



## **5.1 Land Use and Planning**

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## **5.1 LAND USE AND PLANNING**

### **5.1.1 PURPOSE**

This section identifies existing land use conditions within the Study Area and provides an analysis of potential impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan Update. Potential impacts are identified and mitigation measures to address potentially significant impacts are recommended, as necessary.

### **5.1.2 EXISTING REGULATORY SETTING**

#### **REGIONAL REGULATIONS**

##### **Southern California Association of Governments**

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 affordable housing, transportation, and air pollution have resulted in the adoption of regional plans that affect the City of Rancho Santa Margarita.

SCAG has evolved as the largest council of governments in the United States, functioning as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for six counties (Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Ventura, and Imperial) and 191 cities. The region encompasses an area of more than 38,000 square miles. As the designated MPO, the Federal government mandates SCAG to research and develop plans for transportation, growth management, hazardous waste management, and air quality. As a result, SCAG prepares comprehensive regional plans to address these concerns.

SCAG is responsible for the maintenance of a continuous, comprehensive, and coordinated planning process resulting in a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and a Regional Transportation Improvement Program. SCAG is responsible for the development of demographic projections and is also responsible for development of the integrated land use, housing, employment, transportation programs, measures, and strategies for the Air Quality Management Plan.

##### **2016 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN/SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY**

The passage of California Senate Bill 375 in 2008 requires that an MPO, such as SCAG, prepare and adopt a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that sets forth a forecasted regional development pattern which, when integrated with the transportation network, measures, and policies, will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and light duty trucks (Government Code Section 65080(b)(2)(B)). The SCS outlines certain land use growth strategies that provide for more integrated land use and transportation planning and maximize transportation investments. The SCS is intended to provide a regional land use policy framework that local governments may consider and build upon.



On April 7, 2016, SCAG's Regional Council adopted the 2016 Regional Transportation Plan/ Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016 RTP/SCS). The 2016 RTP/SCS is a long-range visioning plan that balances future mobility and housing needs with economic, environmental, and public health goals. The 2016 RTP/SCS closely integrates land use and transportation so that the region can grow smartly and sustainably. SCAG works closely with local jurisdictions to develop the 2016 RTP/SCS, which incorporates local growth forecasts, projects and programs, and includes complementary regional policies and initiatives. The 2016 RTP/SCS considers new patterns of development as the regional economy continues to recover and grow, the composition of population changes, the housing market responds to evolving needs, and demands and mobility innovations emerge. The 2016 RTP/SCS also includes a long-term strategic vision for the region that will help guide decisions for transportation and how land is used, as well as the public investments in both, through 2040.

## **GROWTH FORECASTS**

SCAG's Forecasting Section is responsible for producing socio-economic estimates and projections at multiple geographic levels and in multiple years. The Forecasting Section develops, refines, and maintains SCAG's regional and small area socio-economic forecasting/allocation models. Adopted 2016 RTP/SCS Growth Forecasts provide population, household, and employment data for 2040. The socio-economic estimates and projections are used by Federal and State mandated long-range planning efforts such as the RTP, Air Quality Management Plan, Regional Transportation Improvement Program, and the Regional Housing Needs Assessment. SCAG's Adopted 2016 RTP/SCS Growth Forecasts are used to assess a project's consistency with adopted plans that have addressed growth management from a local and regional standpoint; refer to Section 6.3, *Growth-Inducing Impacts*.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW**

SCAG's Intergovernmental Review Section is responsible for performing consistency review of regionally significant local plans, projects, and programs with SCAG's adopted regional plans. The criteria for projects of regional significance are outlined in CEQA Guidelines Sections 15125 and 15206. The proposed project is considered regionally significant; as such, project consistency with SCAG's 2016 RTP/SCS policies is analyzed below.

## **LOCAL REGULATIONS**

### **City of Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan**

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

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



The 2002 General Plan Land Use Element identifies major land use issues and related goals and policies established to address these issues and contains the Land Use Plan which describes the type and density of allowed uses, and a statistical summary of the future land use composition. Areas of special interest, which involve more focused planning efforts, are also identified. 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 Land Use Element identifies the general distribution, location, mix and extent of desired land uses including residential, commercial, business, public/quasi-public facilities, open space uses, and other land uses.

The Land Use Element designates the following land uses for the City; refer to Exhibit 5.1-1, 2002 General Plan Land Use Map.

## **RESIDENTIAL**

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 accessory dwelling units, community facilities, parks and open space, day care, churches, 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 California Government Code (CGC) Section 65915, and RSMZC Section 9.08.120, *Density Bonus Process*.

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, with an average density of 10.0 units per net acre. Uses such as accessory dwelling units, community facilities, parks and open space, day care, churches, 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 CGC Section 65915 and RSMZC Section 9.08.120.

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 day care, 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 CGC Section 65915 and RSMZC Section 9.08.120.

High Density Residential (HDR): The High Density Residential designation provides for attached units, 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 day care, 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 CGC Section 65915 and RSMZC Section 9.08.120.

## **COMMERCIAL AND BUSINESS**

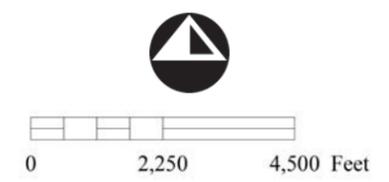
General Commercial (C): The General Commercial land use designation provides for retail uses that rely on automobile traffic and attract customers from a citywide and/or regional trade area. The maximum intensity of development is 1.0:1 floor area ratio (FAR). The average intensity is 0.4:1 FAR.

