



Parks and Recreation: General Parks Use Policy

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PARKS AND RECREATION: GENERAL PARKS USE POLICY

DEPARTMENT POLICY

Adopted: 11/2025

The City of Laguna Niguel (“City”) provides safe and well-maintained park facilities to the public for recreational and social, civic, commercial and private activities that are of interest and need to the community. The Parks and Recreation General Parks Use Policy is established to provide an effective framework for the administration of park facilities and open space throughout the City by providing equitable and fair access to all users and ensuring that park and open space use aligns with the City’s mission, vision, values, municipal codes, ordinances, and policies. The goal of the General Parks Use Policy is to ensure that parks facilities and open space enhance the overall wellness of all residents in Laguna Niguel.

Please note that Athletic facilities, Laguna Niguel Aquatics Center, Skate and Soccer Park, Sea Country Senior and Community Center, Crown Valley Community Center, and City Hall are not governed by this policy.

A. GENERAL PARKS REGULATIONS

The following General Parks Regulations apply to all facilities listed within this policy, in addition to any other regulations or limitations specified under individual areas.

1. Alcohol, tobacco, smoking, vaping, e-cigarettes, drugs, or narcotics are prohibited at all City facilities and parks.
2. Foliage, landscape, and structures shall not be defaced, destroyed, or removed.
3. Garbage/rubbish and litter must be deposited in designated receptacles.
4. Outdoor barbecues are only allowed on City-provided grills. No open personal grills or open fires permitted.
5. Firearms, weapons, fireworks, fog machines, or similar smoke-making devices are prohibited.
6. Amplified sound is not permitted at any facility without prior written approval and must comply with all City codes. The appropriate level of amplified music will be determined by the facility staff and may not interfere with regular operations or impact residential neighborhoods.
7. Golf, archery, ice blocking, and the flying of motor-driven or fuel-propelled airplanes, rockets, missiles, drones, parachuting, remote control planes, and cars, etc., are prohibited, except at such time and place as may be designated by the Parks and Recreation Director or designee.

8. Amusement-type equipment such as bounce houses, inflatables, and dunk tanks are not permitted. (except at the Lower Soccer Field at Crown Valley Park)
9. Dogs must be on a leash not to exceed six (6) feet in length. Owners or custodians are required to clean up after their dogs.
10. City Parks are open from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. (exceptions are noted in the Athletic Facilities Use Policy).
11. Camping or overnight stays are strictly prohibited in all City parks.
12. Use of the facilities does not imply endorsement or sponsorship of the event by the City. All publicity for events and programs must be approved by the City prior to distribution.
13. All parking signs and restrictions must be observed and obeyed. Parking is permitted only in designated areas. Parking is prohibited on grass, sidewalks, or near red curbs. Reserving or holding parking spaces is prohibited. All parking is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservation of any City facility does not guarantee availability of parking.
14. The City is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
15. Motor vehicles are only permitted on approved roads and designated parking areas.
16. The City reserves the right to photograph events for City promotional purposes.

B. PARK AND OPEN SPACE USE**NON-RESERVABLE PARK AND OPEN SPACES**

The following areas are available for public use on a first-come, first-served basis and cannot be reserved:

- Tot Lots/Playground
- Paved and Unpaved Trails
- Public Restrooms
- Picnic Shelters and Tables (Except at Crown Valley Park Plaza)
- Open Park Space

LILLY SHAPELL PARK AND GLIDER USE

Lilly Shapell Park is known for its spectacular views and favorable conditions, making it an ideal location for flying model gliders. A City permit is required to operate gliders at this park.

To obtain a permit, pilots must demonstrate the ability to successfully operate a glider at Lilly Shapell Park and must comply with all applicable park regulations. The use of electric or gasoline-powered model airplanes is strictly prohibited. To schedule a flight test, pilots must contact a member of the Model Glider Committee. A Model Glider Permit Application (Appendix A) must be submitted to the City of Laguna Niguel Parks and Recreation Department.

LARGE PARK GATHERINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

To enrich the lives of our residents, select park facilities are available for community gatherings and special events with 100 people or more. Per the Municipal Code, a permit is required for such use and will be reviewed and approved by the Parks and Recreation Director or their designee.

Permits will be approved on a first-come, first-served basis and must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the large gathering or special event. Approval of a permit does not guarantee or entitle the permit holder to reserve specific park amenities. Rather, the permit serves as official notification to the Parks and Recreation Department that a large activity may affect regular park use.

