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Strategic Plan: 2018-2027

OC PARKS. YOUR BACKYARD ADVENTURE.





CONTENTS

03 DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

04 WHO WE ARE

05 WHY WE MATTER

06 OUR VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

08 OUR STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

09 CHERISHING OUR UNIQUENESS

10 OUR OC PARK ASSETS

11 OVERVIEW OF 2007-2017 STRATEGIC PLAN

12 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

17 OVERVIEW OF 2018-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

20 2018-2027 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND GOALS

22 OC PARKS GOALS

Goal 1. Understand to Our Park Visitors' Needs

Goal 2. Promote OC Parks

Goal 3. Protect Our Parks in Perpetuity, Together

Goal 4. Serve as Stewards of OC Parks' Assets

Goal 5. Practice Sustainable Financial Management

Goal 6. Ensure Responsible Park Development And Expansion

Goal 7. Implement Thriving, Resilient Ecosystems for
Emergency Management

Goal 8. Cultivate An Effective, Dynamic Workforce

41 APPENDIX: STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESULTS

Orange County Parks (OC Parks)

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Stacy Blackwood, OC Parks Director



In 2007, OC Parks laid out its plans for the next 10 years in its first-ever strategic plan. Many people provided valuable input and put in a great deal of work to confirm OC Parks' future direction throughout the process and resulting plan. The 2007 Strategic Plan outlined OC Parks' core business, stewardship of open space, and funding for regional parks. That plan has served us well during the past decade and helped improve and grow operations, attendance, and customer

It's hard to believe 10 years have passed, and how much has happened in that time. In 2007, OC Parks was part of the Resources and Development Management Department (or RDMD, now known as OC Public Works). Today, OC Parks falls under Orange County Community Resources (OCCR). In 2007, we managed 40,000 acres of parks and open space. Since then, OC Parks grew by more than 50%, to 60,000 acres, and assumed operations of Dana Point Harbor.

Not only has OC Parks changed, the world has changed. Technology plays a larger role today than it did a decade ago, and presents new opportunities as well as challenges. Demographics in the county have changed, as have the way people see and use outdoor spaces.

We need to keep up with all these changes, both internal and external, while maintaining our core values. This is why an effective strategic plan needs to grow with the organization it represents. The OC Parks 2007 Strategic Plan laid a solid foundation we have relied on over the past decade. Now is the time to refresh and update that Strategic Plan, building on it, making sure we are still on the right track and represent our users' needs appropriately.

To that end, we solicited input last year to help guide our next steps. This process included soliciting public input through our website, surveys, social media channels, and emails, mailed printed postcards, and meetings with stakeholder groups. These measures collected more than 4,600 survey responses, well exceeding our goal of 1,000.

This Strategic Plan update to our goals and initiatives serves as a reaffirmation of our fundamental goals and philosophy, taking into consideration today's conditions, opportunities, and constraints. I encourage you to take the time to review this update. I hope you look forward to OC Parks' next 10 years as much as I do.

Who We Are

OC Parks encompasses regional, wilderness and historical facilities, as well as coastal areas throughout Orange County, California. OC Parks' facilities offer something for just about everyone, whether for recreation and exercise, enjoying nature, or learning about the history of Orange County. OC Parks is committed to managing land and facilities in a way that maximizes their enjoyment by the public, while properly caring for them so they thrive for generations to come.

Fun Facts!

- **60,000 acres** of **diverse** regional parklands, wilderness, historic sites, and coastal areas
- **25** urban and wilderness **parks**
- **7 miles** of **beaches** and other coastal facilities
- **25,000 acres** of **open** space lands
- **150 miles** of existing **bike trails** and nearly **350 miles** of existing and proposed **dirt** trails

Award-winning parks and programs are enjoyed by millions of residents and visitors each year, in ways as diverse as the parks themselves.



Why We Matter

OC Parks are Important to Visitors

OC residents of all backgrounds come to OC Parks to relax and refresh. Spending time in parks helps people to connect with nature, friends, and their own inner well-being. Many find the beauty of the parks inspirational. People come to the parks to recreate – hike, bike, horseback ride, and play. Others come to volunteer or learn about nature.

What makes OC Parks even more valued is its close proximity to OC residents. OC Parks offer camping, hiking, lake fishing, and other opportunities within a half-hour drive from anywhere in Orange County. Many spaces are also interconnected and accessible by bike and regional trails and bikeways. Our staff are friendly and dedicated to preserving and maintaining the parks and serving our communities.

OC Parks are important to non-users as well...

The preservation and protection of open spaces improves OC's environment, community health, and surrounding beauty in an otherwise urbanized landscape. One-tenth of OC's land and water surface is part of OC Parks which provide:

- Trees that purify the air
- Diverse habitats where wildlife can thrive
- Water recapture and infiltration in a drought-prone environment
- Improved property values – important to taxpayers whose dollars help make the parks possible

**OC Parks makes
Orange County
even better!**

OC Parks employees' perspectives:

"OC Parks facilities provide countless opportunities for rest, recreation, and education. They enhance the lives and overall well being of Orange County residents."

"OC Parks provide areas of serenity and relaxation that support healthy lifestyle choices."

"OC Parks is responsible for the natural resources entrusted to it to steward, the maintenance of its facilities, and development of opportunities that contribute to the quality of life for the residents of Orange County and beyond."

"OC Parks matters because it will allow future generations to have the same experiences I have had while living in Orange County. These experiences include recreational opportunities, conservation programs, and safe places to enjoy."

Champions of the land for a thriving community

We see a future where residents and visitors alike are champions of Orange County's parklands and the ecosystem they support.

A future where people value and invest in parklands as critical assets for:

- Improved quality of life, health, and well-being
- A sustainable environment amidst densely populated urban development
- Cleaner air and water
- Enhanced real estate values
- Preservation of Orange County's cultural heritage

OC residents connect with the surrounding environment where flora and fauna thrive. They appreciate that the commitment to stewardship of these open spaces encourages resilience to fire, erosion, and other conditions that threaten the community as a whole.

OC residents are touched by at least one positive experience at OC Parks – through play, educational programs, volunteerism, or simply appreciation for the natural beauty surrounding us.

Current and future generations cherish these OC Parks experiences and embrace Orange County as a great place to live, work, and play.





Our Mission

We preserve and enhance OC Parks' natural and cultural resources for recreation, education, and exploration.

Our Values

Community

Actively bringing park users together to share the natural and cultural benefits of our parks. Understanding that every OC Parks employee plays an essential role in meeting our mission.

Commitment to Excellence

Delivering quality service in our parks. Learning from both success and failure to continually improve.

Service

Promptly meeting the needs of our community with innovative solutions and personal kindness.

Stewardship

Protecting and improving the parks, wilderness, and natural and cultural heritage sites entrusted to our care as invaluable assets.

Working with Our Stakeholders and Partners

Our Partners

OC Parks relies on the support and direction of our Board of Supervisors and County Chief Executive Officer (CEO). We also count on the valuable expertise of our advisory groups, including the OC Parks Commission, OC Parks Trails Subcommittee, OC Parks Historical Commission, and Coastal Greenbelt Authority.

As part of a broader OC family, we work closely with our sister agencies in OC Community Resources (OCCR) and other County departments.

We also work within the framework of our regulators who provide important oversight, such as California Coastal Commission, Regional Water Quality Board (RWQB), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and US Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE), among others.

Our Stakeholders

OC Parks serves not only our park users, but the communities that neighbor our parks and property owners whose taxes make OC Parks possible. OC Parks are also an important draw for non-residents, including tourists, who want to enjoy our open spaces.

OC Parks is grateful for our volunteers who give countless hours to help us serve the public and deliver our programs and services.



