



HEALTHY PARKS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES: Green Access and Equity for Orange County



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This policy report is a summary for Orange County of The City Project's 2011 report, *Healthy Parks, Schools, and Communities: Mapping Green Access and Equity for Southern California*, which maps and analyzes park access and equity in nine counties in Southern California — Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego, Kern, Santa Barbara and Imperial — using narrative analyses, geographic information system (GIS) mapping tools, and demographic and economic data.

Unlike other studies, which plot *either* green space *or* population, the maps in this report plot green space *in relation* to population and other metrics to measure accessibility, such as distance to the park. This report also provides multidisciplinary analyses of the vital benefits of parks and other green space to people and the environment. It describes the consequences of disparities in green access and the benefits that could be reaped in “park poor” and “income poor” communities if resources were fairly allocated. It concludes with recommendations for equitable investments in green space in Orange County and throughout California and the nation.

The goal of this work is to combine research and analyses with effective outreach to provide concerned citizens, community groups, elected and other government officials, planners, funders, and other stakeholders with the best available information upon which to prioritize actions and decisions that positively impact green access for all.

For more information on green access and equity in Orange County and Southern California, or to download a copy of this summary or the full nine county policy report, please visit www.cityprojectca.org/greenjustice.

This report is available in English and Spanish.

ABOUT THE CITY PROJECT

The mission of The City Project is to achieve equal justice, democracy and livability for all.

The City Project carries out its mission by influencing the investment of public resources to achieve results that are equitable, enhance human health and the environment, and promote economic vitality for all communities. Focusing on parks and recreation, playgrounds, schools, health, and transit, we help bring people together to define the kind of community where they want to live and raise children. The City Project works with diverse coalitions in strategic campaigns to shape public policy and law, and to serve the needs of the community as defined by the community.

The City Project is a nonprofit organization that has worked and published extensively over the past decade on equal access to parks and green space, transportation, and related issues at the intersection of social justice, sustainable regional planning and smart growth.

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- Cover photo: Yorba Regional Park, courtesy of OC Parks (ocparks.com)

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Black Star Canyon Wilderness Park | Credit: OC Parks | ocparks.com

A MESSAGE FROM KAISER PERMANENTE

For nearly 65 years, our mission at Kaiser Permanente has been to improve the health of our health plan members and the communities we serve. Parks and green space play a vital role in the health and well-being of a community and its residents. That’s why we are proud to support the “green space” work that The City Project is doing with funding from our Healthy Eating Active Living program.

We’ve come together because we know that healthy communities and a healthy environment are critical to individual health and wellness. Over the long term, the work of The City Project and their community partners can spur new parks and recreation areas like walking paths and gardens in underserved neighborhoods, as well as joint-use agreements between schools and parks, and the recognition of green space access in local planning and policy documents.

We congratulate The City Project on this important effort, and applaud the American Public Health Association’s recent awarding of its prestigious Presidential Citation to City Project Founding Director Robert García.

Expanding the availability of open spaces and the access to them is one way we can contribute to a lasting solution to improve public health. It’s all part of our commitment to bring total health—including preventive care through healthier lifestyles—to our members and the communities we serve.

Sincerely,

Diana M. Bontá

Vice President, Public Affairs

Kaiser Permanente

This report was sponsored in part by a grant from





INTRODUCTION

From iconic beaches to towering mountains and vast forests, Orange County boasts a variety of opportunities for recreation and enjoying the natural environment. Yet, not all Orange County residents can access our great outdoors and the many benefits it offers.

Why do parks matter? Green space provides places to have fun for people of all ages. Access to green space directly correlates with decreased rates of obesity in adults and children. The benefits of parks include improved physical and mental wellness. Park and recreation programs provide positive alternatives to gangs and crime. Parks contribute to community building and bring people together. Green space provides important economic and environmental benefits, creating green jobs, raising property values, filtering out air and water pollutants, and offering shady places to lie under a tree on a hot day. Parks help preserve our cultural heritage and Native American Sacred Sites.

The City Project works with our allies to implement strategies to improve green access for all through community organizing and coalition building; multidisciplinary research and analyses, like the work reflected in this report; strategic media campaigns, including new social media; and policy and legal advocacy outside the courts. When necessary, we also seek access to justice through the courts.

Parks and other green space are not a luxury. Dedicating existing public resources for creating and improving access to green space, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color, offers an exceptional opportunity to improve public health, environmental quality, economic vitality and overall quality of life.

Together we can help children be active, eat well, stay healthy, and do their best in school and life.

Sincerely,

Robert García

Executive Director, Counsel and Founder

The City Project



Bolsa Chica Ecological Preserve | Credit: caopenspace.org

DEFINING GREEN SPACE AND ACCESS

Green Space: “Green space” refers to all parks, natural open spaces, beaches, school fields, trails and recreational facilities. This term is applied broadly even though some of these areas may not have much greenery. The National Recreation and Parks Association has recommended *ten acres of park space per 1,000 residents*.