Groups of 100 People or More

For all gatherings or events expected to attract more than 100 people, a Large Park Gathering and Special Event Permit Application (Appendix B) is required. This permit will be reviewed and approved by the Parks and Recreation Director or their designee. Depending on the nature of the event, additional approval may be required from other City departments, including but not limited to Police Services, Community Development, and Public Works. Please note that this permit does not constitute a reservation of any specific park space or amenity, such as grass areas, playgrounds, picnic tables, or athletic fields. Groups may also be required to provide proof of insurance. Insurance requirements will be provided.

Capacity Uses

Maximum capacity limits for City facilities, as established by State and City codes, ordinances, and regulations, will be strictly enforced regardless of any facility reservations or permits issued for park or facility use.

Confirmation

An approved group gathering in a City Park is not confirmed until the permit has been officially approved by the City. Submitting a permit application signifies only that the applicant has read and understands the general regulations-it does not guarantee approval.

Permanent Rental of Parks and Open Space

No permanent or ongoing rental or assignment of any City facility shall be granted to any individual or organization.

Responsible Parties

Use of parks for group gatherings or special events is limited to responsible individuals who are 21 years of age or older. The approved applicant is accountable for the use, cleanliness, and overall condition of the facility. Additionally, the applicant must be able to communicate effectively with City staff and fully understand all applicable regulations.

Scheduling Priorities

City-sponsored or co-sponsored events shall take priority over all other group activities. In the event of a scheduling conflict, the Parks and Recreation Director or their designee reserves the right to reschedule any group or facility use. The scheduling of group gatherings, special events, and contractual recreational programs will be managed at the discretion of the Parks and Recreation Director or designee in a fair and equitable manner to best serve the educational, cultural, and recreational needs of the general public.

Code of Conduct

Applicants must conduct themselves in a manner that does not disrupt, disturb, or interfere with the orderly use and enjoyment of the park or open space by others. Disruptive behavior is strictly prohibited. Applicants are responsible for managing noise levels to avoid interfering with other park activities or negatively affecting surrounding neighborhoods.

Banners/Signage

Banners and signage are not permitted at any City facility without prior written approval. For all events, the following disclaimer must be included on any flyers, notices, or electronic communications: "This event is a private reservation and is not endorsed or sponsored by the City of Laguna Niguel."

Park and Open Space Damage

- Facilities shall be left by the user in a clean and well-maintained condition.
- Any person or group causing property or equipment damage will be required to pay for the full repair of damaged City property.
- Under no circumstances is the equipment to be removed from a City Park.

Use Denial and Revocation

Facility use may be denied or revoked by the Parks and Recreation Director or designee based on any of the following:

- Unavailability of requested times.
- Hazardous conditions of the park, including inclement weather.
- Maintenance or emergency repairs.
- Any person or group with an outstanding balance due to the City.
- Past violations by the applicant of City regulations pertaining to the use of parks.
- Parks may not be used for the ongoing conduct of religious services.
- If the activity is not compatible with accepted legal and moral standards, and/or detrimental to the best interest of the City.
- If any requirements of the user permit regulations are not met.
- Misrepresentation of use/user/falsification of documents.
- Inadequate supervision.

Unauthorized Equipment

The following equipment is not authorized for use in park or open space facilities:

- Amusement-type equipment (except at the Lower Soccer Field at Crown Valley Park)
- Portable/temporary lights
- Portable grills
- Amplified sound without prior approval

Liability

The City is not liable for any accidental injury or loss or damage of property for individuals or groups. The applicant shall agree to indemnify, hold harmless, and defend the City and all their officers, employees, and agents from all alleged loss, bodily injury, property damage, liability, cost, or expense that may arise or be caused in any way by their use and occupancy of City facilities. The applicant shall release, discharge, and agree not to hold the City, their officers, employees, and agents liable for any bodily injury, death, or damage to or loss of personal property arising out of the use and occupancy of City facilities.

Insurance

Permit holder may be required to provide liability insurance for reservations. Insurance requirements are determined based on the City's risk assessment of the event and vary by

the type of event/activities/uses, facility location, and number of anticipated guests. Requirements are subject to change without notice.

C. PICNIC SHELTERS

Picnic shelters and tables are available to the public on a first-come, first-served basis and cannot be reserved.

However, picnic tables and shelter at the Crown Valley Park Plaza may be reserved in advance. For guidelines and reservation details, please refer to the Crown Valley Park Facilities Use Policy.

