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# of Orange County

3rd  
Edition

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## Meet the Mayors of Orange County

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**Kay Coop**  
Founder / Publisher



This is our third edition of *Meet the Mayors of Orange County*, which we publish annually in October. The quality of communities are directly related to the quality of the leadership. The brief articles herein are an introduction and the city websites are included in the mastheads. If you missed the previous issues, please visit our website [www.schoolnewsrollcall.com](http://www.schoolnewsrollcall.com).

Thank you for including this edition among your reading choices. If you would like to receive future issues emailed to you, please sign-up on our website.



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## City of Aliso Viejo

12 Journey Ste. 100, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656 • 949/425-2500 • [avcity.org](http://avcity.org)

# A Commitment to Service



**Richard Hurt**  
Mayor

The City of Aliso Viejo is a thriving place to live, work, and play in south Orange County. I am honored to have the opportunity to serve as Mayor and to continue building upon the strong foundations of our community alongside my fellow Council Members.

I believe that community is strengthened through service, and I am grateful to represent the City on various regional boards and committees. As a longtime community volunteer, I am also humbled by the spirit of volunteerism I see from our residents.

We are a community that gives back, through clean-up days, blood drives, supporting our youth, and more. In 2021, the City of Aliso Viejo held the grand opening of the historic Aliso Viejo Ranch, and we have since donated hundreds of pounds of fresh produce from our working farm to local food programs for those in need.

While the City continues providing a structure of support for our residents, we also strive to foster growth for local businesses. One of the biggest projects currently taking place is the remodeling of The Commons shopping center, a major focal point in our community. With this project and others throughout Aliso Viejo, we have seen several new businesses locate their operations here as we live up to our reputation as a business-friendly city.

I'm excited to see what the bright future holds for Aliso Viejo, and I'm proud to continue my service and commitment to the City. On behalf of the City Council, I welcome you to visit Aliso Viejo and see everything we have to offer.

## City of Anaheim

200 S. Anaheim Blvd., Anaheim, CA 92805 • 714/765-4311 • [anaheim.net](http://anaheim.net)

# We Are Anaheim



**Ashleigh Aitken**  
Mayor

It's a new day in Anaheim, and I'm proud to play a leading role as the city's first female mayor in Anaheim's rich 165-year history.

Since joining the City Council in December, I've remained committed to restoring confidence in our city while leading the effort for commonsense government reforms that enhance transparency.

While there's much work ahead, our residents, neighborhoods and businesses remain our top priority.

I'm committed to ensuring residents have access to the services they need and deserve.

One of my first initiatives as mayor was to expand hours and days at Anaheim's libraries. Earlier this year, we increased daily access to libraries in the east, central and west parts of our city. Families can now visit a library in our city any day of the week, no matter where they live.

We've also expanded our partnership with schools to bring afterschool community use of fields at Trident Education Center, South Junior High School and Sycamore Junior High School. The fields at all three schools are set to be used for youth sports, while Sycamore Junior High also will be used as general park space.

We're also hiring more firefighters and police to keep our community safe and to further reduce response times when our residents and businesses need us. We're able to do this thanks to a record economic recovery driven by the 25 million yearly visitors making their return to Anaheim's theme parks, convention center and other attractions.

For the 12 months through June, Anaheim saw a record \$184 million in visitor hotel revenue. It's visitor spending like this that's allowing us to focus our daily efforts on police, fire, parks, community centers, affordable housing and homeless outreach.

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[aesd.org/OnlineAcademy](http://aesd.org/OnlineAcademy)



## City of Brea

1 Civic Center Circle, Brea, CA 92821 • 714/990-7600 • [cityofbrea.net](http://cityofbrea.net)

# Brea Offers Something for Everyone



**Marty Simonoff**  
Mayor

Whether you live, work, or visit the City of Brea, we gladly welcome you! I'm Marty Simonoff, proudly serving as Brea's Mayor this year. Brea's long been recognized for its vision and innovation. We pride ourselves in offering various programs, services, destination shopping, dining, art, and plenty of places to have fun.

There are a variety of shopping, dining, and entertainment venues in Brea to please all. Soon, a large-scale project will begin construction to complement our vast options. The Brea Mall's redevelopment project was approved this year by the City Council. It is a mixed-use project encompassing the

Southwest Mall property. It includes demolishing the vacant Sears building and constructing an outdoor retail court with gathering spaces, a new fitness center, and a 380-unit apartment building.

If you enjoy the outdoors, Brea has 22 parks and recreational facilities. These include a renovated Skate Park, Sports Park, a historic swimming facility, municipal golf courses, and The Tracks at Brea Trail. Brea also offers art and cultural amenities. Proud of our reputation as one of North Orange County's premiere cultural venues, Brea hosts live performing arts at the Curtis Theatre, a 190-piece Arts in Public Places outdoor sculpture collection, and an Art Gallery.

Brea strives to provide the best experiences for all who visit, work, and live here. Learn more about the community, what we've accomplished, and what's to come by watching this year's State of the City. It was presented virtually, offering everyone the opportunity to learn about Brea. I invite you to visit [cityofbrea.net](http://cityofbrea.net) to view it and find more city-related information.

## City of Buena Park

6650 Beach Blvd., Buena Park, CA 90622 • 714/562-3500 • [buenapark.com](http://buenapark.com)

# Proudly Serving the Community



**Arthur C. Brown**  
Mayor

Art Brown was first elected to office in 1990 and is Buena Park's most senior member of the City Council. Art has served as Mayor in 1993, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2010, 2015, and 2019. This year, Art is serving his eighth term as Mayor.

Mayor Brown was raised locally and attended schools in Long Beach. Art served our country in the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps, and received an Honorable Discharge as Gunnery Sergeant. Art served as a police officer for 26 years with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Upon retirement, Mayor Brown began his career as an elected official by serving on the Savanna Elementary School District School Board.

Throughout the past thirty years, Art has recognized that being an effective Council Member goes beyond attending Council Meetings. Art has dedicated himself to promoting Buena Park's interest at the regional level serving as:

- Former Chairman of the Board of the Orange County Transportation Authority
- Former Chairman of the Board for Metrolink Rail
- Former Chairman Orange County Council of Governments
- Former Vice Chairman I-5 Joint Powers Authority
- Director of Southern California Association of Governments
- Director of the OC Waste Management Commission
- Commissioner of the California Peace Officers Memorial

Currently, Art was elected to serve as the President of Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).

Art has a true passion for public service. In addition to his previous service, Art is currently serving as a member of the Buena Park Historical Society, the Buena Park Noon Lions Club, and a member of the Fraternal Order of Real Bearded Santas.

## City of Costa Mesa

77 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa, CA 92626 • 714/754-5000 • [costamesaca.gov](http://costamesaca.gov)

# Stronger Every Day



**John Stephens**  
Mayor

The beginning of this school year coincided with my State of the City address, the theme of which was, "Stronger Every Day." Like the students and teachers who serve them, the City is faced with challenges each year, but we press forward each day.