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 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 1.0:1 FAR and the average intensity of development is a 0.35:1 FAR.



- 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.



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## **PUBLIC/QUASI-PUBLIC**

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 0.6:1 FAR and the average intensity of development is a 0.3:1 FAR. Ownership and control of properties designated as Community Facility are indicated on Exhibit 3-3 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 Public Library)
- CH** City Hall and Bell Tower Regional Community Center (City of Rancho Santa Margarita)
- FS** Fire Station (Orange County Fire Authority)
- W** Water District (Santa Margarita and Trabuco Canyon Water Districts)

## **OPEN SPACE**

Parks (P): The Parks designation provides for public and private-owned parklands, which may include areas for active sports play, large multipurpose fields for community sports fields and courts, and informal recreation, tot lots, community event space, maintenance/support facilities, and caretaker facilities. The maximum intensity of development is a 0.5:1 FAR and the average intensity of development is a 0.1:1 FAR.

Open Space (OS): The Open Space designation provides open space for outdoor recreation, buffering of 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 0.4:1 FAR and the average intensity of development is a 0.05:1 FAR.

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 0.4:1 FAR and the average intensity of development is a 0.05:1 FAR.



## OTHER

Future Planned Community (FPC): The Future Planned Community designation applies to land located within the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI) northeast of the City's existing boundary. Future development of the Northeast Future Planned Community is expected to occur following annexation of the properties by the City and the City approval of a Specific Plan. This area is subject to detailed planning and development of residential, commercial, community facility, recreation and open space uses to ensure that it is complementary to the master planned development of Rancho Santa Margarita and properly planned for its interface with Trabuco Canyon and adjacent neighborhoods.

## Rancho Santa Margarita Zoning Code

On April 11, 2007, the Rancho Santa Margarita City Council adopted the *Rancho Santa Margarita Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance* (codified through Ordinance No. 07-03) which is known and referred to as Title 9, *Planning and Zoning*, or the *Rancho Santa Margarita Zoning Code* (RSMZC). The RSMZC establishes regulations and provisions related to the use of land and resources within the City of Rancho Santa Margarita. The RSMZC is as an implementation tool to achieve the goals and policies established within the General Plan, serve the public health, safety and general welfare of the City of Rancho Santa Margarita, and provide the economic and social advantages resulting from an orderly planned use of land and resources.

The RSMZC divides the City into zoning districts; refer to Exhibit 5.1-2, *Rancho Santa Margarita Zoning Map*. Table 5.1-1, *Zoning District and General Plan Designation Consistency*, identifies the zoning districts and associated General Plan designations.

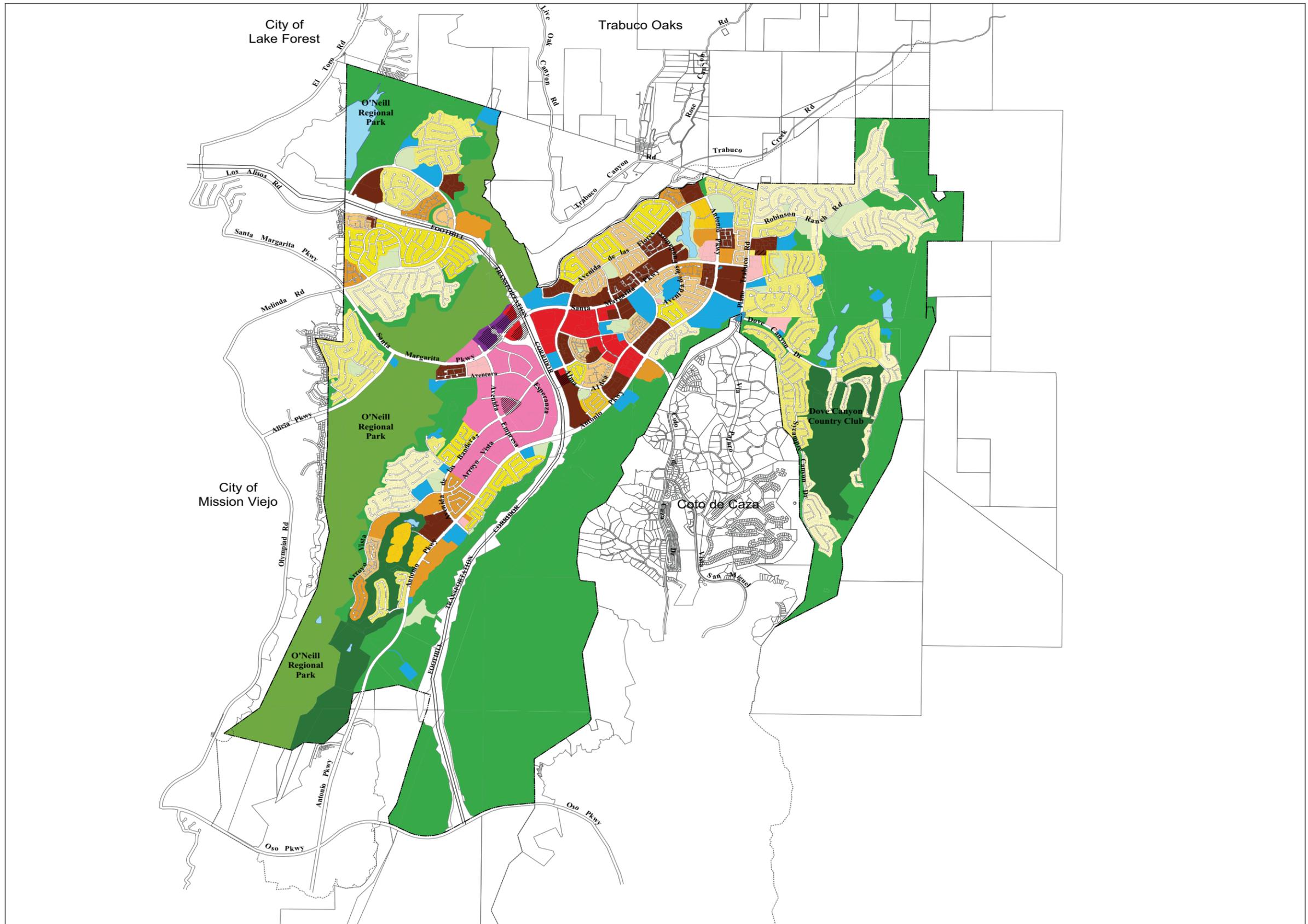
## RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

