



## **5.15 School Facilities**

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## **5.15 SCHOOL FACILITIES**

### **5.15.1 PURPOSE**

This section identifies school facilities serving 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.

### **5.15.2 EXISTING REGULATORY SETTING**

#### **STATE REGULATIONS**

##### **Assembly Bill 2926**

The State of California has traditionally been responsible for the funding of local public schools. To assist in providing facilities to serve students generated by new development projects, the State passed Assembly Bill (AB) 2926 in 1986. AB 2926 allowed school districts to collect impact fees from developers of new residential and commercial/industrial building space. Development impact fees were also referenced in the 1987 Leroy Greene Lease-Purchase Act, which required school districts to contribute a matching share of project costs for construction, modernization, or reconstruction.

##### **Senate Bill 50 and Proposition 1A**

Senate Bill (SB) 50 and Proposition 1A, both of which passed in 1998, provided a comprehensive school facilities financing and reform program, in part by authorizing a \$9.2 billion school facilities bond issue, school construction cost containment provisions, and an eight-year suspension of the Mira, Hart, and Murrieta court cases, which allowed local governments to deny new development on the basis of inadequate schools. Specifically, the bond funds were to provide \$2.9 billion for new construction and \$2.1 billion for reconstruction/modernization needs. Further, the Mira, Hart, and Murrieta cases ruled that cities and counties under their legislative authority could impose additional fees for school construction to mitigate the effect of new construction.

The provisions of SB 50 prohibit local agencies from denying either legislative or adjudicative land use approvals on the basis that school facilities are inadequate and reinstates the school facility fee cap for legislative actions (e.g., General Plan amendments, specific plan adoption, zoning plan amendments) as was allowed under the Mira, Hart, and Murrieta court cases. SB 50 states that these fees are the exclusive means of considering as well as mitigating school impacts caused by new development. Accordingly, these fees limit the scope of impact review in an EIR, the mitigation that can be imposed, and the findings a lead agency must make in justifying its approval of a Project (Government Code Sections 65995-65996). According to Government Code Section 65996, the development fees authorized by SB 50 are deemed to be "full and complete school facilities mitigation." These provisions remain in place as long as subsequent State bonds are approved and available.



SB 50 also establishes three levels of Developer Fees that may be imposed upon new development by the governing board of a school district depending upon certain conditions within a district. Level One Fees are the statutory fees, which can be adjusted for inflation every two years. Level Two Fees allow school districts to impose fees beyond the base statutory cap, under specific circumstances. Level Three Fees come into effect if the State runs out of bond funds after 2006, which would allow school districts to impose 100 percent of the cost of the school facility or mitigation minus any local dedicated school monies. The school fee amounts provided for in Government Code Sections 65995, 65995.5, and 65995.7 would constitute full and complete mitigation for school facilities.

In order to accommodate students from new development projects, school districts may alternatively finance new schools through special school construction funding resolutions and/or agreements between developers, the affected school districts, and occasionally, other local governmental agencies. These special resolutions and agreements often allow school districts to realize school mitigation funds in excess of the developer fees allowed under SB 50.

The passage of Proposition 1A in 1998 created the School Facility Program (SFP), in order to streamline the process districts go through to obtain State funding. Pursuant to the SFP, funding for new construction and modernization is provided by the State in the form of per-pupil grants. Generally, projects also require local matching funds. The SFP also implemented numerous reforms intended to streamline the application process, simplify the State facilities program, and create a more transparent and equitable funding mechanism.

### **5.15.3 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

Students residing within the City of Rancho Santa Margarita are served by two K-12 school districts: Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD) and Saddleback Valley Unified School District (SVUSD), as described below.

#### **CAPISTRANO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

CUSD operates 63 schools/programs and encompasses 195 square miles within seven cities across south Orange County.<sup>1</sup> CUSD serves the south and west portions of Rancho Santa Margarita with two elementary schools and one middle school located within the City: Arroyo Vista Elementary School, Tijeras Creek Elementary School, and Arroyo Vista Middle School. Las Flores Elementary School, Las Flores Middle School, and Tesoro High School also serve the City but are located outside of Rancho Santa Margarita. Refer to [Table 5.15-1, \*Capistrano Unified School District Facilities Serving Rancho Santa Margarita\*](#), for current enrollment information. As indicated in [Table 5.15-1](#), capacities at CUSD school facilities are adequate to accommodate the existing student population with the exception of Tesoro High School, which slightly exceeds current capacities.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update Final Existing Conditions Report*, December 2017.



