development within the project area. New development will include residential, commercial, office, as well as institutional and public facilities uses. With the increase in population and new development, additional sheriff services, and potentially new or expanded facilities, will be required to maintain response times.

The Sheriff's Department is presently contracted to provide service to Rancho Santa Margarita. During contract negotiation, the City and Sheriff's Department determine the level of service to be provided. As the General Plan is implemented and development occurs, the City with the Sheriff's Department will determine if new sheriff facilities are needed in the project area. However, as described under the Environmental Setting section, a station is being considered in Lake Forest to service Rancho Santa Margarita, in addition to other southeast Orange County cities. The specific environmental impact of constructing a new sheriff facility in Lake Forest cannot be determined at this level of analysis and will be subject to separate CEQA review.

The General Plan Land Use Element contains the following goals and policies to ensure that police protection services are provided at acceptable levels of service to meet the community's needs:

**Goal 10:**     *Provide effective and responsive police protection.*

**Policy 10.1:** Provide a sufficient level of police protection (including facilities, personnel, and equipment) and public education through the Orange County Sheriff's Department.

**Policy 10.2:** Continue to implement alternative policing methods, such as Community Oriented Policing and youth programs, to maintain the low crime rate within Rancho Santa Margarita.

The General Plan Safety Element also contains the following goals and policies to reduce the risk of exposure to criminal activity through planning, education, regulation of human activity, and proper design.

**Goal 3:**     *Protect citizens and businesses from criminal activity.*

**Policy 3.1:** Utilize the services of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to reduce the risk of criminal activity.

**Policy 3.2:** Promote after school programs, volunteer programs, and Business and Neighborhood Watch programs to help maintain a safe environment.

**Policy 3.3:** Continue to implement existing programs that promote a peaceful, non-violent problem solving approach for conflict resolution within the community.



- Policy 3.4:** Continue to explore new techniques and approaches to create a community in which the residents feel safe.
- Policy 3.5:** Encourage the development and operation of community and recreational facilities as a pre-emptive strategy to reduce youth related crime.
- Policy 3.6:** Improve public awareness of both the responsiveness of local law enforcement and ways to reduce criminal activity.
- Policy 3.7:** Apply design techniques aimed at reducing criminal activity to new development and redevelopment.
- Policy 3.8:** Ensure that adequate street and property lighting is provided and maintained in order to protect public health and safety.

If the City adequately reviews service contract renewal with the Orange County Sheriff's Department, evaluates the need for additional facilities, and employs alternative policing methods, an otherwise potentially significant impact can be reduced or avoided.

### Schools

Future development within the project area will occur with implementation of the General Plan. Within the incorporated areas, 75 housing units and 293,000 square feet of commercial uses will be developed. In the Northeast Planned Community, which is currently unincorporated, 612 housing units will be developed. CUSD serves the portion of the City that will accommodate the majority the 75 housing units and 293,000 square feet of commercial uses. SVUSD serves the Northeast Planned Community. Table 11 summarizes the projected student generation by future development in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the City.

**Table 11  
Future Student Generation**

Land Use	Number of Units/ Square Feet	Generation Factor	Generated Students
<i>Incorporated Area Served by Capistrano Unified School District</i>			
Single-Family Residential	13	.5124/unit	7
Multi-Family Residential	62	.1903/unit	12
Commercial*	293,000	.1118/1,000 square feet	33
TOTAL			52
<i>Unincorporated Northeast Future Planned Community served by Saddleback Valley Unified School District</i>			
Single-Family Residential	514	.565/unit	290
Multi-Family Residential	98	.246/unit	24
TOTAL			314

Source: Capistrano Unified School District, March 2002; Saddleback Valley Unified School District, March 2002.

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\*Note: CUSD has different generation rates for retail/services and office. The higher of the two, office, was used.

As stated in the Environmental Setting section, the CUSD is currently experiencing overcrowded conditions with limited or no space for additional growth within its existing sites. Therefore, facilities will likely be needed to accommodate the 52 students generated by implementation of the General Plan. Alternatively, existing facilities within the District but outside of Rancho Santa Margarita may have capacity to accommodate these additional students. No currently vacant land within the incorporated portions of the City is designated for school facilities. The specific environmental impact of constructing new school facilities in the incorporated area served by CUSD cannot be determined at this level of analysis and will be subject to separate CEQA review.

The 314 students generated in the Northeast Future Planned Community by implementation of the General Plan will be served by SVUSD. The General Plan specifies that 20% of the acreage in the Northeast Future Planned Community be used for a joint elementary school and park facility. Annexation of any portion of the Northeast Future Planned Community cannot occur until a Specific Plan which meets this criteria, among others, is completed. The specific environmental impact of constructing new school facilities in the unincorporated area served by SVUSD cannot be determined at this level of analysis and will be subject to separate CEQA review.

The funding of school facilities has been impacted by the passing of SB 50. The new law limits the impact fees school districts can charge to off-set the impact of new development on the school system. The CUSD and SVUSD have adopted a maximum development fee of \$2.86 per square foot and \$2.14 per square foot, respectively, for residential units. For commercial use, CUSD charges a development fee of \$.34 per square foot. These amounts are higher than the \$1.93/sf for residential units as set by SB 50, but the school districts have found that additional money is required to raise the necessary 50 percent local matching monies to qualify for state financing. In the event that the state runs out of bond money to finance new school facilities, the CUSD has found that a development fee of \$5.27 per square foot for residential units will be required to raise 100% of the required funding. SVUSD has not performed the analysis to determine the funding required if state bond money runs out. The school districts review the amount of developer fees required on an annual basis.

