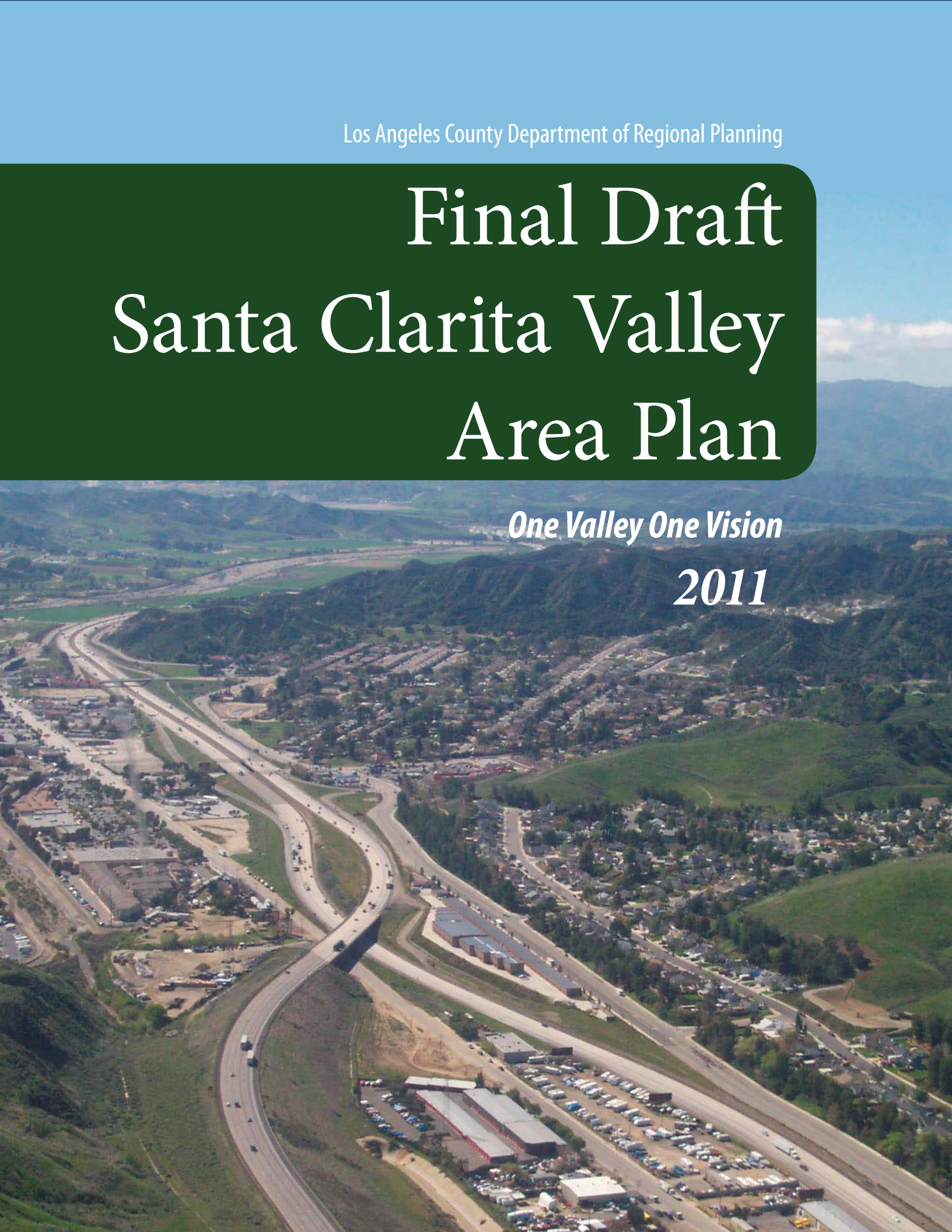
Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Final Draft Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan

One Valley One Vision

2011



The following Final Draft Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan will require approval by both the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors prior to official implementation. Hearing dates to be determined.

Once adopted, the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan will be a component of the Los Angeles County General Plan and provide goals and policies specific to the Santa Clarita Valley.

Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Final Draft
Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan

One Valley One Vision

September 2011

Acknowledgments

Board of Supervisors

- **Michael D. Antonovich**, Chair
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- **Gloria Molina**
  First District
- **Mark Ridley-Thomas**
  Second District
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  Third District
- **Don Knabe**
  Fourth District

Regional Planning Commission

- **Pat Modugno**, Chair
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- **Esther L. Valadez**
  First District
- **David W. Louie**
  Second District
- **Harold V. Helsley**
  Third District
- **Curt Pedersen**
  Fourth District

Department of Regional Planning

- **Richard J. Bruckner**
  Director of Planning
- **Dennis Slavin**
  Chief Deputy Director
- **Jon Sanabria**
  Deputy Director

Community Studies North

- **Mitch Glaser,** AICP
  Supervising Regional Planner
- **Thuy Hua,** AICP
  Senior Regional Planner
- **Emma Howard**
  Assistant Regional Planner
- **Rick Kuo**
  Assistant Regional Planner

Geographic Information Systems

- **Nick Franchino**, AICP
  GIS Manager
- **Dan Hoffman**
  Principal Regional Planner
- **Martha Selig**
  Assistant Regional Planner

Contributing Staff

- **Rob Glaser**
  Principal Regional Planner

Former Staff

- **Andy Malakates**
  Countywide Studies
- **Kari Davis**
  Countywide Studies
- **Marshall Adams,** AICP
  Countywide Studies

City of Santa Clarita

- **Paul Brotzman**
  Director of Community Development
- **Lisa Webber**, AICP
  Planning Manager
- **Jason Smisko**
  Senior Planner
- **Ben Jarvis**
  Associate Planner
- **Mike Ascione**
  Assistant Planner II

Consultant Team

- **Molly Bogh**
  Lilburn Corporation
- **Caitlin Morais**
  DM Geographics
- **Fred Greve**
  Mestre Greve Associates
- **Daryl Zerfas**
  Austin-Foust Associates

"To enrich lives through effective and caring service."