Green Access: The presence of green space alone is not enough. In order to truly benefit from these resources, residents must have access to green space. Many factors determine the accessibility of green space:

- Distance from green space to where people live, whether green space can be reached without a car, and obstacles such as highways.
- Location of natural geographic features and walkability.
- Whether a park is safe, or perceived as safe, by local residents.
- Physical appearance, condition and recreational amenities.
- Whether green space is open to the public, hours of operation and cost of admission.

Park Poor: Refers to any geographic area that provides *less than three acres of green space per 1,000 residents*, as defined by California law. Three acres is the size of approximately one and one half soccer or football fields.

Income Poor: Refers to a median household income of \$47,331 per year or less, as defined by California law.

Children need safe places to play

A Santa Ana girl runs into the street after a ball next to an elementary school. The school has several large fields, but locks them after school and on weekends, making them unavailable to the public. Children of color disproportionately live in communities of concentrated poverty without enough places to play in parks and schools, and without access to cars or an adequate transit system to reach parks and school fields in other neighborhoods.

Photo by Tim Wagner for Partnership for the Public's Health (twagnerimages.com).





Gum Grove Park - Seal Beach | Credit: caopenspace.org

GREEN ACCESS IN ORANGE COUNTY TODAY

Each of the 34 incorporated cities in Orange County maintains neighborhood and community parks, while the county maintains nearly 60,000 acres of regional and wilderness parks. Orange County is also home to two federally protected lands, Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge and Cleveland National Forest, and six state protected beach areas. Individual cities and the county also manage parts of the 42-mile Orange County coastline.

Orange County is California's second most populated county after Los Angeles and the smallest by size in Southern California.

There are disparities in access to green space between North and South Orange County. State Route 55, also known as the Costa Mesa Freeway, unofficially divides the county into two distinct regions, North Orange County and South Orange County. The demographics in the two regions are also different. People of color tend to be separated into a few areas of high concentration, found disproportionately in North Orange County. Over 52% of the total Latino population resides in four North Orange County cities: Santa Ana, La Habra, Stanton and Anaheim. Nearly one-third of all Asian and Pacific Islanders in Orange County reside within the three cities of Westminster and Garden Grove in North County, and Irvine in South County.

Large parts of Orange County are disproportionately non-Hispanic white. All of the cities with beach access, for example, have a population that is at least

71% white, far exceeding the county average of 51%. South Orange County has far lower population and development densities and, therefore, more open space than North Orange County. The communities of South Orange County tend to be more affluent and disproportionately non-Hispanic white.

As shown by the map on the opposing page, the areas of Orange County disproportionately populated by people of color and low-income people have less green space than non-Hispanic white and more affluent areas. Compounding this issue, there is little public transportation to most parks, beaches and open space, so access is limited for low-income people without cars or other personal vehicles. In its 2007 Orange County Parks Strategic Plan, the county park department identified correcting inequality in access to parks between residents of North Orange County and South Orange County as one of its major goals.

Orange County Snapshot

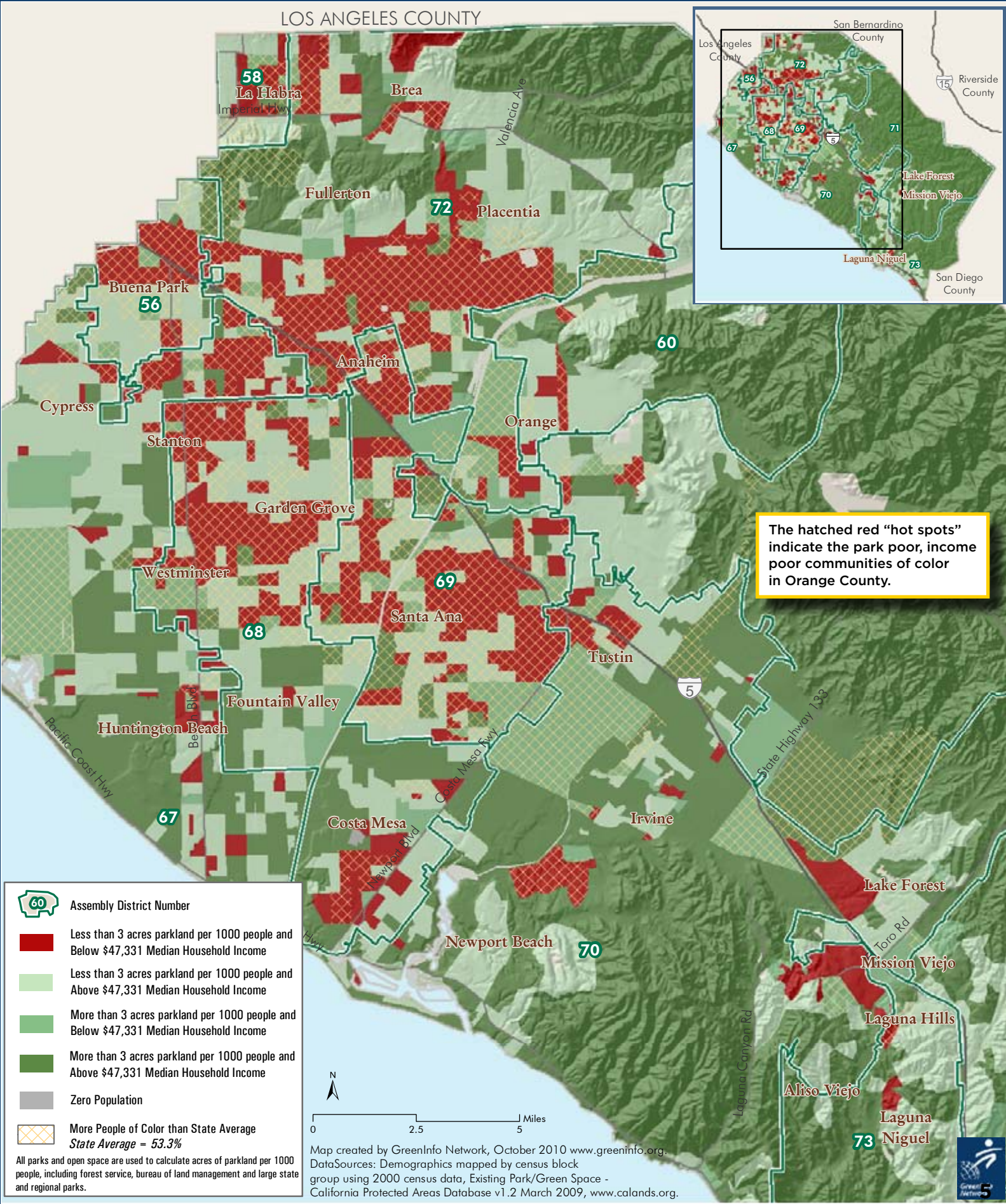
Population	3,010,759 (as of 2008)
Total land area	798.3 sq mi / 510,912 acres
Total green space	191.4 sq mi / 122,517 acres

