

3.14 Recreation

This section examines whether implementation of the General Plan will increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or result in the construction or expansion of recreational facilities.

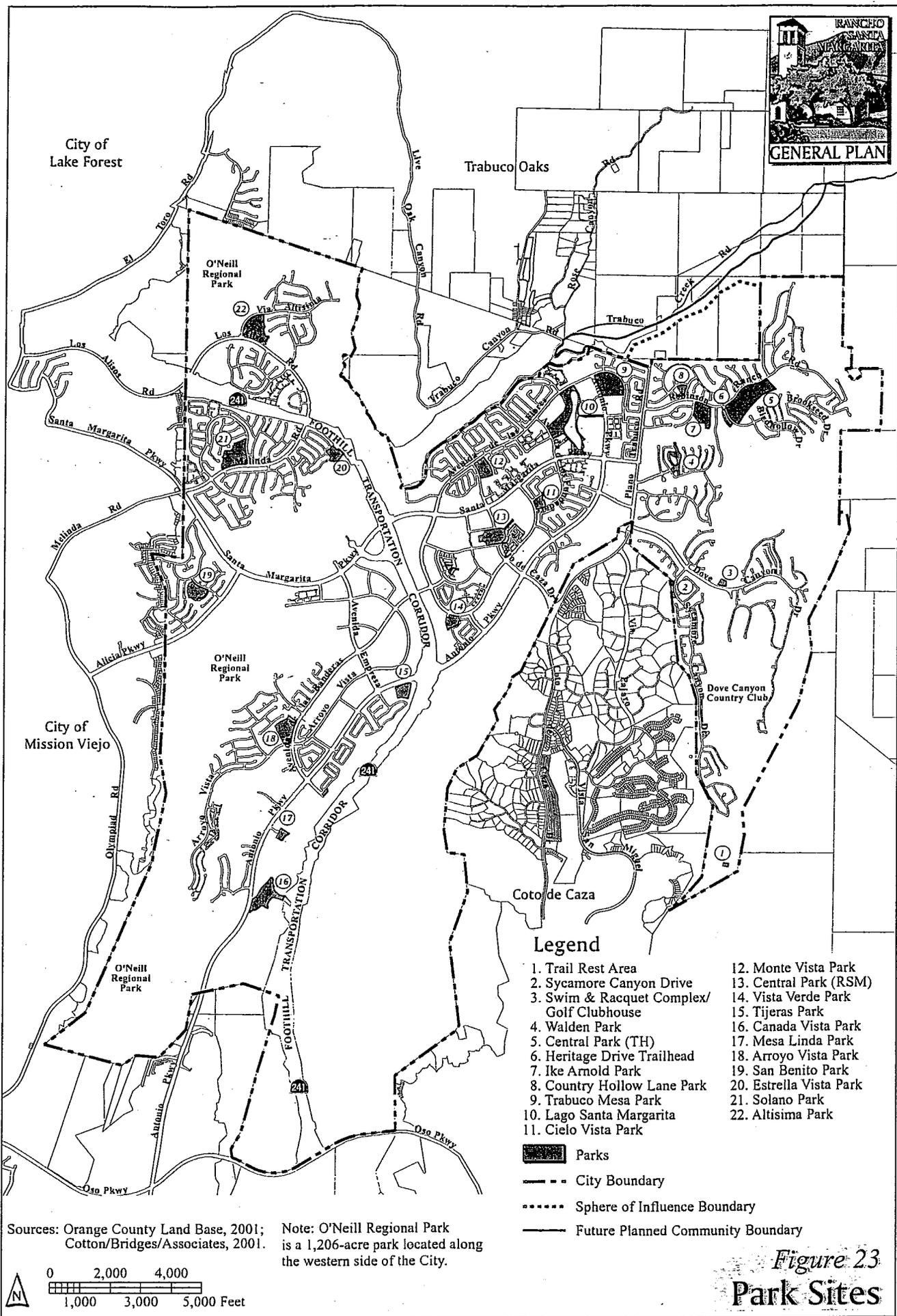
ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Rancho Santa Margarita park and recreation system consists of neighborhood parks, community parks, O'Neill Regional Park, joint use parks, community services and facilities, trails, along with the extensive open space system.

The establishment of parkland within Rancho Santa Margarita occurred during the development of the Planned Communities that have been incorporated into the City. Figure 23 shows the location of parks within the City. All parks in the City are privately owned and operated by homeowner associations and can be characterized as primarily neighborhood-serving. Most of the neighborhoods in the City are within walking distance from an existing park. Rancho Santa Margarita currently has 22 developed parks that range in size from the 0.5 acre Dove Canyon Trail Rest Area to the 21.4 acre Central Park in the Trabuco Highlands Planned Community. Several of the smaller parks function only as passive parks. Active recreational parkland is provided in the City at 17 of the 22 parks. Table 24 summarizes the existing parks and recreational facilities in the City excluding County of Orange Regional Parks. The provision and availability of parks in Rancho Santa Margarita is of particular importance to the community given the community's youthful population. Approximately 40% of the population in Rancho Santa Margarita are persons under 24 years of age. This segment of the population presents an increased demand for active recreational facilities and services, including playgrounds, ball fields and organized sporting events.

