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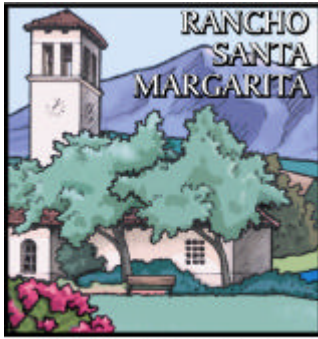
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## GENERAL PLAN

# Introduction

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The Land Use Element is a guide to land use planning within Rancho Santa Margarita. This Element identifies the type and location of existing and future land uses within the City. The specific land uses and their location within the community in turn affect the remaining General Plan elements. For example, the location and types of land use outlined in the Land Use Element rely on the circulation system identified in the Circulation Element, and the open space facilities identified in the Land Use Element are the subject of the Conservation and Open Space Element policies. The land uses identified in the Land Use Element also reflect the community's goals for its form and character, and the desire to maintain a quality living environment for families, strengthen the community's distinctive image, diversify and expand the local economy, and preserve the natural areas that make Rancho Santa Margarita unique.

### *Purpose of the Land Use Element*

The City of Rancho Santa Margarita incorporated to gain local political control and strengthen community identity and pride. One of the responsibilities of an incorporated city is controlling future growth and development. According to State law, cities must prepare and adopt a General Plan as a tool to manage growth and development. The Land Use Element is a mandatory element or chapter of the General Plan.

The purpose of the Land Use Element is to describe present and planned land use activity, and address the relationship between development and environmental quality, protection of natural water resources, potential hazards, and social and economic objectives. As a guide for future growth and development, the Element identifies the general distribution, location, mix and extent of desired land uses including residential, commercial and business, public/quasi-public facilities, open space uses, and other land uses.



Through the use of text, maps, and diagrams, a clear and logical land use pattern is established including standards for future development. A particularly important feature of the Element is the Land Use Policy Map. This map shows the location, density, and intensity of development for future desired land uses in the Rancho Santa Margarita Planning Area. Finally, the goals and policies in the Element establish a constitutional framework for future land use planning and development decisions in Rancho Santa Margarita.

The Land Use Element of the Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan represents the City's desire for long-range changes and enhancements of its land uses. The Land Use Plan builds on the established land use pattern to provide integration between existing community qualities and the community's vision of the future. Achieving the vision will be accomplished through continued public involvement and diligence by City decision makers and staff.

***Scope and Content  
of the Element***

The Land Use Element is comprised of three sections: 1) Introduction; 2) Issues, Goals, and Policies; and 3) the Land Use Plan. In the Issues, Goals, and Policies section, major land use issues are identified and related goals and policies are established to address these issues. The goals, which are overall statements of the community's desires, are comprised of broad statements of purpose and direction. The policies serve as guidelines for reviewing development proposals, planning facilities to accommodate anticipated growth, and accomplishing community development strategies.

The Land Use Plan contains the Land Use Policy Map that graphically identifies the land use designations within the Rancho Santa Margarita planning area. The planning area includes land within the municipal boundaries, unincorporated land within the City's sphere of influence, and areas of Mission Viejo, Lake Forest, and the Cleveland National Forest that relate to long-range planning for the community. The land use designations are described including the type and density of allowed uses, and a statistical summary of the future land use composition is provided. Areas of special interest, which involve more focused planning efforts, are also identified. Specific implementation programs for the Element are located in the General Plan Implementation Program.

***Related Plans and  
Programs***

The scope and content of the Land Use Element is primarily governed by the *General Plan Law and Guidelines* and the *Planning Zoning and Development Laws* for the State (California Government Code Sections 65000-66025). A number of other plans and programs are additionally considered in the formulation, adoption, and implementation of local land use policy.

Related plans and programs are both local and regional in nature. Regional planning agencies, such as the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), recognize that planning issues extend beyond the boundaries of individual cities. Efforts to address regional planning issues such as air quality, transportation, affordable housing, and habitat conservation have resulted in the adoption of regional plans. The form and distribution of development in the Rancho Santa Margarita planning area are affected by these plans. Relevant local and regional plans are discussed briefly and related to the Land Use Element in the following sections.

### **California Environmental Quality Act and Guidelines**

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was adopted by the State legislature in response to a public mandate for thorough environmental analysis of projects impacting the environment. The provisions of the law and environmental review procedure are described in the CEQA Law and Guidelines as amended in 1998. CEQA is the instrument for ensuring that environmental impacts of local development projects are appropriately assessed and mitigated.

### **County of Orange Zoning Ordinance and City of Rancho Santa Margarita Zoning Ordinance**

Following incorporation, the City elected to use the County of Orange Zoning Ordinance as an interim means of regulating land use. The County Zoning Ordinance was supplemented directly by City-adopted ordinances, which tailored the Ordinance to the City of Rancho Santa Margarita. The City will adopt its own Zoning Ordinance and related Zoning Map once the General Plan is adopted. The Zoning Ordinance will be the primary implementation tool for the Land Use Element. Together, the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map will identify specific types of land use, intensity of use, and development and performance standards applicable to specific areas and parcels of land within the City.

### **Planned Communities**

Rancho Santa Margarita has been primarily developed as a series of Planned Communities prior to incorporation. The Planned Communities comprising the incorporated City include:

- ? Rancho Santa Margarita Planned Community (Including Business Park and Town Center)
- ? Rancho Trabuco Planned Community

- ? Robinson Ranch Planned Community
- ? Dove Canyon Planned Community

Pre-incorporation development agreements apply to a number of the Planned Communities in Rancho Santa Margarita and identify permitted levels of development based on the provision of public facilities and infrastructure. The land use designations identified in the Land Use Element are consistent with the development densities identified in the development agreements.

### **Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan**

The Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan was prepared by the County of Orange to address areas within Trabuco Canyon located north of the City. The Specific Plan consists largely of rural and open space designations to preserve the existing character of the canyon area. The Plano Trabuco sub-area described in the Specific Plan corresponds to the Northeast Future Planned Community described in the Land Use Plan within this Element. Development assumptions made in this Element for the Northeast FPC are consistent with those identified in the Specific Plan.

### **SCAG Growth Management Plan**

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Growth Management Plan recommends methods to redirect regional growth to minimize traffic congestion and better protect environmental quality. The goals of the Growth Management Plan include balancing jobs and housing. While SCAG has no authority to mandate implementation of its Growth Management Plan, principal goals have implications for the land use composition of the Rancho Santa Margarita Planning Area. The SCAG goals are reflected throughout all of the General Plan elements, including the Land Use Element.

### **South Coast Air Quality Management Plan**

The South Coast Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) mandates a variety of measures to improve air quality. To comply with the AQMP, the Land Use Element organizes land uses in relation to the circulation system, promotes commercial land uses with convenient access to transportation, and provides a balanced Land Use Plan that promotes a favorable relationship between jobs and housing.

### **Orange County Growth Management Plan**

The purpose of the Orange County Growth Management Plan is to ensure that the transportation system and other public facilities are adequate to meet the current and projected needs of Orange County. The Plan establishes the following five major policies:

- ? **Development Phasing:** Development will be phased according to Comprehensive Phasing Plans (CPPs) adopted by the County. Phasing is limited to roadway and public facility capacities.
- ? **Balanced Community Development:** Development will be balanced to encourage employment of local residents, and both employment and employee housing in the County, as well as in individual growth management areas (GMAs).
- ? **Traffic Level of Service:** Future development creates the need for improvements to major intersections significantly impacted by growth, and a developer fee program is included to pay for improving affected intersections on a pro-rata basis.
- ? **Traffic Improvement Programs:** All new development must provide necessary transportation facilities and intersection improvements as a condition of development approval.
- ? **Public Facility Plans:** Comprehensive public facility plans for fire, sheriff/police, and library services are required. New development participates on a pro-rata basis.

