

RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

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RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Laguna Niguel is committed to balancing natural resource management with community development. Over 1/3 of the City is comprised of dedicated open space and parks and recreation areas, including natural hillsides, hiking and biking trails, amenitized parks, sports fields, and a range of community-serving recreation facilities.

This Element is designed to protect and enhance Laguna Niguel's valuable resources, both natural (such as biological resources) or human-made (such parks and recreational facilities). These resources are essential for preserving the City's distinctive character and providing a high quality of life for its residents and visitors. Overall, the Resource Management Element supports the community's commitment to environmental stewardship through mindful conservation efforts aimed at safeguarding both natural and man-made resources for future generations.

The Laguna Niguel Resource Management Element combines the state-mandated Conservation and Open Space Elements and addresses the required topics to the extent they exist in the City. The topics of military installations, forests, harbors, and fisheries are not relevant to Laguna Niguel, as the City does not contain these features. The provision of water services is addressed in the Public Facilities and Services Element. Fire and flood hazards are addressed in the Public Safety Element. An inventory of

open space land is provided in the Land Use Element via maps and tables, in accordance with Government Code Sections 65302(d) and 65560. Chapters 3 and 5 of the ECR provide a more detailed description of water resources, soils, minerals, and other natural resources, parks and open spaces. The City has an extensive network of trails and bikeways. While these amenities provide a recreational benefit, they are discussed in more detail in the Mobility Element.

Organization of Element

The Resource Management Element addresses each of the topics below as they relate to Laguna Niguel. The goals and policies of this Element are organized around the following topics:

- Open Space
- Parks and Recreation
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases
- Energy Resources

OPEN SPACE

Goal RM-1

A cohesive network of open space areas that supports conservation of natural resources, positively contributing to the City's visual appeal and the environment.

Laguna Niguel values its open spaces, a defining community feature that significantly contributes to the City's character and the well-being of both the environment and its residents. The City includes or borders several regional open spaces, such as Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park (including portions of the Aliso Creek Corridor), Laguna Niguel Regional Park, and Salt Creek Corridor Regional Park, as well as an extensive network of public and privately owned local open spaces. The collection of these open spaces provide valuable habitats for wildlife and other natural resources. The City's designated open space properties are identified in Figure LU-3 in the Land Use Element.

While the open space designation typically pertains to passive use, many of these areas within the City contain overlapping features. These often include hiking, equestrian, and biking trails. Open spaces also often connect or are adjacent to more active park facilities.

Laguna Niguel is also distinguished by its scenic resources and vistas (Figure RM-1), which include panoramic views of prominent ridgelines, expansive open space corridors, and lakefront perspectives in Laguna Niguel Regional Park. From several of the City's parks and view nodes at higher elevations, residents and visitors can also



enjoy sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean, surrounding canyons, and the distant Santa Ana Mountains. These scenic amenities enhance the City's visual character and reinforce connections to its natural setting.

In addition to their environmental benefits like improved air quality, stormwater management (e.g. wetlands), climate resilience, and habitat preservation, these open spaces also offer social benefits, including opportunities for physical activity and improved quality of life. Protecting these open spaces, scenic resources and vistas helps Laguna Niguel maintain a harmonious balance between nature and urban life.