O'Neill Regional Park serves both as an overnight camping facility and offers day/picnic use. The picnic area provides for single and group uses and contains picnic tables, barbecues, a large turf area, horseshoe pits and playground equipment. About 3.5 acres are available for RV camping. The park facilities offer recreational opportunities including an equestrian campground, an arena, and 18 miles of riding and hiking trails. Regional riding and hiking trails include the following:

- a. Arroyo Trabuco Trail – Proposed to generally parallel Trabuco Creek from Cleveland National Forest to San Juan Creek in San Juan Capistrano. This trail is existing (mostly within O'Neill Regional Park) from Trabuco Canyon Road downstream to the San Juan Capistrano city limits.



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

Note: O'Neill Regional Park is a 1,206-acre park located along the western side of the City.

Legend

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Trail Rest Area | 12. Monte Vista Park |
| 2. Sycamore Canyon Drive | 13. Central Park (RSM) |
| 3. Swim & Racquet Complex/
Golf Clubhouse | 14. Vista Verde Park |
| 4. Walden Park | 15. Tijeras Park |
| 5. Central Park (TH) | 16. Canada Vista Park |
| 6. Heritage Drive Trailhead | 17. Mesa Linda Park |
| 7. Ike Arnold Park | 18. Arroyo Vista Park |
| 8. Country Hollow Lane Park | 19. San Benito Park |
| 9. Trabuco Mesa Park | 20. Estrella Vista Park |
| 10. Lago Santa Margarita | 21. Solano Park |
| 11. Cielo Vista Park | 22. Altissima Park |
- Parks
 City Boundary
 Sphere of Influence Boundary
 Future Planned Community Boundary

Figure 23
Park Sites

- b. Bell View Trail – Proposed to connect the Tijeras Creek Trail in the north (at Plano Trabuco Road) to the Wagon Wheel Trail in Caspers Wilderness Park. This trail is almost all existing.
- c. Live Oak Trail – Existing from O’Neill Regional Park to El Toro Road.
- d. Tijeras Creek Trail – Generally parallels Tijeras Creek from Plano Trabuco Road downstream to Trabuco Creek. This trail is existing.
- e. Trabuco Creek Bikeway – Proposed to generally parallel Trabuco Creek from Cleveland National Forest to San Juan Creek in San Juan Capistrano. Within this City, this bikeway exists on the bluff top east of the Arroyo Trabuco, between Antonio Parkway (at Avenida De Las Flores) and Santa Margarita Parkway.

The Lago Santa Margarita Beach Club is owned and operated by the Rancho Santa Margarita Landscape and Recreation Corporation (SAMLARC). It consists of a 12.6 acre constructed lake surrounded by 16.8 acres of parks, trails, and a lakeside beach. A grill and picnic area, boating, swim lagoon, two volleyball courts, and Fiesta Room are provided at the facility for SAMLARC residents.

**Table 24:
Existing Parks and Facilities
in Rancho Santa Margarita
Excluding County Regional Parks and Riding and Hiking Trails**

	Organized Sports Fields	Baseball	Basketball	Children's Play Area/ Tot lot	Community Center/Club House	Hiking Trails	Performance Stage	Picnic Tables	Spa	Swimming Pool	Tennis	Volleyball	Roller Hockey Rink	Other Uses
Dove Canyon														
3	Swim and Racquet Complex/Golf Clubhouse]]]	#]]]		
2	Sycamore Canyon Drive]]						
1	Trail Rest Area]]						
Rancho Santa Margarita														
18	Arroyo Vista]]]]	#]]]		
14	Vista Verde Park]]						
16	Cañada Vista]]]]]
13	Central Park (RSM)]]]]]	
11	Cielo Vista]	#]]			
10	Lago Santa Margarita]]]]]]]
17	Mesa Linda]]]]]		
12	Monte Vista]]]	#]]				
15	Tijeras]]]]]						
9	Trabuco Mesa]]]]]			
Rancho Trabuco														
22	Altisima Park]]]			#]	#]]			
19	San Benito Park]]]]]		#	
20	Estrella Vista Park]]						
21	Solano Park]]]]	#]]		
Robinson Ranch, Walden, and Rancho Cielo														
5	Central Park (Trabuco Highlands)]]]	#]				
8	Country Hollow Lane]]]				
6	Heritage Drive Trailhead]]						
7	Ike Arnold]]]]						
4	Walden]]]]				

Corresponds to legend on Figure 22, Park Sites.