"To improve the quality of life through innovative and resourceful physical and environmental planning, balancing individual rights and community needs."

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INTRODUCTION

I. PURPOSE OF THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY AREA PLAN

The Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan is a component of the Los Angeles County General Plan and is intended to provide focused goals, policies, and maps to guide the regulation of development within the unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley. This updated Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan replaces in its entirety the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on February 16, 1984 and subsequently amended on December 6, 1990, which had previously served as the basic planning tool for the unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley. This Area Plan, as it may be amended from time to time, is intended to serve as a long-term blueprint for development over the next approximately 20-year planning period, except where specific policies address other target dates as set forth in the plan.

According to the General Plan Guidelines published by the State of California[1], an "Area Plan" is a planning tool that focuses on a particular region or community within the overall General Plan area. An Area Plan is adopted by resolution as an amendment to the General Plan as set forth in Section 65350 et. seq. of the California Government Code. It refines the policies of the General Plan as they apply to a smaller geographic area and is implemented by ordinances and other discretionary actions, such as zoning regulations and Community Standards Districts. The Area Plan must be internally consistent with the General Plan of which it is a part. An Area Plan need not address all of the required elements of the General Plan, when the overall General Plan satisfies these requirements.

This Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan has been prepared to ensure consistency with both the County's comprehensive General Plan and with the City of Santa Clarita's General Plan. The Area Plan does not include all of the mandatory General Plan Elements, such as Housing, because the County's overall General Plan addresses all these mandatory issues on a Countywide basis. The Area Plan contains detailed background, maps, goals and policies regarding land use and circulation planning, and policy-level discussions of other issues relating to specific needs and characteristics of the Santa Clarita Valley such as open space preservation, trail planning, hillside development, and historic preservation.

The 2010 Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan is the culmination of a unique cooperative effort with the City of Santa Clarita to work together in creating a unified vision for the Santa Clarita Valley. The Santa Clarita City Council and Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors initiated this joint planning effort, called *One Valley One Vision*, in recognition of a mutual need to coordinate land uses and the pace of development with provision of adequate infrastructure, conservation of natural resources, and common objectives for the Valley. Major goals of the *One Valley One Vision* joint planning effort were to achieve greater cooperation between the County and the City, coordinated planning for roadways, infrastructure, and resource management, and enhanced quality of life for all who live and work in the Santa Clarita Valley.

The *One Valley One Vision* project included public input during all stages of the planning process. Community participation was solicited through surveys, meetings and workshops, mailings, maintenance of an informational website, stakeholder interviews, children's and youth activities, visioning workshops, outreach to Spanish-speaking residents through meetings and personal contact, placement of door-hangers, bus-shelter advertising, newspaper advertisements, the Valley Congress, correspondence, study sessions, and public hearings. An initial year-long public participation process resulted in formulation of community recommendations for the future of the Valley. These recommendations were published and ratified by a diverse collection of community representatives as the Vision and Guiding Principles, and are set forth in their entirety in Section IX, below. The Guiding Principles also form the basis for more specific issue-based goals and policies contained in the various Area Plan elements.

Implementation of the *One Valley One Vision* policies will be managed by the County of Los Angeles through adoption of this Area Plan as a part of its General Plan, and through use of the goals, policies and maps contained herein to establish zoning regulations and guide new development proposals within unincorporated portions of the Santa

1 Governor's Office of Planning and Research, *State of California General Plan Guidelines, 2003*, p. 17.

Clarita Valley. Those portions of the planning area within the incorporated boundaries of the City of Santa Clarita will be regulated by adoption of the City's updated General Plan, which has also been revised to reflect the common goals and policies agreed to as part of the *One Valley One Vision* effort.

Together, the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and the City's General Plan will clarify and articulate the County's and City's intentions with respect to the rights and expectations of the general public, property owners, special interest groups, prospective investors, and business interests. Through these documents, the County and the City inform the community of their common goals, policies, and standards.

II. COMPONENTS OF THE ONE VALLEY ONE VISION PLANNING EFFORT

The joint County-City effort to provide for comprehensive planning of the Santa Clarita Valley has resulted in adoption of the following planning documents:

- This Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, adopted by the Board of Supervisors on _____ by adoption of Resolution No. _____. The Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan includes the following elements, with maps, goals and policies specifically targeting the Santa Clarita Valley:
    - Land Use
    - Circulation
    - Safety
    - Conservation and Open Space
    - Noise.
- The updated City of Santa Clarita General Plan, adopted by the City Council on June 14, 2011 by adoption of Resolution No. 11-61 and 11-62. The City's General Plan includes all elements mandated by State law (Section 65300 et. seq. of the California Government Code), with open space and conservation combined into one element, as follows:
    - Land Use
    - Circulation
    - Housing
    - Noise
    - Conservation and Open Space
    - Safety
    - Economic Development

Both documents became effective on their respective date of adoption. As required by State law, all subsequent planning and development decisions within the Santa Clarita Valley planning area shall be determined to be consistent with these documents, except as provided herein for any land use applications pending during the plan preparation and adoption process.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORTS

Separate Environmental Impact Reports were prepared for the *One Valley One Vision* effort, one for the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan one for the City's General Plan Update. The Draft Environmental Impact Reports (DEIRs) were was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act. A DEIR prepared for the County's Area Plan (SCH #2008071119) was circulated for public review on September 4, 2009. A Revised DEIR (RDEIR) was circulated for public review on November 23, 2010. Responses to the comments received on the RDEIR were prepared and transmitted to responding agencies on _____. The RDEIR was reviewed by the Regional Planning Commission at a noticed public hearing on December 8, 2010. Responses to comments and other relevant documentation were incorporated into the Final EIR, which was certified after a public hearing by the Board of Supervisors on _____.

