WEST ATHENS/WESTMONT

COMMUNITY PLAN

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

Adopted by the Board of Supervisors

March 15, 1990

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LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING

James E. Hartl, AICP, Director of Planning
John Edwards, Administrator, Community Planning

COMMUNITY STUDIES III

Sorin H. Alexanian, Section Head
Elizabeth N. Ndubisi, Planner
Margaret F. Murphy, Planner
Teresa M. Abalos, Secretary

CORDOBA CORPORATION

George Pla, President
Maria Mehranian
Kathy O'Grady
Robert Vasquez
Chester Britt

RCA AND ASSOCIATES

Renette Combs Anderson, President

For additional information regarding this document, please contact:

Department of Regional Planning
Community Studies III
Hall of Records, Room 1162
320 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012
(213) 974-6425

INTRODUCTION

This report is the second in a series of reports dealing with West Athens/Westmont. This report is a community plan, the purpose of which is to establish a framework of goals, policies and programs on which to make decisions as to the allocation of resources and the pattern, density, and character of development in the West Athens/Westmont community. The community plan details preferred land use and the kinds of public facilities including highways, schools and parks that are needed to accommodate the people who live and work there. Although the plan is composed of individual sections, called elements, which address a particular planning concern, the plan is structured to provide an integrated policy strategy in which a comprehensive range of community concerns and issues are addressed.

Although the major components of the Los Angeles Countywide General Plan and Community Plan have different roles, they are not mutually exclusive. The Community Plan, as a component of the overall General Plan, serves to provide governmental decisionmakers with a local perspective, and with guidelines appropriate to local issues. For example, land use and circulation policies will be more detailed and specific. However, decisions made must reflect the direction set by both the countywide and the Community Plan. The countywide chapters and elements of the General Plan shall guide decisions involving regional concerns. Furthermore, issues not addressed or elements not included in the West Athens-Westmont Community Plan are incorporated by reference from the Los Angeles County General Plan.

Additionally, in those instances where a decision may involve both local and regional concerns, it is the countywide General Plan that sets policy direction parameters. In some cases, both the General Plan and the Community Plan may address a particular issue. In such a case, the more stringent policy shall apply.

THE COMMUNITY

The West Athens/Westmont community covers an area of 3.1 square miles. As of July 1987, the County of Los Angeles estimated the population of West Athens/Westmont to be about 39,598. There are approximately 12,300 housing units in the area, of which about 4,600 (38 percent) are owner-occupied. West Athens/Westmont is an urban residential community. Only about 58 acres (three percent) of the area is vacant land.

There are three elementary schools, one junior high school, and one senior high school in the area. Southwest College, a community college located at Imperial Highway and Western Avenue, has an enrollment of 7,000 students. Helen Keller Park is located in the

college located at Imperial Highway and Western Avenue, has an enrollment of 7,000 students. Helen Keller Park is located in the southeast corner or the area. The Chester Washington Golf Course is located in the southwest corner.

The average age for the population of West Athens/Westmont is young compared to the average age for Los Angeles County. Almost forty percent of area residents are less than eighteen years of age. One-third of all children are less than five years old. In 1980, the median age in the area was 23.2 years, considerably below the County median of 29.8 years. The increase in young, Hispanic families is largely responsible for the low median age in the area.

Compared to averages for Los Angeles County, the population of West Athens/Westmont has relatively lower income, employment and education levels. In 1980, the median family income was only sixty percent of the County median. There are more than twice as many families living below the poverty level in West Athens/Westmont than the County-wide average. Approximately 61% of the households received public assistance in 1980.

Unemployment is a major problem in the area. The high number of young residents contributes to the comparatively high level of unemployment, because unemployment rates continue to be highest among young workers.

Crime is a significant problem in the community. A large number of gangs are active in the area. The crime rate is significantly higher than the Los Angeles County average.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

The West Athens/Westmont community is located in the southwestern portion of central Los Angeles County (See Figure 1). The community is bounded on the north and east by the City of Los Angeles, on the south by the City of Gardena, and on the west by the Cities of Hawthorne and Inglewood. The street boundaries for the area are roughly Manchester Avenue to the north, El Segundo Boulevard to the south, Vermont Avenue to the east, and Van Ness Avenue on the west. West Athens/Westmont is approximately nine miles south of the Los Angeles Civic Center. The area is east of the Los Angeles International Airport and about a mile west of the Harbor Freeway.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

A key factor in developing a successful community plan is extensive community involvement in the formulation of goals, objectives, and policies. The basis for this community plan is the problems, issues, ideas, and suggestions articulated by members of the community. A comprehensive community participation process has been designed to solicit comments and suggestions from all segments of the community.

A central element of the community participation process is a series of meetings held in the community. For the initial meetings, a committee of West Athens/Westmont community leaders was formed. Meetings of the committee are scheduled during the evening hours to allow maximum participation.

Maps and other factual material about the area were presented to facilitate discussions at the community meetings. Issues, problems and alternatives were explored to determine the needs and desires of the residents. The reasons behind proposed plan and zoning changes were presented as well as the expected benefits of the changes.

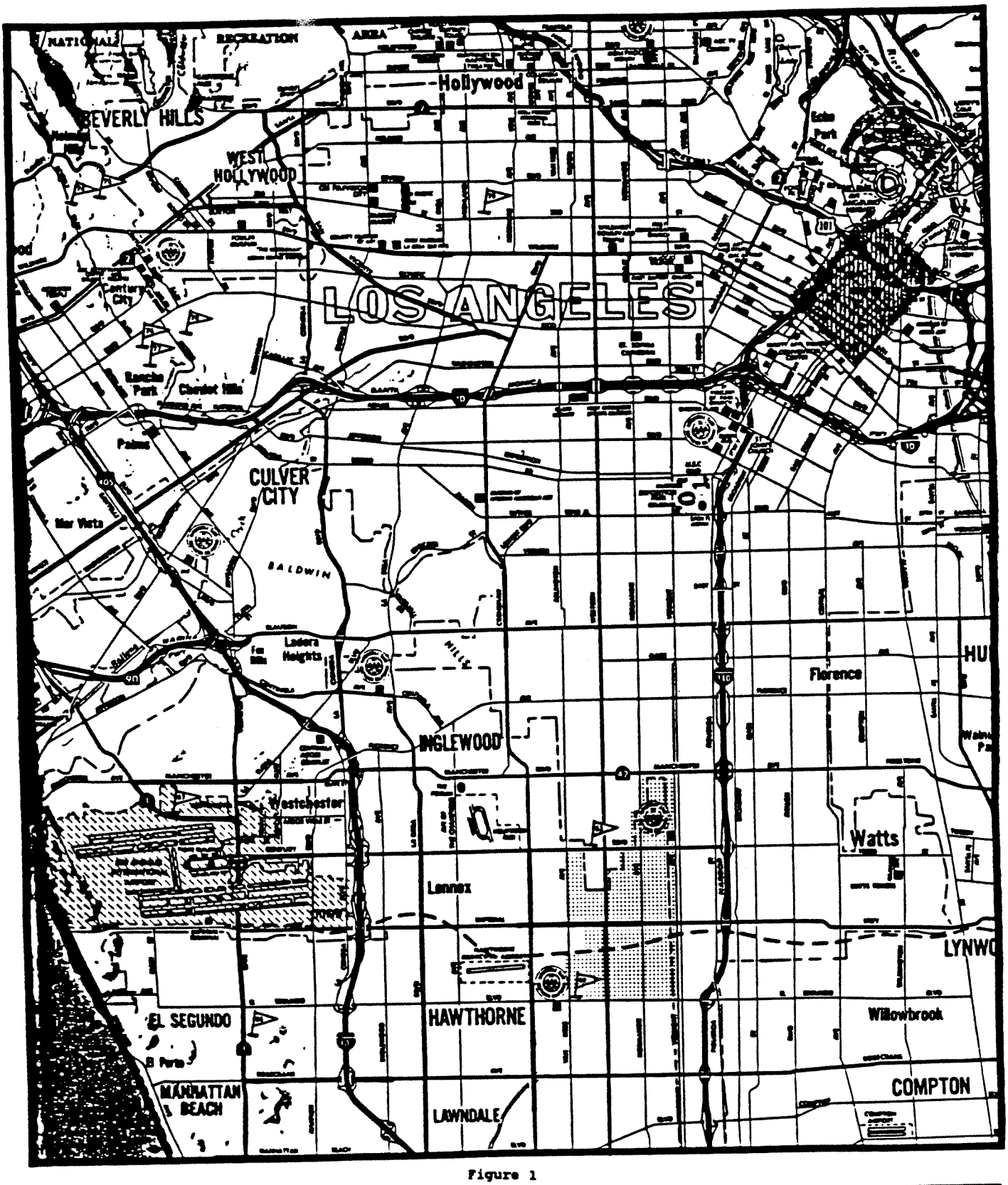


Figure 1

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

WEST ATHENS/WESTMONT

CENTURY FREEWAY

N

REGIONAL SETTING

At the West Athens/Westmont community meeting of October 18, 1988, committee members expressed needs for:

- Programs to address the high rate of youth unemployment.
- Additional police protection.
- A police station located in the area.
- A community center for seniors and others.
- Safe housing for senior citizens.
- More restaurants in the area.
- More commercial shopping facilities.
- Additional park land.
- Better coordination between College and community activities.
- Support services for the many young families in the community.
- Revitalization of existing commercial areas.
- Community-based cultural events/activities.

