

# **STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

Presented by  
**Mayor Donald P. Wagner**

**Tuesday, February 14, 2017**





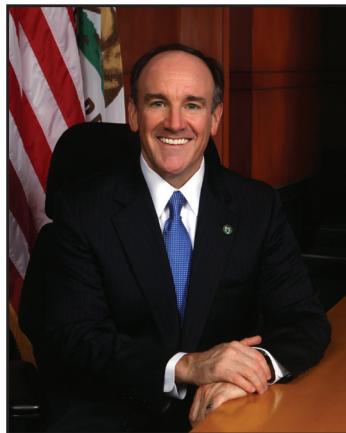
**Mayor**  
**Donald P. Wagner**



**Mayor Pro Tem**  
**Lynn Schott**



**Councilmember**  
**Melissa Fox**



**Councilmember**  
**Jeffrey Lalloway**



**Councilwoman**  
**Christina L. Shea**



**City Manager**  
**Sean Joyce**

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*The following is the City of Irvine State of the City Address,  
originally delivered February 14, 2017, by Mayor Donald P. Wagner*

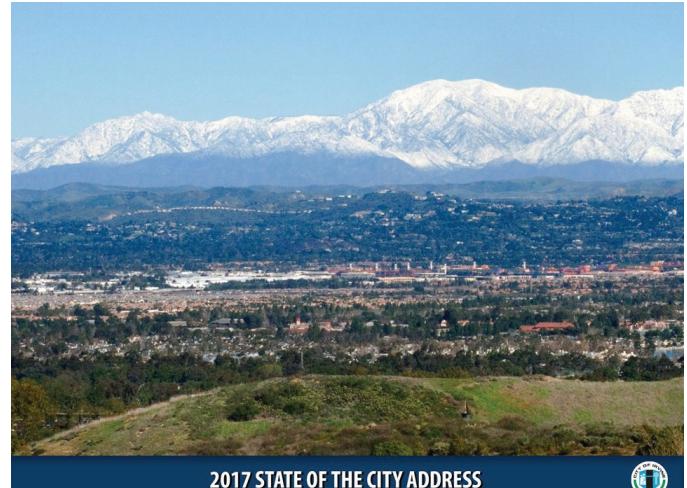
Good evening, everyone. Whether you are here in person or watching electronically, I thank you for spending some time with us. It is, of course, Valentine's Day, so I will try not to intrude too much on your evening.

Let me start with a brief introduction. I am NOT the Donald everyone has been talking about.

I'm Don Wagner; I was . . . privileged . . . to be elected Mayor in November. And it truly is a privilege to serve the citizens of this great City. But I am certainly no stranger to this City. I spent the last six years in the State Legislature representing Irvine – defending it mostly – up in Sacramento. My wife, Megan, and I moved to Irvine in 1991 from Los Angeles. We never looked back, having found a wonderful place to raise and educate our children. For more than 25 years, this has been Megan's and my home.

As Mayor, I have the pleasure of working with a fantastic group of City officials and staff. In particular, I am proud to lead the City Council whose members are here with us tonight: Mayor Pro Tem Lynn Schott, and Councilmembers Christina Shea, Jeff Lalloway, and Melissa Fox. Each of them shares my passion and dedication to the people of this City and they work very hard on your behalf. It is an honor to serve with each one of them.

I mentioned staff, and they, too, deserve recognition. Much of what is going well in the City – and, as you will hear, there is a lot – is the result of talented and dedicated staff working very hard and very creatively. There are too many to mention – though I should briefly recognize City Manager Sean Joyce who heads up our staff, and Police Chief Mike Hamel who is responsible for public safety – both of whom are here tonight. Not just to them, though, I want each one of our City staff and public safety personnel to know that the Council recognizes and appreciates your efforts on behalf of our citizens.



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Finally, I want to take a moment to recognize and thank the many City commissioners and committee members, some of whom are also here tonight, and who volunteer so much time to make Irvine better.

So, what can I tell you about the state of our fair City?

Let me start by telling you what I heard from you during the recent campaign and in my now two months on the job.

First, we need to get Irvine moving again by improving traffic.

Second, you demand that this Council and this government keep Irvine the safest city of its size in the nation.

Third, our schools must remain world class.

And fourth, it is time to deliver on the long delayed promise of a Great Park.

Those are my goals for the coming years. Fortunately, this City is in a great position to achieve those goals.

Let's take a look at that position and some of our recent successes to get a picture of where Irvine is today.