Cherishing Our Uniqueness

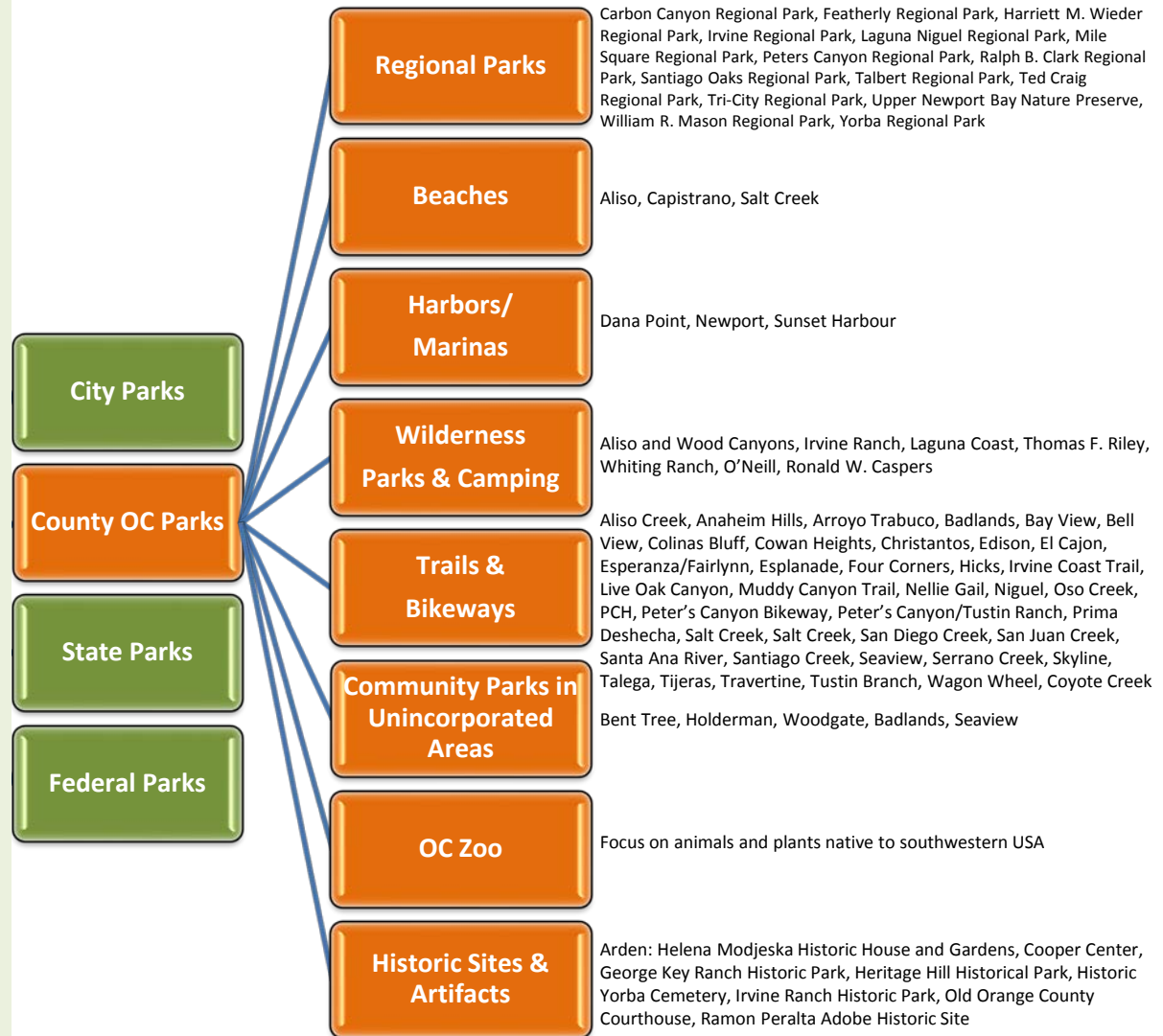
OC Parks is in a unique position of preserving wilderness and open spaces, while still serving local communities. Building on the 2007 Strategic Plan, this Strategic Plan updates and continues OC Parks' commitment to provide:

- A system of regional parks of significant size and character not otherwise provided by local cities and homeowners associations
- A regional recreation network with park sites and programs that respond to diverse, county-wide recreational interests
- A public regional biking, riding, and hiking trail system with linkages to open space and recreation facilities, and with other local trail systems

In addition, OC Parks promotes preservation, conservation, and stewardship of open space and the County's cultural and historic heritage.

Similar to city parks, OC Parks are based in the community. OC Parks also provides significant, dynamic, and diverse parklands, including open space, coastline, unincorporated community parks, harbors and marinas, trails, wilderness, zoo, and historical sites. Traditional children's playgrounds and sports fields are less common in OC Parks.

Similar to State and Federal parks, OC Parks is dedicated to preserving wildlife, providing open space, and educating the public about nature. OC Parks are also rooted in the community with a deep commitment to developing an appreciation for nature.



Our OC Parks Assets

When you think of OC Parks, you may think of land and trees. When we think of OC Parks, we think of all of the wonderful ***park assets*** that are entrusted to us to provide and maintain in serving our visitors!

RECREATION

- Playgrounds
- Sport courts
- Fields
- Hiking/camping
- Horse-back riding
- Golf
- Surfing
- Biking
- Fishing

AMENITIES

- Concessions
- Children's train
- Equestrian center
- Paddle boats
- Bike rentals
- Retail
- Restaurants
- Hotels
- Campsites
- Picnic tables
- Restrooms

OC PARKS EMPLOYEES

- Park Rangers
- Field/operations staff
- Administrative staff

NATURAL RESOURCES

- Ecosystems
- Habitat
- Plants
- Animals
- Geology

CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Archeology & paleontology sites and collections
- Historic & heritage sites (ranches, homes, adobes)

UNIQUE RESOURCES

- Zoo
- Nature centers
- Vista points
- Archery range
- Glider site
- Mountain bike park (in progress)

LAND

- Wilderness
- Regional parks
- Open space
- Nature preserves

FACILITIES

- Picnic shelters
- Restrooms
- Park offices
- Maintenance buildings
- Amphitheaters
- Meeting rooms
- Wedding sites

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Roads, parking, signs
- Bikeways
- Trails
- Walkways/sidewalks
- Benches
- Fire pits/BBQs
- Drinking fountains
- Waste receptacles
- Vehicle/boat maintenance

WATER

- Lakes
- Harbors
- Marinas
- Beaches
- Waterways
- Watersheds
- Estuaries

LANDSCAPING

- Trees
- Shrubs
- Turf
- Native gardens
- Irrigation & drainage
- Restoration projects

Overview of 2007-2017 Strategic Plan

Purpose

The 2007-2017 OC Parks Strategic Plan provided a road map to guide OC Parks, as a newly integrated organization, toward establishing its vision and mission and addressing the management, operation, maintenance, expansion, and development of our facilities and programs. The Strategic Plan addressed three key issues:

1. **The Core Business of OC Parks** – What is OC Parks doing now and how or whether that should change in the future? What should be emphasized, improved, and what should OC Parks look to others (either independently or in partnership) to provide?
2. **Stewardship of Open Space** – How should OC Parks manage and provide use of the wilderness parks and open space under its purview? How can resource protection be balanced with public access?
3. **Funding Regional Parks** -- What is the current capacity of OC Parks to fund current operations along with future improvements and their associated operating costs? Within this framework, what should be priority pursuits for and use of funds?

2007 Goals

The 2018-2027 OC Parks Strategic Plan builds on the goals, established in 2007, to ensure their continuation while focusing on specific areas that warrant more concentrated attention. The 2007 goals were:

A – RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES meet the regional recreational needs of a growing population in balance with preservation and protection of natural, cultural and historic resources.	B – NATURAL RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP preserve and protect the environmental legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.	C – CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP preserve and protect the cultural and historic legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.
D – ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS ensure accessibility to and continuity of the county's harbors, beaches, parks, cultural sites, and trails.	E – PUBLIC COMMUNICATION/ EDUCATION increase public awareness and appreciation for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of Orange County.	F – COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP/ PARTNERSHIPS create strategic alliances by pro-actively engaging other organizations and the community-at-large.
G – ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS align organizational structure and capabilities with the mission and goals.	H – FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE achieve sustainable long-term financial viability to satisfy operational needs, capital requirements, and desired programs and services.	I – PUBLIC SAFETY ensure that all OC Parks facilities maintain a high level of safety for visitors and employees.