To address housing challenges, the City provided \$1 million to 275 at-risk families for rental assistance and, in many cases, prevent eviction. Further, the City granted \$975,000 to Families Forward for the Bungalows housing project to provide housing to eight families. We've developed a partnership with California Legal Aid to advise residents facing eviction.

To address public safety, our Police Department underwent a culture change. Our officers are guided by the core values of Empathy, Professionalism, Courage and Integrity and the motto, "Honored to Serve." We also partnered with the School District to add a third School Resource Officer on high school campuses.

We opened Luke Davis Field as park space and through our partnership with Newport-Mesa, we are opening other school sites to create more green space.

We hired an outstanding operator of the Costa Mesa Tennis Center, who is introducing tennis to children on the Westside through Save Our Youth.

We completed over \$2.5 million in improvements to Jack Hammet Sports Complex for youth sports.

The Orange County Museum of Art is completing its first year of operation with over 100,000 taking advantage of free admission. It has become a key addition to the City of the Arts.

I'm proud to be the mayor of a great city that is truly stronger every day!

## City of Cypress

5275 Orange Ave., Cypress, CA 90630 • 714/229-6700 • [cypressca.org](http://cypressca.org)

# Cypress is Calling



**Anne Hertz-Mallari**  
Mayor

I am incredibly proud to serve as the 2023 Mayor of the City of Cypress, a city with a small-town feel and big-city amenities. Cypress' door is open to everyone. From serving seniors who have lived here for a lifetime and young families building a future to nurturing a business-friendly environment, we work diligently to deliver on a promise of progress.

With growth as our guide, 2023 marked the beginning of many new initiatives and the continuation of others that bring improved services and opportunities to our City. Our ongoing investment in developing first-class facilities and delivering efficient municipal services is a source of pride. This year marked the start of our Reimagine Arnold Cypress Park initiative to bring the City's longest-standing community park into the 21st century. The project will feature state-of-the-art sports facilities, upgraded equipment, and recreation spaces for everyone to enjoy.

Our investments don't stop there, as Cypress continues to be a leader in economic development. Our continued efforts to attract businesses were rewarded this past year with the opening of The Square, a development that has become a center of activity and economic revitalization. We have also invested in our existing business community, launching a new business-to-business gift card program and waiving fees to support their ongoing work.

Thanks to these efforts and many other initiatives led by City leadership and our exceptional staff, Cypress is a city that residents, businesses, and visitors can call "home." I am honored to have answered the call to be Mayor of this great City and invite everyone to visit Cypress!

## City of Dana Point

33282 Golden Lantern, Dana Point, CA 92629 • 949/248-3500 • [danapoint.org](http://danapoint.org)

### Focused on Planning for Prosperity



**Mike Frost**  
Mayor

As Mayor of Dana Point, a priority for me and our council is to continue Dana Point's reputation as a vibrant, world-class city. This year, we are focused on planning for prosperity.

When you look across Dana Point, you can see the exciting changes taking place, whether it is new housing and retail in the Lantern District, investment for redeveloping the harbor, and the Doheny Village plan recently approved by the Coastal Commission. When we plan, we bring about the changes that matter to our residents, businesses, and visitors, today and for the long term.

While we face some of the issues that other communities in California face, Dana Point is a safe, well maintained, and a compassionate, connected community. I am proud that in our annual community survey, Dana Point residents are satisfied with the services the City provides and feel Dana Point's staff and City Council listen and are responsive to residents. This is a good foundation, but we have more to do. We are wrapping up a general plan update to guide our land use planning decisions over the next 20 years as a blueprint for the future. Another priority for me includes a municipal code and building code review as these are vitally important to ensuring business is done in a simple, efficient, and purposeful way.

I look forward to working with our council, commissions, non-profits, and committees as we all strive to ensure Dana Point remains the best place to live, work and visit.

## City of Fountain Valley

10200 Slater Ave., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/593-4400 • [fountainvalley.org](http://fountainvalley.org)

### Proudly Serving Our "Nice Place to Live"



**Kim Constantine**  
Mayor

It has been my absolute honor and privilege to serve as Mayor of Fountain Valley – also known as “A Nice Place to Live” to nearly 56,000 residents. I remained active and engaged overseeing many pivotal and exciting milestones. This year, our City Council approved and received significant grant funding for Fountain Valley's first ever Universally Accessible Playground (UAP) in our Fountain Valley Sports Park. The City partnered with the Cities of Garden Grove and Westminster on a Navigation Center that will be a referral-based temporary shelter available to all 3 communities' unhoused population.

Both the Navigation Center and UAP will be operational in Spring. The I-405 Improvement Project is nearing its completion. Our 7 City bridges are now reconfigured to their fullest potential and have reopened.

Not only is FV a Nice Place to Live, but also to work & play. The City continues to welcome new businesses and strives to be a food destination in Orange County. This year, we welcomed MOI Cuisines, Urban Plates, and look forward to welcoming the first two Dutch Bros. Coffee locations in Orange County! Our anxiously awaited community events, to include the Crawfish and Lobster Festivals and the annual Summerfest were well-attended.

As I wrap up my Mayoral term, I reflect on the great accomplishments we achieved. Our City Council and City staff look forward to discovering new and innovative ways to deliver high quality services to our community so our residents, businesses and visitors may thrive and “Live their Best Life.”

## City of Fullerton

303 W. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, CA 92832 • 714/738-6300 • [cityoffullerton.com](http://cityoffullerton.com)

### The City of Opportunities



**Fred Jung**  
Mayor

Nearly 120 years ago, in 1904, Charles Chapman was the City of Fullerton's first Mayor. I am the city's 53rd.

We live in a time of extraordinary change. Advancements in technology have reshaped the way we live and the way we work. Whether we like it or not, the pace of this change, and the opportunities afforded to us, will only accelerate.

Fullerton has been through big changes before and there were those who told us back then to fear the future and slam the brakes on progress. Each time, we overcame those fears and acted anew. The cynics, the pessimists, and those who do not wish us well that have plagued our city will find no safe harbor in Fullerton's bright future.

By expanding into the global marketplace and encouraging global investment in the City of Fullerton, we have a unique opportunity to increase sales tax revenue, to market real estate purchases in our city and expand our property tax revenue, and to seek global development partners to modernize sections of our city - long ignored and underappreciated.

Working diligently to change the culture of city hall and our residents who have lived here for many decades, we are relentlessly promoting and marketing the absolute real amenities the City of Fullerton has to offer.

Everywhere you look — there is work to be done.

We have begun the journey to remake Fullerton. With hope and virtue, I trust those who share our promise join me.

Let's have our eyes fixed on the horizon and be brave enough to do the hard, difficult things.

We as Americans were built on that spirit.

And Fullerton was built on that promise.

## City of Garden Grove

11222 Acacia Pkwy., Garden Grove, CA 92840 • 714/741-5000 • [ggcity.org](http://ggcity.org)

### The World Comes to Garden Grove



**Steve Jones**  
Mayor

To say Garden Grove is an international city is an understatement. From our diverse neighborhoods and places of worship, to our vibrant food culture and traditional celebrations, Garden Grove is a tapestry of international people, places, and events. It's also home to well-known cultural hubs such as Little Saigon and OC Koreatown.

