



# Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



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## **LOS ANGELES COUNTY ANTELOPE VALLEY AREAWIDE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE - PROJECT NO. R2007-02733-(5) - SEPTEMBER 27, 2014 - AGENDA ITEM NO. 5**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan (Plan) Update provides the policy framework to guide future development in the unincorporated areas of the Antelope Valley. The current Plan, adopted in 1986, would be replaced by this Plan. All elements would be replaced as well as all figures and maps. The update program also includes zone changes and amendments to Title 22 (Planning and Zoning) of the Los Angeles County (County) Code to maintain consistency between the Plan and its implementing documents. The Plan Update also includes minor amendments to the adopted 1980 County General Plan to reflect updated text and maps related to highways, agricultural areas, and Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) associated with the Plan.

The Plan includes the northernmost part of the County. The area is bordered by Kern County to the north, San Bernardino County to the east, and Ventura County to the west. Other portions of the County, including the San Fernando Valley, Santa Clarita Valley, and San Gabriel Valley, are located to the south of the Plan area.

The Plan covers approximately 1,800 square miles, or 44 percent of the County. It surrounds the City of Palmdale and the City of Lancaster, and includes more than two dozen communities. The area includes large amounts of sparsely populated land, and includes the Angeles National Forest, part of the Los Padres National Forest, and part of the Mojave Desert. The Area Plan area also includes federal, state and County parks and recreational areas including the California Poppy Preserve, Alpine Butte Wildlife Sanctuary, Vasquez Rocks Natural Area Park, Little Rock Reservoir Recreation Area and other such publicly owned areas.

Major transportation networks include Interstate 5 (I-5) Freeway, State Route 14 (SR-14) Freeway, and State Route 138 (SR-138). There are also several public airports within or in the vicinity of the area, namely the General William J. Fox Field Airport, Palmdale Regional Airport and United States Air Force Plant 42 as well as Edwards Air Force Base.

The Plan achieves the following:

- **Strikes the appropriate balance between economic growth and development, and important resource and rural character protection:** The Plan provides for growth well beyond the timeframe of this Plan and Southern California Association of Governments (SCGA) projections. The Plan directs this growth to areas where development is appropriate. Most of future growth is planned along major infrastructure projects by Los Angeles County Metropolitan Authority (Metro) and State Department of Transportation (Caltrans), namely the High Desert Corridor, and the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement projects.
- **Bases land use and zoning on the Plan area:** The Plan uses development patterns, landforms, natural resources, hazards, constraints and other such factors to designate areas appropriate for growth and for preservation.
- **Reflects extensive community participation:** The Plan used a broad-based and far-reaching outreach strategy to develop its maps, goals, and policies. During the project's seven years, more than 200 meetings were conducted with various stakeholders for their important local knowledge and input.

## **AREA PLAN STRATEGY, GOALS AND POLICIES**

### **Rural Preservation Strategy**

The Plan preserves the rural character of the Antelope Valley by guiding growth to appropriate areas, and balancing economic development with protection from potential safety hazards and preservation of natural resources that define the Antelope Valley. The overarching framework, the Rural Preservation Strategy, is based on four types of environments – rural town centers, rural town areas, rural preserve areas, and 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 directing future growth to appropriate areas. These four areas are described in more detail below.

1. **Rural Town Centers:** Rural town centers are the focal points of rural communities and provide services to residents as well as local employment opportunities. The majority of existing commercial uses in the Antelope Valley is located in such areas, and where similar locally-serving public and commercial uses be directed in the future. Future development in these areas must be consistent with the existing community character.
2. **Rural Town Areas:** Rural town areas provide a transition between rural town centers and rural preserve areas (described below) with a mix of residential and a widely varied agricultural uses. The majority of the community residents are located here, and where new residential development in the community be directed in the future. Future development in these areas must be consistent with the existing community character.
3. **Rural Preserve Areas:** Rural preserve areas surround the rural town centers and rural town areas, are largely undeveloped, and generally not served by existing infrastructure and public facilities. Many of these areas contain environmental resources, such as SEAs, Scenic Resource Areas, and Agricultural Resource Areas as well as safety hazards, such as Seismic Zones, Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, and Flood

Zones. Future development in these areas should include single family homes at very low densities; various agricultural uses, including equestrian and animal-keeping uses; and other uses where appropriate.