Source: 2007-2017 OC Parks Strategic Plan, <http://www.ocparks.com/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=26019>

Accomplishments in the Last 10 Years, Mapped to 2007 Goals

A – Recreational Opportunities: *Meet the regional recreational needs of a growing population in balance with preservation and protection of natural, cultural and historic resources.*

- Provided new amenities while adding functional value throughout the OC Parks' system that offer educational, inspirational, and recreational opportunities for the public, including:
 - *New acquisitions:* Approximately 22,000 acres of open space with expansive access to trails in the Blackstar and Silverado Canyons; Tri-City Regional Park; Roger Stanton Park; and management of Dana Point Harbor, combined with implementation of expanded events and programming at each location
 - *Construction:* A new archery range and multi-purpose facility at Mile Square Regional Park and a multi-sports complex at Clark Regional Park
 - *Renovations:* Haster Basin Recreational Park and Saddleback Gateway
- Substantially increased visitors from approximately 9 million to 14 million by marketing and promoting OC Parks via the creation of an OC Parks Brand Guide, including Park Brochures and Maps; a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube; and expansion of programming and events, such as the Summer Concert series with performances at six different parks, Sunset Cinema Movie Night series consisting of 12 events, OC Zootacular, expanded Park Ranger-led hikes, and partnering with numerous organizations for educational and interpretative programs.

B – Natural Resources Stewardship: *Preserve and protect the environmental legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.*

- Created a Natural Resource Management unit to adhere and address Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP) and Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) regional resource management guidelines; develop restoration plans; coordinate with Natural Communities Coalition, California State Parks, Irvine Ranch Conservancy and other agencies to delineate responsibilities; and increase consistency and results at a regional level
- Implemented partnerships with organizations, such as Natural Communities Coalition (NCC), Laguna Canyon Foundation (LCF), Irvine Ranch Conservancy (IRC), Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), and Waste & Recycling, for native vegetation and weed mapping of approximately 25,000 acres of habitat, as well as providing large scale restoration (230 acres to date) in the Irvine Ranch Open Space, and regular volunteer-based restoration projects each year
- Completed a tree inventory valued at \$175 million and incorporated the inventory into the GIS database to assist in addressing significant regional threats, such as the polyphagous shot hole borer

Accomplishments in the Last 10 Years, Mapped to 2007 Goals (cont'd.)

C – Cultural and Historic Resources Stewardship: *Preserve and protect the cultural and historic legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.*

- Completed significant preservation and adaptive reuse of historical buildings
 - Irvine Ranch Historic Park preserved and renovated five buildings for office space.
 - Irvine Regional Park's Soda Fountain Pavilion preserved and renovated for use as a conference/training facility.
 - Ongoing preservation of the Old Orange County Courthouse, George Key Ranch Historic House, Arden Modjeska Stonehouse, and Opid Cottage.
- Implemented partnerships with local universities, partner groups, and professional entities for management and curation of the County's archaeological and paleontological collection
- Developed increased cultural and paleo programming to highlight Orange County's diverse and expansive natural and cultural history by adding events, such as Prehistoric OC, Science at the Park, and new exhibits at Clark Museum.

D – Access and Connections: *Ensure accessibility to and continuity of the county's harbors, beaches, parks, cultural sites, and trails.*

- Developed and implemented new technologies for ease of obtaining information, such as online services for annual passes, picnic shelter reservations and permitting, Google Streetview for trails, and OC Parks mobile application with information regarding OC Park hours, fees, events, and maps
- Hired a Trails Coordinator and formed a Regional Trails Subcommittee to provide oversight and recommendations on existing trails, public awareness, identification of gap closures, and review of trails policies
- Developed partnerships with municipalities, private developers, OCTA, and other County agencies to develop and implement a countywide regional trail/bikeway gap closure plan, which includes an OC Loop and identifies planned segments of regional trail connections in Orange County
- Developed the OC Parks Master Signage Plan and scheduled implementation across the organization to provide new informational and safety signage

E – Public Communication & Education: *Increase public awareness and appreciation for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of Orange County.*

- Created a Communications Unit, including a Special Events Coordinator and Public Information Officer, to implement professional services for event planning, public communications, and marketing
- Implemented events for celebration and awareness of newly developed projects, such as ribbon-cuttings with elected officials and partner organizations, cultural festivals, and hosting of national and recreational conferences

Accomplishments in the Last 10 Years, Mapped to 2007 Goals (cont'd.)

F – Collaborative Leadership/Partnerships: *Create strategic alliances by pro-actively engaging other organizations and the community-at-large.*

- Co-hosted Orange County Sea Level Rise and Coastal Impacts Workshop with the University of Southern California (USC) Sea Grant Program, FloodRISE Project at the University of California at Irvine (UCI), and the California Coastal Conservancy
- Partnered with OC Public Works to open Haster Basin Recreation Park, which increased flood protection and provided increased park space in a highly-urbanized area of north Orange County
- Partnered with OC Public Works to develop 1.9 miles of an off-road Class I bikeway along the Coyote Creek flood channel in Buena Park, Fullerton, and La Mirada
- Partnered with OC Probation Department to create Camino de Esperanza (Trail of Hope), a unique program that organized field trips for incarcerated youth at an institutional unit to OC Parks facilities to educate and inspire each of the participants in ways that far exceeded expectations

G – Organizational Effectiveness: *Align organizational structure and capabilities with the mission and goals.*

- Implemented a major reorganization of OC Parks, which transferred OC Parks from OC Public Works to OC Community Resources (OCCR) and aligned OC Parks with other community service programs in the County, such as OC Public Libraries, OC Community Services, and OC Animal Care
- Implemented contracted parking management for 17 regional, beach, and wilderness parks to allow staff to focus on customer service responsibilities and increase revenue
- Created multiple new units within OC Parks for better business management and efficient/effective workflow:
 - Created the Administrative Support Unit to provide oversight to all field Office Technicians to develop standardized practices in park facilities; this unit handles staffing, reservation system, and vehicle and equipment inventories.
 - Created the Operational Support Group, focusing on Operations Staff to oversee uniforms, Ranger reserves, 800 MHz radio communications, OC Parks Dispatch, Park Ranger recruitment, major incident response, and civil citations
 - Created the Capital Improvement Unit to establish a systematic process for planning, prioritizing, budgeting, and completing capital improvement and maintenance projects
- Created the only regional park Ranger Academy in Southern California to address training and professional standards for Park Rangers, who serve as peace officers in a regional system, and incorporate training by professionals in fire and law enforcement agencies
 - Note: Rangers are subject to 900 hours of training. The OC Parks Ranger's Academy has 67 graduates.
- Created the OC Parks Volunteer Program to establish volunteer standards across the organization and provide consistent training of volunteers. The OC Parks Volunteer Program has grown from 150 to more than 850 volunteers, donating more than 24,000 hours.

Accomplishments in the Last 10 Years, Mapped to 2007 Goals (cont'd.)

H – Financial Discipline: *Achieve sustainable long-term financial vitality to satisfy operational needs, capital requirements, and desired programs and services.*

- Established operational, capital, emergency, and dredging reserves to address potential dips in revenue sources, future projects, response to disasters, and save for dredging projects that occur every 5 to 8 years
- Developed a five-year Strategic Financial Plan that is updated yearly to demonstrate OC Parks commitment to long-term financial planning and ensuring that it has adequate funding resources into the future
- Established a prioritization and fiscal work plan for funding capital improvement and maintenance projects that are incorporated into OC Parks Five-Year Strategic Plan
- Balanced staff delivered services with contracts for commodities, services, and technical expertise
- Created the Grants Management Group to research, apply, and partner with other agencies for mutually supported projects and programming, such as the OC Loop and Aliso and Wood Canyons Visitor Center
 - OC Parks has been awarded more than \$8 million in grant funding.
- Increased revenue by establishing and amending leases on OC Parks property
 - OC Parks has 47 leases or licenses, which produce \$9.2 million annually.
 - OC Parks implemented site maintenance inspection on all leases/licenses.

