



## **5.14 Police Protection**

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## 5.14 POLICE PROTECTION

### 5.14.1 PURPOSE

This section identifies police protection services 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.

### 5.14.2 EXISTING REGULATORY SETTING

#### STATE REGULATIONS

##### California Penal Code

The California Penal Code establishes the basis for the application of criminal law in California.

#### LOCAL REGULATIONS

##### Rancho Santa Margarita Municipal Code

*Rancho Santa Margarita Municipal Code (Municipal Code) Title 6, Public Safety and Welfare, and Title 8, Public Nuisances, Code Enforcement, and Abatement, establish regulations related to public safety, nuisances, and code enforcement within the City.*

### 5.14.3 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### POLICE SERVICES

Rancho Santa Margarita contracts with the Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD) for all its law enforcement needs. OCSD is responsible for public safety and general law enforcement within both the City and unincorporated areas within the Study Area. Rancho Santa Margarita is located within OCSD's Southeast Operations Division. The Division's geographic area of responsibility covers over 273 square miles, including portions of the Santa Ana Mountain range and provides law enforcement services to more than 271,000 residents. To serve the public safety needs of the City, OCSD operates a Sheriff's sub-station at City Hall. Based on the City's *Adopted Operating Budget & Capital Improvement Plan for 2018-2019*, staff assigned to Rancho Santa Margarita included one police chief, one administrative sergeant, and 28 field operations officers.<sup>1</sup>

Law enforcement services include patrol, criminal investigations, traffic enforcement, traffic accident analysis and investigation, parking enforcement, and the use of specialized units when necessary. OCSD also provides a variety of community policing

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<sup>1</sup> City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Adopted Operating Budget & Capital Improvement Plan for 2018-2019*, June 30, 2018.



programs for the public, including crime prevention, Business Watch/Neighborhood Watch and community awareness programs.

In 2016, OCSD responded to 11,629 service calls in the City, which included calls that were generated via dispatch and by the Patrol Deputies' self-initiated observations.<sup>2</sup> Calls for service increased slightly by 2.6 percent from the previous year.

OCSD has established response times for emergency calls. Priority 1 calls, which are life threatening, are responded to in five minutes or less from the time of dispatch. Priority 2 calls, which are not immediately life threatening, including serious crimes that just occurred, incidents likely to escalate to a crime against a person, or any incident where a delay would impede further investigation or cause someone to be in jeopardy, are responded to in 12 minutes or less. In 2016, average response times for Priority 1 calls were 5:34 minutes and Priority 2 calls were 12:24 minutes.<sup>3</sup>

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

OCSD provides a variety of programs and services within the City focused on cyber safety, drug education and awareness, emergency preparedness, hate crime, victim assistance resources and programs, sex offenders, neighborhood watch, parking citation, proof of correction, department ride along, vacation home checks, and volunteer assistance.<sup>4</sup> A few programs and services related to crime prevention and law enforcement are described in further detail below.

### Neighborhood Watch<sup>5</sup>

Rancho Santa Margarita's crime prevention program enlists the active participation of citizens in cooperation with law enforcement to reduce crime in their neighborhood. The Neighborhood Watch program is a proactive community safety program which involves neighbors getting to know each other and working together in a program of mutual assistance. Residents are trained to recognize and report suspicious activities in their neighborhoods and learn numerous crime prevention techniques and security measures.

### Explorer Program<sup>6</sup>

The Explorer Program provides young adults (ages 14 to 21) with the opportunity to volunteer and assist OCSD in Rancho Santa Margarita. Through weekly meetings, Explorers can broaden their knowledge and learn first-hand about the challenges and rewards of a career in law enforcement. Explorers receive training in a variety of topics including leadership, patrol procedures, first-aid, and laws of arrest. They also participate

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2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Programs & Services*, <http://www.cityofrsm.org/235/Programs-Services>, accessed April 10, 2018.

5 City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Neighborhood Watch*, <http://www.cityofrsm.org/DocumentCenter/View/137>, accessed April 10, 2018.

6 City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Explorer Program*, <http://www.cityofrsm.org/239/Explorer-Program>, accessed April 10, 2018.



in ride-alongs with patrol officers, and annual Explorer Academy regional and national competitions.

