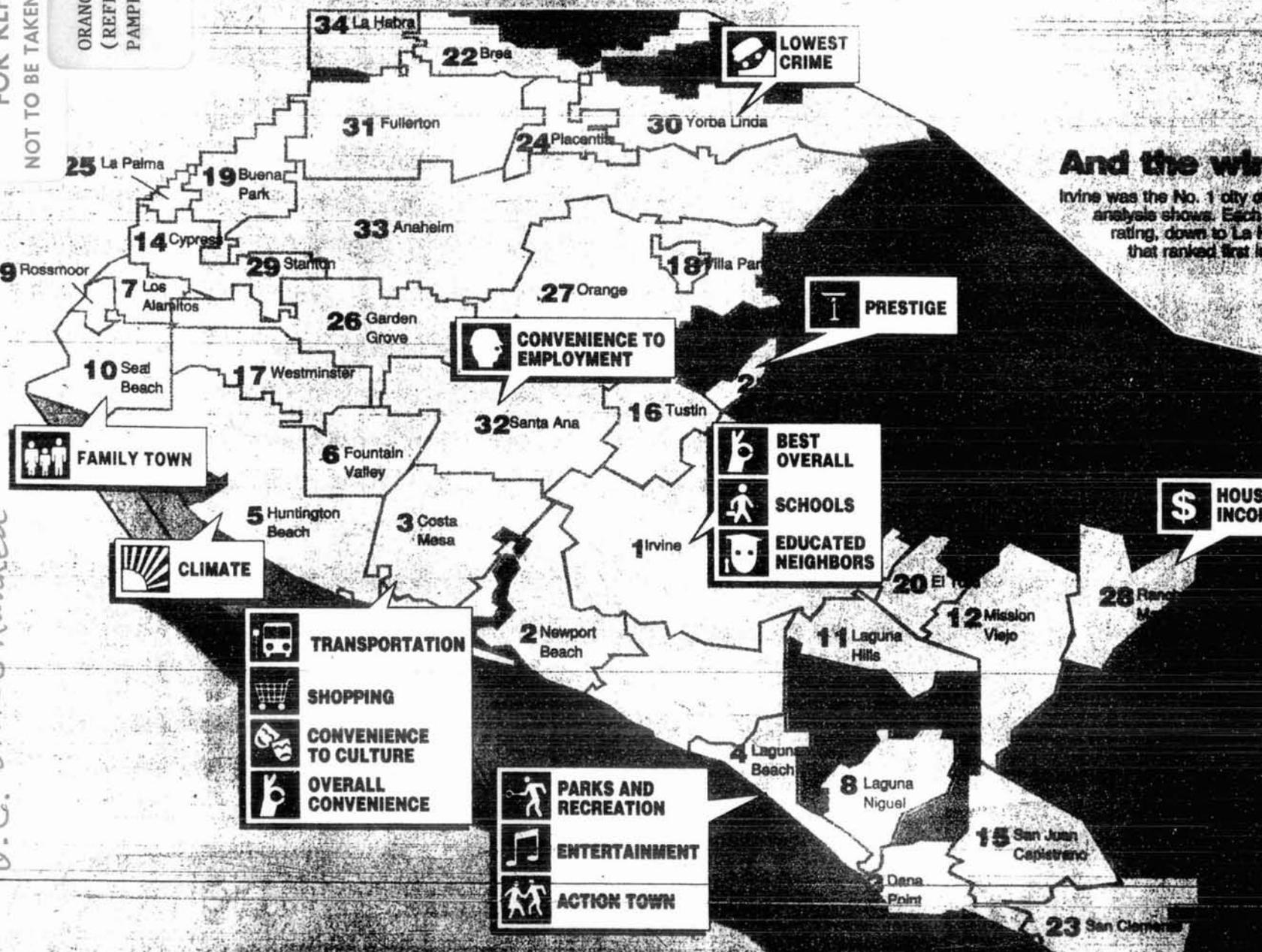


# Close-up

FOR REFERENCE  
NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM LIBRARY

ORANGE COUNTY  
(REFERENCE  
PAMPHLET FILE)



**And the winner is...**  
Irvine was the No. 1 city overall, the Register's computer analysis shows. Each community is labeled with its overall rating, down to La Habra's 34th. Boxes point to cities that ranked first in individual categories.

O.C. Cities Ranked

A PLACE TO CALL

**RACE TO CALL HOME**

**Rankings**



City	Schools	Climate	Shopping	Recreation	Entertainment	Crime	Air Pollution	Traffic	Income	Educated Neighbors	Transportation	Convenience of location to Beach	Employment	Culture
<i>Orange</i>	1	24.5	22	13	2	16	11.5	16	4	4	2	15	22	22
Lewport Beach	2.5	6	10	10	14	16	11.5	25.5	14	3.5	6	4	14	4
<i>Costa Mesa</i>	2.5	3.5	1	17	6	2.5	27.5	30.5	28	17	1	8	7	1
Aguna Beach	13	18	3	1	1	16	11.5	16	25	2	25	1.5	28	28
<i>Hinley Beach</i>	4	1	27	18	22	2.5	27.5	19.5	17	17	1	2	19	2
Mountain Valley	29	3.5	16	6	16	10	11.5	25.5	8	17	10	12	5	3
<i>Los Alamitos</i>	6	8	29	5	30.5	5.5	11.5	18.5	19.5	14	20.5	13	20	17
Aguna Niguel	17.5	13	5	16	10.5	10	11.5	8	5	3.5	19	7	30	30
<i>Costa Mesa</i>	6	3.5	31	31	30.5	5.5	11.5	8	18.5	14	21	10	26	26
Leaf Beach	6	3.5	30	3	25	2.5	27.5	8	34	24	18	5	22	22
<i>Long Hills</i>	8.5	19	11	26	20	16	11.5	8	30	11	15	14	27	18
Mission Viejo	11.5	29.5	25	14	16	15	11.5	8	3	7	17	20	29	29
<i>Dunwoody Pt.</i>	17.5	13	2	11	19	7	27.5	8	20	8.5	27.5	1.5	33	33
Ypress	24	13	28	19	4	10	11.5	19.5	12	27	29.5	15	19	16
<i>San Juan Capistrano</i>	17.5	6	8	7	10	10	27.5	10	16	14	27.5	5	32	32
ustin	20.5	24.5	4	29	11	21.5	11.5	33.5	28	19.5	6	24	2	5
<i>Westminster</i>	31	8	26	23	5	18	27.5	25.5	32	30	9	13	11	8
ilia Park	26	29.5	12.5	21.5	10.5	29	11.5	8	16	24	22	25	6	14
<i>Buena Park</i>	29	21	6	12	7	27.5	11.5	26.5	21	32	13	23	17	15
l Toro	8.5	21	7	30	25	16	33.5	8	9	10	14	19	26	20
<i>Aliso Viejo</i>	20.5	29.5	33.5	33	30.5	27.5	11.5	8	2	8	18	27	9	12
rea	10	29.5	14	2	3	32	11.5	19.5	15	24	26	33	23	25
<i>San Clemente</i>	17.5	13	6	6	13	2.5	27.5	8	31	21	22	3	34	34
lacentia	15	29.5	20	4	30.5	32	11.5	8	13	19.5	20	32	15	18
<i>Palmdale</i>	22	21	24	25	30.5	24.5	11.5	8	27	24	23	22	21	24
arden Grove	32.5	13	18	20	25	21.5	11.5	32	26	30	11	16	9	7
<i>Orange</i>	32.5	21	12.5	21.5	6.5	26	27.5	29.5	18	24	8	30	9	9
ancho Santa Margarita	11.5	29.5	33.5	34	30.5	16	11.5	8	1	5	33	28	31	31
<i>San Juan Capistrano</i>	30	13	24	32	24	21.5	11.5	25.5	33	30	34	17	12	12
orba Linda	23	34	23	26	30.5	32	11.5	1	6	8.5	31	34	18	26
<i>Fullerton</i>	18	20.5	17	9	12	32	27.5	33.5	22	12	19	29	16	21
anta Ana	34	17	19	27	11	21.5	27.5	33.5	32	34	3	21	1	2
<i>Westminster</i>	27	21	21	24	21	24.5	33.5	30.5	27	33	7	29	6	11
s Habra	25	29.5	15	15	16	12	11.5	25.5	24	28	34	31	25	27

Rankings are averaged for communities with tied scores. The lowest categories of crime, air quality, and income are not included in this chart because they are compiled from these categories. Source: The Register Poll and Chapman Survey from statistics compiled by the Register.

**Factors:** Each place **What we want:** Low crime is high priority

# OC's top-rated cities might surprise you

Marilyn Kalfus  
The Register

It lacks an ocean, rugged hills and neighborhoods of stately homes hidden in sprawling estates. Instead, rows of pale, look-alike houses line its streets, and fog hovers above. But Irvine, a one-time barley and lima bean capital that routed into the nation's largest planned community, is a new title to trumpet. This city of 97,873 residents is the best place to live in Orange County. That's according to a Register computer analysis of 14 factors that influence how people pick a home.

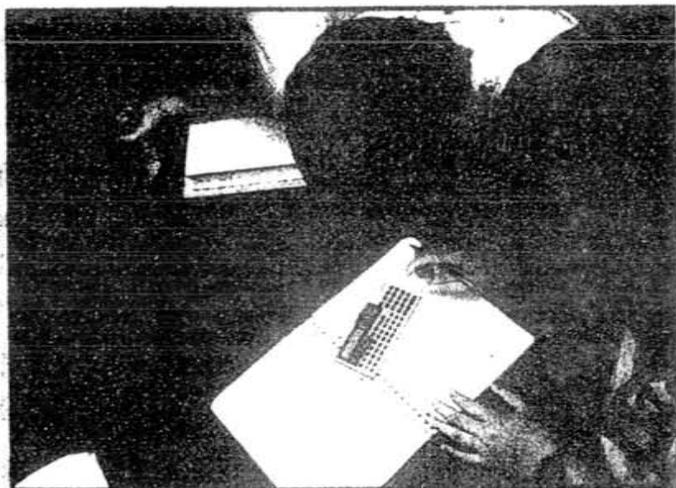
"I'm not surprised at all that we would receive a top ranking," Irvine Assistant City Manager Paul Brady said. "Oftentimes, I get up above the city in a high-rise building or a helicopter, and it's a beautiful setting. ... It's a good blend."

Some results were predictable: Educated and affluent residents, convenient location and high student test scores helped catapult such cities as Irvine and second-place Newport Beach to the top.

But there were some surprises: Costa Mesa, which took third place overall, turned out to be the county's best bargain.

It wasn't among the cities that many Orange County residents said they would prefer to live in, but it captured high marks in many categories. And its housing prices, averaging \$172,000 last year, were in the lower half of the county's roster of cities.

Also unexpected: Laguna Beach, better known for its artists' colony and homosexual community, emerged as a top city for families. Rancho Santa Margarita, which takes its image on afford-



Ana Vanegas/The Register

Students use a calculator to work a problem at University High School in Irvine during a physics class taught by Dan Wroblecky.

able housing, was one of the most prestigious towns. And sleepy Tustin tied with Santa Ana for the worst crime score, with nine crimes a year for every 100 residents.

La Habra, far from the freeways and the beach and cursed with acrid smog, was judged the worst place overall to live.

The Register study was conducted by Chapman College Professor Karl Reitz, who computed such factors as crime rate, weather, smog, school test scores, socioeconomic level of residents, proximity to beaches and entertainment, and the number of parks and stores.

The key to the analysis was a poll that Reitz conducted among Orange County residents to learn which factors they believe are most important when picking a place to live.

Reitz weighted the results of the computer analysis based on what residents said mattered the most.

For example, county residents said low crime was the most important factor, so

more weight was given to a low crime rate than closeness to a beach.

"The whole thing was driven by what people said they found desirable in a community," said Reitz, who lives in Yorba Linda. His city placed fourth from the bottom.

The survey was not all-encompassing. It did not measure a city's charm or lack of charm. It counted parks but didn't analyze their quality. It didn't examine community spirit or ethnic diversity.

"I think what you're doing is basically biased against older cities," protested Santa Ana Mayor Dan Young, whose town came in third to last. Noting that those cities tend to have large minority populations, he added: "It's a subtle form of racism. It's unfair. It's superficial."

But others felt that where people live has little to do with racial prejudice, and that people of all origins strive for a higher standard of living.

"I think people probably look for the same thing no

matter what their race is," said Harvey Englander, a political consultant who works in Newport Beach and lives in Orange. "I think everybody wants good schools, strong law enforcement. Those issues transcend any kinds of racial issues. These are things that we all want for our families. There's no surprise in that."

Irvine has the good schools as well as educated residents and plenty of restaurants and theaters, the computer analysis showed.

"The city of Irvine is like a lab," said David Price, an architect who lives in Irvine. "You see the newest hotels, the prototype school buildings, the cutting edge in new housing."

Modern Irvine was born in 1970, when The Irvine Co. announced plans for a master-planned community on 43 square miles of undeveloped land surrounding the University of California, Irvine. Houses sprang up in place of crops, and in the next 10 years Irvine became California's fastest-growing city.

In the Register analysis, Irvine snagged consistently high scores. It topped the school category, with public schools that led the county in student test results. Scholastic Aptitude Test scores for reading and math were 454 and 532, respectively, compared with last-ranked Santa Ana's average of 396 and 483, according to figures released by the Department of Education in 1988 for the previous school year.

Lynn Winfield, a 40-year-old mother of three, said she moved to Irvine four years ago because of its reputation for excellent schools.

"I found a beautiful home

Please see POLL/2

## Conclusions: What we didn't consider

By Marilyn Kalfus  
The Register

So how seriously should you take the Register's computer analysis?

Look at it this way: Of the three people who compiled the rankings — a reporter from Orange, an editor from Laguna Beach and a pollster from Yorba Linda — no one is pulling up stakes for No. 1-ranked Irvine.

We know there are plenty of decisions that go into choosing a home that might not be reflected in the rankings.

For one thing, the survey looked at the total city or community, not neighborhoods. And small, unincorporated communities weren't rated at all.

The categories that were used were adapted from the Rand McNally Places Rated Almanac, chosen because they were considered important to the widest range of Orange County residents.

The Register gathered thousands of statistics for this survey and, to reduce any bias, weighted those figures according to what residents say they want most in a community.

But other factors were not available or could not be counted.

For example, a city might have a high crime rate, but some neighborhoods in that city might be among the county's safest. Another city might have mediocre schools, but you might have moved to your neighborhood because that one school had the perfect program for your child.

### In response

We all know that numbers don't tell the whole story of a community. A hundred factors can go into choosing a place to live — or sometimes one very important factor. You might find your community the prettiest place to live in Orange County or its best-kept secret. Write and let us know why you live where you do, and we'll publish your replies. Send your thoughts to Accent, c/o The Orange County Register, PO Box 11626, Santa Ana 92711.

And the Register analysis did not measure house or lot sizes, or tall trees. It did count the number of parks, but did not examine how big they are or what they offer.

Not to the chagrin of one Chapman College professor, where bookstores counted.

"For me, the most important aspect of culture is bookstores," said Robert Slayton, an assistant history professor who lives in Orange. "Do I have access to the books that I want? For me, I don't want just Robert Ludlum. I don't want to sound elitist. There's nothing wrong with what's sold at B Dalton. I just want that and more."

Beyond that, there was no accounting for taste.

