

Section 2: Community Character

“Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.”

- Alan Lakein

Yesterday: Community Background and History

As far back as the mid-eighteenth century, the San Gabriel Valley was occupied by Awigna Indians. In 1769, explorer Gaspar de Portola led the first expedition into the region and named the area La Puente (“the bridge”) after the bridge he had built to cross the San Jose Creek. A couple of years later, Fathers Cambon and Somero followed Portola’s trail and founded the San Gabriel Mission which gave its name to the valley. In the 1770s, the San Gabriel Mission became the wealthiest mission in the state of California. Known for its good soil, plentiful water and native labor, the area attracted numerous settlers over the next half-century.

In 1822, Mexico proclaimed its independence from Spain and sought to destroy all vestiges of Spanish rule in Mexico and California. Missions, which always supported the throne, were secularized, and District governors were given power to make grants of former mission lands. The vast ranchos made ideal settlements for enterprising businessmen and their families.

The area known today as Hacienda Heights was first settled in the early 1840s by John Rowland and William Workman, European businessmen who had settled in New Mexico and ran a successful trading post there. The entrepreneurs were attracted to southern California by the Gold Rush and newly available mission lands following Mexico’s independence from Spain. The men initially raised cattle and later grew wheat and wine grapes, and by the late 1840s they grew their rancho into a self-sufficient agricultural enterprise. Rancho La Puente, as it was known, became renowned for raising cattle and sheep, growing and milling wheat, and cultivating grapes and fruits for brandies and wines. In fact, Rowland was the first large commercial wine manufacturer in California. In 1851, La Puente Rancho was split between Rowland on the east side and Workman on the west side, but both men continued their agricultural pursuits.

In the 1870s, new railroad lines attracted numerous settlers to La Puente Valley. During that time, Rowland and Workman allowed the railroad to be built across their property. Southern Pacific Railroad completed its first trunk line through La Puente Valley in 1876. Santa Fe Railroad opened its competing line in 1881. The resulting rate war brought thousands of settlers to the area, and land subdividing began.

By the early 1900s, La Puente Valley was known for its abundance of citrus, walnut, and avocado crops, and maintained its agricultural character—mixed with growing industrial development of oil, banking, and communications—through the middle of the twentieth century. The new Salt Lake Line came through the area, making it possible to ship fruit to larger markets. In 1912, Anita Baldwin sold a 1,826-acre tract to Edwin G. Hart and Jed Torrance, who subdivided that land, located on the northern side of Puente Hills, into small citrus and avocado groves and called it North Whittier Heights. The following year, Turnbull Canyon Road was carved out of the Puente Hills to connect with the development in Whittier.

Around 1914, settlers began planting orange, lemon, avocado and walnut trees. When they were big enough to bear fruit, the growers organized into the North Whittier Heights Citrus Association and opened a packing plant near Clark and Ninth Avenues. Prior to that, fruit was hauled to Whittier. Also in 1914, the community's oldest club, the Monday Club (later the North Whittier Heights Club and later still the Hacienda Heights Woman's Club), was formed for helping "people who need help and providing social activities for women in local communities." In 1915, a small settlement called Hillgrove sprung up around the new packing plant, and a railroad station named Hillgrove was built nearby. As told to *The Highlander* newspaper in 1990, "Hillgrove was a settlement that existed mostly on paper. The settlement featured only the freight station, a telegraph office and a general store."

Water reached the area in quantity in 1921 when the reservoir at Hacienda and East Road was completed. And as the distribution system crawled upward over the hills, so did the blanket of green groves. The early 1920s also saw the peak of avocado development. Hundreds of people were employed, including engineering crews, mule skinnners, nursery men, and laborers, building roads and pipelines, contouring the hills and planting avocados all throughout the area. Agriculture in the early days was not limited to avocados, however. Flowers and vegetables such as rhubarb, cucumbers, tomatoes and string beans also abounded, and oranges and lemons were planted in the valley lands.