At the same meeting, the following problems were identified:

- Crime, gang and illegal drug related activities, especially in the more densely populated areas and unkept alleys.
- The replacement of single family homes with multi-family units, especially in high crime areas.
- An excessive number of liquor stores.
- Lack of adequate maintenance for many rental properties, especially those owned by absentee landlords.
- Lack of mandated parking facilities for the churches in the area.
- Lack of adequate child care facilities.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITY PLAN

The objective of this plan is to review existing conditions and recommend policies to preserve and improve the quality of life in the community. As discussed above, the basis for the goals and objectives for this plan is the comments and suggestions made at community meetings.

To determine current land use and building conditions in the community, a parcel by parcel field survey was conducted. The results of this survey provide the baseline for existing land use. Existing zoning was reviewed. Land use and zoning changes are recommended consistent with the goals listed below. These statements reflect the goals and objectives as expressed by local residents. These goals and objectives are the framework for private and public sector participation in the future development of the community.

Land Use Goals

The land use goals articulate the focus of land use planning for the area. They encourage controlled development and redevelopment which will improve the economic base in West Athens/Westmont. At the same time, they ensure the continuing viability of the residential neighborhoods.

The land use goals are as follows:

1. To preserve and improve the residential character of the community.

2. To reduce the allowable density of multi-family residential areas to reflect current land use patterns.

3. To formulate a set of design review standards which meet the special safety and aesthetic needs of the community.

4. To establish land use patterns which foster economic revitalization in the commercial and industrial areas which are suffering from deteriorated conditions.

5. To create opportunities for increased employment for area residents.

6. To fully exploit increased access opportunities associated with the Century Freeway and light rail station.

7. To encourage the development of mixed-use facilities, particularly near the light rail station.

8. To provide land for clustered commercial development which could better and more safely serve community retail shopping needs.

9. To ensure land use patterns consistent with the circulation network and availability of public facilities.

10. To balance the area's social, cultural and economic needs and environmental considerations in the allocation of its land resources.

11. To ensure land uses which contribute to the social, economic and cultural diversity of the community.

12. To encourage a rational sequence for future development based on projected community needs.

13. To strengthen existing, viable commercial centers.

14. To improve the viability and usefulness of commercial areas through store front renovation programs and by employing safety design techniques tailored for high-crime areas.

15. To encourage clean, light industrial development in an industrial park environment.

Housing Goals

The housing goals articulate the pressing housing needs in the community today. The focus of the housing goals is the preservation of housing in good condition and the renovation of deteriorated housing. Central to these goals is the need to provide safe housing which is affordable to area residents. The specific housing goals for the area are as follows:

1. To preserve existing stable residential neighborhoods.

2. To rehabilitate or replace deteriorated housing stock.

3. To provide a safe environment for residents.

4. To reduce overcrowding.

5. To encourage infill and help improve the community form and appearance.

6. To provide convenient and accessible housing for handicapped and elderly individuals.

Economic Goals

The economic goals and objectives address the general goals of a sound local economy, increased revenues and adequate employment. The following goals seek to attract investment and create employment opportunities for residents and generate public revenues.

1. To retain and expand the number of small businesses.

2. To support small business development through incubator and similar programs.

3. To increase employment opportunities, particularly among minority populations.

4. To secure additional outside funding to support job training programs.

5. To provide effective outreach into the community by job training, referral and placement programs.

6. To promote economic revitalization of commercial and industrial areas through redevelopment and rehabilitation.

7. To incorporate safety and aesthetic design standards in development and redevelopment projects.

8. To increase the cooperation and coordination between public and private sectors in the formulation of economic development plans and programs.

9. To develop an adequate infrastructure capacity to support existing and new development, including closer coordination between economic development and capital improvements programs.

Circulation Goals

An adequate transportation system expands the potential for social and economic opportunities. The efficient movement of people, goods and services with minimum pollution and expenditure of human energy and natural resources is the main purpose of the following transportation goals:

1. To coordinate the future transportation needs with current community development policies.

2. To coordinate the current transportation system with the planned light rail station.

3. To develop viable transportation alternatives to serve the needs of the transit dependent.

4. To improve the public transportation services to persons and areas not presently being adequately served by existing systems.

5. To develop a transportation planning process which considers the level of access required by various land use activities.

Environmental Management Goals

The goals of the Environmental Management Element are:

1. To provide adequate and accessible outdoor recreation and open space amenities.

2. To minimize hazards to public health, safety and welfare and prevent loss of life, bodily injury and property damage resulting from natural and man-made phenomena.

3. To reduce noise levels produced by all types of motor vehicles.

4. To reduce the impact of construction and industrial noise.

5. To minimize adverse environmental impacts.

LAND USE ELEMENT

The land use element describes the desired direction for future physical development in West Athens/Westmont, based on existing and expected land use. This element designates the future distribution and density of land use for housing, commerce, industry, education, public buildings, and parks and recreational areas. The physical form of development, revitalization, growth, and preservation for the next fifteen years are all expressed in the land use element.

Existing Land Use and Building Conditions

A parcel by parcel field survey was conducted to determine the existing land use and building conditions in West Athens/Westmont. Table 1 shows the existing land use determined in that survey. The findings of the survey are as follows:

Residential

The West Athens/Westmont area consists of predominantly residential land uses. The 1988 field survey found that 66 percent of the total net land area, excluding streets and freeways, is dedicated to single-family, duplexes or multi-family residential uses. Of the total net land in West Athens/Westmont (excluding streets and freeways), 53 percent is used for single-family homes. Of all residential properties, single-family residences account for 69 percent of all units.

Table 2 lists the zoning acreage, maximum number of units per acre and total population capacity at build-out for the existing residential and agricultural zones. Acreage was adjusted to account for land dedicated to public use and therefore unavailable for residential development. The present A-1 zone would allow 2,210 single family units.

Commercial/Industrial

With the exception of the K-Mart community shopping center on Western Avenue, commercial uses in the area are confined to the commercial strips which line the major arterials. Commercial uses account for only 3.4% of the total land area. Area residents conduct much of their retail trade outside of the area.

The commercial strips which line West Athens/Westmont arterials contain aging facilities with many vacant buildings interspersed with operating businesses. Vermont Avenue has an especially high rate of vacant and deteriorating buildings.

The industrial uses located in West Athens/Westmont are small in size and dispersed throughout the area. The most dense concentration of industrial uses occurs along a narrow strip

TABLE 1

WEST ATHENS/WESTMONT
EXISTING 1988 LAND USE BY CATEGORY

LAND USE	ACRES	PERCENT OF NET TOTAL	PERCENT TOTAL
COMMERCIAL	51.38	3.4%	2.6%
INDUSTRIAL	16.62	1.1%	0.8%
INSTITUTION	204.17	13.5%	10.3%
VACANT	57.96	3.8%	2.9%
SINGLE FAMILY	804.97	53.1%	40.6%
PARKING	3.21	0.2%	0.2%
TWO FAMILY	80.30	5.3%	4.0%
MULT. RESIDENTIAL	117.16	7.7%	5.9%
PUBLIC UTILITIES	32.27	2.1%	1.6%
PARKS & GOLF COURSE	147.41	9.7%	7.4%
TOTAL (EXCLUDING STREETS)	1,515.45	100.0%	-
TOTAL FREEWAY	82.64		4.2%
ESTIMATED STREETS OF TOTAL AREA (20% OF TOTAL)			19.5%
TOTAL WEST ATHENS/WESTMONT AREA	1,984.09	-	100.0%

SOURCE: CORDOBA CORPORATION, MAY 1988

TABLE 2

WEST ATHENS/WESTMONT
EXISTING ZONING CAPACITY

ZONE	ACRES*	MAXIMUM UNITS PER ACRE	BUILDOUT (UNITS)
A-1 (Light Agricultural)	254	8.7	2,210
R-1 (Single Family Residential)	216	8.7	1,879
R-2 (Two Family Residential)	139	17.4	2,419
R-3 (20) (Limited Multiple Family)	514	20.0	10,280
R-4 (Unlimited Family Residential)	37	50.0	1,850
TOTAL	1,160	-	18,638

* Acres excluding rights-of-ways and land designated for public uses.

