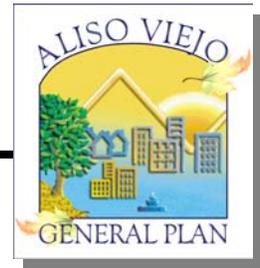


# INTRODUCTION

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Aliso Viejo is a unique place in southern California. Located just miles from the Pacific Ocean, this community provides a wide range of housing, shopping, and recreational opportunities. In addition, the community offers an excellent business environment. Many national and international corporations and a four-year liberal arts college call Aliso Viejo home. Community residents are very active, both in terms of recreational pursuits, and in giving back to the community.

Achieving these milestones is remarkable, given that the first development within the community occurred only 20 years ago. The Mission Viejo Company prepared and implemented a master plan for the community, and the Aliso Viejo Community Association (AVCA) provided excellent guidance and strong community organization at a neighborhood level. However, residents had little control over the municipal services provided on a day-to-day basis by Orange County and others. Given the size of the burgeoning new community and the resources and quality of life issues at stake, self-governance was needed to protect the community's assets, establish identity, and give local residents and businesses control of the community's future.

On July 1, 2001 with a population of about 42,000, the City of Aliso Viejo became the 34<sup>th</sup> city in Orange County. As required by California law, the City has prepared this General Plan to address issues related to future growth and development. The Plan is a blueprint, describing what residents want the City to become, as well as options to get there over the next 20 years. The various policies, plans and programs in the chapters of the General Plan (known as elements) provide guidance for the City Council and others to address challenging conditions and specific actions to optimize community resources and potential.

## WHAT IS THE GENERAL PLAN?

Aliso Viejo's General Plan identifies a community vision for the future and establishes a framework to guide decisions regarding development, transportation, housing, resource management, public safety, public services, and general community well being. During creation of the General Plan, the community came together to craft a way to achieve this vision, expressed through text and illustrations. The General Plan reflects the desires and values of Aliso Viejo residents, the development community, businesses, and public officials.

The Aliso Viejo General Plan describes how the City will work to retain the natural and aesthetic qualities that make the community unique, and at the same time, respond to the dynamics of regional growth and meet changing needs. The General Plan serves as a policy guide, balancing these inter-related factors against Aliso Viejo's community vision.

# INTRODUCTION



Preparation of Aliso Viejo's first General Plan involves establishment of policies and programs directed at managing growth and development of the remaining vacant parcels within the City, enhancing quality of life and livability of the community, and achieving sustainability. The active role that community leaders have taken in both pre- and post-incorporation planning is a vital part of this Plan. The General Plan promotes the values of the residents and businesses within the community by establishing policies and programs to meet the basic challenges and opportunities facing the new City.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES

The City has encouraged citizen participation in developing and reviewing this General Plan through all stages of this process. Public participation occurred through the following methods:

- ❖ *Community Workshops:* From November 19, 2002 to March 18, 2003, four community workshops were held to solicit input on the General Plan Program.
- ❖ *General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) Meetings:* From November 19, 2002 to October 15, 2003, six GPAC meetings were conducted. The GPAC consists of members of the community appointed by the City Council.
- ❖ *Housing Element Community Forum:* A community forum addressing the City of Aliso Viejo Housing Element was held on October 15, 2003. Members of the public and representatives of housing advocacy organizations and homeowners associations attended the forum.
- ❖ *City Website:* Updates on the progress of the General Plan were posted to the City website ([www.cityofaliso Viejo.com](http://www.cityofaliso Viejo.com)) on a bi-monthly basis from November 2002 to March 2004.
- ❖ *City Council Agenda Items:* The City Council considered matters associated with the General Plan as agenda items at meetings held on June 18, July 9, and October 22, 2003 and January 7, 2004.
- ❖ *Public Review Period:* The Draft General Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report were circulated for public review and comment prior to public hearings.
- ❖ *City Council Public Hearing:* The City conducted a public hearing in March 2004 to adopt the General Plan, including the Housing Element.

