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## **Rancho Santa Margarita About to Get A Facelift; Three-Month Build to Affect Traffic Only During Work Hours**

**Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.** — The state's longest-named city is about to get one of the state's longest monument signs. Members of the Rancho Santa Margarita City Council on Wednesday voted unanimously to award a \$284,000 contract to an Orange construction company to beautify the city's busiest intersection.

Horizons Construction Company International will begin work at the three-way intersection of Santa Margarita Parkway and Alicia Parkway in early May, where it will build a 140-foot long monument sign. The Gateway Improvements Project is part of a seven-year Capital Improvement Program that was originally given the go-ahead last summer.

"When this came up at our budget meeting last year, we were all floored we hadn't done this before," Mayor Brad McGirr said. "It's long overdue."

The City received eight bids, ranging from Horizons' at \$283,094.25 to the highest at \$367,070.07. All four council members present voted for the contract.

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Other costs attached to the project bring the total to \$399,651.10; the City budgeted \$440,000 of Public Financing Authority (PFA) Bond Funds, which are mandated for use exclusively for infrastructure improvement projects within three years.

The build time is expected to be three months, beginning in May, with another three months to allow landscaping to germinate. The project should be completed in full by November.

The northbound lane closest to the sidewalk on Santa Margarita Parkway, as well as the bike lane, will be compromised from May to July during monument construction. It will be closed, as needed, between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. on weekdays only. There are about 55,000 trips daily through the intersection.

“I think it gives an identity to the community,” council member Carol Gamble said before approving the contract along with Mayor McGirr, Mayor Pro Tem Tony Beall and council member Mike Vaughn. “Our community is 30 years old and it’s looking 30 years old. With other communities coming along as the region evolves, it’s important for us to make meaningful investments to keep up.”

McGirr agreed, mentioning specifically the communities of Ladera Ranch, Talega and Rancho Mission Viejo.

“It beautifies the city and in doing so, make us all the more proud of the City in which we live,” McGirr said. “Ladera, Talega, the new developments at Rancho Mission Viejo are beautiful. We need to keep up. It’s like painting your house every number of years. I think it will look great.”

At its highest point, the slate finish concrete masonry sign will be 10 feet 6 inches. Facing Alicia Parkway, it will include six stone veneer finish columns.

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The City sought public input on the design elements included in the monument, and considered community feedback before finalizing the design. Sixteen native tree species will be planted in adjacent O'Neill Regional Park as part of the landscaping, which will also include drought-tolerant plantation, drip irrigation and up-lighting.

The project includes new street lamps as well. The center of the sign will be 47 feet long and about 6 feet at each end, rising in an arc at the center, where the city seal will rest over the city name. The center portion of the sign will be flanked by walls 48 feet long and about 5 feet high.

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