SOURCE: L.A. COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING ZONING MAP

fronting El Segundo Boulevard, which is zoned for industrial use. Industrial uses account for only one percent of the total land area.

Problem Identification

Many of the current problems identified in the West Athens/Westmont community can be addressed through land use policies. The following problems were identified through the community participation process. They are the basis on which the new land use plan was formulated.

Residential

- Multi-family development is permitted in areas which may be zoned for higher density but are still predominantly single-family neighborhoods. The quality of life is threatened in areas where multi-family development is leading to increased residential densities.

- Residential uses are interspersed with commercial uses on high-volume traffic arterials.

- Many residential buildings in the older neighborhoods are in need of substantial repairs.

Commercial

- Many commercial buildings are in need of repair.

- Surrounding areas capture a significant amount of retail sales which could be held in West Athens/Westmont.

- Commercial uses in strip configurations negatively impact some residential neighborhoods due to traffic, lack of parking, fumes, and noise.

Industrial

- Industrial development is dispersed throughout the southern portion of the area, rather than concentrated in a clearly defined industrial section.

Proposed Community Plan/Zoning

A number of land use and zoning changes have been proposed for West Athens/Westmont. These changes are based on information gathered by the field survey and the problems identified above. Figure 2 shows proposed zoning and Figure 2b shows proposed land use for West Athens/Westmont. Table 3, which corresponds to Figure 2, shows proposed zoning by acreage. Table 4, which corresponds to Figure 2b, shows proposed land use by acreage.

Residential Changes

Current zoning significantly exceeds current residential land use. For example, 805 acres are actually in single family use compared to 471 zoned for single family use. Maximum buildout of all current residential zoning would result in 18,638 housing units, as opposed to 10,871 current housing units.

Based on discussion with community residents and a review of land use and housing data, the proposed land use plan suggests the down-zoning of the northeastern section of the community. To address the discrepancy between current and proposed use, most of the area currently zoned R-3 (20) is recommended to be reduced to R-2.

The Community Plan Map shows the proposed land use designations. Four residential classifications are proposed:

- single-family: 8 units or fewer per acre
- two family: 17 units or fewer per acre
- medium density: 30 units or fewer per acre
- density bonus: 50 units or fewer per acre

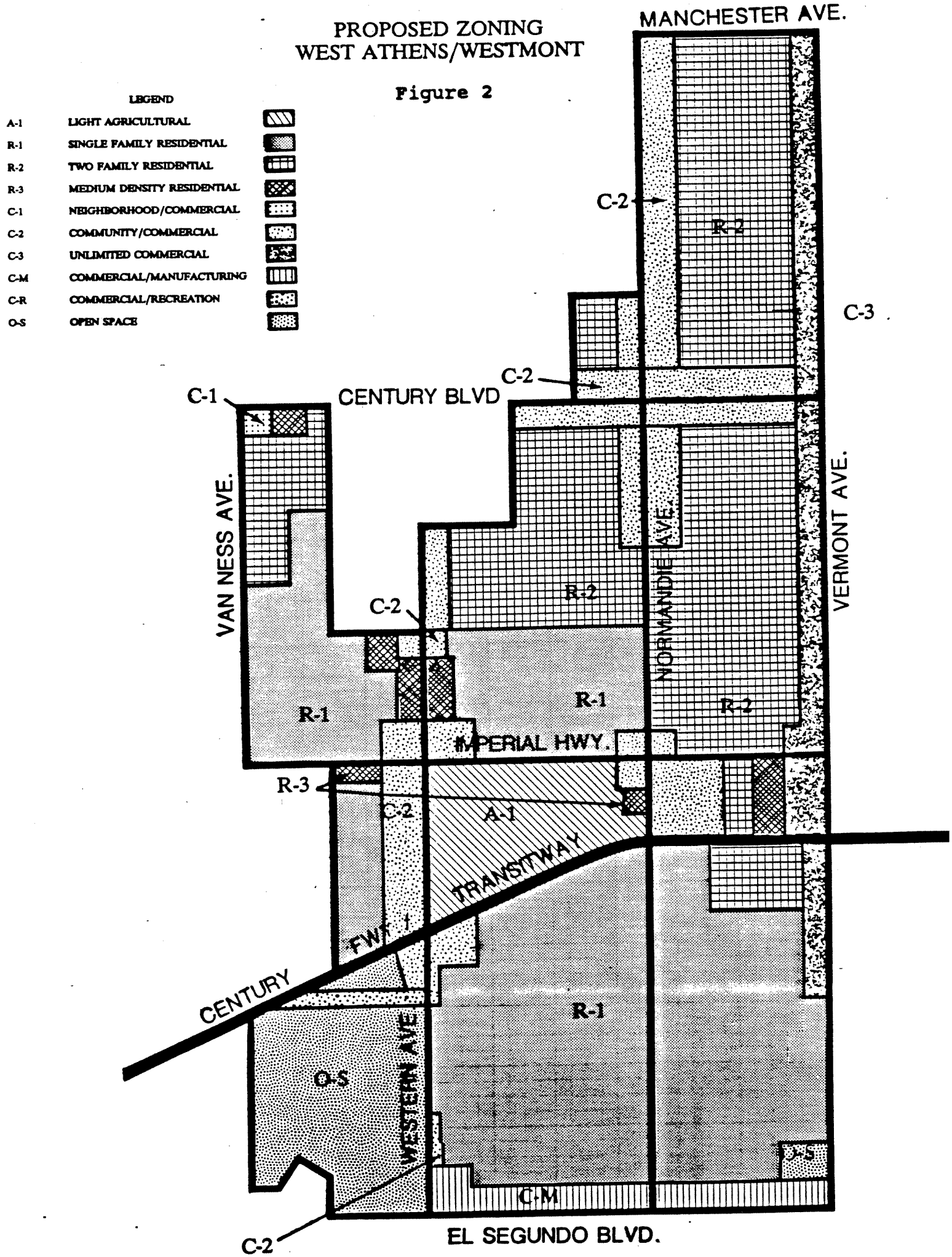
The Community Plan recognizes and protects the existing stable, single-family areas. Two-family (duplex) is designated for areas developed with two-family residences and mixed single-family and multi-family use. A high density zone is proposed for the residential area west of the transit station to accommodate senior citizen housing.

The area currently occupied by the Chester L. Washington Golf Course and Hellen Keller Park is currently zoned A-1. That area is recommended to be changed to Open Space (O-S). Areas which now contain institutional uses are recommended to be rezoned to fit surrounding area.

It is recommended that the existing residential areas currently zoned A-1 be changed to R-1.