CUSD does not have current plans for new schools; however, CUSD has identified district-wide facilities projects under the School Facilities Improvement District (SFID) Bond Measure.<sup>2</sup> Identified improvements within Tesoro High School include modernizing the football stadium and replacing field turf, modernizing the performing arts center, music, choral, drama classrooms, science, and computer labs, and replacing existing portable classrooms with new classroom buildings. With the expectation of future growth through the School of Choice program and new residential developments, Tesoro High School recently removed portable classrooms and constructed a new 24-classroom building in the area across from the current portable classrooms to accommodate the future growth.<sup>3</sup> No other improvements are planned for CUSD facilities serving Rancho Santa Margarita.

**Table 5.15-1  
Capistrano Unified School District Facilities Serving Rancho Santa Margarita**

School/Address	Enrollment (2016-2017) <sup>1</sup>	Total Capacity <sup>2</sup>	Excess/(Shortage) Capacity
<b>Elementary Schools</b>			
Arroyo Vista Elementary School (K-8) 23371 Arroyo Vista	577	620	43
Las Flores Elementary School (K-5) 25862 Antonio Parkway	568	680	112
Tijeras Creek Elementary School (K-5) 23072 Avenida Empresa	358	485	127
<b>Total Elementary Schools</b>	<b>1,503</b>	<b>1,785</b>	<b>282</b>
<b>Middle Schools</b>			
Arroyo Vista Middle School (K-8) 23371 Arroyo Vista	389	430	41
Las Flores Middle School (6-8) 25862 Antonio Parkway	979	1,247	268
<b>Total Middle Schools</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>1,677</b>	<b>309</b>
<b>High School</b>			
Tesoro High School (9-12) 1 Tesoro Creek Road	2,551	2,540	(11)
<b>Total High School</b>	<b>2,551</b>	<b>2,540</b>	<b>(11)</b>
Note: Las Flores Elementary School, Las Flores Middle School and Tesoro High School are located in unincorporated Las Flores and serve City residents.			
Sources:			
1 California Department of Education, <i>School Accountability Report Card</i> , 2016-2017, <a href="http://www.sarconline.org/">http://www.sarconline.org/</a> , accessed April 19, 2018.			
2 City of Rancho Santa Margarita, <i>Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update Final Existing Conditions Report</i> , December 2017.			

CUSD's current development impact fees for residential development are \$3.79 per square foot for residential development, and \$0.61 per square foot for commercial/industrial development.<sup>4</sup>

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Cooperative Strategies, *Capistrano Unified School District Residential Development School Fee Justification Study*, February 26, 2018, [http://capousd-ca.schoolloop.com/file/1514016268910/144697\\_4333195/2966372938037732775.pdf](http://capousd-ca.schoolloop.com/file/1514016268910/144697_4333195/2966372938037732775.pdf), accessed April 18, 2018.



## SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

SVUSD serves approximately 29,000 students from its attendance area that encompasses over 95 square miles across south Orange County. SVUSD serves the north and east portions of Rancho Santa Margarita with seven schools: Cielo Vista Elementary School, Melinda Heights Elementary School, Robinson Elementary School, Trabuco Mesa Elementary School, Rancho Santa Margarita Intermediate School, Mission Viejo High School, and Trabuco Hills High School. Table 5.15-2, Saddleback Valley Unified School District Facilities Serving Rancho Santa Margarita, details current enrollment for 2017-2018 and capacities at the SVUSD schools serving the City. SVUSD serves the Northeast Future Planned Community and would be responsible if a school is constructed in that area in the future. SVUSD does not anticipate constructing any new facilities or planned improvements. SVUSD has a goal to increase SVUSD attendance by one percent in order to increase State revenue and improve student achievement after experiencing years of declining student enrollment.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 5.15-2  
Saddleback Valley Unified School District Facilities Serving Rancho Santa Margarita**

