



1 Civic Center Circle, Brea, California 92821

[www.cityofbrea.net](http://www.cityofbrea.net)

## Brea - Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

### *Yesterday...*

Nestled in the foothills on a plateau at the northern tip of Orange County, Brea was known as a place where tar seeped from the hills. The word "Brea" means tar in Spanish. In early history, Indians and pioneers used chunks of the oil-soaked earth for fuel and domestic purposes like heating their homes and waterproofing their roofs. Then came the big oil boom!



In 1894, the Union Oil Company purchased 1,200 acres of land to be used for oil development. They struck it rich in 1898 when the first oil well, Olinda Oil Well #1, came in - thus creating an oil boom in the hills of Brea and Olinda and paving the way for the thriving city that Brea is today.

An actual town did not develop until 1911 when businesses and small industries sprang up to serve the oil field workers and their families. The official founding date for the town of Brea is January 19, 1911, when the old map of the town of Randolph was refiled under a new name. The City of Brea became incorporated on February 23, 1917, with a population of 752.



Brea's oil boom lasted until the 1940s. As oil production declined, the next three decades brought new housing developments and businesses to Brea. The 70s saw big changes with the opening of the Brea Mall. The city grew steadily through the years. As oil production declined, the 40s, 50s and 60s brought many new housing developments and new businesses. The 70s saw big changes with the opening of the Orange (57) freeway and the construction of the Brea Mall. Industrial parks and retail areas thrived in Brea during the 70s and 80s, as more and more companies took advantage

of the city's strategic location in the center of Southern California.

Brea's rich history is preserved at the Brea Museum and Heritage Center, 495 S. Brea Blvd. The museum provides a place for education, research, and community gatherings. Please call 256-2283 for information on operating hours, current exhibits, or meeting and banquet facilities.

Visitors can take a step back in time at the [Olinda Oil Museum and Park](#), a 12-acre historical park developed to recapture the sights, sounds, and smells of the oil boom era. The site includes: Olinda Oil Well #1 which is still pumping 100 years later; the original field office (now a museum) with the original safe and warehouse; a jackline pump and its surrounding building; and a records vault. Park gates are open daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The field office is open to visitors Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Sundays from 12 noon to 4 p.m., or when State Park Rangers and/or docents are available. Admission is free. For further information, call 671-4447.

Two historical books provide an interesting look at Brea's past, "Brea, Celebrating 75 Years," by Teresa Hampson, and "Oil, Oranges and Opportunity," by local historian Esther Cramer. Also, a DVD by Brea historian Brian Saul titled "Brea, A History of Our Town and Our Times," takes you through some fascinating and unusual facts about Brea's early times. These items, produced for the 75th anniversary, are available for purchase at the Brea Community Center front counter. For information, please call 990-7100. A historical video titled, "A Walk in Time," and the items mentioned above, can also be purchased from the Brea Historical Society, the guardians of Brea's history. [Click here](#) to view the Historical Society website and learn about the Brea Museum and Heritage Center, 495 S. Brea Blvd, or call 714-256-2283. The Museum is also a beautiful, unique place for your next meeting, banquet, or special event. Please call for rental information.

### *Today...*

Brea is a thriving city of 40,377 residents. More than 100,000 people visit the city daily to work, shop or play. Brea Mall, conveniently located just off the 57 freeway, has four major anchor stores: Nordstrom, Macy's, Sears and JC Penney, with over 175 specialty stores and restaurants and Glen Ivy Day Spa. Located adjacent to Brea Mall, the full-service 299-room Embassy Suites Hotel attracts visitors, conferences and small conventions from domestic and foreign locales. Homestead Village, an extended stay hotel, opened in 1998.

Brea is also very proud of its bustling downtown popularly known as "Birch Street," with over 50 acres of shopping and entertainment. This village-style pedestrian-oriented promenade features Taps Fish House & Brewery, Old Navy, The Yardhouse, the Improv Comedy Club and Edwards Stadium Cinema Complex, to name a few.

City Hall Park, located on Brea Boulevard, includes a large community plunge and hosts a popular summer Concerts in the Park series, as well as the annual July 4 Country Fair. The Brea Scout Center, housed in the renovated old City Hall at the park, is now open. The renovation project was a labor of love spearheaded by the Brea Lions Club to benefit many community service groups including the Brea Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Monetary donations are always welcomed to offset operating expenses.

The Brea Marketplace, Brea Gateway Shopping Center, Union Plaza and East Imperial Center offer residents extensive choices for specialty retail and services, and create more reasons to "Shop Brea" and keep tax dollars working in their own community. Brea Boulevard and Imperial Highway, both retail corridors, host a number of smaller neighborhood shopping centers, all conveniently located.

Brea's housing market is booming with newer developments like Olinda Ranch (662 housing units) located at the corner of Lambert Road and Valencia; Walden Estates (54 single family homes) located on the north side of Lambert Road just east of Kraemer; and Tonner Hills (795 housing units) proposed for an unincorporated area of Orange County just north of Brea that is expected to be annexed into the City in the future.

Brea also welcomed its very first Brea Sports Park, which opened on February 2009 and is located on the northwest corner of Valencia and Birch.

### ***Tomorrow...***

Because Brea is well known for a high quality lifestyle and upbeat business tempo, new development proposals can be expected into the future. An updated City of Brea General Plan was adopted in 2003 reflecting key values that guide the community. This document reflects extensive public outreach, which is a hallmark of policy-making in Brea. As population becomes dense in Southern California and the entire region becomes increasingly urban, Brea is certain to lead the way in striking good balance on emerging issues.

Revitalization of existing properties will remain an important dynamic for Brea. Development concepts now in place honor the past through timely preservation of historically relevant resources while still encouraging more efficient infrastructure and improved buildings to handle expanding human needs. Exciting in-fill projects will continue to be a cornerstone of economic development for the City.

Brea is committed to responsible growth, which includes protection of nearby open space. The City is bordered by a significant natural wildlife corridor that also serves as a rare scenic break within the area's urban sprawl. Working in conjunction with neighboring communities, Brea has attracted national interest from parks and environmental organizations that recognize the significance of its setting. Nearby hillsides may well represent the best legacy for the future.