PROPOSED ZONING
WEST ATHENS/WESTMONT

Figure 2



PROPOSED LAND USE
WEST ATHENS/WESTMONT

Figure 2b

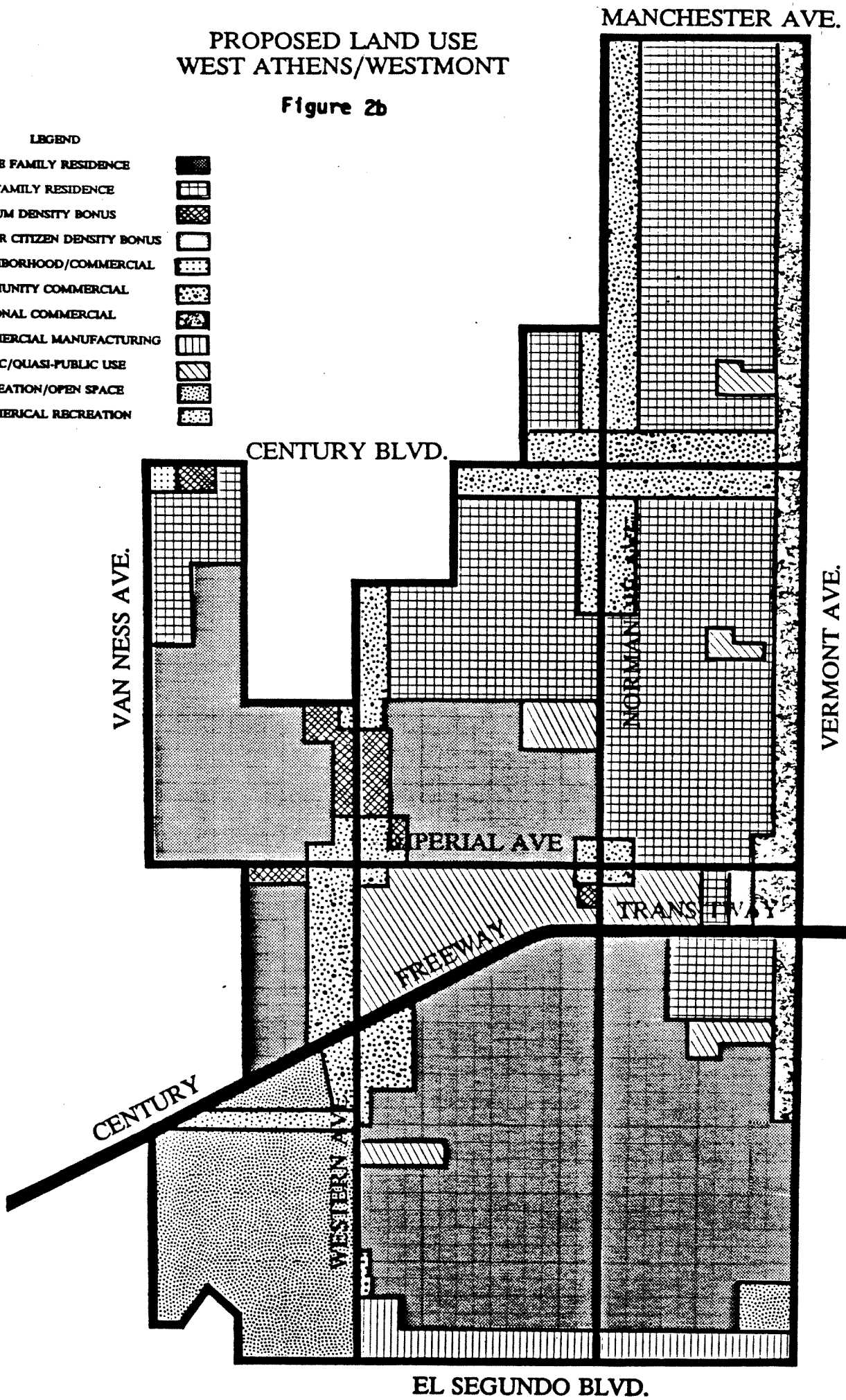


TABLE 3

WEST ATHENS/WESTMONT
PROPOSED ZONING BY CATEGORY

ZONE	ACRES	PERCENT OF NET TOTAL	PERCENT OF TOTAL
A-1 (Light Agricultural)	64.9	4.3%	3.3%
R-1 (Single Family Residential)	549.6	36.1%	27.7%
R-2 (Two Family Residential)	577.7	38.0%	29.1%
R-3 (Medium Density Residential)	25.2	1.7%	1.3%
R-3-P (Residential/Parking)	7.2	0.5%	0.4%
C-1 (Neighborhood/Commercial)	1.6	0.1%	0.1%
C-2 (Community/Commercial)	95.2	6.3%	4.8%
C-3 (Regional/Commercial)	49.4	3.2%	2.5%
C-M (Commercial/Manufacturing)	14.7	1.0%	0.7%
O-S (Open Space)	125.6	8.3%	6.3%
C-R (Commercial/Recreational)	10.1	0.7%	0.5%
TOTAL (Excluding Streets)	1521.2	100.0%	
Freeway Total	82.6		4.2%
Estimated Street Acreage (20% of Total)	380.3		19.2%
TOTAL WEST ATHENS/WESTMONT AREA	1984.1		100.0%

SOURCE: CORDOBA CORPORATION

TABLE 4

WEST ATHENS/WESTMONT
PROPOSED LAND USE BY CATEGORY

LAND USE	ACRES	PERCENT OF NET TOTAL	PERCENT OF TOTAL
SINGLE FAMILY	503.0	33.1%	25.4%
TWO FAMILY	542.4	35.7%	27.3%
MULT. RESIDENTIAL	18.4	1.2%	0.9%
MULT. RESIDENTIAL/SENIOR BONUS AREA	5.6	0.4%	0.3%
COMMERCIAL	137.2	9.0%	6.9%
COMMERCIAL MANUFACTORING	14.7	1.0%	0.7%
PUBLIC/QUASI-PUBLIC USE	155.8	10.2%	7.9%
PARKING	8.4	0.6%	0.4%
COMMERCIAL RECREATION	10.1	0.7%	0.5%
PARKS & GOLF COURSE	125.6	8.3%	6.3%
TOTAL (Excluding Streets)	1521.2	100.0%	
Freeway Total	82.6		4.2%
Estimated Street Acreage (20% of Total)	380.3		19.2%
TOTAL WEST ATHENS/WESTMONT AREA	1984.1		100.0%

SOURCE: CORDOBA CORPORATION

Commercial

The Century Freeway light rail transit station to be constructed at Vermont Avenue is expected to provide a unique opportunity for commercial development in West Athens/Westmont. To take advantage of this opportunity, the plan recommends that zoning in the station area be tailored to accommodate the development of clustered, pedestrian shopping malls designed for shopper convenience and safety. Therefore it is recommended that the area southwest and northwest of the rail station be upzoned to C-3.

At present significantly more land area is zoned commercial than is in commercial use. This plan recommends that some commercial areas currently zoned C-3 be downzoned to C-2. This downzoning occurs along Normandie Avenue and east of the golf course.

A narrow strip lining West Century Boulevard (one-half of the block width) is currently zoned C-2. Existing use on this street is mixed residential/commercial. Accordingly, it is recommended that the strip be widened to include the full block and that the zoning be changed to mixed residential/commercial.

Commercial/Industrial

The designation of mixed-use commercial/manufacturing is recommended for El Segundo Boulevard. This major arterial is currently developed with a mixture of uses and is zoned for industrial use.

Public and Open Space

The open spaces which are currently zoned A-1 are changed to O-S. Public Uses are recommended to be changed to zones which occupy surrounding area. On Table 5 the acreage for various public institutions are listed.

TABLE 5

LAND DEDICATED TO PUBLIC USE (1988)

USE	ACRES
SCHOOLS	62
WATER COMPANY	2
PUBLIC UTILITIES	32
PARKS	147
TOTAL	**243**

Land Use Policies

The following land use policies are recommended to address identified needs in the West Athens/Westmont area.

General

Allow for the development of residential, commercial, recreational, public and supportive land uses, at varying densities and intensities.

Encourage the elimination of non-conforming uses and buildings.

Coordinate and monitor the impact and intensity of land uses on the existing transportation and circulation systems so they are able to provide for the efficient movement of people and goods with the least interference.

Consistency

The distribution and intensity of land uses shall be consistent with the land use plan.

Maintain consistency between the Land Use Element, Zoning Ordinances, and other County Ordinances, regulations and standards.

Consider all General Plan Goals and Policies, including those in other General Plan Elements, in evaluating proposed development projects for General Plan consistency.

Public/Private Participation in the Planning Process

Encourage citizen participation in planning and development of land use programs.

Endeavor to promote public interest in, and understanding of, the General Plan and regulations relating to it.

Foster inter-governmental cooperation and coordination in order to maximize the effectiveness of land use policies.

Residential Neighborhoods

Promote the preservation, maintenance, and enhancement of existing residential neighborhoods.

Discourage scattered multi-family development and encourage the preservation of existing, stable, single family neighborhoods.

Encourage infill of vacant parcels in residential areas.