IV. PLANNING AREA

Location and Setting

The *One Valley One Vision* planning effort encompassed the entire Santa Clarita Valley, generally bounded on the west by the Ventura County line, on the north by the Los Padres and Angeles National Forest areas, on the east by the Angeles National Forest, and on the south by the major ridgeline separating the Santa Clarita from the San Fernando Valley. The County's Area Plan includes unincorporated areas, including the communities of Agua Dulce, Bouquet

Canyon, Castaic, Fair Oaks Ranch, Hasley Canyon, Newhall Ranch, San Francisquito Canyon, Val Verde, Sunset Pointe, Southern Oaks, Stevenson Ranch, and Westridge. The incorporated City of Santa Clarita communities of Canyon Country, Newhall, Saugus, and Valencia are included in the City's General Plan update. The entire planning area includes over 480 square miles, of which 432 square miles are in the County unincorporated area (including 235 square miles within the National Forest boundaries) and 52 square miles are within the City limits. The City's adopted sphere of influence includes approximately 29 square miles which, although still under County jurisdiction, are also addressed in the City's General Plan. Table I-1 below summarizes jurisdictional areas, and Figure I-1 shows the planning area boundaries.

Table I-1:
Jurisdictional Areas in Santa Clarita Valley Planning Area

Jurisdiction	Area (square miles)
Total Planning Area • One Valley One Vision Area • United States Forest Service Area	485.40 250.21 235.19
County of Los Angeles	197.53
City of Santa Clarita (incorporated boundaries)	52.68
City's Adopted Sphere of Influence*	29.48

*Note: The City's Sphere of Influence is included in County area, but must also be included in the City's General Plan area boundaries for planning purposes.

The planning area is located approximately 30-40 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. Existing land use patterns can be traced largely to the influence of geographic constraints. The Valley is framed by mountain ranges, including the San Gabriel, Santa Susana, and Sierra Pelona ranges. Angeles National Forest land, most of which is undeveloped and protected, surrounds much of the planning area. The natural topography of the Santa Clara River and its many tributary canyons, in conjunction with the National Forest holdings, has focused growth in the Santa Clarita Valley on the more central, level areas between the Valley's two major freeways. Most of the development has occurred adjacent to the Golden State (Interstate 5) and Antelope Valley (State Route 14) freeways, concentrating urbanization within a "V" shaped area formed by these two major transportation routes.

The Valley's topography is characterized by rolling terrain, canyons, creeks, and the Santa Clara River. The river flows from east to west for almost 100 miles from its headwaters near Acton to the Pacific Ocean, through a valley formed between the Santa Susana Mountains. That portion of the river within the planning area is known as the Upper Santa Clara River, and has a watershed consisting of approximately 680 square miles.

The Santa Clarita Valley is located at the convergence of several major transportation and utility facilities. The Southern Pacific Railroad, the Golden State and Antelope Valley freeways, and two major aqueducts traverse the Valley. Oil, natural gas and power lines enter from the north through the Tejon Pass, cross the Valencia-Newhall community, and then exit near Newhall Pass.

Governance

The Santa Clarita Valley contains territory under the jurisdiction of two political entities. The unincorporated areas under the jurisdiction of Los Angeles County are addressed in this Area Plan, and the incorporated area within the boundaries of the City of Santa Clarita is included in the City's General Plan. Both agencies have revised their Plans to reflect the goals and policies of the *One Valley One Vision* planning process. The City's jurisdiction is located generally in the central portion of the Valley, and is largely developed. The unincorporated area generally surrounds the City and much of it is either undeveloped or is developed with lower density residential and rural uses. However, there are several areas within the County's jurisdiction that have developed or are in the process of being developed with urban uses; some of these areas have been developed through adoption of Specific Plans, as described in Section V, below.

The County has established various advisory groups and councils to advise the Board of Supervisors and staff regarding local planning issues. These include the Agua Dulce Town Council; the Castaic Area Town Council; the San Francisquito Canyon Preservation Association; the West Ranch Town Council (including West Ridge, Stevenson Ranch, Southern Oaks, and Sunset Pointe); and the Val Verde Civic Association. Although these groups do not have statutory authority, they provide valuable input to decision makers regarding local issues.

The City of Santa Clarita incorporated on December 15, 1987. At incorporation, the City boundaries included 39.78 square miles and a population of about 130,000. From 1987 through 2006 the City processed 28 annexations, expanding its boundaries to include territory for which residents or property owners had petitioned to join the City. The City's 2006 population was 177,400, representing a three percent annual growth rate since incorporation (including natural growth, in-migration and annexation).

The City's policy on annexation requests has been to welcome additional residents who wish to join the City and to provide new residents with full representation and City services. Both the City and the County have taken the position that residents in unincorporated areas have the right and responsibility to determine the jurisdictional boundaries that are appropriate for their area.