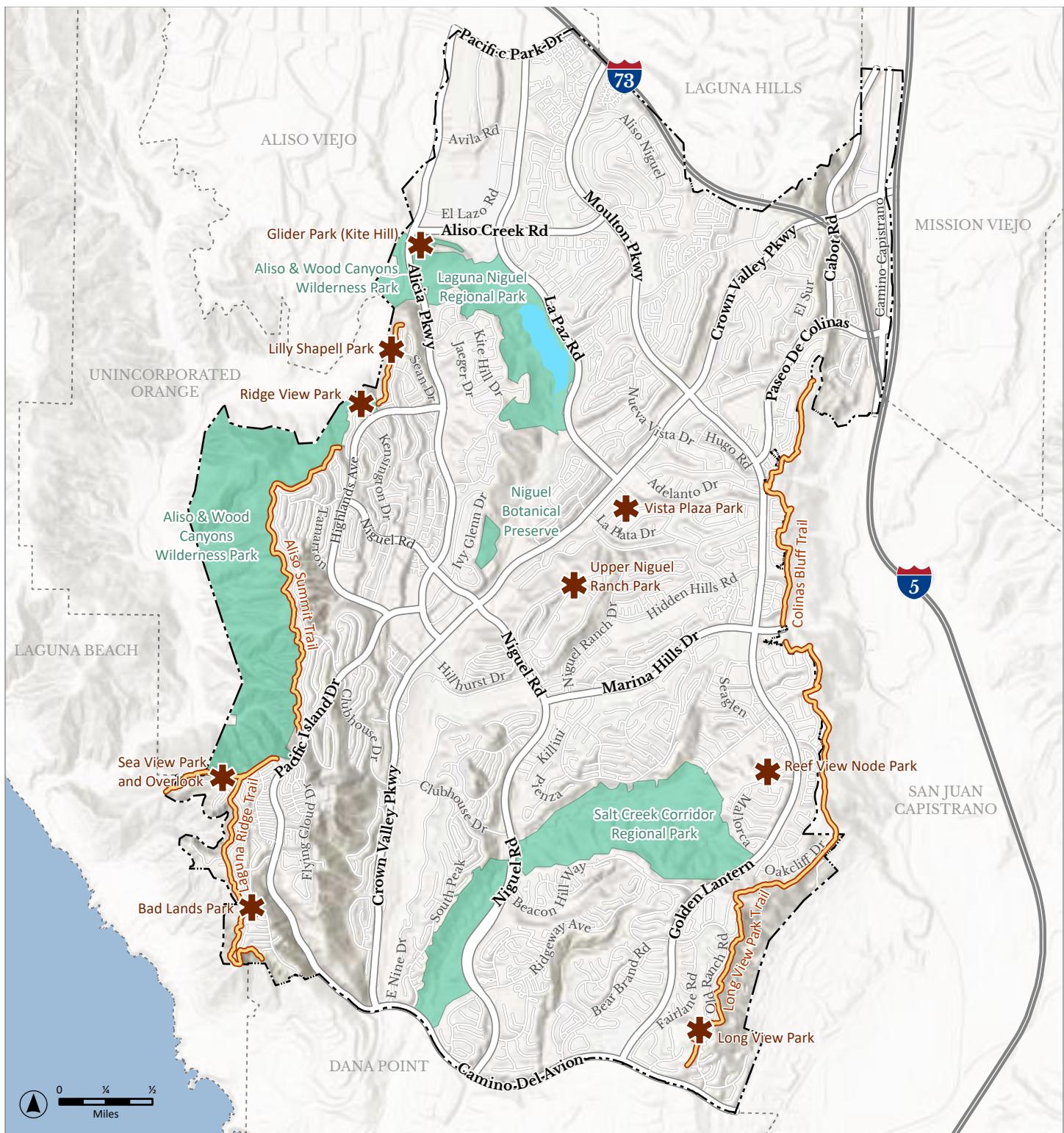
RM-1 Policies



- RM-1.1 Open Space Preservation.** Preserve open space lands for recreation, habitat protection and enhancement, resource conservation, flood hazard management, public safety, aesthetic visual appeal, and overall community benefit.
- RM-1.2 Open Space Maintenance.** Ensure open space maintenance practices that balance biological resource value, fuel modification and fire safety, and community recreation and athletics. This includes engagement and coordination with private property owners and homeowners' associations.
- RM-1.3 New Development.** Encourage new development projects, where appropriate, to preserve open space through deed restrictions and private long-term management.
- RM-1.4 Mature Vegetation.** Avoid removing mature vegetation, which takes significant time to achieve, to the extent feasible. Also, encourage development projects to provide a variety of sizes of new vegetation to balance initial aesthetic landscape value with the long-term health and sustainability of the landscape material.
- RM-1.5 Hillside Preservation.** Implement the City's Hillside Protection Ordinance to minimize impacts to sensitive hillside and canyon areas.
- RM-1.6 Creek Conservation.** Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions on the conservation management of appropriate portions, including wetland areas, of Aliso Creek, Salt Creek, and Sulphur Creek as a sustainable natural habitat.
- RM-1.7 Open Space Regional Collaboration.** Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions to conserve shared open spaces.
- RM-1.8 Sensitive Landform Protection.** Encourage new development projects to avoid sensitive habitat areas, protect sensitive landforms, and conserve natural resources as open spaces.
- RM-1.9 Rewilding.** Explore rewilding opportunities and other ecological restoration projects aimed at increasing biodiversity and restoring natural processes.
- RM-1.10 Open Space Education.** Promote public awareness about the importance of conserving open spaces like the Aliso Creek Greenbelt, Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park, and the Salt Creek Corridor Regional Park.



RM-1 Scenic Resources and Vistas



Data sources: City of Laguna Niguel; Orange County GIS.

Prepared for the City of Laguna Niguel by De Novo Planning Group
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Laguna Niguel City Boundary

Other Jurisdictions

Laguna Niguel Lake

Scenic Resources

Scenic Vista

Scenic Vista (Trails)

PARKS AND RECREATION

Goal RM-2

Exceptional outdoor spaces and parks that support diverse recreational opportunities, active lifestyles, and community health and wellness.

Laguna Niguel differentiates itself through its diversity and quality of park and recreation facilities, including City parks, regional county parks, joint-use agreements with school districts, and private parks.