Promote the rehabilitation, revitalization or replacement of deteriorating residential properties without threatening the security and comfort of residents.

Replace residential units which cannot be economically rehabilitated with those of a size and density that is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.

Require new residential development to meet the density limitations prescribed in the Land Use Plan map.

Eliminate industrial and commercial uses from residential areas, except existing neighborhood oriented stores that fill a need and are compatible with surrounding use.

Safeguard residential neighborhoods from intrusion by non-conforming and disruptive uses.

Mitigate traffic congestion and unacceptable levels of noise, odors and dust which affect residential use.

Ensure a sensitive transition between commercial and industrial uses and residential uses by means of techniques as buffering, landscaping and setbacks.

Seek programs to encourage the maintenance of the community's housing stock.

Commercial/Industrial Areas

Encourage the revitalization of deteriorating commercial areas.

Enhance the physical character and economic viability of existing commercial areas by providing for infill and intensification of vacant and under-utilized parcels, adaptive reuse of vacant structures and rehabilitation of deteriorated structures.

Encourage the development of commercial land uses that increase the capture of local retail sales.

Attract new commercial uses to the West Athens/Westmont community which are necessary to support the needs of the residents and are now unavailable.

Encourage the development of neighborhood-serving commercial uses such as grocery stores, financial institutions, and services to local residents.

Encourage the development of commercial and office facilities at the interchange of the Century Freeway and Vermont Avenue.

Where mixed uses are permitted, ensure compatible integration of adjacent uses to minimize conflicts.

Locate major commercial uses in areas which are easily accessible to major transportation facilities.

Require new commercial development to provide parking which is designed to be compatible with adjoining businesses and residences.

Encourage existing commercial uses to provide common parking areas, improve automobile and truck access and to establish attractive and unifying architectural elements and themes.

Municipal Services

Improve the image of major highways by use of landscaping, lighting, graphics and/or other streetscape treatments.

Improve the image and appearance of the area through graffiti clean-up programs.

Rehabilitation/Redevelopment

Use redevelopment techniques as provided for by State law to facilitate the revitalization of blighted commercial districts.

Promote the involvement of the appropriate public agencies in making housing rehabilitation loans available to homeowners and landlords.

Promote the utilization of loan programs offered through public agencies to stimulate revitalization of faltering commercial facilities.

HOUSING ELEMENT

The housing element addresses the need for safe, affordable housing in West Athens/Westmont. This element examines existing conditions and identifies housing needs and presents policies to meet those needs. The Housing Element is closely linked to the Land Use Element to ensure coordination of policies and land uses.

Problem Identification

Housing issues and concerns were identified by planning staff through conversation with residents and on-site inspections. Those issues and concerns are as follows:

- Preservation - The construction of multi-family dwellings and the deterioration of the housing stock is threatening some residential neighborhoods.

- Rehabilitation - A significant portion of the existing housing stock is in need of rehabilitation.

Potential Funding Programs

There are a wide range of programs that can be used to help meet housing needs. Some programs and funding sources which have the potential to meet housing needs are described below.

Department of Housing and Urban Development

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers a variety of programs aimed at helping communities provide decent housing for low and moderate income people. The distribution mechanism by which assistance is provided varies according to the intent of the program. Assistance may come in the form of income support programs or through subsidies to various levels of the housing production and maintenance process.

Section Eight - Rent Subsidies

The HUD Section Eight program provides rental assistance to families with incomes below eighty percent of the County median income, adjusted for family size. HUD establishes a ceiling "fair market rent" for a particular housing unit, then makes housing assistance payments" which make up the difference between the fair market rent and the tenant's contribution to that rent. The renters payment is set at about thirty percent of the renters income.

Rental Rehabilitation

The rental rehabilitation loan program provides property owners of one to four units, in specific target areas, rehabilitation loans at three to nine percent interest rates to bring their residential property up to local codes.

The Rental Rehabilitation Program is designed to help investors rehabilitate rental properties while avoiding displacement of existing tenants. Eligible low income tenants residing in the properties are provided Section 8 housing certificates or housing vouchers to help pay post-rehabilitation rents. Rehabilitated units are rented at market rents and are exempt from any special rent control ordinances. This form of renovation and rehabilitation of rental properties provides physical and property improvements while assisting low to moderate income residents and promoting stable and favorable living conditions.

Home Improvement Loans

Home improvement loans are available to homeowners who want to repair their homes, expand living quarters, improve energy efficiency, or make other improvements. There are two types of loans offered in this program:

- Qualified Home Improvement - $5,000 to $15,000
- Qualified Rehabilitation Loan - $15,000 or more

The home improvement loan program allows homeowners to invest in their own property, making improvements which upgrade their communities.

Community Development Block Grants

This program provides local jurisdictions with a 100 percent grant for funding a wide range of community development activities. Under this program, local governments are allowed to develop programs to meet the specific needs of their community. The emphasis of the program is to focus on housing activities, especially rehabilitation and preservation.

Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG)

Urban Development Action Grants are designed as a development tool to create partnerships among government, the community and private industry to overcome problems of development and encourage private investment.

State Programs:

The California Housing Finance Agency

The purpose of the CHFA is to provide financing for the development and rehabilitation of low and moderate income housing. This is accomplished through direct assistance for mortgage financing, rehabilitation, neighborhood preservation, and the sale of tax-exempt bonds.

The State of California has a number of departments and agencies which provide services and technical assistance in helping communities meet various housing needs and opportunities. Some of these government departments and agencies include: the Department of Economic and Business Development, Employment Development Department, the Department of Aging, and the California Fair Employment Practices Commission.

The Department of Housing and Community Development is the principal department responsible for coordinating federal and state housing and community development. Besides providing technical services to local government, private and non-profit groups, the Department administers the following state-funded housing programs:

- The California Low Income Home Management Training Program
- The Urban Redevelopment Loan Fund
- The Housing Rehabilitation Loan Fund
- The Low Income Home Management Program
- The Advisory Service Fund

Local Programs

Traditionally, the authority to regulate various activities such as land use through zoning and subdivision codes has been seen as the principal plan implementation tool. Some of these traditional tools have included building and health standards, zoning codes, and subdivision ordinances. These regulations protect the public health and safety and ensure environmental quality. They are also designed to secure compatible land uses and direct development in accordance with the community's General Plan.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the preparation of an environmental impact report for all projects which may have a significant effect on the environment. The Environmental Impact Report is an information document, which can be useful in carrying out the intent of the Housing Element.

Housing Policies

The following housing policies are recommended to address identified needs in the West Athens/Westmont area:

Promote representative citizen participation in the formulation, implementation, and review of housing programs.

Promote the maintenance of the existing housing stock.

Replace or rehabilitate substandard housing.

Encourage greater development of new and utilization of existing local, state and federal programs to ensure adequate funding of housing programs.

Support community and neighborhood organizations to encourage self-monitoring and development of community identity and quality neighborhoods.

Encourage the preservation of affordable housing.

CIRCULATION ELEMENT

AREA STREET SYSTEM

Manchester Avenue is an east-west, four and six-lane major highway with left turn lanes provided at all intersections within the study area. On-street parking with peak period restrictions is provided on both sides of Manchester.

Century Boulevard is an east-west, four and six-lane major highway with left-turn lanes provided at all intersections within the study area. Century Boulevard becomes a four-lane roadway east of Western Avenue to west of Normandie Avenue. On-street parking with peak period restrictions is provided on both sides of Century Boulevard with the exception of between Normandie Avenue and Vermont Avenue where on-street parking is prohibited.

Imperial Highway is an east-west, six-lane major highway with left-turn lanes provided at all intersections within the study area. A right-turn lane is provided on the west bound approach of Imperial Highway at Ban Ness Avenue. On-street parking with peak period restrictions is provided on both sides of Imperial Highway.

El Segundo Boulevard is an east-west, six-lane major highway with left-turn lanes provided at all intersections within the study area with the exception of the eastbound approach on El Segundo Boulevard at Vermont, where the left-turn is combined with the through movement and prohibited during peak period. On-street parking with peak period restrictions is provided on both sides of El Segundo Boulevard on Vermont Avenue. West of Vermont Avenue, on-street parking is prohibited on both sides of El Segundo Boulevard.