GENERAL RULES OF USE FOR PICNIC SITES

1. All picnic tables are available on a first-come, first-served basis at no charge (except at identified locations at Crown Valley Park).
2. Use of bounce houses, dunk tanks, and other amusement-type equipment are not permitted at any City Park facility (except at the Lower Soccer Field at Crown Valley Park)
3. Decorations are allowed but may only be attached using string, ribbon, or masking tape. The use of staples, tacks, duct tape, and chalk are not permitted. All decorations must be removed after the event.
4. Prior written permission is required to set up tables, chairs, temporary shelters, or any other equipment on the grass areas of any City Park.

D. PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO MEDIA

Anyone engaged in commercial (for-profit or sales-related) photography or videography on City property, whether still, motion picture, digital, for print, TV, theatres, or the Internet, is required to complete a Photography and Video Media Permit Application (Appendix C). Personal Photography or filming at City Parks, the Niguel Botanical Preserve, trails, or open space areas do not require a permit.

Any applicant who submits a letter written on school letterhead by a school administrator or instructor stating that the applicant is currently enrolled in a recognized United States educational institution and that the photography and video media is not for commercial release is exempt from any permit fees established pursuant to the Municipal Code.

Charitable photography and video media produced by City of Laguna Niguel nonprofit organizations, and news media, are exempt from any permit fees established pursuant to the Municipal Code.

For more information, please contact the City of Laguna Niguel Parks and Recreation Department.

Commercial Photography- Permit Required

"Commercial Photography" refers to photography for sale or profit aside from filming for motion pictures or television. Such photography may be permitted after submission of appropriate application and proof of required insurance coverage. Commercial photography permits are handled in the same manner as commercial motion picture, video, and television photography.

Commercial Video Media- Permit Required

"Commercial Video Media" refers to the filming or recording of moving images – via film, electronic, magnetic, digital, or other formats- conducted by individuals, businesses, or entities for a market audience with the intent to generate income. Examples include, but are not limited to, feature films, videography, monetization of social media, and documentaries. Commercial filming may also include the advertisement of a product or service, or the use of actors, models, sets, or props.

A Commercial Photography and/or Video Media permit is required for the following circumstances:

- The activity restricts/prevents public access to an area or takes place in a location not ordinarily open to the public; or
- The activity uses a model, constructed set, lighting rig, or large props requiring setup; or
- The image(s) are used to advertise a business or promote/sell a product, print, or service; or
- The City would incur additional administrative costs to monitor the activity.

A "model" refers to a person or object that serves as the subject for photography to promote the sale or use of a product or service. Models may include, but are not limited to, individuals, animals, or inanimate objects, such as vehicles, boats, clothing, or food and beverage products.

Portrait subjects, such as wedding parties and graduating students, are not considered models when the images are intended for personal use and not to promote or sell a product or service.

Personal Photography and Video Media- Permit Not Required

Photography or Video Media for personal purposes is encouraged to enhance visitor enjoyment and extend the benefits and influences of recreational experiences.

Personal photography or Video Media by park visitors, whether still, motion picture, or video, is allowed without a permit only under the following circumstances:

- All park rules and regulations must be adhered to.
- No reserving or blocking off space, or interference with other park visitors' use or enjoyment of the park.
- No use of professional props and/or sets, professional actors, models, or specialized or large motorized equipment.
- Photography or Video Media takes place during regular park operating hours.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO MEDIA PERMIT FEES: (See Appendix C)**E. POOCH PARK (DOG PARK)****RULES AND REGULATIONS**

1. Park hours are 7:00 a.m. to dusk Monday through Saturday, and 8:00 a.m. to dusk on Sunday. The park may close during inclement weather or as needed.
2. On Mondays and Fridays, the park is closed from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for maintenance.
3. Aggressive behavior by dogs, owners, or custodians is not allowed.
4. Food is not allowed within the fenced area of the park.
5. Commercial use, such as professional dog training, is prohibited.
6. Abandonment of animals is prohibited and is punishable by law (California Penal Code Sec. 5971)
7. Each owner or custodian may bring no more than three dogs at any one time.
8. No puppies under the age of four months.
9. Organized gatherings are not permitted.
10. No animals other than dogs are permitted in the park.
11. Children under the age of 13 must be accompanied and supervised by an adult at all times.
12. Owners or custodians must clean up after their dogs and dispose of waste properly.

13. All dogs must be current on vaccinations, including rabies, and must be wearing a current dog tag.
14. Dogs must be spayed or neutered.
15. Dogs must remain on a leash outside the fenced area, and owners or custodians must maintain control at all times.
16. Please limit use of the single dog run to 30 minutes if other users are waiting.
17. Dogs may not be left unattended in Pooch Park or in vehicles.
18. Dog owners or custodians are responsible for all damage or injuries caused by their dogs at the park. In the event of a dog bite or injury, the owner or custodian must exchange current tag information and phone numbers.
19. General parking is not allowed in the Fire Station visitor or reserved stalls. ADA accessible parking may only be used by park visitors with a valid placard.