Tens of thousands of people prefer the uniform homes in Irvine and other planned communities; others cannot abide look-alike

Please see CONCLUSIONS 3

## Poll: Some results are expected; others are more surprising

FROM 1

in Newport Beach we were going to buy, but because of the (Irvine) schools we ditched it," she said.

When the family arrived in Irvine her son, who had attended a private kindergarten in Pensacola, Fla., had to repeat that grade at Turtle Rock Elementary School. "Even in a private school," she recalled, "they were so far behind."

The shining star of the Irvine Unified School District isn't a kindergarten, though, but University High School. It had 26 National Merit Scholarship semifinalists last year, more than any other public school in the nation. About 97 percent of its students continue their education after graduation.

Irvine also ranked first in the educational level of residents, with the typical resident having a college background. It came in second, after North Tustin, in the category of prestige, which measured housing costs and the socioeconomic level of residents.

Brady said he believes the "town-gown relationship" involving UCI and Irvine Valley College gives the city an advan-

tage.

"We have tapped these people to be on commissions and task forces, gaining university knowledge and expertise you don't find in a lot of communities," the assistant city manager said.

The city has been a leader in innovative social programs. It runs a busing program for the handicapped, offers child care in its civic center and has the strongest human rights law in the county. The law bans discrimination based on sex, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation or marital status.

Now, in a novel approach to the homeless problem, a group of city and university officials are discussing housing homeless families on UCI property.

Irvine also came in as a top family town, third after Seal Beach and Laguna Beach, because of its schools, low crime rate and number of parks per capita.

"Our kids have a neighborhood street, probably with as strong an identity as the one I grew up on," Price said. "The kids can walk to school. They

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 1  
Schools: 1  
Transportation: 2  
Shopping: 22  
Recreation: 13  
Entertainment: 2  
Smog: 16  
Other pollution: 11.5  
Crime: 16  
Income: 4  
Educational level: 1  
Climate: 24.5  
Convenience to beach: 18  
Convenience to employment: 10  
Convenience to culture: 10  
Family town: 3  
Overall convenience: 9  
Prestige: 2  
Action town: 8  
Average house price: \$210,279

have friends that can walk over. We're within a stone's throw of the boys' and girls' club, and they can play on a hardwood basketball court. We have a dozen tennis courts within three or four blocks. There's a lagoon you can go sailing in."

Jo Ann Caronna, 40, owner of The Collection, a clothing shop in The Marketplace shopping

center, has raised two daughters in the 11 years she's lived in Woodbridge Village. Even when they played on their own, she said, she always felt that they were safe.

"There are swimming pools and lakes that have lifeguards," Caronna said. "As long as there's a lifeguard on duty, you can send the munchkins down to the pool. So they can be independent within their own community."

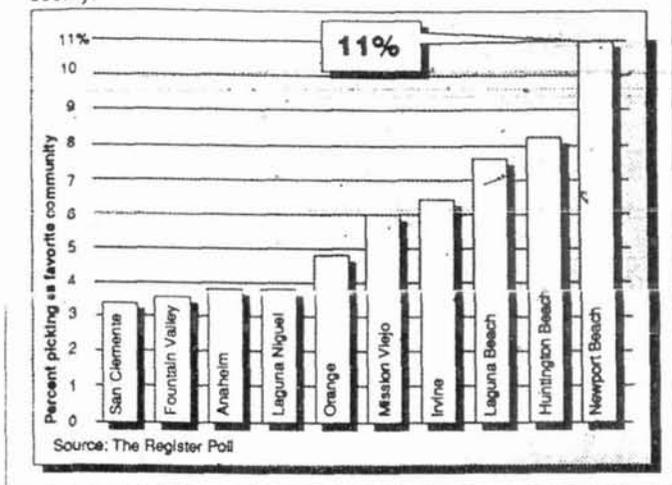
Irvine didn't have the lowest crime rate; Yorba Linda did. But Irvine placed well above Santa Ana, which had the highest crime rate. Figures released by the state Bureau of Criminal Statistics last year showed that in 1987, Yorba Linda had two crimes for every 100 people; Irvine had four; Santa Ana had nine.

Irvine ranked second in entertainment, which included the number of movie and live theaters per capita, and second in transportation, which measured freeway access and proximity to John Wayne Airport. Irvine has two freeways, the Santa Ana (I-5) and San Diego (I-405), run-

Please see POL/3

## Picking a home

If they could live anywhere in the county, Orange County residents are most likely to want a home in Newport Beach. The top 10 choices included a variety of communities scattered throughout the county:



The Register

## Poll: Analysis of communities offers some surprising results

FROM 2

ning through it. Many other Orange County cities have one — or none.

If the cities had been graded for yuppie appeal, Irvine probably would have grabbed a high score in that category, too.

"The joke is, in Irvine they don't let you live there unless you drive a BMW or a Volvo and you have an (Izod) alligator on your chest," said Sandy Genis, a Costa Mesa city councilwoman. "Oh. Polo is acceptable, too."

"In Costa Mesa, you're liable to find a person who got the shirt because they liked it, and if the shirt has the squiggle, they'll get out their scissors and cut the squiggle off."

So what type of place is crawling with all-cotton alligators? One that bans such visual blights as television antennas and recreational vehicles parked on the streets. Depending on where you live, houses must be painted in earth tones or pastels. And if you live in, say, Woodbridge, don't get caught working under that Volvo with a wrench!

"We don't allow people to tear down their cars in their front yards or in their driveways," said Bob Figeria, executive director of the Woodbridge Village Association.

But some Irvine residents are dissatisfied. Linda Davison calls it an overly planned community.

Davison, 49, has lived in Irvine for the past 21 years. She said she would move if she could afford to. Irvine, she said, is "too plastic for me."

"I grew up on Balboa Island," said Davison, hugging her ski jacket against the wind on a monochromatic gray afternoon at Irvine's Crossroads shopping center. "It (Balboa) developed slowly, and with some character."

In a scathing review of Irvine

last year, a New York Times architecture critic agreed.

"There is lots of neat, prim good taste in Irvine, and barely a neon sign to be found," Times writer Paul Goldberger wrote, "but the world that it gives us is not liberating; it is stifling."

Still, others say they're not looking for surprises.

"I grew up in West LA, and there was a house across the street from us painted turquoise with brown trim," said Englander, who lived in Irvine for four years and liked it, though he later moved to Orange.

"Growing up I always said, 'I want to live somewhere without any turquoise houses with brown trim.'"

Last year, some Irvine and Tustin residents got angry at The Irvine Co. for building what one called a rust and purple

"psychedelic scream" of a shopping center, the Tustin Market Place, right outside Irvine.

Some residents found the bright hues so offensive that they vowed to boycott the shops, designed by a Mexican architect known for his use of bold color.

In response to the public critique, The Irvine Co. had the purple walls repainted a less controversial terra cotta.

Sometimes Irvine seems too perfect, Caronna said.

"The area is immaculate," she said. "Everybody has a reasonable amount of money to spend, and if you look at any parking lot, it's like you're looking at a new-car sales lot."

"I had a battle with my kids in high school. If everybody else had a new car, why couldn't they? As long as you hold onto your values, it's OK. But you can't let them think this is reality. It's far above most people's reality."

"You've got to let them know, every place is not like Irvine."

## Finding a bargain

Costa Mesa emerges as one of the best buys in the county, ranking No. 3 for liveability but way down at No. 22 in housing cost. Buena Park and Cypress also come out as bargain towns that offer a lot for the money. The situation is reversed for North Tustin, Villa Park and Yorba Linda, which had relatively high prices without liveability scores to match.

CITY	Liveability rank	Housing price rank	Average house price
Anaheim	33	23	\$165,623
Brea	22	19	\$190,326
Buena Park	19	30.5	\$147,007
Costa Mesa	3	22	\$172,290
Cypress	14	21	\$178,050
Dana Point	13	16	\$198,664
El Toro	20	27	\$159,708
Fountain Valley	6	12	\$211,129
Fullerton	31	15	\$205,968
Garden Grove	26	32	\$136,043
Huntington Beach	5	8	\$233,987
Irvine	1	13	\$210,279
Laguna Beach	4	5	\$281,379
Laguna Hills	11	9.5	\$225,068
Laguna Niguel	8	9.5	\$225,068
La Habra	34	33	\$132,237
La Palma	25	30.5	\$147,007
Los Alamitos	7	6.5	\$250,103
Mission Viejo	12	20	\$189,078
Newport Beach	2	2	\$308,019
North Tustin	21	4	\$282,478
Orange	27	17	\$197,004
Piacentia	24	26	\$163,840
Rancho Santa Margarita	28	28	\$159,708
Rossmore	9	6.5	\$250,103
San Clemente	23	14	\$209,500
San Juan Capistrano	15	18	\$191,803
Santa Ana	32	29	\$154,043
Seal Beach	10	3	\$290,138
Stanton	29	34	\$121,156
Tustin	16	24	\$165,120
Villa Park	18	1	\$437,500
Westminster	17	25	\$164,008
Yorba Linda	30	11	\$224,762

\* For housing prices, No. 1 is the most expensive, No. 34 the least.

Sources: Register's places-rated analysis; June 1988 housing prices from TRW Real Estate division

# Factors: Each place is rated on 14 factors

By Marilyn Kalfus  
The Register

**T**he Register's analysis of Orange County communities measured 14 factors adapted from the Rand McNally Places Rated Almanac that influence how people pick a place to live. Factors ranged from the crime rate to the number of parks and stores in a city.

Orange County residents were polled on how important all those factors are when figuring out where to move, and the results were weighted accordingly. For example, the poll revealed that low crime was most important, so a city's crime rate counted more than, say, the weather.

Residents also were asked where in Orange County they would prefer to live, though those results were not factored into the rankings.

Housing costs did not play a part in the overall ratings because the analysis was designed to produce a "wish list" of places where county residents would most like to live.

As a result, any bias in the survey would tend to favor more affluent towns.

Source material for the project, which began in summer 1988, was the most recent information available.

The following sources were used:

- Housing — average selling price for a single-family home. TRW Real Estate Market Information, prices as of June 1988.

- Crime — number of cases of homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, larceny and arson per 10,000 residents. FBI Crime Index, 1987, released June 1988; state Department of Finance Population of California Cities, January 1988.

- Schools — California Assessment Program, third-grade test scores; Scholastic Aptitude Test, 12th-grade scores (1986-87); and pupil-teacher ratios (1987-88) for Orange County school districts. California Department of Education.

- Weather — number of days on which heating or cooling is needed. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Monthly Normals of Temperature, Precipitation, and Heating and Cooling Degree Days 1951-1980. Statistician Karl Reitz estimated figures for some Orange County cities based on available weather data.

- Smog — number of days an area exceeded the

federal ozone standard. South Coast Air Quality Management District, Air Quality Data 1987. Reitz estimated figures based on data from Anaheim, Costa Mesa, El Toro, Los Alamitos and La Habra.

- Other pollution — locations of Superfund sites or toxic dumps, areas that had to be evacuated during the 1980s or areas within the San Onofre nuclear power plant's emergency evacuation zone.

- Socioeconomic — median household income and education level of residents. Register marketing information from Rezide, ZIP Code Encyclopedia and Claritas Corp., 1988

- Convenience — distance from the center of each city to:

The county's two major employment centers. These were mapped with the aid of Grubb & Ellis, Coldwell Banker and Newport Economics. They consist largely of parts of Anaheim, Santa Ana, Costa Mesa and Irvine.

Recreational and cultural amenities. The nearest beach and regional shopping center, Orange County Performing Arts Center, South Coast Repertory Theatre, Anaheim Stadium, Anaheim Convention Center, Orange County Fairgrounds, Pacific Amphitheatre, Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre, Little Saigon, Los Angeles County.

- Transportation — number of freeways, Amtrak stations and municipal transportation systems in a city, and access to John Wayne Airport.

- Shopping — number of supermarkets, drug stores and hardware stores per capita.

- Parks and recreation — number of public parks and swimming pools, tennis courts and golf courses.

- Entertainment — number of restaurants, movie theaters, live theaters, museums, colleges and universities.

After the data were collected, the Register conducted a poll to see what factors were most important to Orange County residents.

The Register Poll was conducted by The Chapman Survey, a division of the Center for Economic Research at Chapman College. The survey was designed and conducted by Karl Reitz, professor of mathematics and sociology, and a team of Chapman faculty and students.

The poll of 501 residents was taken Sept. 18-22. The margin of error for the poll was 4.5 percent.

# Convenience: Closeness counts

By Marilyn Kalfus  
The Register

**S**hooting from the hip, tavern owner Robert "Zeb" Ziemer sees his hometown of Costa Mesa in relation to the rest of Orange County this way:

"We're halfway between everything."

Figuring that a guy like Ziemer, who has lived in Costa Mesa for about two dozen years, might be a bit biased, the Register got out a map and a tape measure.

We looked at how far the center of each city is from one of the county's regional shopping malls, the beach, the employment centers, Anaheim Stadium, Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre and half a dozen other major attractions. We even threw in Los Angeles.

Hours of computations ensued. In the end, we wish we'd just taken Ziemer's word for it.

While not exactly "halfway between everything," Costa Mesa was closer to most things than any other town. So it ranked as the most conveniently located city in Orange County.

San Clemente, the picturesque seaside village at the southern tip of the county, is the least convenient place to live.

So what's a few extra miles? Sometimes, it can change the way business is done.

Robert Slayton, an assistant professor of history at Chapman College, said professional life is different in Orange County than in Chicago, where he used to work.

"Here, I find meetings are at people's homes and dinner is served," said Slayton, who lives in Orange. "I think it's because the trip is longer and there's a need to use that forum for a professional as well as a personal function."

Carole Lopez, who has lived in San Clemente for the past 12 years, compensates for the inconvenience in her own way.

"I make every little movement, every trip count," said Lopez, as she stood outside a Texaco Food Mart on a recent morning and pumped \$15.24 worth of superunleaded gasoline into her powder blue Mercury Cougar.

Lopez, a saleswoman at The Broadway in the Laguna Hills Mall, said she doesn't bother to shop at South Coast Plaza anymore. It's just too far away and

## Convenience towns

### Top five

1. Costa Mesa
2. Newport Beach
3. Fountain Valley
4. Huntington Beach
5. Santa Ana

### Bottom five

30. Yorba Linda
31. Dana Point
32. San Juan Capistrano
33. Rancho Santa Margarita
34. San Clemente

too congested for her.

"I'm at the age where it doesn't matter," said Lopez, 49, with a laugh. "You know, when you're young, you have to have just the right scarf?"

Fred Yeilding, another long-time San Clemente resident, also was filling his tank.

Yeilding and his wife, Louise, ventured as far as the Shrine Auditorium in downtown Los Angeles last week. They had tickets for Mikhail Baryshnikov's production of "Swan Lake."

The 40-year-old developer said he allowed two hours for the trip.

"The freeways are so unpredictable," he mused, "you have to allow two hours for something that will take an hour."

He said construction roadblocks on the northbound San Diego (I-405) Freeway funneled traffic into one lane for about 15 miles. So despite his best plans, "We barely wolfed down our dinner, and we were late for the show," he said.

But Yeilding, who attended the University of California, Santa Barbara, and said he misses the culture, has a special attachment to San Clemente, where he's lived for 30 years.

"San Clemente is unique because it's bordered by open space — permanently," he said. "You've got 20-some-odd miles of oceanfront, and back country that will never be developed."

That "back country" is Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base, and it's what brought Vivica Ross to San Clemente. Her husband is stationed there.