Residential – Low Density. The Residential – Low Density (RL) districts (RL-6,000 and RL-5,000) provides for the development of single-family detached homes on moderate to large lots consistent with the General Plan LDR designation.

Residential – Low Medium Density. The Residential – Low Medium Density (RLM) districts (RLM-4,000-D and RLM-4,000-A) provides for single-family detached (RLM-4,000-D) homes on smaller lots, as well as attached (RLM-4,000-A) townhomes and duplexes consistent with the General Plan LMDR designation.

Residential – Medium Density. The Residential – Medium Density (RM) districts (RM-3,000-D and RM-2,000-A) provides for detached (RM-3,000-D) single-family homes on smaller lots, as well as attached (RM-2,000-A) townhomes, condominiums, duplexes, and apartments consistent with the General Plan MDR designation.

Residential – High Density. The Residential – High Density (RH) districts provides for high density attached homes, as well as apartments, and senior housing consistent with the General Plan HDR designation.



- LEGEND**
- Residential - Low Density (RL)**
    - RL-6000
    - RL-5000
  - Residential - Low-Medium Density (RLM)**
    - RLM-4000-A
    - RLM-4000-D
  - Residential - Medium Density (RM)**
    - RM-3000-D
    - RM-2000-A
  - Residential - High Density (RH)**
  - Residential - High Density Specific Plan (RH-SP)**
  - Commercial - General (CG)**
  - Commercial - Neighborhood (CN)**
  - Auto Center (AC)**
  - Auto Center - Overlay (AC-O)**
  - Business Park (BP)**
  - Public/Quasi-Public (PQ)**
  - Park (P)**
  - Open Space (OS)**
  - Open Space - Golf (OSG)**
  - O'Neill Regional Park (ONP)**
  - Water (W)**
  - City Boundary**
  - Sphere of Influence**



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



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**Table 5.1-1  
Zoning District and General Plan Designation Consistency**

| Zoning District  | General Plan Designation                     |
|--|--|
| <b>Residential Districts</b>   |  |
| Residential – Low Density (RL)<br>RL-6,000<br>RL-5,000               | Low Density Residential (LDR)                |
| Residential – Low-Medium Density (RLM)<br>RLM-4,000-D<br>RLM-4,000-A | Low-Medium Density Residential (LMDR)        |
| Residential – Medium Density (RM)<br>RM-3,000-D<br>RM-2,000-A        | Medium Density Residential (MDR)             |
| Residential – High Density (RH)                                      | High Density Residential (HDR)               |
| <b>Commercial and Business Park Districts</b>                        |  |
| Commercial – General (CG)  | General Commercial (C)                       |
| Commercial – Neighborhood (CN)                                       | Neighborhood Commercial (NC)                 |
| Auto Center (AC)   | General Commercial (C)                       |
| Business Park (BP)   | Business Park (BP)                           |
| <b>Public/Quasi-Public District</b>                                  |  |
| Public/Quasi-Public (PQ)   | Community Facility (CF)                      |
| <b>Parks/Open Space Districts</b>                                    |  |
| Park (P)   | Park (P)                                     |
| Open Space (OS)  | Open Space (OS)                              |
| Open Space – Golf (OSG)  | Open Space Golf (OSG)                        |
| O'Neill Regional Park (ONP)  | Regional Open Space (ROS)                    |
| <b>Other District</b>  |  |
| Future Planned Community (FPC)                                       | Future Planned Community (FPC)               |
| <b>Overlay Districts</b>   |  |
| Auto Center Overlay (ACO)  | General Commercial (C)<br>Business Park (BP) |

Source: City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update Final Existing Conditions Report*, December 2017.

## COMMERCIAL AND BUSINESS PARK DISTRICTS

Commercial – General. The Commercial – General (CG) district provides for retail uses that rely primarily on automobile traffic and attract customers Citywide and/or in the regional trade area consistent with the General Plan C designation.

Commercial – Neighborhood. The Commercial – Neighborhood (CN) district provides for a variety of retail uses that serve the needs of nearby neighborhoods and have limited potential to negatively impact nearby residents. The CN district is consistent with the General Plan NC designation.