For the last 34 years, the city has maintained an active and friendly relationship with its sister city of Anyang, Republic of Korea. Anyang is a modern city, located about 13 miles south of Seoul with a population of around 600,000.

In 1991, the Sister City Association of Garden Grove was formed to coordinate a student exchange program with Anyang. Each January, the association welcomes high school students from Anyang for a one-week stay to visit local sites, experience American culture, and live with host families. During the spring break, the association sponsors Garden Grove Unified School District high school students to travel to Anyang and arrange their stays with Korean host families.

In 2019, to mark our 30th anniversary as sister cities, a delegation from Anyang visited Garden Grove to ceremoniously reaffirm our sister city relationship.

Recently, by invitation of the City of Anyang, a small City of Garden Grove delegation visited Anyang to commemorate their 50th anniversary of cityhood and meet with travel and trade representatives to promote tourism.

Garden Grove's ability to thrive in peace and harmony relies on our genuine appreciation, understanding, and welcoming of global societies and their many valued contributions to our community.

## City of Huntington Beach

155 Fifth St., Ste. 111, Huntington Beach, CA 92648 • 714/969-3492 • [surfcityusa.com](http://surfcityusa.com)

### Proudly Serving Surf City



**Tony Strickland**  
Mayor

I'm Mayor Tony Strickland and I'm proud to serve you as Surf City's Mayor. As a former State Assemblyman and State Senator, I can tell you by far, being Huntington Beach's Mayor serves as a highlight in my life.

I absolutely love Surf City! From our nearly 10 miles of uninterrupted, world-class beaches, to our picturesque pier, the prestigious Bolsa Chica wetlands, to our wonderful equestrian center – there is truly something for everyone here in HB. Residents and visitors alike appreciate our perfect weather, ocean breezes, and killer sunsets.

Beginning in 2024, I look forward to serving our community for the next three years as a Council Member, as my Mayoral term expires in early December. I look forward to passing the baton to Mayor Pro Tem Gracey Van Der Mark and I am confident she will do a fantastic job serving as the Mayor Huntington Beach in 2024.

Surf City has something for everyone to enjoy year-round! I hope you had a chance to see the Pacific Airshow! The holidays are fast approaching, so check out our website at [SurfCityBreak.com](http://SurfCityBreak.com) for the latest news and event happenings!

I look forward to collaborating more with residents, our business community and my colleagues on the City Council to enhance services and further define our priorities for the future.

## City of Irvine

1 Civic Center Plaza, Irvine, CA 92606 • 949/724-6000 • [cityofirvine.org](http://cityofirvine.org)

### We are One Irvine



**Farran N. Khan**  
Mayor

The City of Irvine is home to over 300,000 residents and we pride ourselves on being One Irvine – where we exist to serve our community in the continual pursuit of a City that offers an exceptional quality of life. As the second largest City in Orange County and growing, we are extremely grateful for our ranking as one of America's safest cities for the 17th consecutive year, according to FBI data. Our unique master-planned community continues to grow in residential and business sectors, while maintaining a commitment to our core values of empathy, humility, passion, innovation, and integrity.

May 2023 marked the beginning of the next phase of development at the Great Park in Irvine. A project area spanning nearly 1,300 acres, with more than 500-acres open today and 300-acres in the next phase of development, the Great Park is a park for all. The plan's initial phase brings an exciting array of amenities, including a world-class outdoor amphitheater, new cultural attractions, and expansive space dedicated to unprogrammed passive enjoyment and will deliver an expanding array of new opportunities to secure the park's place among the world's greatest metropolitan parks.

The City of Irvine is a unique and unparalleled city full of diversity and inclusivity. From award winning schools and open space to trailblazing sustainability goals – including reaching carbon neutrality by 2030 – Irvine is destined to thrive and prosper through its innovative approaches and commitment to community.

## City of La Habra

110 E. La Habra Blvd., La Habra, CA 90631 • 562/383-4000 • [lahabracity.com](http://lahabracity.com)

### A Caring Community



**James Gomez**  
Mayor

Proud to be known as "A Caring Community," La Habra and its 63,000 residents have a long history of public service and community events. Local service organizations, such as the La Habra Host Lions Club and the La Habra Collaborative, host public events throughout the year, raising funds to support programs that assist seniors, children, and families in need.

No matter the season, there is always something to do in La Habra. For example, the La Habra Citrus Fair in the spring and the La Habra Corn Festival in the fall each attract thousands of people to the City's downtown, both offering a family friendly and fun selection of carnival entertainment, dining and shopping choices. The City's "Fourth of July Spectacular" is the highlight of the summer season and provides La Habrans and visitors an opportunity to celebrate our nation's history and shared ideals. And certainly, no holiday season would be complete without the La Habra Tamale Festival, a celebration of family and friendship, and of course, delicious tamales! Not a week goes by without at least one event in La Habra meant to encourage a greater sense of community, whether it be a free concert or "movie in the park," a youth sporting event, or an event planned by a local non-profit organization.

Visit La Habra today and experience for yourself all that this wonderful community has to offer.

Mayor James Gomez was first elected to the City Council in November 2002 and is currently serving his fifth appointment as Mayor. As a life long resident of La Habra, Mayor Gomez is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the community. He is a dedicated volunteer and an advocate for La Habra's local business community. Through his actions, Mayor Gomez demonstrates the meaning of La Habra's motto, "A Caring Community."

The collage features several images: a street sweeper, a person pointing at a map, children at a table, two construction workers, a person in a lab coat, a group of police officers, and a group of people at an event. Overlaid on the collage are two award logos: the Orange County Business Journal 'EMBRACING DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION' Honoree 2023 logo, and the City of Irvine 'TOP WORK PLACES 2021-2022' award logo. At the bottom, the text reads 'Join Our Team!' with the website [cityofirvine.org/jobs](http://cityofirvine.org/jobs) and the 'CITY OF IRVINE REGISTER' logo.

## City of La Palma

7822 Walker St. La Palma, CA 90623 • 714/690-3300 • [cityoflapalma.org](http://cityoflapalma.org)

### Creating Unity In Community



**Debbie S. Baker**  
Mayor

Debbie S. Baker has been a resident of La Palma since 1974, attending elementary, junior high, and high school in the City.

In 2016, she was appointed to the City's Development and Circulation Committee (DCC) and later assumed the role of Chair in 2020. Additionally, she actively contributes to the community as a Block Captain for Neighborhood Watch.

Following her election to the City Council in 2020, Debbie Baker assumed the esteemed position of Mayor in 2023. In addition to her mayoral responsibilities, she holds crucial roles on various State and County committees and boards, including Cal Cities' Community Services Policy Committee, Orange County Library

Advisory Board, the Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District Board of Trustees and the Operations Committee, and an alternate representative for the Orange County Sanitation District Board. Additionally, Debbie serves as an alternate representative for the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority, Co-Chairs the La Palma's Business Engagement Ad Hoc Committee, serves as the Council liaison on the La Palma Community Foundation, and is an active member of the Community Emergency Response Team.

