

2009 FALL | News Magazine & Activity Guide



laguna hills
CITY VIEWS

General Plan Adoption Navigating Our Future

What's Inside?

General Plan Adoption
Animal Services
Budget Report
Environment



CITY HALL HOURS:

8 am – 5 pm Monday – Friday

ENGINEERING, PLANNING AND BUILDING COUNTER HOURS:

1 pm – 5:30 pm Monday – Thursday
 1 pm – 5 pm Friday

Regular **City Council Meetings** are held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.

Traffic Commission Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of January, March, May, July, September and November.

Community Services, Historical and Arts Commission Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of February, April, June, August, October and December.

All meetings begin at 7 pm in the City Council Chambers.



LAGUNA HILLS CITY COUNCIL:

Joel Lautenschleger
 Mayor

Randal Bressette
 Mayor Pro Tem

Melody Carruth

R. Craig Scott

L. Allan Songstad, Jr.

A Message

from the **CITY**

As fall draws near, we turn to thoughts of a new school year, upcoming holidays and cooler weather. This issue of City Views looks beyond just this Fall, but gazes at a 20-year horizon with a newly adopted General Plan and Biennial Budget guiding the way.

This fall the City is also helping to make registering your pets easier through a program with the County of Orange that makes pet licensing easy. On pages eight and nine you'll find tips on how to prevent water pollution from reaching our creeks and bays as well as ways to conserve our precious drinking water resources at home.

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CITY VIEWS

City Views is published quarterly by the City of Laguna Hills and is distributed as a public service to City residents and businesses. We welcome your suggestions and feedback and value your involvement in the community. Please send or call in any comments or questions to:

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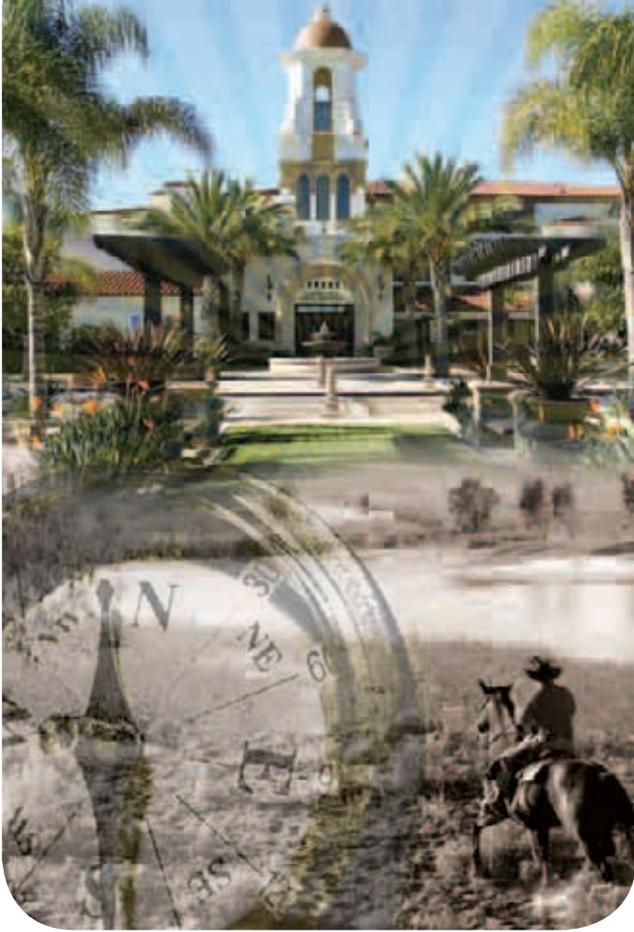


