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Mar 31, 2025

CITY OF IRVINE  
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

# Memo

To: Oliver C. Chi, City Manager  
From: Melinda Liu, Councilmember *ML*  
Date: March 27, 2025  
Re: **2026 FIFA World Cup and 2028 Olympics City Readiness**

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For the next few years, Southern California will be visited and watched by millions of sports fans across the world as a result of the 2026 FIFA World Cup and 2028 Olympics. Millions of visitors are expected to travel to Southern California to view the upcoming games. Therefore, the City of Irvine should prepare for these upcoming worldwide events.

The FIFA World Cup is held every four years, with its first tournament hosted on July 13, 1930. The upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup tournament will be the first time that three countries, the United States, Mexico, and Canada, jointly host a World Cup, making it one of the most anticipated sports events globally. The first opening game for the United States will take place on June 12, 2025, at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, and the final match will take place on July 19, 2026, at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. FIFA reports that over 1.18 million international visitors arrived at the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, and the 2026 FIFA World Cup attendance is expected to increase significantly.

The Olympics is held every four years, with its most recent tournament happening in Paris, France, in 2024. It was reported that an estimated 11.2 million people visited Paris during the 2024 Olympics, therefore, it is expected that a similar trend may occur during the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. In addition, athletes and media villages will be hosted on the USC and UCLA campuses to accommodate lodging.

The importance of preparing the City of Irvine for these events is in response to several attributes. First, Irvine's location between Los Angeles and the US/Mexico border makes it an ideal commercial stopover for tourists traveling to the games. Notable Irvine centers such as Irvine Spectrum Center and The Market Place could accommodate these visitors for shopping and entertainment, benefiting the local City economy.

Second, Irvine has more than 20 hotels that may serve to lodge thousands of sports fans en route to Los Angeles, mainly due to its proximity to John Wayne Airport, I-5, and I-405. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, hotels have not fully recovered financially due to low booking rates. However, these worldwide events

would increase hotel revenue, thereby potentially increasing job opportunities to accommodate future guests.

Lastly, the City has several facilities that may be used as training centers for participating teams, including the Great Park. Ensuring teams have access to these facilities and coordinating with our City departments would ensure athletes are safe and enjoy Irvine's best facilities. Moreover, based on the popularity of these events throughout the world, organizations and members of the community would be eager to host events in recognition, therefore ensuring the City is ready to accommodate facility reservations, and readiness would ensure fans' needs.

With this information, I request that the City Manager and the City Staff provide a comprehensive coordination plan in anticipation of these events coming to Southern California, including tourism, public safety, and other important information.

cc: City Council  
City Clerk