The City alone offers over 100 acres of developed public parkland for indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities, featuring active ballfields and sports courts, children's playgrounds, an aquatic facility, a skate park, botanical gardens, and an extensive network of hiking, riding, and biking trails. These facilities are tailored to community members of all ages and abilities, including the Sea Country Senior Center, which offers recreation and enrichment programs for seniors. The City also provides various recreation and enrichment programs, youth camps, family classes, and special events, such as concerts in the park.

In addition to City local parks, Laguna Niguel benefits from several major regional parks. These include Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park, Laguna Niguel Regional Park, and Salt Creek Corridor Regional Park. While these parks mostly offer passive open space, Laguna Niguel Regional Park also provides active recreation opportunities, such as tennis, pickleball, picnic areas, children's play areas,



and fishing on the 44-acre Laguna Niguel Lake.

Through joint-use agreements with outside agencies, such as Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD), the City has further expanded community access to recreational facilities by enabling shared use of parks and sports fields.

Laguna Niguel also has an extensive system of private parks owned and operated by homeowner's associations and other private entities. These parks include recreational amenities such as children's play areas, tennis and pickleball, indoor fitness and meeting rooms, and outdoor swimming pool and spa facilities. Some larger homeowner's associations include recreational opportunities for their residents. Private park spaces also include the 18-hole El Niguel Country Club golf course and the Laguna Niguel Racquet Club.

RM-2 Policies

RM-2.1 Park Acreage. Maintain the City adopted standard for park space acreage at 3.0 acres for every 1,000 residents.

RM-2.2 Diverse Recreation Opportunities. Provide a broad range of public recreational lands, facilities, trails, and other amenities for community members of all ages, abilities, and interests.

 **RM-2.3 Outdoor Recreation Design Standards.** Ensure high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities by maintaining and updating design standards for City parks, open spaces, trails, and other public amenities. Incorporate best practices and innovative approaches to public safety, active transportation, and recreation planning to promote physical activity and community engagement.

RM-2.4 Outdoor Recreation Maintenance. Regularly maintain parks, recreational facilities, open spaces, trails, and other public amenities to ensure accessibility and enhance community use and enjoyment.

RM-2.5 Scenic Viewing Areas. Provide public trails, recreation areas, and viewing points that are designed to enhance the enjoyment of high value scenic views.

RM-2.6 Facility Programming. Plan for and provide high-quality recreation and community service programs for community members of all ages and abilities.

RM-2.7 Recreation Programs. Seek community partnerships and/or sponsorships to fund, enhance, and expand City recreation and education programs for all age groups.

RM-2.8 Joint-Use Agreements. Collaborate with public, charter, and private schools on joint-use agreement for shared and enhanced educational, recreational, and/or other public service opportunities.

RM-2.9 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. Consider Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles during the planning and design of new or renovated parks and recreational facilities to enhance safety and deter crime.

RM-2.10 Recreation Types. Provide a broad range of public recreational lands, facilities, trails, and other amenities for community members of different ages and abilities.

RM-2.11 Recreation and Education Programs. Seek community partnerships and/or sponsorships to help fund, enhance, and expand City recreation and education programs for all age groups.

RM-2.12 Maintenance. Regularly maintain parks, recreational facilities, open spaces, trails, and other public amenities to ensure accessibility and enhance overall community use and enjoyment.



RM-2.13 Design Standards. Maintain and update design standards for City parks and trails based on proven best practices and innovations in public safety, active transportation, and recreation planning that promote quality of life benefits such as community health, physical activity, and social interaction.

RM-2.14 Recreational Funding Opportunities. Pursue funding from established sources and explore non-traditional funding options and innovative partnerships to bolster and support the development, improvement, and maintenance of City parks and recreational amenities.

RM-2.15 Parks and Recreation Public Engagement. Promote a high level of community engagement regarding the Park Master Plan process, park and recreation opportunities, and facility design.



BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES



Goal RM-3

A healthy ecosystem that provides habitats for wildlife and biological resources, enhances environmental well-being, and complements the built community.

Biological resources, including habitats and wildlife, are an important feature for Laguna Niguel, as they contribute to the natural beauty and ecological landscape of the community. The variety of plant and animal species in the local area is a defining feature of the community. In particular, the Laguna Niguel Regional Park is well-known as a premier location for birdwatching, especially during migration. Urbanization in Laguna Niguel has broken up natural habitats, making it difficult for wildlife to travel across the landscape and access the food, water, and shelter they need to survive. Through the protection of biological resources, people living, working, and visiting Laguna Niguel can enjoy a harmonious coexistence with the local wildlife and celebrate their contribution to the community's high quality of life.