Debbie takes great pride in enriching the lives of La Palma's residents by organizing and facilitating various public events, programs, and activities. In 2023, Debbie was a recipient of the Woman of Distinction Award from California State Senator Janet Nguyen. Her dedication lies in fostering a strong and vibrant sense of community within La Palma, ensuring its continuous expansion and growth.

La Palma, a 1.9 square mile general law City located in northwest Orange County, has earned the distinction of being ranked four times by Money Magazine as one of America's Best Places to Live. The City takes great pride in its responsive municipal government and fosters a strong sense of community among its residents.

## City of Laguna Hills

24035 El Toro Rd., Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/707-2600 • [www.lagunahillscga.gov](http://www.lagunahillscga.gov)

### One Town, One Team



**Janine Heft**  
Mayor

Laguna Hills has a long and rich history. Dating back to the late 1800's, Lewis and Nellie Gail Moulton pioneered the settling of South Orange County and made their home in what is now modern-day Laguna Hills. Our equestrian community, Nellie Gail Ranch, is named after our famous matriarch and is known for its beautiful homes and estates.

I was elected in 2016 and I am currently serving my second term as Mayor. I also serve as Immediate Past President of the Association of California Cities-Orange County and as Vice Chair of The Toll Roads. My husband Carl and I have made Laguna Hills our family home for over nineteen years and are raising our two children here.

Last year, Laguna Hills High School won the state championship in Varsity Football, a rare feat that has only been accomplished by four OC high schools. When a citywide celebration was held where each player received their champion rings, I felt so proud to be the Mayor of Laguna Hills at this historic time. The LHHS motto, "One Town, One Team", really sums up our amazing city: whether it is honoring our veterans at our Memorial Day Race, celebrating Independence Day, or commemorating our ranching roots at Heritage Day, our whole community comes together just like a small town in the Midwest.

The highly anticipated 68 acres Village at Laguna Hills is currently under construction. When completed, it will feature a new hotel, office buildings, housing, as well as shopping, dining, and entertainment. Our goal is to make it a top destination regionwide, so come visit us soon!

## City of Laguna Beach

505 Forest Ave., Laguna Beach, CA 92651 • 949/497-3311 • [lagunabeachcity.net](http://lagunabeachcity.net)

### Welcome to Laguna Beach



**Bob Whalen**  
Mayor

Moving to the City of Laguna Beach in 1984 was an easy decision for my wife and me. The combination of good schools and a thriving artist community set in a town with such distinct character, history, beautiful beaches and kind, genuine people captivated us. Ever since our arrival, Laguna Beach has become not just a place we live, but a place we love and have chosen to call home.

Since 2012 I have had the privilege to serve the Laguna Beach community as a City Councilmember, and am currently serving my fifth term as Mayor. Given that we attract an estimated 6.5 million annual visitors to our nearly 8 miles of coastline, ensuring public safety is vital. Our dedicated Police Department, Fire Department and Marine Safety Department have consistently demonstrated their commitment to providing outstanding protection and service. Given that nearly 90 percent of our City in the highest-risk fire zone, fire safety is one of our top priorities. While the City Council has already adopted a comprehensive wildfire mitigation and fire safety plan, we continue to pursue ways to improve our preparedness measures to safeguard our community.

The strength of our economy in Laguna Beach thrives on the contributions from our small businesses, restaurants, hotels and arts organizations. Flourishing new outdoor dining areas throughout the City have infused new energy into Downtown and beyond. North Laguna and our HIP District are witnessing the emergence of unique shops and restaurants. A number of our hotel properties are undergoing renovations and upgrades and our summer art festivals continue to support local artists and entertain both residents and visitors to our City.

I am proud to share that the City maintains its prominent role as environmental steward through initiatives such as our Marine Protection Zone, Balloon Ban, and as a Plastic-Free City through our Neighborhood & Environmental Protection Plan. Our residents, City Council and City staff enthusiastically join me in welcoming you to Laguna Beach

## City of Laguna Niguel

30111 Crown Valley Pkwy., Laguna Niguel, CA 92677 • 949/362-4300 • [cityoflagunaniguel.org](http://cityoflagunaniguel.org)

### Fostering a Sense of Unity



**Kelly Jennings**  
Mayor

Mayor Kelly Jennings is a dedicated public servant for the City of Laguna Niguel, gracefully serving with care, compassion, and kindness. Elected as a City Council Member in 2020, Mayor Jennings has been a strong advocate for positive change and enhancing the strong sense of community that Laguna Niguel is so well known for. Her dedication to residents embodies the true spirit of public service and demonstrates a love for giving back.

Her passion for serving others extends beyond City Hall, as she actively engages with organizations dedicated to making a positive impact on a local and larger regional scale. As the Community Life Director for Mission Lutheran Church, Mayor Jennings not only oversees the church's operations but also plays a pivotal role in its work with six global and five regional charities. Additionally, Mayor Jennings brings a wealth of experience to her role, having previously served as the elected Director for the Moulton Niguel Water District and as a Commissioner for the Santiago Aqueduct Commission. These past positions have provided her with valuable experience and insights into the intricate workings of vital community infrastructure, empowering her to make informed decisions that benefit all residents.

Mayor Kelly Jennings' passion for public service, love for giving back, and genuine care for the well-being of residents have made her an invaluable asset to the Laguna Niguel community. Her leadership has fostered a sense of unity, as she works tirelessly to create a better future for all. Through her unwavering dedication and compassionate approach, Mayor Jennings continues to illuminate the path towards a brighter and more prosperous Laguna Niguel.



## City of Laguna Woods

24264 El Toro Rd., Laguna Woods, CA 92637 • 949/639-0500 • [cityoflagunawoods.org](http://cityoflagunawoods.org)

### We are Going Strong!



**Cynthia S. Conners**  
Mayor

2023 marks my 14th year on the Laguna Woods City Council and my fourth time serving as Mayor. I am honored to represent Laguna Woods on the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor Agency's Board of Directors and, in years past, have also served as our City Council's representative on the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority's Board of Directors and the Coastal Greenbelt Authority. I am a veteran of the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Corps and a retired attorney.

Laguna Woods is a predominantly residential community that prides itself on abundant open space. Our location just east of Laguna Beach, nestled against the Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, provides remarkable opportunities for our 17,644 residents to enjoy the natural beauty of South Orange County.

We sometimes say Laguna Woods is both one of Orange County's oldest and newest cities – the median age of our residents is just under 75, but we are third “youngest” by date of incorporation. Residents voted to form Laguna Woods in March 1999, eight months before Rancho Santa Margarita and two years before Aliso Viejo. 24 years later, we are going strong!

This year, the City Council is exploring the potential construction of a new fire station to improve emergency response times, as well as looking forward to celebrating the much-awaited opening of our first ever public library building. Other efforts have to do with fostering a local business environment that provides our residents with access to high-quality goods and services close to home.