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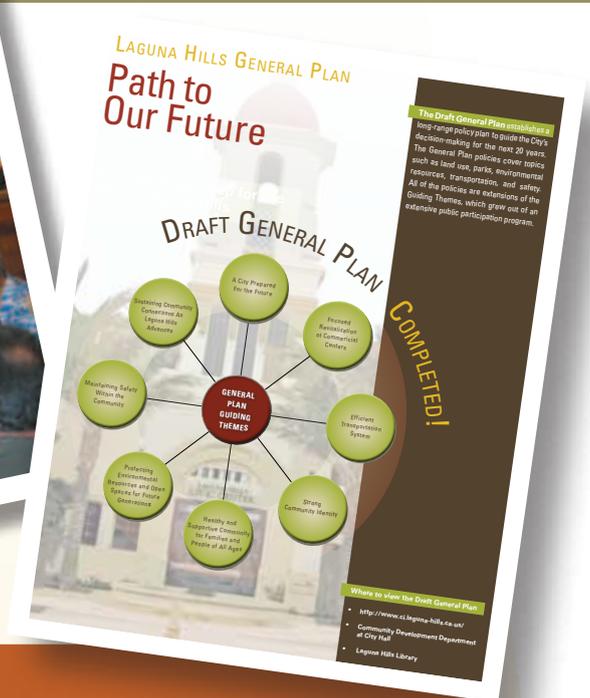
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ON THE COVER

Just as a navigator uses a compass to chart the course of his ship, the City uses its General Plan to chart its future. This issue of City Views explains the General Plan process and what it means for the future of our City. The adoption of the General Plan and the Biennial Budget are vital to keep the City on-track to meet the needs of residents and business owners. You can read more about the General Plan on pages two and three, and about the Biennial Budget on pages six and seven.



Laguna Hills General Plan Charting the Course of the Next 20 Years

After two years of community meetings, public participation and planning, the City of Laguna Hills adopted its General Plan on July 14, 2009 during the Laguna Hills City Council Meeting.

The General Plan is a long-range policy plan that will guide the City's physical development and decision-making over the next 20 years. Required for all Cities and Counties by California State Law, a General Plan can be referred to as a "blueprint" for guiding the future development of the City. The process to develop the Laguna Hills General Plan began in June of 2007 and took two years to complete and adopt.

Guiding Themes

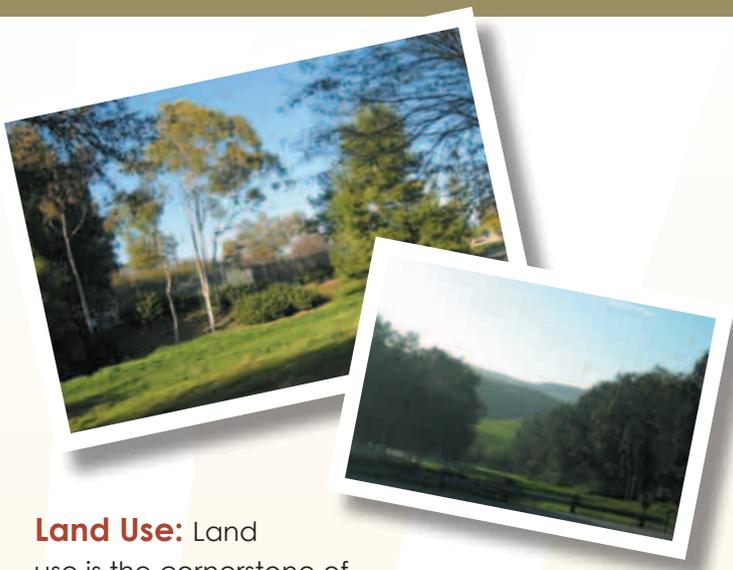
- Maintaining Safety Within the Community
- Focused Revitalization of Commercial Centers
- Efficient Transportation Systems
- Protecting Environmental Resources and Open Spaces for Future Generations
- Strong Community Identity
- Healthy and Supportive Community for Families and People of All Ages
- Sustaining Community Connections as Laguna Hills Advances
- A City Prepared for the Future

Community Involvement

The Laguna Hills General Plan is designed to be an active and community driven document. Throughout the two year process, the General Plan Consultant and City Staff have worked hand-in-hand with members of the community. The City formed a General Plan Advisory Committee made up of Laguna Hills residents and business leaders. The City held a number of community workshops, meetings, study sessions, public hearings and developed newsletters in an effort to involve the community in the planning process as much as possible.