Historical Overview

The earliest evidence of human occupation in the Upper Santa Clara River area dates from 7,000 to 4,000 years ago, and was recovered from two sites near Vasquez Rocks. Native Americans of Shoshonean-speaking culture groups probably began to reach the planning area about 1,500 years ago. Members of the Tataviam culture group – a Takic-speaking subgroup of the Shoshonean language group – have been in the Valley since about 1,000 B.C., and were described as a distinct linguistic group when they were first encountered by Pedro Fages in 1776. The Tataviam lived primarily on the upper reaches of the Santa Clara River, east of Piru Creek and extending from the Antelope Valley to the San Gabriel Mountains. Archaeological data indicate that subsistence patterns and ritual practices were similar to neighboring Chumash and Gabrielino culture groups; these groups were hunter-gatherers, subsisting on acorns, yucca, juniper berries, seeds, and small game. Many of the place names in the valley, such as Castaic, Piru, and Hasley, reflect a Tataviam linguistic origin.

In the late 1770's, Gaspar de Portola claimed the Valley for Spain and European colonists began to arrive. Around 1779, the Valley became part of the San Fernando Mission and was used for cattle grazing. The mission was divided into large ranches when California was added to the Mexican Republic, and the western portion of the Santa Clarita Valley became part of Rancho San Francisco. In 1842 gold was discovered in Placerita Canyon, initiating California's first gold rush; several million dollars worth of gold was mined in the valley during this period. After the war with Mexico ended in 1848, the United States gained control of the area. Two years later, California was admitted to the Union as a state.

Most of the growth in the Santa Clarita Valley after 1850 was fueled by the development of railroads and oil production. In 1875, Henry Mayo Newhall purchased Rancho San Francisco and renamed it Newhall Ranch. Newhall knew the railroad would transect the area and sold rights-of-way and a town site to the Southern Pacific Railroad. In 1876, the northerly and southerly rail lines were joined in Canyon Country at Lang Station.

Also in 1876, California's first oil producing well began operation in Pico Canyon and the state's first oil refinery was built in Railroad Canyon. Besides railroad and oil activities, the Valley was also discovered to be a good setting for filmmakers shooting westerns. The Valley's rugged canyons have been used as a backdrop for many television shows and feature films. Several of the Valley's remaining historical sites are associated with this era.

From the 1960's on, growth in the Santa Clarita Valley was fueled by the need for affordable housing in proximity to the Los Angeles basin and San Fernando Valley. Post-war suburban growth pushed its way north from the San Fernando Valley after the designation and expansion of Interstate 5 as a federal highway. Based on statistics from the Department of Regional Planning, the Santa Clarita Valley grew by over 45,000 dwelling units from 1960 through 1989, with over 20,000 units constructed during the 1980's. Rapid residential growth during this period led to a call for local government and incorporation of the City in 1987. After incorporation, residential growth continued within both City and County areas and development of commercial retail, office, and industrial uses increased, particularly along the Interstate 5 corridor. According to City and County estimates, in 2008 there were approximately 57,000 dwelling units within the City and 23,000 units in County unincorporated areas. An additional 39,500 units have been approved (6,000 in the City and 33,500 in the County), and other applications for new development are pending. Moreover, planning for areas adjacent to the Santa Clarita Valley, such as the Tejon Ranch north of Castaic and the growing cities of Lancaster and Palmdale to the north along

State Route 14, are expected to impact transportation and other infrastructure within the Valley. A major challenge in future planning for the Santa Clarita Valley will be managing the anticipated growth within the north Los Angeles County region, in a manner that preserves both quality of life and the environment.

V. PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

The Santa Clarita Valley has been the subject of several previous planning efforts by the County and the City of Santa Clarita. Following is a brief summary of prior adopted plans.

1984 Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan (County of Los Angeles)

The initial Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan was adopted in 1984, based on assistance from the Santa Clarita Valley Planning Advisory Committee (a citizens' advisory committee representing a variety of local interests and expertise). It was designed to provide decision-makers with a policy framework to guide development decisions in the Valley.

Following its adoption by the Board of Supervisors in 1984, two significant changes occurred which affected the Area Plan. The first of these was the incorporation of the City of Santa Clarita in 1987, including the communities of Newhall, Valencia, Saugus and portions of Canyon Country and Sand Canyon. Second, growth in the Santa Clarita Valley during the 1980's exceeded initial expectations, requiring revision of growth projections for population, employment, and housing. To reflect these changes, the Board of Supervisors adopted a comprehensive update of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan in 1990.

City of Santa Clarita Plans

After its incorporation in 1987, the City undertook preparation of its first comprehensive General Plan, which was adopted on June 26, 1991 by City Council Resolution 91-98. The City's firest General Plan included the following elements: Land Use, Housing, Community Design, Economic Development, Circulation, Human Resources, Public Services, Parks and Recreation, Open Space and Conservation, Air Quality, Noise, and Safety. Various elements were updated from time to time to reflect conditions, requirements, and policies.

To implement its General Plan the City adopted a Unified Development Code, containing zoning and subdivision regulations, which was most recently updated in 2008. In 2001, the City adopted the Santa Clarita Beautification Master Plan, which contains citywide design guidelines as well as specific guidelines tailored to maintain community character within Canyon Country, Newhall, Saugus, and Valencia. According to the document, "the Beautification Master Plan addresses concepts for streetscape design, landscape enhancement, gateways, and monumentation and signage, on both a regional and a community scale. The Master Plan strives to maintain the identity of individual communities while unifying the entire City through design."