Overall, Orange County has approximately 41 acres of green space per 1,000 residents. Not all residents have equal access to these lands. The communities with the worst access to parks lie in North Orange County, with the lowest income levels and highest concentrations of people of color. For example, in Stanton the ratio is only 0.68 acres per 1,000 residents.



Park Poor, Income Poor, and People of Color

Orange County



The hatched red "hot spots" indicate the park poor, income poor communities of color in Orange County.

All parks and open space are used to calculate acres of parkland per 1000 people, including forest service, bureau of land management and large state and regional parks.

Map created by GreenInfo Network, October 2010 www.greeninfo.org. DataSources: Demographics mapped by census block group using 2000 census data, Existing Park/Green Space - California Protected Areas Database v1.2 March 2009, www.calands.org.





WHY PARKS MATTER: PHYSICAL HEALTH

Children and adults that live in communities with parks, school fields, nature centers and other recreational facilities are more physically active than those who lack access to these resources. This is particularly true for low-income communities. One study found that in low-income areas, people who live within one mile of a park exercised 38% more than people who lived farther away. Unfortunately, low-income areas often lack sufficient park space.

The health implications of the lack of places to play and exercise are profound. The 2008 rates of overweight and obesity among children in Orange County range from 13.9% to 21.4% by age group. While these rates are slightly less than the statewide average of 26.5%, there are significant disparities

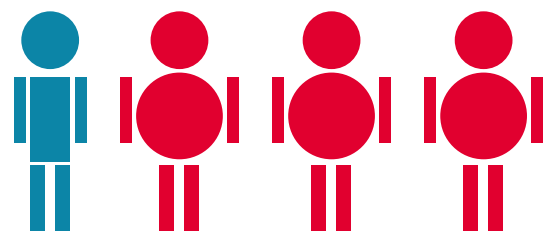
between the Assembly Districts in Orange County. District 69 (Santa Ana) has the highest population of children in Orange County, is park poor, and has the highest rate of obesity and overweight children at 35.5%.

Parks, schools and physical activity are integral parts of a comprehensive approach to healthcare and the built environment. As the nation struggles to come to grips with spiraling costs of medical care, improving physical education in schools and the built environment through parks and green space should be embraced as forms of preventive care. Indeed, many experts consider providing safe parks and other recreational spaces as a primary form of preventive medicine.