Business Park. The Business Park (BP) district provides for and maintains an employment center in the Rancho Santa Margarita Business Park that includes employment generating uses such as general office, light industrial, light manufacturing, warehousing,



and research and development. Service and retail commercial uses that primarily support the businesses in the business park may also be appropriate.

## **PUBLIC/QUASI-PUBLIC DISTRICTS**

Public/Quasi-Public Districts. The Public/Quasi-Public (PQ) district provides adequate space to meet the needs of public and quasi-public facilities, including off-street parking and loading, and protects adjacent areas from excessive noise, illumination, odor, smoke, traffic, surface water runoff, and other objectionable effects.

## **PARKS/OPEN SPACE DISTRICTS**

Park. The Parks (P) district provides for a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities in the community, as well as to maintain important natural resources.

Open Space. The Open Space (OS) district provides open space for outdoor recreation, buffering of incompatible uses, preservation of natural resources, and protection of public health and safety.

Open Space – Golf. The Open Space – Golf (OSG) district provides for the development of golf courses.

O'Neill Regional Park. The O'Neill Regional Park (ONP) district identifies areas of O'Neill Regional Park that are located in the City and designated on the City's official zoning map. Because the County of Orange is the jurisdiction responsible for development and maintenance of O'Neill Regional Park, the RSMZC does not identify specific uses or standards for the ONP district.

## **OTHER DISTRICTS**

Future Planned Community. The Future Planned Community (FPC) district encourages innovative design and development that is consistent with the General Plan FPC designation and land use assumptions.

Auto Center. The Auto Center district provides for the retail sale of automobiles in the community consistent with the General Plan, provides an attractive and architecturally compatible environment along Santa Margarita Parkway in an effort to maximize the retail sale of automobiles in the City, provides for employment opportunities for existing and future residents, provides adequate space to meet the needs of auto dealerships, including off-street parking, display and loading, and protects adjacent uses from excessive noise, illumination, odor, smoke, traffic, surface water runoff and other objectionable effects.

## **OVERLAY DISTRICTS**

Auto Center. The Auto Center Overlay district expands the opportunity to provide for the retail sale of automobiles in the community consistent with the General Plan, provides an attractive and architecturally compatible environment along Santa Margarita Parkway in an effort to maximize the retail sale of automobiles in the City, provides for employment opportunities for existing and future residents, provides adequate space to meet the



needs of auto dealerships, provides additional opportunities to expand the auto center district in appropriate areas, and protects adjacent uses from excessive noise, illumination, odor, traffic, surface water runoff and other objectionable effects.

### 5.1.3 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### EXISTING LAND USES

Rancho Santa Margarita was primarily developed as a series of Planned Communities under the jurisdiction of the County of Orange prior to the City's incorporation. The Planned Communities comprising the incorporated City include:

- Rancho Santa Margarita Planned Community
- Rancho Trabuco Planned Community
- Robinson Ranch Planned Community
- Dove Canyon Planned Community

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.

While the Planned Communities once set forth the zoning and site development standards for specific areas within the City, they were replaced by the *Rancho Santa Margarita Zoning Code (RSMZC)* in 2007. The Planned Communities now serve as a guide for the character of development in specific geographic areas of the City. At this time, the Planned Communities have been built out, leaving little opportunity for significant new development.

Existing (on-the ground) development within the City limits are identified in Table 5.1-2, Existing Land Use Summary.

As indicated in Table 5.1-2, there are 17,766 residential dwelling units and approximately 5.97 million square feet of commercial, business park, and community facilities uses within the City. Over 4,800 acres within the City are comprised of open space and park uses. Approximately 1,061 acres are right-of-way. There are currently no vacant parcels available for development within the City, except for the 92-acre Chiquita Ridge area. Under a settlement agreement in 2009 with the County, 37 acres of Chiquita Ridge must be preserved for natural habitat. Therefore, approximately 55 acres of Chiquita Ridge (currently designated Open Space) has been identified for potential future development.



**Table 5.1-2  
Existing Land Use Summary**

| Land Use                       | Acres          | Dwelling Units | Square Feet      |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| Low Density Residential        | 895.5          | 6,032          | --               |
| Low-Medium Density Residential | 228.2          | 2,259          | --               |
| Medium Density Residential     | 263.3          | 4,080          | --               |
| High Density Residential       | 251.4          | 5,395          | --               |
| General Commercial             | 129.4          | --             | 961,906          |
| Neighborhood Commercial        | 43.5           | --             | 363,454          |
| Business Park                  | 271.3          | --             | 3,457,374        |
| Community Facility             | 219.4          | --             | 1,184,862        |
| Parks                          | 153.9          | --             | 3,616            |
| Open Space                     | 3,070.1        | --             | 10,000           |
| Open Space Golf                | 457.1          | --             | 67,026           |
| Regional Open Space            | 1,164.3        | --             | --               |
| Water                          | 71.2           | --             | --               |
| Right-of-Way (approximate)     | 1,061.3        | --             | --               |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>8,279.9</b> | <b>17,766</b>  | <b>6,048,238</b> |

Source: City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update Final Existing Conditions Report*, December 2017.

#### 5.1.4 SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLDS AND CRITERIA

Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines contains the Initial Study Environmental Checklist, which includes questions relating to land use and relevant planning. The issues presented in the Initial Study Environmental Checklist have been utilized as thresholds of significance in this section. Accordingly, a project may create a significant environmental impact if it would:

- Physically divide an established community (as explained in Section 9.0, *Effects Found Not To Be Significant*, further analysis of this topic is not required in this EIR);
- Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect; and
- Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation (this threshold is discussed in depth in Section 5.12, *Biological Resources*, and, to avoid duplication, is not repeated here).

