

**BUILDER**

# CALIFORNIA MPC WILL ENCOMPASS 6,000 HOMES FOR ACTIVE ADULTS

Rancho Mission Viejo breaks new ground in its approach to mixed-age living.

By [Jennifer Goodman](#)

*Rancho Mission Viejo*



Recent studies show that more than ever, retired home buyers prefer vibrant, mixed-used developments where they are surrounded by people of all ages. A new development in southern Orange County, Calif., is meeting this trend head-on with an innovative master plan that scatters neighborhoods for 55-plus buyers throughout a lively outdoor-focused, mixed-age community.

## **PROJECT DETAILS**

Project The Gavilans at Esencia

Location Rancho Mission Viejo, Calif.

Builder Variety of production builders

Developer Rancho Mission Viejo LLC, San Juan Capistrano, Calif.

Village Architect Robert Hidey Architects, Irvine, Calif.

Home Sizes 1,456 square feet to 3,004 square feet

Price High \$400,000s to \$1 million-plus

These “intergenerational villages” are the heart of the 23,000-acre Rancho Mission Viejo project that, once complete, will include 6,000 homes for the 55-plus crowd, making it one of the largest senior new-home communities in the state. The first phase of the 890-acre neighborhood called Esencia encompasses 12 residential neighborhoods and 840 homes. Eight neighborhoods are for all-age buyers and four—labeled Gavilans—are exclusive to those 55 and up. To promote interaction between the communities, there are no gates separating the neighborhoods.

Project planners are betting that this open approach will woo seniors who want to stay connected with residents of all ages, says Paul Johnson, senior vice president of community development for Rancho Mission Viejo.

“Instead of clustering all of the Gavilan neighborhoods together, we’ve spread them throughout the village,” he says. “And, we’ve created a diversity of inviting recreational and social spaces to be shared by both ‘all age’ and ‘active adult’ residents so residents can choose to become as integrated as they desire.”

#### **At the Ranch**

As the largest new-home community planned in California, Rancho Mission Viejo ultimately will provide approximately 14,000 homes and include up to 5 million square feet of nonresidential uses such as schools, parks and recreational facilities, essential services, and a network of trails and roadways. At build-out, the residential villages will occupy roughly 6,000 acres of the historic 23,000-acre working ranch that has been family-owned since 1882. Seventy-five percent of the land will be preserved for ranching, farming, and the phased formation of a large habitat conservation area known as The Reserve at Rancho Mission Viejo.

Gavilan builders for Esencia’s first phase include Shea, William Lyon, CalAtlantic, Ryland, TRI Pointe, Meritage, and Warmington Residential, with home styles ranging from modern ranch dwellings to farmhouse-inspired residences in myriad sizes from 1,456 to 3,004 square feet. Shea’s 133 Gavilan dwellings in Esencia are predominantly one-story plans with large open kitchens and covered outdoor rooms—features that appeal to active adults who like to entertain.

“They allow our target buyer to move down in overall size of home but not compromise, and in fact get the latest and greatest kitchen and other design features that are missing from older housing stock,” says Bob Yoder, Shea’s Southern [California](#) division president.

Esencia’s common areas include new types of recreational amenities, including a series of open-air rooms located around the site’s perimeter and connected by trails, some of which will include fireplaces, TVs, and restrooms.

“We like the opportunity to provide an active adult lifestyle along with single-story, lower maintenance living in a location where the customer can stay close to their extended family and even continue working at their current job,” says Yoder.

## *About the Author*



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