



## **5.16 Parks and Recreation**

---





## **5.16 PARKS AND RECREATION**

### **5.16.1 PURPOSE**

This section identifies existing parks and recreational facilities 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.

### **5.16.2 EXISTING REGULATORY SETTING**

#### **STATE**

##### **Mitigation Fee Act**

The California Mitigation Fee Act, Government Code Sections 66000, et seq., allows cities to establish fees which would be imposed upon development projects for the purpose of mitigating the impact that the development projects have upon the City's ability to provide specified public facilities. In order to comply with the Mitigation Fee Act, the City must follow four primary requirements: 1) Make certain determinations regarding the purpose and use of a fee and establish a nexus or connection between a development project or class of project and the public improvement being financed with the fee; 2) Segregate fee revenue from the General Fund in order to avoid commingling of capital facilities fees and general funds; 3) For fees that have been in the possession of the City for five years or more and for which the dollars have not been spent or committed to a project, the City must make findings each fiscal year describing the continuing need for the money; and 4) Refund any fees with interest for developer deposits for which the findings noted above cannot be made.

#### **LOCAL**

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

The General Plan (2002) established a parkland standard of 3.0 acres of active parkland space per 1,000 residents. New development in the City is subject to the 3.0 acres of active parkland per 1,000 residents requirement.

##### **Rancho Santa Margarita Municipal Code**

The City adopted its Local Park Code (*Rancho Santa Margarita Municipal Code* [Municipal Code] Chapter 9.11, *Local Park Code*) pursuant to Government Code Section 66477 (the "Quimby Act"). The basic purposes and objectives of the Local Park Code are to preserve, enhance, and improve the quality of the physical environment of the City; ensure that adequate park and recreation facilities would be provided; secure for the residents of the City the social and physical advantages resulting from the provision of orderly park, recreation, and open space facilities; establish conditions which would allow parks and recreation areas to be provided and to exist in harmony with surrounding



and neighborhood land uses; and ensure that park and recreation facilities are provided and maintained in a manner that would permit their maximum use and enjoyment by the residents. Pursuant to Municipal Code Chapter 9.11, *Local Park Code*, any person who proposes to divide real property for the purpose of creating a residential subdivision or a parcel map for residential use shall pay a park fee or provide park land in accordance with the requirements identified in the City's Local Park Code.