### **Orange County Crime Stoppers<sup>7</sup>**

Orange County Crime Stoppers is a service that allows citizens to anonymously report potential criminal activity and/or supply information regarding suspects of crimes. It allows people to report non-emergency information either by phone call, web, or text. No phone lines are recorded, and no identifying information can be obtained through the encrypted codes.

### **AlertOC<sup>8</sup>**

AlertOC is Orange County's regional public mass notification system designed to keep those who live or work in Orange County informed of important information during emergency events. The system is sponsored and led by the County of Orange in partnership with many Orange County cities.

Public mass notification systems have become a critical component of emergency preparation and response. Public safety officials respond by using the system to rapidly send out messages when there is a perceived, upcoming, or imminent situation that may require community action.

## **CRIME AND POLICE ACTIVITY**

Rancho Santa Margarita has historically had a very low crime rate. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Crime Statistics, Rancho Santa Margarita has the lowest crime rate of any city in Orange County and is typically in the top five safest cities in the entire nation when compared to cities with a population over 25,000.<sup>9</sup>

The FBI uses the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program to ensure consistency among cities when they report the information. The UCR Program classifies crimes as either Part 1 or Part 2. Since Part 1 crimes are the most serious and have the most impact on quality of life, they are typically the crimes used for comparison purposes. Table 5.14-1, Rancho Santa Margarita Part 1 Crime Activity, shows Part 1 crimes that generated police activity from 2011 to 2016.

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7 City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Orange County Crime Stoppers*, <http://www.cityofrsm.org/246/Orange-County-Crime-Stoppers>, accessed April 10, 2018.

8 County of Orange, *AlertOC*, <http://www.alertoc.com/>, accessed April 10, 2018.

9 City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Crime Statistics*, <http://www.cityofrsm.org/523/Crime-Statistics>, accessed April 10, 2018.



**Table 5.14-1  
Rancho Santa Margarita Part 1 Crime Activity**

| Crime         | 2011       | 2012       | 2013       | 2014       | 2015       | 2016       |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Homicide      | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          |
| Rape          | 1          | 2          | 3          | 10         | 8          | 2          |
| Robbery       | 9          | 10         | 6          | 1          | 9          | 10         |
| Assault       | 22         | 15         | 8          | 16         | 27         | 36         |
| Burglary      | 66         | 69         | 77         | 39         | 45         | 45         |
| Larceny       | 284        | 240        | 200        | 148        | 249        | 206        |
| Auto Theft    | 18         | 18         | 13         | 16         | 9          | 16         |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>354</b> | <b>307</b> | <b>230</b> | <b>347</b> | <b>315</b> |

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

### 5.14.4 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 police protection. 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.

### 5.14.5 PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### POLICE PROTECTION SERVICES

- **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT CAUSE SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE PHYSICAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROVISION OF NEW OR PHYSICALLY ALTERED POLICE FACILITIES OR RESULT IN THE NEED FOR NEW OR PHYSICALLY ALTERED POLICE 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:** The General Plan projects up to 528 additional dwelling units and approximately 3,085,014 square feet of nonresidential development by the year 2040, which would increase demand for police protection services provided by OCSD.

Additional facilities, personnel, and equipment may be required to maintain adequate levels of police protection within the City. However, at this time, it is unknown whether OCSD would need to expand or construct new facilities to meet the demand of future development in the Study Area. Full development assumed by the General Plan Update is expected to occur gradually over time through 2040; thus, any increase in demand for



police protection services would similarly occur gradually as additional development and associated population growth is added to the City, which also depends on the economic market demands. As individual projects are proposed within the City, OCSD service levels and staffing requirements would be evaluated on an annual basis to determine if additional staffing and/or facilities would be required. If the General Plan Update is adopted, OCSD would be able to utilize the project's projected growth in population, dwelling units, and nonresidential development to effectively plan for increases in population and police protection service demand.

Further, the General Plan Update Safety Element includes policies related to crime risk and prevention. Safety Element Policy 6.1 encourages the utilization of services from local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies. Safety Element Policies 6.2 through 6.6 encourage inter-agency coordination with OCSD and Orange County Health Care Agency and local schools, after school programs, volunteer programs, and Neighborhood Watch programs would all help in maintaining a safe environment. Safety Element Policies 6.7 and 6.8 encourage the development of community and recreational facilities and promotion of public awareness to serve as ways to reduce criminal activities and youth related crimes. Lastly, new developments are encouraged to apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles and adequate street and property lights to protect public safety (Safety Element Policies 6.9 and 6.10). Implementation of these General Plan Update policies would help minimize risks relates to criminal activities and heighten awareness for public safety and would not result in significant impacts to police protection services. . As such, implementation of the General Plan Update would result in less than significant impacts in this regard.

