

## Chapter 4: Background

### I. Location and Description

With approximately 4,083 square miles, Los Angeles County is geographically one of the largest counties in the country. Los Angeles County stretches along 75 miles of the Pacific Coast of Southern California, and is bordered to the east by Orange County and San Bernardino County, to the north by Kern County, and to the west by Ventura County. Los Angeles County also includes two offshore islands, Santa Catalina Island and San Clemente Island. Figure 4.1 shows the regional location of Los Angeles County.

**Figure 4.1: Regional Location of Los Angeles County Map**

#### Unincorporated Areas

The unincorporated areas account for approximately 65 percent of the total land area of Los Angeles County, as shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Los Angeles County Distribution of Land Area**

County Land Components	Cities (sq. miles)	Unincorporated (sq. miles)	Total (sq. miles)
Mainland	1,456.0	2,497.7	3,953.7
San Clemente Island	0	56.4	56.4
Santa Catalina Island	2.9	71.9	74.8
Total	1,458.9	2,626.0	4,084.9

Source: Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

The unincorporated areas in the northern portion of Los Angeles County are covered by large amounts of sparsely populated land, and include the Angeles National Forest, part of the Los Padres National Forest, and the Mojave Desert. The unincorporated areas in the southern portion of Los Angeles County consist of many non-contiguous land areas, which are often referred to as the County's unincorporated urban islands.

The County's governmental structure is comprised of five Supervisorial Districts. The Board of Supervisors is the governing body of the County, and makes legislative land use decisions for the unincorporated areas. Figure 4.2 shows the unincorporated areas, and Figure 4.3 shows the County's Supervisorial Districts.

**Figure 4.2: Los Angeles County Unincorporated Areas Map**

**Figure 4.3: Los Angeles County Supervisorial Districts Map**

## Climate and Topography

Los Angeles County is a land of beaches, valleys, mountains, and deserts. Overall, the climate can be characterized as “Mediterranean,” with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters. The diversity of the topography results in localized climate zones that are roughly divided by the Transverse Ranges (Santa Monica Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains). The climate zones are closely tied to geologic landforms and vary based on elevation changes and distance from the ocean. These climate zones can be grouped into three broad categories:

### Coastal Plain

The coastal plain includes the beaches, valleys, and canyons that occupy the Los Angeles Basin and terminate at the Transverse Ranges. During the dry season, the determining factor in coastal plain weather is the proximity to the Pacific Ocean and the resultant marine layer. The marine layer acts as a buffer, which is evidenced by relatively cool and constant temperatures, low clouds, fog, and haze. The marine layer settles over the Basin during the evening and early morning before being burned off by sunshine midday. Due to the dominance and stability of the high pressure area in the Basin, precipitation is rare between May and November.

### Mountain

Climates in the mountains are characterized by lower average temperatures and heavier rainfall than in the coastal plain. The Transverse Ranges are further removed from the climatic influences of marine wind patterns and experience the additional influence of altitude.

### High Desert

The high desert includes the Antelope Valley, which is the westernmost portion of the Mojave Desert. The high desert is located more than 50 miles inland, and is removed from marine influences and experiences a more extreme type of climate. The Transverse Ranges act as a barrier to rain-bearing clouds moving inland. In addition, the Antelope Valley is home to several wildlife and wildflower sanctuaries that thrive in the often inhospitable climate found in the high desert.

## Regional Context

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization that represents the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Imperial, San Bernardino, and Riverside, and 190 cities. Los Angeles County is further divided into nine SCAG subregions: North Los Angeles County; San Fernando Valley Council of Governments; Las Virgenes Malibu Conejo Council of Governments; Arroyo Verdugo; Westside Cities Council of Governments; South Bay Cities Council of Governments; City of Los Angeles; San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments; and Gateway Cities Council of Governments. Table 4.2 shows population growth in the SCAG region, by county, between 2000 and 2010.

