



**ANNUAL “REPORT CARD” FOR ORANGE COUNTY RELEASED**  
*Seventh Annual Community Indicators Report to be Featured at March Forum*

Irvine, CA — Orange County’s economy remains strong and signs point to continued growth in 2006. These are the findings from the 2006 Community Indicators report that was presented to the Orange County Board of Supervisors today and will be released at the annual State of the County program sponsored by the Orange County Forum today (March 8, 2006) at the Hyatt Hotel in Irvine ([www.ocforum.org](http://www.ocforum.org)).

The comprehensive report outlines recent growth in several business and high-tech indicators, boding well for Orange County’s economy:

- Manufacturing and service exports increased for the third year in a row at \$14.9 billion in 2004.
- There is a rise in average daily visitor spending in Orange County than in peer and neighboring counties.
- Orange County has the fastest per capita income growth rate among peers (4.27%).
- There is an increase in the percent of Orange County executives surveyed stating that the county is becoming a more attractive place to do business (24%).
- Venture capital funding jumped 87% from \$138.6 million for the first half of 2004 to \$259.5 million for the first half of 2005.
- Patent grants to Orange County inventors increased 16.6%, greater than increases in peer markets like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Austin.

“We have a lot of reasons to be optimistic about our future,” said Michael Ruane, project director for the report and Executive Director of the Children and Families Commission of Orange County. “In addition to a prospering economy, the health and education of children is improving, which has a long-term effect on the success of our community.”

The report is not without warnings. Persistently high housing costs continue to be an issue on the county’s otherwise strong business climate. For many years job growth has outpaced housing construction, resulting in 89% of residents that can not afford the median priced home and the county is among the least affordable locations to rent. Among 300 metropolitan areas compared, Orange County’s cost of living was fourth highest, largely attributable to the cost of housing.

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Orange County regularly outperforms the state on SAT scores, standardized testing, eligibility for admission to public California universities, and dropout rates. But these indicators vary significantly by region and ethnicity, with lower-performing schools concentrated in central county cities and Latinos on average performing at a lower level than other ethnic groups. As Latinos become a larger proportion of public school enrollment, improved Latino educational performance will be essential to Orange County's future workforce and economic strength.

A special section devoted to Arts and Culture in Orange County highlights the importance of the arts industry both to businesses and residents. The county is home to nearly 500 nonprofit arts organizations and boasts over 37,000 jobs in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry—over 2.5% of the total workforce population. This is the highest concentration of arts industry jobs in southern California.

Another special feature of this year's report focused on the issue of homelessness in Orange County. The number of homeless families outnumbers homeless individuals two to one, with over 16,000 homeless children reported. The recurring theme of high housing costs is a main factor.

The Orange County Community Indicators report is prepared through a partnership of the County of Orange, the Orange County Business Council, and the Children and Families Commission of Orange County. The report is the seventh annual report to track

Orange County's progress against key economic, social and health measures, and is now available online at

[www.oc.ca.gov/ceocommunity.asp](http://www.oc.ca.gov/ceocommunity.asp) or by calling (714) 834-7257.

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