Implementation of the Orange County Growth Management Plan involves the establishment of: (1) growth management areas (GMAs) to implement Comprehensive Phasing Plans; (2) Facility Implementation Plans to address the financing of public facilities for each GMA; (3) County-wide implementation and evaluation of compliance with development phasing and improvements; and (4) traffic improvement/public facility development agreements. Rancho Santa Margarita is located in GMA #9. The Northeast Future Planned Community area is located in GMA #5.

### **Orange County Local Agency Formation Commission**

The provisions of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 will be applied by the Orange County

Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) in making decisions regarding future City annexations of land within the Rancho Santa Margarita sphere of influence (SOI) and to any reorganizations of other service districts for the Rancho Santa Margarita planning area. Under this act, LAFCO is responsible for: a) encouraging orderly development; b) ensuring that populations receive efficient and quality governmental services; and c) guiding development away from open space and prime agricultural lands unless such action promotes planned, orderly, and efficient development.

### **School District Long-Range Facility Plans and Master Plans**

To plan for future facility needs, school districts typically implement a long-range planning approach with Long-Range Facility Plans and Master Plans. These documents allow school districts to estimate the number of additional students that new development will generate and plan for needed improvements to meet the demand. The plans may also consider demographic trends, such as increased household size, that can affect the need for future school services. Coordination with the school districts to provide adequate educational facilities is an issue addressed in this Element.

### **National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)**

Rancho Santa Margarita is under the jurisdiction of the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (SDRWQCB), which implements the NPDES permit for the San Diego area (including southern Orange County). The NPDES permit, a requirement under the Clean Water Act, addresses pollution from urban runoff that impacts water quality of receiving waters (such as streams and lakes). Under the NPDES permit, each jurisdiction must implement measures to reduce urban runoff during all phases of development: planning, construction and existing uses. Requirements include incorporating Best Management Practices to reduce runoff from construction and existing uses, reporting any violations to the SDRWQCB and education regarding the negative water quality impacts from urban runoff.



## Urban Water Management Plans and Water Master Plans

Water districts use a variety of planning processes to plan for the provision of water within their service areas. Urban Water Management Plans and Water Master Plans are typically used to estimate future demand for water and required improvements to meet future need. Sources of water, and other issues that affect the provision of water within the service area are addressed in the plans. The Land Use Plan addresses the need to coordinate with the water districts' planning processes to ensure adequate water is available to existing and future development.

### *Relationship To Other General Plan Elements*

According to State planning law, the Land Use Element must be consistent with the other General Plan elements. Each element is independent and all the elements together comprise the General Plan. All elements of the General Plan are interrelated to a degree, and certain goals and policies of each element may also address issues that are the primary subjects of other elements. The integration of overlapping issues throughout the General Plan elements provides a strong basis for implementation of plans and programs, and achievement of community goals.



The Land Use Element relates very closely to all of the General Plan elements. The Land Use Plan establishes the land use pattern for the Rancho Santa Margarita planning area based on the community vision of the future. The Land Use Element also ensures that infrastructure and public facilities are available to accommodate planned land uses, and that the unique environmental quality of Rancho Santa Margarita is safeguarded and enhanced.

For example, the Housing Element of the General Plan provides the basis for establishing housing stock that meets the affordability requirements and other special needs of the community. Emphasis is given to the development of housing that is complementary to existing neighborhood character. The Circulation Element provides a Circulation Plan to accommodate increased traffic from planned development. The use of alternative transportation modes and reduction of automobile trips are addressed in the Circulation Element to meet the transportation demands from new development, and to mitigate the impact of development on regional air quality and traffic conditions. The Land Use Element serves to reduce automobile trips by encouraging the development of office,

commercial and light industrial uses, and consequently improves the jobs-to-housing balance.

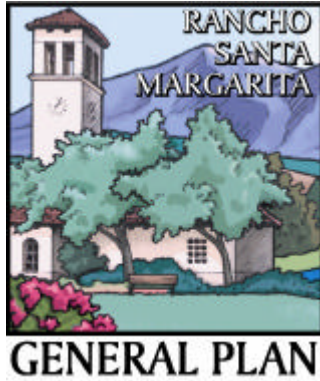
Rancho Santa Margarita has been recognized as a city that incorporates many of the principles of smart growth. Rancho Santa Margarita includes a mix of housing, commercial, and retail land uses. A system of pedestrian trails and neighborhood parks offers residents numerous alternatives to driving. The City's mixed-use design reduces the number and length of vehicle trips.<sup>1</sup>

A number of areas are designated for parks and open space on the Land Use Policy Map for recreational and aesthetic purposes. The Conservation/Open Space Element provides policy and plans to maintain and enhance existing parks and recreational facilities and to develop new facilities to meet demand from population growth. Conservation/Open Space Element policy is also designed to protect natural and cultural resources and allow infiltration of natural runoff. The Safety and Noise Elements ensure that the planned land uses identified in the Land Use Element are compatible and will not result in public safety hazards or excessive noise.

As development continues in Rancho Santa Margarita, utilities and public services must be available for new and existing businesses and residents. The *Public Facilities and Services* portion of the Land Use Element addresses the availability of utilities and services for planned development including water supply, treatment and distribution, sewer treatment, solid waste, drainage/flood control, fire protection and emergency services, law enforcement, public education, parks, community centers and recreational opportunities, and libraries. The *Public Facilities and Services* portion of this Element ensures that adequate utilities and services are available for planned development.

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<sup>1</sup> O'Neill, David. Smart Growth: Myth and Fact. Washington, D.C.: ULI-the Urban Land Institute, Page 7, 1999.



## Issues, Goals, and Policies

Four major issues are addressed by the goals, policies, and implementing actions of the Land Use Element. These major issues include: (1) balancing the mixture of land uses within the City to ensure that revenue generation matches service provision responsibilities; (2) controlling and directing future land use so that it complements and protects the quality of the existing community; (3) ensuring that reuse of MCAS El Toro is environmentally compatible with the established community; and (4) providing adequate public services and facilities to meet the needs of the existing community and future development.

### *Balance of Land Uses*

Every community requires a mixture of land uses: residential uses to provide housing for those living within the community; commercial and industrial uses to provide revenue and employment opportunities for the City's residents; public and institutional uses to provide services such as education and utilities; and open space and recreational uses for the enjoyment of all. Rancho Santa Margarita is fortunate to have a variety of housing and employment generating uses.

**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 1.1:**    Attract and retain research and development, light industrial, and high technology developments that are compatible with the character and existing land uses in the City in order to improve the generation of sales tax and property tax and maintain access to high-paying employment opportunities within the community.

**Policy 1.2:**    Encourage high-quality commercial activities in the community that improve access to essential services and entertainment opportunities.

**Policy 1.3:**    Maintain a land use composition in Rancho Santa Margarita that provides a balance or surplus between the generation of public revenues and the cost of providing public facilities and services.

**Policy 1.4:** Maintain a variety of housing types that complements the employment opportunities in the community and encourages a jobs/housing balance.