RM-3 Policies

-  **RM-3.1 Urban Forest.** Encourage tree planting both on public and private properties to expand and enhance the urban forest.
-  **RM-3.2 Habitat Conservation.** Support efforts to identify and conserve suitable habitats, with priority given to those for rare and endangered species in Laguna Niguel, in accordance with state and federal resource agency requirements.
-  **RM-3.3 Invasive Species.** Encourage landscape planting that excludes known invasive plant species.
- RM-3.4 Local Coordination.** Collaborate with local and regional public and private organizations to implement strategies and programs that protect and preserve biological resources in Laguna Niguel.
-  **RM-3.5 Ecosystem Enhancement.** Encourage landscaping that minimizes the need for herbicides and pesticides and that provides food, water, shelter, and nesting sites for birds, butterflies, beneficial insects, and other creatures that support the larger ecosystem.
- RM-3.6 Biological Resources Awareness.** Collaborate with agencies, non-profit organizations, and other community groups to promote awareness about steps residents can take to help preserve and enhance biological resources in the area.
-  **RM-3.7 Botanical Preserve.** Support the Niguel Botanical Preserve in its efforts to educate and promote the use of native and nectar-producing plant species in landscapes.
-  **RM-3.8 Wildlife Movement.** Encourage the preservation of critical wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity as part of the development review process.



CULTURAL RESOURCES

Goal RM-4

Archaeological and cultural resources provide valuable insights into the area's rich and varied historical and cultural heritage and should be recognized and considered for preservation.

Preserving archaeological and cultural resources in Laguna Niguel contributes to the City's unique identity and character. These resources help link the community to the past, offering valuable insights into the diverse histories and cultures that have shaped the City. By protecting these assets, Laguna Niguel fosters a sense of community.



RM-4 Policies

RM-4.1 Historic Resources. For qualifying historic structures, evaluate their cultural relevance, physical condition, economic factors, feasibility, and other key considerations when reviewing proposals for major alterations, demolition, or relocation.

RM-4.2 Archaeological and Paleontological Resources. If significant archaeological or paleontological resources are discovered, evaluate their cultural relevance, physical condition, economic factors, feasibility, and other key aspects. Consider curation in a public location in Laguna Niguel or appropriate institution, as feasible and permitted by environmental regulations.



AIR QUALITY AND GREENHOUSE GASES

Goal RM-5

A healthy and sustainable community by thoughtfully considering and addressing the effects of air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions.

Improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions are essential to maintaining a healthy and sustainable environment. Air quality is especially crucial in the South Coast Air Basin (SCAB), which does not meet certain state and federal air quality standards. To further improve air quality conditions, regional cooperation among all agencies within the basin is necessary. Laguna Niguel can contribute to the lowering of greenhouse gas emissions through the implementation of strategic land use and transportation policies, such as those supporting active transportation and travel demand management.





RM-5 Policies



RM-5.1 **Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Collaboration.**

Collaborate with federal, state, and regional agencies on matters related to improving overall air quality and addressing greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.



RM-5.2 **Sustainable Infrastructure.**

Consider implementing sustainable technologies and practices in the development and maintenance of public infrastructure projects.



RM-5.3 **Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Public Engagement.**

Encourage community participation in air quality and greenhouse gas reduction planning efforts.



RM-5.4 **Sustainable Development.**

Review new qualifying development projects to ensure compliance with State air quality emissions thresholds and greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.



RM-5.5 **Air Pollution Education.**

Promote awareness of air pollution's impact on physical health and the environment, and common best practices for improving air quality.



RM-5.6 **Clean Air Funding Opportunities.**

Pursue funding from established sources and explore non-traditional funding options and innovative partnerships for clean air and greenhouse gas emissions reduction projects.



ENERGY RESOURCES

Goal RM-6

Sustainable energy practices that strengthen community resilience, economic stability, and long-term energy adaptability.

Sustainable energy practices are important for ensuring that energy resources can support future growth in Laguna Niguel. This includes effective energy management and conservation methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollutants and to build a resilient community.





RM-6 Policies



RM-6.1

Energy Compliance and Sustainability.

Ensure state energy compliance by adhering to all power generation requirements and encouraging renewable energy expansion. This also includes efforts to reduce energy use in City operations and pursuing partnerships to improve energy efficiency, storage, and microgrid solutions.



RM-6.2

Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy.

Encourage energy conservation and the adoption of renewable energy practices within the City and by residents and businesses to reduce reliance on traditional energy sources, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and foster a more sustainable community. This includes implementing innovative energy-saving strategies and utilizing renewable energy sources throughout the community, in close partnership with other agencies and local energy providers.



RM-6.3

Green Building Standards. Ensure all new development projects comply with the current version of the California Green Building Standards Code.



RM-6.4

Electric Vehicles. Encourage electric vehicle use by expanding citywide electric vehicle charging infrastructure. This includes the provision of electric vehicle charging stations at City facilities and encouraging their installation at workplaces, multifamily residential communities, and commercial centers to improve accessibility and convenience for electric vehicle owners.