"We always get stuck in no-man's land," she griped. But Ross, 40, doesn't mind San Clemente compared with the outpost of Camp Lejeune near Jacksonville, NC. They were stuck there, 2½ hours from the nearest freeway, for three years.

San Clemente also rates more favorably with Ross than does Santa Ana, where she grew up.

Though Santa Ana, with the popular MainPlace mall, is more convenient for shopping,

Ross is so put off by that city's crime and congestion that "I have relatives there, and I don't ever go visit them unless there's a funeral," she said.

Then there are those who hardly ever leave San Clemente, period.

Sitting under a blue and white umbrella outside Eve's Kitchen on Avenida del Mar, Craig McBride, a 37-year-old house painter, said he has lived in San Clemente for 19 years and only leaves to go to the mountains.

Then he served up a pitch that wasn't offered at the local chamber of commerce:

"There's no entertainment here except the beach," McBride said. "The beach and the bars. But I quit drinking. So it's just the beach."

# Bringing up baby: Families look

## for good schools, parks

By Marilyn Kalfus  
The Register

**O**n a sunny Saturday morning beside the Seal Beach Pier, Pat Lozowski and her 21-month-old son, Alex, straddled the smooth statue of a seal.

"Now that I have a child," the former Venice resident said, "I look at things differently."

Lozowski is a 40-year-old textile designer who moved to Seal Beach from Los Angeles County three months ago. She didn't know that she was moving into what the Register's computer analysis found to be the best town in the county for young families. But she fully agrees with the finding.

The family-town category was made up of three factors important to people with children — low crime, good schools and plenty of parks per capita.

Seal Beach placed eighth in crime, with three crimes for every 100 people in 1987, according to figures released last year by the state Bureau of Criminal Statistics. Yorba Linda, with the lowest crime rate, had two crimes per 100 people; Santa Ana was the highest with nine per 100.

Seal Beach schools also were among the top 10 in the survey. State Department of Education figures last year showed that Seal Beach's third-grade California Assessment Program scores were 326 for reading and 318 for math. In top-ranked Irvine, scores were 347 and 335 out of a possible 400. In Santa Ana, which came in last in the school category, they averaged 282 and 292.

Lozowski cited a few findings of her own.

"I've been surprised at how many preschools there are," she said. "And I know people who have high-school age kids, and they say the schools are very good and the parents are very involved."

The Lozowskis moved from Venice primarily because her husband changed jobs and now works in Irvine.

But, Lozowski added, "One of the reasons is that now we have a family."

"Venice was a little more dangerous," she said. "For adults, it's a lot more fun. You're closer to the restaurants and the cultural center. But for a family, Seal Beach is better. It's safer.



Charlene Brown/The Register

Parents watch as their children make use of a sandy playground on a sunny day in Seal Beach.

We don't have bars on the windows."

Mina Castillo of Santa Ana doesn't have bars on her windows, either. But the 39-year-old widow, who lives in the southwest part of town with her four children, instead has Bo — her 200-pound guard dog.

With its high crime rate and low school-test scores, Santa Ana placed last in the family-town category.

"It's not safe," Castillo said. "There are a lot of drugs and a lot of gangsters and a lot of unemployed people. A lot of people, they say, 'Santa Ana, that's the worst place.' They don't exaggerate. But what can we do?"

Castillo also worries about the education her 9-year-old son receives at Diamond Elementary School.

"He reads very badly. He writes very badly," she said. "I don't know how he is in fourth grade. I think they (pass the children) because they want to give them to another teacher, to another room."

But not everyone who lives in Santa Ana is dissatisfied.

"There's no crime here hardly at all," said Curt Layman, 65, a retired trucking company owner who has lived in the northeast

### Family towns

#### Top five

1. Seal Beach
2. Laguna Beach
3. Irvine
4. Los Alamitos
5. Placentia

#### Bottom five

30. Orange
31. Stanton
32. Tustin
33. Garden Grove
34. Santa Ana

part of town for 20 years.

"The area I live in here, anything east of Grand and north of First Street, I'd say, is a dog-gone good area," he said.

Layman said he feels at ease taking his two granddaughters, ages 7 and 8, to Cabrillo Park.

"You can take them to the park and sit down with friends and talk and you don't have to have your eyes on them 100 percent of the time," he said.

Layman, who previously lived in southwest Santa Ana and still visits friends there, thinks that area has been improving lately, too.

"It's getting better again — mainly because of the Santa Ana Police Department," said Layman, a block captain in the Community Watch program. He and other city residents patrol the streets and alert police to

problems.

That mutual support wasn't always there, he said. Twenty years ago, "we had a hard time getting the police to be friendly to the public," he said. "Kick tails and take names' was their motto. They were treating all of us like we were bad.

"With the Police Department coming around and helping the public, the public now is helping the Police Department."

Michael Metzler, president of the Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce, said his three children were benefiting from the ethnic mix of the Santa Ana Unified School District, a factor the survey did not measure.

Only 10 percent of the district's students are non-Hispanic white.

Metzler's twin 14-year-old daughters go to Santa Ana High



Paul Kuroda/The Register

Mina Castillo of Santa Ana, who works for the Southwest Minority Development Association, worries about her children's safety.

School; his 8-year-old girl attends Santiago Elementary School.

"They like the ethnic diversity," he said. "It's rich and challenging. They (the twins) have begun to learn to speak Spanish as their second language."

Garden Grove placed second to last in the family-town lineup. Ed Dundon, superintendent of the Garden Grove Unified School District, said the survey was unfair.

In rating the schools, the Register compared students' CAP and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores and the pupil-teacher ratio for each district.

But numbers don't always tell what kind of job the schools are doing, Dundon said. Having a couple fewer children in a class won't mean extra attention for

each student, he said.

And a lot depends on the students' needs.

For example, students at Garden Grove schools speak more languages than English, Spanish and Vietnamese, he said.

"People don't realize we've got a lot of Buddhists, a lot of Moslems in this area," Dundon said. "How many people can we hire to speak Farsi? You've got the various dialects in 'Nam, the Chinese, the Japanese, Koreans, Thais, the whole bit."

Noting that the Irvine Unified School District led the others, Dundon said: "Irvine — is that a normal situation? No, it's not. It's skewed. The families are above median income, not very many minorities. It's not normal."

# What we want: Low crime is high priority

By Marilyn Kalfus  
The Register

Once, parts of Newport Beach sold for \$1 an acre — as swampland.

Boy, have times changed. Today, given the choice of living anywhere in the county, the city that Orange County residents are most likely to choose is Newport Beach.

The three runners-up: Huntington Beach, Laguna Beach and Irvine.

That was the result of a Register poll of 501 Orange County residents conducted in September.

It wasn't an overwhelming victory. Just 11 percent of those polled selected Newport Beach. Still, it was the most preferred city. Only 3 percent picked San Clemente, at the bottom of the top 10.

Pollster Karl Reitz said he believes that Newport Beach and other affluent south-county cities didn't snag higher numbers because people were mindful of what they could and couldn't afford.

"That (preference) probably reflects the realistic position about where they could live," he said.

Newport Beach residents weren't surprised to hear that their city is the most coveted.

"I've been all over the world," said Pilar Wayne, the 52-year-old widow of actor John Wayne and a Newport Beach

## What OC residents look for in a city

A Register Poll shows that Orange County residents consider low crime the most important factor in choosing a place to live. But few people care if they have rich neighbors. The priority poll was used to help determine the best OC cities based on what people want.

Factor	Percent who consider it very important
Low crime rate	75%
Good public schools	58
Avoiding pollution	51
Low smog level	51
Nice weather	31
Being close to employment opportunities	28
Being close to transportation	22
Having nearby parks and other recreation	22
Being close to the beach	20
Having educated neighbors	18
Having a variety of stores nearby	13
Being close to shopping and major sports and entertainment facilities	10
Having community theaters and movies nearby	9
Having affluent neighbors	5

Source: The Register Poll

resident, "either with Duke on his locations when he was making movies or on my own, and I have never seen a more beautiful place than Newport Beach.

"You go to a home in Beverly Hills, you look out the window and what do you see?" she asked. "Another house wall."

But Newport Beach, even the "poor section" of west Newport

Beach is "scenic and lovely," said Marion Pond, a west Newport resident.

Still, she sighed when she spoke of the beach crowds: "Summertime is like the lemmings and the migration to the sea."

It's so congested in the summer, she said, that she stays near home from noon Fridays

until Sunday evenings.

"You have a heck of a time getting out of there," Santa Ana resident Curt Layman said of Newport Beach's reliance on the Costa Mesa (55) Freeway. In Santa Ana, he said, "I can go 360 degrees and hit a freeway."

Despite its golden image, Newport Beach ranked toward the bottom for crime, in 25th place. Residents blamed its tourist spots for raising the crime rate.

As part of the survey of cities, Orange County residents were asked what was most important to them in looking for a place to live. A low crime rate was the top priority, with 75 percent of residents considering it very important. At the bottom of the list was having rich neighbors; only 5 percent considered that a must.

Also very important: good public schools, nice weather, a low smog level and a lack of other pollution.

Few people gave a hoot about having cultural attractions, movies or community theaters nearby; just about 10 percent gave those factors the nod. Twice as many people wanted to be near the beach.

"The values are decidedly middle class, and that's what Orange County is," Reitz said. "They're not culture oriented. They want to be places where there's a good environment, low crime and good schools. That's their primary focus."

The Register

# Laguna: The beach and the arts help city

claim No. 1 ranking for action in Orange County

## Laguna: It's where the county's action is

By Marilyn Kalfus  
The Register

**H**eidi Neal once piled a bunch of friends into her black Suzuki Samurai and drove up and down Coast Highway in Laguna Beach, bent on ridding the town of tourists.

They didn't mow them down. They just screamed at them.

"We were yelling, 'Go home!'" said Neal, 26, who sells flowers in Laguna Village, a collection of open-air shops and artists' studios overlooking the ocean.

Shooing away Laguna's crowds is part of an all-night barhopping fest, an annual Labor Day weekend tradition in which the locals reclaim the town.

"Summertime, with the tourists, just walking down the street you've got to wear shoulder pads," quipped Dean Creazzo, a 24-year-old illustrator who has lived in Laguna for a couple of years.

But this beachfront town of bronze bodies, boutiques and sidewalk cafes isn't just a hub in the summer. The Register computer analysis rates it as Orange County's No. 1 action town.

Of course, there's action. And then there's ACTION.

"I think Newport Beach is your action town for partying and restaurants," said Walter Viszolay, a Laguna seascape artist. "This is more of a daytime, roam-around town for tourists."

The Register survey counted stores, restaurants, movie and live theaters, museums, and parks and recreation per capita.

Other than a few notable exceptions, like Bennie the Bum's 24-hour-a-day diner, Laguna Beach doesn't exactly swing at night. The city is known for its

Please see LAGUNA/5

From an artists' colony, with more than 75 art galleries and an annual Festival of Arts and Pageant of the Masters. It also has a large homosexual community.

Main Beach is a jumble of half-court basketball and volleyball games. Most of the shops are jammed into an area about a mile square along Coast Highway. The Krishna devotees parade on Sundays past a sportswear store that sells condom earrings.

People watchers call Laguna

a hot spot.

"Laguna is its own country," said Creazzo, sitting on a low, wooden ladder outside the Ruth Mayer Gallery on Coast Highway. "You see people down on the street corners playing guitars and trombones. Jugglers. There's not so much of an attitude hang-up as in other cities."

At Bennie the Bum's, a patron described what a "zoo" the restaurant becomes at 3 a.m.

"There's all kinds. Drunks, the street people," said Tommy.

### Action towns

#### Top five

1. Laguna Beach
2. Costa Mesa
3. Brea
4. Newport Beach
5. Fountain Valley

#### Bottom five

30. Yorba Linda
31. La Palma
32. North Tustin
33. Rossmore
34. Rancho Santa Margarita

Sparacino, a 34-year-old landscaper wearing a tiny, silver earring. "The bars close at 2.

They stumble in here, knocking stuff over. It's hilarious. And the best part of it is, there's no

cover charge."

Jesse Monaghan, a 24-year-old real estate investor, thinks the town serves up a bit more glamour than its diner.

"You see a lot of celebrities here," Monaghan said on his way to play volleyball on the beach. "And you see a lot of fresh faces. You can meet anyone you want to."

T. Jefferson Parker, author of the novel "Laguna Heat," lives in a ranch house tucked into Laguna Canyon. He looks at life

there somewhat differently.

"I don't perceive Laguna Beach as an action town," said the 35-year-old writer, relaxing on his sprawling white sofa as his king snake, Ruby, lolled in the nearby aquarium. "It's actually a sleepy little place. That's one of the reasons I live here."

It's certainly not for the shopping, he added.

"When I want clothes — unless I want shorts and T-shirts — I have to leave Laguna."



Tracy Lee Silveria/The Register

La Habra resident Rocky Occhuto hugs his daughter, waitress Linda McDonald, at Cleary's Family Restaurant. Owner Joe Cleary sits at the counter.

## La Habra: Residents a loyal breed

By Linda Stewart  
The Register

**S**o what if La Habra is a long, hot hike from the beach?

Joe and Wanda Cleary had the beach. They prefer La Habra.

So what if its low housing prices contributed to a low status score in the Register rankings?

"We've got the greatest buys," said Wanda Varner, a Century 21 real estate sales manager. "I live in La Habra, work in La Habra and love La Habra."

So what if the town is among the smoggiest around during the summer?

"I never noticed the smog; things like that don't bother me," Wanda Cleary said.

This is the way La Habra residents viewed the news that their city had ended up dead last, No. 34, the dregs of the Register ranking.

"I think your survey stinks," said Varner, 46, who moved to La Habra in 1969. "Our office didn't get to where it is today by people not liking to live in La Habra."

You don't get between 48,800

### Ranking

Overall ranking	34
Schools	25
Transportation	34
Shopping	15
Recreation	15
Entertainment	15
Smog	32
Other pollution	11.5
Crime	25.5
Income	24
Educational level	28
Climate	29.5
Convenience to beach	31
Convenience to employment	25
Convenience to culture	27
Family town	27
Overall convenience	29
Prestige	31
Action town	17
Average house price	\$132,237

La Habra residents and the city they love and expect to escape unscarred. This is the town that drew thousands to the annual "I Love La Habra Community Festival" a few weeks ago.

The Clearys left Long Beach for La Habra, and 34 years later they say they have no regrets. They raised six children, run a popular restaurant in the center of town and are pleased with the

quality of their lives.

"I would never leave La Habra," Wanda Cleary said. "I like the smallness of it. People are friendly and you know your neighbors. When we lived in Long Beach, we didn't know anybody."

Only one of the Clearys' six adult children chose to leave La Habra. And that one, a Costa Mesa attorney, still visits every weekend.

La Habra housing is a relative bargain, with an average selling price of about \$132,000. But while the prices draw people, other factors make them stay.

Susan and Phil Carey said they were drawn to the community three years ago by its affordable housing and have decided to stay, even though they now can afford to move elsewhere.

"If you're interested in a fast-moving, lots-of-night-life city, La Habra is not a place for you," said Susan Carey, president of the La Habra Jaycees. "But if you want a place to raise your children, run into your friends at the market and a place where there's a history, this is the type

Please see LA HABRA/7

# La Habra: Residents pooh-poo low ranking

FROM 6

of place to live.

"And if you're willing to get involved with the city, you'll be welcomed with open arms."

