

2.2.4 Community Character and Cohesion

The following section is based on the Supplemental Community Impact Assessment (Caltrans 2026) prepared for the Project.

2.2.4.1 Regulatory Setting

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), established that the federal government use all practicable means to ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings (42 United States Code [USC] 4331(b)(2)). The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in its implementation of NEPA (23 USC 109(h)) directs that final decisions on projects are to be made in the best overall public interest. This requires taking into account adverse environmental impacts, such as destruction or disruption of human-made resources, community cohesion, and the availability of public facilities and services.

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an economic or social change by itself is not to be considered a significant effect on the environment. However, if a social or economic change is related to a physical change, then social or economic change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant. Because this Project would result in physical change to the environment, it is appropriate to consider changes to community character and cohesion in assessing the significance of the Project's effects.

2.2.4.2 Affected Environment

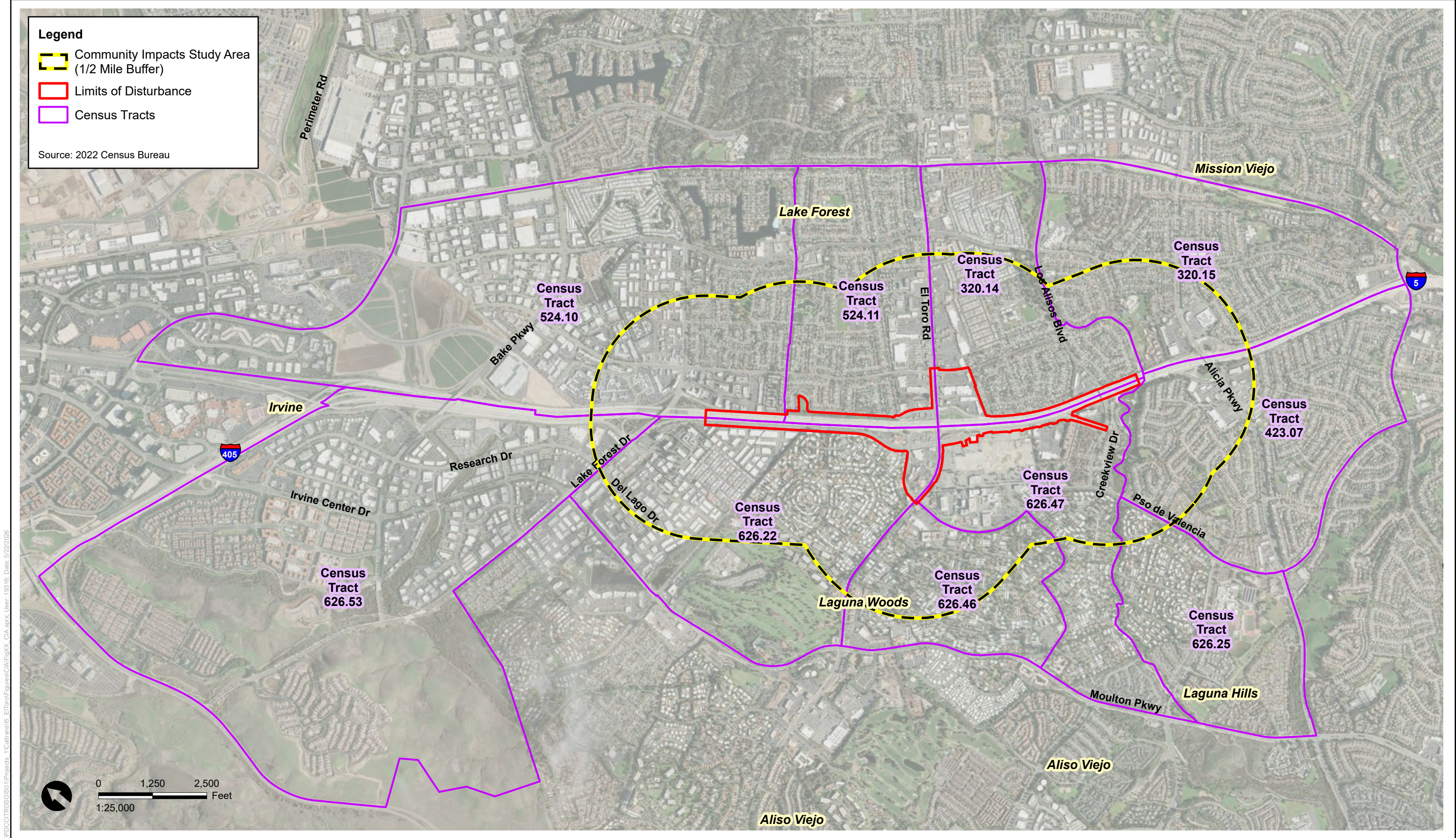
The *limits of disturbance* is the area that would be physically affected by primary or direct impacts during the construction period. The community impact study area is defined as the limits of disturbance plus a 0.5-mile buffer. As shown on Figure 2.2.4-1, the community impact study area overlaps with 10 census tracts within the cities of Lake Forest, Laguna Hills, Laguna Woods, Irvine, and Mission Viejo.

Community character can be defined as attributes, including social and economic characteristics, as well as assets that make a community unique and establish a sense of place for its residents. Community cohesion is the degree to which residents have a sense of belonging to their neighborhood; a level of commitment of the residents to the community; or a strong attachment to neighbors, groups, and institutions, usually as a result of continued association over time (Caltrans 2011).

The demographics of the community impact study area's population, housing characteristics, and economic conditions and trends have been evaluated because they influence the character and cohesion of a community. The longer residents have lived within their community and the more homogenous the population, it can be assumed that the level of cohesion and character would be stronger in these communities than those that have a transient population with largely different social and economic backgrounds (i.e., age, ethnicity, and income).

