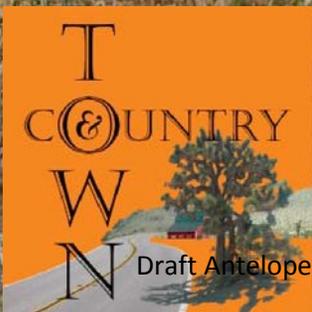


Draft Antelope Valley Area Plan

Town & Country

November 2014



Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Draft

Antelope Valley Area Plan

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Chapter 1

Chapter 1: Introduction

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I. PURPOSE AND VALUES

Purpose

The purpose of the Antelope Valley Area Plan (Area Plan) is to achieve the communities' shared vision of the future through the development of specific goals, policies, land use and zoning maps, and other planning instruments. This shared vision is articulated in the Town and Country Vision Statement, which was developed by the Antelope Valley communities in various workshops in 2008. It goes:

The Antelope Valley region is a wonderful place to live, work, play, and raise a family. The Valley is a mosaic of unique small towns in which rural lifestyles are cherished. These diverse towns are unified by an extraordinary environmental setting that includes agricultural lands, natural open spaces, expansive mountain views, diverse ecological habitats, and dark night skies. The Valley's network of trails, roads, and transit link these dispersed towns to each other and to a wide offering of local-serving businesses and quality social, educational, cultural, and recreational services and facilities.

Residents, business owners, and property owners collaborate with a responsive local government to ensure that life in the Antelope Valley region will continue to be exciting, enjoyable, and rewarding. The growing population's need for additional housing and employment opportunities is balanced against the need to respect historical heritage and preserve the natural environment. Public improvements and private developments are sustainable, conserving available resources and relying on alternative energy sources, and complement the small scale of existing rural towns. A wide array of activities and opportunities for youth ensure that the Valley's high quality of life will be sustained for future generations.

The Area Plan is a blueprint for future development and conservation in the Antelope Valley that informs decision-making at all levels to help ensure that individual activities are consistent with, and supportive of, the communities' vision. It is a tool for residents, elected officials, planners, service providers, and developers. Each group will use the Area Plan in different ways, but all are guided by its vision, goals, and policies. Residents will use the Area Plan as a benchmark in attaining their aspirations for the development and preservation of their communities. Elected officials and planners will refer to the Area Plan when allocating resources to address residents' most important issues and priorities. Service providers will use the Area Plan as a guide for deciding which infrastructure and improvement projects should be undertaken and which programs should be established or improved. Developers will look to the Area Plan's goals and policies in deciding what to build, including location, character, and appearance.

As a component of the Los Angeles County General Plan, the Antelope Valley Area Plan refines the countywide goals and policies in the General Plan by addressing specific issues relevant to the Antelope Valley, such as community maintenance and appearance, and provides more specific guidance on

elements already found in the General Plan. The General Plan provides guidance on all issues not covered in the Area Plan.

The Area Plan also helps further the countywide objective of reducing greenhouse gases in order to meet the goals of the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 32) and California's Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (Senate Bill 375), which aim to achieve reductions of greenhouse gases. Los Angeles County has undertaken countywide measures to address these mandates, including adoption of the Green Building, Drought Tolerant Landscaping, and Low Impact Development Ordinances in 2008. The Area Plan strengthens these efforts by including goals and policies to support local development practices and initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Implementation of the Land Use, Mobility, and Conservation and Open Space Elements contained in this Area Plan cumulatively affect the future reduction of greenhouse gases both locally and regionally.

Values

All aspects of the Area Plan are informed by a set of core values that ground and guide the Area Plan. In order to best serve the common interests represented in this Area Plan, planning values outline the shared responsibilities of the many partners who will work together to transform goals and policies into a realized vision. The core values of the Antelope Valley Area Plan are:

