



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: Interested Agencies and Organizations
(Refer to Attached Distribution List)

Subject: **Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report
for the Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update**

Lead Agency: City of Rancho Santa Margarita
22112 El Paseo, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688
Ms. Wendy Starks, AICP, Senior Planner
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The **CITY OF RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA** is commencing the preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update and has released this Notice of Preparation (NOP) per the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The City wants to know your views and specific concerns related to the Project's potential environmental effects. Information gathered during the NOP comment period will be used to shape and focus future analysis of environmental impacts. If you are a public agency, the City is interested in your agency's views, as to the scope and content of the environmental information germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities. As a responsible or trustee agency, your agency may need to use the EIR prepared by the City when considering issuance of a permit or approval of a project in your jurisdiction.

NOP Comment Period: The City invites you to submit written comments describing your specific environmental concerns, and if representing a public agency, please identify your specific areas of statutory responsibility. Written comments are desired at the earliest possible date, but due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice. **The NOP public comment period begins on April 30, 2018 and ends on May 29, 2018.** Please send your written comments to the City staff contact identified above, and please include your name, address, and contact information in your correspondence.

Document Availability: The Project description, location, and potential environmental effects are contained in the attached Project Information Packet. Copies of the attached materials are also available for public review at the City of Rancho Santa Margarita, Planning Division, 22112 El Paseo, Rancho Santa Margarita, California 92688, Monday through Friday from 8:00 am until 4:00 pm.

Project Title: Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update

Project Location: City of Rancho Santa Margarita, County of Orange, California

Project Description: (brief): The General Plan Update is a strategic update focused on five elements: Conservation/Open Space, Economic Development, Land Use, Noise, and Safety. The Circulation and Housing Elements were updated in 2013 and 2014 respectively; thus, no changes are proposed to those two elements. The purpose of the General Plan is to provide the City Council, Planning Commission, Staff, and the entire community with a comprehensive and internally consistent plan to guide the City's decision-making and development processes through the General Plan planning period (2040). The work program includes an update of the General Plan baseline data, goals, and policies.

Date:

April 23, 2018

Signature:

Wendy Starks

Title:

Wendy Starks, AICP
Principal Planner

Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan EIR NOP Distribution List

State Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse 1400 Tenth Street Sacramento, CA 95814	Jillian Wong, Planning Rules Manager SCAQMD 21865 Copley Drive Diamond Bar, CA 91765	San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board 2375 Northside Drive, Suite 100 San Diego, CA 92108-2700
CDFW South Coast Region 3883 Ruffin Road San Diego, CA 92123	California Department of Conservation 801 K Street, MS 24-01 Sacramento, CA 95814	CA Dept of Toxic Substances Control Intergovernmental Review 5796 Corporate Avenue, Floor 1 Cypress, CA 90630
Housing and Community Development 2020 West El Camino Avenue Sacramento, CA 95833	CA Native American Heritage Commission IGR/CEQA Review 1550 Harbor Boulevard, Suite 100 West Sacramento, CA 95691	SCAG Intergovernmental Review Section 818 W 7th Street, Floor 12 Los Angeles, CA 90017
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<p>Dove Canyon c/o Carla Hohmann Seabreeze Property Management 39 Argonaut, Suite 100 Aliso Viejo, CA 92656</p>	<p>Robinson Ranch c/o Kendrah Kay Power Stone Property Management 16470 Bake Parkway Irvine, CA 92618</p>	<p>Walden c/o Tina S. Gustave TSG Independent Property Management 27129 Calle Arroyo, Suite 1802 San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675</p>
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NOTICE OF PREPARATION

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA GENERAL PLAN UPDATE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

LEAD AGENCY:



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Planning Division
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April 30, 2018

JN 152779



PROJECT INFORMATION PACKET

I. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, the City of Rancho Santa Margarita (City) has distributed this Notice of Preparation/Project Information Packet for the Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update and EIR. The General Plan Update involves a process of revising the City's existing General Plan, last updated in its entirety in 2002.

The sections that follow describe the City's location in the region, summarize the General Plan Update document, and list the issue areas to be evaluated through a Program EIR, which will be prepared in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168.

II. REGIONAL LOCATION

The City of Rancho Santa Margarita (City) is located in eastern Orange County about 10 miles northeast of the Pacific Ocean, in the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains; refer to [Exhibit 1, Regional Location](#). The General Plan study area is comprised of 8,607 acres (13 square miles), of which 8,280 acres are located within the City's incorporated limits and 327 acres are located within the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI); refer to [Exhibit 2, General Plan Study Area](#). The community is bisected by the Foothill Transportation Corridor State Route 241 (SR-241), which extends to the north connecting with North County cities such as Yorba Linda and Anaheim, and to the south terminating at Oso Parkway. The cities of Mission Viejo and Lake Forest are located to the west, Cleveland National Forest is located to the east, and unincorporated Orange County is located to the north and south. Regional access to the City is provided via SR-241, SR-133, and Interstate 5.

III. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The current *City of Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan* (2002 General Plan) was adopted in 2002 and consists of the following State mandated and optional elements:

- Circulation
- Conservation/Open Space
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Land Use
- Noise
- Safety



NOT TO SCALE

Michael Baker
INTERNATIONAL



04/18 | JN 152779



Regional Location

Exhibit 1



The Housing Element was updated in September 2013 in compliance with the 2013-2021 planning cycle for cities within the Southern California Association of Governments region. The Circulation Element was adopted in January 2014. No changes are proposed to the Housing and Circulation Elements.

According to the 2002 General Plan Land Use Plan Development Capacity Summary, implementation of the 2002 General Plan was anticipated to result in the development of 17,608 dwelling units and 13.6 million square feet of non-residential development, resulting in a population of 51,178 within the planning area. Because of the time that has elapsed since adoption of the 2002 General Plan, it contains some outdated information, projections, and policy direction. Thus, it was determined that a strategic update to the 2002 General Plan was warranted.

The General Plan Update was developed through a process involving community engagement activities, working sessions with City staff and department heads, and meetings with various stakeholder groups.

IV. PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

Since the General Plan was adopted in 2002, Rancho Santa Margarita has maintained a strong mix of land uses and balance of jobs and housing in which people live, work, shop, and play. Successful implementation of the 2002 General Plan has supported this high quality-of-life, ensuring the small-town village character is protected and enhanced. With the significant progress that has been made in implementing the 2002 General Plan and the desire to enhance quality-of-life and encourage economic development as the community continues to grow and mature, the City determined the need to provide a strategic update to several General Plan elements.

Residents support existing Rancho Santa Margarita planning policies and the 2002 General Plan Vision Statement; therefore, the proposed Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update (General Plan Update or proposed project) provides an opportunity to reaffirm existing goals and policies, to remove or revise goals and policies that are no longer relevant or need updating to reflect changing regulatory requirements, and to consider new goals and policies that further support and maintain Rancho Santa Margarita's vision.

The mission of the proposed project is to uphold and honor the original Rancho Santa Margarita Planned Community Master Plan; prepare Rancho Santa Margarita for the next 20+ years; maintain a balance of land uses; maintain and support quality-of-life, community satisfaction, and safety for all residents; and update the General Plan to meet new State requirements.

The purpose of the General Plan is to provide the City Council, Planning Commission, Staff, and the entire community with a comprehensive and internally consistent plan to guide the City's decision-making and development processes through the General Plan planning period (2040).



GENERAL PLAN UPDATE COMPONENTS

The General Plan Update is a strategic update focused on five elements: Conservation/Open Space, Economic Development, Land Use, Noise, and Safety. The Circulation and Housing Elements were updated in 2013 and 2014 respectively; thus, no changes are proposed to those two elements.

Major components of the General Plan Update include:

- Update existing conditions, with year 2016 serving as the baseline year.
- Update the General Plan development projections to the year 2040, the General Plan planning period.
- Update the Land Use Element with one new Mixed-Use (MU) land use designation and establish site conditions and characteristics for future mixed-use development.
- Update the Conservation/Open Space, Economic Development, Land Use, Noise, and Safety Elements to reflect current conditions and account for new development projections.
- Add, delete, or modify existing General Plan goals and policies in the Conservation/Open Space, Economic Development, Land Use, Noise and Safety Elements.

Land Use Plan

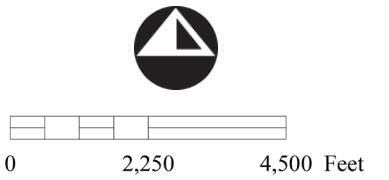
The General Plan Land Use Map identifies the type, location, and density/intensity of future development within the City; refer to Exhibit 3, General Plan Update Land Use Map. No changes are proposed to the Land Use Map as part of the General Plan Update.

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE GROWTH AND ASSUMPTIONS

Within Rancho Santa Margarita, many of the parcels are not developed to their maximum density or intensity. There are future land use opportunities that could result in new development or redevelopment within the community. In general, it is anticipated that new development will occur in a similar manner with only a limited number of parcels being developed at the maximum density or intensity. Therefore, the projected future development intensity and density identified in Table 1, General Plan Update Development Potential, is based upon existing and historical development, as well as anticipated development associated with future land use opportunities.