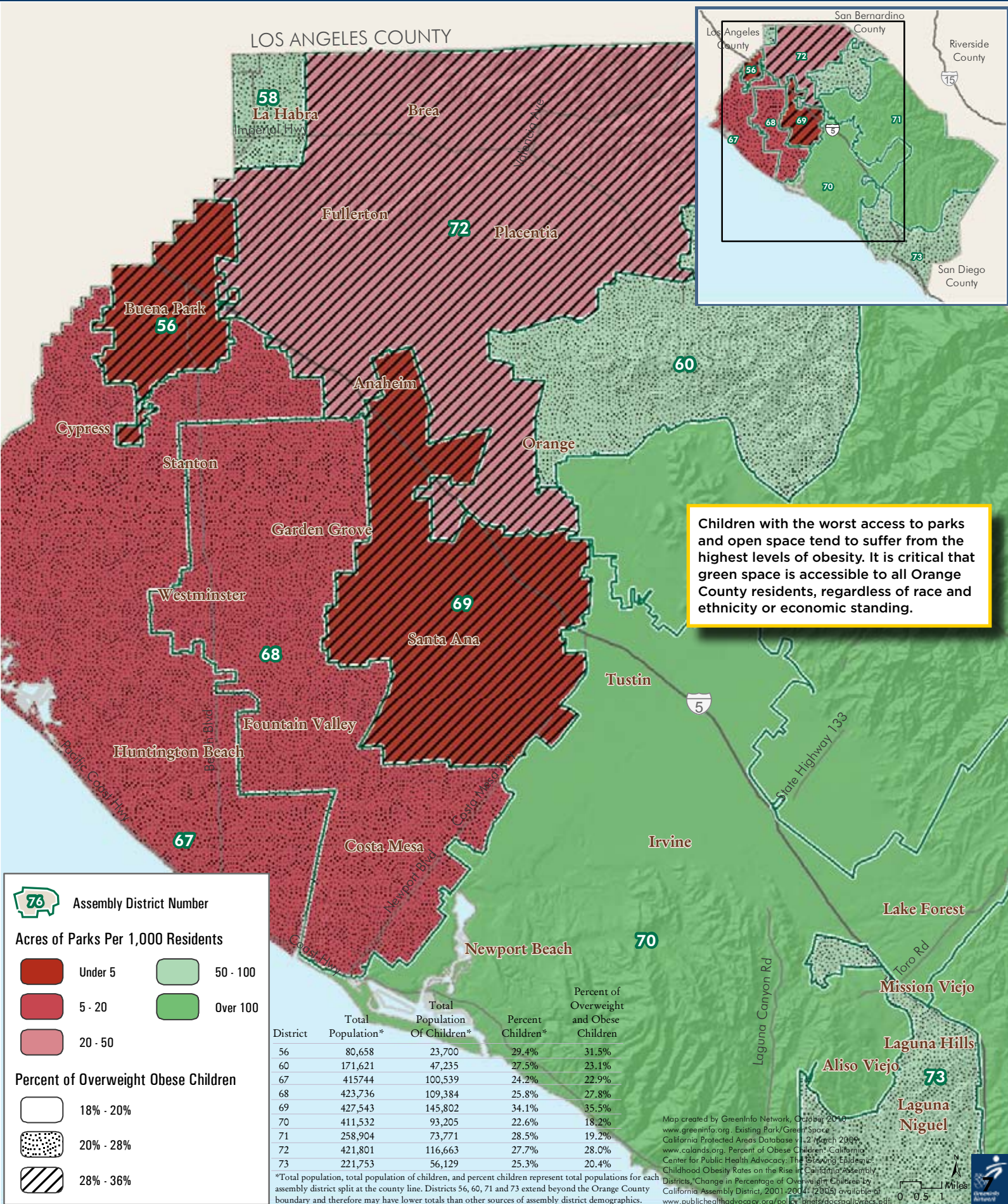
Photos by Tim Wagner for Partnership for the Public's Health (twagnerimages.com)



Nearly 3 out of 4 Latino adults in Orange County are overweight or obese.



Overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults.



Children with the worst access to parks and open space tend to suffer from the highest levels of obesity. It is critical that green space is accessible to all Orange County residents, regardless of race and ethnicity or economic standing.

76 Assembly District Number

Acres of Parks Per 1,000 Residents

- Under 5
- 5 - 20
- 20 - 50
- 50 - 100
- Over 100

Percent of Overweight Obese Children

- 18% - 20%
- 20% - 28%
- 28% - 36%

District	Total Population*	Total Population Of Children*	Percent Children*	Percent of Overweight and Obese Children
56	80,658	23,700	29.4%	31.5%
60	171,621	47,235	27.5%	23.1%
67	415,744	100,539	24.2%	22.9%
68	423,736	109,384	25.8%	27.8%
69	427,543	145,802	34.1%	35.5%
70	411,532	93,205	22.6%	18.2%
71	258,904	73,771	28.5%	19.2%
72	421,801	116,663	27.7%	28.0%
73	221,753	56,129	25.3%	20.4%

*Total population, total population of children, and percent children represent total populations for each assembly district split at the county line. Districts 56, 60, 71 and 73 extend beyond the Orange County boundary and therefore may have lower totals than other sources of assembly district demographics.

A CLOSER LOOK AT PHYSICAL FITNESS CHALLENGES

PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Good schools, a good education and the full development of the child include adequate physical education in the curriculum. Physical education quality and quantity are particularly deficient for less affluent students and those in racial and ethnic groups at high risk for overweight and obesity.

Shrinking school budgets and increased pressure to meet academic standards measured by standardized tests are leading to a decline in physical education classes and school-sponsored athletic programs. Evidence shows, however, lifelong benefits of physical education. Physically fit students tend to do better academically. Students who take part in physical activity, including team sports, tend to stay in school longer, and enjoy positive alternatives to at risk behavior. Reducing physical education in school can hurt test results and graduation rates.