I – Public Safety: *Ensure that all OC Parks facilities maintain a high level of safety for visitors and employees.*

- Developed partnerships with local medical and fire agencies to respond to emergency incidents and provide professional training to the Ranger Academy classes
- Developed emergency access maps, action plans, and incident call out procedures
- Provided ICS 300 training for Senior and Supervising Park Rangers and incorporated a Unified Incident Command Structure into OC Parks processes for planning and coordinating incidents
- Constructed the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified buildings at Irvine Regional Park for the Irvine Maintenance Yard

Achievement Awards in the Last 10 Years

OC Parks has received multiple awards for demonstration projects and other achievements by:

- National Association of Counties (NACo)
- National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials (NACPRO)
- National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA)
- City-County Communications & Marketing Association (3CMA)
- California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
- California Parks and Recreation Society (CPRS)
- California Association of Public Information Officials (CAPIO)
- American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Orange County
- American Institute of Architects Orange County Chapter (AIAOC)
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- League of American Bicyclists: Bicycle Friendly Communities

Time for the Next Strategic Plan

Our world has changed since 2007, when we developed the prior Strategic Plan.

- **Changes within OC Parks.** We have increased our land holdings by more than 50%. We face new and pre-existing environmental concerns, such as coastal erosion, tree infestation, and fires. OC Parks was transferred from the OC Public Works to become part of the newly created OC Community Resources (OCCR), building on a shared administrative resource model. Our visitor rates to our OC Parks have increased significantly with potential negative impact on the environment if not carefully managed.
- **Changes in Orange County.** Orange County's population of 3.2 million represents residents with greater diversity in terms of ethnicity, interest, ages, and lifestyles. Today, 30% of Orange County's population is foreign born, for example.

Because of these changes and other trends, it was time to modernize OC Parks' vision and mission to ensure it was impactful to internal and external stakeholders. We want to:

- Provide clarity on why we exist
- Include goals, objectives, and action steps that will guide OC Parks for the next 10 years
- Ensure that the Strategic Plan has a reasonable time frame, given the organization's capacity for implementation

Therefore, the purpose of the 2018-2027 Strategic Plan is to:

- Bridge the 2007-2017 Strategic Plan and the County's General Plan
- Build on the work to date
- Form the foundation in developing OC Parks' Strategic Financial Plan and budget
- Establish programs for continuous improvement and review of progress for meeting goals and objectives and accomplishing established projects, thereby, holding ourselves accountable and assisting in decision-making

Our Strategy

In developing the 2018-2027 Strategic Plan, the intent was to build on the last Strategic Plan and our accomplishments to date. In thinking through our strategy, we realized we have complex operations to deliver our OC Parks services, programs, and activities. Our work clusters into four areas:

- **Services we provide the public.** We work with our partners and stakeholders to deliver our core services: recreational, interpretative, and special event opportunities; user services; maintenance services; and wilderness, environmental, and habitat protection.
- **Internal processes & activities.** We require an internal infrastructure to deliver our core services. Marketing and outreach involves both public awareness and stakeholder engagement. We apply new technology to improve our processes, document our procedures, and monitor our contracts. Our administrative services include IT, human resources, payroll, and business continuity in the event of a disaster. Moreover, we must have effective working relationships within OCCR and with other departments, such as Public Works and the Sheriff, particularly when dealing with issues that cut across organizational lines, such as new park construction projects or working with homeless individuals.
- **Financial sustainability.** To do all of this, we must be financially strong with proper reserves and fee structures, combined with effective asset management (including a Capital Improvement Plan and land acquisition strategy) and cost-effective delivery of effective services.
- **Our people.** Our people must make it happen – fulfill our mission and deliver our core services. We must provide the organizational structure, staffing, resources, and talent management plan to recruit and retain our skilled professionals so we can effectively deliver our core services. These “people” aspects entail team work, great morale, and pride in OC Parks. For example, our Park Ranger Academy has helped us in effectively bringing new Park Rangers on board more effectively. As people retire, we must ensure that we retain their institutional knowledge. It is vital to our success that our people, along with OCCR, other County departments, and the Board of Supervisors, understand and support our shared goals.

The “OC Parks Strategy Map” on the next page highlights these four areas.

2018-2027 OC Parks Strategy Map

Our Mission: We preserve and enhance OC Parks' natural and cultural resources for recreation, education, and exploration.

OC PARKS ASSETS

Regional
Parks

Beaches

Harbors/
Marinas

Trails

Wilderness
Parks &
Camping

Zoo

Historic
Sites &
Artifacts

SERVICES WE PROVIDE FOR THE PUBLIC

Recreational,
Interpretative, &
Special Events

Visitor Services

Maintenance
Services

Wilderness,
Environmental &
Habitat Protection

INTERNAL PROCESSES & ACTIVITIES

Public
Information,
Communication,
& Outreach

Process
Improvements

Planning

Administration

OC Working
Relationships

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Expenditure &
Revenue
Monitoring

Liability &
Reserves

Asset
Management

Contract
Management &
Service Costs

EFFECTIVE, DYNAMIC WORKFORCE

Internal Working
Relationships

Organization &
Staffing

Talent
Management

Safety,
Emergency
Management &
Response

Alignment
Around Shared
Goals

2018-2027 Strategic Priorities and Goals

OC Parks received extensive input into developing its strategic priorities, including:

- OC Board of Supervisors, commissions, and advisory groups
- OC Parks employee interviews and focus groups
- Multiple strategic-planning workshops with OC Parks employees and external stakeholders
- Stakeholder survey of 4,607 respondents

On the stakeholder survey (summarized in the Appendix), 4,607 respondents rated OC Parks high overall (4.3/5), including an excellent enjoyment of their visits (4.4/5) and strong customer service (4.3/5).

Areas identified for continued improvement are:

- Program offerings and availability of amenities
- Improved advertising and information about recreational programs and opportunities
- Improved maintenance of landscaping and trails, as well as facilities and amenities.
- Desire for more open and passive green space and standard park amenities

The top priorities for the next decade were:

- Invest in habitat restoration/environmental sustainability (66%)
- Purchase/acquire more parks and open space (55%)
- Build new trails/bikeways within and between parks (41%)

From this input emerged a consistent pattern of the need for OC Parks to continue what it is doing, while strengthening our capabilities in specific areas:

1. Adapt to Our Park Visitors' Needs

2. Promote OC Parks

3. Protect Our Parks in Perpetuity, Together

4. Serve as Stewards of OC Parks' Assets

5. Practice Sustainable Financial Management

6. Ensure Responsible Park Development and Expansion

7. Implement Thriving, Resilient Ecosystems for Emergency Management

8. Cultivate an Effective, Dynamic Workforce

Cross-Walk Between 2007-2017 and 2018-2027 Goals

(The 2018-2027 goal colors correspond to the colors used for the subsequent objectives.)





OC Parks Goals

2018-2027

Goal 1. Adapt to Our Park Visitors' Needs

A Better Future

OC Parks understands and adapts to serve our evolving and diverse communities, particularly given the importance of parks in our urban life.

Why This Matters

Orange County today is rich in a diverse population – diverse in terms of ethnicity, age demographics, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural heritage. The OC population will likely change in the next decade, combined with increased urbanization.

OC Parks provides a safe haven for a wide array of interests; for example:

- Places to get away, walk with friends, and allow children to play outdoors
- Places for multi-generational family and friends to gather – birthdays, reunions, and picnics
- Places for outdoor cultural events
- Places for organized activities and tours for seniors and school children
- Places with accessible facilities for seniors and individuals with disabilities

We will identify ways to engage OC residents who have yet to discover our parks.