## City of Los Alamitos

3191 Katella Ave., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/431-3538 • [cityoflosalamitos.org](http://cityoflosalamitos.org)

### A Mighty Little City



**Tanya Doby**  
Mayor

Recently named a 2023 Woman of Distinction by both the State Senate and Assembly, Mayor Tanya Doby first joined the Los Alamitos City Council by appointment in 2019. Seizing upon Mayor Doby's long history of community involvement and volunteerism, residents voted her to her first full term in 2020.

Along with her engaging leadership style, Mayor Doby has an impressive human resource and personnel development background with over 20 years in recruiting and staff development. As a champion and advocate for policies that are consistent, fair, and cost effective, the Mayor has put these skills to work successfully overseeing the rebuilding of the City's law enforcement team and the City's overall management structure. As she happily reported during the recent State of the City, the City of Los Alamitos has a fully staffed and funded public safety operation for the first time in almost a decade. Under her leadership, the City has implemented a number of aggressive new strategies aimed at ensuring that Los Alamitos remains one of the safest places to live in Orange County.

Mayor Doby remains focused on her primary goals of preserving and advancing Los Alamitos' public safety record and implementing creative initiatives to stimulate the local businesses economy. Fond of saying that Los Alamitos is transitioning from a small town into a small city, Mayor Doby is quick to point out that Los Alamitos is a mighty little city and a force to be reckoned with. This ethos has become increasingly apparent as the Mayor was able to secure over \$3 million in State and Federal grants for the City in the last 8 months.

To learn more about Mayor Tanya Doby, visit the City's website at: <http://cityoflosalamitos.org/321/Tanya-Doby>.

## City of Lake Forest

100 Civic Center Dr., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/461-3400 • [lakeforestca.gov](http://lakeforestca.gov)

### Enjoy the Magic of Lake Forest



**Doug Cirbo**  
Mayor

I've long been an amateur magician, but it wasn't until I was elected to the City Council in 2020 that I saw the real magic of Lake Forest.

Now, as Mayor, I use my weekly “Mayors Minute” video to pull back the curtain for residents and share the hard work that goes on behind the scenes. In addition to remaining debt free, Lake Forest is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for residents and creating a balanced community.

A key effort is the Southwest Lake Forest Neighborhood Improvement Project. Residents in the older part of town are asked what would improve their quality of life. The city then identifies and carries out projects to meet those needs. We have created green spaces, improved infrastructure, and enhanced public amenities. This ongoing work improved the area, and City Hall's relationship with the residents.

It is also no sleight of hand that affordable senior apartments were included in the new Meadows and Portola Hills developments. The City worked with National Community Renaissance on the Mountain View Community off El Toro Road. Altogether, nearly 200 affordable units are being added.

The City supported the business community by creating a buy-one, get-one gift-card program. Those who bought gift cards worth \$25, \$50, or \$100 received a free card of equal value to be used at participating Lake Forest businesses. The BOGO program was so successful that the City Council approved two encores – we're on round three now.

There is never a dry spell of Lake Forest's blend of natural beauty, community spirit, educational opportunities, and economic vitality. It is an honor to serve as Mayor in the city my wife and I have called home since 1986. Working together, City leaders and staff will ensure generations of residents can enjoy the magic of Lake Forest.

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## City of Mission Viejo

200 Civic Center, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/470-3000 • [cityofmissionviejo.org](http://cityofmissionviejo.org)

### Gold Medal Support for Mission Viejo



**Brian Goodell**  
Mayor

Mayor Brian Goodell was first elected to the Mission Viejo City Council in 2016. Since then, his deep roots, proactive leadership, economic development efforts and conservative fiscal policies have continued to enhance this community.

Mayor Goodell, who also served in the mayoral role in 2020, led the City with distinction through uncharted waters during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. He has continued to work to connect this community, preserve its open space and enhance public safety. Some of his most notable accomplishments include:

- Acquiring the Oso Creek Golf Course and open space
- Developing new parks and recreation facilities
- Enhancing public safety by adding more school resource officers
- Acquiring “The Mart” building to further the Community Core Vision Plan

In addition to bringing a wealth of commitment to this community, Mayor Goodell brings an Olympic tradition. He was a member of the world-famous Mission Viejo Nadadores swim team and became the first Olympic Gold Medalist from Mission Viejo, breaking two world records while winning two Gold Medals at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal. He was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame; UCLA Athletics Hall of Fame; Orange County Sports Hall of Fame; and the Saddleback Valley Unified School District Hall of Fame. Mayor Goodell also won the Congressional Gold Medal of Achievement as a member of the 1980 USA Olympic Men’s Swimming Team that boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

A resident for more than five decades, Mayor Goodell and his wife Vicki raised their three sons in this City. All are alumni of Mission Viejo High School. The couple has five grandchildren.

## City of Newport Beach

100 Civic Center Dr., Newport Beach, CA 92660 • 949/644-3309 • [newportbeachca.gov](http://newportbeachca.gov)

### Focused on History and Progress



**Noah Blom**  
Mayor

Mayor Noah Blom was elected to the Newport Beach City Council in November 2020, and is currently serving his first term as mayor.

Noah, a Newport Beach native, has a deep and impassioned love for the city. As a second-generation Newporter, Noah learned hard work and dedication from his parents, who owned a photography studio in Corona del Mar.

Noah left Newport Beach after high school to travel and pursue business opportunities in the U.S. and Europe. A chef-turned-restaurateur, his ventures and dealings gave him an opportunity to work with many diverse people and municipalities, learning the intricacies of government relations as he worked to open restaurants in vastly different markets. After being away for many years, Noah returned home to Newport Beach, where he met his wife, Marin. The two continued to open restaurants, this time focusing on the towns and cities of Orange County.

Noah and Marin Blom give back to the community through many philanthropic organizations and causes. In recent years they have focused on youth sports in Newport Beach, and in particular, aquatic activities in the ocean and harbor. Their work includes helping provide opportunities for children who do not otherwise have the means to participate in ocean and harbor activities.

Throughout his entire life, Noah has had a deep love and passion for the political process as a vehicle to achieve change and evolution in the world. He believes that the sidelines are for spectators, and wishes to fight for the history and progress of Newport Beach.



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## City of Orange

300 E. Chapman Ave., Orange, CA 92866 • 714/744-2225 • [cityoforange.org](http://cityoforange.org)

### Proud to Serve the City of Orange



**Dan Slater**  
Mayor

As a third generation Orange resident, I am honored and grateful to call this City home. In fact, my family can trace our roots in Orange back to the 1880s, around the time when the City was incorporated. However, Orange's history actually dates back to 1869 when Alfred Chapman and Andrew Glassell first laid out a one square mile town surrounding a forty-acre central town site. This center became known as the Plaza, which has become the symbol of our community. Today, the Old Towne Plaza still contains many homes and buildings dating to the early days of the City, including the 1923 California Bungalow that I call home. It is of note that Old Towne Orange was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1997, and is the largest National Register District in California.