In California, public schools are required by law to provide physical education. Physical education classes provide an opportunity for children to meet

recommendations for daily physical activity. This is particularly true for students of color and low-income students, many of whom live in neighborhoods that lack safe places to play. Between the 2004 and 2009 academic years, half the school districts audited by the California Department of Education (94 out of 188) did not enforce physical education laws.

Orange County Children Failing Fitness

Race or Ethnicity	Physically Unfit 5th Graders (%)
Latino	77 %
Black	66 %
Asian and Pacific Islander	61 %
White, non-Hispanic	57 %
<i>Orange County Overall</i>	67 %

Percentage of 5th graders who failed to meet physical fitness standards in 2008, reported by the California Department of Education Statewide Assessment Division.

SAFE PARKS

Access to safe parks or other places for physical activity has an important effect on whether children meet recommendations for physical activity and whether they get any activity at all. Fear of crime is a major deterrent to the use of parks. On a nationwide basis, 48% of Latino children and 39% of African American children in urban areas were kept inside as much as possible because their neighborhoods were perceived as dangerous, compared to 25% of non-Hispanic white children and 24% of Asian children.

Parks and recreation programs can play an important role in reducing crime and violence. The City of Los Angeles' Summer Night Lights program is a best practice example. The program keeps select parks open from 7pm until midnight, offering recreational activities, mentoring and counseling programs, meals, and other services, throughout the summer as an anti-gang initiative. There has been a 40% overall

reduction in gang-related crime, including a 57% reduction in gang-related homicide, in the neighborhoods where the program has operated since it began in 2008.



Children are kept inside when parents feel neighborhood parks are unsafe.



Credit: Tim Wagner for Partnership for the Public's Health (twagnerimages.com)

Shared use is a win-win

An effective solution for improving both physical fitness and green access is joint use agreements between schools and parks departments. The shared use of parks, schools and pools can alleviate the lack of places to play and recreate, while making optimal use of scarce land and public resources.

Photo credit: The City Project





WHY PARKS MATTER: PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

Green space provides needed reprieve from the everyday pressures that lead to mental fatigue. This improves the health of adults and children by reducing stress and depression and improving focus, attention span, productivity and recovery from illness.

Spending time in parks can reduce irritability and impulsivity and promote intellectual development in children and teenagers by providing a safe and engaging environment to interact and develop social skills, language and reasoning abilities, in addition to muscle strength and coordination.

Researchers have also found associations between contact with the natural environment and improvements in the functioning of children with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Parks provide a place for social support and encourage self-determination, both important factors in reducing stress, lowering anxiety and improving a person's overall mood. This is true for children and adults, though it is particularly significant for older adults. Social support is derived from the friendship or companionship that comes from the shared experience of participating in activities in a park with other people. Research has also shown that people living in public housing who have contact with natural environments, such as trees, are more likely to make changes that will improve their lives.

Recreation builds character

Youth recreational programs, including active recreation and team sports, promote positive choices and help reduce youth violence, crime, drug abuse and teen pregnancy. Sports and recreation provide life-long lessons in teamwork and help to build character.







Bolsa Chica Mesa | Credit: caopenspace.org

WHY PARKS MATTER: **COMMUNITY PRIDE**

Parks satisfy our need for social interaction by enticing residents into public spaces with trees, greenery, and venues for sports and active recreation. Parks become a source of community building, pride, and inspiration for further neighborhood improvements and revitalization.

Social interaction and neighborhood spaces have been identified as key facets of healthy communities. These factors promote social networks, social support systems and social integration, all of which contribute to a sense of belonging and community. Areas that are park poor have a deficit of the many opportunities green space provides to reflect and build local community pride.

WHY PARKS MATTER: **CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Parks provide important places to celebrate diverse culture, heritage and art. Cultural, historical and artistic monuments should reflect the diversity of a place and its people.

One of the most unique and significant archaeological sites in coastal Southern California lies within the Bolsa Chica, which includes at least 25 known Native Americans burial sites. While over 1,200 acres of the wetlands have been saved from development, the adjacent upland areas are quickly vanishing due to residential development.

Without adequate maintenance and security services, irreplaceable cultural resources may be vandalized or destroyed, erasing an important link with the history of Orange County and Southern California.



Native American sites must be preserved

The Ancestor Walk from Panhe to Putiidhem, Kenyaanga, Bolsa Chica, Motuucheynga and Puvunga is the annual pilgrimage of the Juaneño/Acjachemen and Gabrielino/Tongva people as they honor the spirits of their Ancestors.

Photo credit: United Coalition to Protect Panhe

Neighborhood workdays for green space maintenance and improvement foster common purpose and sense of ownership and pride among residents.