Source: CBA site visits; RSM Facility Inventory from "Final Report on Programs and Services

Developed by the IGCC Committee," May 2001.

A survey of park managers conducted in April, 2000 by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) generally defined active recreational facilities as areas where competitive, organized team sports are played, and activities that may require specially built facilities for such competition. In contrast, facilities for passive activities were defined as unstructured and unscheduled, comprising hiking/walking trails, picnic/sitting areas, general open space, and "people watching" areas. No national standards are advocated by NRPA pertaining to passive versus active park space.

Of the approximately 152 acres of available parkland in the City, approximately 85 acres (56 percent) are devoted to active recreational use. Approximately 68 acres (44 percent) are devoted to passive uses. This does not include the O'Neill Regional Park, which is 1,206 acres in size, and runs along the western portion of the City. This regional park is maintained and operated by the County. Table 25 approximates the acreages within each park dedicated to active and passive uses.

Applying the definitions of active and passive neighborhood park space from the NRPA to the existing recreational facilities in Rancho Santa Margarita (refer to Table 24), the City has approximately 3.22 park acres per 1,000 persons and 1.79 active park acres per 1,000 persons.

Section 66477 of the Government Code (also known as the California Subdivision Map Act) provides local jurisdictions with the authority to acquire parklands in association with new land divisions. This provision of state law allows a city, by ordinance, to require the dedication of land, dedication of improvements, payment of an in-lieu fee, or any combination of these items, for park and recreational purposes as a condition on approving a subdivision map.

THRESHOLDS USED TO DETERMINE LEVEL OF IMPACT

Implementation of the General Plan will result in a significant impact if it (1) increases the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated, or (2) includes recreational facilities or requires the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

With development pursuant to the General Plan, the population of the project area will increase about 9 percent from 2000 to 2025 (please refer to Section 3.2, Population and

Table 25
Active and Passive Parkland
in Rancho Santa Margarita
Excluding County Regional Parks

	Total Acres ¹	NRPA Active ²	NRPA Passive ²	OC Park Code Requirements
Dove Canyon				
3 Swim and Racquet Complex/Golf Clubhouse ³	6.5	6	.5	
2 Sycamore Canyon Drive	2.5	--	2.5	
1 Trail Rest Area	0.5	--	.5	
<i>Community Total</i>	9.5	6	3.5	12.4
Rancho Santa Margarita				
18 Arroyo Vista	8.4	5.5	2.9	
14 Vista Verde Park	3.5	3.2	.3	
16 Cañada Vista	6	5.5	.5	
13 Central Park (RSM)	8.5	1.8	6.7	
11 Cielo Vista	2.5	1	1.5	
10 Lago Santa Margarita	16	--	16	
17 Mesa Linda	2.1	1.3	.8	
12 Monte Vista	6.9	6.2	.7	
15 Tijeras	4	3.5	.5	
9 Trabuco Mesa	11.9	9.5	2.4	
<i>Community Total</i>	69.8	37.5	32.3	71.3
Rancho Trabuco				
22 Altisima Park	11.3	9.3	2	
19 San Benito Park	4.6	.7	3.9	
20 Estrella Vista Park	2.1	--	2.1	
21 Solano Park	11.9	9.8	2.1	
<i>Community Total</i>	29.9	19.8	10.1	26.8
Robinson Ranch, Walden, and Rancho Cielo				
5 Central Park (Trabuco Highlands)	21.4	8.0	13.4	
18 Country Hollow Lane	2.4	1.4	1	
6 Heritage Drive Trailhead	1	--	1	
7 Ike Arnold	13.6	9	4.6	
4 Walden	4.6	2.8	1.8	
<i>Community Total</i>	43	21.2	21.8	14.3
City of Rancho Santa Margarita	152.2	84.5	67.7	124.8

Source: CBA, Inc., 2001.

Notes:

1. Total acreage derived from Orange County GIS Land Base.
 2. CBA park inspections to determine active and passive acreage in the City.
 3. Acreage does not include golf course.
- # Corresponds to the legend on Figure 22, Park Sites.

Housing). This population increase will place additional demands on existing park and recreation facilities.

The General Plan addresses the use of existing parks and facilities and provision of new parks and facilities in the Land Use and Conservation/Open Space Elements. The goals and policies are:

Land Use Element

Goal 1: *Maintain a mix of land uses and a balance of jobs and housing to support a community in which people can live, work, shop and play.*

Policy 1.5: Coordinate with public and private organizations to maximize the availability and use of parks and recreational facilities in the community.

Goal 2: *Control and direct future land use so that the community is protected and enhanced.*

Policy 2.4: Ensure that new development funds its share of community services and facilities (e.g., parks, schools, trails, utilities) and provides fiscal benefit to the community.