Vermont Avenue is a north-south, six-lane major highway with left-turn lanes provided at all intersections within the study area. On-street parking is provided on both sides of Vermont Avenue from south of El Segundo Boulevard to 88th Street with on-street peak period parking restrictions between Imperial Highway and Century Boulevard. Metered parking is provided on the frontage road parallel to Vermont Avenue from north of 88th Street to north of Manchester Avenue.

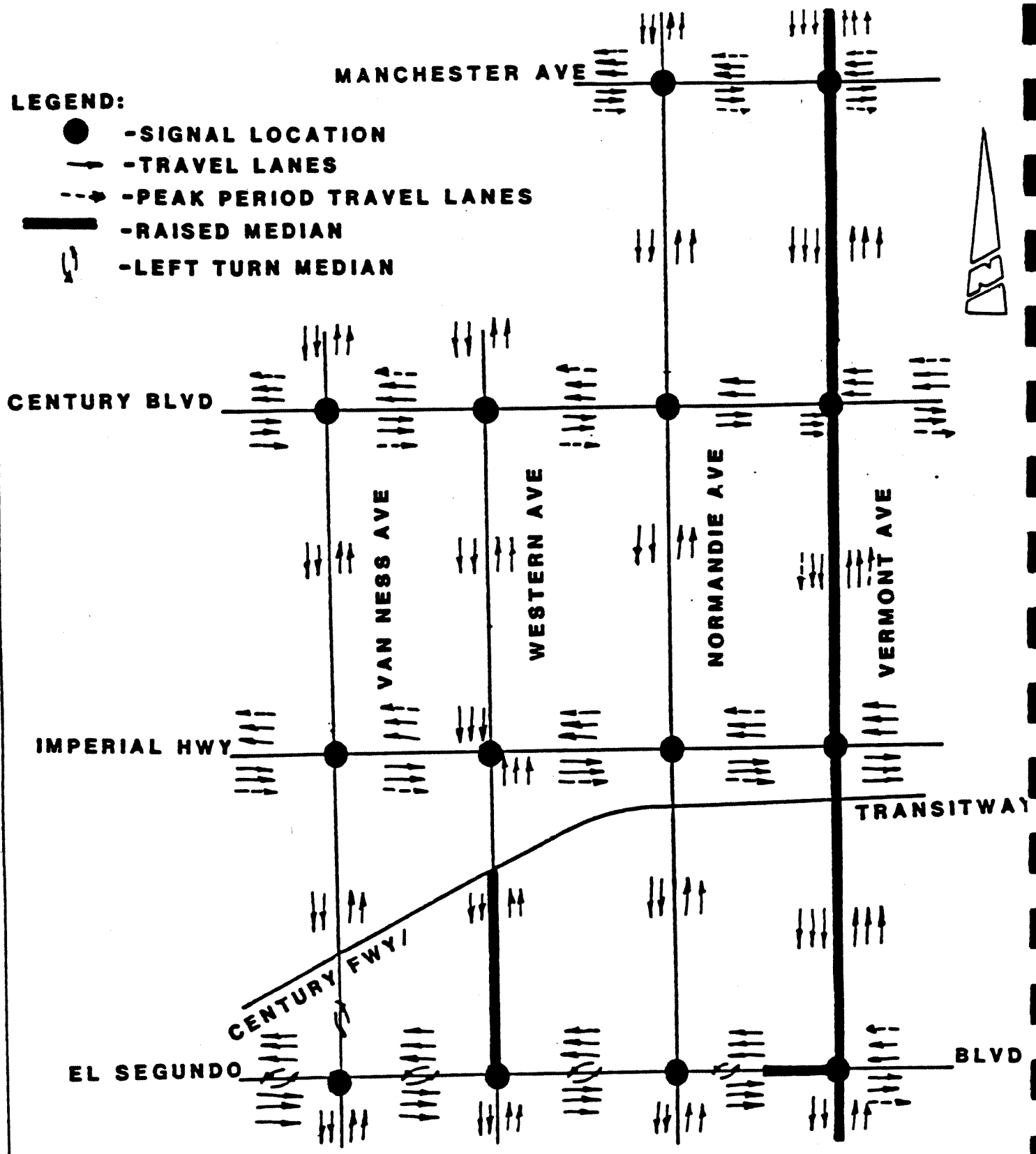
Normandie Avenue is a north-south, four-lane secondary highway with left-turn lanes provided at all intersections within the study area. On-street parking is provided on both sides of Normandie between El Segundo Boulevard and Imperial Highway. On-street parking is prohibited on the east side of Normandie Avenue between Il Segundo

Boulevard and Imperial Highway.

Western Avenue is a north-south, four and six-lane major highway. Western Avenue becomes a six lane roadway on the north-south approaches to Imperial Highway.1 Left-turn lanes are provided at all intersections within the study area. On-street parking is provided at the west side of Western Avenue with on-street parking restrictions four blocks south of Century Boulevard and Imperial Highway.

Van Ness Avenue is a north-south, four-lane secondary highway with left-turn lanes at all intersections within the study area with the exception of the north and south approaches at Century Boulevard, where the left-turn movement is combined with the through movement. On-street parking is provided on both sides of Century Boulevard from the proposed Century Freeway (SR-105) to Century Boulevard.

Century Freeway Transit-Way (SR-105), now under construction, will bisect the study area from east to west just south of Imperial Highway. The Freeway/Transit-way will be providing freeway and light rail access to West Athens/Westmont area. A light rail station will be located near 116th Street and Vermont Avenue.



FIGURE

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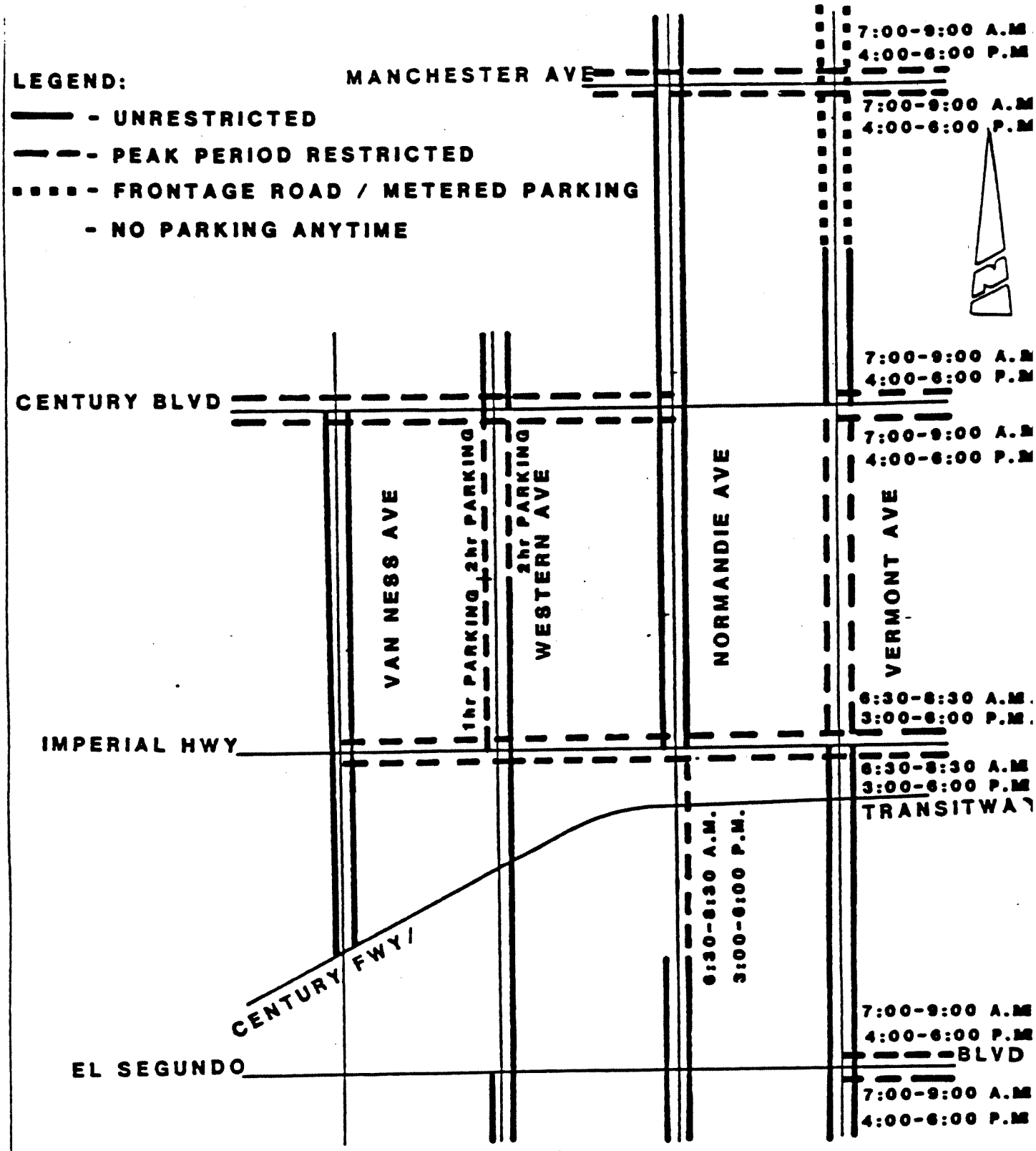
ROADWAY GEOMETRICS