Some magnificent homes were built in the area in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Homes ranged from summer cottages and modest farm houses to dreamlike structures and spectacular view sites. Nearly all homes were individually designed. Many were hidden in the irregular tree covered terrain and accessible only by private roads, which remains a distinguishing characteristic in the hilly parts of the community today.

In the early 1940s, the citrus fruit producing area became known as North Whittier Heights, where farmhouses were scattered throughout a countryside dominated by orange and walnut groves. The citrus packing house, at that time a division of Sunkist, gave the area its identity. But by the mid-1940s, walnut and citrus growing in California became unprofitable due to pests, diseases and the Depression. While the slump was only temporary, with production rebounding during and after the war, the region underwent a building boom after World War II that eventually edged out crops in favor of development. In 1948, the Hacienda Heights Improvement Association (HHIA) was founded, and Robert Craig was the first president.

In the early 1950s, subdivisions started around Kwis Avenue. Post-war growth in the valley spurred growth in the school system and, in 1951, four new school buildings were built for about half a million dollars. In 1957, the City of Industry was incorporated with the goal of providing a welcome environment for business and industries, thereby isolating Hacienda Heights and cementing its role as a bedroom community.

In 1960, the 269th Branch of the Los Angeles County Public Library opened in Hacienda Heights. Soon after, developers started pulling orange trees and developing along Hacienda Boulevard. In 1961, following efforts driven by HHIA, the name was changed from North Whittier Heights to Hacienda Heights. In 1964, *The Highlander* newspaper started, and around that time the 60 Freeway was extended past the 605. Also during the 1960s, the fruit packing house barracks for seasonal workers were sold and turned into the first school in North Whittier Heights (while Hillgrove School was being built) and the area's first Methodist Church (while St. Matthew's was being built).

Development in Hacienda Heights reached a fever pitch in the 1970s and the community began experiencing the growing pains that accompany rapid growth, leaving residents without adequate services, particularly police and parks. These troubles prompted a push for incorporation, which ultimately failed. In 1978, the Community General Plan was developed by the Hacienda Heights Improvement Association and adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. The Community General Plan has been and will remain the regulatory document for Hacienda Heights until this updated Draft Community Plan is adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

Despite the adoption of policies intended to control growth, the 1980s brought a series of substantial changes with irreversible long-term consequences. First, in January of 1980, the Medicine Lodge, a 29 acre property in the hills south of the residential development at the southwest corner of Hacienda and Colima, was sold to Coast Construction Company for approximately \$325,000. Despite objections from Hacienda Heights, Rowland Heights and Diamond Bar, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) adopted its staff's recommendation to include the ridgeline of the Puente Hills, bordering Hacienda Heights and Whittier, in the "spheres of influence" for the cities of Whittier (1,200 acres of HH) and Industry (1,000 acres of HH). Concerns over "quality growth," "reasonable density," "general and community plan compatibility," and "land grabbing" were cited by the unincorporated communities, which felt they were ignored in the process. Soon after, talk of incorporation surfaced again.

In the fall of 1980, HHIA led the drive for incorporation and conducted an extensive community survey, studying the area's physical features, planning, housing and revenue. In 1982, the proposal to incorporate was reviewed by LAFCO. Proponents argued that a new city would be better able to control development and provide increased police and fire service, but opponents worried about an ample tax base given the community's lack of commerce. In 1985, the attempt at incorporation was nullified when signatures on a petition were found to be forged.

Into the 1980s, more difficulties fell on the community in rapid succession. In 1983, a landslide triggered by new construction uprooted three houses on Montellano Avenue, threatened 11 more, and caused residual damage to sewer systems and roads. Legal disputes between 11 additional hilltop homeowners whose properties were at risk of being demolished, the developer and Los Angeles County, resulted in multiple lawsuits alleging that the original developer did not adhere to building and grading regulations. Multiple plans for excavating and reinforcing the hillside were proposed, but Los Angeles County was blamed for delays in approving a final plan. In 1989, a fire destroyed 13 houses, damaged another 18, and contributed to losses estimated at over \$4.3 million.