Goal 12: *Cooperate with homeowners associations and community foundations to ensure that parks, community centers, and recreational opportunities are provided and maintained that promote a family-oriented community and encourage community spirit and participation.*

Policy 12.1: Collaborate with the homeowners associations and community foundations to provide and maintain a variety of community amenities such as the lake, parks, community centers, and pedestrian/bicycle trails.

Policy 12.2: Evaluate the need for and facilitate the provision of additional neighborhood, senior, youth, and day-care centers as needed.

Policy 12.3: Cooperate with homeowners associations, community foundations, and other recreational facility owners to facilitate the maximum effective utilization of parks and recreational opportunities in the community.

Policy 12.4: At the time of review of new residential development, require park dedication and provision of recreational trails that enhance the City's existing recreational system.

Policy 12.5: Work with all school districts in planning for parks and recreation facilities to maximize joint use community recreation opportunities.

Conservation/Open Space Element

Goal 1: *Protect and enhance the significant ecological and biological resources within and surrounding the community.*

Policy 1.5: Coordinate with local, regional, state and federal agencies with jurisdiction over parks and open space in the community to secure permanent access easements for passive recreational and trail purposes where needed.

Policy 1.6: Coordinate with park operators to convert existing passive parkland to active recreational space.

Policy 1.7: Establish and maintain a standard of 3 acres of active park land per 1,000 population.

In addition to the goals and policies, the General Plan includes a parkland standard for future development in the project area. In accordance with the California Subdivision Map Act, a standard of 3 acres of parkland space per 1,000 persons should be established in Rancho Santa Margarita. However, this Plan establishes a parkland standard of 3 acres of active parkland space per 1,000 persons. New development in the City and the Northeast Rancho Santa Margarita Planned Community will be subject to the 3 acres of active parkland per 1,000 persons requirement.

Developing a coordinated system between the City, school districts and homeowner associations is essential for adequate maintenance and improvements of existing recreational facilities as continued use occurs. With implementation of these requirements, impact on existing recreational facilities, that would otherwise be potentially significant, can be reduced or avoided.

To help ensure adequate recreational facilities with development in the Northeast Future Planned Community, the Land Use Element includes land use mix guidelines for the area. These guidelines include 20% of the area to be a joint use elementary school and park facility and 35% of the area to be open space. This open space will include trail linkages to the existing trails network. The park facilities in the Future Planned Community need to be developed in a manner that minimizes negative effects on the environment, otherwise, impact will be significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

The City will undertake Implementation Programs LU-3, LU-27, COS-4 and COS-6 to maintain and enhance existing park and recreational facilities. Implementation Programs LU-3 and COS-4 require assessing the existing active recreational space in the City using the standard of 3 acres of active parkland per 1,000 persons. These programs also call for coordinating with park owners/operators to determine if existing passive parkland can be converted to active recreational space. Implementation Programs LU-27 and COS-6

require achieving a full range of recreational opportunities to serve the community through the following activities:

Collaborating with homeowners associations and community foundations to provide and maintain amenities such as Lake Rancho Santa Margarita, the Intergenerational Community Center (IGCC), riding and hiking trails, and class I bikeways;

- ◆ Securing joint use agreements with school districts, private schools, homeowner associations and other property owners to maximize joint use and development of existing community recreational facilities;
- ◆ Working with the park owners/operators to achieve maximum utilization of available park space and recreation programs and developing new recreation programs to reflect new needs and interests of the Rancho Santa Margarita community;
- ◆ Working with business, homeowners associations, churches, schools, and other property owners to ensure set backs and landscaping are provided next to trails and bikeways;
- ◆ Creating standards to evaluate the need for additional community centers;
- ◆ Promoting a high level of public outreach by coordinating with community organizations, special interest groups and private businesses to provide recreational program opportunities, and distributing newsletters or brochures to inform the community of available recreation programs and facilities; and
- ◆ Exploring means to provide programs to those who cannot afford to pay by utilizing corporate sponsorships, volunteers and joint use of school facilities and services.

The City will utilize Implementation Programs LU-3, LU-8 and COS-5 to address the development of park and recreational facilities in the Northeast Future Planned Community. Implementation Programs LU-3 and COS-5 require all development proposals in the Future Planned Community to be reviewed for consistency with the active parkland standard established in the Conservation/Open Space Element. If amendments to the development proposals are made, impacts to parks and facilities must be considered. Program LU-8 requires the city to utilize the California Environmental Quality Act when reviewing development proposals to minimize environmental impacts detrimental to the community.

LEVEL OF IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION

With the implementation of Programs LU-3, LU-27, COS-4 and COS-6, development pursuant to the General Plan will have a less-than-significant impact on existing parks and recreational facilities. The requirements outlined in Implementation Programs LU-3, LU-8 and COS-5 will reduce the environmental impacts of new recreational facilities in the City and Northeast Future Planned Community to a less-than-significant-level.

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