In addition, the City adopted a set of Architectural Guidelines in 2002 for the purpose of giving "clear direction for the renovation of existing buildings and construction of new buildings." These Guidelines were updated in 2009 and renamed the Community Character and Design Guidelines. The Guidelines were prepared with the stated intent of retaining and encouraging architectural variety, promoting quality, and maintaining the scale and appearance of the City, with attractive development that preserves and enhances natural features and provides amenities for enjoyment of the community.

Specific Plans

Both the County and the City have used the Specific Plan process to provide comprehensive planning for large residential communities and business complexes in the planning area. As described in the State's General Plan Guidelines, a Specific Plan is often used to address the development requirements for a single project, such as a planned community. It may combine policy statements with development regulations, and typically emphasizes development criteria and standards. The text and diagrams of a Specific Plan address necessary infrastructure and facilities as well as land uses and open space, including programs and regulations necessary to finance infrastructure and public facilities. Specific Plans may be adopted by resolution or ordinance, and they must be consistent with the General Plan.

Table I-2 summarizes some of the major specific plans already adopted within the planning area that govern land use and development for larger development projects:

Table I-2: Major Adopted Specific Plans in Planning Area

Name	Jurisdiction	Acres	Uses	2007 Status
Newhall Ranch	County	11,963	20,885 du*	Two tracts pending (10,686 du)
Northlake	County	1330	3623 du, 2 schools, commercial area	Specific plan amendment in process
Canyon Park (Fair Oaks Ranch)	County	308	4,763 multi-family units and 637 single-family units	Partially built
North Valencia I	City	707	2,000 du, 636,000 sq.ft. commercial, 167,000 sq ft. industrial, open space	Res. uses built out
North Valencia II	City	596	1900 du, 150,000 sq.ft. commercial	Res. uses built out
Porta Bella	City	988	2911 du, 96 ac commercial/office, open space	Awaiting clean-up of hazardous materials
Downtown Newhall	City	550	1092 new du 1,017,000 new sq. ft. commercial	Adopted Dec. 2005; street improvements underway

*du=dwelling units

Since adoption of the previous City and County Plans in the 1990's, the Santa Clarita Valley has evolved from a rural and suburban bedroom community into more of a sustainable community with commercial centers, balancing the small town charm with urban sophistication. Valley residents and policy makers have recognized the need for updated planning that focuses on the challenges and opportunities of the coming decades, leading to the *One Valley One Vision* planning process.

VI. PLANNING ISSUES

Through the planning and visioning process of the *One Valley One Vision* effort, the County and City identified issues of Valley-wide significance that, it was felt, were best addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. In recognition of the anticipated continuation of rapid growth, the *One Valley One Vision* planning effort focused on ways to manage this growth and addressed the need for mutual cooperation on the following issues:

1. Phasing of new development with provision of adequate infrastructure required to serve such new development, in a manner that does not adversely impact existing residents;

2. Planning for adequate sports, park and recreation facilities to serve both City and County residents;

3. Coordination on planning and construction of streets, including location, design, and timing of improvements, in order to increase mobility and access, and reduce congestion;

4. Preservation of an open space green belt around the urbanized central portions of the Valley, in order to preserve hillside areas and significant ridgelines, conserve biological resources and water quality, provide opportunities for recreation, and make more efficient use of existing urban infrastructure in the core areas;

5. Planning for integrated trail systems, including bikeways, walkways, and multi-purpose trails;

6. Planning for a balanced mix of residential and business-oriented uses that will increase job creation, promote a vibrant economy, provide a wide variety of goods and services to residents, and ensure adequate housing opportunities to serve all income levels and household types;

7. Preservation and enhancement of rural, suburban, and urban lifestyles and community character within the diverse communities comprising the Santa Clarita Valley;

8. Conservation of significant resources, including historic and cultural sites, riparian and other protected habitat areas, water quality, and scenic areas;

9. Preservation of public health, safety, and welfare, through identification of natural and environmental hazards, including noise, seismic, fire, and airborne emissions, and designation of land uses in an appropriate manner to mitigate these impacts;

10. Creation of vibrant town centers with access to public transit systems through planning for transit-oriented development around rail stations;

11. Coordination on enhancing public and community services such as law enforcement, fire protection, libraries, and cultural centers;

12. Planning for those intensive uses with potential land use and environmental impacts which are needed to support the Valley's anticipated growth, including landfills, aggregate mining and processing, waste transfer and processing facilities, and similar facilities;

13. Planning for social infrastructure and services needed to ensure that the basic needs of all Valley residents are met, including emergency housing, transitional housing, social care facilities, medical care and related services, and ongoing coordination with school districts and colleges; and

14. Growing the economy at a rate commensurate with residential growth, in order to generate financial resources needed to support provision of services to the public at acceptable levels of service.

VII. ORGANIZATION OF THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY AREA PLAN

The Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan consists of various elements, described below. Each element contains a section describing the background and issues addressed in the element, a set of goals, objectives and policies to be achieved during the planning period, and a list of implementation measures to ensure compliance with the goals and policies outlined in the element.

Land Use Element

The Land Use Element contains a land use map and descriptions of the designations applied to land within the Santa Clarita Valley to guide the type, intensity, and density of future uses. The element also contains goals, policies, and implementation measures to ensure that new development and the use of land reflect community goals, enhance quality of life, are supported by adequate services, utilities, roadways and other infrastructure, ensure public safety through consideration of hazardous land use conditions, and conserve valuable resources and amenities within the Valley.

Circulation Element

The Circulation Element contains maps showing major transportation facilities within the Santa Clarita Valley, including streets and highways, rail and public transit routes, stations and terminals, airport facilities, and trails. Descriptions of each type of transportation facility are given in the element, along with goals, policies, and implementation measures to ensure that circulation needs are met in a timely manner to meet the needs of Valley residents.