1. **Collaboration:** The issues and actions identified in the Area Plan are multi-dimensional and complex. As such, it takes a collaborative effort to accomplish the Area Plan's goals. Working in partnership with individuals from public agencies, private organizations and throughout the community, participants in planning and implementation of the Area Plan can come together to achieve the community's vision.
2. **Participation:** The dedicated commitment and ongoing participation of community members, service providers and elected officials will ensure that the Area Plan's implementation over time remains in line with the communities' vision. Community participation also demonstrates to elected leaders and service providers that constituents support the implementation of the Area Plan and expect results.
3. **Accountability:** By adopting this Area Plan, elected leaders have expressed their commitment to achieving the communities' vision by adhering to the Area Plan's goals and policies and by using the implementation actions to guide their work. Land use decisions will be made to benefit the needs of the community as a whole and not individual interests. Accountability means that all stakeholders take responsibility for their respective components of the Area Plan.
4. **Stewardship:** In order for the Area Plan to be effective in achieving the community's goals, people who live, learn, work, and play in the Antelope Valley will have to take an active role in ensuring the Area Plan's timely and thorough implementation. Community members and service providers can and should provide feedback on the insights into the Area Plan's effectiveness.

5. **Balance:** As the diverse and sometimes conflicting needs of current and future stakeholders evolve, the tools within the Area Plan create a framework which allows for balanced decisions to be made. For residents of the Antelope Valley, achieving a balance will unfold gradually. This shall be achieved by encouraging growth and development in appropriate areas of the Antelope Valley and ensuring that these enhance the quality of life of the communities without compromising their rural character.

II. BACKGROUND

Setting

The Antelope Valley planning area is bounded by the Kern County border to the north, the Ventura County border to the west, the Angeles National Forest (inclusive) to the south, and the San Bernardino County border to the east. It excludes the Cities of Lancaster and Palmdale. This area covers approximately 1,800 square miles and includes over two dozen communities.

For a map of the Antelope Valley and the immediate vicinity, please see Map 1.1: Planning Area Boundary.

History

The historic development of the Antelope Valley started in 1876 with the completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad line from San Francisco to Los Angeles via the Antelope Valley. Many communities began to develop, including Lancaster, Palmdale, Rio del Llano and Littlerock, all dependent upon stock raising, dry farming and fruit orchards.

The World War II years brought the development of Edwards Air Force Base and a doubling of the Antelope Valley population. Military defense work expanded in the 1950s, and Palmdale Airport emerged as a national center for jet testing. The latter part of the decade saw the start of an economic downturn throughout the country that slowed military investments in Antelope Valley projects.

The final decades of the 20th century saw the Antelope Valley emerge with major new housing opportunities as vast acreages were subdivided for affordable tract homes. Lancaster and Palmdale incorporated as independent cities, and rural communities continued to grow. Farming regained its status as a productive employer, but the area continued to develop without balancing the growth in housing with a corresponding growth in jobs and investment in infrastructure. Today, many who live in the Antelope Valley commute to jobs in other parts of the Los Angeles Basin. New local commercial centers are expanding the shopping, entertainment and employment opportunities of Antelope Valley residents. For additional information on the setting and history of the Antelope Valley, please see Background Report.

Past and Current Planning Efforts

The previous Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan was adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on December 4, 1986. It contained Valleywide goals and policies pertaining to land use, housing, community revitalization, community design, human resources, circulation, public services and facilities, governmental services, environmental resource management, noise abatement, seismic safety, public safety, and energy conservation. This Area Plan replaces the previous Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan in its entirety.

This Area Plan covers issues that were important in 1986 and are still important to the communities; for example, managing growth, minimizing disruption of ecological resources, placing development away from natural hazards, and ensuring a variety of housing types and costs. This Area Plan also addresses new issues that have emerged in recent years; for example, maintaining agricultural uses, improving mobility, developing renewable energy resources, and curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

Community Participation

The Area Plan is the result of a highly inclusive and extensive community participation program launched in the fall of 2007. Through a series of 23 community meetings, residents and other stakeholders worked alongside planners to develop a shared vision of the future, identify community issues, draft proposals for the future, and prioritize their recommendations, forming the foundation of the Area Plan.

Building on the foundation laid by the communities, planners partnered with other County departments to explore the recommendations, refine the proposed goals and policies, plan for program implementation, and gather support to ensure success. Plan development is an iterative process, and in this case, the communities were included in the earliest steps of development and subsequent rounds of review. The Area Plan began with, and will be realized by, the dedicated residents and stakeholders who have committed, and will continue to commit their time, energy and interests to the Antelope Valley.