The Plaza is just one of Orange's many unique neighborhoods that offer a great place to live, work, and shop. We are also home to outstanding K-12 schools in the Orange Unified School District, and first-rate colleges in Chapman University and Santiago Canyon College.

I care deeply about our current residents, but it's also important to protect our future for all residents, and that includes preserving our existing natural spaces, parks, and trees. On two Saturdays every month, I enjoy spending my mornings picking up trash in Santiago Creek or on the 55 Freeway. We are currently taking steps to restore and improve Santiago Creek, which runs through the middle of Orange and is Orange County's largest watershed, ensuring that we leave a lasting legacy for Orange families.

Although we are a city of more than 140,000 people, our strong values bind us together, and make what is a large city feel like a small town with a lot of Old Towne charm. We are interconnected and grounded to the obligation of serving one another and making the City of Orange the best it can be for our community.

## City of Placentia

401 E. Chapman Ave., Placentia, CA 92870 • 714/993-8117 • [placentia.org](http://placentia.org)

### Fostering a Secure and Flourishing Placentia



**Ward Smith**  
Mayor

The City of Placentia has nearly 52,000 residents who enjoy a close-knit, quiet community with great schools, wonderful amenities, and many exciting developments. Mayor Ward Smith was elected to the City Council in 2016 and reelected in 2020. He has been a Placentia resident for most of his life, and before serving on the City Council, he spent his career with the Placentia Police Department, eventually retiring as Chief of Police. Top priorities for Mayor Smith include public safety, investment in the Old Town and Transient Oriented Development Districts, and City infrastructure rehabilitation, including streets and parks. A robust infrastructure forms the backbone of a thriving city, and Placentia is committed to rehabilitating its streets, roads, parks, and buildings, ensuring they are resilient and capable of accommodating future growth. Understanding that green spaces are essential for a healthy community, the City Council adopted the Placentia Parks Initiative in 2021 to revamp all City parks to promote physical well-being and foster social interaction and a sense of community.

Mayor Smith believes that the Placentia Chamber of Commerce and the local business community are vital partners in the journey toward economic growth. These partnerships foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and job creation, helping the economy and benefiting residents. He believes Placentia's achievements result from the collaborative spirit of dedicated City staff, engaged community members, and supportive neighboring agencies. Placentia is a dynamic and strong community where public safety, revitalization, and economic growth converge. The City Council's commitment to collaboration will ensure that Placentia remains a shining example of a city that cherishes its past while embracing its future.

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City of Placentia

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KINDERGARTEN READINESS

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## City of San Clemente

910 Calle Negocio, San Clemente, CA 92673 • 949/361-8200 • [san-clemente.org](http://san-clemente.org)

### One Town, One Team



**Chris Duncan**  
Mayor

San Clemente has always prided itself on being a community of resilience, unity, and dynamism. This past year, however, our beautiful city has faced a barrage of challenges that have tested our collective resolve.

The year began with a jolt - a series of powerful storms and landslides that interrupted rail service. Homes were endangered, roads were blocked, and even our historic Casa Romantica was put at risk. In response, we sprang into action and rolled up our sleeves to repair, rebuild, and ensure the safety and security of our fellow residents.

We faced another challenge with an unexpected council vacancy. Recognizing the need for unity, we appointed a respected public safety commissioner and former police officer. Our goal was, and remains, to ensure that our city's leadership strives towards collaborative solutions to protect our excellent quality of life and away from partisan divides that hold us back.

As Mayor, I am incredibly proud of our city's response to these challenges. And we bounced back in a big way. This year, San Clemente hosted renowned sporting events, including the Rip Curl World Surf League finals and both the Professional Pickleball Association and Major League Pickleball finals. These events showcased our city's vibrancy and our capability to shine on the global stage.

There's a simple yet powerful motto that resonates with every San Clemente resident: "One Town, One Team." Our future is bright, not because challenges won't arise - they inevitably will - but because we've proven that when we set aside our differences and work together, there's no hurdle, or aspiration, too high for San Clemente.

## City of San Juan Capistrano

32400 Paseo Adelanto, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675 • 949/443-6375 • [sanjuancapistrano.org](http://sanjuancapistrano.org)

### A Rich Heritage



**Howard Hart**  
Mayor

It is a humbling and unique experience to serve as the Mayor of San Juan Capistrano, a city nearly as old as our nation itself. Founded in 1776, Mission San Juan Capistrano - the Jewel of the Missions - serves as the spiritual and cultural hub of our community. However, it is just one important aspect of our history. Even predating the Mission, the Acjachemen indigenous people maintained a sizable village in modern day San Juan Capistrano, known as Putuidem, which is replicated at our Northwest Open Space. We also boast the oldest continuously occupied neighborhood in California - our beautiful Los Rios Historic District.

Another feature of San Juan Capistrano life is our equestrian and rancho heritage. Whether you are a Western rider or an English rider, San Juan Capistrano is for you. We proudly boast of our title as Equestrian Capital of the West and look to solidify that reputation in coming years.

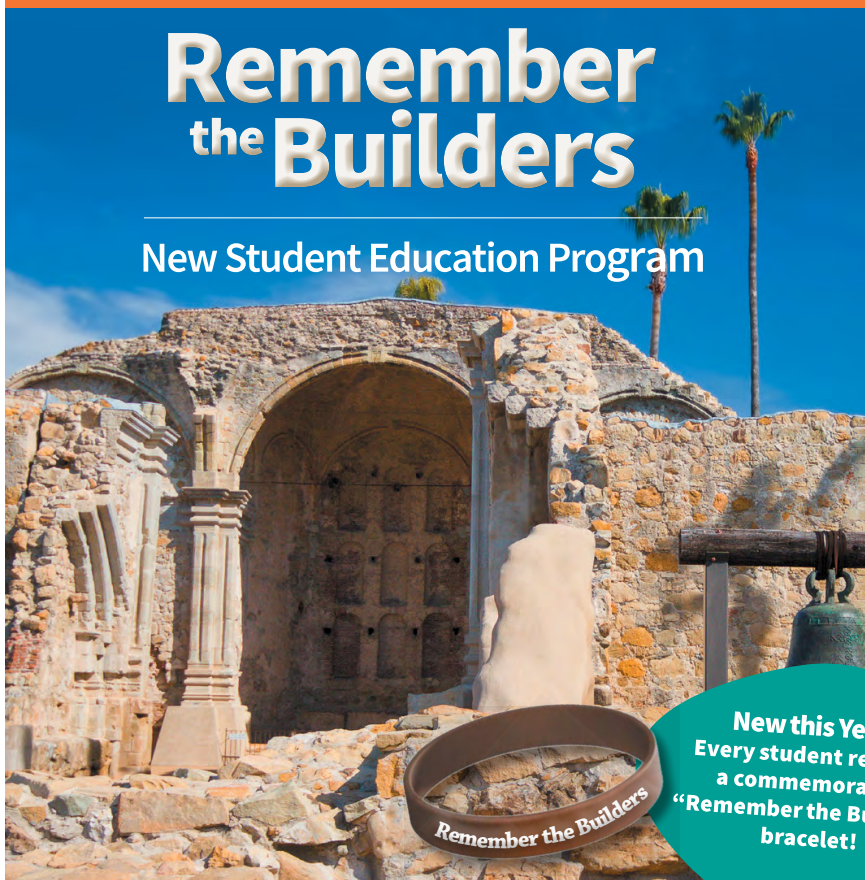
Our strong sense of history, our equestrian heritage, and our small but bustling downtown all combine to create a strong sense of community identity. The biggest challenge we face is to respect private property rights and a robust business environment, and to accommodate state housing initiatives, while maintaining the "San Juan Vibe."