By understanding our diverse community, we can also make sure we allocate our park assets to serve the public effectively.

OC PARKS: Enriching Our Community



Goal 1. Adapt to Our Park Visitors' Needs

Objectives		Initiatives
1.1	Understand user groups and help them participate and feel connected to OC Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1 Gather new and existing data on community and park user demographics 1.1.2 Conduct a needs assessment with non-users to better understand barriers to access 1.1.3 Explore options to remove barriers
1.2	Provide high-quality programming and services to diverse audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2.1 Assess current programming 1.2.2 Create new program and service opportunities that bring people together and connect to OC Parks 1.2.3 Build partnerships to help connect users and programs
1.3	Provide the kinds of facilities, amenities, and infrastructure to meet our users' needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.3.1 Assess users' needs for facilities, amenities, and infrastructure (e.g., for people with disabilities (ADA), path signage) 1.3.2 Integrate these needs into the Capital Improvement Plan (Goal 4)
1.4	Adapt to the community we serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.4.1 Project changes in community trends 1.4.2 Evolve programming and services 1.4.3 Use innovative processes and mechanisms to foster dynamic programs and engaging services

Linkage to Other Goals

Goal 1 supports other OC Parks' goals, including the need to promote our OC Parks to encourage users and first-time visitors to enjoy them (Goal 2) and ensuring we have the kinds of facilities and infrastructure to meet their needs (Goal 4). Simultaneously, we want to ensure we take into consideration users' needs when we consider future park development or expansion opportunities (Goal 7).

Goal 2. Promote OC Parks

A Better Future

OC residents – users and non-users alike – feel their lives are better because of OC Parks. Our parks are a destination for families, outdoor enthusiasts, and international travelers. This goal is important for furthering our other goals in this Strategic Plan, such as fostering a pride of ownership among park visitors, promoting a sense of stewardship, and creating OC Parks as enduring places and spaces for all generations.

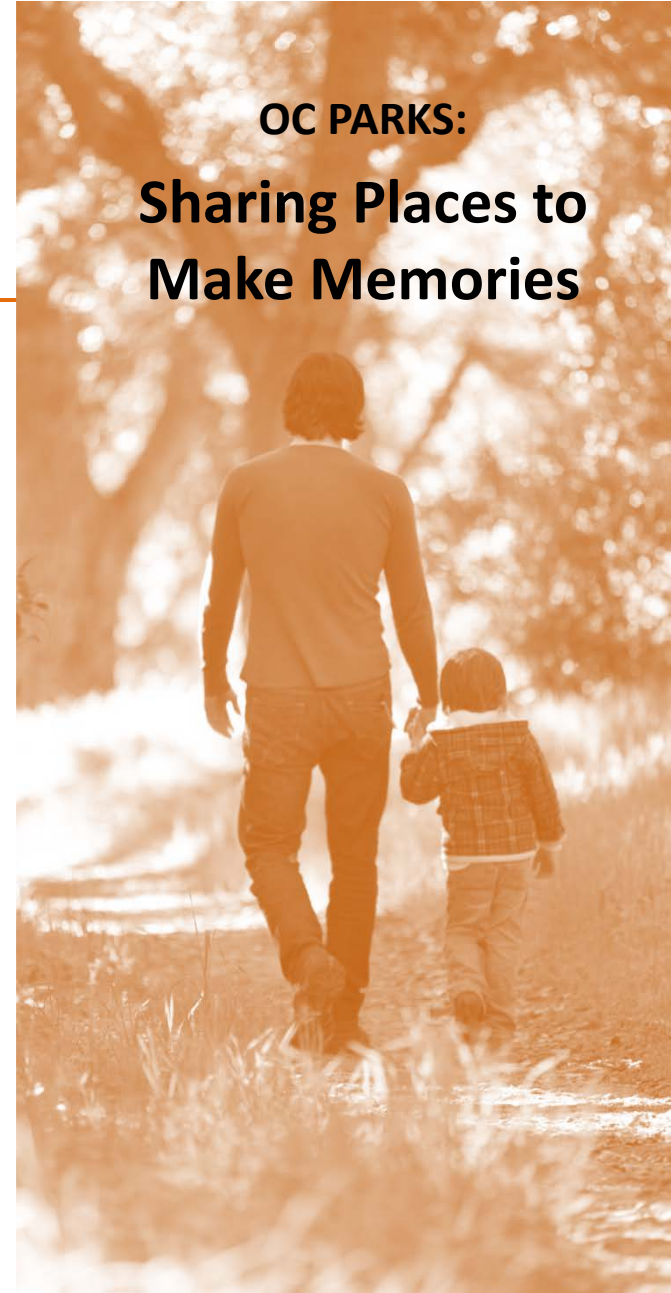
Why This Matters

When many people think of Orange County, they think of theme parks. OC Parks opens residents' minds to the vast cultural and natural resources available. OC Parks improves our lives by:

- Sharing our OC history and heritage
- Celebrating special life milestones
- Exposing residents to the great outdoors
- Discovering new places and creating memories responsibly
- Providing a wide variety of places, programs, and park services year round
- Ensuring OC residents understand the economic and social benefits of OC Parks for improved health, real estate values, and life style benefits

Through OC Parks' outreach efforts, our visitors will discover our hidden gems, unique experiences, and new places to enjoy.

OC PARKS: Sharing Places to Make Memories



Goal 2. Promote OC Parks

Objectives	Initiatives
2.1 Intensify our education, marketing, and outreach efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1.1 Update the OC Parks website2.1.2 Create easily-shareable content, using current media practices, to bring attention to different types of park experiences2.1.3 Promote OC Parks activities and events via social media2.1.4 Share the stories of the people and places of OC Parks2.1.5 Reach out to OC residents who are currently non-users to promote OC Parks' benefits and educate them regarding how OC Parks is using their tax dollars effectively
2.2 Promote a consistent identity and cohesive message	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.2.1 Continue to develop consistent messaging and identity for all of OC Parks2.2.2 Create greater clarity among park users regarding OC Parks, state, federal, and local parks
2.3 Connect people with diverse places, spaces, and experiences in OC Parks so they will return and spread the word	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.3.1 Develop and implement a plan for the next generation of marketing and educational materials that park users need, taking into consideration the latest technologies and preferences2.3.2 Promote healthy outdoor activities and enriching experiences for people of all ages, including suggested activities

Linkage to Other Goals

Goal 2 must work in concert with Goal 1 in terms of adapting to park visitors' needs. As part of promoting OC Parks, we must also educate the public about being responsible users of the parks so that the parks continue to thrive – today and for future generations (Goal 3), discussed next.

Goal 3. Protect Our Parks in Perpetuity, Together

A Better Future

The public continues to experience exceptional recreational opportunities. We are all champions for the protection and enhancement of our parks' significant natural and cultural resources – enjoying the smell of sage while hiking, the vistas on a mountain bike trail, or a birthday picnic with our friends and families.

Why This Matters

People protect what they love. Our parks are extremely popular and highly used.

How we use the parks today affects how visitors experience the parks tomorrow. If not carefully managed, intense and accumulated usage can negatively impact our fragile and finite natural, cultural, and historical resources. When these resources are misused or damaged, the restoration process is harder and potentially impossible to recover.

Protecting our parks is everyone's responsibility. Working together, we protect the health of our land and community so people can love our parks forever.