**Table 4.2 Population for the SCAG Region, County, 2000 and 2010**

County	2000 Population	Percent of Region	2010 Population	Percent of Region
Los Angeles	9,519,000	57.6%	9,819,000	54.4%
Orange	2,846,000	17.2%	3,010,000	16.7%

Riverside	1,545,000	9.4%	2,190,000	12.1%
San Bernardino	1,709,000	10.4%	2,035,000	11.3%
Ventura	753,000	4.6%	823,000	4.6%
Imperial	142,000	0.9%	175,000	1.0%
Total	16,514,000	100.0%	18,052,000	100.0%

Source: SCAG 2012-2035 RTP/SCS

## Existing Population

There are approximately 10 million people in Los Angeles County as a whole, with approximately one million living in the unincorporated areas. Table 4.3 shows the percent change in population from the year 2000 to 2010.

**Table 4.3: Los Angeles County Population, 2000 and 2010**

Area	Population 2000	Population 2010	Increase (%)
Los Angeles County	9,519,338	9,818,605	3%
Unincorporated Areas	986,050	1,057,088	7%

Source: 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census

## Race and Ethnicity

The cultural diversity of residents plays a significant role in defining the character of the unincorporated areas. Influenced by migratory patterns, the approximately 10 million residents comprise one of the most diverse communities in the country. The California Department of Finance estimates that by the year 2050, the Hispanic and Asian populations will account for more than 80 percent of the residents. Planning efforts must acknowledge and account for the diversity and social values that accompany these demographic shifts. Table 4.4 shows the racial and ethnic composition of the unincorporated areas.

**Table 4.4: Unincorporated Los Angeles County, Race and Ethnicity, 2010**

Race	Unincorporated Area Population	Percentage
White	512,219	48%
Black or African-American	96,384	9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	8,851	1%
Asian	124,109	12%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2,037	0.2%
Some Other Race	271,531	26%
Two or More Races	41,957	4%
Total	1,057,088	100%

Ethnicity	Unincorporated Area	
	Population	Percentage
Hispanic or Latino	602,045	57%
Not Hispanic or Latino	455,043	43%
Total	1,057,088	100%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

## II. Growth Forecast

Population, housing, and employment projections play a critical role in the planning process and can help identify and guide future development patterns. The growth forecast includes population projections, household projections, and employment projections. It is important to note that the General Plan uses a regional strategy to guide growth in a way that plans for more efficient and sustainable land use patterns to address climate change, mobility, and community development. The General Plan plans for total growth by encouraging development in areas with infrastructure and access to transit, and discouraging growth in undeveloped areas and environmentally-sensitive and hazardous areas.

The General Plan's growth forecast is from the SCAG 2012 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The growth projections in Tables 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7 provide a picture of probable occurrences rather than assured outcomes. Furthermore, the projections do not account for unforeseen future events, as well as changes in General Plan policies.

**Table 4.5: Los Angeles County Population Projections**

	Population2008	Population 2035	Increase (%)
Los Angeles County	9,778,000	11,353,000	16%
Unincorporated Areas	1,052,800	1,399,500	33%

Source: SCAG 2012-2035 RTP/SCS

**Table 4.6: Los Angeles County Household Projections**

	Households2008	Households 2035	Increase (%)
Los Angeles County	3,228,000	3,852,000	19%
Unincorporated Areas	298,100	405,500	36%

Source: SCAG 2012-2035 RTP/SCS

**Table 4.7: Los Angeles County Employment Projections**

	<b>Employment 2008</b>	<b>Employment 2035</b>	<b>Increase (%)</b>
Los Angeles County	4,340,000	4,827,000	11%
Unincorporated Areas	237,000	318,100	34%

Source: SCAG 2012-2035 RTP/SCS

### **III. Community Participation**

The General Plan reflects a comprehensive effort to facilitate stakeholder participation and garner local input in the development of its goals, policies and programs. Appendix B provides an overview and timeline of the recent outreach activities and drafts of the General Plan that have been released to the public, and a summary of community and stakeholder identified issues that informed the development of the General Plan Guiding Principles.