Conservation and Open Space Element

The Conservation and Open Space Element contains maps, goals, policies, and implementation measures to ensure preservation of an open space greenbelt around most portions of the Santa Clarita Valley, in addition to preserving water quality, historic and cultural resources, scenic views, and providing recreational facilities to enhance the quality of life for Valley residents. A key component of this element is preservation of resources within portions of designated Significant Ecological Areas (SEA's) within the County General Plan. More comprehensive Countywide policies are contained within elements of the County General Plan; however, conservation and open space issues specific to the unincorporated Santa Clarita Valley are addressed in this Area Plan.

Safety Element

The Safety Element contains maps, goals, policies, and implementation measures to ensure that residents are not exposed to health risks due to air pollution, earthquakes, wildland fires, or other environmental hazards, and that adequate provisions are made for crime prevention, law enforcement, and fire protection services. While the County's General

Plan contains a comprehensive Safety Element, this Area Plan contains specific public safety information and policies to guide development decisions in the Santa Clarita Valley based upon local conditions.

Noise Element

The Noise Element contains maps and policies to ensure that residnets are not exposed to health risks or nuisances due to noise generated from freeways and high-volume roadways, airports, industiral and recreation uses, special events and other uses emitting loud sounds. Policies address sound attenuation measures such as setbacks, noise barriers, and buffering to protect the public health, safety and welfare. While the County's General Plan contains a comprehensive, countywide Noise Element, the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan contains specific noise information and policies to guide development decisions in the unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley based upon local conditions.

VIII. HOW TO USE THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY AREA PLAN

This Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan is a component of the Los Angeles County General Plan. All of its maps, goals, policies, and implementing actions must be consistent with the Countywide chapters and elements of the General Plan. Users should be guided by the following:

- Should any areas of conflicting interpretation arise, unless specifically noted, the provisions of the Countywide General Plan shall prevail.

- No policy, whether in written or diagram form, shall be given greater weight than any other policy in evaluating the policy intent of this Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan.

- The Land Use Policy Map is never to be interpreted as a stand-alone document, but must be interpreted in light of applicable written policies in the Area Plan.

- The interpretation of policy should be governed by the Vision and Guiding Principles of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, as further clarified in the Area Plan.

- Density Transfer: In accordance with the provisions of the County's General Plan, "a transfer of density within a project is allowed, regardless of the urban/non-urban boundary, where supported by geologic and/or topographic data and the change results in a superior design," subject to consistency findings with policies of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan. The Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan does not, however, permit the creation of urban densities (exceeding one dwelling unit per acre) within rural areas.

- Staff Consultation: While the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan is meant to be a guide for the public in determining allowable uses of private property, the public is encouraged to consult with members of the County's planning staff prior to investing in the preparation of development plans that might later prove to be inconsistent with the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan.

- Non-Conforming Uses: All legally established uses in existence at the time of adoption of this Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan are deemed to be consistent with this Plan, although Zoning Ordinance provisions regarding Non-Conforming Uses may apply. Existing legal lots may be developed (following current development requirements) regardless of lot size.

- Completed applications filed prior to the effective date of this Area Plan shall be allowed to be reviewed for consistency with the previously adopted Area Plan. Projects may be maintained as originally approved provided the approval is still valid and has not expired. Any subsequent change(s) of use or intensity shall be subject to the policies of this Area Plan.

In some instances, this Area Plan's land use designation boundaries follow Highways that were proposed at the time this Area Plan was prepared, as depicted on the Highway Plan in this Area Plan. During the time this Area Plan is in effect, it is possible that the alignment of the proposed Highways will be adjusted pursuant to review and approval by the County's Interdepartmental Engineering Committee (IEC). In those instances, it is the intent of this Area Plan to allow adjustments to this Area Plan's land use designation boundaries to follow the adjusted Highway alignment without a Plan Amendment. Such adjustments may be

made by the reviewing authority (Director, Hearing Officer, or Regional Planning Commission), provided that the reviewing authority finds:

- The adjustment is necessitated by an adjusted Highway alignment that was approved by the IEC in a duly noticed public meeting;
- The adjustment maintains the basic relationship between land use types; and
- The adjustment is consistent with the goals and objectives of this Area Plan.

If a Highway, street, or right-of-way is vacated, it is the intent of this Area Plan to allow the adjoining Area Plan land use designation to be extended into the vacated Highway, street, or other right-of-way without a Plan Amendment.

In addition to the direction provided by this Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, new development and land use activities are regulated by many agencies other than the Department of Regional Planning. Obtaining approval for certain types of actions may require proof of the availability of public services – including water/sewer, power, police, fire and schools – as well as fair-share provisions for public parks, libraries, streets, and other public facilities.

Along with the standard building requirements and zoning regulations that apply throughout the County, development in hillside areas often requires special considerations and permits from local, state, and federal agencies. Such controls are intended to ensure compatibility with off-site resources – such as downstream water quality – in addition to regulating the on-site impacts. For example, on-site sewage disposal systems, necessary in the more remote areas not served by public sewers, may require adherence to the requirements of several agencies due to requirements for grading, soil conditions, and water quality. These agencies include the County Departments of Public Works and Public Health, as well as the California Regional Water Quality Control Board. Also, any alteration of a streambed will likely require permits from the California Department of Fish and Game, and possibly from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, in addition to compliance with County site design regulations. The applicant for any such application is advised to consult all applicable departments and agencies.