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

***Control and Direct  
Future Land Use***

Rancho Santa Margarita is almost fully developed; however, the City can control changes in land use that would be incompatible with the existing community. While recognizing that change is inevitable, the community can plan and guide future development and land use so that it complements the existing community, and protects and enhances the existing character of Rancho Santa Margarita and its neighborhoods.

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

**Policy 2.1:** Ensure that new development is complementary to the existing small-town village character of the City.

**Policy 2.2:** Annex land within the sphere of influence prior to its development to ensure that new development is compatible with existing development in Rancho Santa Margarita.

**Policy 2.3:** Ensure that new development and land uses are architecturally consistent and compatible in scale and style with existing development.

**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.

**Policy 2.5:** Preserve and enhance the quality of Rancho Santa Margarita by abating any non-conforming buildings and uses.

**Policy 2.6:** Evaluate the compatibility of proposed new development and land uses with surrounding uses and protection of the watershed shared with our surrounding communities when reviewing development proposals.

*Land Use and  
Environmental  
Compatibility*

**Policy 2.7:** Ensure that new development is compatible with the physical characteristics of the site, surrounding land uses, and available infrastructure.

Although the future reuse of MCAS El Toro is undetermined at this time, one reuse proposal includes development and operation of a commercial airport at the former air station. Reuse of MCAS El Toro as a commercial airport could result in aircraft overflight activities that pose risks to the residents of Rancho Santa Margarita and surrounding communities.

**Goal 3:** **Encourage reuse of El Toro with development that is compatible with existing and planned land uses in Rancho Santa Margarita and surrounding communities.**

**Policy 3.1:** Coordinate with local and regional agencies to oppose any reuse of MCAS El Toro that would result in aircraft overflight over Rancho Santa Margarita and surrounding communities.

**Policy 3.2:** Cooperate with local and regional agencies to encourage a non-aviation reuse of MCAS El Toro, such as the Orange County Central Park and Nature Preserve Plan.

**Policy 3.3:** Establish baseline environmental standards reflecting environmental conditions in the community (such as air quality, noise, traffic/circulation) that may be impacted by proposals for future development as the basis for assessing the environmental impacts of such proposals.

**Goal 4:** **To the maximum extent practicable, reduce the discharge of pollutants and runoff flow from urban development.**

**Policy 4.1:** To the maximum extent practicable, cause property owners or developers to minimize pollutant loading and flow velocity from new development projects and redevelopment projects during and after construction.

**Policy 4.2:** To the maximum extent practicable, limit development that disturbs natural water bodies and natural drainage systems.

**Policy 4.3:** To the maximum extent practicable, educate all who live, work and shop in the City to minimize activities that pollute urban runoff.

**Policy 4.4:** Post-development runoff from a site shall not contain pollutant loads that cause or contribute to exceedances of receiving water quality objectives and which have not been reduced to the maximum extent practicable.

***Adequate Public  
Services and  
Facilities***

Public facilities and services, such as water supply, treatment and distribution, sewer treatment, solid waste, drainage/flood control, fire protection and emergency services, law enforcement, public education, parks, community centers and recreational opportunities, and libraries are provided by the City or other service entities. Other service providers include: the Trabuco Canyon Water District, Santa Margarita Water District, Orange County Flood Control District, Orange County Fire Authority, Orange County Sheriff's Department, various school districts, and the Orange County Library system. The provision and maintenance of these services and facilities protect the quality of life and the livability of the community. Such facilities and services will need to be expanded to accommodate future growth and development. Existing public facilities such as water and sewer lines will need to be replaced due to age and the need to increase capacity.

The following goals and policies are designed to ensure that public services and facilities are provided at acceptable levels of service to meet the community's needs.

***Water Supply, Treatment and Distribution***

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**Goal 5:** Collaborate with local and regional water suppliers to ensure that an adequate water supply is available and that delivery and treatment capacity is adequate to meet the community's needs.

**Policy 5.1:** Actively coordinate with Santa Margarita Water District and Trabuco Canyon Water District, as well as regional water suppliers and distributors, to ensure that high quality water is available and deliverable to the community.

- Policy 5.2:** In cooperation with the Santa Margarita Water District and Trabuco Canyon Water District, review development proposals to ensure that adequate water supplies, treatment, and distribution capacity are available to meet the needs of the proposed development without negatively impacting the existing community.
- Policy 5.3:** Work cooperatively with local and regional water suppliers to ensure adequate water reserves exist in case of natural disaster.
- Policy 5.4:** Participate in and support regional programs that target the improvement and conservation of the region's groundwater and surface water supply.
- Policy 5.5:** Actively promote water conservation by City residents and businesses.
- Policy 5.6:** Promote the use of reclaimed water for irrigation of parks, golf courses, and landscaped areas in the community.

***Sewer Treatment***

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- Goal 6:** **Collaborate with local sewer treatment providers to provide and maintain adequate levels of sewage treatment.**
- Policy 6.1:** Actively coordinate with Santa Margarita Water District and Trabuco Canyon Water District to ensure that sewer service and facilities are provided and maintained to meet the community's need for sewer collection and treatment.
- Policy 6.2:** In cooperation with the Santa Margarita Water District and Trabuco Canyon Water District, review development proposals to ensure that adequate sewer collection and treatment facilities are available to meet the needs of development without negatively impacting the existing community.

*Solid Waste*

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**Goal 7:** Collaborate effectively with local providers of solid waste collection and disposal to provide a sufficient level of solid waste disposal.

**Policy 7.1:** Cooperate with solid waste collection and disposal service providers to ensure City residents are provided adequate solid waste collection and disposal services.

**Policy 7.2:** Participate in local and regional programs that encourage the per capita reduction of solid waste in Rancho Santa Margarita in order to meet State mandates for waste reduction.

*Drainage/Flood Control*

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**Goal 8:** Collaborate with the Orange County Flood Control District (OCFCD) to provide a level of flood control protection that meets the needs of the community.

**Policy 8.1:** Cooperate with the OCFCD, Homeowners Associations, and community foundations to ensure an adequate level of drainage and flood control facilities and programs are provided and maintained within the community.

*Fire Protection and Emergency Services*

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**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.

***Law Enforcement***

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**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 to maintain the low crime rate within Rancho Santa Margarita.

***Public Education***

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**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 education opportunities, amenities and curriculums in the 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.

***Parks, Community Centers and Recreational Opportunities***

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**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 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 existing private recreational system.

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

***Libraries***

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**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.

***Related Goals and Policies***

The goals and policies described in the Land Use Element are related to and support subjects included within other General Plan elements. In turn, many goals and policies from the other elements directly or indirectly support the goals and policies of the Land Use Element. These supporting goals and policies are identified in Table LU-1.

**Table LU-1  
Land Use Related Goals and Policies by Element**

General Plan Element	Land Use Element Issue Areas			
	Balance of Land Uses	Control and Direct Future Land Uses	Land Use and Environmental Compatibility	Public Facilities and Services
Land Use				
Housing	1.1, 1.2	1.4, 2.1, 2.2		1.7
Circulation		3.1, 3.2, 4.1	1.5, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4	1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3
Economic Development	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4	2.5	2.8	
Conservation/Open Space	6.3	6.4	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2	1.4, 1.6, 1.7, 3.1, 4.3
Safety	3.4		1.6, 2.5	1.2, 3.1, 3.5, 3.6, 3.8
Noise	3.1		1.1	



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## Land Use Plan

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The Land Use Plan consists of two components: a plan for the existing City, and a set of planning assumptions for the Northeast Future Planned Community area, which extends beyond the City's sphere of influence (SOI). Substantial new growth in the Rancho Santa Margarita planning area will occur within the Northeast Future Planned Community once the area is annexed to the City. The Northeast Future Planned Community is designated by this Land Use Plan as Future Planned Community (FPC). The FPC land use designation allows for innovative land planning and building design, and seeks to continue Rancho Santa Margarita's heritage as a planned community, ensuring that the quality of planning and design within the area is consistent with that found throughout the rest of the City.