### 5.16.3 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### LOCAL PARKS

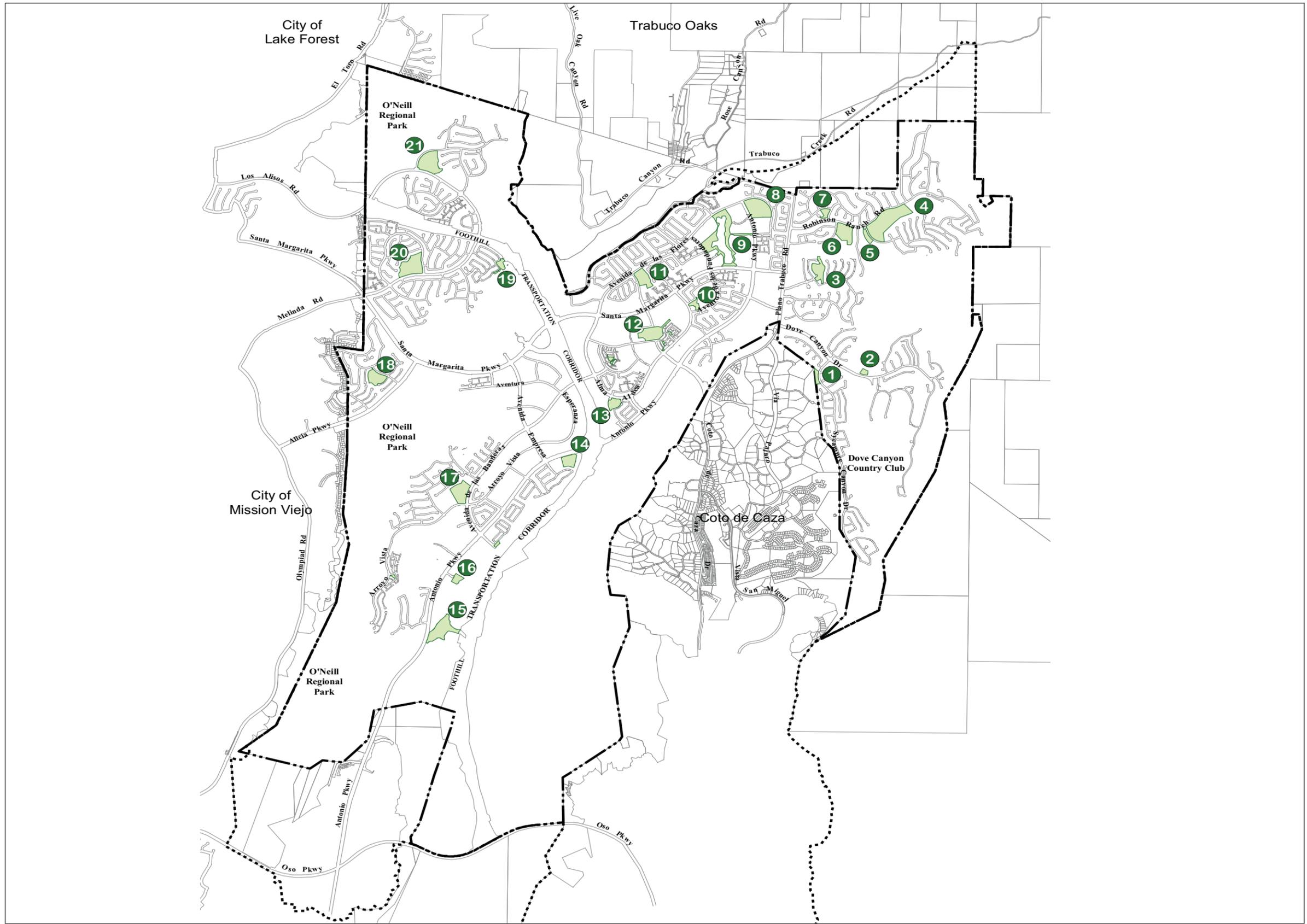
The Rancho Santa Margarita parks and recreation system includes neighborhood parks, community parks, O'Neill Regional Park, joint use parks, community services/facilities, and an extensive open space system.<sup>1</sup> All parks in the City (with the exception of O'Neill Regional Park and County of Orange trails) are privately owned and maintained by homeowner associations, although public access is available to most parks.

The establishment of parkland within Rancho Santa Margarita occurred during the development of the Planned Communities that have been incorporated into the City. Exhibit 5.16-1, *Park Sites*, shows the location of parks within the City. All local parks in the City are privately owned and operated by homeowner associations and can be primarily characterized as neighborhood-serving. Most of the neighborhoods in the City are within walking distance from an existing park. Rancho Santa Margarita currently has 22 developed parks that range in size from the 0.5-acre Dove Canyon Trail Rest Area to the 21.4-acre Central Park in Trabuco Highlands. Several of the smaller parks function only as passive parks. Active recreational parkland is provided in the City at 17 of the 22 parks. Table 5.16-1, *Rancho Santa Margarita Parks and Facilities*, summarizes the existing parks and recreational facilities in the City.

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

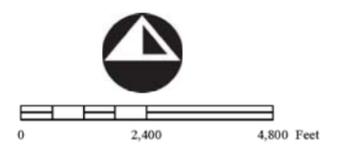
---

<sup>1</sup> City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Recreation*, <http://www.cityofrsm.org/406/Recreation>, accessed on June 29, 2016.



