

tion makes it difficult to anticipate and plan for change. Notwithstanding, the City’s historic tradition of forward-thinking planning and innovation will be essential if the community is to preserve its distinctive character in a rapidly changing region. The chart below shows a demographic profile of nearby cities.

Increasing Automobile Traffic and Parking Congestion

Directly related to regional growth is the high volume of traffic and congestion along Laguna Canyon Road, the Coast Highway, and the city’s other major arteries. *Traffic congestion is no longer limited to peak summer weekends!* New toll roads have dramatically increased access to Laguna Beach for Orange County residents as well as out-of-county residents. The Downtown area and neighborhoods adjacent to Coast Highway experience congestion during peak commuter and tourist traffic hours. By the year 2020, Orange County Transportation Authority expects a 43% increase in the number of total vehicle miles traveled on freeways and streets within the county every day. Many people no longer feel safe walking or biking along heavily traveled roads. The

City and regional transit systems relieve some of the congestion, but opportunities for improving the systems exist.

Traffic congestion already seriously impacts Downtown businesses and residential areas as well as access to the shoreline and other local amenities. Without addressing the role of the automobile and public transportation in and around the City, continued economic vitality and resident and visitor satisfaction will be difficult to achieve. Although the automobile may continue to be the primary transportation choice, people will increasingly seek alternatives.

Maintaining a Vibrant Downtown

Although still a vital center of pedestrian activity marked by distinctive architecture, unique stores and crowds of tourists, the Downtown village suffers from traffic congestion and parking problems, vacant storefronts, and a lack of year round, resident-focused activities. Considerable competition takes place between resident shoppers, local employees,

REGIONAL PROFILE

Community	1999 Population	Population Growth 1990–1999	Population Projection 2000–2020	Median Home Value	Median Household Income	% Hispanic Population	% Asian Population	% White Population
Aliso Viejo*	30,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dana Point	37,343	17.0%	N/A	\$337,100	\$54,516	14%	2%	83%
Laguna Beach	24,325	5.0%	1.7%	\$463,000	\$65,382	11%	2.4%	85.7%
Laguna Hills	30,757	29.3%	-3.5%	\$239,300	\$40,489	6%	6%	87%
Laguna Niguel	57,836	32.2%	6.8%	\$305,312	\$68,738	9%	7%	82%
Laguna Woods	19,496	N/A	N/A	\$174,900	\$40,612	N/A	6%	90%
Irvine	133,700	23.7%	9.3%	\$294,700	\$56,307	18%	6%	74%
Newport Beach	72,623	11.0%	1.5%	\$500,001	\$60,374	4%	3%	92%
Orange Co.	2,775,619	13.5%	13.2%	\$275,743	\$56,352	29.7%	12.5%	55.9%

* Few statistics exist for Aliso Viejo due to its status as an unincorporated area.

Source: Welcome Home: Southern California Relocation Guide. Center for Demographic Research, CSUF. City of Newport Beach.

beach visitors, festival visitors and out-of-town shoppers for the approximate 1,900 parking spaces in the downtown area. The age, architectural style and size of downtown buildings vary considerably, adding richness and vitality to the area. Some vacant storefronts diminish the appearance of the downtown community. Finally, residents feel a need for more pedestrian oriented places in the Downtown to serve as a focal point for community activity and as a gathering spot for events and celebrations.

Balancing Residential Needs and Visitor Use

Tourism is a major industry in Laguna Beach and a significant source of revenues for financing public services. It has grown dramatically in the last twenty years. Most of the growth has occurred in the number of tourists who visit for only a single day or evening as opposed to tourists who come for extended overnight stays. Addressing the needs of tourism without sacrificing the needs of Laguna residents represents a significant challenge for the entire community as it considers how it will develop and prosper in coming years. Laguna Beach is both home to its 25,000 residents and a destination point for millions of annual visitors, who come for the beaches, art festivals, galleries, museums, restaurants, and unique shopping attractions. Residents take advantage of these amenities but also need different services and



facilities to support their daily activities. Some businesses have been driven out of town by high rents. Local businesses that continue to cater to the needs of residents feel threatened by high commercial rents. In addition, residents and tourists share many Laguna Beach parks and recreation facilities. All told the current volume of tourists and visitors diminishes the intimate character of the community and make it difficult for residents to drive and park about the city.

Resolving the Controversy Between “Growth” and “No-Growth”

Laguna Beach must continue to fund the high quality public services its residents depend upon, while heeding the concerns of those who feel that continued growth threatens the quality of life that makes it a desirable place in which to live. A limited tax base and economic reliance on tourism, an industry already in conflict with desired quality of life, suggest a need to pursue new economic initiatives. For Laguna Beach, the question is what economically productive industries are most compatible with existing community needs and values. There is anecdotal evidence that Laguna Beach is becoming a home to a new technology industry but whether this will fuel the kind of tax growth necessary and at the same time be acceptable to the community is not yet known.

Protecting Hillsides and Open Space

Although the cost of open space management is high, the benefits it has provided Laguna Beach are incalculable. Hillsides and open space make up fifty-nine percent of the total land area in Laguna Beach. Hillside living is a predominate characteristic which makes view preservation and tree management important issues. Restrictive hillside development standards were adopted in 1989, but the development of hillside lots continues. In the open space, user conflicts and tensions develop among cyclists, hikers, dog owners, and preservationists.