The following Land Use Plan focuses on the balance of land uses within the City, the location of future land uses, land use and environmental compatibility, and provision of public services and facilities. The other elements within the General Plan expand on how the Land Use Plan will be implemented to create a compact and livable community.

### *Balance of Land Uses*

The variety of land uses within Rancho Santa Margarita affects the important balance between the generation of public revenues and the provision of public services and facilities. Achieving and maintaining a balance of land uses can ensure fiscal stability and also create a desirable community in which people work, shop, reside, and recreate. As discussed later in this element, implementation of the Land Use Plan will result in positive net revenue for Rancho Santa Margarita.

The majority of Rancho Santa Margarita is developed, and limited vacant land is available for future new development. As a result, the majority of future growth in the Rancho Santa Margarita planning area will occur in the Northeast Future Planned Community. The Land Use Plan identifies the land use types designated for the vacant lots within the City and the Northeast Future Planned Community area. Based on the Land Use Plan, these areas will develop with a land use composition that provides a balance between the generation of public revenues and the cost of providing public facilities and services.

Implementation of the Land Use Plan will also assist in creating a balance between jobs and housing units within the City. A balance between jobs and housing allows some people to live and work within the same community. This results in a reduction of traffic, thereby reducing the level of air pollution and improving the quality of life for the community. Ensuring that affordable housing is available for those lower income households working within the commercial, office, and retail areas of Rancho Santa Margarita is important. The City has identified land for employment generating uses, as well as residential uses. An economic development strategy is discussed in the Economic Development Element of the General Plan, and the provision of adequate housing is discussed in the Housing Element.

### **Land Use Classification System**

The Land Use Policy Map (Figure LU-1) illustrates the various types and distribution of land uses planned for Rancho Santa Margarita. The land use classification system is presented in Table LU-2 and includes 13 land use designations. These land use designations identify the types and nature of development allowed in particular locations depicted on the Land Use Policy Map. Table LU-2 also identifies the maximum density or intensity of development allowed under each General Plan land use designation.

The General Plan land use designations are grouped according to the following five general land use categories: Residential; Commercial and Business; Public/Quasi-Public Facilities; Open Space; and Other.

The Residential categories include four designations that allow for a range of housing types and densities. The non-residential categories include a variety of designations that promote a range of revenue-and employment-generating businesses, such as General Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial and Business Park. Other non-residential designations include Community Facility, Parks, and a variety of Open Space designations. A Future Planned Community designation is used to address future growth on existing nursery properties and the Porter Ranch area located northeast of the City. Within the existing City boundary there are currently 5 vacant parcels of land totaling approximately 25 acres.

General Plan land use policy will be implemented through the City's Zoning Ordinance, which will be developed following completion of the General Plan. State planning law requires consistency between the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

**Table LU-2  
Land Use Classification System**

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Maximum DUs/Net Acre or Maximum FAR/Net Acre</b>	<b>Average DUs/Net Acre or Average FAR/Net Acre</b>	<b>Summary Description of Land Use Designation</b>
<b>Residential Land Uses</b>			
<b>LDR – Low Density Residential</b>	7.0 du/acre	6.5 du/acre	Single-family detached units on moderate to large lots.
<b>LMDR – Low-Medium Density Residential</b>	11.0 du/acre	10.0 du/acre	Small-lot single-family detached homes, as well as some single-family town homes and duplexes.
<b>MDR – Medium Density Residential</b>	18.0 du/acre	14.3 du/acre	Duplexes, town homes, row houses, and multiple-family units such as apartments and condominiums.
<b>HDR – High Density Residential</b>	25.0 du/acre	20.0 du/acre	Apartments, condominiums, senior housing, and multi-family clusters.
<b>Commercial and Business Land Uses</b>			
<b>C – General Commercial</b>	1.0:1 FAR	0.4:1 FAR	Retail stores, restaurants, lodging, personal services, business services, and financial services of a citywide or regional nature. Does not promote development of commercial strips.
<b>NC - Neighborhood Commercial</b>	0.6:1 FAR	0.3:1 FAR	Retail stores, service stations, restaurants, and services that serve the needs of surrounding neighborhoods.
<b>BP – Business Park</b>	1.0:1 FAR	0.35:1 FAR	Service commercial, retail commercial, office, light industrial, open space, and community facilities (excluding public and private schools). Applies to all non-residential properties in Rancho Santa Margarita Business Park.
<b>Public/Quasi-Public Facilities Land Use</b>			
<b>CF – Community Facility</b>	0.6:1 FAR	0.3:1 FAR	Fire stations, police stations, public and private schools, recreation centers, water tanks, utilities, or other non-commercial, non-residential, or non-industrial purposes.
<b>Open Space Land Uses</b>			
<b>P - Parks</b>	0.5:1 FAR	0.1:1 FAR	Publicly- or privately-owned and dedicated park lands.
<b>OS – Open Space</b>	N/A	N/A	Streams and washes, open space easements, and other private and public open spaces.
<b>OSG – Open Space Golf</b>	0.4:1 FAR	0.05:1 FAR	Maintenance and development of golf courses and other private recreational uses.
<b>ROS – Regional Open Space</b>	0.4:1 FAR	0.05:1 FAR	Sections of O’Neill Regional Park within the City. Active and passive recreational uses consistent with Orange County regulations.
<b>Other Land Uses</b>			
<b>FPC – Future Planned Community</b>	Varies	Varies	Denotes large areas of land under single or common ownership for detailed planning and development for residential, commercial, community facility, recreation and open space uses.



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This Element uses certain terminology to describe 13 land use designations. The term *density* is used for residential uses and refers to the population and development capacity of residential land. Density is described in terms of dwelling units per net acre of land (du/net acre).

Development *intensity*, which applies to non-residential uses, refers to the extent of development on a parcel of land or lot (i.e., the total building square footage, building height, the floor area ratio, and/or the percent of lot coverage). Intensity is often used to describe non-residential development levels; but, in a broader sense, intensity is also used to express overall levels of both residential and non-residential development types. In this Element, floor area ratio and building square footage are used as measures of non-residential development intensity.

Floor area ratio (FAR) represents the ratio between the total gross floor area of all buildings on a lot and the total area of that lot. The FAR controls the intensity of use on a lot. FAR is determined by dividing the gross floor area of all buildings on a lot by the land area of that lot. For example, a 20,000 square foot building on a 40,000 square foot lot yields a FAR of 0.50:1. A 0.50:1 FAR allows a single story building, which covers half the lot, or a two-story building with reduced lot coverage. Figure LU-2 depicts the calculation of FAR.