A community's characteristics can be described by demographic information, including population size, age composition, ethnicity, and household characteristics. This section describes the existing community characteristics of the community impact study area and its associated census tracts.

Census tracts were used because they are the most complete dataset for the level of detail required to analyze the surrounding demographic and socioeconomic character generally associated with the community impact study area. Census tracts are also used to incorporate populations that may not be directly affected by the Project but may be indirectly affected by Project construction and operation. To assess the potential for the Project to affect community character and cohesion adversely or beneficially, demographic characteristics were evaluated utilizing data from the 2019–2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates (U.S. Census Bureau 2023a). The U.S. Census Bureau recommends using 5-year estimates when precision is necessary and when analyzing small populations on the tract level.



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Figure 2.2.4-1
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Community Character

Regional Population Characteristics

Population

Table 2.2.4-1 summarizes the population of each census tract within the community impact study area as compared to the overall population of the cities within the community impact study area and Orange County as a whole. The total population within the community impact study area is 54,010, which accounts for 1.7 percent of Orange County's overall population.

Table 2.2.4-1. Existing Population Characteristics

Geographic Area	Total Population
City of Lake Forest	85,846
City of Laguna Hills	30,921
City of Laguna Woods	17,342
City of Irvine	308,160
City of Mission Viejo	92,415
Orange County	3,164,063
Community Impact Study Area Census Tracts	
320.14	5,887
320.15	6,434
423.07	7,013
524.10	5,093
524.11	4,930
626.22	4,324
626.25	4,688
626.46	3,328
626.47	4,671
626.53	7,642
Total population of census tracts in the community impact study area	54,010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a (Table DP05).

Income and Poverty

The U.S. Census Bureau determines the number of persons living below poverty based on poverty thresholds, which differ slightly from the poverty guidelines defined by the Department of Health and Human Services. As shown in Table 2.2.4-2, Orange County reported a median household income of \$113,702, which is higher than the average of the community impact study area (\$104,730). The median household income for the various geographies varies greatly, with median income ranging from \$60,465 to \$169,543 for the county, cities, and census tracts. The community impact study area average has a higher percentage of persons living in poverty (10.2 percent) as compared to Orange County (9.5 percent); however, overall, California has a higher percentage of persons living in poverty (12 percent).

Table 2.2.4-2. Existing Regional and Local Income Characteristics

Geographic Area	Median Household Income (US\$)	Population Below Poverty Level (%)
City of Lake Forest	131,378	8.3
City of Laguna Hills	122,778	7.8
City of Laguna Woods	60,235	11.3
City of Irvine	129,647	11.7
City of Mission Viejo	136,071	5.0
Orange County	113,702	9.5
Community Impact Study Area Census Tracts		
320.14	77,891	22.7
320.15	169,543	5.6
423.07	141,430	7.9
524.10	109,113	4.8
524.11	145,445	9.6
626.22	60,931	14.7
626.25	73,036	12.0
626.46	60,465	8.8
626.47	75,559	6.2
626.53	133,889	9.9
Average in the Community Impact Study Area	104,730	10.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b (Table DP03).

Disabled Populations

As shown in Table 2.2.4-3, the estimated disabled population within the community impact study area (16.3 percent) is notably higher as compared with Orange County (9.3 percent).

Table 2.2.4-3. Existing Disabled Populations

Geographic Area	Disabled Population (%)
City of Lake Forest	8.7
City of Laguna Hills	10.9
City of Laguna Woods	29.6
City of Irvine	6.1
City of Mission Viejo	9.9
Orange County	9.3
Community Impact Study Area Census Tracts	
320.14	18.5
320.15	18.0
423.07	12.0

Geographic Area	Disabled Population (%)
524.10	10.4
524.11	10.7
626.22	32.1
626.25	17.0
626.46	22.9
626.47	17.7
626.53	3.6
Average in the community impact study area	16.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023c (Table S1810).

Age Distribution

Table 2.2.4-4 provides the age distribution of the community impact study area, the cities within the community impact study area, and Orange County. As shown in Table 2.2.4-4, 21.3 percent of Orange County's population is under 18 years of age, while 15.8 percent of the population is 65 years of age and over. In comparison, 15.3 percent of the community impact study area's population is under 18 years of age, while 31.5 percent of the population is 65 years of age and over. The median age in Orange County is 39.1 years old, but the median age for the community impact study area is older, at 51.4 years old.

Table 2.2.4-4. Population and Age Distribution

Geographic Area	Total Population	Median Age	Age			
			Under 18	%	65 and Over	%
City of Lake Forest	85,846	40.4	18,320	21.3	12,886	15.0
City of Laguna Hills	30,921	43.1	6,067	19.6	6,278	20.3
City of Laguna Woods	17,342	75	72	0.4	14,393	83.0
City of Irvine	308,160	33.9	66,883	21.7	32,414	10.5
City of Mission Viejo	92,415	46.1	18,613	20.1	20,682	22.4
Orange County	3,164,063	39.1	674,833	21.3	498,997	15.8
Community Impact Study Area Census Tracts						
320.14	5,887	46.9	1,154	19.6	1,182	20.1
320.15	6,434	45.2	970	15.1	2,069	32.2
423.07	7,013	41.4	1,540	22.0	1,370	19.5
524.10	5,093	45.6	819	16.1	1,209	23.7
524.11	4,930	39.6	1,041	21.1	818	16.6
626.22	4,324	70.8	78	1.8	3,213	74.3
626.25	4,688	53.1	881	18.8	1,727	36.8
626.46	3,328	73.9	54	1.6	2,719	81.7

Geographic Area	Total Population	Median Age	Age			
			Under 18	%	65 and Over	%
626.47	4,671	63.8	242	5.2	2,236	47.9
626.53	7,642	33.2	1,462	19.1	452	5.9
	54,010	51.4	8,241	15.3	16,995	31.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a (Table DP05).