OC PARKS: Protecting the Wellness of Our Land and Community



Goal 3. Protect Our Parks in Perpetuity, Together

Objectives	Initiatives
3.1 Manage park use to protect resources while preserving exceptional park experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1.1 Understand visitor desires and park capacities 3.1.2 Develop guidelines for public use requests for events and amenities 3.1.3 Communicate a report card with balance use indicators 3.1.4 Develop strategies to match desire uses with park sustainability practices
3.2 Inspire responsible park behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.2.1 Provide information on responsible use of parks through a variety of media (e.g., at trailheads and park entry areas, social media, and website) 3.2.2 Continue to work with partner organizations to deliver the message of responsible use 3.2.3 Evaluate and implement most effective methods (e.g., best practices) for ensuring responsible use
3.3 Build public appreciation and connection to protect our park resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.3.1 Offer educational initiatives to inspire visitors to value, respect, and protect our natural and cultural resources 3.3.2 Identify and implement optimum resources and staffing levels to provide visitors with safe and enjoyable experiences 3.3.3 Build and expand on our partnerships and volunteers to achieve our goals in collaboration 3.3.4 Ensure positive working relationships with regulatory agencies through ongoing compliance

Linkage to Other Goals

Goal 3 supports other OC Parks' goals, particularly in terms of working with changes in our park visitors' needs (Goal 1) and educating the public about OC Parks (Goal 2). It also ties into the importance of ensuring we protect OC Parks' assets (Goal 4), particularly in terms of mitigation or recovery caused by damage to our green space or infrastructure.



OC PARKS: Caring for Our Parks

Goal 4. Serve as Stewards of OC Parks' Assets

A Better Future

The public cherish our parks as special and exceptional places to visit, recreate, and enjoy – today and into the future. We will maintain, restore, and enhance our park assets in an efficient and fiscally responsible way.

Why This Matters

The public has entrusted one-tenth of Orange County land to OC Parks to maintain, preserve, operate, and enhance. Therefore, the public should expect to have these prized assets well cared for.

OC Parks is in charge of both built and natural environments. In addition to preventive and corrective maintenance and landscaping, we periodically face environmental threats – invasive species, coastal erosion, fires, etc. – that endanger our intricate ecosystem. At such times, we get involved with habitat restoration, harbor dredging, and other preventive and restorative measures.

To ensure the sustainability of our assets for future generations, we must provide safe, clean, and enjoyable facilities, protect our valuable and sensitive built and natural resources, and commit to flexibility in meeting the communities' needs.

Goal 4. Serve as Stewards of OC Parks' Assets

Objectives	Initiatives
Maintain Our Parks	
4.1 Maintain safe, attractive, and enjoyable parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1.1 Establish and implement a clear set of quality standards to care for our parks and their environments 4.1.2 Establish a maintenance management program to establish a baseline set of responsibilities for maintaining the parks 4.1.3 Evaluate each facility for appropriate staffing levels
Assess Our Park Priorities	
4.2 Develop systems for evaluating and prioritizing maintenance needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.2.1 Build and implement an Asset Management System for OC Parks, including an asset condition assessment of both built and natural environments that is integrated into the existing GIS system, day-to-day operations, and other systems 4.2.2 Develop a plan for monitoring and tracking maintenance updates/activities 4.2.3 Identify opportunities for preservation and adaptive reuse of historical and cultural buildings and sites 4.2.4 Solicit public input regarding community needs
Improve Our Parks	
4.3 Restore, enhance, and sustain our entrusted properties and parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.3.1 Incorporate best management practices for sustainability 4.3.2 Develop a Capital Improvement Plan that aligns with the Strategic Financial Plan and forecasts future projects and expenditures 4.3.3 Restore our historically valuable properties and treasured natural resources 4.3.4 Implement a culture of continuous improvement and applying best practices, including inspections and budget items for needed improvements

Goal 4. Serve as Stewards of OC Parks' Assets

Objectives		Initiatives
4.4	Be an industry leader and collaborative partner to share and implement new initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">4.4.1 Evaluate existing technology and tools for regulatory compliance and improving effectiveness4.4.2 Partner with other agencies, universities, and professionals to support scientific research in saving and preserving our parks
Protect Our Parks		
4.5	Maintain a responsive posture to natural disasters or potential damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">4.5.1 Develop and implement a proactive hazard mitigation plan to protect our public facilities and natural resources

Linkage to Other Goals

Goal 4 is closely tied to mitigation initiatives to protect the land and habitats (Goal 3) in terms of protecting and enhancing our hardscape and softscape. As stewards of OC Parks' assets, Maintenance must be responsive to park visitors' needs (Goal 1). Any park development or expansion (Goal 6) must take into consideration the maintenance resources requirements. Finally, Maintenance is intricately involved with natural or man-made disasters – during all phases of emergency preparation, response, and recovery (Goal 7).

Goal 5. Practice Sustainable Financial Management

A Better Future

OC Parks are oases in the middle of an urban landscape that make Orange County a great place to live, work, and play. We will ensure our parks have the financial resources to sustain them into the future.

Why This Matters

The County has made major investments in large parklands and open spaces in a densely populated environment. Given the pressures for increased housing stock and business expansion, it is vital to sustain OC Parks assets.

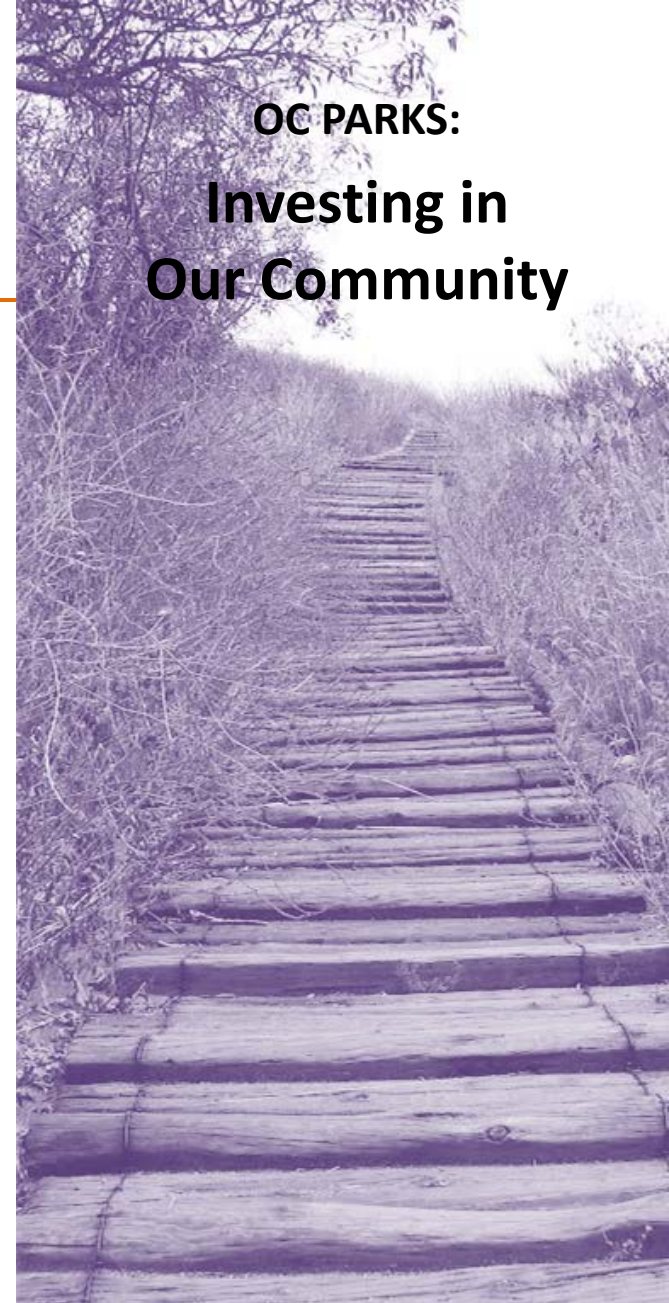
OC Parks financial resources support the operation and maintenance of our assets and our reinvestment in our capital infrastructure. OC Parks receives 85% of its funding from a special designated tax; the balance of the budget comes from leases, park fees, and other revenue sources.

OC Parks must always make sensible financial decisions, particularly given the major goals OC Parks has set out to accomplish. We must make choices and set priorities. Through sound financial management, OC Parks will:

- Provide exceptional park experiences to make memories
- Conserve and restore habitat and environmental resources
- Sustain our quality of life in a great urban county in America
- Assist in maintaining real estate values by creating a healthy balance between suburban growth and open spaces
- Ensure capital investments in OC Parks' infrastructure, habitat restoration efforts, and environmental hazards and mitigation needs

Adequate financial reserves allow us to respond to opportunities, emergencies, and economic changes.