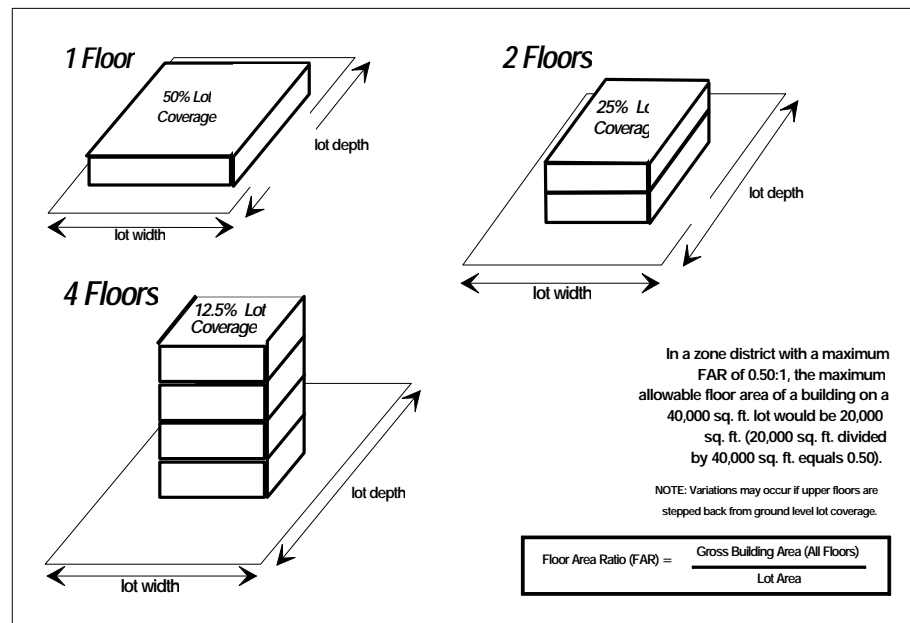


Figure LU-2  
Floor Area Ratio Illustrated

State General Plan law requires that the Land Use Element indicate the maximum densities and intensities permitted within the Land Use Plan. The land use designations shown on the Land Use Policy Map are described in detail in this Element. Table LU-2 lists each of the land use designations shown on the Land Use Policy Map and provides a corresponding indication of maximum density or intensity of development. Maximum allowable development on individual parcels of land is governed by these measures of density or intensity. Table LU-2 also includes the average overall level of development within each land use designation within the planning area. These average levels of development represent an anticipated overall density and intensity of development for the planning area and are, therefore, less than the absolute maximum allowed for an individual parcel of land. For various reasons, many parcels in the community have not been developed to their maximum density or intensity and, in the future, maximum development as described in this Element can be expected to occur only on a limited number of parcels.

The overall future development of the City is anticipated to occur at the average level of density or intensity indicated in Table LU-2. Development at an intensity or density between the average and maximum levels can occur only where projects offer exceptional design quality, important public amenities or benefits, or other factors that promote important goals and policies of the General Plan. Additionally, a density bonus of 25 percent is required by State law to be offered for certain projects affordable to low or very low income households.

### **Land Use Designations**

All land in the Rancho Santa Margarita Planning Area is assigned to one of the 13 land use designations described below:

#### ***Residential Land Use Designations***

***Low Density Residential (LDR):*** The Low Density Residential land use designation provides for single-family detached homes on moderate to large lots. The designation allows a maximum density of 7.0 units per net acre, with an average density of 6.5 units per net acre. Uses such as mobile and modular homes, second living units, guesthouses, community facilities, parks and open space, day cares, churches, agricultural uses, and others that are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of the low-density single-family neighborhood may also be allowed.

The maximum density of this land use designation may be exceeded with General Plan Housing Element policy in accordance with the density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of the California Government Code.

***Low-Medium Density Residential (LMDR):*** The Low-Medium Density Residential land use designation provides for single-family detached homes on smaller lots, as well as development of single-family attached residential units such as town homes and duplexes. The designation allows a maximum density of 11.0 units per net acre where already subdivided, with an average density of 10.0 units per net acre. Uses such as mobile and modular homes, second living units, guest houses, community facilities, parks and open space, day cares, churches, agricultural uses, and others that are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of the low-medium density single-family neighborhood may also be allowed.

The maximum density of this land use designation may be exceeded with General Plan Housing Element policy in accordance with the density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of the California Government Code.

***Medium Density Residential (MDR):*** The Medium Density Residential designation provides for detached and attached single-family homes, condominiums, duplexes, and apartments. The designation allows a maximum of 18.0 units per net acre, with an average density of 14.3 units per net acre. Uses such as mobile and modular homes, day cares, churches and others that are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of the medium density neighborhood may also be allowed.



The maximum density of this land use designation may be exceeded with General Plan Housing Element policy in accordance with the density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of the California Government Code.

**High Density Residential (HDR):** The High Density Residential designation provides for detached and attached single-family homes, condominiums, duplexes, and apartments. The designation allows a maximum of 25.0 units per net acre, with an average density of 20.0 units per net acre. The High Density Residential designation also provides for development of senior housing. Uses such as mobile and modular homes, day cares, parks and open space, churches and others that are compatible with and oriented toward serving the needs of the high density or senior neighborhood may also be allowed.

The maximum density of this land use designation may be exceeded with General Plan Housing Element policy in accordance with the density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of the California Government Code.

### **Commercial and Business Land Use Designations**

**General Commercial (C):** The General Commercial land use designation provides for retail uses that rely on automobile traffic and attract customers from a citywide and/or regional trade area. This land use designation does not encourage the development of commercial strips. The maximum intensity of development is 1.0:1 FAR. The average intensity is 0.4:1 FAR.

**Neighborhood Commercial (NC):** The Neighborhood Commercial land use designation provides for a variety of retail uses that serve the needs of nearby neighborhoods. In addition to retail uses, areas designated Neighborhood Commercial can also include a small amount of space for general business, medical, or professional offices. The maximum intensity of development is 0.6:1 FAR. The average intensity is 0.3:1 FAR.



**Business Park (BP):** The Business Park designation applies to all non-residential properties within the Rancho Santa Margarita Business Park area. Permitted uses include service commercial, retail commercial, office, light industrial, open space, and community facilities (excluding public and private schools). The maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 1.0:1 and the average intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.35:1.

### ***Public/Quasi-Public Land Use Designation***

***Community Facility (CF):*** The Community Facility land use designation allows development of fire stations, police stations, public and private schools, recreation centers, water tanks, utilities, or other non-commercial, non-residential, or non-industrial purposes. The maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.6:1 and the average intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.3:1. Ownership and control of properties designated as Community Facility are indicated on the Land Use Policy Map using the following symbols:

***S*** – Public Schools (Capistrano and Saddleback Valley Unified School Districts)

***R*** – Churches, Religious Institutions, and Religious Schools (Under various control)

***L*** – Libraries (Orange County Library District)

***CH*** – City Hall and Intergenerational Community Center (City of Rancho Santa Margarita)

***FS*** – Fire Station (Orange County Fire Department)

***W*** – Water District (Santa Margarita and Trabuco Canyon Water Districts)

### ***Open Space Land Use Designations***

***Parks (P):*** The Parks designation provides for privately owned and dedicated parklands. Activities that may be developed include areas for active sports play, large multipurpose fields for community events and informal recreation, tot lots, picnic areas, multipurpose sports fields and courts, concessions, community event space, maintenance/support facilities, and caretaker facilities. The maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.5:1 and the average intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.1:1.

***Open Space (OS):*** The Open Space designation provides open space for outdoor recreation, buffering of incompatible land uses, preservation of natural resources, managed production of resources, and protection of health and public safety. Areas designated as Open Space include: streams and washes, open space easements, and other private and public open space. No density or intensity standards are applied within this designation.