School/Address	Enrollment (2017-2018) <sup>1</sup>	Capacity (2018) <sup>1</sup>	Excess/(Shortage) Capacity
<b>Elementary Schools</b>			
Cielo Vista Elementary School (K-6) 21811 Avenida de las Fundadores	776	823	47
Melinda Heights Elementary School (K-6) 21001 Rancho Trabuco	996	1,265	269
Robinson Elementary School (K-6) 21400 Lindsay Drive, Trabuco Canyon	561	1,250	689
Trabuco Mesa Elementary School (K-6) 21301 Avenida de las Flores	618	1,325	707
<b>Total Elementary Schools</b>	<b>2,951</b>	<b>4,663</b>	<b>1,712</b>
<b>Intermediate School</b>			
Rancho Santa Margarita Intermediate School (7-8) 21931 Alma Aldea	1,312	1,734	422
<b>Total Middle School</b>	<b>1,312</b>	<b>1,734</b>	<b>422</b>
<b>High School</b>			
Mission Viejo High School (9-12) 25025 Chrisanta Drive, Mission Viejo	2,221	3,076	855
Trabuco Hills High School (9-12) 27501 Mustang Road, Mission Viejo	2,830	3,173	343
<b>Total High School</b>	<b>5,051</b>	<b>6,249</b>	<b>1,198</b>
Source: 1 Saddleback Valley Unified School District, Stella Escario-Doiron (Chief of Facilities), Response to Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update Letter, May 22, 2018.			

Current developer impact fees for SVUSD are \$3.79 per square foot of residential use; \$0.61 per square foot of retail and services, office, research and development,

<sup>5</sup> Saddleback Valley Unified School District, Attendance Information, [https://www.saddlespace.org/morrisonm/svusd information/cms\\_page/view/471266](https://www.saddlespace.org/morrisonm/svusd%20information/cms_page/view/471266), accessed June 29, 2016.



industrial/warehouse/manufacturing, hospitals, hotel/motel, and commercial/industrial uses; and \$0.054 per square foot for storage commercial/industrial uses.<sup>6</sup>

## PRIVATE SCHOOLS

In addition to public schools, the City is home to several prominent Orange County private schools, including the following:

- Mission Hills Christian School, 29582 Aventura (serving grades kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> grade);
- Rancho Viejo Montessori School, 29782 Avenida de Las Banderas (serving preschool to 8<sup>th</sup> grade);
- St. John's Episcopal School, 30382 Via Con Dios (serving preschool to 8<sup>th</sup> grade);
- St. Junipero Serra Catholic School, 23652 Antonio Parkway (serving preschool to 8<sup>th</sup> grade); and
- Santa Margarita Catholic High School, 22062 Antonio Parkway (serving 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade).

These schools serve students residing throughout Orange County.

## COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

There are no two- or four-year universities located within Rancho Santa Margarita. The closest public post-secondary two-year college is Saddleback College, located in Mission Viejo. Other colleges within Orange County include Chapman University, Santiago Canyon College, Santa Ana College, Orange Coast College, and Golden West College. In addition, the nearest four-year universities include Concordia University Irvine, University of California, Irvine, and California State University, Fullerton.

### 5.15.4 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 school facilities. 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.

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<sup>6</sup> Saddleback Valley Unified School District, *Saddleback Valley Unified School District Adjustment in Developer Fees*, July 9, 2018.



## 5.15.5 PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

### SCHOOL FACILITIES

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

**Impact Analysis:** Implementation of the General Plan Update could result in the development of up to 528 additional dwelling units (estimated 236 single-family and 292 multi-family units) over existing conditions. School districts typically use student generation factors to determine the potential number of students that would be generated by the amount of residential development in order to accurately anticipate the needs for new/expanded facilities. Table 5.15-3, Estimated Student Generation, identifies the number of potential students that would be generated from development anticipated by the General Plan Update at full buildout in 2040.