So, while we welcome Ganahl Lumber, In-N-Out, and River Street Marketplace, we also have signed or are negotiating long term leases that will preserve our open spaces at the Ecology Center, the Rancho Mission Viejo Riding Park, and the Northwest Open Space. While we move into the future, our roots are firmly planted in our heritage!

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## City of Santa Ana

20 Civic Center Plaza, Santa Ana, CA 92701 • 714/647-5400 • [santa-ana.org](http://santa-ana.org)

### Making Santa Ana History



**Valerie Amezcua**  
Mayor

Mayor Valerie Amezcua made history when she took office on Dec. 13, 2022, as the first woman ever to serve as mayor of Santa Ana since its founding 154 years ago. The City of Santa Ana is a proud community of active neighborhoods, thriving businesses, culture, art and educational institutions. Santa Ana is the county seat and one of the most populous cities in Orange County, with over 300,000 residents.

Mayor Amezcua previously served as a member of the Santa Ana Unified School District Board of Education for eight years. She had a 30-year career with the Orange County Probation Department, retiring from her position as a supervising probation officer in 2017, and is a graduate of the University of La Verne.

Mayor Amezcua is a mentor, a bridge builder and a collaborator who understands the value of partnerships to the long-term success of Santa Ana's neighborhoods and community at large. Her top priority as mayor is to improve and enhance the quality of life of all Santa Ana residents, particularly the most vulnerable members of the community.

Mayor Amezcua has served on numerous boards and commissions, including the OC Human Relations Commission, the Board of Directors for the National Hispanic Business Women's Association, and the Early Prevention & Intervention Commission (EPIC) for the City of Santa Ana. Her family has a long history in Santa Ana and she is grateful for their support. Mayor Amezcua is a proud mom to her adult son, Mike Melendrez, and appreciates life every day with her husband, Sam Marin.

## City of Stanton

7800 Katella Ave., Stanton, CA 90680 • 714/379-9222 • [www.StantonCA.gov](http://www.StantonCA.gov)

### Honored to Serve the People of Stanton



**David J. Shawver**  
Mayor

It has been my honor and privilege to serve the people of Stanton for the past 35 years. I have been married to my wife Jennifer for 46 years while living in Stanton where I raised my family of five.

During this time, with the help of my fellow City Councilmembers, we were able to completely transform our town of "Community Pride and Forward Vision." Today Stanton is totally different than the way it used to be. We have new business and residential centers throughout our town, and it is not going to stop.

My family and I are active in our local church and local schools. This gave me an opportunity to volunteer with local nonprofits and community organizations. I served as President of the Cypress College Foundation and the Kiwanis Club of Greater Stanton while also volunteering with the Boy Scouts of America, the Boys and Girls Club of Stanton, the Youth Assistance Foundation, Orange County Inter-Faith Council, St. Polycarp Church, and many other worthwhile groups.

I currently represent the people of Stanton and Orange County by serving on the Boards of the Orange County Fire Authority, Ground Water Replenishment System, Public Cable Television Authority, Orange County Parks/Trails Commission, Orange County Waste and Recycling Commission, Orange County Sanitation District, Orange County Crime Lab/RAN Board, Public Cable Television Authority, and Orange County City Select Committee.

In addition, I serve on the Orange County Council of Governments, Association of Orange County Cities, Southern California Association of Governments, and Orange County League of California Cities. These opportunities provide me with the resources to assist all residents of Stanton and Orange County in providing their needed services.

However, I am most proud of our town's residents and business owners who truly make Stanton a city of "Community Pride and Forward Vision." Together we will continue the renaissance. Thank you for my opportunity to serve.

## City of Seal Beach

211 Eighth St., Seal Beach, CA 90740 • 562/431-2527 • [sealbeachca.gov](http://sealbeachca.gov)

### Seal Beach: Enchanting Small Town Charm



**Thomas Moore**  
Mayor

As I embark on my seventh year serving on the City Council, I am honored to be Seal Beach's Mayor in 2023.

Drawing from my experience as an IT professional and former entrepreneur who successfully launched two companies, I bring a unique background from the private sector to guide the city towards sound fiscal decisions. Moreover, my current full-time role in the IT industry equips me with the technical skills to help streamline and enhance the city's computer systems.

Seal Beach's reputation is built on its family-friendly ambiance, several fantastic eateries, charming shops, and the ever-inviting beach that surfers and families continually come to enjoy.

Leisure World is an important part of our city with around 9000 residents. The city provides shuttles to the beach, affordable meals, and police services to the senior population.

The revival of our historic red car stands as a testament to our commitment to preserving the rich history of our town. It serves as a reminder of our enduring heritage. Soon the Bay Theater will re-open on Main street which is being remodeled to look exactly as it did when it opened in 1945.

This year we continue to have exceptional events such as the Seal Beach Car Show and the Seal Beach Lion's Fish Fry. These gatherings have not only broken attendance records but have also ushered in a return to the sense of normalcy we've longed for over the past few years.

I invite for you to experience the magic of our town firsthand. May your time in Seal Beach be as enchanting as it continues to be for me.



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## City of Tustin

300 Centennial Wy., Tustin, CA 92780 • 714/573-3000 • [tustinca.org](http://tustinca.org)

### Best Place to Live for Families



**Austin Lumbard**  
Mayor

This past year, the City of Tustin was honored to be ranked the number 1 city in California and 12th nationwide in Fortune's 25 Best Places to Live for Families. Tustin welcomes people of all ages and backgrounds and we are proud of our diverse family friendly community.

Our City boasts an expansive park system, encompassing both tranquil and vibrant parks. This year we completed renovations at Pioneer Park and Pine Tree Park, and we look forward to opening Tustin's first dog park, The Barks Barracks at Tustin Legacy Park, very soon.

Tustin offers a range of housing options, from contemporary developments in Tustin Legacy to newer suburban neighborhoods in Tustin Ranch, and, of course, our cherished historic homes in Old Town.

Our popular events such as the Chili Cook-Off, Tustin Tiller Days, Movies and Concerts in the Park, our weekly Certified Farmer's Market, and the appeal of popular destinations like the District at Tustin Legacy, the Tustin Market Place, and Tustin Auto Center, make it easy to see why many chose to live, work and play in Tustin.

The City of Tustin truly is a one-of-a-kind place with a rich history and a bright future that offers lifelong memories.

It is my great honor to serve as Tustin's Mayor.