***Open Space Golf (OSG):*** The Open Space Golf designation provides for maintenance and development of golf courses and other private recreational uses. The maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.4:1 and the average intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.05:1.

***Regional Open Space (ROS):*** The Regional Open Space designation applies to sections of O'Neill Regional Park that lie within the City of Rancho Santa Margarita. The designation provides for a variety of active and passive recreational uses, consistent with Orange County regulations for use of the Park. The maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.4:1 and the average intensity of development is a floor area ratio of 0.05:1.

### ***Other Land Use Designations***

***Future Planned Community (FPC)*** - The Future Planned Community designation applies to all land located within the City's sphere of influence northeast of the City's existing boundary. The FPC designation denotes large areas of land under single or common ownership for detailed planning and development for residential, commercial, community facility, recreation and open space uses. The maximum intensity of development and the average intensity of development will vary depending on how a proposed development conforms to the allowable use guidelines as stated in the Land Use Plan.

### **Planned Communities**

Due to Rancho Santa Margarita's history as a planned community, the City is almost fully developed, leaving little room for significant new development or land use change. Rancho Santa Margarita is based on the land use plans developed for each of the planned communities that form the City. These include:

- ? Rancho Santa Margarita Planned Community (Including Business Park and Town Center Plans)
- ? Rancho Trabuco Planned Community
- ? Robinson Ranch Planned Community
- ? Dove Canyon Planned Community

Several of these planned communities are also the subject of development agreements, which identify the levels of development allowed, and important public facilities that will accompany development. Development in these areas will follow the individual planned community development plans and agreements.

Development proposals within these planned communities will be reviewed for consistency with approved development plans and agreements. Any proposed amendments to the approved planned communities will also be reviewed to ensure that such amendments support the fiscal stability of the City, provide necessary public facilities and services, and minimize environmental impacts.

The area located southwest of the Robinson Ranch Planned Community is referred to as the Rancho Cielo and Walden Communities. These areas were developed consistent with the Orange County development code. Figure LU-3 identifies the locations of all of the above listed planned communities within the City.

### **Northeast Future Planned Community**

The nursery properties and Porter Ranch area located northeast of the City are designated Future Planned Community (FPC) on the Land Use Policy Map. The purpose of the FPC designation is to allow for innovative land planning and building design. Application of the FPC designation to this area continues Rancho Santa Margarita's heritage as a planned community, ensuring that the quality of planning and design within the area is consistent with that



found throughout the rest of the City. The General Plan does not determine the actual configuration of land uses within the FPC. Rather, development of this area shall be subject to a Specific Plan and should reflect the following allowable land use mix guidelines:

- ? 20% Low Density Residential (not to exceed 4.0 du/acre) concentrated in the Porter Ranch area,
- ? 17% Low Density Residential (not to exceed 7.0 du/acre),
- ? 8% Medium Density Residential,





- ? 20% Community Facility and Park combined as a joint use elementary school and park facility,
- ? 35% Open Space (including preservation of bluffs located southeast of Trabuco Creek and north and east of the Porter Ranch area),
- ? Total dwelling units not to exceed 612 units (This residential development cap is equivalent to the maximum number of units allowed within the Plano Trabuco subarea of the Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan).

Annexation of any portion of the Northeast Future Planned Community area shall not occur until a Specific Plan which is substantially consistent with the above-listed guidelines is completed for the entire area. The General Plan advocates no changes to the Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan, unless such changes produce positive results for the City. The percentage mix of land uses for the Northeast Future Planned Community serves as a guideline for developers, but may be modified with the approval of the City. Parks developed within the Northeast Future Planned Community should include a balance of amenities which enhance the overall private park system, and trail linkages to the existing trails network are required.

### **Land Use Plan Development Capacity**

Table LU-3 provides a statistical description of the 13 General Plan land use designations within the City and a corresponding indication of maximum density or intensity of development at buildout. The maximum allowable development on individual parcels is governed by these measures of density or intensity.

For various reasons, many parcels in the community have not been developed to their maximum density or intensity. In the future, it is anticipated that 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 listed in Table LU-3 is based upon an average level of development. The average level of development was generated using a representative sample of existing conditions.

The identified average density is applied for planning purposes only and exceeding the average density does not require a General Plan amendment. Development at an intensity or density between the average and maximum levels can occur when projects offer exceptional design quality, important public amenities or benefits, or other factors that promote important goals and policies of the

**Table LU-3  
Land Use Plan Development Capacity Summary**

Land Use	Assumptions				Net Acres	Estimated Dwelling Units	Estimated Non-Residential Square Feet (Thousands)	Estimated Population
	Maximum		Average					
	DU/Acre	FAR	DU/Acre	FAR				
<i>Residential Land Use Designations</i>								
<b>LDR</b> Low Density Residential	7	--	6.5	--	948	6,164	--	17,918
<b>LMDR</b> Low-Medium Density Residential	11	--	10	--	205	2,053	--	5,967
<b>MDR</b> Medium Density Residential	18	--	14.3	--	240	3,438	--	9,992
<b>HDR</b> High Density Residential	25	--	20	--	267	5,341	--	15,526
<i>Commercial, Business, and Tourist Land Use Designations</i>								
<b>C</b> General Commercial	--	1:1	--	0.4:1	123	--	2,135	--
<b>NC</b> Neighborhood Commercial	--	0.6:1	--	0.3:1	44	--	581	--
<b>BP</b> Business Park	--	1:1	--	0.35:1	255	--	3,886	--
<i>Public/Quasi-Public Land Use Designation</i>								
<b>CF</b> Community Facility	--	0.6:1	--	0.3:1	191	--	2,496	--
<i>Open Space Land Use Designations</i>								
<b>P</b> Parks	--	0.5:1	--	0.1:1	140	--	612	--
<b>OS</b> Open Space	--	--	--	--	3,087	--	--	--
<b>OSG</b> Open Space Golf	--	0.4:1	--	0.05:1	442	--	963	--
<b>ROS</b> Regional Open Space	--	0.4:1	--	0.05:1	1,203	--	2,620	--
<i>Other Land Uses</i>								
<b>FPC</b> Future Planned Community	<i>Assumptions per Land Use Plan</i>				261	612	348	1,775
Water	--	--	--	--	38	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>					<b>7,446</b>	<b>17,608</b>	<b>13,641</b>	<b>51,178</b>

Note: Assumes 2.95 Persons per Occupied Housing Unit (per DOF, 2001)

General Plan. Additionally, a density bonus of 25 percent is required by State law to be offered for certain projects affordable to low or very low income households, or senior citizens.

Table LU-3 includes the planned land use and/or development intensities in the identified Future Planned Community area.

***Control and Direct  
Future Land Uses***

Even though Rancho Santa Margarita is a newly formed City, the majority of the land area within the City is parkland, open space, and regional open space (O'Neill Regional Park). With proper planning, new development will occur without negatively affecting the unique character that City residents enjoy.

The approximately 327-acre Northeast Future Planned Community area is the primary location for new residential and non-residential development in the future. The City will work with the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and owners of the 327 acres to prepare appropriate development plans and to annex this area into the City ensuring that new development is compatible with the character of Rancho Santa Margarita. The City's current sphere of influence is shown in Figure LU-1.

