



PEDAL POWER!

How Irvine became OC's leading cycling city



BY KEDRIC FRANCIS

Irvine is famous for its master plan, which helped create one of the most successful communities in the country. The city has been recognized as one of the most liveable, safest and all around best places to live in the U.S. by organizations like the U.S. Conference of Mayors, 24/7 Wall St. and MONEY magazine.

Irvine has also earned accolades for something that, while perhaps not as crucial as schools and safety, has been a key part of the city's success since the beginning: the bicycle. More specifically, how easy it is to cycle around the city.

"The bike paths in Irvine are just amazing," says Michael Forte, an avid cyclist who is also general manager of Irvine-based Felt Bicycles. "Southern California has always been a great place for cycling because of its climate. And Irvine is very friendly to cyclists as far as infrastructure and bike paths," he says, joking that, "a bike path on the East Coast is called the shoulder."

Irvine currently has 301 miles of on-street bike lanes and 54 miles of off-street bikeways that connect neighborhoods, villages and city centers throughout the community. By spring of 2017 an extensive system of new bike trails and pedestrian paths designed and built by FivePoint will run in and through the Orange County Great Park and the Great Park Neighborhoods.

In 2013, Irvine earned its first Silver rating as a Bicycle Friendly Community

from the League of American Bicyclists, an improvement on its previous Bronze rating. According to the League, "a community recognized by the League as Bicycle Friendly welcomes bicyclists by providing safe accommodation for cycling and encouraging people to bike for transportation and recreation."

Irvine's Silver BFC award is the highest ranking of any city in Orange County, and recognizes the City of Irvine's commitment to improving conditions for bicycling.

The Bicycle Friendly Community Award comes in five levels: Diamond, Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze, measured by categories such as bike ridership, bicycle friendly laws and ordinances, availability of bike lanes, and how often bicycling classes are offered.

Will Irvine be able to advance to Gold standard in future evaluations, joining Palo Alto, San Francisco, Santa Cruz and San Luis Obispo as the only

California cities to reach that level? Irvine doesn't have to look far for an example. UCI earned a Gold ranking as a Bicycle Friendly University from the League, one of only 12 Gold schools in the country.

The Silver ranking isn't the only cycling accolade the city has earned. Irvine has a bike score of 70 from walkscore.com, a group that measures how bikeable and walkable cities, neighborhoods and even apartment communities are. Irvine's ranking is the highest in Orange County, No. 7 in the state, and 25th in the country.

Within Irvine, University Town Center earns a 93 bikeable score out of 100, earning the "Biker's Paradise" level. Both University Town Center and nearby University Park (the first village in Irvine) were designed with paths and walkways that run through the green spaces that connect the community as part of the original William Pereira master plan for Irvine.

Plans for Great Park Neighborhoods, one of the newest communities in Irvine, include many of the attributes that made the first Irvine village designed by Pereira so walkable and bikeable.

"Great Park Neighborhoods is a trails and transit community," says Tom Martin, FivePoint's VP of Product and Planning. "We have planned each of our neighborhoods to have a distinct ethos and we've linked them together by the 50-70 foot wide greenbelt system we call the 'T'."

"The idea is that people will be able to bike from one park to another, throughout the Orange County Great Park, and to retail and services in the vicinity."

And Irvine's residents want those trails in the Orange County Great Park. When the City of Irvine amended its Bicycle Transportation Plan in 2011, the process included surveys about cycling.

TOP 10 TRAILS AND BIKEWAYS IN (AND THROUGH) IRVINE

1. **Jeffrey Open Space Trail**
Trail length: 3.5 miles
2. **Mountains to Sea Trail**
Trail length: 22 miles
3. **Portola Trail**
Trail length: 3.7 miles
4. **Shady Canyon Trail**
Trail length: 3.7 miles
5. **San Diego Creek Trail**
Trail length: 9.3 miles
6. **West Irvine Trail**
Trail length: 1.7 miles
7. **Sand Canyon Trail**
Trail length: 3.7 miles
8. **Quail Hill Loop Trail**
Trail length: 1 mile • Hike & Mountain Bike
9. **Serrano Ridge Trail**
Trail length: 2.6 miles • Hike & Mtn. Bike
10. **Woodbridge Trail**
Trail length: 3.7 miles

The highest priority from respondents was for "new off-street bikeways connecting to and through the Orange County Great Park."

"When people are asked what's the number one amenity they want in a community, it's hiking, biking and walking trail systems," says Martin.

"The fact that FivePoint is building the Great Park Neighborhoods with cycling in mind is just so progressive," says Felt's Michael Forte. "It's good for the economy and the health of the residents. It's good for everybody."



FIVEPOINT'S COMMITMENT TO CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Since 2013, FivePoint has given an orange bicycle to each new household in the Pavilion Park and Beacon Park communities in the Great Park Neighborhoods. These cool cruisers, designed by Irvine-based Felt Bicycles, have become a common sight in and around the Orange County Great Park. But they are more than two wheels and a set of handlebars. They are human-powered vehicles that can connect people with their communities. Whether on a path, trail or street, bicyclists see their community and those who live there differently. They can stop and greet others. They are connected.



Let's make Irvine the very best it can be. Let's keep our eyes and minds open to new ideas. Let's go beyond the status quo. Let's surprise ourselves with what happens next. **Let's go.**