#### 5.1.5 PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The General Plan Update strategically focuses on updating the following five General Plan elements: Conservation/Open Space, Economic Development, Land Use, Noise, and Safety. No changes are proposed to the Housing and Circulation Elements.

The proposed land use plan identifies the type, location, and density/intensity of future development within the City; refer to Exhibit 3-3, *General Plan Update Land Use Map*. The proposed land use plan designates all land in Rancho Santa Margarita to one of the 14 land use designations listed below. It should be noted that the only new land use



designation proposed under the General Plan Update is the Mixed-Use (MU) designation. Although the MU designation would be available for future use, no parcels would be designated MU as part of the General Plan Update process and the General Plan development assumptions do not include future mixed-use development. Future use of the MU designation would require a General Plan Amendment and would be reviewed to determine consistency with the General Plan Update growth assumptions and the necessary CEQA compliance documentation. No changes are proposed to the existing land use designations.

- Low Density Residential
- Low-Medium Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Commercial General
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Business Park
- Community Facility
- Park
- Open Space
- Open Space Golf
- Regional Open Space
- Water
- Future Planned Community
- Mixed-Use

Based on the proposed land use designations, density and intensity permitted for each parcel, and associated development assumptions, the proposed land use plan would increase development over existing (2016) conditions by 528 additional dwelling units and 3,085,014 additional square feet of non-residential uses; refer to Table 3-4, General Plan Update Growth Assumptions.

## **CONSISTENCY WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLANS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS**

- **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH ANY APPLICABLE LAND USE PLAN, POLICY, OR REGULATION OF AN AGENCY WITH JURISDICTION OVER THE PROJECT (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE GENERAL PLAN, SPECIFIC PLAN, LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM, OR ZONING ORDINANCE) ADOPTED FOR THE PURPOSE OF AVOIDING OR MITIGATING AN ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECT.**

**Impact Analysis:** SCAG reviews environmental documents for regionally significant projects for their consistency with the adopted 2016 RTP/SCS. SCAG refers to CEQA Guidelines Section 15206, Projects of Statewide, Regional or Areawide Significance, in determining whether a project meets the criteria to be deemed regionally significant. The following criteria is relevant to the project:

*Criteria 1: A proposed local general plan, element, or amendment thereof for which an EIR was prepared.*

The proposed project involves components specified in Criteria 1; the General Plan Update is a strategic refresh of the 2002 General Plan and involves updating and modernizing the goals and policies, introducing a new Mixed-Use land use designation, and updating the General Plan existing conditions and development projections through the year 2040. Therefore, it is concluded that the project is regionally significant. SCAG's 2016 RTP/SCS goals and policies were adopted to help focus future investments on the



best-performing projects and strategies to preserve, maintain and optimize the performance of the existing transportation system. The General Plan Update's consistency with SCAG's goals is presented in Table 5.1-3, SCAG 2016 RTP/SCS Goals Project Consistency Analysis. As indicated in Table 5.1-3, the General Plan Update would be consistent with SCAG's regional planning efforts and a less than significant impact would occur in this regard. Note, the General Plan Update policies referenced in Table 5.1-3 are provided in their entirety at the end of this analysis.

**Table 5.1-3  
SCAG 2016 RTP/SCS Goals Project Consistency Analysis**

| SCAG 2016 RTP/SCS Goals  | Project Consistency Analysis   |
|--|--|
| <p>GOAL 1. Align the plan investments and policies with improving regional economic development and competitiveness.</p> | <p><u>Not Applicable</u>. Specifically, Goal 1 of the 2016 RTP/SCS is not adopted for the “purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect,” per Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. Nevertheless, the General Plan Update does include policies related to the City’s economic development that indirectly connect to the overall economic development and competitiveness of the SCAG region.</p> <p>The General Plan Economic Development Element’s main purpose is to maintain and improve the economic sustainability of the City by addressing economic growth and development; business attraction and retention; and fiscal strength and stability. The element includes several policies related to improving the City’s economy. Economic Development Element Policy 1.1 encourages short- and long-range plans to stimulate jobs and economic growth that complement the City’s employment, entertainment, and shopping needs; and Economic Development Element Policies 2.1 and 2.2 support the retention of existing industry and employment generators and the use of incentives, such as fast-tracking development permits, public-private partnerships and other available financing options, to assist businesses that provide important benefits and contributions to the community. Collaboration with business organizations is also encouraged to attract and retain businesses and industries (Policies 2.4 and 2.5). Additionally, Economic Development Element Policy 3.2 strives to maintain a substantial fiscal surplus to ensure sufficient financial resources during slow economic periods. Overall, these General Plan Update policies all contribute to enhancing SCAG’s regional economic development and competitiveness.</p>   |
| <p>GOAL 2. Maximize mobility and accessibility for all people and goods in the region.</p>                               | <p><u>Consistent</u>. The Circulation Element of the General Plan would not be updated as part of the project as it was more recently updated in 2014. Therefore, the adopted Circulation Element would continue to meet RTP/SCS Goal 2 by progressing toward a sustainable transportation system that focuses on maximizing network connectivity and mobility, operational balance, emissions reduction/energy efficiency, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, and transit readiness.</p> <p>Goal 4 of the proposed Land Use Element further supports the integration of transportation and land use planning to provide mobility options and comfort for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and personal vehicles. Land Use Element Policy 4.1 establishes appropriately scaled car-free and pedestrian-only zones in high pedestrian demand locations; Land Use Element Policy 4.2 ensures City rights-of-way provide adequate infrastructure for the movement of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians with facilities that provide safety and comfort for all transportation modes; Land Use Element Policy 4.3 balances street space allocated for alternative transportation options with parking; Land Use Element Policy 4.4 supports the creation of multiuse trails to enhance access to open space, promote active transportation options, and increase recreational opportunities; Land Use Element Policy 4.5 supports multimodal improvements within the City and neighboring jurisdictions; and Land Use Element Policy 4.6 encourages nodes of interest and activity that are highly accessible by pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. Implementation of these proposed Land Use Element policies would encourage greater mobility and accessibility for people and goods in the region and would be consistent with the adopted Circulation Element.</p> |