Prior to approval of development within the Northeastern Future Planned Community area, an annexation plan will be completed. As part of the annexation plan, developers will need to prepare an urban services plan that outlines how adequate levels of public services and facilities will be provided to serve the new development, without reducing the level of services in the City. The plan will identify who will be responsible for the provision of the various public services and facilities, as well as identify funding sources to finance the services and facilities. Prior to City approval, the urban services plan must demonstrate that the proposed development meets identified service standards.

The only new development anticipated to occur within the existing City boundaries will be on 5 vacant lots totaling approximately 25 acres (less than 1 percent of total City land area). Future development on these lots will follow existing regulations to ensure that it is compatible with the character of Rancho Santa Margarita.

***Land Use and  
Environmental  
Compatibility***

Although the future reuse of MCAS El Toro is undetermined at this time, one reuse proposal includes development and operation of a commercial airport at the former air station. Reuse of MCAS El Toro as a commercial airport could result in aircraft overflight activities that pose risks to the residents of Rancho Santa Margarita and surrounding communities. The City encourages reuse of El Toro with development that is compatible with existing and planned land uses in Rancho Santa Margarita and surrounding communities.

To achieve this objective, Rancho Santa Margarita will coordinate with local and regional agencies to oppose any reuse of MCAS El Toro that would result in aircraft overflight of Rancho Santa Margarita and surrounding communities. In addition, the City will cooperate with local and regional agencies to encourage a non-aviation reuse of MCAS El Toro, such as the Orange County Central Park and Nature Preserve.



Urban development can affect the environment in many ways, including water quality, which can be impacted by pollutants from urban runoff. Pollutants such as heavy metals, petroleum products, animal waste and trash can be carried through the storm drain system into receiving waters, such as Trabuco and Tijeras Canyon creek. These pollutants affect the beneficial uses of these receiving waters including recreation, aesthetic enjoyment and preservation of fish and wildlife habitat. To address this problem, the Clean Water Act was amended in 1987 to include the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Permit (NPDES). This permit, implemented in south Orange County by the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (SDRWQCB), requires jurisdictions to enforce requirements reducing polluted urban runoff during all phases of development. Rancho Santa Margarita is a co-permittee of the NPDES permit and will continue to implement the most recent provisions adopted by the SDRWQCB.

As identified in other elements of this General Plan, Rancho Santa Margarita has established baseline environmental standards reflecting environmental conditions in the community (such as air quality, noise, traffic/circulation) that may be impacted by proposals for future development as the basis for assessing the environmental impacts of such proposals.

### ***Provision of Public Facilities and Services***

Public facilities and services are provided by the City or other service entities. These facilities and services include: 1) water supply, treatment and distribution; 2) sewer treatment; 3) solid waste disposal, 4) drainage/flood control; 5) fire protection and emergency services; 6) law enforcement; 7) public education; 8) parks, community centers and recreational opportunities; and 9) libraries. Other service providers include the Trabuco Canyon Water District, Santa Margarita Water District, Orange County Flood Control District, Orange County Fire Authority, Orange County Sheriff's Department, various school districts, and the Orange County Library system. The provision and maintenance of these services and facilities protect the quality of life and community livability. Such

facilities and services will need to be expanded to accommodate future growth and development.

### **Water and Sewer Service**

Adequate municipal water and sewer service is necessary to protect public health in urban settings. The Rancho Santa Margarita planning area is served by two water providers: the Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD) and the Trabuco Canyon Water District (TCWD). The SMWD provides water to the Rancho Santa Margarita and Rancho Trabuco communities. The TCWD provides water to the Robinson Ranch, Dove Canyon, Walden and Rancho Cielo areas. The SMWD and the TCWD are members of the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC). The MWDOC is a member of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). Almost all of the water supply is purchased from MWD, which imports the water from the Colorado River Aqueduct (a small portion comes from Northern California through the State Water Project). Small amounts of annual rainfall and limited groundwater reserves are the reasons for reliance on imported water.

The SMWD and TCWD are also responsible for the collection of wastewater within the City. SMWD owns and operates the Oso Creek Wastewater Reclamation System. The water that is reclaimed by this system is used to irrigate golf courses, greenbelts, parks, and school grounds. In addition, SMWD owns 2.25 million gallons per day (MGD) of treatment capacity as a member agency in the South East Regional Reclamation Authority (SERRA). SERRA operates a wastewater treatment facility in Dana Point. The SMWD Chiquita Water Reclamation Plant handles water not treated in Dana Point. This plant serves the communities of Rancho Santa Margarita, Coto de Caza, and portions of the Trabuco Canyon and Irvine Ranch Water Districts. TCWD collects wastewater and reclaims it at the Robinson Ranch Wastewater Treatment Plant. 100 percent of the reclaimed water is used for irrigation purposes. A portion of the TCWD remains unsewered, relying on septic systems for wastewater disposal.

To meet future need, the SMWD is examining expanded use of groundwater for irrigation, additional water reclamation facilities, desalination, stream flow capture, water conservation, and water transfers from outside the area. TCWD is planning additional treatment facilities, reclaimed water storage and domestic water sources to ensure the District's capability to provide for customers through the projected buildout within its service area in 2030.

Both water districts will continue to work with MWD to ensure that adequate water supplies and sewer services are available to meet the needs of existing development and future growth. As part of this cooperation, the City will provide land use and other necessary data to the districts for use in updating their Urban Water Management Plans, as well as other planning documents. The City will also participate in water conservation programs to reduce future water consumption. A more detailed discussion of water conservation programs is contained in the Conservation/Open Space Element.

Encouraging good water and sewer service in the planning area will require maintaining the existing water and sewer infrastructure and extending new infrastructure to serve new development. Because the incorporated area is almost entirely developed, water infrastructure is in place and few improvements will be required to accommodate new development. Development proposals and amendments within Planned Communities will be reviewed for consistency with water and sewer infrastructure requirements established in development plans and agreements. In addition, the City will rely upon district assessment of the water and sewer needs of proposed projects and require infrastructure improvements where needed.

### **Solid Waste Disposal**

Sufficient solid waste disposal is necessary to protect public safety and provide for a clean, healthy community. A private sector contractor provides residential solid waste collection services for Rancho Santa Margarita. The City's solid waste is disposed at the County of Orange Integrated Waste Management Department's Prima Deshecha landfill in San Juan Capistrano. The landfill is a permitted Class III landfill accepting only non-hazardous municipal solid waste for disposal (and no hazardous or liquid waste). As a result of the conflict resulting from the increase in the amount of trash being imported from outside Orange County to the Prima Deshecha facility, the City of San Juan Capistrano and County of Orange have established a Memorandum of Understanding to cap the amount of trash the landfill can accept.

Services provided by the private sector contractor will be extended as additional development occurs in the future. The City also is obligated to meet State mandates for solid waste reduction by participating in local and regional programs to encourage per capita reduction of solid waste. Reductions will be achieved through recycling and composting of



solid waste, reduction of the amount of solid waste produced, and public education.

### **Drainage/Flood Control**

The planning area includes three natural creeks and their tributaries. Flood control systems have been constructed to direct runoff away from developed areas and prevent flooding associated with heavy rains. The two agencies responsible for flood control within Rancho Santa Margarita are the City and the Orange County Flood Control District (OCFCD). The City is responsible for local flood control facilities and OCFCD is responsible for regional flood control facilities.