The city's entertainment and recreational facilities rated a respectable 15 in the survey, boosted by the La Habra Community Theater, the Boys Club and the Children's Museum at La Habra, the only museum of its kind in Orange County.

At the bottom were the city's smog (32) and transportation (34) ratings.

"We're so far away from the freeways, which is a good thing and a bad thing," said La Habra City Councilman John Holmberg, 32.

It means residents do not have to tolerate the noise and traffic jams that freeways bring, he said, but it takes them longer to get out of town.

Loyal to a fault, several residents went so far as to defend the acrid smog that descends on the town whose name means "opening" or "pass through the hills."

Varner, for one, said the air quality being measured is not La Habra's alone, but a byproduct of what floats above Fullerton, Brea and Whittier.

Local historian Esther Cramer, 62, casts blame beyond the city limit for other factors in La Habra's low ratings.

"Maybe outsiders are judging La Habra by a few of the things that are changing," she said.

Among those changes, many residents agree, are drug trafficking and gang infiltration, but

“ If you're interested in a fast-moving, lots-of-night-life city, La Habra is not a place for you. But if you want a place to raise your children, run into your friends at the market and a place where there's a history, this is the type of place to live. And if you're willing to get involved with the city, you'll be welcomed with open arms. ”

**Susan Carey**

La Habra Jaycees president

they said this is an inevitable result of being near larger urban areas.

As for the survey's findings that La Habra's schools are not the county's finest — they rated a low 25 — La Habra City School District board member Antonio Valle Jr., 51, said the standard-

ized test scores on which the rating was based cannot tell the whole story.

"I don't know about this survey, but when people come to La Habra in general, they look at our schools and are satisfied," said Valle, chairman of special education at Sonora High School in the Fullerton Joint Union High School District. "There's a lot of positive things going on in the classroom."

The schools face challenges with their expanding Hispanic population, he said.

"We have a lot of students in elementary school that have not been in school before," Valle said. "We have a lot of immigrants and some of them have never held a pencil in their hands. We do a lot with these students."

La Habra residents even disagreed with the high rankings.

The only drawback to the city, residents said, was that they had to scoot over to Brea to shop.

So what if shopping was where La Habra got one of its highest scores?

# Costa Mesa: High rankings,

## low prices make it best bargain

By Marilyn Kalfus

The Register  
From Costa Mesa

**L**ike many Orange County residents, Ernie Feeney would be happy to move to Newport Beach.

But Feeney, who lives next door in Costa Mesa, is a realist.

"If I had to choose almost any city to live in, I can't think of another one that I would choose over Costa Mesa," she said.

"Not one that's within our means. I mean, wouldn't everyone love to live on (Newport Beach's) Linda Isle? But you're talking about 2 (million dollar) and 3 million dollar homes."

The city where Feeney has lived for 24 years lacks the cachet of a beach town. And unlike Newport Beach, the Register Poll found, Costa Mesa is not one of the places where county residents most want to live.

Yet Costa Mesa emerged as the best bargain in the Register's survey.

It grabbed the No. 3 spot — behind Irvine and Newport Beach — in the overall rankings. But it ranked 22nd in housing costs, with an average selling price last summer of \$172,000, compared with Newport Beach's \$308,000.

"For a long time it was considered the poor man's beach town," said Karl Reitz, a Chapman College professor who ranked the cities for the Register. "I think people are beginning to realize that bargain is there."

Costa Mesa also proves that cities don't have to be affluent to be liveable. The city emerged 29th of the 34 communities in earnings, with a median household income of \$30,753.

This city of 91,891 residents is the most conveniently located town in Orange County. Its schools are in the Newport-Mesa Unified School District, which had student test scores second only to top-ranked Irvine. And while not exactly on the ocean, it's close enough to have many of the same benefits, such as less smog and moderate climate.

"Costa Mesa appears to be very overlooked," said Harvey Englander, a Newport Beach-based political consultant who lives in Orange. "Most people don't have an image of its residential character. They think of South Coast Plaza or the Orange County Performing Arts Center."

Irvine beat Costa Mesa as the best place to live in Orange County, but Costa Mesa City Councilwoman Sandy Genis pre-

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 3

Schools: 2.5  
Transportation: 1  
Shopping: 1  
Recreation: 17  
Entertainment: 6  
Smog: 2.5  
Other pollution: 27.5  
Crime: 30.5  
Income: 29  
Educational level: 17  
Climate: 3.5  
Convenience to beach: 8  
Convenience to employment: 7  
Convenience to culture: 1  
Family town: 18  
Overall convenience: 1  
Prestige: 26  
Action town: 2  
Average house price: \$172,290

fers her city's freewheeling architectural styles to the restrictions imposed by Irvine's homeowners associations.

"Somebody (in Irvine) told me not only did they have to paint their house brown or tan, but they had to be these precise shades," she said. "It makes for a tidier community, but I think it robs you of some of your originality."

Genis said she knows of a house in Costa Mesa painted hot pink. It's not exactly her taste, she said, "but sometimes I get a little smile when I go by."

Once nicknamed Goat Hill because the animals roamed freely across its farmland, Costa Mesa was incorporated in 1953. South Coast Plaza opened 14 years later and today is one of the world's largest shopping centers, with such upscale shops as Tiffany & Co., Cartier, Louis Vuitton and Yves St. Laurent rive gauche. The South Coast Repertory Theater, Orange County's largest, best-known performing arts group, won a 1988 Tony Award for regional

theater.

Three freeways run through the city — the Costa Mesa (55), the San Diego (I-405) and the Corona del Mar (73) — and the city is near John Wayne Airport.

"It really is the most accessible location," Mayor Peter Buffa said. "I've said for a long time when you look at the amenities in a city of 100,000, it's pretty amazing. I go to different conferences around the country, and you talk to somebody in, you know, Wyoming. A city of 100,000 to him is a state capital. In cities of 100,000, people just don't have things like the Performing Arts Center and South Coast Plaza, plus being five minutes from the water."

The city's worst feature, said Arlene Shafer, executive manager of the Costa Mesa Chamber of Commerce, is probably the summer beach traffic.

"You can't get to Newport Beach without going through Costa Mesa," she said.

Another traffic problem: the Pacific Amphitheatre and its rock concerts.

"When everybody converges on Fairview, they're blocking our intersections, and our emergency vehicles can't get through," said Feeney, who lives about a mile north of the amphitheater. "After the concert, the obscenities are disgraceful."

People who live outside Costa Mesa probably would rate it higher than people who live in the city, said Scott Williams, chairman of Costa Mesa's General Plan Steering Committee.

"You can go to a concert and go shopping," Williams said, "but you don't have any of the problems that living next to a concert theater creates. You can go to the swap meet, but you don't have to live with the traffic."

# NORTH TUSTIN: Status is what

## it's all about in priciest area

By Marilyn Kalfus  
The Register  
From North Tustin

Patricia DeAngelo wasn't aware that she lives in the most prestigious area in Orange County.

Of course, she might have had a few clues.

"There's tons of huge houses up in the hills," DeAngelo said, leaning on her kitchen counter and gazing out the window as dusk painted the sky orange. "It's amazing. I keep going like this." She craned her neck as she steered an imaginary car.

None of those homes, however, is larger than DeAngelo's \$22 million, 36,000-square-foot mansion. The Mediterranean-style home is surrounded by palm trees and waterfalls on a 26-acre estate. One swimming pool has caves; the other is designed for water volleyball only.

Eighteen sparkling Nautilus machines sit in the gym; on the floor below are two racquetball courts. Or, if the DeAngelos don't feel like working up a sweat, they can just bathe in the glow of a fireplace. There's one in each of the 10 bedrooms.

But DeAngelo and her husband, Michael, the founding chairman of the Clothetime chain of retail clothing stores, say they're no longer content to watch the sun dance on the Pacific Ocean 20 miles away. The DeAngelos and their three sons plan to pack up and move to the beach.

### Status towns

#### Top five

1. North Tustin
2. Irvine
3. Rancho Santa Margarita
4. Newport Beach
5. Villa Park

#### Bottom five

30. Buena Park
31. La Habra
32. Garden Grove
33. Santa Ana
34. Stanton

better situation is the one where there's more money, period."

Real estate agent Phyllis Spivey said she believes North Tustin is special for its look and feel, with its rambling houses atop steep, green hills and horses grazing in white-fenced paddocks.

"The area has a charm that is lacking in some of our Orange County communities," said Spivey, who was too diplomatic to name them.

Caroline Willsie, a 46-year-old North Tustin resident, put it another way.

"You don't just see houses, houses, houses," she said.

"There's space and openness. I walk the dog every evening, and I walk half a block and I'm in a

wooded area. There's an owl building a nest out there."

You won't find picturesque wildlife scenes in Stanton, a tiny industrial city whose typical resident hasn't gone much beyond high school in education.

Still, Donna Lancaster, a 51-year-old mail-order clerk, said there's nowhere she'd rather live in Orange County than Stanton.

While shopping at an Alpha Beta supermarket on Beach Boulevard with the gang moniker "Crips" scrawled across one wall, Lancaster thought long and hard to come up with anything wrong with the town where she has lived for the past 23 years.

"Nothing," she said finally.

That's one thing North Tustin doesn't have — a beach. It also has no supermarkets. No movies. No restaurants.

What it has is status.

Prestige in this survey was measured by housing costs, income and educational level of residents.

The most prestigious area in Orange County stretches north from the Tustin city line into the foothills, with communities that have such apropos names as Cowan Heights or Red Hill Ridge.

The average sales price for houses in North Tustin last summer was \$282,478, according to TRW. That is more than twice as much as the typical house in Stanton, the town at the bottom of the prestige pole.

The typical Tustin Hills resident has been to college, compared with high school for the Stanton dweller, and the hills' median household income is \$54,293, about twice the typical Stanton family's earnings.

How much does any of that really matter? In Orange County, it apparently counts for a lot.

"Orange County is very materialistic," observed Robert Slayton, an assistant history professor at Chapman College who moved to Orange from the Midwest. "Do you know what most people talk about in Chicago? Local politics. Here, they talk about real estate. Money. And if you're defining things solely on the basis of money, the



John Martin/The Register



## ANAHEIM

In 1985, a toxic leak at the Larry Fricker Co. in Anaheim forced the evacuation of more than 7,000 residents.

A little more than a year ago, a gas leak from the Stepan Co. sent a dozen nearby residents to the hospital. A few months later, chemical contamination forced the closing of a water well.

Staying away from pollution is very important to Orange County residents, the Register Poll found, and Anaheim's incidents with toxins helped pull the city down almost to the bottom of the computer ranking.

With seven serious crimes in a year for every 100 residents, the city ranked 30th of 34 for crime, another important factor to county residents.

"This city is changing for the worse," said Dick Tamoush, 53, owner of a minimarket near Lincoln Avenue. "I have problems all the time. Break-ins, thefts, what have you."

Dennis Stafko has lived in the city on and off since 1955, and said he doesn't like the changes he has seen in those 30-plus years.

"I think crimes have increased maybe a hundred times compared to the time when we just moved here," the 50-year-old truck driver said. "I can still remember vividly the years when we had a lot of orange trees around. The air was filled with citrus smell."

"I certainly wish something could be done to improve the quality of life here."

But downtown resident Sally Horton, 32, found the rankings too low and said she has found the city very liveable.

"We have some of the best parks around," the eight-year resident said. "My husband plays softball in Fullerton, Placentia and Santa Ana and the maintenance falls short in those parks."

Others didn't care about the ratings one way or another.

"Any ranking system that'd show Irvine as No. 1 has no credibility with me," said Councilman Tom Daly, 33, a lifelong Anaheim resident.

Many people in the county appeared to agree with Horton and Daly. When Orange County resi-

### Ranking

Overall ranking: **33**

Schools: **27**  
 Transportation: **7**  
 Shopping: **21**  
 Recreation: **24**  
 Entertainment: **21**  
 Smog: **24.5**  
 Other pollution: **33.5**  
 Crime: **30.5**  
 Income: **27**  
 Educational level: **30**  
 Climate: **21**  
 Convenience to beach: **26**  
 Convenience to employment: **6**  
 Convenience to culture: **11**  
 Family town: **29**  
 Overall convenience: **12**  
 Prestige: **29**  
 Action town: **22**  
 Average housing price: **\$165,623**

dents were asked where in the county they would live if they could live anywhere, Anaheim, the county's largest city with about 242,000 residents, was about the top 10.

This, after all, is the city Walt Disney chose for the "Happiest Place on Earth." It has the Los Angeles Rams, the California Angels and one of the busiest convention centers in the nation. A report last week by the Orange County Transportation Commission said the Anaheim Stadium area will be the biggest employment center in the county by 2010, with almost 100,000 jobs.

Nearness to jobs and freeways was a common reason Anaheim residents gave for their choice of home—and that was where the city ranked highest in the Register analysis.

"I live here because of my employment," said Stafko, the trucker. "This is close to the freeways, very convenient."

James Doti, Anaheim Hills resident and acting president of Chapman College, said the overall ranking was probably fairly accurate, given the low price of Anaheim's homes. If there were more demand for Anaheim housing, he said, the prices would be higher.

"I'd give much more credence to the dollars people are plunking down on a home," he said.

— Louise Woo/The Register



## BUENA PARK

Landlocked Buena Park is convenient to the one beach that makes waves in this town — Beach Boulevard.

The road leads to a major amusement park, glamorous wax depictions of movie stars and dashing knights from days of yore.

"Prestige? We have it!" said Barry Muszik, general manager of the 27-year-old Movieland Wax Museum on Beach Boulevard where Dudley Moore, Jimmy Stewart and Roger Moore stopped to receive keys to the city. Not to mention the armored knights at the Medieval Times entertainment center.

Residents here aren't even willing to settle for the very respectable score of seventh for local entertainment. As these folks see it, the city's biggest competitor is a talking rodent with big ears.

"I think Buena Park should be pretty high in the poll. We have quite a bit of entertainment in the city," said Gerald Sigler, a Buena Park Planning Commission member. "The city is pretty well-known throughout the US now because of Knott's Berry Farm. ... We're going to be

### Ranking

Overall ranking: **19**

Schools: **26**  
 Transportation: **12**  
 Shopping: **6**  
 Recreation: **12**  
 Entertainment: **7**  
 Smog: **27.5**  
 Other pollution: **11.5**  
 Crime: **25.5**  
 Income: **21**  
 Educational level: **32**  
 Climate: **21**  
 Convenience to beach: **23**  
 Convenience to employment: **17**  
 Convenience to culture: **15**  
 Family town: **26**  
 Overall convenience: **19**  
 Prestige: **30**  
 Action town: **6**  
 Average house price: **\$147,007**

known more and more as time goes on."

But this city of 66,000 is not all fun and games, which might explain why it got an overall ranking of 19 on the survey.

"There are areas I wouldn't go at night," said Linda Whipple, a homemaker and mother of two. "But the area we're in is a very nice area to be living."

— Linda Stewart/The Register



## BREA

**T**his city's motto used to be "Good Old Brea." And although the motto changes each year — this year, it's "Brea — Our People Make the Difference" — the old motto is the one people here still use in conversation.

Its no-nonsense, homespun tone typifies the feelings residents have about this city.

"People move to Brea because it's a good place to raise kids and enjoy life," Councilman Ron Isles said. "When we have a council election, the winning campaign themes are, 'Keep good old Brea's hometown spirit.'"