It is no secret that Irvine is a wonderful place to



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live, and you don't have to take my word for it.

Sunset Magazine's Cover Story this month ranked Irvine as one of the "Best Places to Live 2017." We received high marks from the editors for bike lanes and trails, low crime rate, a robust economy, a multicultural population, and the emerging Orange County Great Park.

Similarly, the online publication Fiscal Times just last month ranked Irvine number one among municipalities for its financial management. I attended the National Mayors' Conference three weeks ago and can assure you that little more than 45 years after incorporation, Irvine is, and is truly regarded around the country as, one of America's great cities.

If you look at what matters to people in making a city livable, we are high on the list of what matters the most.

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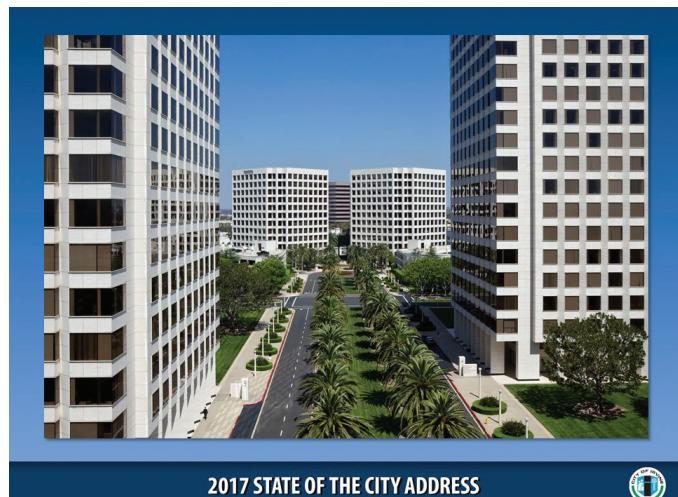


Consider:

A wonderful headline written for our Police Department's press release in 2016: "Irvine Safest Big City in the Nation." As Police Chief Mike Hamel was quoted: "The City of Irvine has recorded the lowest rate of violent crime per capita for any city in the nation with a population of 250,000 or more." That matters deeply to each of us. Our police officers work hard on your behalf every day and every night, and we are fortunate with the results.

Consider also: We are the largest city in Orange County in terms of geographic size, at 66 square miles. To fill that space we have beautiful community and neighborhood parks ... athletic fields ... community centers ... open space. And, we have among the strongest home sales in the country. Those sales are an integral part of a robust economy and help keep Irvine young and evolving.

Finally, Irvine boasts of two fantastic school districts that produce wonderful students – most of whom are college-ready, and college-bound. As to colleges, Irvine truly shines. We can boast of the very best in American higher education. We have a truly fine community college in Irvine Valley College, a Cal State Fullerton campus, Brandman University, and, of course, UC Irvine, one of the nation's premier research universities. Higher-education choices also include the Irvine campuses of Concordia University ... Chapman University's



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Rinker Health Science Campus ... USC ... Pepperdine University ... University of La Verne ... and Western State College of Law.

For these reasons, people want to come here ... to work here ... and to live here ...

All of which, of course, leads to challenges, not the least of which are traffic and building out the Great Park.

We are very much the victims of our success.

By year's end, Irvine's population will be closer to 270,000 than today's 260,000, and this City Council is committed to addressing that growth in a way that matches development with responsive governance.

We want residents, new and old, to thrive in their jobs and in our schools, and to live happily in a City with the high expectations that this City Council pledges to meet.

So let's look at those challenges.

Traffic. All of us on the Council heard about it in the recent campaign, and all of us on the Council, of course, drive in Irvine so we have lived the problem. Because of that, we are focused on finding solutions.

For example, we fully support the efforts underway by Caltrans and the Orange County Transportation Authority to expand capacity on our local freeways, and to lessen the impacts that the current freeway congestion causes in Irvine. When the freeways are crowded, to absolutely no one's surprise, motorists – Irvine residents but many other people as well – get off those freeways and clog our local arterial roadways. Moreover, the first streetlight on or off of a freeway is under the control of Caltrans, not the city of Irvine. That's a challenge when you are trying to coordinate all those various lights. Thus, we are working closely with Caltrans and the Transportation Authority on these issues of common concern.

But we are doing much more to aggressively and

quickly improve traffic flow.

Last month, in the City Council's first meeting of the new year and my first business meeting on the Council, I put on the agenda the matter of traffic management. As a result, now in place are two initiatives for enhanced traffic management and better City Council oversight of Irvine traffic.