**Table 5.1-3 [continued]  
SCAG 2016 RTP/SCS Goals Project Consistency Analysis**

| SCAG 2016 RTP/SCS Goals  | Project Consistency Analysis   |
|--|--|
| <p>GOAL 3. Ensure travel safety and reliability for all people and goods in the region.</p>  | <p><u>Not Applicable.</u> Specifically, Goal 3 of the 2016 RTP/SCS is not adopted for the “purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect,” per Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. However, the General Plan Update includes policies related to providing safe and convenient access between various land uses that indirectly connect to the overall travel safety and reliability of people and goods in the SCAG region.</p> <p>The proposed Land Use Element includes several policies related to integrating transportation and land use planning to encourage greater mobility and reliability through integration of various transportation modes, and safe and convenient access between land uses, including residential, business, commercial, schools/public facilities, and recreational/open space areas; refer to proposed Land Use Element Policies 4.1 through 4.6. Additionally, City roadways, pedestrian walkways, and bicycle routes would continue to follow safety standards established by local and regional agencies, such as the Orange County Transportation Authority, California Department of Transportation, City of Rancho Santa Margarita, and County of Orange.</p>  |
| <p>GOAL 4. Preserve and ensure a sustainable regional transportation system.</p>   | <p><u>Consistent.</u> As stated, the proposed General Plan Update includes goals and policies related to allowing new land use development and growth into the City while maintaining adequate infrastructure, including a sustainable regional transportation network. All individual development projects must be assessed with some level of traffic analysis to determine how the project would impact existing traffic capacities and any required improvements.</p> <p>Specifically, the proposed Land Use Element Policy 4.3 which ensures that City rights-of-way provide adequate infrastructure for the movement of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians with facilities that provide safety and comfort for all modes of transportation.</p>   |
| <p>GOAL 5. Maximize the productivity of our transportation system.</p>   | <p><u>Consistent.</u> Although the Circulation Element of the General Plan would not be updated as part of the project, the proposed Land Use Element includes policies that control and direct future land use development in a way that still preserves the productivity of the City’s transportation network. The proposed land use plan includes a balance of land uses and each development project would be required to conduct some level of traffic and circulation analysis to ensure impacts to motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users are minimized.</p>   |
| <p>GOAL 6. Protect the environment and health of our residents by improving air quality and encouraging active transportation (e.g., bicycling and walking).</p> | <p><u>Consistent.</u> The proposed Land Use Element and Conservation/Open Space Element include several goals and policies related to enhancing active transportation networks in the City to improve the overall health of residents and the natural community. Land Use Element Policies under Goal 4 encourage the integration of transportation and land use planning to provide mobility options for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists. Land Use Element Policies under Goal 12 are related to providing a balance of high-quality active and passive public open spaces, a regional trail system, and recreational facilities, which all encourage more active transportation and improve the health of Rancho Santa Margarita residents. Additionally, Land Use Element policies under Goal 13 encourage coordination with homeowner associations and other recreation providers to ensure that parks, community centers, and recreational opportunities and programs are provided and maintained.</p> <p>Goals and policies under the proposed Conservation/Open Space Element also address the improvement of the environment through the preservation of ecological and biological resources, cooperating with local and regional agencies to improve air quality, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to levels consistent with State goals. Specifically, Conservation/Open Space Element Policy 4.1 encourages cooperation with the South Coast Air Quality Management District and SCAG in their efforts to implement the regional air quality management plan; Conservation/Open Space Element Policy 4.2 promotes land</p> |