Mile Square Regional Park | Credit: OC Parks | ocparks.com

WHY PARKS MATTER: **ECONOMIC VITALITY**

If you want parks, work for jobs — and justice. Green space is an economic stimulus that creates jobs, boosts local businesses and raises property values. Improving green space and green access can benefit local, state and national economies in the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

The New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) is a best practice example for government agencies today to get the nation back to work, while improving green access and quality of life for all. The CCC created 3 million new jobs, created 8,000 new parks including 800 state parks, and planted 2 billion trees. Visits to national parks increased 600 percent from 3.5 million people in 1933, to 21 million by 1941. Other public work projects built 40,000 new schools. Parks and recreation programs and green infrastructure projects — such as developing and enhancing parks or park accessibility via public transit, walkways and bike paths — can be sources

of green collar jobs and job training for local workers. Giving priority in contract selection to local small businesses and apprenticeship programs can help ensure benefits are fairly distributed.

Parks are essential to community development and revitalization efforts, drawing new visitors to existing businesses and new businesses to the area. Parks and recreation also help strengthen and stimulate the economy through the tourism and hospitality industries and recreation-related sales of clothing, equipment, fees and services. Studies from around the country have shown that parks can generate as much as \$5 in revenue for every \$1 in costs.

A Southern California study found that being located near green space adds five to ten percent to the total value of a home, in both high-income and low-income communities. Higher home prices can also result in higher property tax revenues.

New parks benefit neighborhoods

This half-acre lot will be transformed into the first community center in the 92701 zip code, as well as a small park. The Latino Health Access Park and Community Center in Santa Ana is expected to draw new visitors and activity to the Lacy neighborhood. Parks have been shown to increase local property values and can raise local tax revenue. *(For more information about the LHA Park and Community Center, please see page 20.)*



Photo credit: Latino Health Access



Orange County Great Park | Credit: City of Irvine & OCGP Corp.

WHY PARKS MATTER: ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Parks and green space provide critical environmental benefits such as absorbing and naturally filtering polluted storm water runoff. This can help reduce flooding while also improving river and ocean water quality after heavy rainfall. Another important ecosystem benefit of green space is habitat for plants and animals.

Parks can also help offset the adverse effects of a warming climate. Public health researchers at the University of Southern California have found that low-income communities of color will be most significantly impacted by warmer weather and dirtier air as a result of climate change. These communities already experience higher rates of mortality during heat waves, as well as asthma and other respiratory illnesses associated with air pollution. A canopy of trees provides shade and cooler temperatures that moderate the effect of asphalt, concrete, and other

man-made building materials that trap heat. Trees and other vegetation also filter out harmful pollutants, improving the air we breathe.

Green access can often be improved by providing transportation options beyond cars, such as public transit accessibility or walkways and bicycle paths. Developing infrastructure that people can use to get to parks without a car can also reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions and improve local air quality.

Green space promotes environmental conservation values including the protection of clean air, water and land. For many individuals, particularly in low-income urban areas, parks represent their only opportunity to escape concrete, play on grass and experience a diversity of wildlife.

Connecting children with nature

The Cleveland National Forest accounts for 44% of Orange County green space, but access is limited for families without cars. Programs such as Transit to Trails or REI's Promoting Environmental Awareness in Kids provide opportunities for children to explore the wonders of nature and the great outdoors, helping to create the next generation of environmental stewards.

Photo credit: REI (Recreation Equipment, Inc.)





Credit: The City Project

GREEN ACCESS AND EQUAL JUSTICE

The history of Southern California is relevant to understand how the region came to be the way it is, and how it could be better.

The fact that low-income people and people of color disproportionately lack equal access to parks, school fields, beaches, trails and forests is not an accident of unplanned growth or the outcome of an efficient free market distribution of land, housing, transit and jobs. Disparities in green access are the result of a history and continuing legacy of discriminatory land use and economic policies and practices.