Transit-Dependent Populations

As shown in Table 2.2.4-4 above, there is a high percentage of residents who are 65 years of age and over (31.5 percent) in the community impact study area, which is a strong indicator of a transit-dependent group.

Economic Conditions

Regional Economy

The regional study area used for analyzing impacts on regional economic conditions includes Orange County and the cities of Lake Forest, Laguna Hills, Laguna Woods, Irvine, and Mission Viejo. As shown in Table 2.2.4-5, between 2019 and 2050, employment is projected to increase by 2.7 percent in Lake Forest, 15.1 percent in Laguna Hills, 18.8 percent in Laguna Woods, 19.9 percent in Irvine, 4.2 percent in Mission Viejo, 11.9 percent in the county, and 14.5 percent in the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) region. The employment growth projections between 2019 and 2050 for Orange County and the SCAG region correspond with the projected population growth, which is at 7.8 percent for Orange County and 11.1 percent for the SCAG region.

Table 2.2.4-5. Regional Employment Growth Forecast

Geographic Area	Year		Percent Growth (%)
	2019	2050	
City of Lake Forest	44,700	45,900	2.7
City of Laguna Hills	19,200	22,100	15.1
City of Laguna Woods	4,800	5,700	18.8
City of Irvine	282,600	338,700	19.9
City of Mission Viejo	37,700	39,300	4.2
Orange County	1,805,000	2,019,000	11.9
SCAG Region	8,976,000	10,276,000	14.5

Source: SCAG 2024a.

Table 2.2.4-6 shows current industry trends within the community impact study area census tracts, cities within the community impact study area, and Orange County. The largest industries within the community impact study area are educational services, health care, and social assistance at 19 percent, followed by professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services at 17.9 percent, and manufacturing and retail trade both at 11.5 percent.

Table 2.2.4-6. Existing Regional and Local Industry Trends

Geographic Area	Civilian Employed Population (16 Years and Over)	Industry												
		Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining (%)	Construction (%)	Manufacturing (%)	Wholesale Trade (%)	Retail Trade (%)	Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities (%)	Information (%)	Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (%)	Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services (%)	Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance (%)	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services (%)	Other Services, Except Public Administration (%)	Public Administration (%)
City of Lake Forest	45,730	0.4	4.9	12.0	3.3	11.5	5.3	2.9	8.1	15.6	19.1	8.6	5.0	3.4
City of Laguna Hills	15,891	0.4	6.3	9.4	3.0	10.8	4.4	1.9	12.2	17.5	18.0	9.0	4.8	2.2
City of Laguna Woods	3,689	0.2	2.2	9.5	1.6	11.4	3.7	2.4	13.4	20.1	20.3	5.7	7.8	1.7
City of Irvine	156,021	0.4	2.7	12.5	3.3	8.1	3.0	2.8	11.1	19.6	22.8	7.8	3.4	2.3
City of Mission Viejo	45,592	0.7	5.2	11.4	3.3	9.6	3.6	2.2	9.3	16.0	22.0	9.0	4.2	3.5
Orange County	1,595,034	0.7	6.0	11.8	3.1	10.1	4.2	1.9	8.4	14.9	21.0	10.1	4.8	3.2
Community Impact Study Area Census Tracts														
320.14	2,734	0.2	11.1	8.4	1.0	13.8	6.8	3.1	5.4	11.9	15.9	15.9	5.4	0.9
320.15	3,076	0.2	2.1	14.9	2.9	10.1	4.2	1.9	8.9	20.1	24.7	7.2	0.7	2.1
423.07	3,403	0.6	6.9	10.0	1.3	7.7	6.3	1.5	10.2	17.8	19.7	11.1	4.4	2.5
524.10	2,723	0.4	3.9	15.1	2.1	14.2	6.4	5.0	7.5	17.3	18.3	7.6	1.4	0.8
524.11	2,789	1.8	3.8	14.1	0.8	12.5	4.6	1.6	7.0	14.1	18.0	9.3	8.7	3.8
626.22	1,344	0.0	1.5	11.5	0.0	12.1	0.0	0.0	12.9	28.1	20.8	4.6	7.1	1.3
626.25	1,935	0.0	13.1	1.6	5.7	18.5	1.2	0.0	4.1	21.7	21.0	7.4	4.8	1.0
626.46	612	0.0	4.9	0.0	0.0	6.9	5.9	2.9	9.6	12.4	19.3	18.1	19.9	0.0
626.47	2,109	0.0	7.2	9.9	4.2	13.6	9.8	0.0	11.3	19.0	11.4	8.5	4.3	0.9
626.53	4,570	0.0	3.0	15.0	4.0	8.4	1.8	4.2	15.9	18.2	19.8	5.8	2.8	1.1
Average in the community impact study area	25,295	0.4	5.6	11.5	2.4	11.5	4.7	2.3	9.7	17.9	19.0	8.9	4.5	1.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b (Table DP03).

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Employment

As shown in Table 2.2.4-7, the population of 16 years and older that is in the labor force within the community impact study area is approximately 57.5 percent. In comparison, Orange County has a higher percentage of people in the labor force at approximately 65.6 percent. The civilian labor force unemployment rate within the community impact study area is approximately 6.1 percent, which is higher than at the County level at approximately 5.3 percent.

Table 2.2.4-7. Existing Regional and Local Employment Status

Geographic Area	Population (Age 16 and Over)	In Labor Force (%)	Not in Labor Force (%)	Civilian Labor Force Unemployment Rate (%)
City of Lake Forest	69,452	69.1	30.9	4.6
City of Laguna Hills	25,597	66.5	33.5	6.2
City of Laguna Woods	17,270	23.0	77.0	7.0
City of Irvine	248,534	66.6	33.4	5.5
City of Mission Viejo	76,003	63.1	36.9	4.5
Orange County	2,572,232	65.6	34.4	5.3
Community Impact Study Area Census Tracts				
320.14	4,957	56.6	43.4	2.5
320.15	5,500	59.1	40.9	4.9
423.07	5,627	65.4	34.6	7.5
524.10	4,447	68.2	31.8	10.2
524.11	3,951	74.5	25.5	5.2
626.22	4,265	33.2	66.8	5.0
626.25	3,919	50.3	49.7	1.9
626.46	3,274	21.5	78.5	13.2
626.47	4,442	51.6	48.4	8.0
626.53	6,250	75.3	24.7	2.8
Average in the community impact study area	46,632	57.5	42.5	6.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b (Table DP03).