**Table 5.1-3 [continued]  
SCAG 2016 RTP/SCS Goals Project Consistency Analysis**

| SCAG 2016 RTP/SCS Goals  | Project Consistency Analysis   |
|--|--|
|  | use patterns that reduce the number and length of vehicle trips; Conservation/Open Space Element Policy 4.3 encourages the expansion and retention of local-serving retail businesses to reduce the number and length of vehicle trips to comparable services in other jurisdictions; and Conservation/Open Space Element Policy 4.4 encourages complete street improvements and alternative modes of transportation.  |
| GOAL 7. Actively encourage and create incentives for energy efficiency, where possible.  | <u>Consistent.</u> Goal 5 of the proposed Conservation/Open Space Element encourages energy conservation to sustain existing and future economic and population growth. Specifically, Policy 5.1 encourages participation in local, regional, and State programs that promote energy conservation and alternative energy sources; Policy 5.2 supports collaboration with energy suppliers and distributors to institute energy conservation programs and informing the public of these programs; and Policy 5.3 encourages green design features, such as passive solar design, natural ventilation, and building orientation during a project's development review process.   |
| GOAL 8. Encourage land use and growth patterns that facilitate transit and active transportation.  | <u>Consistent.</u> Refer to response to RTP/SCS Goal 6.  |
| GOAL 9. Maximize the security of the regional transportation system through improved system monitoring, rapid recovery planning, and coordination with other security agencies.  | <p><u>Not Applicable.</u> Specifically, Goal 9 of the 2016 RTP/SCS is not adopted for the "purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect," per Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. Nevertheless, the General Plan Update includes policies related to safety and security from natural disasters and criminal activities that indirectly connect to the overall security of the regional transportation system in the SCAG region.</p> <p>Consistent with the adopted Circulation Element, the proposed Safety Element includes policies related to the protection and preparation of the community for natural and man-made disasters as they relate to the regional transportation network. For example, Safety Element Policy 1.1 supports the development of local preparedness plans and multi-jurisdictional cooperation and communication for emergency situations consistent with the National Incident Management System and Standardized Emergency Management System; Safety Element Policies 1.2 and 1.3 encourage the maintenance and update of the City's Emergency Operations Plan and Local Hazard Mitigation Plan; and Safety Element Policy 1.4 supports education of City staff, residents, and businesses of appropriate actions to safeguard life and property before, during, and immediately following emergencies.</p> |
| Source: Southern California Association of Governments, 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, April 2016, <a href="http://scagrtpsc.net/Documents/2016/final/f2016RTPSCS.pdf">http://scagrtpsc.net/Documents/2016/final/f2016RTPSCS.pdf</a> , accessed May 1, 2018. |  |

**Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies:**

**CONSERVATION/OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

**Goal 4: Cooperate with local and regional agencies to improve air quality.**

**Policy 4.1:** Cooperate with the South Coast Air Quality Management District and Southern California Association of Governments in their efforts to implement the regional Air Quality Management Plan.

**Policy 4.2:** Promote land use patterns that reduce the number and length of motor vehicle trips.



**Policy 4.3:** Encourage the expansion and retention of local serving retail businesses (e.g., restaurants, drug stores) to reduce the number and length of automobile trips to comparable services located in other jurisdictions.

**Policy 4.4:** Encourage complete streets improvements and alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, biking, and public transportation to reduce emissions associated with automobile use.

**Policy 4.5:** Consider vehicle miles traveled when creating and implementing planning documents and reviewing development proposals.

**Policy 4.6:** Require new development and reuse/revitalization projects with sensitive uses in areas within 500 feet of a freeway or urban road with 100,000 vehicles/day to be designed to lessen any potential health risks through site design, landscaping, ventilation systems, or other measures.

**Goal 5: Encourage energy conservation.**

**Policy 5.1:** Participate in local, regional, and State programs that promote energy conservation and alternative energy sources.

**Policy 5.2:** Collaborate with energy suppliers and distributors to institute energy conservation programs and inform the public of these programs.

**Policy 5.3:** Encourage green design features such as passive solar design, natural ventilation, and building orientation during the development review process.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT**

**Goal 1: Ensure economic development that maintains and enhances the community's character.**

**Policy 1.1:** Develop and implement short- and long-range plans to stimulate jobs and economic growth that complement the City's employment, entertainment, and shopping needs.

**Goal 2: Attract and retain the types of businesses and employment generating uses that are beneficial to the community and maintain the City's community character.**

**Policy 2.1:** Encourage the retention of existing industry and employment generators in the community by providing and maintaining high-quality services and facilities.

**Policy 2.2:** Encourage the use of incentives, such as fast-tracking development permits, public-private partnerships and other available financing options, and implementation of consistent and understandable development standards and processes, to assist businesses that provide important benefits and contributions to the community.



- Policy 2.3:** Promote economic development activities that encourage interaction and dialogue between business owners, leasing agents, property managers, and local economic development officials for the purposes of improving business recruiting and retention.
- Policy 2.4:** Cooperate with surrounding local jurisdictions, and new technology, and communications providers to ensure that state-of-the art communications and data facilities and services are available to the community.
- Policy 2.5:** Collaborate with business organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to attract business and industry to the City, especially where the City has a competitive advantage or is losing potential revenue to other jurisdictions.
- Policy 2.6:** Collaborate with business organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to retain and/or expand local businesses within the City. These efforts could include business visitations, regular focus groups, and surveys.
- Policy 2.7:** Attract, retain, and support expansion of industry that complements Rancho Santa Margarita's character and takes advantage of the City's supply of quality housing and locational advantage for goods movement and corporate mobility.
- Policy 2.8:** Promote the development of new retail uses and retention of existing retail uses (e.g., restaurants, specialty stores) that serve local needs, expand the selection of conveniently located goods and services, and help the City to compete for retail sales tax revenue within the region.

**Goal 3: Maintain an economic base that provides for long-term fiscal viability.**

- Policy 3.1:** Encourage the attraction, retention, and expansion of industries that generate a positive fiscal impact while balancing these revenue generating land uses in concert with other uses that generally have neutral or negative fiscal impacts.
- Policy 3.2:** Strive to maintain a substantial fiscal surplus to ensure sufficient financial resources during slow economic periods when revenue generation may be low.
- Policy 3.3:** Explore additional revenue sources beyond the sales tax (e.g., Transient Occupancy Tax) to promote fiscal viability.