The biggest news in town these days is the girls basketball team at Brea-Olinda High School, which recently won the southern region California Interscholastic Federation championship and has become the city's heroines.

When the girls play, "You'll find the whole town there cheering them on," rallying behind them in their bid for the state championship, Leyton said. "That's the kind of town this is."

Isles said he would have liked to see Brea rank higher than No. 22, but he is pleased with the city's strong score as a family town.

"That's not a surprise to anyone who knows Brea," Isles said.

The city also received high rankings for its schools, recreation and entertainment.

Isles said he was pleasantly surprised by Brea's high marks for entertainment, which included restaurants, movie the-

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 22
Schools: 10
Transportation: 26
Shopping: 14
Recreation: 2
Entertainment: 3
Smog: 32
Other pollution: 11.5
Crime: 19.5
Income: 15
Educational level: 24
Climate: 29.5
Convenience to beach: 33
Convenience to employment: 23
Convenience to culture: 25
Family town: 6
Overall convenience: 28
Prestige: 21
Action town: 3
Average house price: \$190,326

aters and other leisure-time activities.

"We don't have a Disneyland or a Knott's Berry Farm so people sometimes don't think of us as a place with a lot of entertainment," the councilman said. "But we've got a lot of movie theaters and a plethora of restaurants. Brea's getting to be a place where people come at night to have dinner."

Mayor Gene Leyton said the poll does not appear to have taken into account that Brea is a major employment center.

He said a recent survey by the Southern California Association of Governments showed that 40 percent of the traffic coming toward Orange County from the Inland Empire stops in Brea because of the jobs there.

"During the day, Brea's population jumps from 33,000 to 100,000," the mayor said.

— Erin Kelly/The Register



## CYPRESS

**I**n 1961, a young veteran named John Kanel stumbled upon a quiet little dairy town called Cypress while searching for a new home near his sister and brother-in-law in Anaheim.

He and his wife had driven down from Los Angeles one weekend to check out a newspaper advertisement describing new houses "near Knott's Berry Farm." They fell in love with the model home and never looked back.

"We looked at it and said, 'That's going to be a nice home,'" Kanel said. "The model was a small, convenient little home for a woman, her husband and little boy."

In the decades that passed, Kanel and Cypress both grew up. Kanel — now 59 and mayor pro-tempore — said he loves the way his city evolved and can't understand why it only ranked 14th of 34 in the Register's ratings or how it came in 27th in education or fourth in entertainment.

"Entertainment — that's absurd," he said. "The only thing we have is one movie theater. We don't have any bowling alleys, and we don't have a lot of nightclubs."

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 14
Schools: 24
Transportation: 29.5
Shopping: 28
Recreation: 19
Entertainment: 4
Smog: 10
Other pollution: 11.5
Crime: 19.5
Income: 12
Educational level: 27
Climate: 13
Convenience to beach: 15
Convenience to employment: 19
Convenience to culture: 15
Family town: 25
Overall convenience: 15
Prestige: 22
Action town: 16
Average house price: \$178,050

Cypress has a mixture of housing types, professional and blue-collar people, and ethnic backgrounds, Kanel said. "It's the kind of city where people get to know each other very well," he said.

His town might not be a model city, but so-called model cities are overrated, Kanel said. "It connotes that everything is perfect, and there is no thing as perfection."

— Louise Woo/The Register



## DANA POINT

**C**ouncilwoman Ingrid McGuire was incredulous.

"Thirteenth?" McGuire asked. "I can't believe it."

"I'm very disappointed and surprised that Dana Point ranked only as the 13th-best place. It's somewhat better than the medium, but it's really not good enough."

Councilman Mike Eggers and other Dana Point residents also said they were confused by the results.

"The whole thing staggers me," Eggers said.

Residents criticized middle-of-the-road rankings in entertainment, recreation and climate.

Eggers moved to Dana Point after living in Mission Viejo and San Juan Capistrano. He said he hasn't found himself at a loss for things to do.

Entertainment can be found at local restaurants and resorts, the harbor, the Orange County Marine Institute and the beaches. Fun and recreation abound for this city of 26,000 residents, Eggers said.

Ed Conway, an 11-year resident, said that although he loves the town's diversity — from con-

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 13
Schools: 17.5
Transportation: 27.5
Shopping: 2
Recreation: 11
Entertainment: 19
Smog: 7
Other pollution: 27.5
Crime: 8
Income: 20
Educational level: 8.5
Climate: 13
Convenience to beach: 1.5
Convenience to employment: 33
Convenience to culture: 33
Family town: 11
Overall convenience: 31
Prestige: 14
Action town: 15
Average house price: \$198,664

dominiums to million-dollar homes — he couldn't disagree with the low ranking given Dana Point on its convenience to employment. The seaside city is tucked away far from any freeways, which brought down its rating.

"If we were all retired," he said, "we would probably be No. 1."

— Jami Leebow/The Register



## EL TORO

**S**ome El Toro residents aren't the slightest bit envious that Irvine placed No. 1 in a ranking of county communities.

El Toro came in No. 20. So what?

"We could have lived in Irvine and that's just it. We moved here," said Helen Wilson, who has lived in a home in wooded Lake Forest for nearly five years.

"It just seemed a cozy, comfortable place where you could raise your kids," she said.

El Toro rated as the 16th-best family town, slipping that low in part because it lacks parks and other recreation. Residents can't argue with that. Wilson said recreation outside of the Lake Forest homes is "pitiful."

Neither is El Toro a place with lots of action.

"That's OK. We don't want it to be," Wilson said. "We're a bedroom community. People need an escape. They work all week and they want to come home and relax."

Besides, the Orange County Performing Arts Center is just up the freeway in Costa Mesa, she said. Residents can zip up there for a dose of culture.

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 20
Schools: 8.5
Transportation: 14
Shopping: 7
Recreation: 30
Entertainment: 23
Smog: 16
Other pollution: 33.5
Crime: 8
Income: 9
Educational level: 10
Climate: 21
Convenience to beach: 19
Convenience to employment: 26
Convenience to culture: 20
Family town: 16
Overall convenience: 23
Prestige: 15
Action town: 23
Average house price: \$159,708

Well, maybe zip isn't the right word. After all, El Toro is nestled next to the infamous El Toro "Y," where the Santa Ana and San Diego freeways come together and traffic screeches a halt.

"We're fairly close to the freeway," said Fred McGuire, who moved to El Toro from Mission Viejo. And that's good, he said — "when it moves."

— Cheryl Downey/The Register



## FOUNTAIN VALLEY

**N**ame a landmark in Fountain Valley. Stumped?

A lot of people are, Fountain Valley Chamber of Commerce President John Collins said.

The city's lack of identity makes it "the best kept secret in Orange County," Collins said. But without major landmarks and with 70 percent residential land, the city attracts few visitors. So people can get the wrong impression of Fountain Valley, Collins said.

Collins was surprised that Fountain Valley ranked low as a "family town" — No. 23 — and high as an "action town" — No. 5. In reality, Collins said, the situation is reversed. Most of the action in town is geared toward family events, such as the annual community fiesta at Mile Square Park and city recreation programs, he said. Small businesses and strip shopping centers generate most of the city's sales- and property-tax revenue.

"It really is a sleepy little town like something in the Midwest or the East," he said.

Mayor Pro Tempore Laurann Cook also said she was surprised at Fountain Valley's scores as an action town rather than a

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 6
Schools: 29
Transportation: 10
Shopping: 16
Recreation: 8
Entertainment: 16
Smog: 10
Other pollution: 11.5
Crime: 25.5
Income: 8
Educational level: 17
Climate: 3.5
Convenience to beach: 12
Convenience to employment: 5
Convenience to culture: 3
Family town: 23
Overall convenience: 3
Prestige: 12
Action town: 5
Average house price: \$211,129

family one. But in the past two years, the city's sleepy nature has been changing. Since 1987, the City Council has approved plans for a 140-acre commercial and business center called Southpark, a Marriott Courtyard and Residence Inn and Hyundai Motor America's national headquarters. Cook called the city's overall No. 6 ranking a "nice compliment."

— Donna Davis/The Register



## FULLERTON

**S**o there's a little smog. And no, the beach isn't around the corner. But Christopher Norby thinks most Fullerton residents are happier to have their bookstores, colleges, a law school and a healthy dose of that intangible stuff that doesn't show up on a demographer's yardstick: community spirit.

"We haven't just been built overnight as sort of a pre-fab, instant community. We have roots here," Norby said, responding to the Register's ratings that put his city among the least desirable in the county.

Of course, Norby is a city councilman and understandably biased toward his town. But he's also a native who understands why residents stick around.

The presence of the McColl waste dump dragged down Fullerton's rating on pollution. But Norby discounted the importance of McColl and said the price of real estate in the immediate area was evidence that newcomers weren't deterred by it.

"If you're talking about education, we've got without question the best educational

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 31
Schools: 14
Transportation: 13
Shopping: 17
Recreation: 9
Entertainment: 12
Smog: 32
Other pollution: 27.5
Crime: 25.5
Income: 23
Educational level: 12
Climate: 29.5
Convenience to beach: 29
Convenience to employment: 16
Convenience to culture: 21
Family town: 20
Overall convenience: 24
Prestige: 16
Action town: 11
Average house price: \$205,968

environment in the county," he said. "We've got one of only about five optometry schools in the whole Western United States. I mean, you can go from kindergarten all the way to being a lawyer or an optometrist right here in Fullerton."

— Dawn Bonker/The Register

Please see LIST

FROM 10



## GARDEN GROVE

**A** long a strip of Garden Grove Boulevard and Brookhurst Avenue, store signs in the distinctive Korean alphabet mark the presence of Little Seoul.

But unlike the Vietnamese of Westminster's Little Saigon, most of the Koreans of Little Seoul have only their businesses based in the city, not their lives, said Andrew Kim, spokesman for the Korean-American Association of Orange County.

Kim lives in Fullerton because he does not want his children going to the Garden Grove schools.

"Education is very important to most Asians, especially Koreans," Kim said. "Koreans seek out cities with the best schools."

Kim's perceptions find statistical backing in the Register's analysis, which, based on test scores and class sizes, ranked Garden Grove schools 32nd of 34. Fullerton's schools ranked 14th.

"It is a city with great potential to move ahead if its leaders are willing to do more innovative things with redevelopment, stopping crime and increasing ethnic harmony," Kim said.

Garden Grove has great ethnic and racial diversity but, for the most part, those groups stay separate, he said. Koreans and other Asians frequent and support Little Seoul but few whites, Hispanics or blacks do. Likewise, Hispanics keep to themselves and support only the shops and businesses that cater to their ethnic backgrounds. Whites pretty much stay with mainstream businesses and centers, Kim said, and crime is always a problem in the city.

Police Chief John Robertson agreed that the city's poor ranking on crime is correct — but said that's probably the only ranking that matches reality.

"We're not a utopia, we have some bad spots," Robertson said. "We're an older city in transition that's recycling many of its residential neighborhoods and commercial spots. But that's a very positive thing that people seem to overlook."

Orange County's fourth-largest city always gets a bum rap, Robertson said.

The Register's analysis only reinforces the image, he said.

Still others went to great lengths to interpret the survey in a positive light.

Told that Garden Grove had a higher per-capita crime rate than other cities, Councilman J. Tilman Williams offered:

"Maybe we've got too many police out there — and we're just catching more criminals."

So how could his city have ranked 26th? Williams just couldn't see it.

"Maybe it was a prejudiced survey to begin with," he said.

"We've got that Crystal Cathedral here in Garden Grove. Every Sunday, (the Rev.) Bob Schuller goes on television and tells them: This is his home town."

— William H. Boyer/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 20  
 Schools: 32.5  
 Transportation: 11  
 Shopping: 18  
 Recreation: 20  
 Entertainment: 25  
 Smog: 21.5  
 Other pollution: 11.5  
 Crime: 32  
 Income: 26  
 Educational level: 30  
 Climate: 13  
 Convenience to beach: 16  
 Convenience to employment: 9  
 Convenience to culture: 7  
 Family town: 33  
 Overall convenience: 7  
 Prestige: 32  
 Action town: 20  
 Average house price: \$136,043



## HUNTINGTON BEACH

**H**untington Beach is like an awkward teenager, striving to mature while waging an internal battle against often-conflicting and bewildering forces.

Pushing the 200,000 population mark, it is the third-largest city in Orange County.

But no one seems to notice. Major opportunities for industry and commerce have slipped away.

Developer Frank Mola was honored just one year ago at a luncheon as a hometown boy made good. A few months ago, he sold his Charter Center — the most prominent building in the city — and moved his operation to Newport Beach.

Weiser Lock, once the city's second-largest employer, has left.

Equally frustrating is the fact that smaller neighbors have grabbed many plums. Costa Mesa has South Coast Plaza and the Orange County Performing Arts Center. Westminster has the area's largest mall and the branch courthouse. And Newport Beach is, well, Newport Beach.

Huntington Beach, however, appears finally to be making its move.

With an aggressive city management staff, finally complemented by an aggressive City Council, the city has taken on what private enterprise would not — at least not by itself.

Today, buildings are being bulldozed into history in downtown Huntington Beach and ground is being broken on a half-billion dollars worth of residential, retail, hotel, restaurant and cultural projects.

The beach area will bring in millions in taxes. The city will get something more in return than meter fees from beach parking lots and bad publicity from riots.

Once and for all, city leaders hope, the city will get to exploit the beach that they see as its greatest asset.

— Frank Mickadelt/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 5  
 Schools: 4  
 Transportation: 8  
 Shopping: 27  
 Recreation: 18  
 Entertainment: 22  
 Smog: 2.5  
 Other pollution: 27.5  
 Crime: 19.5  
 Income: 17  
 Educational level: 17  
 Climate: 1  
 Convenience to beach: 6  
 Convenience to employment: 13  
 Convenience to culture: 8  
 Family town: 12  
 Overall convenience: 4  
 Prestige: 13  
 Action town: 19  
 Average house price: \$233,967



## LAGUNA BEACH

If Brett Bond's parents ever told her that her family would have to move away from Laguna Beach, she wouldn't be happy.

"I would start crying," Brett, 7, said defiantly. "I would run away."

Laguna Beach is the kind of town that evokes images of basketball by the sea, models in the Pageant of the Masters clad in nothing more than gold paint and other people's cars taking up the last available parking spot on a sunny weekend day.

But a surprise finding of the Register computer analysis was that Perego strollers and Barbie dolls might be equally valid images. The city ranked as the county's second-best family town, trailing only Seal Beach.

The ranking was based on a low crime rate, good schools and lots of parks and recreation per capita.

The crowd of first- and second-graders at Bluebird Park — THE place to be after 3 p.m. — agreed with all that about parks and playgrounds and nice teachers. But they added Boogie Boards and the beach to the list of reasons they find Laguna Beach the best place — the

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 4  
 Schools: 13  
 Transportation: 25  
 Shopping: 3  
 Recreation: 1  
 Entertainment: 1  
 Smog: 16  
 Other pollution: 11.5  
 Crime: 16  
 Income: 25  
 Educational level: 2  
 Climate: 18  
 Convenience to beach: 1.5  
 Convenience to employment: 28  
 Convenience to culture: 26  
 Family town: 2  
 Overall convenience: 20  
 Prestige: 7  
 Action town: 1  
 Average house price: \$281,379

"raddest" place — to grow up, not just in the county, but in the world.

Travis Jacobson, 6, moved to Laguna Beach from San Jose. He said Laguna has more to do.