The General Plan Land Use Element contains the following goals and policies to ensure that public education is provided at acceptable levels to meet the community's needs:

**Goal 11:** *Cooperate with local school districts and other educational organizations to ensure that a level of public education is provided that meets the community's educational needs.*

**Policy 11.1:** Cooperate with local school districts and assist them in identifying the need for new, expanded, or rehabilitated school sites and facilities so that sufficient educational facilities for programs are provided and maintained.

**Policy 11.2:** Encourage access to equal educational opportunities and curriculums in the various school districts that serve Rancho Santa Margarita.

**Policy 11.3:** Consider the need for new or expanded educational facilities when annexing new land.

**Policy 11.4:** Encourage additional and improved parking facilities at public schools in order to provide adequate parking for large/special events.

Implementation of these goals and policies will reduce or avoid an otherwise potentially significant impact.

### **Parks**

Section 3.14 – Recreation of this EIR addresses environmental impacts associated with provision of adequate park facilities.

### **Libraries**

Implementation of the General Plan will result in an increase of development in the project area and a corresponding increase in the population. This increase in population will increase demand on existing library facilities. Based on OCPL adopted standards and estimate population projections, buildout of the project area pursuant to the General Plan will generate a need for 2,984 additional books and approximately 400 square feet of additional library space. Currently, the Rancho Santa Margarita Branch Library exceeds the square footage needed by almost 7,000 square feet and number of books by 16,450. Therefore, additional books and library space to serve the increase in population are not needed.

The Land Use Element contains the following goals and policies to ensure that library facilities are provided at acceptable levels of service to meet the community's needs:

**Goal 13:** *Cooperate with the County of Orange to provide a level of library facilities and services that meets the needs of the community.*

**Policy 13.1:** Actively work with the County to provide library services and facilities that meet state standards for library facilities.

**Policy 13.2:** Encourage the maintenance of a high-quality library system that: enhances the cultural life of the community; is the repository of people's ideas, knowledge and thoughts; and is the information center for the community.

**Policy 13.3:** Collaborate with the County library system to enhance the provision of programs to the residents of Rancho Santa Margarita and surrounding communities.

**Policy 13.4:** As the community ages, consider the expansion and/or improvement of library facilities.

Implementation of the goals and policies with regard to providing a level of library facilities and services that meets the needs of the community will reduce or avoid an otherwise potentially significant impact.

## MITIGATION MEASURES

### Fire Protection

The City will implement Implementation Programs LU-23 and LU-24 to ensure adequate provision of fire protection services. Implementation Program LU-23 requires the City to review development proposals and amendments with Planned Communities for consistency with fire facility requirements established in approved development plans. The Program also requires evaluation of the need for additional fire facilities to serve new development outside of Planned Communities. Implementation Program LU-24 requires the City to consider service standards, future development, and facility needs when renewing service contracts with the Orange County Fire Authority.

### Police Protection

The City will implement Implementation Programs LU-23, LU-24, LU-25, and S-15 to ensure the adequate provision of police protection services. Implementation Program LU-23 requires the City to review development proposals and amendments with Planned Communities for consistency with police facility requirements established in approved development plans. The Program also requires evaluation of the need for additional police facilities to serve new development outside of Planned Communities. Implementation Program LU-24 requires the City to consider service standards, future development, and facility needs when renewing service contracts with the Orange County Sheriff's Department. Alternative Policing methods are advocated in Implementation Program LU-25. Implementation Program S-15 works to minimize criminal activity by providing substantive levels of police protection and educating the public about methods to reduce criminal activity.

As discussed in the Environmental Impact section, the specific environmental impact of constructing a new sheriff facility in Lake Forest cannot be determined at this level of analysis and will be subject to separate CEQA review.

### Schools

The City will implement Implementation Program LU-26 that requires the City to review development proposals in Planned Communities for consistency with school facility requirements established in approved development plans, review development proposals

outside Planned Communities for impacts to school facilities, and assist in collection of impact fees.

As previously discussed under the Environmental Impact section, the specific environmental impact of constructing new school facilities in the Capistrano Unified or Saddleback Valley Unified School Districts cannot be determined at this level of analysis and will be subject to separate CEQA review.

### **Parks**

Section 3.14 – Recreation of this EIR addresses mitigation required for the environmental impacts associated with provision of adequate park facilities.

### **Libraries**

The City will implement Implementation Programs LU-28 and LU-29 regarding establishing a library advisory board and collecting library impact fees. Implementation Program LU-28 calls for establishment of an advisory network of local public facility and service provider representatives to ensure that community needs for library services are being met. Implementation Program LU-29 requires the City to review development proposal and amendments within Planned communities for consistency with library impact fees required by approved development plans and agreements, in addition to assessing proposed development outside of Planned Communities.

## **LEVEL OF IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION**

### **Fire Protection**

Implementation of City procedures regarding new development and contract renewal outlined in Implementation Programs LU-23 and LU-24 will reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

### **Police Protection**

Implementation of City procedures regarding new development and contract renewal in addition to alternative policing methods outlined in Implementation Programs LU-23 through LU-25 will reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

### **Schools**

Implementation of City procedures regarding new development and collection of impact fees called for in Implementation Program LU-26 will reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

### **Parks**

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Section 3.14 – Recreation of this EIR addresses the level of impact after mitigation of impacts associated with provision of adequate park facilities.

#### **Libraries**

Establishment of a library advisory network and collection of library impact fees called for in Implementation Programs LU-28 and LU-29 will reduce impact to a less-than-significant level.