WEST ATHENS / WESTMONT



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ON STREET PARKING

WEST ATHENS / WESTMONT

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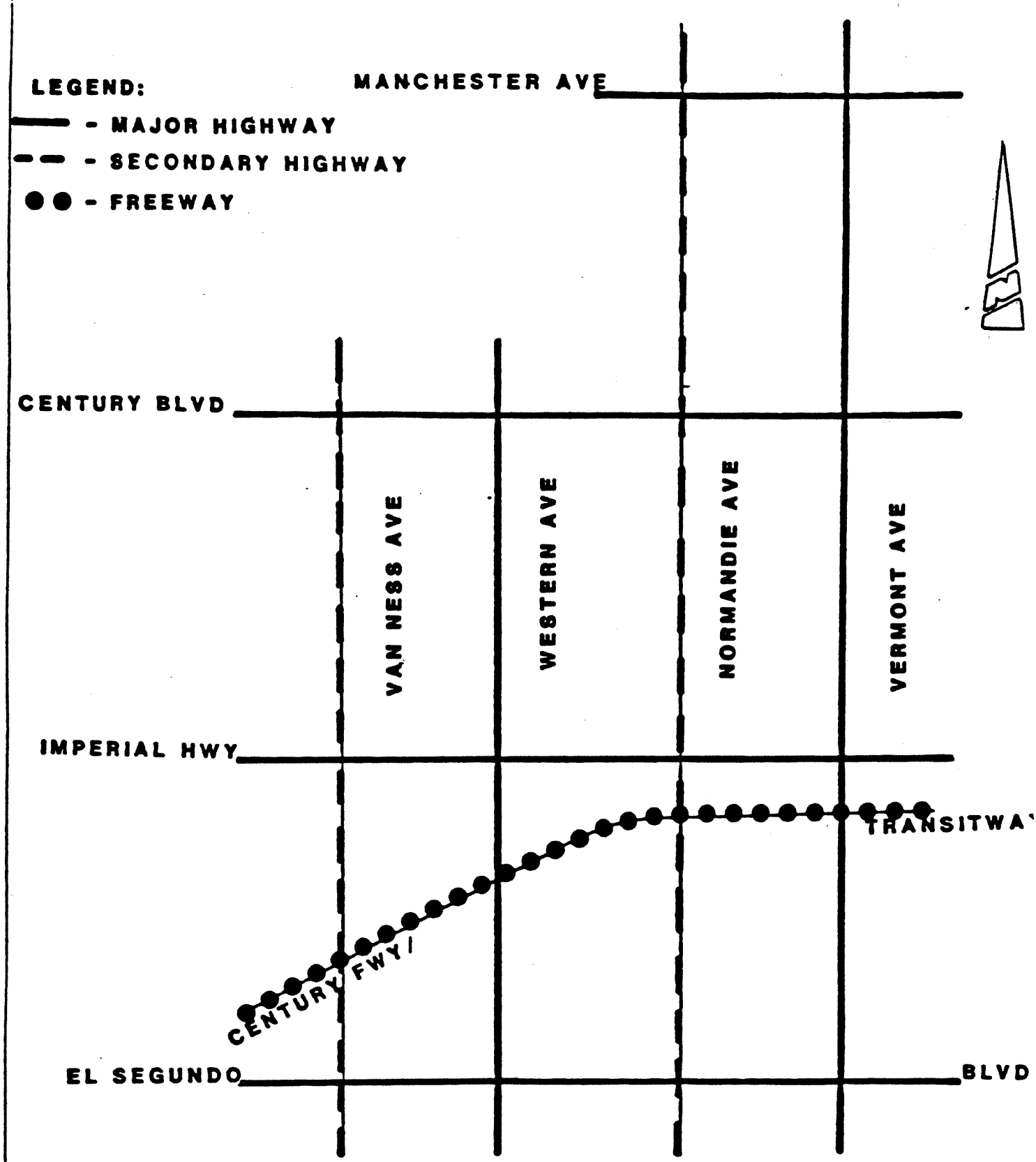

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HIGHWAY CLASSIFICATION

WEST ATHENS / WESTMONT

FIGUR

PUBLIC FACILITIES

The public facilities element considers the public buildings, structures and grounds to meet the needs of the community. It includes schools, parks, libraries, civic buildings, fire stations, social service centers, distribution systems for water and electrical power and collection systems for sanitary sewers and storm drainage.

Existing Conditions

Los Angeles Southwest College is located on Imperial Boulevard in West Athens/Westmont. The college has an enrollment of approximately 7,000 full-time and part-time students.

The Chester L. Washington Golf Course, located in West Athens/Westmont, is a 147 acre, 18-hole golf course. Helen Keller Park, also located in the area is a 6.6 acre park. Helen Keller Park is the only neighborhood park facility serving the area. The golf course and park account for 9.7 percent of the total area in West Athens/Westmont (excluding streets and freeways).

Public utilities and the water company facilities account for two percent of the total land in the area. This figure includes the right of way for an electrical transmission line which crosses the southern portion of West Athens/Westmont.

In the course of the community participation process, the committee identified a number of unmet facilities needs in West Athens/Westmont. Most pressing, the committee expressed a strong desire for a Sheriff Station to be located within the community. At present, West Athens/Westmont is served by the County Sheriff Station in Lennox. Crime is a significant problem in the area, and crime rates are substantially higher in West Athens/Westmont than County-wide for all categories of crime. The physical presence of a Sheriff's Station in the community could have a significant positive impact on the community.

West Athens/Westmont does not have a community center available for senior citizens or other community members who need a facility in which to congregate. A community center would be a highly desirable addition to the area. To serve this need, a community center could be established adjacent to the Sheriff Station.

The Century Freeway/Transitway

The Century Freeway/Transitway will traverse the southern portion of the West Athens/Westmont community. There will be a light rail transit stop at Vermont Avenue near 116th Street. Daily weekday ridership for that stop has been projected by the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission to be about 8500. That level of ridership is considered about average for the system. A park and ride lot

accommodating approximately 240 vehicles is planned to serve the station.

It is anticipated that there may be some excess land remaining after CALTRANS has completed the construction of the Century Freeway/Transitway. CALTRANS will make a decision as to the disposition of any excess land sometime in late 1990 or 1991. At that time, the County of Los Angeles will be given the opportunity to purchase any such excess land. If the County chooses not to purchase the land, CALTRANS may offer the land to a utility company or sell it at public auction.

Issue and Problem Identification

- There is no Sheriff Station located within the community.
- There is no community center located within the community.
- Available park land in the area is below the standard of ten acres of parks per thousand population.
- There is a need to make more efficient use of existing public facilities, particularly those which have potential for multiple usage.
- In some areas the existing water mains are smaller than is now standard. This condition discourages major new developments that are an integral part of the community's revitalization effort.
- Graffiti is a widespread problem in public as well as private facilities.

Policies

- Maintain and improve the community's infrastructure and facilities.
- Encourage the location of a Sheriff Station in the area.
- Encourage the establishment of a community center in the area.
- Encourage enhanced public facilities and community services, educational, cultural and recreational opportunities and other municipal services.
- In the event that excess land becomes available after the completion of the Century Freeway, secure the preservation of that land as open space to be used for active or passive recreation.

- Make all efforts to keep remaining open space undeveloped except for recreational uses.

- Coordinate recreational planning with the school district to maximize the joint use of facilities and encourage programs which provide educational and cultural enrichment for all the people of the community.

- Continue to encourage and support an adequate level of public services to meet the needs of the existing and future planned population.