"It's more funner and there's a beach," said Travis, a first-grader.

"The beaches are fun because you get to go sailing and go on boats and surf," said Jenna Henryson, 8. "And you can play balls at the beach and you can swim at the beach and go on the (Aliso) pier and look at whales. And you can get a suntan."

Mike Farrell, 7, already knows why he always wants to live in Laguna Beach. He wants to be a surfer and a doctor.

Here, he figures, he can do both.

— Jami Leebow/The Register



## LAGUNA HILLS

Melody Carruth said she can't think of 10 places — or even one place — she would rather raise her family.

"I think Laguna Hills is perfect," said Carruth, a community activist and mother of four small children.

So Carruth was surprised to learn that Laguna Hills placed 11th in a Register survey ranking Orange County's places to live.

Carruth and 3½-year resident Ellen Martin said they and the husbands searched for homes before settling on Laguna Hills.

"If we moved again," said Martin, a homemaker and mother of two, "I'd say it would be somewhere in Laguna Hills."

What sold both Martin and Carruth was the family-oriented flavor of the community — despite its ranking as only the 15th best place for families.

"For people here, their lives certainly revolve, for the most part, around their families," said Carruth, a five-year resident who is a leader in Laguna Hills' drive to cityhood. "Their philosophies are certainly similar to ours."

Please see LIST/1

## A PLACE TO CALL HOME

FROM 11

Carruth also disputed Laguna Hills' ranking as the 28th-best community for recreation.

With Laguna Niguel Regional Park just south of the community, Laguna Hills residents have access to a park with acres of rolling hills, picnic areas and nature, Carruth said. Inside Laguna Hills, residents can take advantage of a community parks and Iglesia Park, a wildlife sanctuary, she said.

There's plenty for adults to do, too. Carruth and Martin said, even though Laguna Hills finished only 20th in entertainment.

"On Saturday nights when my husband and I go out on a date," Martin said, "we usually go to the movie here and then we go to the Claim Jumper, one of our favorite restaurants."

— Jami Leebow/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 11  
 Schools: 8.5  
 Transportation: 15  
 Shopping: 11  
 Recreation: 28  
 Entertainment: 20  
 Smog: 16  
 Other pollution: 11.5  
 Crime: 8  
 Income: 30  
 Educational level: 11  
 Climate: 13  
 Convenience to beach: 14  
 Convenience to employment: 27  
 Convenience to culture: 19  
 Family town: 15  
 Overall convenience: 22  
 Prestige: 20  
 Action town: 24  
 Average house price: \$225,068



## LAGUNA NIGUEL

Laguna Niguel is inconvenient, residents concede. And it doesn't have much in the way of entertainment — yet.

Just wait, residents said. The Mann movie theaters are coming to town with eight screens. Soon, the area will even be a manageable distance to jobs.

Cindy O'Neal said she only wishes the Register would rank Laguna Niguel five years from now.

"We're sort of a little lopsided," she said. "We've got too many houses and not enough of everything else. But it's coming."

When she and her husband moved from Northern California six years ago, they hunted for a home until they found Laguna Niguel.

It didn't matter that Jerry O'Neal's new job was in Inglewood — a drive that was 1½ hours then.

They wanted to live in Laguna Niguel, with its rolling hills and proximity to the ocean.

But times change, and Jerry

O'Neal no longer spends 1½ hours each way commuting. He spends 2½ hours.

"But it is still worth it," he said, calling his community "an island within itself."

With a planned boom in commerce and business, Laguna Niguel is on the verge of moving up on the scale of Orange County's ideal places to live, Cindy O'Neal said. Irvine Spectrum, just a short run up the freeway, is expected to become the county's second-biggest employment center by 2010, a recent county report shows.

But Cindy O'Neal doesn't plan to wait that long.

"Five years from now, we're going to be wonderful," she said.

— Jami Leabow/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 8  
Schools: 17.5  
Transportation: 12  
Shopping: 5  
Recreation: 16  
Entertainment: 30.5  
Smog: 10  
Other pollution: 11.5  
Crime: 8  
Income: 5  
Educational level: 3.5  
Climate: 13  
Convenience to beach: 7  
Convenience to employment: 40  
Convenience to culture: 30  
Family town: 14  
Overall convenience: 26  
Prestige: 6  
Action town: 26  
Average house price: \$225,068



## LA PALMA

On an anecdotal level, residents can tell you that La Palma is the kind of place where you meet all kinds of people. And there's an actual university study to back them up.

The city's population is 68 percent non-Hispanic white, according to the 1980 census. But a study by two geography professors found that the city has one of the most diverse populations in the nation, with fairly even numbers of many ethnic groups. Its Asian-American population includes Koreans, Japanese and Indians. Its Hispanic population hails from Cuba as well as Mexico. Its borders also include a significant mix of Filipinos, blacks and several other groups.

"It is unusual," said James Allen, a professor at California State University, Northridge, who examined the ethnic makeup of cities with populations of more than 10,000. "Nationally, it (La Palma) ranks 16th (in ethnic diversity). In Orange County, it's the only one listed in our top group."

Arnold Hernandez didn't need a study to tell him that. As the manager of La Capilla Family Restaurant, he serves up Mexican food to a rainbow clientele:

"I get just about everything in here, Vietnamese, Mexicans, blacks, Indians."

In other words, many groups appear comfortable making their home in La Palma, and even if it ranked near the bottom of the Register's computer analysis, residents give it high scores as a heterogeneous and homey place.

"Most people like Cerritos, but Cerritos (housing) prices are too much," said Sung Kim, manager of the Han Nam video store, which is lined with Korean movie titles. "The LA area, too much crime. This area, there's not too much crime."

He's right. In 1987, La Palma had three serious crimes for every 100 residents, one of the lower rates in the county.

Charlie Kim, who manages the popular Han Nam Chain La Palma Market, speculates that most of the city's 16,600 residents are looking for the same thing: "Nice residential areas. It's like living in a small city in a big city."

While La Palma's residents have a high median income of \$46,986 per household, a dearth of places in which to spend it is the price they pay for their bedroom community.

"Entertainment? No doubt about it. It is lacking, as far as any kind of structured entertain-

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 25  
Schools: 22  
Transportation: 23  
Shopping: 32  
Recreation: 25  
Entertainment: 30.5  
Smog: 24.5  
Other pollution: 11.5  
Crime: 8  
Income: 7  
Educational level: 24  
Climate: 21  
Convenience to beach: 22  
Convenience to employment: 21  
Convenience to culture: 24  
Family town: 19  
Overall convenience: 29  
Prestige: 19  
Action town: 31  
Average house price: \$147,007

ment," said Tom Wright, vice president of the La Palma Homeowners Association.

Although he and others agreed with the Register's low rating of 30.5 and 32 in the entertainment and shopping categories, respectively, they quickly point out that anything they might want to do is nearby.

"La Palma is only 1.7 square miles," said Peggie Turnage, deputy city clerk. "It would be great to have a mall in our city, but then you wouldn't have any room for homes."

— Linda Stewart/The Register



## LOS ALAMITOS

**T**here's no night life to speak of in Los Alamitos. No movie theaters, drive-ins, bowling alleys and not even one shopping mall.

"That's my town, baby. We may seem a little boring but we like it that way. That's it in a nutshell," City Manager Michael Graziano said.

Despite its size and subdued personality, Los Alamitos came in as the seventh-most-desirable place to live in Orange County.

Los Alamitos — all 4.4 square miles of it — could be Beaver Cleaver's hometown: It ranked

fourth as a place to raise a family, fifth in parks and recreation and sixth in schools.

Take away the 2.2 square miles occupied by the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Los Alamitos and the city becomes the third smallest in the county after La Palma and Villa Park.

A strong, stay-at-home community, Los Alamitos — about four miles from the ocean — also rated high in environment scores, with little smog and other pollution and a good climate.

But the city also came out of the rankings with its share of problems. It ranked 19th in crime rate, 17th in convenience to culture and 20th in proximity to employment centers. As an action town, the city ranked 27th, just seven from the bottom.

"It's a nice little town and I've felt that way since 1924," said resident Lura Labourdette, who witnessed the city's trans-

Please see LIST

## A PLACE TO CALL HOME

FROM 12  
formation from fields of sugar beets and wheat to tract housing where residences now average \$250,103.

Neither Labourdette nor Graziano was surprised at the results.

"It's right on point as far as my feelings go," Graziano said. "We're a pretty middle-class community as opposed to middle-class swingers. There's not a lot of mobility here."

"We spend lots of time and money on community recreation and most of our neighborhood watch programs and church functions are the real social events."

Graziano said a recent pitch for emergency volunteers illustrates the level of community commitment.

"We mailed out the fliers to all 12,000 people who live here and expected maybe 50 would respond. But we've got hundreds back and they're still pouring in. Now that's what I call down-home."

— Donna Davis/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 7  
Schools: 6  
Transportation: 29.5  
Shopping: 29  
Recreation: 5  
Entertainment: 30.5  
Smog: 5.5  
Other pollution: 11.5  
Crime: 19.5  
Income: 10.5  
Educational level: 14  
Climate: 8  
Convenience to beach: 13  
Convenience to employment: 20  
Convenience to culture: 17  
Family town: 4  
Overall convenience: 14  
Prestige: 10.5  
Action towns: 27  
Average house price: \$250,103



## MISSION VIEJO

**D**avid Loren, a 29-year-old Chicago transplant, enjoys taking crime-free evening strolls near Lake Mission Viejo with his girlfriend.

But what does Mission Viejo offer after a few lake-view laps?

"There really isn't that much to do," Loren said. "They roll up the sidewalks."

Even those who love life in Mission Viejo concede that it might be just a teensy bit boring. Even so, the city came in 12th of 34 county communities ranked for liveability.

"Regrettably, you have to go other places to have fun," said John Ben, a longtime resident who spends his volunteer time organizing community activities. "We need culture down here."

In results that were a surprise to no one who lives in Mission Viejo, the city rates as a family town, not an action town. The action is on the baseball diamonds, in the community swimming pools and out on the golf links, not in the non-existent nightclubs and community theaters.

"We want people to work and play in Mission Viejo. And there's more to play than athletic fields," Mission Viejo Councilman Chris Keena said.

But he was diplomatic. He wouldn't say the city was boring, just a little unbalanced in available activities.

Keena has begun to push for some night life in Mission Viejo. He has suggested building an outdoor amphitheater for cultural events such as plays and musical events as well encouraging a high-quality nightclub to come to town.

"One of the common complaints I hear all the time is there's nothing to do in the evening," Keena said. "It's as if people think everyone goes to bed at 10 o'clock. It's not true. It's a very young community."

You want culture? "You go to Laguna Beach for that," Keena said.

Ben goes to the Orange County Performing Arts Center in Costa Mesa. Loren and his friends go to Newport Beach or Laguna Beach.

## E

And some Mission Viejo residents forget the freeways and turn to Loren for easy amusement. He manages the entertainment emporium of the '80s: your neighborhood video-rental store.

— Cheryl Downey/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 12  
Schools: 11.5  
Transportation: 17  
Shopping: 25  
Recreation: 14  
Entertainment: 18  
Smog: 16  
Other pollution: 11.5  
Crime: 8  
Income: 3  
Educational level: 7  
Climate: 29.5  
Convenience to beach: 20  
Convenience to employment: 29  
Convenience to culture: 29  
Family town: 8  
Overall convenience: 27  
Prestige: 8  
Action town: 25  
Average house price: \$189,078



## NEWPORT BEACH

**T**he name Newport Beach has prestige — enough to make many Orange County residents dream of living there.

Asked where in the county they would live if they could pick any community, 11 percent named Newport Beach — more than named any other city.

In the Register's analysis, the beach town had the liveability to match. Well, almost. It came in second as a desirable place to live in the overall rankings. The county's 10th-largest city not only has good schools and highly educated residents, but is a convenient place with good transportation, close to regional centers for work, shopping, culture and play, the Register's data show.

However, Newport Beach scored poorly on crime, ranking 25th of the 34 communities. City Manager Robert Wynn blamed the tourist crowds.

No longer the sleepy summer retreat that once shut down from Labor Day to Memorial Day, the city now is one of the most important West Coast financial and business hubs.

Mayor Don Strauss said the city's overall excellent scores were nothing new.

"Life doesn't get much better than this," said Strauss, a city resident for more than 33 years. He was surprised at the city's ratings of 14th in convenience to employment centers and 16th for smog, since the city is close to major thoroughfares and sits right on the ocean.

Community activist Jan Vandersloot agreed. But Vandersloot said many residents are concerned about problems the survey doesn't address, such as the deterioration of views and neighborhood wetlands in the wake of commercial development.

"These rankings are understandable and flattering but they don't give a clear picture of where the city is going," Vandersloot said.

Helen Kreutzkamp, a Newport Beach resident for more than half her 77 years, said she doesn't care for the traffic congestion that has accompanied the area's growth.

"I've seen this place go from a slow and easy way of life to a cosmopolitan area with all its advantages and troubles. But I don't know where else in the world I'd rather live."

— Donna Davis/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 2  
Schools: 2.5  
Transportation: 4  
Shopping: 10  
Recreation: 10  
Entertainment: 14  
Smog: 16  
Other pollution: 11.5  
Crime: 25.5  
Income: 14  
Educational level: 3.5  
Climate: 6  
Convenience to beach: 4  
Convenience to employment: 14  
Convenience to culture: 4  
Family town: 9  
Overall convenience: 2  
Prestige: 4  
Action town: 4  
Average house price: \$308,019

Please see LIST/14

s. That's right. The Register's comprehensive than ever, with national, regional

## A PLACE TO CALL HOME

FROM 13



## NORTH TUSTIN

Its residents probably could live just about anywhere in Orange County they wanted to. They have among the highest incomes and housing prices in the county.

The typical household income in North Tustin is nearly \$54,300. Last summer, housing prices here averaged \$282,478.

"Personally, I'd like to live in Laguna Beach. That's close to the beach," said Pat Smith, who nevertheless has lived in North Tustin for 20 years. Laguna Beach "has a lot of spirit (even though) you'd probably go crazy with the tourists."

North Tustin certainly is no tourist attraction. That's probably because it has no shopping, theaters or other activities. And it's not that close to the freeways.

So all in all, it ranked No. 21.

An exclusively residential community such as North Tustin is particularly inconvenient for young people, Smith said.

"About 10 years ago when my teens couldn't drive, (my husband and I) had to drive them everywhere ... any place they wanted to go, like shopping, the beach," Smith said.

Smith agreed with her community's ranking in the bottom half of the 34 areas in the study.

But Brian Campbell wouldn't leave North Tustin any other way.

"To me, North Tustin is the place to live," the 33-year-old construction contractor said.

"The area is beautiful, there is hardly any traffic and the neighbors watch out for one another."

Entertainment and shopping are within a short drive, he added.

Campbell has lived most of his life in North Tustin and wasn't having any of the Register's ranking.

"I don't believe in this," he said. "Is it because we aren't near the beach? I lived on the beach for two years and I hated it. The traffic was terrible."

— Enrique Rangel/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 21  
Schools: 20.5  
Transportation: 16  
Shopping: 33.5  
Recreation: 33  
Entertainment: 30.5  
Smog: 27.5  
Other pollution: 11.5  
Crime: 8  
Income: 2  
Educational level: 6  
Climate: 29.5  
Convenience to beach: 27  
Convenience to employment: 4  
Convenience to culture: 12  
Family town: 24  
Overall convenience: 16  
Prestige: 1  
Action town: 32  
Average house price: \$282,478



## ORANGE

**F**or lifelong residents like Gene Smith and Fred Barrera, there are some things that ranking statistics can't measure: roots and family values passed from one generation to another.