**LEGEND**

- Parks
  - 1. Sycamore Canyon Drive
  - 2. Swim & Racquet Complex
  - 3. Walden Park
  - 4. Central Park (TH)
  - 5. Heritage Drive Trailhead
  - 6. Ike Arnold Park
  - 7. Country Hollow Lane Park
  - 8. Trabuco Mesa Park
  - 9. Lago Santa Margarita
  - 10. Cielo Vista Park
  - 11. Monte Visa Park
  - 12. RSM Central Park
  - 13. Vista Verde Park
  - 14. Tijeras Creek Park
  - 15. Canada Vista Park  
- Dog Park  
- Skate Park
  - 16. Mesa Linda Park
  - 17. Arroyo Visa Park
  - 18. San Benito Park
  - 19. Estrella Vista Park
  - 20. Solana Park
  - 21. Altisima Park
- City Boundary  
 ..... Sphere of Influence



Sources: City of Rancho Santa Margarita, 2017 and Orange County Local Area Formation Commission, 2013.



This page intentionally left blank.



**Table 5.16-1  
Rancho Santa Margarita Parks and Facilities**

Park Name/Location	Organized Sports Fields	Baseball	Basketball	Children's Play Area/Tot Lot	Community Center/Club House	Hiking Trails	Performance Stage	Picnic Tables	Spa	Swimming Pool	Tennis	Volleyball	Other Uses
<b>Dove Canyon</b>													
1 Sycamore Canyon Drive			X					X					
2 Swim and Racquet Complex/Golf Clubhouse			X		X			X	X	X	X	X	
<b>Robinson Ranch, Trabuco Highlands, Walden, and Rancho Cielo</b>													
3 Walden					X	X			X	X			
4 Central Park (Trabuco Highlands)	X		X	X				X		X			
5 Heritage Drive Trailhead						X		X					
6 Ike Arnold	X	X	X	X				X					
7 Country Hollow Lane		X	X	X						X			
<b>SAMLARC<sup>1</sup></b>													
8 Trabuco Mesa	X	X	X	X			X	X			X		
9 Lago Santa Margarita					X	X	X	X		X		X	X <sup>2</sup>
10 Cielo Vista				X				X			X		
11 Monte Vista	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	X		
12 RSM Central Park	X			X	X		X	X					X <sup>2</sup>
13 Vista Verde Park	X	X		X				X					
14 Tijeras Creek	X	X		X		X		X					
15 Cañada Vista	X	X	X			X		X					X <sup>2</sup>
16 Mesa Linda			X	X		X		X			X	X	
17 Arroyo Vista	X	X		X				X		X	X	X	
18 Estrella Vista Park <sup>1</sup>	X			X		X		X					
19 Solana Park <sup>1</sup>	X	X	X	X				X		X			
20 Altisima Park <sup>1</sup>	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X		
<b>Rancho Trabuco</b>													
21 San Benito Park			X	X				X		X	X	X	
<b>Cañada Vista Park<sup>2</sup></b>													
Dog Park													X
Skate Park													X
Notes:													
1. Maintained by Rancho Santa Margarita Landscape and Recreation Corporation (SAMLARC).													
2. Cañada Vista offers a dog park and a skate park. Central Park provides an indoor soccer arena. Lago Santa Margarita Beach Club includes a sandy four-foot deep lagoon and rentals for boats, water trikes, kayaks, and surrey bikes while the Lago Santa Margarita Lakeshore provides an outdoor gym with fitness stations, the lake, and available fishing stations.													
Sources:													
1. City of Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Conservation/Open Space Element, <i>Table COS-2 Existing Parks and Facilities in Rancho Santa Margarita</i> , December 2002.													
2. SAMLARC, <i>Parks and Playgrounds</i> , <a href="http://www.samlarc.org/Parks_and_Facilities/Parks_and_Playgrounds.htm">http://www.samlarc.org/Parks_and_Facilities/Parks_and_Playgrounds.htm</a> , accessed July 7, 2016.													
3. SAMLARC Parks and Amenities Guide.													
4. Orange County Shopping, Rancho Santa Margarita Parks and Recreation Facilities Map.													
5. Written Communication, Patrick White, SAMLARC Park Use and Sports Field Manager, September 26, 2016.													
6. Written Communication, Wendy Starks, City of Rancho Santa Margarita Principal Planner, September 26, 2016.													