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

### **SAFETY ELEMENT**

#### **Goal 6: Protect citizens and businesses from criminal activity.**

- Policy 6.1:** Utilize the services of local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies to reduce the risk of criminal activity.
- Policy 6.2:** Promote after school programs, volunteer programs, and Business and Neighborhood Watch programs to help maintain a safe environment.
- Policy 6.3:** Continue to implement existing programs that promote a peaceful, non-violent problem-solving approach for conflict resolution within the community.
- Policy 6.4:** Work with the Orange County Sheriff's Department to identify and incorporate new techniques and technological advances that create a community in which the residents feel safe.
- Policy 6.5:** Facilitate collaborative partnerships between the Orange County Health Care Agency, Orange County Sheriff's Department, medical professionals, community-based agencies, and service providers to



provide social and mental health care support that reduces recidivism and prevents criminal behaviors.

- Policy 6.6:** Work with the Orange County Sheriff's Department and the local schools to educate parents and students regarding bullying and internet safety.
- Policy 6.7:** Encourage the development and operation of community and recreational facilities as a pre-emptive strategy to reduce youth related crime.
- Policy 6.8:** Promote public awareness of both the responsiveness of local law enforcement and ways to reduce criminal activity.
- Policy 6.9:** Apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles aimed at reducing criminal activity to new development and redevelopment.
- Policy 6.10:** Ensure that adequate street and property lighting is provided and maintained in order to protect public health and safety.

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

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

### 5.14.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

- **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT RESULT IN CUMULATIVE IMPACTS TO POLICE PROTECTION SERVICES.**

**Impact Analysis:** Cumulative police protection service impacts are analyzed in terms of impacts within OCSD's service area. Implementation of the General Plan Update along with cumulative development projects within the region would not have a significant impact on police protection services. As development assumed by the General Plan Update is anticipated to gradually occur over time through 2040, OCSD and the City would effectively plan for increases in population and police protection service demand on a yearly basis.

Individual projects would be reviewed on a project-by-project basis to determine specific safety requirements applicable to the specific development and to ensure compliance with these requirements. The General Plan Safety Element includes policies specifically related to crime prevention and reduction. Coordination between the City, OCSD, local schools, and other neighborhood programs and groups would help reduce the risk of criminal activity through after school and volunteer programs, conflict resolution, new techniques and technological advances, social and mental healthcare support (Safety Element Policies 6.2 through 6.5). Additionally, new developments would be encouraged to apply CPTED principles and installation of adequate street and property lighting (Safety Element Policies 6.9 and 6.10).



At this time, it is unknown whether OCSD would need to expand or construct new facilities to meet the demand of future development in the Study Area. It is also speculative to know where a future OCSD station would be located in the City to meet future demands. However, the City, in coordination with OCSD, would continue to consider impacts to police services and facilities as part of the long-term planning process. OCSD and the City review service needs and budgets on an annual basis and would plan for police demands associated with future growth projected in the General Plan Update. Additional funding for police services and facilities would be paid to OCSD in part by increased developer fees and general funds associated with new development as it occurs. This would ensure that new developments offset their impacts on OCSD's facilities, staffing, response times, and existing service levels within the City. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would result in less than significant impacts to police protection and emergency services. As such, implementation of the proposed project would not result in cumulatively considerable police protection impacts.

**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.

#### **5.14.7 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS**

Police protection impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan Update would be less than significant. No significant unavoidable police protection impacts would occur as a result of the General Plan Update.

#### **5.14.8 SOURCES CITED**

City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Adopted Operating Budget & Capital Improvement Plan for 2018-2019*, June 30, 2018.

City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Crime Statistics*, <http://www.cityofrsm.org/523/Crime-Statistics>, accessed April 10, 2018.

City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *Explorer Program*, <http://www.cityofrsm.org/239/Explorer-Program>, accessed April 10, 2018.

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

County of Orange, *AlertOC*, <http://www.alertoc.com/>, accessed April 10, 2018.