4. **Economic Opportunity Areas (EOAs):** EOAs are defined clusters along the proposed routes of the High Desert Corridor on the east side of the Antelope Valley, and the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement Project on the west side. With these two major infrastructure projects, future growth and development should be directed to these EOAs.

The Plan identifies three EOAs:

- a. East EOA, encompassing the communities of Lake Los Angeles, Sun Village, Littlerock, Pearblossom, Llano, and Crystallaire;
- b. Central EOA, located along Avenue D, just north of William J. Fox Airfield and west of SR-14 Freeway; and
- c. West EOA near the I-5 along SR-138/Avenue D, immediately east and west of the California Aqueduct and including portions of the Neenach community.

### **Plan Elements**

The Plan sets forth a number of Goals and Policies that will guide development in the Antelope Valley for the next 20 to 30 years. These Goals and Policies are organized into six elements that address different aspects of development that will occur in the area. These elements are described below.

1. **Land Use:** The Land Use Element directs future growth through goals and policies, including the Land Use Policy Map and legend, to appropriate areas within the Antelope Valley. For future growth, the Plan uses higher residential densities, and commercial and industrial land use designations primarily in existing town centers and within EOAs. The Plan also relies on lower residential densities and SEAs to guide sensitive development in areas with important resources and/or natural hazards.
2. **Mobility:** The Mobility Element calls for a balanced, multi-modal transportation system across the Antelope Valley through goals and policies that address regional movement of services and goods, local transportation meeting the needs of residents, and the balance required to meet the demands of both.
3. **Conservation and Open Space:** The Conservation and Open Space Element sets out goals and policies to protect the Antelope Valley's environmentally significant and/or undisturbed natural spaces, make use of certain natural resources, and provide open space areas for recreation and enjoyment. This Element identifies the resources and open spaces which may be developed, and gives guidance as to how sustainable development can be conducted in the future. In addition, this Element identifies areas which should be preserved from development, or are unsuitable for development due to hazards.

4. **Public Safety, Services and Facilities:** The Public Safety, Services and Facilities Element identifies local hazards (including fire, geology, and floods) and specific goals and policies for enhanced and efficient local services including law enforcement, parks, schools, libraries, health facilities, and economic development.
5. **Economic Development:** The Economic Development Element sets forth goals and policies for sustainable economic development throughout the Antelope Valley. The Plan balances economic growth with the preservation of the unique rural character and rich environmental resources of the Antelope Valley. Policies address major industries for economic development, such as High-tech Manufacturing, Transportation and Logistics; Agriculture; Renewable Energy; Construction and Housing; and Recreation, Tourism and Filmmaking.
6. **Community-Specific Land Use Concepts:** As each community varies in its nature, form, and character, the Community-Specific Land Use Concepts describe in greater detail how the Plan is to be implemented in each community within the Plan area. The Community-Specific Land Use Concepts provide expectations for how each rural community may change and grow throughout the life of the Plan. This chapter also specifies the desired land uses for each area and identifies potentially incompatible land uses undesirable to the respective community.

The Plan area includes Angeles National Forest and extends south to border foothill communities. The Plan will adopt revised SEA boundaries within the Plan area for the following:

- Altadena Foothills and Arroyos SEA
- Antelope Valley SEA
- Joshua Tree Woodlands SEA
- San Andreas SEA
- San Dimas Canyon and San Antonio Wash SEA
- San Gabriel Canyon SEA
- Santa Clara River SEA

#### Relationship to Proposed General Plan SEA Program Update

As your Commission is aware, in February 2014 the County General Plan Update began Commission public hearings. The General Plan Update **includes a countywide SEA program** with SEA boundaries, revised ordinance, and SEA Program Guide. While the Plan also includes updated SEA boundaries, the Plan is a separate effort from the General Plan Update. Once the SEA boundaries are adopted as part of the Plan, the General Plan will be required to be consistent with the Plan and will also be updated.

#### Amendments to 1980 General Plan

The Plan requires amendments to the adopted 1980 General Plan for consistency. These include updated text and maps related to the highways, agricultural areas, and SEAs within the Antelope Valley area.

The amendments to the Master Plan of Highways within the Antelope Valley were considered by the Interdepartmental Engineering Committee on February 6, 2014 and February 11, 2014, and were recommended for approval.

