

Irvine can annex El Toro

10

years of
debate over
the base

100

million

The total dollars
spent in waging
the El Toro war

900

Number of acres
of concrete on the
El Toro base

Approval means no airport after a 10-year fight, but rather a mix of housing, schools and parks.

By **LAYLAN CONNELLY**
and **JEFF ROWE**

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In the end, the great debate led to the Great Park.

Irvine won approval Wednesday to annex the old El Toro air base, ending a decade-long struggle over its future.

The Local Agency Formation

Commission, or LAFCO, voted 5-2 to allow Irvine to annex the 4,700-acre Marine base, effectively killing a proposed commercial airport. It also clears the way to build the Great Park plan, a mix of housing, schools, commercial centers, museums and parks.

Even most airport proponents now concede the El Toro fight is lost, and they are looking inland for solutions to future air passenger demand.

The decision Wednesday also vaults Irvine past Anaheim to become Orange County's largest city in area.

"I think it's the most important land-use and annexation decision in the last 30 years," Ir-

vine Mayor Larry Agran said after the hearing.

Only one significant obstacle remains before development of the base can begin: a lawsuit brought by the Airport Working Group, a pro-airport group, challenging the environmental impact report on the Great Park. A hearing is set for Dec. 11.

Charles McLaughlin, a former Leisure World United board member and co-founder of Tax-payers for Responsible Planning, recalled Wednesday a debate where a former mayor of Newport Beach said flights would be "overhead every five minutes."

"And I thought, 'That's torture,'" he said. "I think that galvanized a lot of people."



"Online and seniors - that did it."

BERT HACK
ABOVE.
MAYOR OF
LAGUNA
WOODS