III. VISION AND STRATEGY

Vision Statement

At the heart of the County's approach to community planning is the idea that the Area Plan is an adopted version of the communities' aspirations for the future. Collectively, those aspirations amount to a community vision, based on shared values and common goals. The communities reached consensus on the following vision statement:

The Antelope Valley region is a wonderful place to live, work, play, and raise a family. The Valley is a mosaic of unique small towns in which rural lifestyles are cherished. These diverse towns are unified by an extraordinary environmental setting that includes agricultural lands, natural open spaces, expansive mountain views, diverse ecological

habitats, and dark night skies. The Valley's network of trails, roads, and transit link these dispersed towns to each other and to a wide offering of local-serving businesses and quality social, educational, cultural, and recreational services and facilities.

Residents, business owners, and property owners collaborate with a responsive local government to ensure that life in the Antelope Valley region will continue to be exciting, enjoyable, and rewarding. The growing population's need for additional housing and employment opportunities is balanced against the need to respect historical heritage and preserve the natural environment. Public improvements and private developments are sustainable, conserving available resources and relying on alternative energy sources, and complement the small scale of existing rural towns. A wide array of activities and opportunities for youth ensure that the Valley's high quality of life will be sustained for future generations.

This vision of the Antelope Valley's future serves as a touchstone through the planning process, and it is reflected in the land use map, goals, and policies that comprise the Area Plan.

Issues

Through the planning and visioning process, the County identified issues of Valleywide significance that, it determined, were best addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. In anticipation of future growth, the planning effort focused on ways to manage this growth and addressed the need for balance on the following issues:

1. Preservation and enhancement of each unique town's rural character, allowing for continued growth and development without compromising the rural lifestyle;
2. Preservation of open space around existing towns, in order to preserve hillside areas and significant ridgelines, conserve biological resources, provide opportunities for recreation, and make more efficient use of existing infrastructure in the core areas;
3. Planning for integrated circulation systems, including bikeways, walkways, and multi-purpose trails;
4. Conservation of significant resources, including agricultural lands, mineral resources, water supply, and scenic areas;
5. 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; and
6. Coordination on enhancing public and community services such as law enforcement, fire protection, and parks.

Rural Preservation Strategy

The Area Plan's Rural Preservation Strategy addresses issues of Valleywide significance in a manner that builds upon the communities' vision statement. While each community in the Antelope Valley possesses its own identity, they are all unified in the pursuit of preserving the rural lifestyle and the rural

character of the region. This rural character is what makes the Antelope Valley so unique and valuable to the rest of Southern California.

The term “rural” is defined by the following characteristics:

- Living in a low density environment without high intensity land uses, such as regional commercial centers;
- A natural, peaceful, quiet setting, with the ability to find a sense of solitude;
- Views of adjacent natural areas by day, such as hillsides and ridgelines, and views of starry skies by night;
- Agricultural and equestrian uses that are sensitive to the land; and
- An absence of infrastructure generally found in urban and suburban areas, including but not limited to curbs, gutters, sidewalks, street lighting, and traffic signals.

The Rural Preservation Strategy is based on four types of environments – rural town center areas, rural town areas, rural preserve areas, economic opportunity areas – that serve different purposes. Collectively, these environments preserve the rural character of the region, conserve environmental resources, and protect residents from potential hazards while allowing for additional growth and development. For more information on these environments, please see Chapter 2: Land Use Element.

Rural town center areas are the focal points of rural communities, serving the daily needs of residents and providing local employment opportunities. The majority of new locally-oriented public facilities and new locally-oriented commercial uses should be directed to these areas. These areas will provide pleasant pedestrian environments and will be accessible by a range of transportation options to reduce vehicle trips. Some of these areas will allow for a mix of commercial and residential uses.

Rural town areas provide a transition between rural town center areas and rural preserve areas, as they are occupied by a mix of residential and light agricultural uses. Residents living in these areas are willing to forego urban infrastructure and services in order to live in a rural environment. The majority of new residential development should be directed to these areas, provided that such development is consistent with the existing community character and allows for light agricultural, equestrian, and animal-keeping uses where appropriate. These areas will provide transportation linkages to rural town center areas and other nearby destination points.