IX. VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following Vision and Guiding Principles have been formulated to serve as the framework for the preparation of consistent Plans for the Santa Clarita Valley by the City of Santa Clarita and County of Los Angeles. They have been written in consideration of the extensive public input received during the *One Valley One Vision* process through surveys, stakeholder interviews, children's and youth activities, Visioning Workshops, and the Valley Congress. Previous drafts of the Guiding Principles have been modified to reflect the majority opinion and suggestions of the October 25, 2001 Valley Congress participants. Additional changes have been made in language to simplify language and improve the technical accuracy of the document. The Guiding Principles have also been included throughout the Area Plan in the goals and policies of each element.

Vision

The Santa Clarita Valley is a wonderful place to live, work, play, and raise a family. The Valley is a mosaic of unique villages with growing ethnic diversity, each with individual identities, surrounded by a greenbelt of forest lands and natural open spaces. These villages are unified by the Valley Center activity core, a beautiful environmental setting that includes the skyline and Santa Clara River, a vibrant growing economy, and a rich history of common social values. The Valley's network of roads, transit, and trails links these villages and provides access to a wide offering of quality education, cultural, recreation, and social services and facilities.

Life in the Santa Clarita Valley will continue to be exciting, enjoyable, and rewarding through a broad range of housing types, an increase in quality jobs in close proximity to all neighborhoods, and transit-oriented villages complemented by excellent schools, attractive parks and other recreational amenities, expanded trail networks, and preserved natural resource areas. As the Valley moves forward, it is crucial that sound and sustainable planning principles shape new villages and enhance established neighborhoods. Implementing policies to increase mobility and accessibility, manage traffic congestion, improve air quality, and conserve water and energy resources throughout the Valley is essential to maintain the overall high quality of life.

Guiding Principles

Development in the Santa Clarita Valley shall be consistent with these guiding principles as agreed upon by the City of Santa Clarita and the County of Los Angeles. The principles will be carried out with the application of common standards for land use development, infrastructure and resource management, as appropriate or applicable. The principles implement the vision for the Santa Clarita Valley, which is intended to sustain and enhance environmental resources, economic vitality, and the social well being of its residents.

Management of Growth

1. Growth in the Santa Clarita Valley shall account for the visions and objectives for each community and must be consistent with principles, as subsequently defined in this document, for the protection of the Valley's significant environmental resources. It must also be based on the availability of or ability to provide adequate infrastructure, schools, and public services, and must be carefully planned to benefit the community's economy, lifestyles and needs.

2. Growth shall occur within and on the periphery of previously developed areas, rather than as "leapfrog" development or in areas of critical environmental habitat or natural hazards, and taking into consideration accessibility to infrastructure and public services.

3. Development shall be prioritized in areas for infill and redevelopment sites within currently developed areas consistent with community character objectives and those for which the City and County have approved entitlements. Commitments for new development outside of these areas shall be made in accordance with the other principles defined in this document.

4. Higher density development, including multi-family housing and mixed use projects that integrate housing with commercial uses, shall be targeted in areas adjacent to existing and planned transit corridors, stations and key activity centers, such as the Valencia Town Center and portions of Newhall and Soledad Canyon Road.

Environmental Resources

5. The natural buffer area surrounding the entire Valley, which includes the Angeles National Forest, Santa Susanna, San Gabriel, Sierra Pelona, and Del Sur mountains, shall be preserved as a regional recreational, ecological, and aesthetic resource.

6. The Santa Clara River corridor and its major tributaries shall be preserved as open space to accommodate storm water flows and protect critical plant and animal species.

    a. Uses and improvements within the corridor shall be limited to those that benefit the community's use of the river in its natural state.

    b. Development on properties adjacent to, but outside of the defined primary river corridor, shall be:

    - located and designed to protect the river's water quality, plants, and animal habitats, controlling the type and density of uses, drainage runoff (water treatment), and other relevant elements; and

    - designed to maximize the full range of river amenities, including views and recreational access, while minimizing adverse impacts to the river.

7. The Santa Clarita Valley's prominent ridgelines shall be preserved and hillside development shall be limited to protect their valuable aesthetic and visual qualities intrinsic to the Valley landscape.

8. Development shall be located and designed to minimize the impact on the Valley topography, emphasizing the use of grading techniques for development pads that mimic the natural topography in lieu of repetitive flat pads to the extent feasible and consistent with a community's open space objectives.

9. Development shall be located and designed to protect oak, sycamore, and other significant indigenous woodlands.

10. Biological resources in the designated Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) shall be protected through the siting and design of development to account for and be highly compatible with the SEA resources. Specific development standards shall be identified to control the types of land use, density, building location and size, roadways and other infrastructure, landscape, drainage, and other elements to assure the protection of the critical and important plant and animal habitats of each SEA. In general, the principle shall be to minimize the intrusion and impacts of development in these areas with sufficient setbacks, or buffers, to adequately protect the resources.

11. New development shall be designed to improve energy efficiency, reducing energy and natural resource consumption by such techniques as the use of solar generators, recycling of treated wastewater, capture of storm runoff on-site, and use of recycled materials in building construction, native and drought-tolerant landscape, and energy and water efficient appliances and systems.

Land Uses

12. The Santa Clarita Valley shall contain a diversity of land uses that support the needs of current and future residents including housing, schools, libraries, parks, retail, business and industry, civic institutions, medical and social services, cultural, entertainment, open spaces, and comparable uses.

13. The type and density of land uses in the Santa Clarita Valley shall be varied to reflect the special characteristics, life styles, and opportunities that differentiate its communities. A choice of urban, suburban, and rural environments will be provided.