- Encourage the upgrading of the existing inadequate water mains to meet the community's demands of higher flow.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Environmental management is concerned with both the natural and man-made environment in the community. This element examines existing resources and evaluates the potential for environmental and personal harm resulting from flooding, fire, and earthquake. Environmental management policies focus on the enhancement, preservation and protection of resources and on the reduction of loss of life, injuries and property damage.

Existing Conditions: Natural Resources

West Athens/Westmont is a highly urbanized community in a large metropolitan area. No rare or endangered plant or animal species are known or suspected to exist. The topography is mostly level with no significant hillside areas and soil erosion is not a problem.

There are no year-round bodies of surface water in the community. Local and imported sources of water are anticipated to meet the existing and future needs of the community with proper management.

Existing open land in the community is in the form of park land, public schools, a junior college, a golf course and cleared land for the Century Freeway right-of-way. Although the community is already urbanized, a unique opportunity to set aside additional land for open space may exist if CALTRANS makes available vacant parcels acquired but not used for the Century Freeway.

Recreational, Cultural, and Aesthetic Resources

West Athens/Westmont could be considered deficient in the amount of land available for recreational use when the National Recreation and Parks Association standard of ten acres of parks per one thousand population is used. If CALTRANS makes available land unused by the Century Freeway, it would be appropriate to acquire that land for

park/open space uses.

Earthquake Hazards

The Newport/Ingelwood Fault traverses the community. Ground shaking in the event of seismic activity on this and nearby faults (including the San Andreas fault) has the potential for substantial damage in the community.

It is highly probable that there will be a major earthquake in Southern California within the next twenty years. A large to great earthquake in the region would cause serious damage, including post-earthquake fires, building damage, disrupted fuel/energy lines, broken water/sewer lines, and damage to streets, roads, freeways, and communication lines.

The West Athens/Westmont community should participate in regional earthquake preparedness planning, including land use and construction planning. As for other areas of southern California, it is critical that existing structures be upgraded to meet current seismic standards in the Los Angeles Building and Safety Code, and that any new construction also meet these standards.

Fire Hazards

The community is not considered to be at risk from wild land fires. The potential for urban fires exists due to the mixture of type, age and condition of structures.

Much of the northern and eastern sections of West Athens/Westmont are served by four or six-inch water pipes, which are now considered substandard, primarily because they deliver smaller water flows than with a standard eight-inch pipe. The Southern California Water Company, which serves the area, has an on-going program of pipe replacement in these areas. In areas where higher density development is allowed, any new projects should be carefully evaluated and coordinated with the County Engineer.

Policies

- Prepare and implement design and architectural review standards for new commercial development which emphasizes safety and aesthetics.
- Support the development of a region-wide Master Plan to be implemented when an earthquake occurs.
- Continue to encourage and support enforcement of state and federal environmental controls.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The economic development element is concerned with the fiscal issues relating to capital expenditures for infrastructure, the provision of urban services, and the economic health of commercial and industrial uses in the community. Economic Development policies focus on the enhancement of the business climate and the availability of jobs for residents in the area.

Existing Conditions

Existing economic conditions in the community are problematic. Poverty and unemployment are significantly higher in the area than the average for Los Angeles County. In keeping with the predominantly residential character of the area, relatively few jobs are available in the community. Total employment in 1984 was 5,143.

Many of the commercial structures in the community have deteriorated. Much of the retail trade is conducted outside of the community. Existing commercial areas have developed along the major arterials. This "strip" commercial development pattern has resulted in problems with adjacent neighborhoods as residential development increased.

Extensive shopping facilities available to residents within five to seven miles of the community. The cities of Culver City, Gardena, Hawthorne, Inglewood, Los Angeles and the Willowbrook area all offer comprehensive shopping in all major retail outlet categories which attract West Athens/Westmont shoppers. As a result, local businesses rely disproportionately on the sale of non-durable goods. In West Athens-Westmont durable goods sales account for less that 13 percent of all retail sales, compared to a County average of 39 percent.

The new Century Freeway, which includes a light rail transit stop in the area at Vermont Avenue and 116th Street, presents unique opportunity for economic development. The freeway will provide excellent access to LAX and other major destinations. The transit station will provide a pedestrian environment that could enhance retail development.

Issues and Problems

Some of the identified issues and problems in the West Athens/Westmont area are as follows:

- There is a pressing need for jobs and economic growth in the area.

- Lack of retail trade is a significant problem in the area.

- Many local business are located in deteriorated buildings

Government Programs

There are a variety of local, state and federal economic assistance programs which are designed to provide economic aid and encourage business development in economically depressed areas. If they were available, most of these programs would be administered by a local agency, in this case the Community Development Commission (CDC) of Los Angeles.

The West Athens/Westmont community clearly requires a coordinated strategy including both public and private participation to address the economic needs of the area. Part of this strategy could be to identify and promote government economic assistance programs in the area.

The economic development strategy has to be set in the framework of the specific conditions and needs of the community. Characteristics of the labor force, the condition of the buildings, and the availability of land all have implications for the direction and nature of growth. The existing economic environment and the potential for economic growth must also be placed within the context of the larger regional economy.

Because of the residential quality of this community, the recommended economic strategy is based on residential rehabilitation, commercial revitalization and limited light industrial development. The residential rehabilitation portion of the strategy is addressed in the housing element.

A key aspect of economic improvement in disadvantaged areas is supportive business financing. Some of the government programs which could help provide business financing in West Athens/Westmont are:

Low Interest Commercial Rehabilitation Loans

The County can make rehabilitation loans available to commercial property owners or master tenants at lower than market interest rates by using federal grant funds to subsidize a portion of current interest rates. A local financial institution would provide and service the loan.

The aim of commercial rehabilitation is to improve the physical appearance and operating efficiency of a business place and to make to make it more attractive to shoppers. Loans cannot by used to refinance existing debt.

Commercial Rehabilitation Rebates

For commercial property owners or tenants who wish to self-finance property rehabilitation, the County can rebate a portion of actually incurred rehabilitation costs.

Business Development Loans

The County can make below market rate business development loans for such items as product line diversification, increase in inventories, business management systems improvement, etc.

Small Business Administration "503" Loans

The County can help a business file for "503" loans which are similar to business development loans described above.

Industrial Development Bonds (IDB)

The IDB program offers tax exempt financing for industrial, historic rehabilitation (Marks-Historic Bond Program), and energy-related development. The bonds provide funds to businesses at rates significantly below the level of traditional forms of finance.

The bonds may provide financing of up to $10,000,000 for facilities and for industrial purposes or energy development. The bond issue is secured entirely by the applicant's credit. Local criteria for the project include a favorable impact on physical and economic distress in the community where the project is planned and assistance to minorities and low and moderate income residents.

Urban Development Action Grant Program (UDAG)

UDAG is a grant financing program offering reduced interest loans for business development or expansion that creates permanent employment. UDAG may provide financing of approximately 20% of the total project cost in the form of low interest loans.

Minority Business Development Center (MBDC)

The MBDC is a federal agency charged with the responsibility of assisting in the development of minority entrepreneurs. The Agency seeks to strengthen the nation's economy by encouraging the development of healthier and larger minority-owned firms which are profitable and have the capacity of producing a larger number of jobs. It seeks to accomplish this objective through the leveraging of its influence with other federal agencies and through the advocacy of favorable policies that will directly affect the creation and progress of minority businesses in the nation. MBDC provides both management and technical assistance in the areas of marketing, accounting, inventory control, bonding, bid estimates, management; and technical assistance in the areas of marketing,

accounting, inventory control, bonding, bid estimates, management, procurement negotiations, personnel management, sources of financing, exporting, acquisition, mergers, workshops and export assistance.

The MBDC is designed to perform three specific responsibilities: Increase the formation of new minority-owned businesses; Expand existing minority-owned firms; and minimize business failure among minority entrepreneurs.

Additional Economic Improvement Programs

Other programs which could help improve the economic climate might include redevelopment projects, technical assistance, regulatory relief, incentive programs, insurance programs, private industry councils, and job training programs.

Policies

Ensure that zoning fosters a healthy commercial and industrial development in the community.

Encourage the revitalization of existing businesses by all available public or private means.

Establish an incubator project to encourage new small businesses to flourish in the area.

Investigate and secure all applicable government assistance programs for area business sections within the study area.