## City of Villa Park

17855 Santiago Blvd., Villa Park, CA 92861 • 714/998-1500 • [villapark.org](http://villapark.org)

### We are Extended Family



**Robert Pitts**  
Mayor

I love history and am especially thrilled to have learned more about our wonderful city from those that have blessed our city over the past 50 + years. Villa Park was incorporated in 1962.

There were many challenges in the early years to keep Villa Park from becoming too urban. There were numerous news articles with headlines that read "Villa Park, A Mix of Mayberry and Beverly Hills" and Villa Park "Is a Small Countrified, Satisfied City."

People remember children riding their horses down the streets in Villa Park early on and we have pictures of houses next to the horse stables during the early years of development, in fact most streets still do not have sidewalks. Back in the 1800's the Villa Park area was known for grape growing and was known as the raisin capital of the world. A blight took place in 1887 and that was the beginning of the growing of Valencia Oranges which soon gave way to some of Orange County's amazing landscape and homes.

There are many traditions in Villa Park that we enjoy and attend every year; Concerts in the Park, July 4th parades, Villa Park Dry Land Boat parade and I still believe the highlight of the year is the Santa Tour that fosters the amazing comradery that takes place in our city.

We have over the years been able to help create a community where we are not known as neighbors, but extended family.

I am honored to have served two terms as mayor of our amazing city, which has a small-town culture and feel to it. And I look forward to continuing to serve for many years to come.

## City of Westminster

8200 Westminster Blvd., Westminster, CA 92683 • 714/898-3311 • [westminster-ca.gov](http://westminster-ca.gov)

### First-Time Mayor, Lifetime Public Servant



**Chi Charlie Nguyen**  
Mayor

The City of Westminster is a vibrant and diverse city that serves as a cultural destination with a rich history, and I am proud to serve my first term as Mayor.

When I came to this country after the Fall of Saigon, I never imagined I would someday serve as the mayor for a city. I came to America to escape oppression, and was faced with learning a new culture, a new language, and a new way of life.

Eventually, I became a family man and worked hard to instill the values of kindness, humility, perseverance, and public service in my children. Always a believer that you must lead by example, I was involved with school activities, youth sports, non-profit organizations, and community groups.

That sense of community responsibility has led me to a life of public service that continues to grow. And I could not be prouder of representing Westminster and the many accomplishments, as well as future endeavors.

In the past nine months, the City Council has prioritized economic development, addressing homelessness, funding opportunities, increase in public safety, revitalizing public spaces, and enhancing customer service. The Westminster Mall revitalization project continues to move along, and the decades-long I-405 Freeway Improvement Project is coming to an end.

As a graduate of public schools and the California State University system, education is important to me, and I am excited to continue sharing the wonderful things about Westminster through this publication.

At your service

## City of Yorba Linda

4845 Casa Loma Ave., Yorba Linda, CA 92886 • 714/961-7100 • [yorbalindaca.gov](http://yorbalindaca.gov)

### The Land of Gracious Living



**Gene Hernandez**  
Mayor

It's an incredible honor to represent the City of Yorba Linda as Mayor. We pride ourselves as being "the Land of Gracious Living," and we have countless reasons to make that bold claim.

With over 100 miles of trails, 200 acres of parkland, the Nixon Presidential Library, beautiful and distinct neighborhoods, engaged faith communities, award-winning schools, and fantastic shopping and dining opportunities — Yorba Linda is brimming with small town charm, but big city amenities.

Over the last few years, we have invested heavily in creating exciting gathering spaces, such as our new, state-of-the-art Public Library and Cultural Arts Center. Just in time for summer, we reopened our Adventure Playground facility following a \$7 million renovation to transform this cherished facility into an incredible year-round destination for creative play. With a double water slide, splash pad, zip line, whiffle ball field, and giant play structure, Adventure Playground is a must-visit destination for Yorba Linda's youth.

Yorba Linda is a city full of unparalleled opportunity, attracting new residents and exciting businesses & restaurants. Yorba Linda is also frequently ranked as one of the top five safest cities in California, making our community an exceptional place to live, work, play, and worship.

But our most vivid point of pride is our people. Yorba Linda is filled with engaged residents and passionate volunteers. I call them unsung heroes because they unite our community for the common good. We are proud that Yorba Linda is a place of unmatched civic pride, patriotic character, and caring neighbors."

## Orange County Department of Education

200 Kalmus Drive, Costa Mesa CA 92628 • 714/966-4000 • www.ocde.us



**Dr. Al Mijares**  
Superintendent



**Dr. Ramon Miramontes**  
Deputy  
Superintendent  
of Instructional  
Programs

In the Star Wars universe, whenever a spacecraft makes the jump to light speed, the stars outside the cockpit stretch out into luminous streaks. It's a mesmerizing visual of acceleration that brings to mind the dizzying advancement of

technology here on planet Earth — and the urgent need for educational systems to keep pace.

With artificial intelligence poised to reshape workplaces and society at large, the Orange County Department of Education is moving ahead with an ambitious initiative that will evaluate and determine the best approaches for integrating AI into teaching and learning. This could include more personalized learning, real-time feedback for students and teachers, or the automation of routine tasks, allowing educators to focus more on matters that demand human insight, judgment and creative thinking.

While the outcomes have yet to be determined, we do know this won't be a solitary endeavor. Led by our Educational Services division, OCDE is taking the first steps of a collaborative journey that will involve school district leaders, industry partners, educators, parents and students. And we envision it taking place in three distinct phases.

The first phase will seek to elevate AI literacy and leadership, establishing a common understanding and terminology in Orange County. The second phase will develop strategies and an implementation plan in collaboration with leaders of the county's 28 independent school districts. Finally, a third phase will evaluate our efforts, gather data and plan for the future. OCDE's commitment to continuous improvement and

community engagement ensures that the feedback loop will remain open, fostering a culture of learning and adaptability.

OCDE has long sought to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to emerging technologies, but AI represents something we haven't quite seen before. These newer tools simulate human intelligence, enabling computers to perform tasks that typically require human cognitive abilities. As such, they have the potential to impact just about every aspect of our work and lives, from teaching and learning to health care, transportation, media, energy, finance and customer service.

While ChatGPT and other publicly available services aren't perfect, remember that they are programmed to learn from us, which means they can and will evolve exponentially. In other words, the examples we see today are the worst versions we're going to encounter moving forward.

Preparing students for an AI-driven future isn't just about passing along technical skills. It's about teaching adaptability, critical thinking and ethical decision-making. By integrating AI literacy across educational settings, OCDE and our partners will be able to equip students with the capacity to navigate an increasingly complex world without losing those traits that make us uniquely human, like kindness, character and artistic expression. And through community engagement, we can pursue a shared vision for AI that aligns with our local values and needs.

The need for education to remain in stride with technology is undeniable, and the Orange County Department of Education has long been a leader in this arena. But collaboration is the key to what lies ahead. That's how we'll ensure that the next generation isn't just ready to embrace the challenges of an AI-driven world, but that they're poised to drive innovation, forge new paths and contribute meaningfully to a future that's constantly in motion.



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