

LADERA RANCH

Orange County, California

Development Team

Owners/Developers

Rancho Mission Viejo
San Juan Capistrano, California
www.RanchomissionViejo.com

DMB Consolidated Holdings, LLC
Scottsdale, Arizona
www.dmbinc.com

Master Planner

EDAW, Inc.
Irvine, California
www.edaw.com

Architect

William Hezmalhalch Architects, Inc.
Santa Ana, California
www.whainc.com

Landscape Architect

Land Concern, Ltd.
Santa Ana, California
www.landconcern.com

Civil Engineer

Huitt Zollars, Inc.
Irvine, California
www.huitt-zollars.com

A scenic, view-oriented, environmentally responsible community that strikes a careful balance between preserving natural resources and providing much-needed housing, Ladera Ranch, which was begun in 1998 and substantially completed in 2006, is a 4,000-acre (1,619 ha) master-planned community carved out of southern California's vast Rancho Mission Viejo. More than 1,600 acres (648 ha) of sensitive habitat are being preserved as open space under a perpetual land trust, leaving about 2,400 acres (971 ha) to be developed with 8,100 homes and 1 million square feet (92,900 m²) of commercial space in six villages and three multiuse districts, with a relatively high average density—for production housing on a greenfield site—of 7.1 units per acre (17.5/ha). A central biofiltration system collects and naturally treats low-flow stormwater runoff, while a centralized computer system tightly controls irrigation, reducing water use. The community's final two villages, Terramor and Covenant Hills, have incorporated a wide range of pioneering green building techniques, making Ladera Ranch one of the largest concentrations of green-designed and -constructed homes in the United States and the nation's largest solar community.

Reflecting the theme of "neighborhood as amenity," Ladera Ranch is organized around a hierarchy of community, village, and neighborhood planning goals. Its soft infrastructure and governance structures are among the most ambitious and sophisticated in the nation. These elements—which include a communitywide intranet that links residents, local businesses, and social, civic, and recreational activities—have nurtured hundreds of groups, clubs, and events, resulting in a clear sense of community. Each of Ladera Ranch's villages has its own identity, which takes design cues from historical southern California building types; most important, the project makes a strong break with the region's 25-year reliance on stucco and tile as the predominant palette of materials. Villages vary subtly in street pattern, density, landscape, architecture, and lifestyle. Detailed design guidelines help balance the charm and appeal of traditional neighborhood design with the unforgiving demands of high-volume production home-builders. "One of the development team's most significant accomplishments," notes Marc Lamkin, director of community development for Rancho Mission Viejo, "was the ability to bring approximately 1,000 residential lots to the builder market each year."

Each 900- to 1,400-home village contains a core comprising a village club as well as other public facilities that may include a child care center, school, library, and village green. To optimize sales and create a diverse community, each village also contains a wide range of housing types at a variety of price points, including rental apartments, stacked condominiums, townhomes, and live/work units, as well as single-family products ranging from houses on conventional lots to garden and motor courts, and alley-loaded, custom, and semicustom home lots. To avoid a sense of separation between the villages, a four-mile-long





(6 km) promenade, open space, and activity corridor links residents with community facilities in their own and other villages. At the neighborhood level, all homes are located within two blocks of a neighborhood park or open space, and design guidelines specify architectural treatments for homes on corners, street trees, roundabouts, sidewalks separated from the street by planting strips, and other elements to ensure diverse, attractive, walkable neighborhoods. By shifting the focus of design and planning back to the neighborhood level, Ladera Ranch has demonstrated that authentic, diverse, well-thought-out neighborhoods can increase both sales and land and home values.



The community has been a grand-slam economic success for its developers, Rancho Mission Viejo and DMB Consolidated Holdings, LLC, achieving an internal rate of return of more than 50 percent. Ladera Ranch has raised the bar and set a new standard for the development of master-planned communities in southern California. Its final villages also have created a breakthrough model for sustainable, green-building practices; multiple national production builders that had never before taken on green-building projects are applying these techniques to various projects elsewhere.

Project Data

Web Page

www.laderaranch.com

Site Area

4,000 acres (1,619 ha)

Facilities

1 million square feet (92,903 m²) commercial and retail space

5,000 square feet (465 m²) retail space

8,100 residential units

Land Uses

residential, recreational, office, retail, conservation

Start/Completion Dates

1998–2006

Jury Statement

Started in 1998, Ladera Ranch is a 4,000-acre (1,619 ha), 8,100-unit new community carved out of southern California's vast Rancho Mission Viejo. Forty percent of its land area is preserved as open space, and the balance has been developed creatively in a variety of self-contained neighborhoods, one of which leads the nation in residential solar-powered homes. By employing best practices in planning and environmental management, this new community has brought about significant economic results for the developer, the homebuyers, and the region.