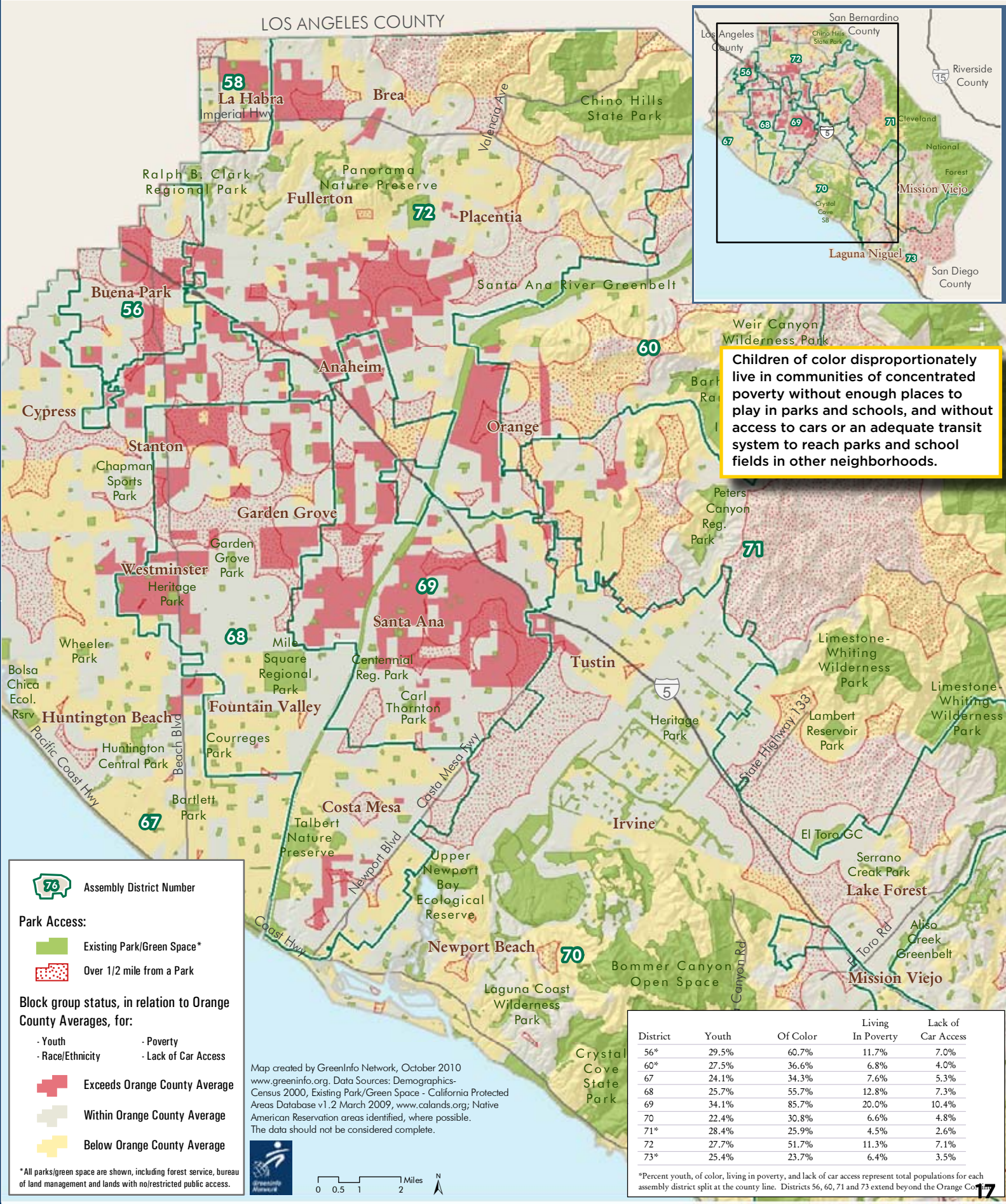
As cities started to emerge in Orange County, developers refused to sell individual properties to African Americans, Asians, Hispanics or Native Americans, and racially restrictive housing covenants were in use until the 1950s. While there were no restrictions on which racial and ethnic groups were allowed to use the beaches in Orange County, people of color were forbidden from buying beach-front property. As the decades passed, property values in Orange County skyrocketed. When formal and informal restrictions finally lifted, beach communities and other desirable areas of Orange County were cost-prohibitive for the people who were denied access when property values were lower.

In 1945, school segregation was outlawed throughout California, thanks in large part to a lawsuit filed by Gonzalo Mendez against school districts in Orange County. The United States Court of Appeals

for the Ninth Circuit held that segregating school children of Mexican and Latin descent denied them the equal protection of the laws under the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. *Mendez v. Westminster* served as important precedent to the landmark United States Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which struck down “separate but equal” schooling and legal apartheid in the United States as unconstitutional in 1954.

Recipients of public funds, such as cities and counties, are prohibited from engaging in practices that have the intent or the *effect* of discrimination based on race, color or national origin. As a matter of simple justice, parks, school fields, and other natural public places are a public resource, and the benefits and burdens should be distributed equally.

Resources must be allocated to target park, school and health disparities. Investing in park poor and income poor areas provides economic stimulus and the multiple benefits of green space to underserved communities, and will also help achieve compliance with equal justice laws and principles mandating equal access to public resources.



76 Assembly District Number

Park Access:

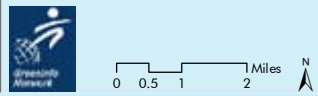
- Existing Park/Green Space*
- Over 1/2 mile from a Park

Block group status, in relation to Orange County Averages, for:

- Youth
- Race/Ethnicity
- Poverty
- Lack of Car Access

- Exceeds Orange County Average
- Within Orange County Average
- Below Orange County Average

Map created by GreenInfo Network, October 2010
 www.greeninfo.org. Data Sources: Demographics-Census 2000, Existing Park/Green Space - California Protected Areas Database v1.2 March 2009, www.calands.org; Native American Reservation areas identified, where possible. The data should not be considered complete.



*All parks/green space are shown, including forest service, bureau of land management and lands with no/restricted public access.



10 WAYS TO IMPROVE GREEN ACCESS

The following recommendations for equitable development would help ensure that everyone, especially children and youth of color and others in low-income communities, benefits equally from infrastructure investments.