Areas of Concern

The following is an overview of how the General Plan addressed these issues through the goals and policies formulated by the community and adopted by the City Council.



Land Use: Land use is the cornerstone of the Laguna Hills General Plan. In addressing land use, the General Plan looked at current development projects and determined the best way to accommodate future development within the City.

Mobility: Traffic relief is a high priority for everyone in Southern California, and Laguna Hills is no exception. Like most cities, Laguna Hills has a healthy mix of residential streets, freeways, walking and bicycling trails, and bike lanes as well as options for public transportation. As the General Plan evaluated mobility, it cited issues of congestion, unsynchronized traffic signals, speeding, and an overreliance on automobiles as issues of concern.

Conservation and Open Space: As with many South Orange County cities, Laguna Hills is fortunate to have many rolling hills and lush parks for residents to enjoy. Of the 4,234 acres of land that make up Laguna Hills, about 590 acres are protected as open space. The General Plan aims to keep this open space protected from development and available for residents to enjoy for generations to come.

Community Services and Facilities: City services and facilities in Laguna Hills are important to the quality of life for its residents. Facilities such as the Community Center, City Parks, and Sports Complex ensure that residents and businesses of Laguna Hills enjoy access to a number of classes, programs and services. The General Plan ensures that all new development and redevelopment of City buildings will maintain these high standards.

Safety: Safety will always be a top priority for our City and Laguna Hills residents enjoy an extremely safe community. However, the General Plan is looking to enhance our safety even more through environmental design efforts.

Because disasters and emergencies inevitably do occur, the General Plan calls for maintaining a high level of preparedness to limit damage and risks to public health.

Noise: Noises are commonly thought of as nuisances and can cause undue stress and negatively impact one's quality of life. The General Plan calls for lower amounts of noise in general by incorporating land use planning and development techniques to reduce noise within the City. The General Plan also calls for the City to monitor transportation and nontransportation related noise as it relates to residents and local businesses.

Housing: Laguna Hills will work to maintain its small town feel while respecting property rights and giving housing opportunities to the next generation of Laguna Hills residents.

The General Plan focuses on the 2008-2014 Housing Element. Within the housing element there are four areas of concern:

- Neighborhood and housing preservation
- Housing availability
- Equal housing opportunity
- Opportunity areas

Opportunity Areas

During the course of the Update Process, nine different areas within the City were studied where it was believed that future land use changes might occur. These areas were labeled as opportunity areas. Through the process, three opportunity areas ultimately emerged, which are known respectively as "Moulton & La Paz," "Alicia Gateway," and "Via Lomas." In addition the General Plan recommended a modest increase in the development potential within the Urban Village Specific Plan area. These four areas offer favorable market conditions, satisfy needs within the commercial and housing markets, and provide the best potential for addressing community goals expressed in the General Plan's guiding themes.

The General Plan is available on the City's website at www.ci.laguna-hills.ca.us.



ANIMAL SERVICES



Dog Licensing, Spaying and Neutering: The Right Thing to Do!

Calling all pet owners! Did you know that there are between six and eight million dogs and cats that enter shelters nationwide every year? Fortunately, Laguna Hills has the lowest number of dogs and cats that end up at the shelter when compared to neighboring cities such as Irvine and Mission Viejo. Even so, there is more that can be done. A recent study found that only 43 percent of dogs within the

City are licensed. A license is required by state law for all dogs over the age of 4 months. Licensing ensures dogs have their rabies vaccinations and provides the necessary information to support investigations of cruelty, neglect, abandonment and dog bites. Licensing can also identify the owner of a dog and increase the chances of reuniting it with its owner. More importantly, licensing encourages owners to spay and neuter their dogs.