First, the City Council has directed City Manager Sean Joyce to return later this month with the legal documents and operations plans needed to reinstate the former City of Irvine Transportation Commission. This commission will be made up of local experts and traffic professionals charged with the task of bringing to Irvine the very best practices for traffic management.

Some of those practices are easy, common sense ideas, and should be implemented soon, such as eliminating a number of those annoying red no left turn arrows that keep you sitting at an intersection when there is no opposing traffic. Or better coordinating our lights for less interruptions of traffic flow. And working with Irvine businesses to bring voluntary trip reductions through staggered work or delivery hours, increased ride-sharing, and maybe off-site parking with shuttle service to reduce trips into a congested area.

In addition, the new Transportation Commission will be charged with a central tenet of my campaign platform: advise on development so that no project gets approved unless it completely mitigates its traffic impacts. The first rule of holes is simple; when you're in one, stop digging.

Second, the City is actively engaged in the recruitment for a Transportation Manager. I understand that we are the largest City in America without a transportation professional dedicated exclusively to traffic management. This City Council will fix that.

Our Transportation Manager hire will oversee traffic management and transit planning, and serve as the staff liaison to the Transportation Commission. And we will hire our Transportation Manager without adding to the growth of the budget. The

position will be paid for from existing staff levels. We are not charging the citizens of Irvine to fix a problem that the short-sighted planning decisions made many years ago have caused for you today.

That is not all this Council intends to do to get Irvine moving again.

We continue with the implementation of more than \$116 million in traffic capital projects to manage congestion and improve traffic flow.

These include: roadway and intersection widening to enhance capacity; the aforementioned new traffic signal timing effort focused on reducing delays, especially at freeway ramp areas; expanding transportation options such as iShuttle commuter routes; and promoting bicycling and walking as alternatives to commuter and recreation vehicle trips.

We are also working diligently to accelerate capital projects that can have a near-term effect in easing traffic. We are fortunate that conservative and prudent fiscal management has left us with the ability to finance these projects. They include:

- Widening of parts of Jamboree Road, one of our major thoroughfares;
- Council consideration of a Jamboree/Michelson pedestrian bridge to minimize pedestrian/vehicle conflicts at one of the City's busiest intersections;
- Adding additional turn lanes at Culver and University to ease traffic from UC Irvine and University High School;
- Widening the intersection at Jeffrey and Walnut;
- And expanding iShuttle business commuter routes now that OCTA is operating the system.

We have heard you on traffic and we are working hard to get Irvine moving.

Then . . . there is the challenge of the Great Park.

On a shelf in my office are two pieces of concrete. One is from the Berlin Wall. The other is a piece of

torn up runway from the old El Toro Airbase. In a way, they are very much related. The fall of the wall gave us the peace dividend that allowed Congress to close the air base. With that closure came a time of deep division in our county.

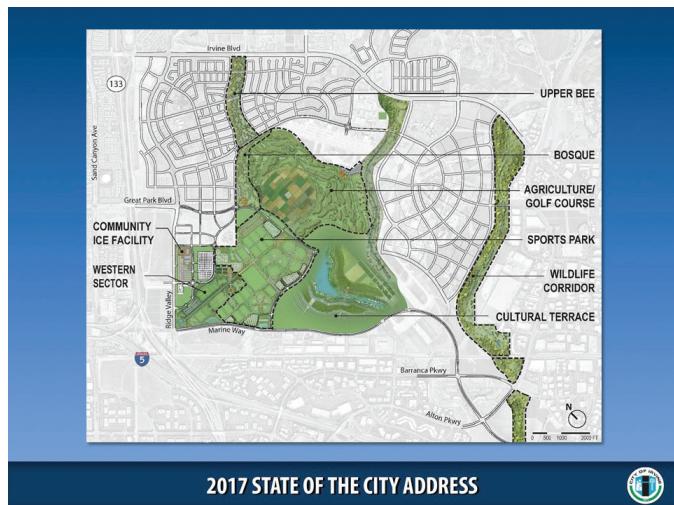
But collectively, we healed that division with the decision to remove the runways, from which I snagged a small bit, and to build the Orange County Great Park. Many millions of dollars – and maybe a couple of audits later – we are finally in a position to deliver not just to Irvine, but to all of Orange County, on the Great Park promise.

When complete, the Great Park's 1,300 acres will be known for its many amenities, the most striking being its sports facilities.

Our private partner, Five Point Communities, is putting the final touches to the first phase, to be delivered early this year, of a 194-acre Sports Park. When all phases are completed, it will build out a total of 688 acres on the City's behalf.