"There is something wrong with the survey," Smith, 64, said of the Register analysis as he tended his customers at his Nutshop, an organic food store on East Katella Avenue.

"My wife and I have lived here all our lives and all my

seven children and 15 grandchildren live here too," Smith said. "You're talking about roots — that's the nice thing about Orange" that was not measured in the survey.

"I am not qualified to talk about other (Orange County) cities because I've just been through them," Smith said. "But this city has identity."

Orange has Old Towne, a square mile in the downtown area with homes that were built at the turn of the century.

"The way I figure, any city, town or village — it's only what the people make it to be," Smith said. "A lot of people are just takers ... but how much do they give to their city?"

As Smith spoke, he he bagged \$9.94 worth of dried fruit, candies and nuts for Ethel Hight,

another lifelong resident.

Despite recent controversy over how to deal with the 150 to 200 dayworkers who gather along East Chapman Avenue in search of daily employment, Orange is a community rich in ethnic flavor, he said.

"I have a Chinese shoe store next to me, a Japanese restaurant, a Vietnamese beauty shop nearby and an Indian restaurant next block," Smith said.

Barrera, who sits on the City Council, said that because of its varied ethnic makeup, the city

continues to attract newcomers from every ethnic group.

"They are just like my mother who came here from Durango,

Mexico, when she was 4 years old."

— Enrique Rangel/The Register  
Please see LIST/

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 27

Schools: 32.5

Transportation: 5

Shopping: 12.5

Recreation: 21.5

Entertainment: 8.5

Smog: 26

Other pollution: 27.5

Crime: 25.5

Income: 19

Educational level: 24

Climate: 21

Convenience to beach: 30

Convenience to employment: 3

Convenience to culture: 9

Family town: 30

Overall convenience: 16

Prestige: 23

Action town: 9

Average house price: \$197,004



## PLACENTIA

**J**erry Taylor was not amused that her town landed in the lower echelon of Orange County cities.

"I would probably put it in the top 10, only because these other places are getting so congested," said Taylor, 63. "You know, the older you get, the more you don't want this congestion."

Taylor agreed with many of the findings. There's no question that there's not a lot of shopping or lively cultural goings-on in town. But Placentia's 41,000 residents are hardly living on the edge of a desert.

"As far as shopping and the cultural arts (are concerned), there aren't any here," she said. "But we are so close to everything else. My husband and I, we are within two miles of Brea Mall. We can shop in Fullerton, which is a mile away. And we are very close to freeways, which makes other communities very accessible."

Taylor, who used to head the Welcome Wagon, admitted that few of the people she meets moved to Placentia "just because they wanted to." Most, she said, were transferred to the area by their companies.

But once they get there, they find a strong family town with plenty of parks and, by Orange County standards, an almost-bearable median home price of \$163,840.

— Dawn Bonker/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 24

Schools: 15

Transportation: 20

Shopping: 20

Recreation: 4

Entertainment: 30.5

Smog: 32

Other pollution: 11.5

Crime: 8

Income: 13

Educational level: 19.5

Climate: 29.5

Convenience to beach: 32

Convenience to employment: 15

Convenience to culture: 18

Family town: 5

Overall convenience: 25

Prestige: 18

Action town: 18

Average house price: \$163,840



## RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA

**S**tatistics tell a puzzling story about Rancho Santa Margarita.

It ranked the lowest of all south-county communities — No. 28 overall — but it ranked No. 3 in prestige. So why do these educated, solidly middle-class people want to live in an incomplete planned community with none of the conveniences?

"I moved from someplace



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with all those conveniences," said Bonnie Watson, whose family was among the first 50 to move in. "They don't move here because it's close to shopping: They don't move here because it's close to the beach. They move here because they want to live here."

The fledgling planned community in the foothills east of Mission Viejo is home to 8,500 residents, largely young families with children.

The average age is 32 and more than half the home buyers are purchasing their first home, according to the Santa Margarita Co., developer of the community.

Register marketing figures show that the new town has a median household income of \$61,640, the highest in the county. The Santa Margarita Co. puts the figure at \$50,000 for home buyers and \$33,000 for apartment renters.

The community is to have a balance of jobs, housing and services when it is complete. But so far, it consists of homes, apartments and condominiums, a growing business park, an artificial lake and a beach club. And one big element of Rancho Santa Margarita life that the Register statistics are too old to tell: In February, the area's first grocery store opened.

"The idea is that it's going to be a self-contained community," said Art Sayles, 32, who lives in Rancho Santa Margarita with his wife and two young daughters. "Obviously it's not complete yet. I and the other people out here are willing to wait. We've got a grocery store now and we have a video store so, heck, what else do you need?"

— Cheryl Downey/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 28  
 Schools: 11.5  
 Transportation: 33  
 Shopping: 33.5  
 Recreation: 34  
 Entertainment: 30.5  
 Smog: 16  
 Other pollution: 11.5  
 Crime: 8  
 Income: 1  
 Educational level: 5  
 Climate: 29.5  
 Convenience to beach: 28  
 Convenience to employment: 31  
 Convenience to culture: 31  
 Family town: 22  
 Overall convenience: 33  
 Prestige: 3  
 Action town: 34  
 Average house price: \$159,708



## ROSSMOOR

**N**inth? NINTH????!!  
 Whaddaya mean, ninth? Why, people turn up their noses at Newport Beach to live here. When residents say the streets are wider, the trees are taller and the lawns are greener here, they mean it. State Supreme Court Chief Justice Malcolm Lucas has digs here. Ninth? Get real!

That's the prevailing attitude here toward the Register study that found Rossmoor was the, ahem, ninth best place to live in Orange County.

Please see LIST/16

on March 19th thru March 23rd  
 Store Hours  
 Mon-Fri 10 am-6pm  
 Sat 10 am-6pm  
 Sun 12 noon-5pm

"Only ninth, heh?" said resident Duane Mahlen, pondering how such a boneheaded thing could have happened. Mahlen, who moved here in 1959, just two years after building began, can take one on a spoken tour of the 3,500-home community and point out numerous reasons for higher ranking.

For one, there are the wider streets. Mahlen's not sure exactly how much wider than normal suburban streets, but wider for sure. And the home lots. They're bigger and the houses are set back farther than the average lot in, say, Huntington Beach. Again, statistics aren't readily available, but take his word for it.

And trees. Does this town love trees. Practically a crime to cut one down. Even if it's on a parkway in front of your home and uprooting the sidewalk, a special committee — whose members were sworn in by Lucas — must give the OK.

It's those wide streets and big trees that brought former Midwesterner Robin Bissonnette and her family here.

"We wanted to be reminded of home," she said. "It had more trees, it was established and the homes are older than other places we looked."

Like many in Rossmoor, the Bissonnettes have upgraded their home instead of moving to a pricier locale.

"We just finished adding on two bedrooms and one bath. We could have moved somewhere else, but we didn't."

There's practically no commerce here. A car wash, a dry cleaner, a couple of gas stations, a restaurant or two. Even the Rossmoor Shopping Center is actually in Seal Beach. But that doesn't seem to bother the 10,000 or so residents. They can walk, if they want, to stores in neighboring cities.

And speaking of cities, from time to time there is talk about incorporating or annexing to Seal Beach or Los Alamitos. Old-timers, however, try to hush up that kind of talk right away.

"What could anybody else possibly offer us?" Mahlen asked.

— Frank Mickadoff/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 9  
 Schools: 6  
 Transportation: 21  
 Shopping: 31  
 Recreation: 31  
 Entertainment: 30.5  
 Smog: 5.5  
 Other pollution: 11.5  
 Crime: 8  
 Income: 10.5  
 Educational level: 14  
 Climate: 3.5  
 Convenience to beach: 10  
 Convenience to employment: 24  
 Convenience to culture: 23  
 Family town: 13  
 Overall convenience: 17  
 Prestige: 10.5  
 Action town: 33  
 Average house price: \$250,103



## SAN CLEMENTE

**L**loyd Fukuda fights fires for a living, and fighting traffic in addition was more than he wanted to take on. So after three years of driving from San Clemente, at Orange County's southernmost tip, to

his job with the city of Los Angeles, the 41-year-old firefighter decided to give up the battle.

"Going to work wasn't bad. But when I came home at night, I needed at least 20 minutes to half an hour to wind down," Fukuda said.

Last year, he and his wife moved to Mar Vista, less than a half-hour from his job.

That's San Clemente — fun, quaint, so close to the beach, but so far from everything else.

Residents love this coastal city, with its clean air and its neighborhoods meandering up the hillsides. But when it comes to convenience — to jobs, shopping centers and cultural hot spots — San Clemente ranks dead last among 34 cities and communities, the Register survey showed.

Ask Warren Stitt, 54, owner of an advertising, marketing and television production company and a man who never spends less than 2½ hours a day commuting. For the past four years, he has driven at least two days a week to an office in Hollywood.

The business was established several years ago, but he chose to move to San Clemente because he liked "the wonderful climate and nice people" and disliked crowding and crime.

"I find southern Orange County to be like LA was 15 or 20 years ago," said Stitt, who has lived in Malibu and Pasadena. "I don't know where else I would go."

The Orange County-Hollywood drive is often harried, though, and traffic has worsened considerably in the last year. Stitt often spends time on his car phone doing business.

"You just have to make up your mind that it's worth it," Stitt said.

While it might not be too accessible to the rest of Orange County and Southern California, San Clemente definitely has advantages, residents say.

Its recreational activities received high marks; the San Clemente Municipal Golf Course had 122,000 rounds played on it last year, making it one of the busiest in California.

The city draws thousands of sunbathers and surfers to its beaches and pier every year. A small art colony also has emerged, with the San Clemente Arts and Crafts Club and playhouse theater.

While residents and community leaders generally agreed with the survey findings, they took exception to the city's ranking of 25th for prestige.

This, after all, was the vacation spot for President Nixon. It is home to Carl Karcher, founder of Carl's Jr. restaurants, Ken Khachigian, a speech writer for President Reagan and tennis pro Bob Lutz.

— Barbara Serrano/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 23  
Schools: 17.5  
Transportation: 32  
Shopping: 9  
Recreation: 6  
Entertainment: 13  
Smog: 2.5  
Other pollution: 27.5  
Crime: 8  
Income: 31  
Educational level: 21  
Climate: 13  
Convenience to beach: 3  
Convenience to employment: 34  
Convenience to culture: 34  
Family town: 7  
Overall convenience: 34  
Prestige: 25  
Action town: 21  
Average house price: \$209,500



## SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO

**I**t's a nice family town and along with the swallows it has a comfortable climate to hang around in and good shopping and recreational activities. Just don't try leaving.

San Juan Capistrano, the city known for its famous mission and the swallows who return there each year, ranked a respectable 15th overall in the Register's analysis. It would have ranked higher but for its near-the-basement scores on convenience — little access to transportation, and far from the county's major job and recreational centers.

"It's not convenient to anything that requires you get to the central county or even South Coast Plaza," Councilman Kenneth Friess lamented.

But the city ranked impressively on local facilities and environment. And the swallows aren't the only ones who love San Juan Capistrano.

Prestige? "It means absolutely nothing to me," said Kathy Itzel, a homemaker and 10-year resident. "I'd just as soon nobody heard of San Juan Capistrano."

She and her husband moved to the city of 25,000 hoping to find the kind of family-oriented community they grew up in.

Just as important to the Itzels was diversity — economic, ethnic and cultural.

"We didn't want our children in a place that was exclusive," said Itzel, president of the Marco Forster Parent Teacher Student Association. "We wanted them in an environment that was mixed, and my children certainly have gotten that from San Juan schools."

"San Juan Capistrano is special because of its people and

Please see LIST/17

the mission," said Mike Darnold, president of the San Juan Capistrano Historical Society. "I don't think you'll be exposed to culture more in any other community in Orange County than here."

In November, a decorative arts center was opened. The city's postmodern library is so popular that almost one-third of its 75,000 volumes are checked out each month.

Noted for the Coach House Saloon, a popular music venue, the city ranked in the top 10 for local culture and entertainment. However, it has no movie theaters; a five-screen complex is scheduled to open in December. The closest live theater is provided by Saddleback College.

— Barbara Serrano/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 15  
Schools: 17.5  
Transportation: 27.5  
Shopping: 8  
Recreation: 7  
Entertainment: 10  
Smog: 10  
Other pollution: 27.5  
Crime: 16  
Income: 18  
Educational level: 14  
Climate: 8  
Convenience to beach: 9  
Convenience to employment: 32  
Convenience to culture: 32  
Family town: 10  
Overall convenience: 32  
Prestige: 17  
Action town: 13  
Average house price: \$191,803



## SANTA ANA

Irvine might have come in No. 1 overall in the Register Poll, but Sam Romero wouldn't trade his Santa Ana home for any cookie-cutter neighborhood in "plastic Irvine."

"There's no question we do have our problems," said Romero, a community activist who was born in Santa Ana's Logan barrio in 1934. "But our people who live here in Santa Ana are real. The people here are warm. Wherever you go, people stop and say hello."

"If you come downtown on a Sunday, you'll see whole families dressed in their best clothes out for a stroll, talking to their neighbors," said Romero, assistant director of the non-profit Orange County Community Housing Corp. "You don't see that in places like Irvine. Santa Ana is a breathing, live city."

Wilson Hart, an attorney and former councilman, said he was drawn to Santa Ana by the diversity of its residents.

Although he makes a good living as an attorney, Hart said he wouldn't think of moving to a city like Irvine.

"Who wants to look at row after row of neatly trimmed hedges and earth-tone homes?" Hart said. "My God, that must get to be tiresome."

Hart, who has three children younger than 7, said he believes his children will benefit from Santa Ana's ethnic diversity.

"I don't want my kids to think the whole world looks and talks just like them," he said.

"Where else in Orange County can you find a real Jewish deli, a good Mexican restaurant, a good Chinese restaurant and a black Baptist church — all within blocks of one another?" Hart said. "Santa Ana has a richness, a variety. It's the only real city in Orange County."

Not all residents of Santa Ana are as enthusiastic, however.

It's not a good place to raise a family, said Maria Martinez, a 47-year-old resident of Brook Street, who used to chase drug dealers in her neighborhood with a broom.

"There's so much crime, and so many gang members and drugs," said Martinez, the mother of seven.

— Erin Kelly/The Register



## SEAL BEACH

All the French Riviera can offer is topless beaches and beautiful cafes. Too bad it can't be more like Seal Beach.

Forrest Campbell, 77, spent

part of October on the Riviera. His conclusion: Nice place to visit, but ...

"It's topless, it's interesting to walk through, but it can't beat Seal Beach," concluded the retired contractor, who has called Seal Beach home for 35 years. "Seal Beach has it beat a hundred ways."

"That's the way most people here feel about their little town.

Clothing-optional beaches, air-conditioned malls, you can have 'em. Give the folks here friendly

Please see LIST/18

neighbors, a clean stretch of sand and a Main Street second only to Disneyland's and they'll never want to leave.

Gleynis McCants, born in her mother's house in the Old Town section 25 years ago, testifies: "I tried living in Belmont Shore and Huntington Beach but I couldn't stand to be away. I'm back for good." McCants commutes to Los Angeles, where she works as a comedian.

