



Irvine's Park System

The 100 best park systems in the United States include No. 7 ranked City of Irvine, and with good reason.

The methodology used for 2017 by the national nonprofit, The Trust for Public Land, includes the main criteria of park access (do most residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park?); park size and investment; and popular amenities.

Choices abound, from the iconic Northwood Community Park that includes a castle play structure along with the reflective Northwood Gratitude & Honor Memorial, to the Jeffrey Open Space Trail, which runs uninterrupted alongside Jeffrey Road for more than three miles from the I-5 to Portola Parkway, to the newly opened Quail Hill Community Center and its new playground.

“You have a wonderful mix of park types,” said Alexandra Hiple, research associate for The Trust for Public Land. “You have the preserves and open space; the Great Park; and great trail systems that run throughout the City as well as smaller, local parks. That is what we think of as an ideal park system. You are a really good example of that.”

Today's Irvine count is 19 community parks and 39 neighborhood parks, along with the Orange County Great Park, which is approximately 1,300 acres. Supplementing these numbers is the historic 1988 Open Space Initiative, which ensures permanent preservation of large areas of land throughout the City. About 16,000 acres of parks, trails and wilderness areas – an area greater than one-third of the entire City – will be forever protected (see related story) once build-out is achieved in about 20 years.

Bikeways and trail systems are typically the most desired amenities in communities throughout the country. For example, Irvine provides a network of on-street and off-street bikeways to encourage the use of bicycles as a safe and convenient means of transportation for the recreational user, the student biking to a neighborhood school, and for commuters getting to and from work.



Top 10 Cities

1. Minneapolis
2. St. Paul
3. San Francisco
4. Washington, D.C.
5. Portland, Ore.
6. Arlington, VA
7. Irvine and New York (tie)
9. Madison, Wis.
10. Cincinnati

Source: The Trust for Public Land, 2017

What is Next for Irvine

Here is a list of parks and amenities that are either being developed, close to an opening date, or opened this year and in 2016:

- Orange County Great Park: To complement the open, built section of the Great Park, the first phase of the 194-acre Sports Park opens this summer to complement passive recreation space now under development as part of new parkland totaling 688 acres over five years.
- Quail Hill Community Center (newly opened)
- Eastwood Village Neighborhood Park (opening fall 2017)
- Portola Springs Community Park (25 acres, projected opening summer 2018)
- Gateway Community Park (70 acres, projected opening 2019)
- Los Olivos Community Park (15 acres, projected opening 2019)
- Also, Trabuco Center was dedicated in February 2016

Resources list

- The Trust for Public Land webpage of Best Parks for 2017: [IrvineandBestParks2017](#)
- ParkScore for Irvine: [Irvine2017](#)
- Irvine's community and neighborhood parks:
<http://legacy.cityofirvine.org/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=14455>



- Irvine's bikeways information:
<http://www.cityofirvine.org/transportation/city-irvine-bikeways>
- Special: Watch ICTV's exclusive parks program:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lo2TsX4xqYk&feature=youtu.be>

Open Space – 1988 Voter Initiative

The City of Irvine's landscape is defined as much by its permanent open space as it is by its built environment, thanks to the historic 1988 Open Space Initiative.

Overwhelmingly approved by 85 percent of Irvine voters, the Open Space Initiative ensured the permanent preservation of large areas of land throughout Irvine as masterplanned growth occurs in other areas of the City. About 16,000 acres of parks, trails and wilderness areas—an area greater than one-third of the entire city—will be forever protected by the time of build-out.

Irvine's Open Space Initiative was, and remains in 2017, one of the most innovative, creative and ambitious open space and community development planning programs ever put before voters in California. A living document—an accord with the Irvine Company—is the foundation for Irvine's open space planning. Through the agreement, as master-planned development in designated areas of Irvine proceeds, the city receives ownership of corresponding areas of open space.

The city's network of open space and trails connects to other preserved areas north and south of the city, creating a vast system that links with such stunning places as Limestone Canyon, Round Canyon, Laguna Coast Wilderness Park and Crystal Cove State Park.

Within the city's limits, some of those resources include Bommer and Shady Canyons, Quail Hill (the only area of natural open space along the San Diego Freeway between Los Angeles and Camp Pendleton), Orchard Hills and the Jeffrey Open Space Trail.

Caring for preserved land is an ongoing endeavor that requires special expertise, especially as the City grows and the desire for people to experience the open space increases. To ensure our open space legacy endures forever, the City has partnered with the non-profit Irvine Ranch Conservancy since 2005 to manage the preserved lands and provide continued protection of this spectacular natural resource.



“Our partnership with the City of Irvine is one of our most important relationships,” says Irvine Ranch Conservancy Executive Director Michael O’Connell. “Irvine’s strong commitment to its natural open space, and our ability to bring preservation and community participation to the land, will ensure that these extraordinary places remain healthy and accessible for generations.”

Irvine’s preserved open space is managed primarily as a habitat for wildlife, including sustainable and compatible recreation such as hiking, mountain biking, and trail running. The Conservancy works together with the City to grow public involvement and appreciation for the preserve through public events and volunteer opportunities. Most of the recreation programs on the preserve are led by volunteer community members.

For information and access to the open land, go to: <http://letsgooutside.org/explore/iosp/>