1. **Prioritize green space projects based on need in communities that are both park poor and income poor.** Park poverty and income poverty criteria under California law are a best practice example for standards to measure progress and equity and to hold public officials accountable.
2. **Implement strategic plans to improve parks and recreation in every neighborhood.** Working with the community, public officials should develop a vision and strategic plan to alleviate inequities in access to parks and recreation.
3. **Funding agencies should ensure compliance with civil rights laws guaranteeing equal access** to public resources including parks and recreation. Reports should be published analyzing investments by park agencies and allocation of resource bonds to get a complete picture of which communities benefit from the investment of public funds and which do not in order to help prioritize future investments.
4. **Prioritize projects that address physical, psychological and social health needs,** including childhood obesity and diabetes levels. Create “balanced” parks that offer active recreation with soccer fields, ball parks, basketball and tennis courts, running tracks and bike paths, as well as passive recreation with natural open space, walking trails and picnic areas.



Transit to Trails

Transit to Trails programs use buses to transport children and families on fun and educational trips to parks, beaches and mountains. Although many children live only an hour from the mountains and beaches, many have never been there, because parents often work two or more jobs, and do not have access to cars or to information to plan trips.

Photo credits: The City Project



5. **Prioritize projects that involve the joint use of parks, schools and pools to make optimal use of scarce land, money and public resources.**
6. **Prioritize cultural, historical and public art projects that celebrate diversity, democracy and freedom.** Native American sites must be preserved. Cultural, historical and artistic monuments should reflect the diversity of a place and its people. People of color have played a vital role in making Orange County what it is today, and its park and open space system should reflect this.
7. **Prioritize transportation and infrastructure projects that provide access to green space without a car,** including Transit to Trails programs, walking paths and pedestrian bridges. New bus lines, light rail stations, transit routes, and streets and sidewalks that are safe and work for all users should be designed to reach the region's existing and planned parks, schools and other green space.
8. **Infrastructure projects should create green collar jobs for local workers,** small and disadvantaged business enterprises, and youth. Local small businesses should be given priority in contract selection to help ensure benefits are fairly distributed. Contract awards should also require businesses to hire people from the community and provide apprenticeships where the project is located.
9. **Prevent and reverse the privatization of public green space.**
10. **Improve real and perceived park safety** through better programs, lighting, maintenance and upkeep, the visible presence of security officers, and targeted programs to address drug dealing and gang activity. In densely populated urban areas that may lack space for creating new parks, making existing parks safer may be one of the best ways to improve green access.

Use your voice!

Attend community meetings or join your local planning council to participate in decisions affecting green access in your community. Let government and elected officials know your community and you want them to act on the recommendations on these pages.





ORANGE COUNTY PARKS IN DEVELOPMENT

Latino Health Access Park and Community Center

Latino Health Access (LHA) is a nonprofit public health organization that works to improve the quality of life of underserved Latino residents in Orange County. Seven years ago LHA began conversations with city officials, the business community and residents to create the first park and community center in the 92701 zip code, the most park poor area in Santa Ana with only 0.5 acres of land per 1,000 residents. Residents assisted in the advocacy for and design of the Lacy neighborhood park and today sit on the Community Park Advisory Board serving as community advocates for open space. In 2010, LHA received \$3.5 million from through California's Proposition 84 funding allocation process, which prioritizes park poor and income poor neighborhoods for investment.

Slated for completion in 2012, the park will feature a basketball half-court, toddler playground, adolescent jungle gym, and walking path. Security features include wrought iron gates surrounding the park area, safety night lighting, and rest points for elderly users. These features and amenities were included to increase physical activity opportunities for children and their families, and promote community mobilization for a healthy community.

Orange County Great Park

Another encouraging sign for increased access to parks in Orange County is the creation of the Orange County Great Park in the City of Irvine. Great Park is being developed on the site of the former U.S. Marine Corps El Toro Air Station and is hailed as the "first great metropolitan park of the 21st century." Designed to rival New York's Central Park, Great Park is planned to be more than 1,300 acres. Great Park's award-winning master plan embraces environmental sustainability, preserves Orange County's agricultural heritage, and honors the military history of the former air base, setting a new standard for sustainable park design and urban planning.

The \$1 billion dollar park project was approved by Orange County voters in 2002 and will be constructed in phases. Economic challenges have delayed the project, however a revised timetable forecasts completion for the first major phase of construction, an additional 200 acres, in 2012.

As of 2010, the only area accessible to the public is the 27.5-acre Balloon Park, with a Farmers Market, Kids Rock and other activity areas. This project will represent a major step forward in terms of increasing access to parks and open space for Orange County residents and completing construction should be made a top priority.

CREDITS

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“It is very important that our children grow up healthy. The more they run, the happier they are. The more they play together with other children, the better people they will be in the future. Parks and school yards are a place for peace, a place where life-long values are built. Community activism to build parks and schools is a way of saying no to violence, no to war. Peace and hope are part of our children’s education and culture.”

Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate,
speaking about the work of The City Project and
Anahuak Youth Soccer Association to bring parks,
school fields, and green space to the children
of Southern California.



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For more information on green access and equity in Orange County and Southern California,
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