## **ZONING CONSISTENCY**

### **Proposed Zone Changes**

The Plan Update includes zone changes in the Antelope Valley for consistency with the Plan (please see Attachment 2). In general, most areas in the Antelope Valley are being “up-zoned” from R-A (Residential Agriculture) to A-1 (Light Agricultural), and from A-1 to A-2 (Heavy Agricultural). This provides greater flexibility for Antelope Valley residents and property owners to use their properties in compatible ways supportive of the unique rural character. In town centers and EOAs, certain commercial and industrial clusters and corridors are expanded or created for more job creation in appropriate areas.

### **Proposed Rural Commercial and Rural Mixed-Use Zones**

The Plan Update will also adopt two new rural commercial zones designed specifically for rural areas, and currently only in the Antelope Valley. These are the Rural Commercial Zone (C-RU) and the Rural Mixed Use Zone (MXD-RU) (please see Attachment 3). Some of the highlights of these new zones are described below.

1. Less urban, but more rural, uses and development standards
2. More flexible parking regulations for large vehicles, Recreational Vehicles, trailers and semi-trucks
3. Less stringent outdoor display standards
4. Provisions for cargo storage containers
5. More flexibility for accessory residential use

### **Other Zoning Code Amendments**

In addition to the new zones, the Plan Update amends the existing SEA Ordinance regarding applicability, and adds relevant uses to the Definitions and the C-R (Commercial-Recreation) Zone. These amendments facilitate Plan implementation of SEAs and C-R zone in the Antelope Valley.

The SEA ordinance amendment will also affect SEAs adopted in 2012 as part of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan/One Valley One Vision.

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS**

The Plan includes implementation programs that the County Department of Regional Planning (Department) will undertake to further the goals and policies of the Plan. These implementation programs include:

1. **SEA Program:** The Plan’s SEA Program implementation program includes a biennial Monitoring and Status Reporting, which may include minor amendments reflecting

ongoing development, and future conservation and mitigation incentive programs for SEA lands. These implementation components may be subsumed by a more comprehensive, countywide implementation program for SEAs.

2. **Agricultural Resources Program:** In order to encourage the continued operation of local farms in the Antelope Valley, a program will be developed to allow greater flexibility for local farms to establish and operate additional compatible uses as incidental or accessory to their primary farming operation. This would allow property owners to explore and develop additional sources of income to augment their primary farming use. This program may consist of more flexible zoning regulations for parcels used for farming; allow the transfer of development rights from agricultural lands with option of retaining agricultural easements on the property; create a more streamlined process for permits on identified farmlands; and other such incentives.
3. **Economic Opportunity Areas:** EOAs are designated with land use designations and zoning to accommodate growth after Plan adoption. As the High Desert Corridor and Northwest Corridor 138 Improvement Projects are finalized however, additional planning activities may be needed. Future planning activities may include preparation of a Community Plan, with land use and zoning changes as well as specific goals, policies and implementing strategies more refined than the overall Plan. These efforts, which would include more focused community outreach with affected stakeholders, could include, for example, adjustments to land use designations reflecting final alignments of the freeway as well as on-ramp and off-ramp locations. While these subsequent planning efforts are not required to start development in the East and Central EOA, a Specific Plan, Community Plan or similar planning activity is required for any master-planned development in the West EOA. This ensures that infrastructure and improvements are planned at a more comprehensive scale than individual subdivision maps, given the level of the new development that may occur in this area.
4. **Transfer of Development Rights Program:** The Plan recognizes that increasing or limiting residential densities through land use designations can only go so far in terms of either encouraging development or protecting the environment, respectively, in the areas where appropriate. Thus, a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program for the Antelope Valley is an implementation program to encourage more development in EOAs and preservation of SEA lands.
5. **Scenic Drives Program:** The Plan identifies Scenic Drives in the Antelope Valley that should be preserved so their scenic value is maintained in the years to come. The implementation program intends to develop and implement a program for review of proposed developments within Scenic Drives viewsheds.
6. **Community Standards Districts (CSDs):** The Plan is the foundational planning document for the development of the Antelope Valley for the next 20 to 30 years. As part of its implementation, the Plan requires a comprehensive review of all existing CSDs in the Antelope Valley. This review may also include a program to prepare and adopt any proposed new CSDs or amendments to existing CSD's.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT**

A Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared for this project and is attached as Attachment 4. This Draft EIR was made available to the public on August 22, 2014. Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the public review period is currently ongoing, and will end on October 6, 2014. A Final EIR will be prepared that includes responses to all public comments received during the public comment period. The Final EIR will be before the County Board of Supervisors for their consideration as part of the public hearing for this proposed Area Plan Update (anticipated in November 2014).