OC PARKS: Investing in Our Community



Goal 5. Practice Sustainable Financial Management

Objectives		Initiatives
5.1	Fund core services today	<ul style="list-style-type: none">5.1.1 Continue to evaluate and prioritize expenditures to ensure OC Parks are clean, safe, and open5.1.2 Link the funding of core services to the Asset Management System for OC Parks, including an asset condition assessment (Goal 4)5.1.3 Assess, administer, and manage contracts to maximize available resources5.1.4 Update the park fee schedule
5.2	Invest in priority restoration and park enhancement projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">5.2.1 Seek grants and obtain funding to tackle restoration initiatives5.2.2 Invest in the park infrastructure and facility renewal
5.3	Ensure sufficient reserves for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none">5.3.1 Establish a reserve policy specific to OC Parks, addressing requirements for:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Operations reservesEmergency & disaster response and recovery reservesCapital reserves

Linkage to Other Goals

Goal 5 makes all of the other goals possible. We need funds to meet our park visitors' needs (Goal 1) and promote OC Parks (Goal 2). We must make sure we implement mitigation initiatives to protect the land and habitats (Goal 3), ensure our OC Parks are well-maintained with ongoing renovations and improvements (Goal 4), and position ourselves for thoughtful park development and expansion (Goal 6). We know that Orange County faces periodic natural and man-made disasters and must invest in resiliency and recovery efforts to lessen their impact and renew the land (Goal 7). We also need to invest in our people if we want to cultivate an effective, dynamic workforce (Goal 8) that can achieve these goals and ensure are facilities are open for the publics use.

Goal 6. Ensure Responsible Park Development and Expansion

A Better Future

We serve the needs of OC residents today and into the future. We link our land and water assets into an integrated system.

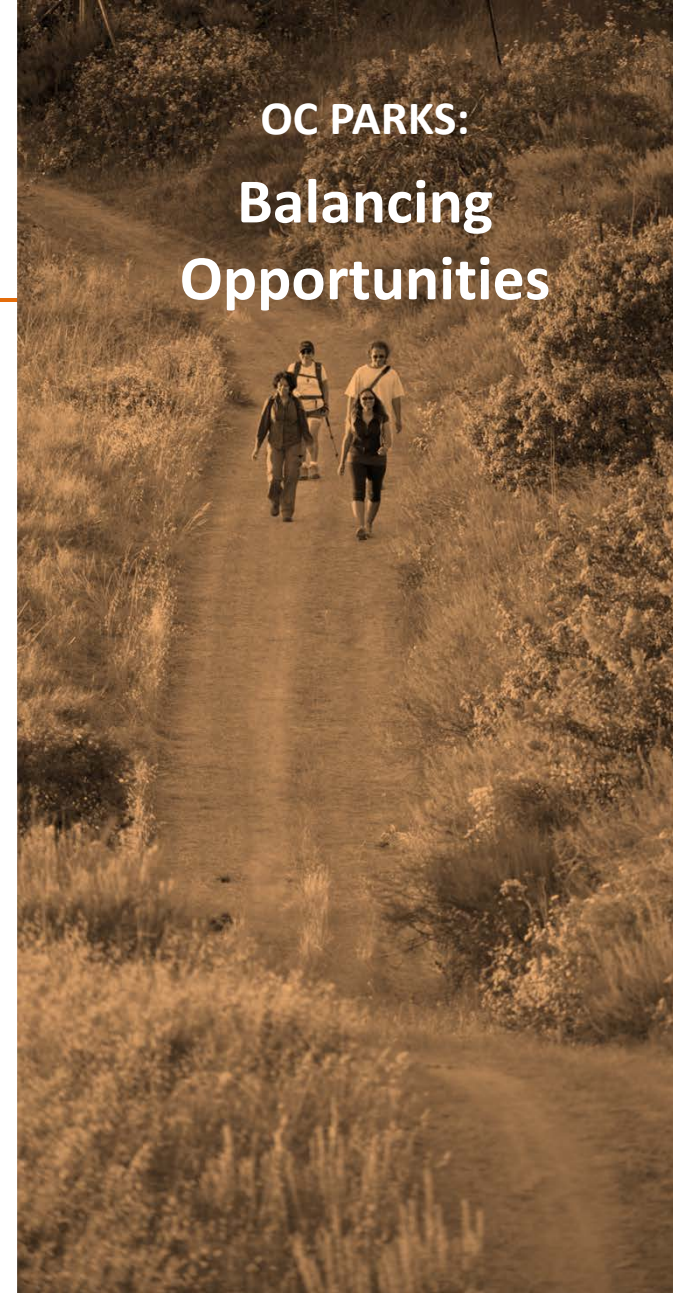
Why This Matters

OC Parks periodically has opportunities to acquire land or transfer land to appropriate entities. Both actions can result in ways for OC Parks to better serve OC residents. We may acquire land to better connect our parks or serve as a buffer along the urban edge. We may transfer land that does not meet our mission or planning criteria.

The OC General Plan provides guidelines for the direction of a regional park system in Orange County. OC Parks needs a Strategic Master Plan for the overall park system that can serve as a framework for park expansion and development. The individual parks within the park system also require their own individual park plans.

Through such master planning, OC Parks can make better decisions. We can balance proposed acquisitions and reallocations against the real-world costs so we can maintain a vibrant, valued, and sustainable park portfolio in the coming years.

OC PARKS: Balancing Opportunities



Goal 6. Ensure Responsible Park Development and Expansion

Objectives	Initiatives
6.1 Prepare or update plans for OC Parks overall and specific park sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1.1 Develop a Strategic Master Plan for the overall OC Parks system, focusing on connectivity 6.1.2 Update General Development Plans (GDPs) – as Park Master Plans – for the individual parks
6.2 Develop and implement criteria for acquisition and reallocation of park assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.2.1 Develop an OC Parks Asset Portfolio that outlines current assets, building on the 2007 OC Parks' Facilities Inventory Assessment (Volume II), and identified future requirements for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilderness Regional Beach Historic Harbor Trails Zoos 6.2.2 Develop criteria and standard procedures for future assets, including analysis of standard operating costs 6.2.3 Apply the criteria for potential acquisitions, including the identification of related resource requirements 6.2.4 Use the criteria for determining potential transfer of OC Parks land to other entities

Linkage to Other Goals

Goal 6 is important for meeting our park visitors' needs (Goal 1), particularly in terms of connecting our OC Parks assets into a meaningful park system. It also relates to OC Parks being able to be good stewards of both the land and habitats (Goal 3) and the facilities, infrastructure, and parklands (Goal 4), including the understanding of the potential resources and staffing required with any future park development or expansion (Goal 5).

Goal 7. Implement Thriving, Resilient Ecosystems for Emergency Management

A Better Future

Orange County is not immune to major disasters. OC Parks works with our County family to tackle major issues – fire mitigation, earthquake recovery, environmental (e.g., sea-level risings or erosion), and societal issues. We will plan for resiliency of our people, our assets, and our land.

Why This Matters

Orange County is a beautiful place that periodically has major setbacks and losses due to circumstances beyond anyone's control – fires and earthquake. Once a hillside has had a fire, the potential for flooding or mudslides increases. Fires and earthquakes create hardships to our parklands, people's lives and homes, and our flora and fauna. Although OC Parks is reliant on firefighters and other agencies, OC Parks serve as emergency sites for evacuees if necessary.