Of the approximately 153 acres of parkland located in the City, approximately 85 acres (55 percent) are devoted to active recreational use. Approximately 69 acres (45 percent) are devoted to passive uses. This does not include O'Neill Regional Park, which is approximately 3,358 acres in size, and is located along the western portion of the City. This regional park is maintained and operated by the County of Orange. Table 5.16-2, Rancho Santa Margarita Active and Passive Parkland, approximates the acreages within each park dedicated to active and passive uses. Applying the definitions of active and passive neighborhood park space from the NRPA to the existing recreational facilities in Rancho Santa Margarita (refer to Table 5.16-1), the City has approximately 3.22 park acres per 1,000 persons and 1.79 active park acres per 1,000 persons.

The City does not have park development impact fees, but instead requires a certain amount of dedicated parkland from every residential development. If this is not feasible, the City also accepts in-lieu fees for park development pursuant to Municipal Code Chapter 9.11, *Local Park Code*.<sup>2</sup>

### **Dog Park and Skate Park**

The City of Rancho Santa Margarita's Dog Park and Skate Park are located at Cañada Vista Park, 24328 Antonio Parkway. The parks are open to the public seven days a week from dawn to dusk. Renovations were approved for the Skate Park and will be scheduled in the near future.

### **O'Neill Regional Park**

O'Neill Regional Park (approximately 3,358 acres) 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 equestrian, hiking, and mountain biking activities.

### **Lago Santa Margarita**

Lago Santa Margarita is located west of the intersection of Santa Margarita and Antonio Parkways, at 21472 Avenida de Los Fundadores. This 12.6-acre manmade lake holds 31 million gallons of water and is one foot deep at the edge. It is surrounded by 16.8 acres of parks, trails, and a lakeside beach. A grill and picnic area, boating, swim lagoon, two volleyball courts, and a fiesta room are provided at the facility for local Santa Margarita Landscape and Recreational Corporation (SAMLARC) residents. The Lago Santa Margarita Beach Club is owned and operated by SAMLARC.

---

<sup>2</sup> City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *2013-2021 Housing Element*, September 2013.



**Table 5.16-2  
Rancho Santa Margarita Active and Passive Parkland**

Active and Passive Parkland Name	Total Acres <sup>1</sup>	NRPA Active <sup>2</sup>	NRPA Passive <sup>2</sup>
<b>Dove Canyon</b>			
1 Sycamore Canyon Drive	2.5	--	2.5
2 Swim and Racquet Complex/Golf Clubhouse <sup>3</sup>	6.5	6	0.5
Trail Rest Area	0.5	--	0.5
<i>Community Total</i>	9.5	6.0	3.5
<b>Robinson Ranch, Trabuco Highlands, Walden, and Rancho Cielo</b>			
3 Walden	4.6	2.8	1.8
4 Central Park (Trabuco Highlands)	21.4	8.0	13.4
5 Heritage Drive Trailhead	1.0	--	1.0
6 Ike Arnold	13.6	9.0	4.6
7 Country Hollow Lane	2.4	1.4	1.0
<i>Community Total</i>	43.0	21.2	21.8
<b>SAMLARC</b>			
8 Trabuco Mesa	11.9	9.5	2.4
9 Lago Santa Margarita	16.8	--	16.8
10 Cielo Vista	2.5	1.0	1.5
11 Monte Vista	6.9	6.2	0.7
12 RSM Central Park	8.5	1.8	6.7
13 Vista Verde Park	3.5	3.2	0.3
14 Tijeras Creek	4.0	3.5	0.5
15 Cañada Vista	6.0	5.5	0.5
16 Mesa Linda	2.1	1.3	0.8
17 Arroyo Vista	8.4	5.5	2.9
18 Estrella Vista Park	2.1	--	2.1
19 Solano Park	11.9	9.8	2.1
20 Altisima Park	11.3	9.3	2.0
<i>Community Total</i>	95.9	56.6	39.3
<b>Rancho Trabuco</b>			
21 San Benito Park	4.6	0.7	3.9
<i>Community Total</i>	4.6	0.7	3.9
<b>Cañada Vista Park</b>			
Dog Park	0.46	0.43	0.03
Skate Park	0.30	0.30	--
<i>Community Total</i>	0.76	0.73	0.03
<b>City of Rancho Santa Margarita</b>	<b>154.0</b>	<b>85.2</b>	<b>68.8</b>
Sources:			
1. City of Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Conservation/Open Space Element, <i>Table COS-3 Active and Passive Parkland in Rancho Santa Margarita</i> , December 2002.			
2. Rancho Santa Margarita, <i>Recreation</i> , <a href="http://www.cityofrsm.org/406/Recreation">http://www.cityofrsm.org/406/Recreation</a> , accessed December 28, 2016.			
3. SAMLARC Parks and Amenities Guide.			