## LAND USE ELEMENT

**Goal 4: Integrate transportation and land use planning to provide mobility options and comfort for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and personal vehicles.**

**Policy 4.1:** Establish appropriately scaled car-free and pedestrian-only zones in high pedestrian demand locations.

**Policy 4.2:** Ensure that City rights-of-way provide adequate infrastructure for the movement of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians with facilities that provide safety and comfort for all transportation modes.

**Policy 4.3:** Balance street space allocated for alternative transportation options with parking when determining the appropriate future use of street space.

**Policy 4.4:** Support the creation of multiuse trails within the City and their connection to regional trails in order to provide enhanced access to open space, promote alternative transportation options, and increase recreational opportunities.

**Policy 4.5:** Support transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements that connect within the City and to neighboring jurisdictions.

**Policy 4.6:** Encourage nodes of interest and activity, public open spaces, well-planned development, mixed-use projects, and signature commercial uses that are highly accessible by pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.

**Goal 12: Provide a balance of high-quality active and passive public open spaces, a regional trail system, and recreation facilities based on community needs and the ability of the City to finance, construct, maintain, and operate facilities now and in the future.**

**Policy 12.1:** Establish and ensure maintenance of a standard of 3.0 acres of active park land per 1,000 population.

**Policy 12.2:** Promote and support the Community Center and the provision of a variety of recreational programs, classes, and events that serve the entire community.

**Policy 12.3:** Coordinate with public, private, and non-profit healthcare and social service providers to better identify and serve the needs of the community.

**Policy 12.4:** Encourage native and large trees of various ages within parks and open spaces to be provided and maintained.

**Policy 12.5:** Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions to facilitate regional trail connections.



**Policy 12.6:** At the time of review of new residential development, require park dedication and provision of recreational trails that enhance the existing private recreational system.

**Goal 13: Cooperate with homeowners' associations and other recreation providers to ensure that parks, community centers, and recreational opportunities and programs are provided and maintained that promote a family-oriented community and encourage community spirit and participation.**

**Policy 13.1:** Collaborate with homeowners' associations and other recreation providers to provide and maintain a variety of community amenities, such as the lake, parks, open space areas, community centers, public meeting facilities/spaces, and pedestrian/bicycle trails.

**Policy 13.2:** Evaluate the need for, and facilitate the provision of, additional neighborhood, senior, youth, and day-care centers as needed.

**Policy 13.3:** Cooperate with homeowners' associations and other recreational facility owners and program providers to facilitate the maximum effective utilization of parks and recreational opportunities and programs in the community.

**Policy 13.4:** Work with school districts in planning for parks and recreation facilities to maximize joint use community recreation opportunities.

**Policy 13.5:** Encourage homeowners' associations and other private recreational facility owners to preserve and maintain active parkland and recreation facilities.

## SAFETY ELEMENT

**Goal 1: Protect and prepare the community for natural and man-made hazards.**

**Policy 1.1:** Support the development of local preparedness plans and multi-jurisdictional cooperation and communication for emergency situations consistent with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS).

**Policy 1.2:** Maintain and update the City's Emergency Operations Plan to ensure consistency and relevancy of conditions and issues within the City.

**Policy 1.3:** Update the City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan in conjunction with the General Plan Safety Element every five years, to ensure consistency and relevancy of hazards and issues within the City.

**Policy 1.4:** Educate City staff, residents, and businesses regarding appropriate actions to safeguard life and property before, during, and immediately following emergencies.

**Mitigation Measures:** No mitigation is required.



**Level of Significance:** Less Than Significant Impact.

### 5.1.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

- **DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND CUMULATIVE DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT RESULT IN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE LAND USE IMPACTS.**

**Impact Analysis:** Development of cumulative projects in the City of Rancho Santa Margarita would be required to mitigate land use impacts on a project-by-project basis. Each project would be evaluated for consistency with the project site's General Plan land use designation and zoning, adopted General Plan goals and policies, and other applicable regional land use plans, such as SCAG's RTP/SCS. As analyzed above, the proposed General Plan Update would result in a less than significant impact related to land use and relevant planning. Therefore, the incremental impact of the proposed project, when considered in combination with development within the City and region, would not result in cumulatively considerable land use impacts. As the project would not involve any land use changes, implementation of the General Plan Update would not conflict with SCAG's growth projections and the General Plan Update would be consistent with SCAG's RTP/SCS goals; thus, cumulative land use impacts are not anticipated to be significant. Further, similar to the proposed project, projects within the SCAG region that are identified as regionally significant would be reviewed for conformity with regional goals for population, housing, employment, mobility and air quality, further reducing potential cumulative impacts to a less than significant level.

**Proposed General Plan Update Policies:** Refer to the General Plan Update goals and policies cited above.

**Mitigation Measures:** No mitigation is required.

**Level of Significance:** Less Than Significant Impact.

### 5.1.7 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

Land use and planning impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan Update would be less than significant. No significant unavoidable land use impact would occur as a result of the General Plan Update.

### 5.1.8 SOURCES CITED

City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update Final Existing Conditions Report*, December 2017.

Southern California Association of Governments, *2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/ Sustainable Communities Strategy*, April 2016, <http://scagrtpsc.net/Documents/2016/final/f2016RTPSCS.pdf>, accessed May 1, 2018.



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