

Villaraigosa saddles up to ride the open trail

By Lisa M. Sodders, Staff Writer, Daily News
9-18-05

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa sat tall in the saddle Saturday as he rode the horse trail at Stoney Point on horseback, alongside more than 50 riders.

The Chatsworth Neighborhood Council's equestrian committee and representatives from numerous horse-riding groups invited the mayor on the two-mile ride to share their concerns about a way of life they fear is being eroded by developers building high-density housing.

"I love this," Villaraigosa said as he rode up the dusty trail on a Los Angeles Police Department Mounted Patrol horse named Tom. "Los Angeles is big enough that we should be able to preserve these kinds of open spaces."

Jerry England, chairman of the equestrian committee, agreed: "There really need to be some unique little pieces of the city that are allowed to be different.

"There's not a lot of rural left any more as these big fields get chopped up for houses."

Deb Baumann, managing director of the Vaquero Heritage Foundation, said preserving equine areas benefits more people than just local residents who own horses.

Groups like Ride-On Therapeutic Horsemanship, which works with adults and children with mental and physical disabilities, also depend on open space and riding trails.

Baumann, who wore an 1830s vaquero costume and sat on a hand-tooled leather saddle and traditional hand-carved oak stirrups, said it's also important to preserve a part of Los