Rural preserve areas are areas outside of the Town Areas, which are largely undeveloped and generally not served by existing or planned infrastructure and public facilities. Many of these areas contain environmental resources, such as Significant Ecological Areas, Scenic Resource Areas, and Agricultural Resource Areas. In addition, many of these areas contain safety hazards, such as Seismic Zones, Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, and Flood Zones. The primary benefit of these areas is that they provide habitat for regionally significant biological species while simultaneously providing scenic value to residents. A secondary benefit of these areas is that they contain natural resources which provide economic opportunities. Development in these areas should be limited to single family homes at very low densities, light and heavy agricultural uses, including equestrian and animal-keeping uses, and other uses where appropriate.

Economic opportunity areas are defined clusters of land along the routes of two new proposed major infrastructure projects in the Antelope Valley, namely the High Desert Corridor and the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement Project. These areas were identified as having tremendous potential for economic growth and development. Thus, any development induced by these two infrastructure projects should be guided to these areas so that the areas around them can be preserved and maintained at low density, or agricultural uses. This is intended to balance the growth and development which the two projects will undoubtedly bring, with the general intent of this Area Plan to preserve the ecological value and rural character of the Antelope Valley.

The Rural Preservation Strategy necessitates a “trade-off” between preserving rural character and developing additional infrastructure, as infrastructure improvements are typically funded by increased property tax revenues and developer fees. In rural town center areas and rural town areas, the amount of potential development allowed by this Area Plan will be equal to, or greater than, the amount of potential development allowed by the previous Area Plan. Therefore, those areas are likely to benefit from increased property tax revenues and developer fees, which can help fund additional infrastructure. In rural preserve areas, the amount of potential development allowed by this Area Plan will be far less than the amount of potential development allowed by the previous Area Plan. Therefore, rural preserve areas are unlikely to benefit from increased property tax revenues and developer fees, which may make it difficult to fund additional infrastructure. The Area Plan acknowledges this “trade-off” by directing additional infrastructure to rural town center areas and rural town areas, where the placement of additional infrastructure may be more cost-effective and environmentally sensitive, and not to rural preserve areas, where the placement of additional infrastructure may not be necessary. Residents of rural preserve areas should be prepared to forego additional infrastructure in order to live in a very remote rural environment and enjoy the benefits offered by such an environment. On the other hand, the economic opportunity areas provide an opportunity for the Area Plan to maximize the investment that state and regional agencies are bringing into the area, while still achieving the general goal of rural preservation in the Antelope Valley.

IV. HOW TO USE THE ANTELOPE VALLEY AREA PLAN

Definitions

The following definition shall apply only as it specifically appears in this Area Plan and shall not be used in any other context outside of this Area Plan.

“Master-planned development” shall refer to a development that includes five or more residential dwelling units, any commercial use, any industrial use or any combination thereof.

Area Plan Format and Content

The Area Plan is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1 (Introduction) presents the Area Plan’s purpose and values, the geographic area, and the communities’ vision statement. Chapter 2 (Land Use Element) discusses how the communities’ vision translates into a development pattern through the

concept of land use. Chapter 3 (Mobility Element) describes the multi-modal approach to moving around the Antelope Valley. Chapter 4 (Conservation and Open Space Element) describes conservation efforts to address potential threats to natural resources. Chapter 5 (Public Safety, Services and Facilities Element) provides measures to ensure services are in place to maintain the safety and welfare of residents. Chapter 6 (Economic Development Element) provides the blueprint for the planning area to build a healthy and sustainable economic base that will drive development and private-sector led conservation and preservation of open space in the area. Chapters 2 through 6 contain goals and policies specific to each chapter's respective topic but all work jointly to comprehensively implement the overall vision. Chapter 7 (Community-Specific Land Use Concepts) highlights each established town and describes its land use form in more detail. Finally, Chapter 8 (Plan Implementation) describes future planning activities that will be undertaken to further implement the goals and policies of this Area Plan. Appendix A includes descriptions of the Significant Ecological Areas within the Antelope Valley Area Plan.

Applicability

The following provisions shall apply to complete applications filed prior to the effective date of this Antelope Valley Area Plan.