Spaying or neutering is good for both the pet and its owner. Many pet owners do not spay or neuter their pets because they feel it will negatively affect their dog or cat. However, spayed and neutered pets live longer, happier lives, are less likely to be aggressive and are more affectionate. Neutered males are also less likely to roam the neighborhood or run away. Spayed female cats are also less likely to show signs of stress or attract unwanted males.

Every day in the United States, more than 70,000 puppies and kittens are born. Considering that is more than seven times the amount of human births

Low Cost Spay and Neuter Clinics in Laguna Hills

Affordable Spay and Neuter

24861 Alicia Pkwy Ste. D (Dick's Sporting Goods Plaza)
Laguna Hills, CA 92653
(949) 768-1314

For more information or to find other low cost clinics, contact the OC Animal Care at (714) 935-6848 or go to www.ocpetinfo.com.

ANIMAL SERVICES

each day, there are not nearly enough homes for these pets. Sterilization procedures are safe operations performed while the animal is under anesthesia. In some cases, pets can go home the same day as the operation but sometimes a short stay with the veterinarian is required.

Laguna Hills Pet Clinic

If your dog or cat needs licensing, vaccinations or microchip implanting, attend the 2009 City of Laguna Hills Pet Clinic. This clinic will be held Saturday October 3rd from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Laguna Hills Community Center. OC Animal Care and the Southern California Veterinary Vaccine Clinic will be on hand to offer low cost services. For example, rabies vaccinations for both dogs and cats are \$6 and identification microchips are \$28.

As part of the Laguna Hills Pet Clinic, licensing amnesty will be granted to those wishing to license their dogs during the event. Licensing amnesty will allow dogs to be licensed without any penalties or late fees. The fee to license an altered dog is \$24 compared to \$100 for an unaltered (unsprayed or unneutered dog). Temporary licenses can also be purchased for dogs that are unaltered or still need some of their shots. These temporary permits are \$24 and give dog owners two weeks to perform the needed procedures. Cat licensing is optional but can be done for a fee of \$6. While at the Pet Clinic, dogs must be on collars or harnesses with leashes and cats must be in carriers. Pet owners must be a minimum of 18 years old to authorize any services. Services must be paid for in cash. For more information please contact Casey Lambert, Laguna Hills Police Services at (949) 707-2641, or visit the City's website at www.ci.laguna-hills.ca.us.

Spay and Neuter Excuses, Myths & Facts

"But my pet is a pure bred" – So is at least one out of every four animals brought to animal shelters around the country.

"I want my dog to be protective" – Spaying and Neutering does not affect a dog's natural instinct to protect its home and family. A dog's personality is formed more by genetics and its environment than by its sex hormones.

"I don't want my male dog or cat to feel less male" – Pets don't have any concept of sexual identity or ego. Neutering a male dog or cat will not change its basic personality. It doesn't suffer any kind of emotional reaction or identity crisis when neutered.



BUDGET REPORT



Biennial Budget, Ensuring Fiscal Responsibility

The City of Laguna Hills got its start in the midst of the severe housing crisis and recession of the early 1990's. Today our nation finds itself in the midst of another, more severe housing crisis and recession. As is now known, the current recession began in December 2007, and is predicted to last through the end of 2009 and possibly into the summer of 2010. This economic downturn greatly impacted the City's 2009-2011 Biennial Budget. As the budget process began, the City relied on four assumptions:

1. The effects of the recession on Laguna Hills are at or near the bottom.
2. The recession will persist through the summer of 2010.
3. A modest recovery will begin in the 2010/11 fiscal year.
4. The present downturn in revenues is cyclical and will eventually recover along with the recovery in the general economy.