Seal Beach's ranking as the county's No. 1 family town, the No. 10 town overall and the dregs as an action town makes perfect sense to Councilman Victor Grgas, who represents the Old Town area. He wouldn't have it any other way.

"If Seal Beach had those things (that make for an action town) I think our overall ranking would be higher, but our ranking as a family town would be lower," Grgas said. "In terms of what I was looking for in a place to raise a family, that's fine with me."

"There are a variety of age groups and income levels. It's not a homogenous group like some communities. It's neat to walk down the street and have my children see someone in their 80s and say, 'How you doing?' I don't think you can do that in some communities."

Not that this town of 26,000 doesn't have its shortcomings. Its housing prices are the third-highest in the county, there's little in the way of night life and to get to a major department store residents go to Cerritos, Lakewood, Huntington Beach or Westminster.

"I don't think you can buy a refrigerator in Seal Beach," Councilman Frank Lazlo said.

— Frank Mickadeit/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 10

Schools: 6

Transportation: 18

Shopping: 30

Recreation: 3

Entertainment: 26

Smog: 2.5

Other pollution: 27.5

Crime: 8

Income: 34

Educational level: 24

Climate: 3.5

Convenience to beach: 5

Convenience to employment: 22

Convenience to culture: 22

Family town: 1

Overall convenience: 11

Prestige: 24

Action town: 28

Average house price: \$290,138



## STANTON

**S** Stanton residents say they have something that's almost extinct in the rest of Orange County: affordable housing.

With the price of a house averaging \$121,000, Stanton is the most affordable city in Orange County.

But its residents often concede that if they had the money, it might be nice to move somewhere with less crime and better schools.

"I moved here about 2½ years ago because the deal I got on my house was just too good to pass up," said Ann McCray, 34, a high-school drug counselor.

"Maybe everything else people think about Stanton is true, but at least I could buy a house."

Jose Perez, 35, bought a home in Stanton nine years ago "because it was the only place we found that we could afford." Perez, a machine shop operator in Irvine, said he wanted to live in Irvine, but couldn't afford it.

"People misunderstand Stanton. It's really a nice, peaceful place. The schools aren't great, but you can't have everything," Perez said. But echoing the thoughts of several others inter-

viewed, Perez said his dream is one day to save enough money to move away from Stanton.

"I still want to move my family to Irvine because of their schools and to be close to my job," he said.

Stanton Councilman Dave Shawver blasted the negative rankings for his city.

"I'm real proud of our city. We've made great strides in the last few years to turn things around, from finances to image," Shawver said. "When I hear people say bad things about Stanton, I ask them how they know and usually they say they don't know about it firsthand but heard it from somebody else. That really burns me up."

— William Boyer/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 29  
 Schools: 30  
 Transportation: 24  
 Shopping: 24  
 Recreation: 32  
 Entertainment: 24  
 Smog: 21.5  
 Other pollution: 11.5  
 Crime: 25.5  
 Income: 33  
 Educational level: 33  
 Climate: 13  
 Convenience to beach: 17  
 Convenience to employment: 12  
 Convenience to culture: 13  
 Family town: 31  
 Overall convenience: 10  
 Prestige: 34  
 Action town: 29  
 Average house price: \$121,156



## TUSTIN

**P**olice Sgt. Jim Peery just couldn't believe the numbers he was seeing. They didn't square with the Tustin he knows.

The Tustin that Peery knows is a relatively affluent city. But the Register computer analysis showed it at No. 28 for income level.

Peery's Tustin has little crime — on average, "one, maybe two homicides a year." But the statistics show the city's per capita crime rate tied with Santa Ana's for bottom place.

"I've been a police officer here eight years," said Peery, 32. "I lived in Chino before ... but I moved here in '85 strictly from the standpoint that it's a fairly crime-free city."

Peery said he agreed with Tustin's low recreation score. With two young children, he's always looking for recreational opportunities. But Tustin lacks parks and bike trails and "you

have to go outside the city to watch a movie," he complained.

The combination of low scores on crime and recreation, plus a mediocre schools ranking gave Tustin, known as a family town, a poor ranking for family life.

"This doesn't represent the Tustin I see," said Jim Ryan, a resident of the town and principal of Foothill High School in nearby North Tustin.

"I see Tustin as low-key, quiet, comfortable community. Traffic here doesn't compare to traffic you see in other communities. The shopping is not as frenetic. You can relax and establish a relationship with shop owners."

Ryan, 57, moved to Tustin from Palm Desert a couple of years ago for his new job. With his two children grown and out of the house, he didn't share the concerns of Tustin's younger families, but as an educator he was especially sensitive about the quality of its schools. Foothill High School is in the Tustin Unified School District.

"We were ranked too low," he said of Tustin's school district. "If they used CAP scores, we're at midpoint; our SATs are way above that. ... I think Tustin would have been at least at midpoint or above. There are a lot

of good school districts, but we're a good school district too."

Nor could Ryan believe that Tustin scored fourth in shopping since it doesn't have a shopping mall yet.

He and Peery stood by their image of the city.

"I'd say this is a great place to live," Peery said. "I'd tell any of my friends: If you can afford a house in Tustin, buy it. You won't regret it."

— Louise Woo/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 16  
 Schools: 20.5  
 Transportation: 6  
 Shopping: 4  
 Recreation: 29  
 Entertainment: 11  
 Smog: 21.5  
 Other pollution: 11.5  
 Crime: 33.5  
 Income: 28  
 Educational level: 19.5  
 Climate: 24.5  
 Convenience to beach: 24  
 Convenience to employment: 2  
 Convenience to culture: 5  
 Family town: 32  
 Overall convenience: 8  
 Prestige: 27  
 Action town: 7  
 Average house price: \$165,120

Please see LIST



## VILLA PARK

**A**n average house price of \$437,500? It's a bargain, Villa Park resident Barbara Dudman figures.

Dudman, an elementary school teacher, said she and her husband looked for houses two years ago in other communities similar to Villa Park, including North Tustin.

"For the size of the house and the lots we got more for a dollar here," she said.

Villa Park does have large houses and large lots — and it's also the most expensive town in town. What it doesn't have are malls, local theaters, sidewalks or street lights.

"This is exactly how we like it," said Lynn Nancy Fontanesi, who has lived in the county's least populous city with her family since 1975.

"Isolation is very important to us."

Thus, the countywide rankings didn't bother Fontanesi or some other of Villa Park's 7,000 residents.

"Surveys like these don't mean anything to us," she said. "They don't represent community values."

And community values and friendly neighbors are what Jim Brodsky likes most about Villa Park.

"It's the last of small-town atmosphere (in Orange County) where you know everyone," Brodsky said.

Brodsky, who owns Villa Park Pharmacy in the city's only shopping center, said he knows of many people who could afford to move elsewhere if they wanted.

"They don't want to leave,"

he said.

"I can stay here and say hi to everyone," he said, standing outside the pharmacy and waving at a couple pushing a grocery cart out of the supermarket next door. "You don't find that in too many places."

— Enrique Rangel/The Register  
Please see LIST/20

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 18

Schools: 28

Transportation: 22

Shopping: 12.5

Recreation: 21.5

Entertainment: 8.5

Smog: 29

Other pollution: 11.5

Crime: 8

Income: 16

Educational level: 24

Climate: 29.5

Convenience to beach: 25

Convenience to employment: 8

Convenience to culture: 14

Family town: 21

Overall convenience: 13

Prestige: 5

Action town: 10

Average house price: \$437,500



## WESTMINSTER

"I don't even tell people I'm from Westminster if I can avoid it," resident H.J. Green said.

His city garnered a middling ranking of 15 overall, but Green was surprised his city fared that well.

The retiree moved to Westminster from Long Beach in 1981, but said he disagrees so strongly with the way the city is managed that he hopes to move back. The streets are poorly maintained, he complained, and the 5 percent tax on electricity, gas and other utilities is a burden.

The city also has been marked during the past year by some apparently race-related problems: Street signs pointing toward Little Saigon have been defaced and the family of an 18-year-old man who was killed by police have filed a civil-rights suit against the city, claiming the shooting stemmed from anti-Hispanic sentiments in the police department.

City officials and most residents had little quarrel with Westminster's middle-of-the-road ranking.

"It's more or less your typical residential town, what people call a bedroom community," said Ardith Martin, a 26-year Westminster resident. "It's no better or worse than a lot of cities here."

The city had its strong points in the Register's computer ranking. It's near enough to the beach to have relatively low smog levels, and it's conveniently located — near the San Diego (I-405) and Garden Grove (22) freeways.

Mayor Chuck Smith said the "average" rating shows that Westminster has a tremendous potential to better itself and is proof that the city has improved over the past few years. Its commercial base has grown with the

influx of Vietnamese refugees and the birth of Little Saigon.

"If this survey was done about five years ago, we'd be near the bottom," Smith said. "These results are very encouraging."

Smith agreed that Westminster does have a crime problem and its low rating in that category is justified, with six crimes for every 100 residents. "That's why the council recently approved plans to increase police manpower," he said. "I think you'll find our crime rates go down significantly in the next few years."

Martin, a homemaker, objected to Westminster's low ranking for schools, however. "My daughter went through the schools here and she received a good education."

Tony Lam, a restaurant owner and vice president of the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce in Westminster, was the only one interviewed who objected to the rating of his adopted city.

Westminster "is a good place

to raise a family," Lam said. However, he said, the schools needed improvement, including more discipline for students.

— William Boyer/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 17

Schools: 31

Transportation: 9

Shopping: 26

Recreation: 23

Entertainment: 5

Smog: 10

Other pollution: 27.5

Crime: 25.5

Income: 22

Educational level: 30

Climate: 8

Convenience to beach: 11

Convenience to employment: 11

Convenience to culture: 6

Family town: 28

Overall convenience: 6

Prestige: 28

Action town: 12

Average house price: \$164,006

Please see LIST/22

FROM 20



## YORBA LINDA

**Y**orba Linda has what Orange County residents want most: low crime. The lowest crime rate in the county.

Oh, but Yorba Linda in the summertime. Hot. Smoggy. As far from the beach as you can get in the county.

True enough, said Arthur Hansen, a 14-year resident. But what didn't show up in the ratings, he said, is what this city of 46,000 residents doesn't have and sorely needs — a soul.

"There's still not a clear sense of what Yorba Linda stands for and what it means to be a Yorba Lindan. Maybe we've stretched geographically too far to have a strong identity," said Hansen, a

history professor at California State University, Fullerton.

But Bob Cochran, a native of Yorba Linda who left Silverado Canyon to move back into his childhood home, likes his city just fine, thank you very much, and usually doesn't care what ratings say.

"I don't put much weight in polls, whether it's Gallup's or the Register's," he said.

As far as he's concerned, Yorba Linda is a well-kept secret, a place where traffic and congestion are light compared with the rest of the county.

On some counts, though, Cochran and the survey agree. Yorba Linda lacks action when it comes to theater, movies, restaurants or entertainment.

"I think they've always felt they could get those resources in Fullerton and Anaheim," Hansen said.

Check back in a few years, the locals urge. Like many residents, Hansen thinks things will change as the city develops eastward into the hills and recently annexed territory. With a new population, the city's base of entertainment might grow, he said.

As for the smog, a category that many cities in north Orange County choked on, Yorba Linda residents are a bit befuddled by all the fuss. If it's any smoggier, it's only by a matter of degrees in a county swathed in the stuff, they said.

"I never sensed that there was a particular problem in Yorba Linda," Hansen said.

— Dawn Bonker/The Register

### Ranking

Overall ranking: 30
Schools: 23
Transportation: 31
Shopping: 23
Recreation: 26
Entertainment: 30.5
Smog: 32
Other pollution: 11.5
Crime: 1
Income: 6
Educational level: 8.5
Climate: 34
Convenience to beach: 34
Convenience to employment: 18
Convenience to culture: 26
Family town: 17
Overall convenience: 30
Prestige: 9
Action town: 30
Average house price: \$224,762

# Conclusions: What we didn't consider

By Marilyn Kalfus  
The Register

**S**o how seriously should you take the Register's computer analysis?

Look at it this way: Of the three people who compiled the rankings — a reporter from Orange, an editor from Laguna Beach and a pollster from Yorba Linda — no one is pulling up stakes for No. 1-ranked Irvine.

We know there are plenty of decisions that go into choosing a home that might not be reflected in the rankings.

For one thing, the survey looked at the total city or community, not neighborhoods. And small, unincorporated communities weren't rated at all.

The categories that were used were adapted from the Rand McNally Places Rated Almanac, chosen because they were considered important to the widest range of Orange County residents.

The Register gathered thousands of statistics for this survey and, to reduce any bias, weighted those figures according to what residents say they want most in a community.

But other factors were not available or could not be counted.

For example, a city might have a high crime rate, but some neighborhoods in that city might be among the county's safest. Another city might have mediocre schools, but you might have moved to your neighborhood because that one school had the perfect program for your child.

## In response

We all know that numbers don't tell the whole story of a community. A hundred factors can go into choosing a place to live — or sometimes one very important factor. You might find your community the prettiest place to live in Orange County or its best-kept secret. Write and let us know why you live where you do, and we'll publish your replies. Send your thoughts to Accent, c/o The Orange County Register, PO Box 11626, Santa Ana 92711.

And the Register analysis did not measure house or lot sizes, or tully trees. It did count the number of parks, but did not examine how big they are or what they offer.

Nor, to the chagrin of one Chapman College professor, were bookstores counted.

"For me, the most important aspect of (culture) is bookstores," said Robert Slayton, an assistant history professor who lives in Orange. "Do I have access to the books that I want? For me, I don't want just Robert Ludlum. I don't want to sound elitist. There's nothing wrong with what's sold at B Dalton; I just want that and more."

Beyond that, there was no accounting for taste.

Tens of thousands of people prefer the uniform homes in Irvine and other planned communities; others cannot abide look-alike

Please see CONCLUSIONS/3

## Conclusions:

FROM 1

housing. Some people want to live in enclaves of, say, retirees or young families; others thrive on diversity.

But the survey did not measure the mix of ages or ethnic groups for each city.

Because of that, Santa Ana Mayor Dan Young found the criteria superficial and the conclusions hurtful to cities such as his with large minority populations.

"These things are very troubling to me, these kinds of categories," Young said. "I think they just very unfairly rank communities. I just don't think somebody's quality of life is to be found in a statistical chart. I think people in Santa Ana and Fullerton are just as happy to

"I think they just very unfairly rank communities. I just don't think somebody's quality of life is to be found in a statistical chart. I think people in Santa Ana and Fullerton are just as happy to be living in their communities as people in Villa Park and Laguna Hills."

Dan Young  
Santa Ana mayor

be living in their communities as people in Villa Park and Laguna Hills."

Peter Muller, a geography professor at the University of Miami and an expert on America's suburbs, disagreed that such a survey is inherently racist.

"You people are simply a mirror that's reflecting back to your

local community," he said.

Then, there was the question of housing costs. Obviously, housing prices determine the choices for most of us. But the Register's survey specifically eliminated housing price as a category for the overall rankings. That's because the analysis was designed to produce a "wish list" of the best

places regardless of cost.

Pollster Karl Reitz, who conducted the survey and ranked the cities, said that because housing prices were not included, any bias would be toward more affluent communities.

"What we did was to put together the best possible ranking in terms of what we had," he said. But even among the categories rated, there were problems.

As an example, he cited convenience rankings, in which the number of miles from one place to another was measured.

But often, traffic congestion or lack of it — is an even bigger factor, he said.