Business Activity

The community impact study area is highly developed and, therefore, contains many businesses and places that conduct commercial business. As described in Section 2.2.1, *Land Use*, approximately 30 percent of the existing land use within the community

impact study area is composed of commercial and services. Businesses within the community impact study area vary greatly and include retail, restaurants, grocery stores, recreational businesses, and medical services. Multiple development projects are proposed within the community impact study area and will include retail, hotels, and other commercial services, as described in Table 2.2.1-3 in Section 2.2.1, *Land Use*.

Fiscal Conditions

As shown in Table 2.2.4-8, Irvine generated the greatest amount of property tax and sales tax revenue compared to the other cities within the community impact study area, and Laguna Woods generated the least amount of property tax and sales tax revenue.

Table 2.2.4-8. Local Government Revenues

Geographic Area	Property Tax Revenue	Sales Tax Revenue
City of Lake Forest	\$27,887,558	\$17,712,071
City of Laguna Hills	\$14,094,582	\$6,363,490
City of Laguna Woods	\$3,739,872	\$1,266,887
City of Irvine	\$101,068,433	\$101,326,079
City of Mission Viejo	\$47,455,034	\$20,529,953

Sources: City of Laguna Hills 2025; City of Laguna Woods 2025; City of Lake Forest 2025; City of Irvine 2024; City of Mission Viejo 2025.

Community Facilities

There are 27 community facilities within the community impact study area, including 10 parks, two trails, one golf course, three places of worship, three schools (including two elementary schools and an early childhood learning center), two post offices, one city hall, one fire station, one hospital, one library, and the Laguna Hills Transportation Center & Park-n-Ride lot. These community facilities are shown in Figure 2.2.4-2 and are listed in Table 2.2.4-9.

Legend

 Community Impacts Study Area
(1/2 Mile Buffer)

 Limits of Disturbance

Community Facilities

- 1 - Cavanaugh Park
- 2 - St. George Episcopal Parish/
Church
- 3 - Laguna Hills City Hall
- 4 - Orange County Fire Station #22
- 5 - US Post Office
- 6 - Clarington Park
- 7 - Sycamore Park
- 8 - Mountain View Park
- 9 - Veterans Park
- 10 - US Post Office
- 11 - Ralph A. Gates Elementary
School
- 12 - El Toro Park
- 13 - Aegean Hills Park
- 14 - Laguna Woods Golf Course
- 15 - Lutheran Church of the Cross
- 16 - St. Nicholas Catholic Church
- 17 - Beckenham Park
- 18 - El Toro Branch – Orange
County Library
- 19 - Saddleback Medical Center
- 20 - Laguna Hills Transportation
Center & Park -n- Ride Lot
- 21 - Olivewood Elementary School
- 22 - La Tierra Early Childhood
Center
- 23 - Laguna Woods Dog Park
- 24 - Aliso Park
- 25 - Aliso Creek Regional Bikeway,
Riding and Hiking Trail
- 26 - Avila Trail

	USPS Office		Place of Worship
	City Hall		Hospital
	Fire Station		Trail
	Government Agency		Park
	Library		Golf Course
	School		

Source: 2024 Google Maps

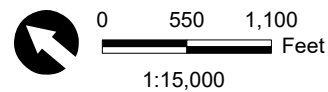


Figure 2.2.4-2
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Table 2.2.4-9. Community Facilities

Map ID	Facility Name	Address	City	Description
1	Cavanaugh Park	23782 Cavanaugh Road	Lake Forest	Park
2	St. George's Episcopal Church	23802 Avenida De La Carlota	Laguna Hills	Place of Worship
3	Laguna Hills City Hall	24035 El Toro Road	Laguna Hills	City Hall
4	Orange County Fire Station #22	24001 Paseo de Valencia	Laguna Hills	Fire Station
5	US Post Office	24001 Calle de la Magdalena	Lake Forest	USPS Office
6	Clarington Park	24701 Jorie Drive	Laguna Hills	Park
7	Sycamore Park	25101 Charlinda Drive	Mission Viejo	Park
8	Mountain View Park	24061 Dylan Avenue	Lake Forest	Park
9	Veterans Park	23102 Ridge Route Drive	Lake Forest	Park
10	US Post Office	24552 Raymond Way	Laguna Hills	USPS Office
11	Ralph A. Gates Elementary School	23882 Landisview Avenue	Lake Forest	School
12	El Toro Park	23701 Los Alisos Blvd	Lake Forest	Park
13	Aegean Hills Park	25366 Maximus Street	Mission Viejo	Park
14	Laguna Woods Golf Course	24351 El Toro Road	Laguna Woods	Golf Course
15	Lutheran Church of the Cross	24231 El Toro Road	Laguna Woods	Place of Worship
16	St. Nicholas Catholic Church	24252 El Toro Road	Laguna Woods	Place of Worship
17	Beckenham Park	24901 Wilkes Place	Laguna Hills	Park
18	El Toro Branch – Orange County Library	24672 Raymond Way	Lake Forest	Library
19	Saddleback Medical Center	24451 Heath Center Drive	Laguna Hills	Hospital
20	Laguna Hills Transportation Center & Park-n-Ride Lot	24282 Calle de los Caballeros	Laguna Hills	Government Agency
21	Olivewood Elementary School	23391 Dune Mear Road	Lake Forest	School
22	La Tierra Early Childhood Center	24150 Lindley Street	Mission Viejo	School
23	Laguna Woods Dog Park	23190 Ridge Route Drive	Laguna Woods	Park
24	Aliso Park	189 Avenida Majorca	Laguna Woods	Park