Throughout the year, Lago Santa Margarita is the site of special events, including a Star-Spangled Spectacular in celebration of the Fourth of July and a Fishing Derby held regularly on the third Saturday morning in May. In addition, the lake is ideal for a variety of year-round recreational activities in addition to a walking trail around the lake. Lago Santa Margarita allows boaters and anglers. Each spring, the lake is stocked with bass, bluegill, catfish, and mosquito fish.



## Bell Tower Regional Community Center

The Bell Tower Regional Community Center is located at 22232 El Paseo, near Central Park and City Hall. The Bell Tower Regional Community Center holds a variety of recreational programs offered by the City's Community Services Department for community members of all ages, including adults, preschoolers, and seniors. These include:

- Pre-school and youth classes (art classes, music classes, and karate);
- Summer camps and classes (adventure, art, computer, cooking, dance, and gymnastics);
- Adult classes (CPR classes, fitness classes, and business investment strategies); and
- Senior services (Meals on Wheels, art and social engagements, education topics, fitness classes, and games).

In addition, the City contracts with the Boys & Girls Club of Capistrano Valley to provide summer and after school programs at the Center. The Bell Tower Regional Community Center is also available to rent as a venue for events, celebrations, and weddings and offers available spaces in arts and crafts, ballroom, conference rooms, multipurpose rooms, and a technology center.

### 5.16.4 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 parks and recreation. 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:

- Have substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or result in the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which may cause significant environmental impacts in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for parks;
- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; and/or
- Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.



## 5.16.5 PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

### PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

- **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE PHYSICAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROVISION OF NEW OR PHYSICALLY ALTERED PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, OR RESULT IN THE NEED FOR NEW OR PHYSICALLY ALTERED PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, THE CONSTRUCTION OF WHICH MAY CAUSE SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN ACCEPTABLE SERVICE RATIOS, RESPONSE TIMES OR OTHER PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES FOR PARKS.**

**Impact Analysis:** The City currently has 154 acres of public parkland. Future development anticipated by the General Plan Update could introduce as many as 528 additional dwelling units and 3,085,014 additional square feet of non-residential uses, resulting in an approximate population increase of 1,692 persons. This potential population increase would increase demands on current parks and recreational facilities within the City. Based on the City's adopted standard of 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents, this increase in population would require approximately 5.1 acres of parkland. These demands could be partially met through the City's surplus parkland of 4.9 acres; refer to [Table 5.16-3, Required Parkland Dedication](#).

**Table 5.16-3  
Required Parkland Dedication**

Existing Conditions (2016)				General Plan Update	
Population	Parkland Acreage	Required Parkland <sup>1</sup>	Parkland Surplus	Net Population Growth	Required Parkland
49,712	154.0	149.1	4.9	1,692	5.1
Notes:					
1 Based on City's adopted parkland standard of 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents.					