**Table 5.15-3  
Estimated Student Generation**

Grade Level	Student Generation Factor <sup>1,2</sup>		Proposed Net Increase Dwelling Units	Total Students Generated	Existing Excess/ (Shortage) Capacity <sup>3</sup>	Able to Accommodate Project?
	SFR	MFR				
<b>Capistrano Unified School District</b>						
Elementary School	0.1425	0.1458	236 SFR 292 MFR	76	282	Yes
Middle School	0.0881	0.0766		43	309	Yes
High School	0.1311	0.0987		60	(11)	No
<b>Total</b>				<b>179</b>	<b>580</b>	
<b>Saddleback Valley Unified School District</b>						
Elementary School	0.2190	0.2782	236 SFR 292 MFR	133	1,712	Yes
Middle School	0.0738	0.0727		39	422	Yes
High School	0.1698	0.1507		84	1,198	Yes
<b>Total</b>				<b>256</b>	<b>3,332</b>	
Notes: SFR = single-family residential dwelling units; MFR = multiple-family residential dwelling units.						
Sources:						
1 Cooperative Strategies, <i>Capistrano Unified School District Residential Development School Fee Justification Study</i> , February 26, 2018, <a href="http://capousd-ca.schoolloop.com/file/1514016268910/1446974333195/2966372938037732775.pdf">http://capousd-ca.schoolloop.com/file/1514016268910/1446974333195/2966372938037732775.pdf</a> , accessed April 18, 2018.						
2 Cooperative Strategies, <i>Saddleback Valley Unified School District Residential Development School Fee Justification Study</i> , October 27, 2016, <a href="https://www.svusd.org/uploaded/SVUSD_Department_Files/MOC/Forms/2017-18/SVUSD_Residential_Development_School_Fee_Justification_Study_2016-17_ADA.pdf">https://www.svusd.org/uploaded/SVUSD_Department_Files/MOC/Forms/2017-18/SVUSD_Residential_Development_School_Fee_Justification_Study_2016-17_ADA.pdf</a> , accessed April 18, 2018.						
3 Refer to Tables 5.1-1 and 5.1-2.						

Assuming all new development anticipated in the General Plan Update occurs within CUSD's school boundary, 179 students would be generated (76 elementary school, 43 middle school, and 60 high school students). As shown on Table 5.15-3, the CUSD elementary and middle schools serving the City have remaining capacities of 282 and





309 students, respectively. Tesoro High School has a capacity shortage for 11 students; however, the high school recently constructed a new 24-classroom building to replace temporary portables in order to accommodate future growth. Assuming an average of 30-students per classroom, the new 24-classroom building could accommodate 720 additional high school students. As such, based on the conservative assumption that all 528 residential units would be constructed within CUSD's school boundary, CUSD would be able to adequately accommodate the increase in student population.

Assuming all new development under the proposed project occurs within SVUSD's school boundary, the project would generate approximately 256 students (133 elementary school students, 39 middle school students, and 84 high school students); refer to [Table 5.15-3](#). As shown in [Table 5.15-3](#), SVUSD has excess capacity for 1,712 elementary school students, 422 middle school students, and 1,198 high school students at the schools serving the City. As such, based on the conservative assumption that all 528 residential units be constructed within SVUSD's school boundary, SVUSD would be able to adequately accommodate the increase in student population.

The exact location of future development and associated school district is currently unknown. However, it should be noted that future development projected within the General Plan Update is anticipated to occur gradually through 2040 and would be largely based on market demand. Thus, any increase in demand for school services would occur gradually as additional development occurs in Rancho Santa Margarita.

School districts assess development impact fees against residential and commercial/ industrial development to mitigate impacts resulting from the increase in demand for school related services. Pursuant to SB 50, payment of fees to the applicable school district is considered full mitigation for project impacts, including impacts related to the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, or other performance objectives for schools. Therefore, individual development projects in accordance with the General Plan Update would be required to pay the statutory fees, so that school facilities can be constructed/expanded, if necessary, at the nearest sites to accommodate the impact of project-generated students, reducing impacts to a less than significant level.