Map ID	Facility Name	Address	City	Description
1	Cavanaugh Park	23782 Cavanaugh Road	Lake Forest	Park
25	Aliso Creek Regional Bikeway, Riding and Hiking Trail	Lake Forest, Laguna Hills, and Mission Viejo	Lake Forest, Laguna Hills and Mission Viejo	Trail
26	Avila Trail	Laguna Hills	Laguna Hills	Trail

Community Cohesion

Housing

Household Size, Occupancy, and Composition

Table 2.2.4-10 and Table 2.2.4-11 provide information on average household size, housing units, and occupancy for the community impact study area census tracts, the cities within the community impact study area, and Orange County. The average household size in Orange County (2.90 persons) is higher than in the community impact study area (2.35 persons). The average number of owner-occupied housing units in the community impact study area (68.6 percent) is higher as compared to Orange County (56.4 percent).

The majority of the residential population within the community impact study area has moved into their current residence within the last 30 years. The largest number of residents moved into the community impact study area between 2000 and 2009 (16 percent), 2010 and 2017 (33.9 percent), and 2018 and 2020 (22.3 percent), which is similar to the trends of the County and the majority of the cities within the community impact study area.

Table 2.2.4-10. Existing Household Size, Composition, and Tenure

Geographic Area	Total Households	Average Household Size	% Owner-Occupied Units	% Renter-Occupied Units	Year Householder Moved into Unit					
					% 2021 or Later	% 2018–2020	% 2010–2017	% 2000–2009	% 1990–1999	% 1989 and Earlier
City of Lake Forest	30,246	2.82	70.7	29.3	10.4	19.3	30.1	18.3	13.8	8.2
City of Laguna Hills	11,490	2.64	71.4	28.6	7.1	21.3	28.7	17.5	14.0	11.3
City of Laguna Woods	11,797	1.46	71.4	28.6	8.4	23.6	40.7	15.4	9.1	2.8
City of Irvine	111,979	2.65	43.8	56.2	16.8	33.4	28.3	11.2	5.5	4.7
City of Mission Viejo	32,917	2.75	77.5	22.5	7.9	16.1	28.3	18.1	18.4	11.2
Orange County	1,074,654	2.90	56.4	43.6	9.7	22.4	30.1	17.4	11.2	9.2
Community Impact Study Area Census Tracts										
320.14	1,971	2.85	68.7	31.3	10.8	17.8	37.8	18.9	7.8	6.9
320.15	1,949	2.82	87.6	12.4	10.9	18.1	21.4	15.7	16.5	17.4
423.07	2,203	3.06	77.3	22.7	3.9	14.9	37.1	18.5	10.5	15.2
524.10	1,992	2.52	82.6	17.4	2.7	10.4	43.1	22.3	14.9	6.5
524.11	1,379	3.42	78.0	22.0	6.7	17.1	21.6	20.7	21.2	12.7
626.22	2,923	1.48	70.4	29.6	9.0	26.8	38.3	14.3	6.4	5.3
626.25	2,163	2.17	68.1	31.9	4.6	21.9	40.6	20.8	7.5	4.7
626.46	2,413	1.38	78.5	21.5	9.7	19.2	42.2	17.3	9.3	2.2
626.47	2,550	1.73	53.8	46.2	10.0	30.9	38.0	11.0	8.6	1.5
626.53	3,644	2.10	20.7	79.3	35.5	45.9	18.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Average in the community impact study area	23,187	2.35	68.6	31.4	10.4	22.3	33.9	16.0	10.3	7.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023d.

Table 2.2.4-11 summarizes the total number of housing units, occupied units, and vacant units within the community impact study area census tracts, the cities within the community impact study area, and Orange County. Orange County has a higher percentage of occupied housing units (94.4 percent) as compared to the community impact study area average (91.4 percent).

Table 2.2.4-11. Existing Regional and Local Housing Occupancy Characteristics

Geographic Area	Total Housing Units	Occupied Units	% Occupied Units	Vacant Units	% Vacant Units
City of Lake Forest	31,739	30,246	95.3	1,493	4.7
City of Laguna Hills	12,261	11,490	93.7	771	6.3
City of Laguna Woods	13,494	11,797	87.4	1,697	12.6
City of Irvine	120,368	111,979	93.0	8,389	7.0
City of Mission Viejo	34,360	32,917	95.8	1,443	4.2
Orange County	1,138,473	1,074,654	94.4	63,819	5.6
Community Impact Study Area Census Tracts					
320.14	2,036	1,971	96.8	65	3.2
320.15	1,986	1,949	98.1	37	1.9
423.07	2,347	2,203	93.9	144	6.1
524.10	2,112	1,992	94.3	120	5.7
524.11	1,410	1,379	97.8	31	2.2
626.22	3,174	2,923	92.1	251	7.9
626.25	2,310	2,163	93.6	147	6.4
626.46	3,048	2,413	79.2	635	20.8
626.47	2,934	2,550	86.9	384	13.1
626.53	4,005	3,644	91.0	361	9.0
Average in the community impact study area	25,362	23,187	91.4	2,175	8.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023d (Table DP04).

Race and Ethnicity

Table 2.2.4-12 provides the racial and ethnic composition of the community impact study area census tracts, the cities within the community impact study area, and Orange County. As shown in Table 2.2.4-12, the community impact study area has a greater percentage of the population that identifies as White (51.2 percent) compared to Orange County (37.7 percent). Orange County has a greater percentage of the population that identifies as Asian (21.7 percent) and Hispanic or Latino (57.8 percent) compared to the community impact study area (44 percent Hispanic or Latino population and 19 percent Asian population).