When the Puente Hills Landfill opened in the 1980s, Hacienda Heights was nearly fully developed. The landfill, which is the largest landfill in the nation, was sited south of the intersection of the Pomona (60) and San Gabriel (605) Freeways. Owned and operated by the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, the Puente Hills Landfill today includes a solid waste disposal facility, an energy recovery facility, a recycle center, a materials recovery facility (MRF), a clean fuels facility, a liquefied natural gas fueling facility, and a gas-to-energy facility. The landfill was also designated a protected watershed, which means it is prohibited, by the Sanitation District's Board of Directors' ordinance, from accepting waste generated within the City of Los Angeles and Orange County.

The early 1990s were also difficult in Hacienda Heights. The Puente Hills Landfill expanded in 1990 and encroached to within half a mile of homes. The controversial site was excavated for soil to cover trash, as allowed by the then current contract. The landfill's permit for expansion and the environmental review were both pending at the time. A couple of years later, another attempt to incorporate failed; lack of a single "rallying cry" was cited as the reason. By this time, the historic citrus packing house was converted into a warehouse for a trucking company, and few relics from the bygone agricultural era remained. However, some of the original homes from Rancho La Puente still stand on a 92-acre tract of land between Gale Avenue and Valley Boulevard. Other homes of early settlers are sprinkled around or near Hacienda Heights, some of them the dwellings of descendants of Rowland and Workman.

Today, residents of Hacienda Heights face many challenges familiar to their predecessors—continuing population growth, the need for additional and affordable housing, and natural and social constraints on development, to name a few. Still, the community has a rich history of overcoming adversity and maintaining a small-town feel rich with picturesque residential areas, beautiful views, excellent schools and parks, and a wealth of cultural and religious institutions, including one of the largest Buddhist temples in America, the His Lai Temple. Neighbors from diverse cultural backgrounds know and respect each other, children are provided for at home and challenged at school, and newcomers can partake in the same benefits residents have long enjoyed, such as open spaces, scenic vistas, and a well-earned sense of community.

Today: Community Data

Community Boundary

Nestled in southern Los Angeles County's Puente Hills, Hacienda Heights is an 11.38 square mile area located approximately 20 miles east of downtown Los Angeles at an elevation of 460 feet. The community is bounded on the north by the City of Industry, on the south by the cities of Whittier and La Habra Heights, on the west by the unincorporated area of North Whittier, and on the east by the unincorporated community of Rowland Heights.

On the north Hacienda Heights is generally bounded by Wildwood Drive, Clark Ave, Gale Avenue, and the 60 Freeway. On the south the boundary generally runs next to Skyline Drive and Skyline fire roads. On the west the community includes the Puente Hills Landfill and a small portion of the Rose Hills Memorial Park. On the east Azusa Avenue serves as the boundary between Hacienda Heights and Rowland Heights until Colima Road. The boundary continues south along the western edge of Schabarum Regional Park. At the end of Azusa Avenue the boundary between the two communities cuts through the Park, roughly bisecting the southern portion of the Park between the two communities.

The once agricultural community is known today, as it has been since the 1960s, as a bedroom community, meaning that the majority of residents commute to their places of work for over 30 minutes per day, on average. An attractive and mature community, Hacienda Heights is home to approximately 60,000 residents. The quiet residential community is both ethnically and economically diverse, and residents value a peaceful way of life, scenic views, lovely parks and excellent schools.

The following data provide a snapshot of the community demographics, which will help inform Plan proposals and priorities.

Population

In recent years, Hacienda Heights has experienced significant population increases. The following 2000 US Census data show the steady increase in population over the past 50 years and percent change from decade to decade.

Table 4: Population Data

Census Year	Population	Increase
1950	6,831	
1960	16,667	144%
1970	35,969	116%
1980	49,422	37%
1990	52,354	6%
2000	53,122	1%

Pace of Development

According to Los Angeles County Assessor data, the pace of development in Hacienda Heights increased dramatically and rapidly beginning in the 1950s. The intensity of development, characterized by the number of buildings built in a given decade, peaked in the 1960s, continued through the 1970s, and leveled off in the 1980s, by which time the community was almost entirely built out. The following data show the sharp increase, continued growth, and eventual tapering off of development activities.