As new development occurs, increased runoff will occur. New development is required to provide on-site stormwater retention/detention facilities to regulate runoff. Such facilities have generally taken the form of ponds that have been designed to handle the difference between the 100-year post-development stormwater discharge and the 10-year pre-development discharge. In other, smaller developments where land is limited, retention facilities have included oversizing on-site storm drain systems to store the additional runoff capacity underground and allowing a discharge to the 10-year predevelopment runoff rate. The City will continue to require developments to provide adequate stormwater drainage systems concurrently with the construction of new development, including detention/retention facilities.

Development proposals and amendments within Planned Communities will be reviewed for consistency with flood control improvements required in approved development plans and agreements. Development proposals outside of Planned Communities will be assessed for drainage impacts and required facilities. Through continued coordination with OCFCD and review of proposed development, public safety and private property will be protected from flood hazards.

### **Fire Protection and Law Enforcement**

Adequate fire protection and law enforcement are imperative to protect public health and safety. 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 planning area. One fire station is located on Avenida Aventura within the Rancho Santa Margarita Business Park. Other stations located within the planning area include one on Trabuco Canyon Road (located just south of Trabuco Oaks), one located at

the intersection of Olympiad Road and Melinda Road in Mission Viejo, one in Coto de Caza, and one at the SMWD building in Las Flores. Several other stations located outside of the planning area respond to fire and other emergencies within the planning area.

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.

Public safety is also an important concern for the community. 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 planning area. To serve the public safety needs of the City, OCSD operates a Sheriff's Station at City Hall staffed by a Chief of Police Services, five sergeants, 15 deputies, one motorcycle deputy, two traffic enforcement deputies, one deputy assigned to the Directed Enforcement Team, and three community services officers. Public safety needs of unincorporated areas within the planning area are met by the Sheriff's South Orange County Substation in Aliso Viejo.

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 service goals and response times for emergency calls.

For both fire protection and law enforcement, ensuring public safety requires maintaining adequate staffing, equipment, and facilities. The City will work with both OCFA and OCSD to ensure that service corresponds to the number of residents and businesses in the City as well as current fire hazards and crime problems. Community-oriented policing will continue to be a centerpiece of the City's approach to crime prevention. The City will also continue to work with homeowners associations to ensure street widths and clearance areas are sufficient to allow these departments to continue to provide valuable, timely service to the community.



## Public Education

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 planning area. The closest facilities are Saddleback College in Mission Viejo, and the University of California, Irvine. Figure LU-4 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 the following seven schools located within the planning area: Arroyo Vista Elementary, Tijeras Creek Elementary, Reilly Elementary, Las Flores Elementary, Wagon Wheel Elementary, Las Flores Middle School, and Tesoro High School. Many of these schools are overcrowded, and the District has limited or no space within its existing sites to accommodate additional growth from surrounding areas outside the City. Therefore, the District continues to look for alternative sites within the planning area to accommodate future student growth.

***Saddleback Valley Unified School District:*** SVUSD serves the north and east portions of Rancho Santa Margarita with the following seven schools located in the planning area: Cielo Vista Elementary, Melinda Heights Elementary, Robinson Elementary, Trabuco Elementary, Trabuco Mesa Elementary, Rancho Santa Margarita Intermediate School, and Trabuco Hills High School. The school facilities are adequate to accommodate the existing student population. The incorporated sections of the planning area are primarily developed and very limited development will occur in the incorporated City in future years. SVUSD serves the Northeast Planned Community area, and would be the responsible district if a school is constructed in that area in the future. SVUSD does not anticipate constructing any other new facilities.



New residential development in the planning area will create additional demand for schools. Since many CUSD facilities are at capacity, additional schools may be required in that District. If a new school is needed in the Northeast Future Planned Community,



SVUSD will be the responsible district. The City will cooperate with the school districts to update information in their Master Plans and long-range facility plans, identify appropriate future school sites that are compatible with surrounding development, and implement facility improvement plans.

Due to the lack of available vacant land in the City, development of additional school sites will likely necessitate an amendment to this General Plan. The City will coordinate any such needed amendments with the appropriate district. Also, the City will work with districts to encourage additional and improved parking facilities for special events, so that spillover parking does not become a nuisance within surrounding neighborhoods.

### **Parks, Community Centers and Recreational Opportunities**

Parks, community centers and recreational opportunities are essential public services that help maintain a high quality of life in the community. Rancho Santa Margarita was developed as a group of planned communities emphasizing the central role of these facilities in civic life.

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, an extensive open space system, and a future Inter-Generational Community Center. All parks in the City (with the exception of O'Neill Regional Park and County trails) are privately owned, operated, and maintained by



homeowner associations. Parks and recreation services in Rancho Santa Margarita can be characterized as primarily neighborhood-serving with facilities well distributed throughout the City. Most of the neighborhoods in the City are within walking distance from an existing park. Rancho Santa Margarita currently has 22 private developed parks which range in size from 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. Of the nearly 152 acres of parkland located in the City, approximately 85 acres (56 percent) are devoted to active recreational use. Approximately 68 acres (44 percent) are devoted to passive uses. The Open Space and Conservation Element of the General Plan provides a full inventory and map of all parks located in the City.

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 trails.

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 man-made 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 local SAMLARC residents.

The Rancho Santa Margarita Intergenerational Community Center (IGCC) will be the social, cultural, civic, and wellness center of the southeast regional community. The facility is to be located in the heart of the town center, near Central Park and City Hall. It will provide cultural and recreational programming for all age groups and all interest groups in order to meet the needs of the entire community. The Bell Tower Foundation has been established as a fundraising organization to finance the construction, administration and operation of the IGCC. Future fundraising activities of this Foundation will establish an endowment for recreational activities throughout the City. Completion of the IGCC was a key element in the drive for incorporation.

As the City matures, it will continue to promote the value of parkland and recreational opportunities for residents. The City will coordinate with local homeowner associations and community foundations to ensure that the lake, existing parks, trails, and community centers are maintained, and new facilities are constructed to meet the needs of new City residents. The Open Space and Conservation Element of the General Plan establishes community-wide standards for the provision of parklands. The City will also work with park operators to ensure that park and recreation facilities are used to the fullest extent. The City will continue to assist in the development of new programs and services for the community, and will support the efforts of the Bell Tower Foundation to successfully integrate the IGCC into the life of the community.

### **Libraries**

Public libraries service several community purposes including, education, recreation, and dissemination of public information. The Orange County Public Library (OCPL) system serves the planning area. The library system has a mission “to provide a framework for the delivery of relevant resources meeting the educational, cultural, civic, business and life-long learning needs of 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 and surrounding areas through the Rancho Santa Margarita Branch Library, located at 30902 La Promesa in the Town Center.

As development occurs, the City will continue to work with the OCPL to ensure that the California State Library recommended standard of 0.5 square feet of library space per capita is met and community needs for library services are met. The City will work with OCPL to ensure that library services in Rancho Santa Margarita are high quality, enhance the cultural life of the community, and provide for an information center within the community. As the community matures and grows, the City will work with OCPL to identify potential locations and services for new libraries.

### **Northeast Future Planned Community**

For the Northeast Future Planned Community area, an urban services plan is required to address the public services and facilities identified in this Element. Necessary service and infrastructure expansion and

improvements will be identified in the urban services plan to show how public services will be provided at adequate levels. The urban services plan will also identify funding sources to achieve the service standards. Currently, the City has policies and programs in place to ensure that new development pays its fair share of needed public improvements.

The City will review and update funding mechanisms to reflect the specific facilities and costs required to support build out of the Land Use Plan. The City may also participate in regional funding programs for certain key facilities such as road improvements.