The City's promise to deliver the Great Park has recently moved forward at an accelerated pace. You are going to see results. The enormous effort . . . and those fantastic results . . . are coming in 2017. This year, we will have soccer games on new fields and inside a new stadium . . . volleyball tournaments on new sand playing areas . . . and 25 tennis courts. But that's just the beginning.

According to the City staff's research, the final total



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of 454 acres that are or will be sports-related – the 194-acre Sports Park, a 170-acre golf course, the 90 acres of our current Western Sector of active sports fields, along with a future ice facility I'll talk about in a minute, and the accompanying parking – will be the largest single public sports complex in California.

In fact, it may be the largest such playing site in the country.

Now let me come back to that ice facility: On Thursday, I will join Anaheim Ducks owner Henry Samueli and other Council members as we break ground on the state of California's largest public ice facility. It will be at the Great Park. It will be a 270,000-square-foot facility, and it will include four sheets of playing ice along with a 2,500-seat arena. The Anaheim Ducks' nonprofit affiliate is building it and will operate it. Join us for that groundbreaking on February 16, at 10 a.m. All are welcome.

Indeed, the Council and I cannot wait to see so many young people, and teams and tournaments this year on the fields of our Sports Park.

And, we can't wait for the ice facility's opening day in 2018.

Finally, let me touch briefly on a few more Irvine successes we expect to realize in 2017 and beyond.

Five new hotels are under construction with due dates to be completed this year – a reflection of

the booming business in our City.

We expect shortly to approve the temporary amphitheater plans needed to bring live music back to Irvine. The City Manager and I have personally met with staff and proponents of the temporary amphitheater and we're pushing a schedule that will allow the venue to open in time for the latter half of this concert season.

The Irvine Company is enhancing the Irvine Spectrum with completion this year of its newest 21-story, 450,000-square-foot office tower to match its twin that opened in 2016. These two office buildings boast an incredible array of high tech and diverse businesses. With the availability of nearby living space we can limit or even possibly reduce the amount of traffic they generate. Remember, the City Council is keeping a closer eye on traffic than in years past and expects the development community to do the same.

The Irvine Company is also giving back to the community by renovating the Woodbridge Village Center, one of the City's oldest retail establishments. Millions of dollars are being put into that center to rehabilitate this landmark.

Your City continues to be in a robust financial position. Our three main sources of funding – sales tax, property tax, and hotel tax – are doing well. We outperformed budget estimates in 2016, and have a contingency reserve of more than 21.5 percent to protect against those years in which the economy is weak.

Also robust is our growing technology presence. According to the Orange County Business Journal's 2017 Book of Lists, in the technology industries of telecommunications, software, consumer electronics, and chipmakers, 22 of the county's 40 top companies call Irvine home. Spearheaded by innovation coming out of UC Irvine and led by great corporate tech leaders, some of the marquee names in technology are located right here in Irvine – ... Broadcom ... Toshiba ... Verizon ... Western Digital ... Blizzard Entertainment ... and in the

medical technology field Allergan and Edwards Life Sciences.

Lastly, I want to address the proposed Veterans Cemetery. I worked hard and quite successfully in Sacramento to co-author legislation needed at the state level to begin the process of getting a Veterans Cemetery in Irvine. Since Governor Brown signed that bill I co-authored, the Veterans Cemetery Committee, under the direction of Col. Bill Cook, has identified its preferred cemetery site. I have already begun conversations with Sacramento legislators to get the necessary further approvals and funding. The veterans deserve a cemetery in Irvine. I will continue to work with them and my former colleagues in the Legislature to get them what they deserve!

In short, it is an exciting time to be in Irvine. We are not without challenges. But we also are not without the resources and the will to tackle those challenges.

The greatest of those resources for Irvine, in fact, for any community, is not our money or our buildings or our open space. It is not any of those businesses I mentioned, nor, of course, is it this City's government. It is our human capital, our people, and their willingness to dream and to work towards their dreams and goals.

I firmly believe that wherever you come from, and whatever your interests and talents, you want the same thing from government for you and your family: The ability to live and work productively, in safety; to provide a quality education to your children; and to be free to speak, worship, participate, and thrive in your community.

This is a City where goals and dreams can be realized, and are being realized every day. We welcome your participation in the life of this City as we move forward. This Council and I stand ready to help in whatever ways we can. We thank you for the honor of being able to serve you and the great city of Irvine.

Thank you and good night.