- LEGEND**
- Low Density Residential (0-7.0 Units/Net Acre, Average 6.5 Units/Net Acre)
 - Low-Medium Density Residential (7.0-11.0 Units/Net Acre, Average 10.0 Units/Net Acre)
 - Medium Density Residential (11.0-18.0 Units/Net Acre, Average 14.3 Units/Net Acre)
 - High Density Residential (18.0-25.0 Units/Net Acre, Average 20.0 Units/Net Acre)
 - Commercial General
 - Neighborhood Commercial
 - Business Park
 - Community Facility
 - Park
 - Open Space
 - Open Space Golf
 - Regional Open Space
 - Water
 - Future Planned Community
 - City Boundary
 - Sphere of Influence



Sources: City of Rancho Santa Margarita, July 2015 and Orange County Local Area Formation Commission, 2013.



Table 1
General Plan Update Development Potential

Land Use	Maximum		Assumed		Acres	Estimated Dwelling Units	Estimated Non-Residential Square Feet
	DU/ Acre	FAR	DU/ Acre	FAR			
Residential Land Use Designations							
LDR: Low Density Residential	7	—	7	—	895.5	6,268	—
LMDR: Low-Medium Density Residential	11	—	10	—	228.2	2,282	—
MDR: Medium Density Residential	18	—	16	—	263.3	4,213	—
HDR: High Density Residential	25	—	22	—	251.4	5,531	—
Commercial and Business Land Use Designations							
C: General Commercial	—	1.0	—	0.25	129.4	—	1,408,732
NC: Neighborhood Commercial	—	0.6	—	0.20	43.5	—	378,961
BP: Business Park	—	1.0	—	0.45	271.3	—	5,318,273
Public/Quasi-Public Land Use Designation							
CF: Community Facility	—	0.6	—	0.15	219.4	—	1,433,721
Open Space Land Use Designations							
P: Parks	—	0.5	—	0.001	154.0	—	6,706
OS: Open Space	—	--	—	--	3,162.6	—	10,000
OSG: Open Space Golf	—	0.4	—	0.0035	457.1	—	69,694
ROS: Regional Open Space	—	0.4	—	0.01	1,164.3	—	507,166
Other Land Uses							
Water	—	—	—	—	71.2	—	—
Total					7,311.0	18,294	9,133,253
Note: Acreage does not account for right-of-way and numbers may vary slightly due to rounding. Future mixed-use development would come from capacity within the MDR, HDR, and C designations.							



Table 2, *General Plan Update Net Growth*, summarizes the growth above existing conditions that could occur with implementation of the General Plan Update. As indicated in Table 2, the anticipated growth over existing (2016) conditions is 528 additional dwelling units and 3,085,014 additional square feet of non-residential uses based upon the assumed development intensities and densities identified in Table 1.

**Table 2
General Plan Update Net Growth
(increase over existing conditions)**

Land Use	Estimated Dwelling Units	Estimated Non-Residential Square Feet
Residential Land Use Designations		
LDR: Low Density Residential	236	—
LMDR: Low-Medium Density Residential	23	—
MDR: Medium Density Residential	133	—
HDR: High Density Residential	136	—
Commercial and Business Land Use Designations		
C: General Commercial	—	446,826
NC: Neighborhood Commercial	—	15,507
BP: Business Park	—	1,860,899
Public/Quasi-Public Land Use Designation		
CF: Community Facility	—	248,859
Open Space Land Use Designations		
P: Parks	—	3,089
OS: Open Space	—	—
OSG: Open Space Golf	—	2,668
ROS: Regional Open Space	—	507,166
Other Land Uses		
Water	—	—
Total	528	3,085,014

The analysis of project impacts is based upon various assumptions regarding existing and future conditions in Rancho Santa Margarita. Unless otherwise stated, the assumptions are as specified in Table 3, *General Plan Update Growth Assumptions*.



Table 3
General Plan Update Growth Assumptions

Description	2016 Existing Conditions	2040 General Plan	Net Change
Residential Uses	17,766	18,294	528
Household Size (Persons Per Household)	2.93	2.93	0
Population (Persons)	48,516	51,404 ²	1,692
Non-Residential Development (Square Feet)	6,048,238	9,133,252	3,085,014
Note: 1. State of California, Department of Finance, E-5 Population and Housing Estimates for Cities, Counties, and the State, 2011-2016, With 2010 Benchmark, Sacramento, California, May 1, 2016. 2. Population is based on a household size of 2.93 and vacancy rates of 4.1 percent for 2040 per California Department of Finance. Source: City of Rancho Santa Margarita and Michael Baker International, 2017.			

V. POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIR will focus on the following environmental issues:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

Due to the decision to prepare an Environmental Impact Report, an Initial Study was not prepared. This option is permitted under CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a), which states that if the Lead Agency determines an EIR will be required for a project, the Lead Agency may skip further initial review and begin work on the EIR.