These assumptions helped to shape the direction of the City's budget during a time of widespread economic hardship. Since inception, the City has held a conservative operating budget ratio of 1:10, but for the 2009-11 Biennial Budget it has been lowered to 1:07. This means that after all operating expenses and debt service, the City will still have a \$2.8 million surplus that can be used for one-time capital projects and reserves.

Prior to development of the budget, the City implemented a personnel reorganization to save money and streamline operations. This resulted in an overall reduction in full-time equivalent personnel from 33.8 during the last budget cycle to 31.15 for the 2009-2011 budget cycle, which represents an 8% reduction in budgeted City personnel and going forward reduces overhead costs by about \$500,000 annually.

As part of the City's budget, each department was asked to decrease its operating budget for the 2009-11 budget. The total number cut by all City departments was \$1,423,225 (see table for individual departments).

The State Budget Crisis – Impact on Laguna Hills

The State of California's budget problems have reached historic proportions and it is unlikely that the recently adopted State budget will solve them. Unfortunately, part of the State's budget solution was to borrow money from local government. For Laguna Hills, this means that the State of California will borrow an estimated \$850,000 this year. Under State law, the money will have to be paid back with interest by June 30, 2013. While this action from the State will create financial hardships for many cities and counties, the City of Laguna Hills will be



BUDGET REPORT

able to manage this loan with no impact on the City's Operating Budget due to the City's healthy reserves.

Capital Improvement Projects

Capital Improvement Projects are major infrastructure upgrades that improve the quality of life for our residents and business, create private sector jobs, and keep Laguna Hills a safe and beautiful City. For the 2009-2011 Biennial Budget, the City has allocated \$14,156,000 towards 15 capital projects. These projects will be funded over the course of the 2-year budget with Special Revenues Funds in the amount of \$13,001,027 or 92% of the funding. The balance of \$1,154,973 will be supported by the City's General Fund.

The following list highlights the major capital expenditures among the 15 capital projects scheduled during the 2009-2011 Biennial Budget:

- Annual Street Maintenance\$1.65 million
- La Paz Widening at the I-5\$5.30 million
- Avenida de la Carlota Widening\$2.17 million
- Laguna Hills Drive Pavement Resurfacing\$950,000
- Water Quality Program\$400,000
- La Paz Open Space Riparian Habitat\$1.70 million

Standard & Poor's Upgrades City's Credit Rating

While credit downgrades and even bankruptcies seem to be the tale of many businesses and governments during this severe recession, a nationally recognized rating agency recently issued a ratings upgrade for Laguna Hills. After a recent review of the City's financial condition and budget plans, Standard & Poor's upgraded the AA- rating on the City's outstanding 2003 Certificates of Participation (municipal bonds) to AA+. This upgrade means an implied AAA rating for the City, which is the highest attainable rating. In the past, Standard & Poor's has noted that the City's general creditworthiness reflects factors such as "participation in the greater Orange County economy", "above-average wealth and income indicators", and "very strong financial management and fiscal policies." In their latest analysis, Standard & Poor's commented, "... the City's finances are, in our view, very strong." They also commented about the City's budget plans that, "these measures put the city in a strong position to address potential financial problems."

Budget Reductions Across the Board:

	2008-09 OPERATING BUDGET	2009-10 OPERATING BUDGET	DOLLAR DECREASE	PERCENTAGE DECREASE
Council/Manager	1,269,860	1,187,032	(82,828)	-7%
City Clerk	392,462	367,157	(25,305)	-6%
Administrative Services	1,708,303	1,330,032	(378,271)	-22%
Information Technology	225,622	197,796	(27,826)	-12%
Community Development	1,121,672	1,098,150	(23,522)	-2%
Public Services	4,483,637	4,000,738	(482,899)	-11%
Community Services	1,948,389	1,647,838	(300,551)	-15%
Public Safety	6,748,249	6,646,226	(102,023)	-2%
Totals	\$ 17,898,194	\$ 16,474,969	\$ (1,423,225)	-8%

ENVIRONMENT



Green Thumb, Blue Ocean

As fall quickly approaches we're often tempted to bring back green lawns and spruce up our yards with chemicals, fertilizers and lots of water.