Table 2.2.4-12. Existing Regional and Local Race/Ethnicity Characteristics

Geographic Area	Total Population	Not Hispanic or Latino							Hispanic or Latino (alone) ^a	Total Minority Population
		White (alone)	Black (alone) ^a	American Indian/Native Alaskan (alone) ^a	Asian (alone) ^a	Hawaiian/ Pacific Islanders (alone) ^a	Some Other Race (alone) ^b	Two or More Races (alone)		
City of Lake Forest	85,846	39,757	1,438	133	17,459	350	471	4,228	22,010	41,390
City of Laguna Hills	30,921	16,830	339	20	4,850	47	21	1,962	6,852	12,108
City of Laguna Woods	17,342	11,806	122	63	4,110	40	98	271	832	5,167
City of Irvine	308,160	108,987	5,967	290	135,237	1,254	1,873	19,619	34,933	177,681
City of Mission Viejo	92,415	54,928	904	32	12,945	26	256	4,989	18,335	32,242
Orange County	3,164,063	1,191,304	48,224	3,634	687,982	8,779	13,810	129,850	1,080,480	1,829,099
		37.7%	1.5%	0.1%	21.7%	0.3%	0.4%	4.1%	34.1%	57.8%
Community Impact Study Area Census Tracts										
320.14	5,887	2,144	81	0	701	0	0	186	2,775	3,557
320.15	6,434	3,843	3	0	951	0	20	628	989	1,943
423.07	7,013	3,288	244	0	1,512	0	0	420	1,549	3,305
524.10	5,093	2,750	94	0	829	0	0	78	1,342	2,265
524.11	4,930	1,707	60	0	675	0	17	211	2,260	2,995
626.22	4,324	2,417	79	20	1,236	0	33	80	459	1,794
626.25	4,688	2,480	8	10	512	0	0	71	1,607	2,137
626.46	3,328	2,406	39	0	559	0	44	64	216	814
626.47	4,671	2,903	10	50	661	0	21	318	708	1,429
626.53	7,642	3,718	139	0	2,640	0	15	390	740	3,519
Total in the community impact study area	54,010	27,656	757	80	10,276	0	150	2,446	12,645	23,758
		51.2%	1.4%	0.1%	19.0%	0.0%	0.3%	4.5%	23.4%	44.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023e (Table B03002).

^a These populations have been incorporated into the “Total Minority Population” calculations.

^b “Some Other Race” is defined as all other responses not included in the “White,” “Black or African American,” “American Indian and Alaska Native,” “Asian,” or “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander” race categories.

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Summary

Community cohesion is the degree to which residents each have a sense of belonging to their neighborhood, a high level of commitment to the community, or a strong attachment to neighbors, groups, and institutions, usually as a result of continued association over time. Impacts on community cohesion generally depend on whether a project is likely to create a barrier or disrupt connectivity of a community. Either of these can be a result of disruptions in access or residential and business acquisitions. Community cohesion is often subtle and hard to identify; however, some indicators that a community has a high degree of cohesion are:

- **Long-term residents:** Long-term residents are likely to feel more connected to their community. Approximately 33.5 percent of the residents within the community impact study area have a residential tenure of over 20 years (moved in prior to 2009), which is comparable with the county's average (37.8 percent). Therefore, a moderate level of community cohesion is observed within the community impact study area based on this indicator because the average long-term residents living within the community impact study area is not substantially greater or less than the county average.
- **Households of two or more people:** A high percentage of single-person households tends to correlate with a low sense of community cohesion. Communities with a higher average household size tend to be more focused on family rearing, which increases community cohesion. The average household size within the community impact study area is 2.35 persons per household. Because this average household size does not indicate a high level of single-person households and is not significantly greater or less than the County's average (2.90 person per household), the community cohesion based on this indicator is considered moderate within the community impact study area.
- **Home ownership over rentals:** A high percentage of home ownership tends to correlate with a high level of community cohesion, whereas a high percentage of rentals tends to imply high mobility within the community. The average number of owner-occupied housing units in the community impact study area is 68.6 percent, which is much higher than the county average (56.4 percent). The average number of rent-occupied housing units in the community impact study area is 31.4 percent, which is much lower than the county average (43.6 percent). This data indicates there may be a high level of community cohesion within the community impact study area because the average rate of owner-occupied housing units is significantly greater than County averages.
- **Ethnic homogeny:** Clusters of populations with similar ethnic roots add to a sense of community cohesion. The community impact study area has a higher percentage of White population (51.2 percent) and Hispanic or Latino population (23.4 percent). The county also has a higher percentage of White population (37.7 percent) and Hispanic or Latino population (34.1 percent). Given that there are two groups that represent a significant majority within the community impact study area, this may also indicate a moderate level of community cohesion.

- **Seniors:** Seniors are active in their community and have the time to become involved. Such groups can have a high degree of community cohesion. The percentage of the population aged 65 years old and older within the community impact study area is 31.5 percent, which is twice as high when compared to the County (15.8 percent). Because the percentage of the population of persons 65 years old and older is significantly greater than the County, the community cohesion based on this indicator is considered likely high within the community impact study area.

Overall, the community impact study area shows moderate to high potential for community cohesion. Based on indicators of community cohesion discussed above, the population characteristics within the community impact study area do exhibit a substantial difference from these same characteristics for the County, as listed below:

- A median age of 51.4 compared to 39.1 (County)
- A median household income of \$104,730 compared to \$113,702 (County)
- A disabled population of 16.3 percent compared to 9.3 percent (County)
- A population that identifies as primarily White (51.2 percent) compared to the County's White population (37.7 percent)
- A minority population of 44 percent compared to 57.8 percent (County)
- An older population (65 years old and older) of 31.5 percent compared to 15.8 percent (County)
- An average household size of 2.35 persons compared to 2.90 persons (County)
- A rate of owner-occupied housing units of 68.6 percent compared to 56.4 percent (County).