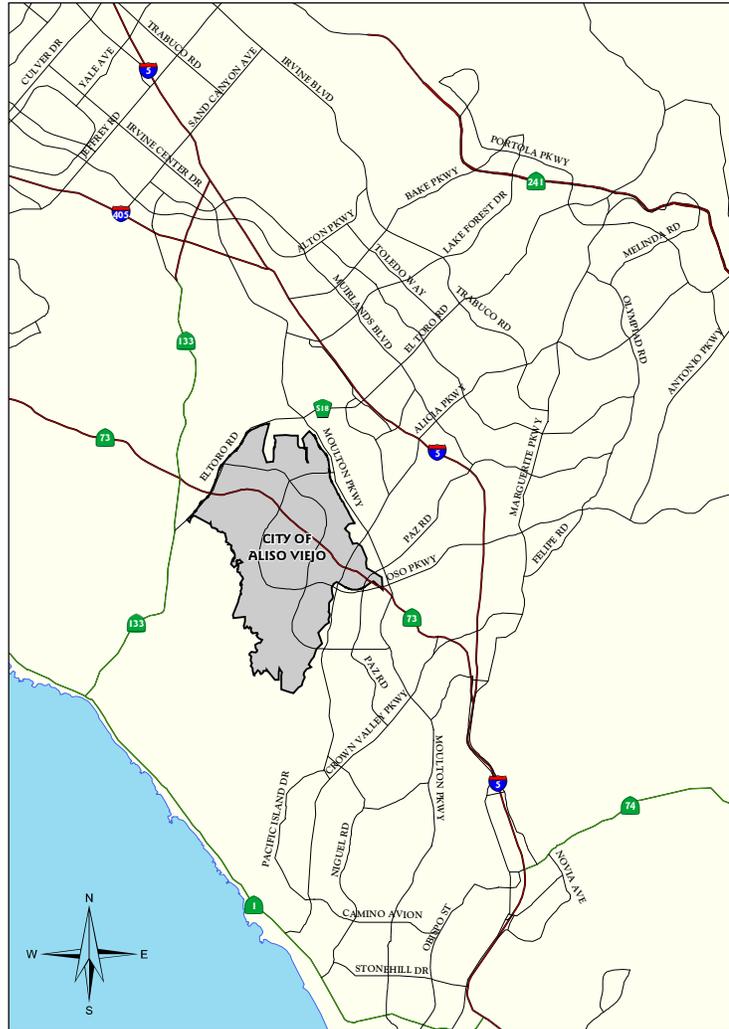




## PLANNING AREA

Aliso Viejo contains approximately 7 square miles of land (or about 4,430 acres) and is located in south Orange County about four miles northeast of the Pacific Ocean. Figure I-1 shows the location of Aliso Viejo within the region. The community is divided by the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor (SR-73) which extends to the northwest connecting Aliso Viejo to cities such as Costa Mesa, Irvine, and Newport Beach, and to the southeast connecting to San Juan Capistrano and offering access to San Diego County. The City is bordered on the west by Laguna Beach, on the east by the Cities of Laguna Niguel and Laguna Hills, and on the north by the City of Laguna Woods.

The planning area for the Aliso Viejo General Plan consists solely of areas within the City Limits approved at the time of incorporation in 2001. As all of the land surrounding the City is under the jurisdiction of other cities, Aliso Viejo does not have a sphere-of-influence to be addressed by future development plans.



**Figure I-1**  
**Regional Location**

## COMMUNITY HISTORY

The first known inhabitants of the Aliso Viejo area were members of the Juaneno and Acjemem native american tribes. In 1769, they were visited by a Spanish expedition under Captain Gaspar de Portola.

The Spaniards founded nearby Mission San Juan Capistrano in 1776, and ruled the region until 1782, when California became Mexican territory and was divided into several large ranchos. During this period, the area was used primarily as a sheep ranch. In 1842, the Mexican government granted the land to Juan Avila, and in 1848 the Guadalupe Hidalgo treaty was signed, making California a territory of the United States.

# INTRODUCTION



In 1890, the Moulton family took title to approximately 22,000 acres of land, naming the area Moulton Ranch. Over the years, portions of the ranch were sold and became Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, and Leisure World (now part of Laguna Woods). Development of the private retirement community of Leisure World began in the early 1960s on 2,095 acres of the Moulton Ranch just north of the current City.

In 1976, the Mission Viejo Company purchased the last remaining 6,600 acres of the Moulton Ranch, located adjacent to Laguna Beach, just west of Mission Viejo. The Company then drew up plans for a 20,000 unit master-planned community named Aliso Viejo. The master plan was designed to meet the needs of a broad range of new home buyers, but also called for a delicate balance of retail and open space, resulting in a community where people really can live, work and play in the same place. In 1979, the County of Orange approved the Aliso Viejo Planned Community development plan, and the first residential units were offered for sale in March 1982. The first residents moved in that November.