14. Valley communities shall contain a mix of uses that support the basic needs of residents – places to live, shop, recreate, meet, socialize, and enjoy the environmental setting – that are appropriate and consistent with their community character. Regionally oriented uses that serve residents of the entire Valley or export goods and services may be concentrated in key business centers rather than uniformly dispersed throughout the Valley communities.

15. Development in the Valley shall be guided by a common set of land use designations and standards for comparable uses in comparable locations. These standards, however, may be varied to reflect the unique intentions for the quality and character of the distinct communities that comprise the Valley.

Residential Neighborhoods

16. The Valley shall contain a mix of housing types that meet the diverse needs of residents, and offer choices for the Valley's population and lifestyles (e.g. ages, education, income, etc.) that are appropriate and consistent with their community character. This shall include a combination of single- and multi-family, owner occupied and rental units within each community, and mixed-use (i.e., integrated housing with commercial or office uses) development in key activity centers.

17. The Valley is committed to providing affordable work force housing to meet the needs of individuals employed in the Santa Clarita Valley.

18. Multi-family housing developments shall contain adequate recreational and open space amenities on-site and be designed to ensure a high quality living environment. Their architectural treatment and building massing shall complement the characteristics of surrounding single-family residential neighborhoods.

19. Neighborhood scale development shall be encouraged by promoting mixed density of housing units consistent with community character objectives and limiting the number and acreage of multi-family units that can be developed in any single location.

20. Housing developments located in the more urbanized communities of the Valley shall be designed to create a sense of neighborhood by:

    - promoting walkability and containing places that serve as centers of activity and identity (e.g. schools, multi-purpose facilities, parks, convenience services, neighborhood commercial centers, etc.);

    - containing a mix of housing types, densities, and parcel sizes, avoiding large areas and an over-concentration of homogeneous density units;

- minimizing the dependence on, prominence, and area dedicated to the automobile;

- featuring architectural design treatments along all frontages of new housing to promote continuity of architectural scale and rhythm and avoid "blank walls"; and

- including pedestrian linkages, landscaped parkways and green corridors, and separated trails (e.g. pedestrian, bicycle or equestrian) where appropriate and feasible.

Vital Economy

21. Commercial and retail uses will be expanded and new centers developed to meet the needs of the Valley's residents, as supportable by the market, minimize the need to travel outside of the Valley, complement (and not adversely compete with) existing uses, and contribute to a balanced Valley economy.

22. New "clean" industries and businesses that provide job opportunities for local residents and enhance the economy shall be encouraged within and adjacent to existing and planned business centers/parks, and adjacent to transportation corridors.

23. Older commercial areas and corridors that are economically and/or physically obsolete or deteriorated, such as portions of Castaic, Val Verde, Newhall, Lyons Avenue, Sierra Highway, San Fernando Road, and Soledad Canyon Road, shall be redeveloped for commercial, mixed use, residential or other appropriate uses that complement and serve adjoining land uses and can be adequately supported by the market. Where appropriate, redeveloped uses and buildings shall reflect the area's important architectural and cultural history.

Mobility

24. A unified and well-maintained network of highways, streets, truck routes, bikeways, and pedestrian paths will provide access among Valley communities and to regional centers outside of the Valley.

25. Santa Clarita Valley's streets and highways shall be developed and maintained according to common standards for right-of-way, paving and other improvements, landscape, signage, lighting, and curb cuts for "like" street categories. These standards shall consider objectives for the character of the Valley's communities, consistent with public health and safety.

26. A continuous bikeway network shall provide circulation within each community, connect the various Santa Clarita Valley communities, and provide access to surrounding open spaces.

27. An integrated transit system shall serve the Valley (rail, bus, shuttle, other) offering convenient alternatives to the automobile, minimizing congestion and providing access to regional transportation systems, such as Metrolink.

Infrastructure

28. The location and timing of development shall be coordinated with the provision of adequate water, wastewater treatment, storm drainage, telecommunications, energy, roads and other infrastructure.

29. Public infrastructure shall be improved, maintained and expanded as needed to meet the needs of projected population and employment growth and contribute to the Valley's quality of life.

30. Common standards for providing utility infrastructure (e.g. flood control channels, energy transmission, and telecommunications) shall be developed and applied throughout the Valley, in consideration of the character of each community.

Schools and Public Services

31. The City and County shall work in partnership with the Santa Clarita Valley school districts and the State of California to ensure the development of adequate facilities and programs to serve the needs and achieve a high level of academic excellence for local students.

32. While the City and County do not have direct authority over the development of public schools, they shall continue to coordinate with the school districts on issues of mutual interest such as transportation services, shared facilities, and long-range planning for Valley schools.

33. Public services (e.g. police, fire, health care, youth, seniors, homeless, etc.) shall be expanded to support community needs and population growth.

Recreation

34. The City and County shall recognize that trails are an important recreational asset that, when integrated with transportation systems, contribute to mobility throughout the Santa Clarita Valley.

35. A continuous and unified hiking and equestrian trail network for a variety of users and developed according to common standards shall connect and unify Santa Clarita Valley communities and be interconnected with the regional and statewide system (e.g., Pacific Crest Trail).

36. New parklands will be developed throughout the Santa Clarita Valley, with priority on locations that are not now adequately served. These shall encompass a diversity of park types and functions, including passive and active areas, in consideration of the recreational needs of the residents to be served.

    a. Common park standards shall be developed and applied throughout the Valley, consistent with community character objectives.

    b. A range of parkland types, sizes and uses shall be provided to accommodate recreational and leisure activities.