Given the information above and the amount of existing community facilities, parks and recreational facilities, and limited vacant land within the community impact study area (see Section 2.2.1, *Existing and Future Land Use*, and Section 2.2.3, *Parks and Recreational Facilities*), a moderate level of community cohesion has been assessed for the existing conditions within the community impact study area.

2.2.4.3 Environmental Consequences

Temporary Impacts

Build Alternatives

Build Alternative 1

Build Alternative 1 would result in temporary impacts on community character and cohesion within the community impact study area. Construction activities associated with Build Alternative 1 would require temporary lane closures and access restrictions, which could result in traffic delays and temporary parking space reductions for local residents, businesses, and commuters, as well as indirect air quality and noise impacts.

Build Alternative 1 would also result in temporary impacts on two community facilities listed in Table 2.2.4-9: Cavanaugh Park and St. George's Episcopal Church.

During construction of Build Alternative 1, there is potential for temporary interruption or delay in accessing local businesses, due to detours and closures on local streets. Build Alternative 1 could also result in temporary disruption to existing on-street parking spaces, including those along Bridger Road that serve restaurants and small businesses. These existing on-street parking spaces could be shifted or temporarily reassigned to a close by location. Such interruptions to available on-street parking during construction would be temporary and would not cause a substantial disruption for customers or clients accessing local businesses or service providers. Build Alternative 1 would also result in the temporary loss of approximately 53 parking spaces from the four properties as shown in Table 2.2.4-13.

Table 2.2.4-13. Temporary Parking Impacts under Build Alternative 1

Assessor's Parcel Number (APN)	Property Name	Number of Temporarily Affected Parking Spaces
621-221-26	In-N-Out Burger	34
621-221-30	Laguna Hills Mall	6
616-033-02	Chevron/Subway	3
616-022-03	St. George's Episcopal Church	10
Total		53

Build Alternative 1 would result in temporary parking space loss at the In-N-Out Burger, Laguna Hills Mall, Chevron/Subway, and St. George's Episcopal Church. The affected properties have abundant parking, and the few spaces affected during construction are not expected to substantially impact local residents, businesses, or commuters. With implementation of Avoidance and Minimization Measure **COM-2**, a parking study shall be prepared during the final design phase to evaluate the extent of temporary parking impacts and identify feasible strategies to minimize disruptions during construction. Once construction is complete, the parking spaces would also be restored to the same or better condition than prior to construction with implementation of Avoidance and Minimization Measure **LU-2** (see Section 2.2.1, *Existing and Future Land Use*). With implementation of a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) (Project Feature **PF-TRA-1** [see Section 2.2.7, *Transportation*]), temporary traffic impacts during construction, such as access and circulation, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and parking during construction, would be reduced.

Build Alternative 1 would result in temporary impacts on community facilities within the community impact study area, as shown in Table 2.2.4-9, including Cavanaugh Park and St. George's Episcopal Church. Build Alternative 1 would require a temporary construction easement (TCE) of approximately 0.5 acre of Cavanaugh Park to support access and staging during construction activities. The half basketball court, playground

equipment, picnic table, and portions of the open grass area would be temporarily unavailable for public use during construction. Build Alternative 1 would also require a TCE of approximately 6,459 square feet from St. George's Episcopal Church during construction. As described above, approximately 10 parking spaces would be temporarily affected during construction. However, access to the church and its facilities would be maintained throughout construction, and church operations are not expected to be affected.

Community facilities listed in Table 2.2.4-9 would also experience temporary impacts during construction, such as an increase in noise, dust, and air pollution from the use of construction equipment. Temporary air quality impacts related to construction activities would be reduced by compliance with Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-9.02 (Project Feature **PF-AQ-1** [see Section 2.3.5, *Air Quality*]) and Section 14-9.03 (Project Feature **PF-AQ-2** [see Section 2.3.5, *Air Quality*]), which require compliance with all applicable laws and regulations related to air quality and the use of dust control procedures during construction. Indirect impacts on noise would occur as a result of construction activities. Temporary noise impacts related to construction activities would be reduced by compliance with Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02 (Project Feature **PF-N-1** [see Section 2.3.6, *Noise*]), which requires controlling and monitoring construction noise.

Impacts on community character and cohesion during construction of Build Alternative 1 would be temporary, intermittent, and would cease after construction is complete. Therefore, with implementation of Project Features and Avoidance and Minimization Measures described above, Build Alternative 1 would not result in temporary adverse impacts related to public access that would create a barrier or disruption in connectivity within the community impact study area.

Design Variation: Build Alternative 1a

Temporary impacts on community character and cohesion for Build Alternative 1a would be the same as for Build Alternative 1. Refer to the discussion above under Build Alternative 1.

Build Alternative 3

Build Alternative 3 would have no temporary impacts on neighborhoods, communities, or community character because no ground disturbance would be required.

No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, I-5 would remain in its current condition, and no improvements would be implemented. Therefore, there would be no Project-related temporary impacts on community character and cohesion.

Permanent Impacts

Build Alternatives

Build Alternative 1

Build Alternative 1 is not anticipated to affect population or housing in the community impact study area because no residential acquisitions would be required and no residents would be displaced or relocated. No permanent impacts on population or housing would occur under Build Alternative 1. Build Alternative 1 would result in the permanent loss of approximately 54 parking spaces from the eight properties listed in Table 2.2.4-14.

Table 2.2.4-14. Permanent Parking Impacts under Build Alternative 1

Assessor's Parcel Number (APN)	Property Name	Number of Permanently Affected Parking Spaces
621-221-26	In-N-Out Burger	3
616-032-08	Farmer Boys Restaurant	8
616-032-09	Rodrigo's Mexican Grill	14
621-221-30	Laguna Hills Mall	7
616-033-05	Miscellaneous Businesses	0 ^a
621-052-04	Miscellaneous Businesses	0 ^a
616-032-04	Raising Cane's	12
616-022-03	St. George's Episcopal Church	10
Total		54

^a A parcel requiring full acquisition will require relocation of businesses; therefore, the number of lost parking spaces is not identified for full-acquisition properties.