In February of 1995, a Self-Governance Subcommittee of the Governmental Affairs committee of the Aliso Viejo Community Association (AVCA) began pushing to make Aliso Viejo a city. AVCA is the first community-wide property owners' association of its kind in California, operating in many ways like a city government, with the authority and ability to provide municipal services funded through residential and commercial property assessments.

In October 1997, the Self-Governance Subcommittee broke away from AVCA and became Aliso Viejo Cityhood 2000. The goal of this organization was to free the community from county governance. In March 1999, Aliso Viejo Cityhood 2000 kicked off a petition drive to put the question of incorporation to a community vote.

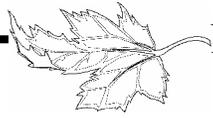
In March 2001, voters went to the polls and chose to make Aliso Viejo the 34<sup>th</sup> city in Orange County. The city officially incorporated on July 1, 2001. Residents and community leaders gathered that day under tents and along the steps of Grand Park's amphitheater for the inaugural City Council meeting.

## COMMUNITY VISION

Building upon the City's history, the *Community Vision* sets the foundation for the entire General Plan. The vision expresses Aliso Viejo residents' strongest values for the future and guides development of the community. City residents have identified the following overarching principles to guide development of the General Plan, and guide decisions made pursuant to the Plan:

### RESIDENTS ENVISION THE CITY'S FUTURE AS:

- ❖ **A fiscally strong and stable community**
- ❖ **A safe community**
- ❖ **A community with unique natural and built resources**
- ❖ **A family-oriented, active community of neighborhoods**
- ❖ **A balanced community with opportunities for housing, jobs, multi-modal transportation, and recreation**



Implementation of these principles is achieved throughout the General Plan elements. Key community values underlying each principle are detailed on the following pages.

### A FISCALLY STRONG AND STABLE COMMUNITY

*Fiscal strength is an important component of community development, as certain land uses generate positive public revenues, while others demand services that are costly and potentially difficult to provide. Aliso Viejo will encourage development that provides a solid fiscal foundation for the community and diverse employment opportunities for residents. Fiscal success will provide a revenue source to finance public improvements and ensure continued provision of outstanding community services. A positive future for the community will be achieved through strong City leadership, coordination with community service and infrastructure providers, and an ongoing beneficial relationship with Soka University of America.*

### A SAFE COMMUNITY

*Safety describes the security of residents and businesses from risk of damage or loss. People will feel safe living and working in Aliso Viejo. The community will continue to be adequately protected from natural and human-caused hazards, excessive noise and criminal activity.*

### A COMMUNITY WITH UNIQUE NATURAL AND BUILT RESOURCES

*As a modern, master-planned community, Aliso Viejo was built to be compatible with surrounding natural features. Preserving the environment is critical if the City is to remain a unique and attractive place to live, work, and play. The community's ongoing commitment to the environment will be demonstrated through preservation of natural open space and scenic resources, and proactive contributions to cleaning up the varied natural and urban settings found within the community. The City will encourage development that respects and enhances these resources, reduces risks associated with natural hazards, and enhances the appearance of the built environment within the community's varied topography.*

### A FAMILY-ORIENTED, ACTIVE COMMUNITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS

*Community identity is defined by the spirit and character of people. Aliso Viejo will be a family-oriented, recreationally-active place, where people give generously of their time and talents to build a strong community. A variety of cultural events and recreational options will*



*be available for residents of all ages. Neighborhoods will continue to be the building blocks of the community and a starting point for community participation. Residents and the business community will have access to information about the community, will be familiar with the decision making process, and will be active participants in community activities. Innovative and interactive channels of communication will be developed between City officials and staff, neighborhoods, residents and businesses to ensure that community information is accessible and all viewpoints are heard and acknowledged.*

## A BALANCED COMMUNITY WITH OPPORTUNITIES

*A balance between jobs and housing was part of the original vision for the Aliso Viejo Planned Community, and remains an important objective for the City. Aliso Viejo will provide opportunities for housing, jobs, multi-modal transportation, and recreation. Appropriate commercial, professional office, company headquarters, and light industrial/manufacturing uses will continue to locate and thrive in the community, operating in harmony with surrounding residential neighborhoods, and making the City a destination point in south Orange County. Aliso Viejo Town Center will become a true mixed-use urban core, with improved circulation and parking and more diverse uses. Housing options will be made available to meet the needs of all segments of our community. A range of recreation activities will be provided by the Aliso Viejo Community Association (AVCA) in neighborhood parks, and public access to adjacent Aliso and Wood Canyons will be preserved and enhanced.*

*Residents and businesses will enjoy convenient access to a multi-modal system of roadways, sidewalks, trails and bikeways used to transport goods, commute and recreate. Major community activity centers will be linked together by a comprehensive and well-maintained system of walking and cycling trails. Excellent public transportation service will connect Aliso Viejo to regional shopping, services and employment centers.*

## PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

Under California law, every city must adopt a comprehensive, long-term General Plan to guide physical development within the incorporated area, as well as to plan for land beyond the municipal boundaries that bear a relationship to the city's planning activities. In essence, a city's General Plan serves as the blueprint for future growth and development. The plan must contain policies and programs to provide decision makers with a solid basis for future decisions related to land use and development.