In addition, the proposed Land Use Element includes several policies related to school services. Land Use Element Policy 2.4 ensures that new developments fund their share of community services and facilities, including parks, schools, trails, and utilities. Land Use Element Policies 11.1 and 11.2 encourages coordination with local school districts to ensure sufficient educational facilities are provided and maintained and adequate land is available for future educational facilities. Shared parking arrangements and joint-use facilities (e.g., recreation fields, gyms, community spaces) are also encouraged under Land Use Element Policies 11.3, 11.4, and 13.4. Lastly, Land Use Element Policy 11.5 ensures the City and school districts work together during planning and environmental review of proposed non-education school reuse projects. Overall, increased cooperation and coordination between the City and school districts would ensure high-quality school and community facilities throughout Rancho Santa Margarita and would not result in



significant impacts to school facilities. As such, the General Plan Update would result in a less than significant impact on school services and facilities.

## **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 11: Cooperate with local school districts and other educational organizations to ensure that a level of education is provided that meets the community's educational needs.**

**Policy 11.1:** Cooperate with local school districts and other educational organizations 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:** Coordinate with school districts to consider the need for new or expanded educational facilities when annexing new land.

**Policy 11.3:** Encourage shared parking arrangements and facilities at community schools and other community gathering places to provide adequate parking for large special events.

**Policy 11.4:** Work with schools to develop cooperative agreements for community use of school facilities, such as recreation fields and gyms.

**Policy 11.5:** Coordinate with local school districts during planning and environmental review of proposed non-education school reuse projects.

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

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

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



### 5.15.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

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

**Impact Analysis:** Implementation of the General Plan Update along with other related cumulative projects would potentially generate new students to the school districts serving the City. Based on the analysis above, CUSD and SVUSD are able to accommodate future growth projected by the General Plan Update and have excess capacity beyond projected growth. Additionally, individual development projects would be required to pay the appropriate school district (CUSD and SVUSD) developer fees based on the type and size of development proposed. Pursuant to SB 50, payment of fees to the appropriate school district is considered full mitigation for project impacts associated with the need to provide new or altered school facilities to serve new students generated by future development. Therefore, individual project applicants would be required to pay the statutory fees, so that space can be constructed, if necessary, at the nearest sites to accommodate the impact of project-generated students. As such, implementation of the General Plan Update and related cumulative projects would not result in significant cumulative impacts to school services and facilities.

**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.

### 5.15.7 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

School facilities impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan Update would be less than significant. No significant unavoidable school facilities impacts would occur as a result of the General Plan Update.

### 5.15.8 SOURCES CITED

California Department of Education, *School Accountability Report Card, 2016-2017*, <http://www.sarconline.org/>, accessed April 19, 2018.

Cooperative Strategies, *Capistrano Unified School District Residential Development School Fee Justification Study*, February 26, 2018, <http://capousd-ca.schoolloop.com/file/1514016268910/1446974333195/2966372938037732775.pdf>, accessed April 18, 2018.

Cooperative Strategies, *Saddleback Valley Unified School District Residential Development School Fee Justification Study*, October 27, 2016, [https://www.svusd.org/uploaded/SVUSD\\_Department\\_Files/MOC/Forms/2017-18/SVUSD\\_Residential\\_Development\\_School\\_Fee\\_Justification\\_Study\\_2016-17\\_ADA.pdf](https://www.svusd.org/uploaded/SVUSD_Department_Files/MOC/Forms/2017-18/SVUSD_Residential_Development_School_Fee_Justification_Study_2016-17_ADA.pdf), accessed April 18, 2018.

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Saddleback Valley Unified School District, Saddleback Valley Unified School District Adjustment in Developer Fees, July 9, 2018.

Saddleback Valley Unified School District, *Attendance Information*, [https://www.saddleback.org/morrisonm/svusd information/cms\\_page/view/471266](https://www.saddleback.org/morrisonm/svusd%20information/cms_page/view/471266), accessed June 29, 2016.

Saddleback Valley Unified School District, Stella Escario-Doiron (Chief of Facilities), Response to Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan Update Letter, May 22, 2018.