While the required parkland to serve the General Plan Update's projected development slightly exceeds the City's existing surplus parkland by 0.2 acres, future development projects may also develop new parks, thereby increasing the City's overall parkland acreage, or pay park in-lieu fees. Pursuant to Municipal Code Chapter 9.11, *Local Park Code*, all park fees and interest accrued from such fees to the City would be used to develop new or rehabilitate existing neighborhood or community park or recreation facilities.

The General Plan Update does not propose modifications to existing Open Space Land Use Designations. Implementation of the General Plan Update would continue to allow for and accommodate the future development of Parks, Open Space Golf, and Regional Open Space land uses which would further contribute to the City's existing parkland; refer to [Table 3-3, General Plan Update Net Growth](#). It is noted that construction of new parks and recreational facilities, if required, would be subject to environmental review under CEQA requirements.



Additionally, the General Plan Update Land Use Element includes goals and policies intended to ensure new development funds its share of parks (Land Use Element Policy 2.4) and maintains the City's standard of 3.0 acres of active park land per 1,000 residents (Land Use Element Policy 12.1). In addition, several policies include support cooperation between the City and Homeowners' Associations and other recreation providers to ensure that parks, community centers, and recreational opportunities and programs are provided and maintained (Land Use Element Policies 13.1 through 13.5). The General Plan Update policies would not result in significant impacts to parks and recreation facilities. Overall, future development anticipated in the General Plan Update would be adequately served by the City's existing parkland and anticipated new parkland development. Impacts would be less than significant.

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

### **LAND USE ELEMENT**

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

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

**Goal 12: 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.

**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.

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

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

### 5.16.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

- **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND OTHER CUMULATIVE DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT RESULT IN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACTS TO PARKLAND AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES.**

**Impact Analysis:** Future development accommodated through implementation of the General Plan Update would result in additional demands on existing parks and recreation facilities. As discussed, parkland demand associated with future development (approximately 8.66 acres) would be accommodated through the City's existing parkland. Nonetheless, future individual development projects would be reviewed to determine their potential impact to parks and recreational facilities. Impacts to existing parks and recreational facilities would be offset following compliance with the goals and policies included in the General Plan Update, including Land Use Element Policy 12.1, which establishes and ensures maintenance of a standard of 3.0 acres of active park land per 1,000 population. Compliance with the City's Local Park Code would further reduce potential park impacts to a less than significant level. Any future expansion of existing facilities or construction of new facilities, if required, would be subject to environmental review under CEQA requirements. Cumulative impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

**Proposed General Plan Update Goals and 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.

### 5.16.7 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

Park and recreational facilities impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan Update would be less than significant. No significant unavoidable impacts to parks and recreation facilities would occur as a result of the proposed General Plan Update.



## 5.16.8 SOURCES CITED

City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *2013-2021 Housing Element*, September 2013.

City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *City of Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Conservation/Open Space Element*, Table COS-2 Existing Parks and Facilities in Rancho Santa Margarita, December 2002.

City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *City of Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Conservation/Open Space Element*, Table COS-3 Active and Passive Parkland in Rancho Santa Margarita, December 2002.

City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *City of Rancho Santa Margarita Municipal Code*.

City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Recreation*, <http://www.cityofrsm.org/406/Recreation>, accessed on June 29, 2016 and December 28, 2016.

Orange County Shopping, Rancho Santa Margarita Parks and Recreation Facilities Map.  
SAMLARC Parks and Amenities Guide.

SAMLARC, *Parks and Playgrounds*, [http://www.samlarc.org/Parks\\_and\\_Facilities/Parks\\_and\\_Playgrounds.htm](http://www.samlarc.org/Parks_and_Facilities/Parks_and_Playgrounds.htm), accessed on July 7, 2016.

Written Communication, Patrick White, SAMLARC Park Use and Sports Field Manager, September 26, 2016.

Written Communication, Wendy Starks, City of Rancho Santa Margarita Principal Planner, September 26, 2016.

SAMLARC Parks and Amenities Guide.