State law further indicates that the General Plan is the primary document a jurisdiction must use to regulate land use. Consequently, the Zoning Ordinance, development agreements, specific plans, and individual public and private development proposals must be consistent with General Plan goals, policies, and standards.

The Aliso Viejo General Plan addresses many issues that are directly related to and influence land use decisions. In addition to land use, State law requires that the Plan address circulation, housing, conservation of natural resources, preservation of open space, the noise environment, and protection of



public safety. These issues are discussed throughout the General Plan to the extent that they apply to Aliso Viejo.

## ORGANIZATION AND USE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The Aliso Viejo General Plan contains goals, policies and plans to guide land use and development decisions in the future. The General Plan consists of the following six elements, or chapters, which together fulfill State requirements:

- ❖ Land Use Element
- ❖ Circulation Element
- ❖ Noise Element
- ❖ Safety Element
- ❖ Conservation/Open Space Element
- ❖ Housing Element

In addition to the State-mandated elements, provisions of Orange County's Measure M require cities to prepare a Growth Management Element, addressing timely provision of capital facilities and public services associated with new development. The Aliso Viejo General Plan sometimes deviates from the State- and County-mandated elements in non-substantive ways. For example, public utilities are included in the State requirements for the Circulation Element, but are addressed in the Land Use Element of the Aliso Viejo General Plan. The City addresses the Measure M requirement for a Growth Management Element through policies and programs in the Land Use Element as well.

Several supporting documents were also produced during the development of the General Plan, including the General Plan Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR). Other technical reports used in preparing the Plan include traffic/circulation and fiscal impact reports.

The General Plan document is comprised of this *Introduction*, and six elements. Each element may stand alone, but is also an integral part of the overall Plan. The General Plan is accompanied by an Implementation Program and Glossary (Appendices A and B). Each of the elements is organized according to the following format: 1) Introduction; 2) Goals and Policies; 3) Policy Map; and 4) Plan.

The *Introduction* of each element describes the focus and the purpose of the element. The Introduction also identifies other plans and programs outside of the General Plan that may be used to achieve General Plan goals. The relationship of the element to other General Plan elements is also specified in the Introduction.

The *Goals and Policies* section of each element contains a description of identified planning issues, goals and policies related to the element topic. The issues, goals and policies are based on input received from the community, members of the General Plan Advisory Committee, members of the City Council, and City staff.

# INTRODUCTION



*Issues* represent the needs, concerns or desires addressed by the General Plan. *Goals* are overall statements of community desires and consist of broad statements of purpose or direction. *Policies* serve as guides to the City Council and City staff in reviewing development proposals and making other decisions that affect the future growth and development of Aliso Viejo.

Each element also contains a *Policy Map* and a *Plan* section. The Policy Map consolidates the various opportunities, constraints, classifications, and policies expressed in the Element in graphic form. The Plan section offers an overview of the City's course of action to implement identified goals and policies. For example, the Land Use Element contains a "Land Use Policy Map" and a "Land Use Plan" indicating the types and intensities of land use permitted in the City. The Circulation Element contains a "Circulation Policy Map" and a "Circulation Plan" identifying and describing the overall circulation system required to meet the future needs of Aliso Viejo. The Plan often contains additional maps, illustrative diagrams and tables.

Following the elements is the ***Implementation Program*** (Appendix A), which identifies specific actions to achieve the goals, policies and plans identified in each General Plan element. The ***Glossary*** (Appendix B) provides definitions for technical terms used throughout the General Plan. Appendix C to the General Plan consists of a ***Community Profile*** assembled to describe current socioeconomic conditions in the City, pursuant to State Housing Element requirements.

The organization of the General Plan allows users to identify the section that interests them and quickly obtain a perspective of the City's policies on that subject. However, General Plan users should realize that the policies in the various elements are interrelated and should be examined comprehensively. Policies are presented as written statements, tables, diagrams and maps. All of these components must be considered together when making planning decisions.