The applicant can choose whether the application will be reviewed for consistency with the previously adopted Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan or this Antelope Valley Area Plan. In either case, approval of the application is not guaranteed.

If an application is reviewed for consistency with the previously adopted Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan, the applicant may modify the application prior to consideration by the Regional Planning Commission, Hearing Officer, or Director. The modification will be reviewed for consistency with the previously adopted Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan if it does not change the housing type (e.g., from single family to two family or multifamily) nor increase:

- The residential density;
- The floor area or lot coverage of non-residential space;
- The amount of grading; or
- The area of ground disturbance.

A modification may necessitate the submittal of revised, updated, or additional materials and reports, such as site plans, elevations, and oak tree reports. In addition, a modification may necessitate additional environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and the County's environmental review procedures.

Modification to an application that is already approved, but not used can be reviewed for consistency with the previously adopted Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan if it qualifies to be reviewed as a

Revised Exhibit “A” or an Amended Site Plan. Otherwise a modification shall be considered a new application and shall be reviewed for consistency with this Antelope Valley Area Plan.

If an approval is used and has a grant term, the approved use may be maintained until the end of the grant term. At the end of the grant term, the use shall be subject to the Antelope Valley Area Plan policies in effect at that time. During the grant term, a modification to the approved use will be reviewed for consistency with the previously adopted Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan if it qualifies to be reviewed as a Revised Exhibit “A” or an Amended Site Plan. Otherwise, a modification to the approved use shall be subject to the Antelope Valley Area Plan policies in effect at that time.

If an approval is used and does not have a grant term, the approved use may be maintained in perpetuity unless a time limit is specified in the Zoning Code. In addition, all applicable non-conforming use provisions of the Zoning Code shall apply to the approved use. A modification to the approved use will be reviewed for consistency with the previously adopted Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan if it qualifies to be reviewed as a Revised Exhibit “A” or Amended Site Plan. Otherwise, a modification to the approved use shall be subject to the Antelope Valley Area Plan policies in effect at that time.

Guidance

The Antelope 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 elements of the Countywide General Plan. Users should be guided by the following:

- **General Plan Applicability:** Should any areas of conflicting interpretation arise, unless specifically noted, the provisions of the Countywide General Plan shall prevail.
- **Comprehensive 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.
- **Equally Weighted Policies:** No policy, whether in written or diagram form, shall be given greater weight than any other policy in evaluating the policy intent of this Antelope Valley Area Plan.
- **Vision and Rural Preservation Strategy:** The interpretation of policy should be governed by the Vision and Rural Preservation Strategy of the Antelope Valley Area Plan.
- **Established Town Descriptions:** Descriptions of established towns in Chapter 7 are intended to provide more detailed descriptions of existing land use patterns, local character, and desired local development patterns, and should be referred to in addition to the remainder of the Area Plan in planning for local projects.

- **Non-Conforming Uses:** All legally established uses in existence at the time of adoption of this Antelope Valley Area Plan are deemed to be consistent with this Area Plan, although Zoning Ordinance provisions regarding Non-Conforming Uses may apply.
- **Undersized Parcels:** Existing legal lots may be developed (following current development requirements) regardless of lot size. For example, a 10 acre parcel designated Rural Land 20 (1du/20ac) may still develop one home.
- **Pending Projects:** 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 changes of use or intensity shall be subject to the policies of this Area Plan.
- **Community Standards Districts:** Community-specific zoning regulations shall be consistent with the goals and policies of this Area Plan. Such regulations shall be instituted only when a unique or detrimental condition exists within a community that prevents implementation of this Area Plan.
- **Regulatory Codes:** Title 21 (Subdivision) and 22 (Zoning) of the Los Angeles County Code provide detailed development guidelines that work to implement this Area Plan. Project applications shall refer to these codes, including Community Standards Districts, to ensure that development and land use activities are compatible with the zoning and to not threaten the health, safety, and welfare of the communities.
- **Staff Consultation:** While the Antelope 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 Antelope Valley Area Plan.

In addition to the direction provided by this 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 for public services, fair-share provisions for public facilities, and other permitting. The applicant for any such application is advised to consult with all applicable departments and agencies.