Table 5: Building Trends

Year Built	Total Parcels
1900 - 1909	1
1910 - 1919	10
1920 - 1929	74
1930 - 1939	67
1940 - 1949	170
1950 - 1959	3,808
1960 - 1969	5,076
1970 - 1979	4,816
1980 - 1989	1,184
1990 - 1999	153
2000 - 2007	80

Households

According to the 2000 US Census, Hacienda Heights contains 16,356 houses, with housing accounting for 98% of all buildings. In 2000, the average household size was roughly 3.25 people and the housing density was 1,438 housing units per square mile. In that same year, the median household income was \$59,485 annually, and the per capita income was \$21,893. Nearly 80% of the housing units are owner-occupied, which is higher than County and State-wide averages.

According to an analysis of Assessor Use Codes, the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning estimates that the overwhelming majority (upwards of 95%) are single family residences, accounting for 85% of the total properties in Hacienda Heights. The same study also shows that 91% of the total acreage in Hacienda Heights is residential.

Race and Ethnicity

The once predominantly Caucasian suburb is now a roughly even mix of White, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian residents. The 2000 US Census data follow.

Table 6: Race and Ethnicity Data

Race	Population	Percent
White	21,797	41%
Hispanic/Latino ¹	20,320	38%
Asian	19,174	36%
African American	825	2%
Two or more	2,063	4%
Other	8,883	17%

Compared with California as a whole, Hacienda Heights has an African American population significantly below the state average, and Hispanic and foreign-born populations significantly above the state average.

Age Distribution

In 2000, the average age of residents was 37. The age distribution, according the 2000 US Census, follows.

Table 7: Age Data

Years	Population	Percent
15 or less	10,877	20.5%
16 to 24	7,499	14.1%
25 to 44	14,820	27.9%
45 to 64	13,607	25.6%
65 or more	6,319	11.9%

As is true across the United States, there is a growing senior population. Additionally, decreasing school enrollments indicate fewer young children year after year.

Educational Attainment

The education level of the community's adult population (25 years and older) is consistent with the County and State overall. The levels of educational attainment are:

¹ Hispanics could be counted in other races, as well, so total can be greater than 100%.

Table 8: Educational Data

Level Completed	Population	Percent
High school / equivalency	7,558	21.8%
Associate's / Some college	10,071	29.1%
Bachelor's	7,186	20.7%
Master's / Doctorate / Professional	3,454	10.0%

Hacienda Heights is part of the Hacienda La Puente Unified School District. The community has two public high schools, five public primary/middle schools, and nine public and two private elementary schools. A table summarizing the schools follows.

Table 9: Schools

	School	Location
High Schools	Glen A. Wilson	16455 Wedgeworth Dr.
	Los Altos	15325 E. Los Robles Ave.
Middle and Primary Schools	Cedarlane	16333 Cedarlane Dr.
	Cedarlane	16333 Cedarlane
	Mesa Robles	16060 Mesa Robles Dr.
	Newton	15616 Newton Ave.
	Orange Grove	14505 Orange Grove
Elementary Schools	Bixby	16446 Wedgeworth Dr.
	Glenelder	16234 Folger
	Grazide	2850 Leopold Ave.
	Kwis	1925 S. Kwis
	Los Altos	15565 Los Altos Dr.
	Los Molinos	3112 Las Marias
	Los Robles Academy	1530 S. Ridley
	Molokan Christian	16222 E. Soriano
	Palm	14740 E. Palm Ave.
	Shadybend	15430 Shadybend
Wedgeworth	16949 Wedgeworth Dr.	

Parks

Hacienda Heights is proud to have six beautiful parks. From west to east, the parks are: Los Robles, Manzanita, Steinmetz, Burton, Pepperbrook and Countrywood. Nearby Schabaram Regional County Park is also enjoyed by Hacienda Heights Residents of all ages. A table summarizing the parks within Hacienda Heights follows.