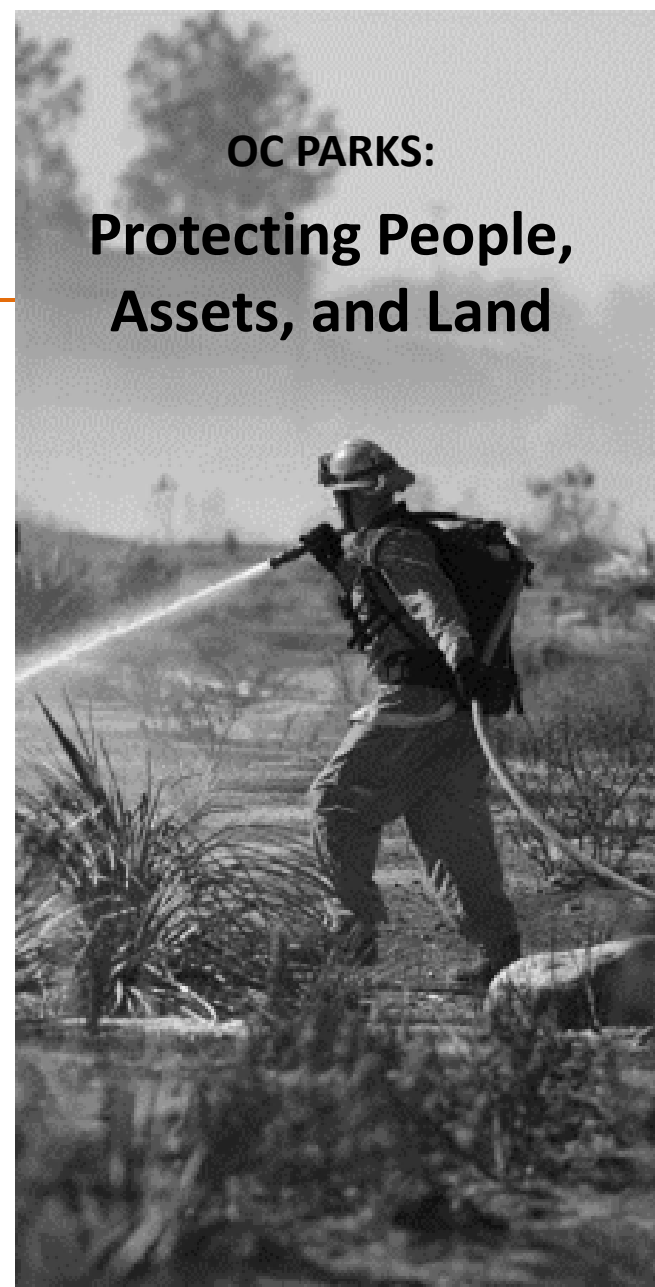
OC Parks must plan for responding to such disasters and design resilient ecosystems that lessen the impact through:

- Native plants that serve as buffers and fair better during fires
- Restoration of buildings with fire retardant materials and structural integrity
- Safety measures for our visitors and employees
- Other hazard mitigation initiatives

OC Parks does not have primary responsibility for addressing larger societal issues, but must work with the OC agencies and nonprofit organizations for humanistic and effective solutions.

We must be resilient and innovative in addressing such issues.

OC PARKS: Protecting People, Assets, and Land



Goal 7. Implement Thriving, Resilient Ecosystems for Emergency Management

Objectives		Initiatives
7.1	Sustain and create alliances to address emergency incidents and safety concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">7.1.1 Participate in or form coalitions with other agencies and stakeholders and the community-at-large to achieve mutual goals7.1.2 Work with partners to identify mutual goals and joint implementation strategies7.1.3 Share technical knowledge and expertise with other jurisdictions and agencies
7.2	Always be prepared for emergencies or disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">7.2.1 Maintain up-to-date Public Safety and Resource Protection Operations Plans that support or contain emergency access maps, Unified Incident Command structure, Evacuation Plans, and Incident Call-Out procedures7.2.2 Conduct cross-training and scenario training for search & rescue operations, fires, emergency responses, and related issues in partnership with local cities, state and federal, public safety agencies7.2.3 Explore the potential for establishing a Department Operations Center within the OC Parks system

Linkage to Other Goals

Goal 7 ties directly to our desire to protect our parks in perpetuity (Goal 3) and serve as stewards of OC Parks' assets (Goal 4) by protecting them, responding during disasters and emergencies, and ensuring their recovery if an event occurs. To do this will require sustainable financial management practices (Goal 5). Moreover, we have to include in our criteria for future park development & expansion (Goal 6) such considerations as the ability to protect and recover the land and habitats.

Goal 8. Cultivate an Effective, Dynamic Workforce

A Better Future

OC Parks is sought after as a great place to work. Our employees are committed to our vision, mission, values, and goals. They are equipped to do their jobs effectively and understand their impact on park users. They thrive in working together in seeking new solutions and innovations to the challenges facing OC Parks.

Why This Matters

Our people are our most important assets. Without them, OC Parks could not achieve our goals or fulfill our mission in serving OC residents. Positive work environments increases morale and productivity, reduces sick days, and improves retention rates. Providing feedback to and soliciting feedback from employees helps employees to feel valued and connected to OC Parks in a quest for continuous improvement.

OC PARKS: Investing in Our People



Goal 8. Cultivate an Effective, Dynamic Workforce

	Objectives	Initiatives	Linkage to Other Goals						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.1	Develop our people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8.1.1 Continue to build on OC Parks employees' expertise in the areas of core responsibilities and competencies 8.1.2 Strengthen capacity for collaborative leadership, innovation, and partnerships 8.1.3 Launch the OC Parks Maintenance School 		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8.2	Implement effective recruitment and retention strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8.2.1 Develop and implement a recruitment plan 8.2.2 Develop and implement a succession and retention plan 8.2.3 Develop and implement a training plan to address developmental needs not cover in the Park Ranger Academy or Maintenance School 8.2.4 Provide the organizational structure and staffing to allow OC Parks to fulfill its mission 8.2.5 Sustaining a healthy and safe work culture 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8.3	Build meaningful working relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8.3.1 Strengthen the connections between field and administrative support staff through more integrated work processes, increased collaboration and coordination, and demonstration of our values 8.3.2 Define the roles and responsibilities across the organization, including identification of internal expertise to capitalize on 8.3.3 Enhance the volunteer support program for a variety of uses 		✓	✓	✓			✓
8.4	Respond to changing demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8.4.1 Train employees to develop a culture where we all serve as OC Parks ambassadors, knowledgeable about the breadth of assets 8.4.2 Make foreign language training available regarding survival words and friendly greetings to be sensitive to specific community demographics 	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓

Linkage to Other Goals

Goal 8 is critical to the achievement of all the other goals. We need to train and develop our people so they have the skills, knowledge, and abilities to tackle these strategic priorities.

Linkage of the Goals to Each Other

The table displays the goals that have a strong connection with each other.

		Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6	Goal 7	Goal 8
Our Goals		Adapt to Park Visitors' Needs	Promote OC Parks	Protect Our Parks in Perpetuity	Serve as Stewards of OC Parks' Assets	Practice Sustainable Financial Management	Ensure Responsible Park Development/ Expansion	Promote Resilience and Safety	Cultivate an Effective, Dynamic Workforce
1	Adapt to Park Visitors' Needs		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
2	Promote OC Parks	✓		✓		✓			✓
3	Protect Our Parks in Perpetuity	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Serve as Stewards of OC Parks' Assets	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Practice Sustainable Financial Management	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
6	Ensure Responsible Park Development & Expansion	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
7	Promote Resilience and Safety			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
8	Cultivate an Effective, Dynamic Workforce	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Acknowledgements

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STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

OC Parks worked with an extensive list of stakeholders and organizations involved in and passionate about the parks. The list is too long to list here. OC Parks is appreciative of their involvement and useful insights on how to make the parks better.

OC PARKS EMPLOYEES

Hundreds of OC Parks employees attended planning workshops and worked endless hours in the development of this Strategic Plan. This level of involvement is valued and important for them in shaping our future direction and building commitment to what we need to do in the coming years.

This plan provides a framework for our future direction, including our strategic priorities and alignment of our staff and organization to achieve our goals. It does not authorize expenditure of funds or commitment of resources.