The permanent parking space loss at the In-N-Out Burger, Farmer Boys Restaurant, Rodrigo's Mexican Grill, Laguna Hills Mall, Raising Cane's, and St. George's Episcopal Church would not inhibit the remaining use of the properties or affect operational activities for residents, commuters, and visitors within the community impact study area. Permanent loss of private commercial parking lots would also occur due to full acquisition of two commercial properties (APN 621-052-04 associated with The Village Plaza, and APN 616-033-05 located along Bridger Road), which is further described in Section 2.2.5, *Relocations and Real Property Acquisitions*. All acquisition activities would be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (Avoidance and Minimization Measure **COM-3**). Some available on-street parking at the Bridger Road cul-de-sac may also be permanently removed. The on-street parking along the Bridger Road cul-de-sac is primarily used by businesses that would also be acquired; therefore, it is anticipated that the parking spaces would no longer be required after construction of Build Alternative 1. Additionally, the Laguna Hills Mall is currently planned to be redeveloped as the Village at Laguna Hills Project. With implementation of Avoidance and Minimization Measure **COM-1** (see Section 2.2.1, *Existing and Future Land Use*), Caltrans, OCTA, and the City of Laguna Hills will work together to ensure there are no

conflicts with the Project's realignment of Avenida de la Carlota and the development plans for The Village at Laguna Hills. The proposed loss of parking at the Laguna Hills Mall will also be considered in their redesign. Overall, it is expected that Build Alternative 1 would improve circulation on the I-5 mainline and local arterial streets, which would outweigh the loss of parking because of improved traffic conditions in the community impact study area. In addition, under Build Alternative 1, the proposed improvements would facilitate pedestrian travel by providing ADA-compliant sidewalks, access ramps, and crosswalks throughout the limits of disturbance at all curb returns and sidewalks being reconstructed, which would benefit community members.

Build Alternative 1 would also result in permanent impacts on two community facilities as listed in Table 2.2.4-9: Cavanaugh Park and St. George's Episcopal Church. Build Alternative 1 would require permanent use of approximately 0.59 acre from Cavanaugh Park. Permanent use of a portion of the park would remove several existing recreational features, including the half basketball court, playground, and picnic table, along with some of the park's open space along I-5. To maintain a sense of place and ensure community character is maintained, Avoidance and Minimization Measures **LU-4** (Section 4f-1) and **LU-5** (Section 4f-2) (see Section 2.2.3, *Parks and Recreational Facilities*) and Project Features **VIS-1** and **VIS-2** (see Section 2.2.8, *Visual Resources/Aesthetics*) would be implemented. These Avoidance and Minimization Measures and Project Features would lessen the impacts on the neighborhood surrounding Cavanaugh Park. Build Alternative 1 would also require a permanent partial acquisition of approximately 1,855 square feet from St. George's Episcopal Church which, as described above, would result in the permanent loss of 10 parking spaces. The permanent partial acquisition of the church would not inhibit the operation of the church. All acquisition activities would be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (Avoidance and Minimization Measure **COM-3**).

Consequently, with the implementation of the Avoidance and Minimization Measures and Project Features identified above, it is not anticipated that Build Alternative 1 would result in any substantial permanent changes to the community character or cohesion of the community impact study area. Therefore, operation of Build Alternative 1 would not adversely affect population characteristics, economic opportunities, employment, or housing availability, which directly affects local and regional growth and the community's character and cohesion.

Design Variation: Build Alternative 1a

Permanent impacts on community character and cohesion for Build Alternative 1a would be the same as for Build Alternative 1. Refer to the discussion above under Build Alternative 1.

Build Alternative 3

Build Alternative 3 would not result in any adverse permanent impacts on community character and cohesion because there would be no ground disturbance. Operation of Build Alternative 3 is anticipated to improve traffic operations, which could improve the character and cohesion within the community impact study area.

No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, I-5 would remain in its current condition, and no improvements would be implemented. Therefore, there would be no Project-related permanent impacts on community character and cohesion under the No-Build Alternative and traffic operations would continue to deteriorate.

2.2.4.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Avoidance and Minimization Measure **COM-2** would be implemented to minimize temporary impacts on community character and cohesion. Avoidance and Minimization Measure **COM-3** would be implemented to minimize permanent impacts on community character and cohesion. Additionally, Project Features and Avoidance and Minimization Measures **COM-1**, **LU-4** (Section 4f-1), **LU-5** (Section 4f-2), **REL-1**, **PF-TRA-1**, **VIS-1**, **VIS-2**, **PF-AQ-1**, **PF-AQ-2**, and **PF-N-1** would be implemented to avoid and minimize impacts on community character and cohesion. The full text of the above-referenced measures can be found in Section 2.2.1, *Existing and Future Land Use*; Section 2.2.3, *Parks and Recreational Facilities*; Section 2.2.5, *Relocations and Real Property Acquisitions*; Section 2.2.7, *Transportation*; Section 2.2.8, *Visual Resources/Aesthetics*; Section 2.3.5, *Air Quality*; and Section 2.3.6, *Noise*.

COM-2 During construction, temporary impacts on onsite parking at adjacent properties shall be minimized to the extent feasible. Construction staging and phasing shall be designed to limit the duration and extent of temporary removal of existing parking spaces. A parking study shall be prepared during the final design phase to evaluate the extent of temporary parking impacts and identify feasible strategies to minimize disruptions during construction.

COM-3 Caltrans shall provide compensation to affected businesses and/or property owners for the permanent loss of parking spaces in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended.

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