Table 10: Parks

Name	Location
County Wood Park	16817 E. Cooper Hills Drive
Los Robles County Park	14906 E. Los Robles Avenue
Manzanita Park	1747 S. Kwis Avenue
Pepperbrook Park	1701 S. Countrywood Avenue
Steinmetz Park	1545 S. Stimson Avenue
Burton Park	16490 E. Santa Bianca Drive

Population Projections

Population projections by Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning indicate that growth trends will continue into the future and that the population could reach over 80,000 in 20 years, a 33% increase over the current count.

The specific projections that follow are based on the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) calculations and are intended to be indicative of future trends rather than precise estimates.

Table 11: Population Projections

Census Year	Population	Increase
2005	60,925	
2010	66,929	10%
2015	71,847	7%
2020	76,691	7%
2025	81,398	6%

As indicated in the data above, Hacienda Heights is a highly diverse community. The Community Plan serves to build on the community's assets while addressing its challenges to ensure a continued high quality of life. While the Plan is supported by technical analyses and data, the community vision serves as the touchstone to move from today's realities to tomorrow's ideal future.

Tomorrow: Community Vision (2015 and beyond)

At the heart of the County's approach to community planning is the idea that the Plan is a codified version of the community's wishes for the future. Collectively, those wishes amount to a community vision, based on shared values and common goals. While a traditional approach to community planning often organizes resources according to a problem-solving paradigm, the Hacienda Heights Community Plan Update was initiated on a different premise: that by painting a best-possible-scenario picture of the future, the community and service providers would be best positioned to maximize opportunities and leverage resources to make that vision a reality.

The purpose of a community-wide vision is to inspire, motivate and guide the community. The vision statement was the first task in the planning process completed by the community participants. In July 2007 a visioning meeting was held where participants actively envisioned Hacienda Heights in the year 2015 during an interactive group exercise. The objective of this exercise was to: (a) initiate the visioning process and to "get the creative juices flowing;" (b) stimulate dialogue between neighbors, many of whom had never met previously; and (c) begin to identify common themes among the range of responses.

Through the interactive exercise facilitated by Regional Planning staff, the following sentiments were offered for what "**Hacienda Height is known for in the year 2015**":

- . New community arts center/auditorium
- . Beautiful views of the hills and terrain
- . Activities for all residents
- . Easy access to LA and OC

- . Excellent schools
- . No crime or gangs
- . Convenient shopping and services
- . Parks and open spaces
- . Safe
- . Community focus
- . Unique retail plan
- . Well planned housing
- . Buddhist Temple
- . Lack of graffiti
- . Community cooperation
- . Beauty
- . Resident participation and activism
- . Beautiful green acres, trees
- . Wireless technology
- . Bedroom community
- . Multicultural
- . Slow pace
- . Respect for nature
- . Pride of ownership
- . Community involvement
- . Communication amongst neighbors
- . Support from County government
- . Neighborliness
- . Close-knit community
- . Upgrading to meet new needs

Building on these sentiments and additional input received in the following weeks, DRP staff analyzed the full collection of results and formulated a draft vision. The draft statement was shared at the following community meeting where the participants responded to and built upon it. The community reached a consensus on the following vision statement:

Hacienda Heights is a **safe, clean** bedroom community where residents from **diverse** cultural and religious backgrounds **co-exist** and **cooperate**. We are **proud** of our homes and value our natural surroundings, especially the view of our hills and our wildlife areas. Our **well-designed** and **maintained** commercial areas, streets, and public spaces provide residents of all ages with a diversity of activities, products and services. The community is **well-planned** and **well-connected**, and the **efficient** transportation network makes getting around easy. Our great schools, new healthcare facilities, state-of-the-art multipurpose center and many parks make our community **ideal for families**.

The vision statement provides the foundation for the entire Plan. Throughout the life of the Plan, the vision provides the community with a shared sense of direction and destiny. By framing the future in the best possible light, community members commit themselves to being part of the solutions, and service providers can make decisions confidently when they understand the community's deepest wishes.