The Draft EIR analyzes the following areas:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

The Draft EIR also identifies three alternatives as required by CEQA. These are:

- No Project/Adopted Area Plan Alternative
- Reduced Intensity Alternative
- Alternative Land Use Policy Map

The Reduced Intensity Alternative, which reduces development by 30 percent across the Plan area, was identified as the environmentally superior alternative.

## **COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The latest draft of the proposed Land Use Policy Map of the proposed Area Plan was made available to the public on July 23, 2014, and the last draft of the proposed Area Plan document (and as analyzed in the Draft EIR) was made available for public review on August 22, 2014. Since then, the Department has received comments and requests for amendments to both the Plan, and to the land use policy map and zoning. These requests and the Department's recommendations are described in detail in Attachment 3. The attached Plan includes tracked changes reflecting staff recommendations. The map changes will be reflected in updated maps based on Commission direction.

## **OUTREACH AND NOTIFICATION**

The Plan Update project was launched in 2007. Since then, the Department has conducted extensive outreach across a wide and diverse range of stakeholders. These include the Rural Town Councils in the Antelope Valley, community groups, industry groups, individual property owners and environmental advocates. Department staff has made themselves accessible to all

interested parties in order to provide information and receive comments and feedback, which were incorporated into the Plan when appropriate. These include conducting Open House and various community meetings on weeknights and weekends, meeting with groups of community members in their residences, holding office hours at the DRP Antelope Valley Field Office, and other such outreach initiatives. Overall, more than 200 meetings were held with a wide range of stakeholders regarding the Plan Update.

On August 21, 2014, a postcard notice of public hearing and availability of the Draft EIR was mailed to all property owners in the Plan area, including notice that their property may be affected by a zone change. Notices were mailed to approximately 65,000 property owners, stakeholder individuals and organizations as well as emailed to approximately 2,500 addresses. Furthermore, the Draft EIR, draft Area Plan and zoning consistency documents were made available on the DRP web site, in all County libraries in the Antelope Valley as well as the City of Palmdale Library, and the DRP Antelope Valley Field Office. The Notice of Availability of the EIR was published in the Antelope Valley Press on August 22, 2014 and the Notice of Public Hearing was published in the same newspaper on August 27, 2014.

### **STAFF SUMMARY**

In conclusion, this Plan establishes a clear framework for future growth and development in a balanced and sustainable manner in the Antelope Valley. The Plan directs growth, including new residential, commercial and industrial development to most appropriate areas while limiting development in areas where important ecological resources and severe environmental hazards are present. The Plan also recognizes and considers the opportunities and potential land use impacts, of the High Desert Corridor and the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement projects. The Plan preserves the unique character of each rural community in the Antelope Valley. This Area Plan strikes a balance of jobs and housing that encourage sustainable growth of the Antelope Valley. A much more ideal jobs-housing balance of 1.3 jobs for every household in the Antelope Valley will be achieved, as compared to the 1986 Area Plan which has a jobs-housing balance of 0.2 jobs for every household.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The following recommendation is made prior to the public hearing and is subject to change based upon testimony and/or documentary evidence presented at the public hearing:

Staff recommends that your Commission close the public hearing; and recommend the Area Plan and appurtenant maps, the zone changes, and zoning consistency program including recommended modifications, be recommended for approval and adoption by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

**I MOVE THAT THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING, AND RECOMMEND TO THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS APPROVAL AND ADOPTION, WITH THE RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS, OF PROJECT NO. R2007-02733-(5).**

MC:SMT:CN

Regional Planning Commission  
Project No. R2007-02733-(5)  
Antelope Valley Area Plan Update  
September 11, 2014

- Attachments:
- 1: Draft Antelope Valley Area Plan (August 2014 RPC)
  - 2: Draft Zone Change Maps
  - 3: Zoning Consistency: Draft Ordinance Amendments
  - 4: Draft Environmental Impact Report (CD)
  - 5: List of Recommended Modifications and Associated Correspondence
  - 6: Draft Commission Resolution - FORTHCOMING