The Pooch Park is patrolled by Mission Viejo Animal Services.

To report any dog attacks or abandonments, please call (949) 470-3045.

F. NIGUEL BOTANICAL PRESERVE

The Niguel Botanical Preserve is an 18-acre botanical garden situated above Crown Valley Park. The purpose of the Preserve is to demonstrate the use of drought-tolerant plants appropriate to the Southern California region, collected from the five areas of the world with similar Mediterranean climates.

The Preserve is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is managed and operated by volunteers under the terms of a cooperative agreement with the City. The property is owned by the City and falls under the General Parks Use Policy. It is open seven days per week, 365 days a year, from sunrise to sunset. Admission is free.

Bicycles, e-bikes, and unauthorized motor vehicles are prohibited in the Preserve.

Visitors to the Preserve may not pick flowers, harvest, or otherwise damage plant materials.

No decorations of any type may be affixed to structures or trees within the Preserve. No objects, including but not limited to chairs, tables, and changing tents, may be placed within the Preserve. Confetti is also prohibited.

The Preserve is not reservable and does not host weddings or other private events of any kind. Group gatherings of more than ten people are prohibited, except for events sponsored by the Niguel Botanical Preserve.

Photography is welcome in the Preserve. All photographers are required to follow the Photography and Video Media requirements in the General Parks Use Policy. In addition, photographers must stay on the trails or hardscape areas and may not stand in plant/flower beds. Moving existing signs, sandbags, and other equipment is prohibited.

Memberships to the Niguel Botanical Preserve are available, and membership dues are considered donations to the non-profit organization.

G. TRAILS AND TRAILHEADS RULES AND REGULATIONS

The City of Laguna Niguel offers over 80 miles of trails for residents and visitors to enjoy. Trail facilities include multi-use trails for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking, as well as Class I and II bikeways for on-road and off-road cycling. This network of trails provides multimodal opportunities for local and regional connectivity throughout the City.

For patron courtesy and safety, please adhere to the following rules and regulations:

1. Be aware of your surroundings.
2. Helmet use is recommended for all bicyclists, skaters, and skateboarders.
3. All trail users must yield to horseback riders. When approaching them, slow down and move along the side of the trail. Bicyclists, skaters, and skateboarders must be in control of their equipment and yield to walkers and runners.



4. When approaching users on the trail, particularly from behind, make sure the other party is aware of your presence.
5. All pets must be leashed, and owners or custodians are required to clean up after them.
6. Motorized vehicles are prohibited on the trail. However, individuals with mobility-related disabilities may use electric-powered mobility aids, such as wheelchairs or other assistive devices, that are designed for pedestrian areas and comply with applicable accessibility standards.
7. **E-Bike Use and Safety:** An e-bike is a bicycle with working pedals and an electric motor under 750 watts. If you ride, or plan to ride, an e-bike, please follow all local laws and safety guidelines to protect yourself and others.

E-bikes must follow the same rules as regular bicycles. They do not require registration, insurance, or a driver's license.

However, under California law, electric bicycles with motors exceeding 750 watts, as well as bicycles powered by gasoline, are classified as motorized vehicles—specifically, motorcycles. These vehicles require registration, insurance, a Class M driver's license, and riders must meet minimum age requirements. These types of vehicles are prohibited on City trails. For more information, please contact the Laguna Niguel Police Services Department at (949) 362-4346.

For trail maintenance concerns or reports, please call the City of Laguna Niguel Public Works Department at (949) 362-4337.

H. INTERPRETATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

In order to facilitate the efficient and timely administration and implementation of this Policy, the City Council recognizes that situations may arise that require City staff to make interpretations and exceptions to this Policy in order to carry out the purposes and goals of this Policy. For that purpose, the City Manager is authorized to make those interpretations and exceptions as the need arises, and without prior application or notice or City Council prior approval, provided that those interpretations and exceptions are consistent with the goals and purposes of this Policy. Any request for an interpretation or exception to the Policy that the City Manager believes is not consistent with the goals and purposes of the Policy may be denied by the City Manager or, if the City Manager determines in his or her judgment, should be reviewed by the City Council, may be referred to the Council for review and determination prior to approval.

Appendices:

- A. [Model Glider Permit Application](#)
- B. [Large Park Gathering and Special Event Permit Application](#)
- C. [Photography and Video Media Permit Application](#)