



City of Irvine 2017 Program Synopsis

Open Space



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Program Synopsis: Open Space

The City of Irvine is the largest city area-wise in Orange County at 66 square miles, with a total sphere of influence of 74 square miles. Its lineage dates back to the 1860s when James Irvine became part owner of what would eventually become the Irvine Ranch, a vast expanse of open space devoted to sheep grazing and field crops.

Since incorporation in 1971, when its population was about 12,500, the preservation of open space and the provision of abundant parks, recreation and public places has been one of the City of Irvine's top priorities. The City's vision strives to balance community development with the preservation of the natural environment. To this end, Irvine has committed more than 16,000 acres of open space through various efforts, including the City's current inventory of 40 local neighborhood public parks and vista points, and 19 community public parks. In addition, the 1,300-acre Orange County Great Park is being expanded with more open parkland in 2017. More than one-third of the entire city has been or will eventually be preserved as parks, trails and natural wild lands, protecting some of the most important and stunning chaparral landscapes in California.

A key component of Irvine's preservation efforts is the landmark Irvine Open Space Initiative that was overwhelmingly approved by residents in 1988. The historic initiative enables the City to preserve important conservation and open space resources through a program that consolidates large, contiguous open space areas under public ownership as phased, master-planned growth occurs in other areas of the city.

An integral component of Irvine's Open Space program is an outstanding trail system. Trails meander throughout the entire city, linking villages and parks and enabling residents to walk or ride bikes—and on some sections, horses—to distant parts of town. Hiking and riding opportunities abound as a result of the city's thoughtfully planned open space network. And more opportunities are on the horizon. As other long-planned villages are built, new parks become available, more links are added to the city's trail system, and other recreational possibilities are explored.

Today, Irvine has 362.8 miles of bikeways – 61.8 miles of off-street and 301 miles of on-street bike lanes.

Irvine Ranch Conservancy

To facilitate public access to the dedicated open space land, a joint venture was initiated in 2006 between the City of Irvine, The Irvine Ranch Conservancy, and Irvine Company. As part of that venture, many access and trail opportunities are readily available.

In April 2007, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger designated Irvine's Bommer Canyon, along with over 50,000 acres of Irvine Ranch Conservancy land, as a California National Landmark. The designation is the first under a state program that officially recognizes and promotes both private and public stewardship of natural resources for public benefit in the state of California.

The City's partner in managing and providing public access to Irvine's Open Space Preserve is the Irvine Ranch Conservancy. The Conservancy is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization created in 2005 to help protect the natural open spaces on the historic Irvine Ranch and enhance the public's connection to them, while helping partners and landowners with all aspects of stewardship.

The City and Conservancy work together through a contractual Management Agreement, under which the Conservancy provides specific, measurable land management and public program objectives to the City and its residents. The Conservancy offers a wide variety of free outdoor programs for all nature enthusiasts including hiking, mountain biking, horse-back riding and much more. For more information, visit irconservancy.org.

For more information on City of Irvine's open space program, contact:

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