While not seeming like a dangerous combination the fertilizers and chemicals that enhance our yards can get carried into creeks and bays through excessive watering. Once in these bodies of water, the fertilizers cause algae and other plants to grow which steals oxygen from marine life. This struggle for oxygen makes their basic existence a challenge and can lead to smaller populations of some species. Fertilizers and plant food should be applied to lawns and plants only when the weather forecast is sunny without a chance of rain and the area should **not** be watered after application.

Even in times when fertilizers are not in use, excessive watering can hurt more than just your wallet. Streams of excessive water can carry dirt, grass clippings and other pollutants into our waterways causing more pollution and hurting marine life. Watering should be only done once the soil is checked for moisture below the surface and seems almost dry; this will be different for every yard. For more information on how to adjust your water schedule go to www.bewaterwise.com.

Yards can be maintained by observing a few simple rules

- Don't water when you're planning on placing fertilizer on your yard.
- Before watering check the soil moisture level below the surface, it should be almost dry before watering.
- Water early in the morning or in the evening to avoid evaporation.
- Set irrigation timers to reflect seasonal water needs, i.e. less in the winter and more in the summer.
- Adjust your irrigation schedule by using the water index at www.bewaterwise.com.
- Replace your landscape with native plants that require less water.



ENVIRONMENT

Cleaning Your Plate ... As Well As Landfills

Less and less of what we used to consider "trash" is going to the landfills. Now even food waste is no longer destined for the dump. The City of Laguna Hills has proudly partnered with CR&R Waste Services to launch the first food scrap recycling program in South Orange County. This is a yearlong pilot program that began on July 1st, 2009 and has 23 Laguna Hills restaurants participating. Restaurants divert food scraps from dumpsters where trash is sent to the landfill. Instead the food scraps will be used to create compost for landscaping and other agricultural applications.

While the State of California's Integrated Waste Management Board requires that Cities divert 50 percent of their waste from landfills, Laguna Hills is ahead of this requirement. In 2008 the City of Laguna Hills had a diversion rate of 59 percent and expects this number to be even higher in 2009 thanks to this new and innovative food waste recycling program.

Keeping Tabs on the Tap

As we enter the rainy season, there is a tendency to forget about the need to conserve water. However we're still in the middle of a major drought and both the Moulton Niguel Water District and the El Toro Water District have water regulations in effect. Moulton Niguel Water District is currently under a Level 2 "water alert" and El Toro Water District is currently under a level 1 "water alert." Both district alert levels require customers to water no more than three days per week for a maximum of 15 minutes per hose per day. The water scheduling for Laguna Hills is Tuesday, Friday and Saturday or Sunday.

Follow these water saving tips to be water-wise:

- Shorten your shower time. Even a 1 or 2 minute reduction could save up to 700 gallons per month.
- Run only full loads in the washing machine and dishwasher. This could save anywhere from 300-800 gallons per month.
- Water your lawn only when necessary. When you step on your grass and it springs back when you lift your foot, it doesn't need water. This could save anywhere from 750-1500 gallons per month.

You can do your part to keep our waters clean!

The City of Laguna Hills is hosting an event as part of the 13th annual Inner-Coastal Watershed Clean-Up Day. Families, Volunteer Groups, and Residents are invited to come out and do their part to keep our creeks, watersheds, and trails preserved for generations to come.

The event is being held at the Laguna Hills Community Center on Saturday September 19, 2009 from 8am-Noon. For more information contact the City of Laguna Hills Public Services Department at (949) 707-2657.

Saturday, September 19, 2009
Laguna Hills Community Center
25555 Alicia Pkwy
Laguna Hills, CA 92653

