



# East San Gabriel Valley Area Plan: Draft Community Character and Design Element Summary



## 1. VISION

A strong sense of place with design that enhances and supports the community's character through an improved public realm, diversity of housing types, preservation of scenic qualities, and preservation of equestrian and rural areas.

## 2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Residential Areas

The unincorporated communities of the ESGV are mostly residential, with one- to two-story single-family residences as the prominent housing type. There are also examples of multi-family housing throughout the communities. Cul-de-sacs are a common residential street pattern that lengthen distances between destinations and neighborhoods. Furthermore, parking conditions for single-family residences vary by community, but typically consist of attached and detached garages with driveways and street parking. Many neighborhoods lack sidewalks, forcing pedestrians and vehicles to share the same street space.

### Commercial Areas

There are few commercially zoned parcels. Commercial areas primarily consist of one- to two-story shopping centers surrounded by surface parking. Commercial corridors and mixed-use projects are not common. Parking availability can be limited at peak use times at the popular shopping centers. Many of the commercial centers are also aging. Outside of public parks, there are few gathering places such as plazas, courtyards, and outdoor seating areas in commercial areas.



For more information, please visit: [planning.lacounty.gov/ESGVAP](http://planning.lacounty.gov/ESGVAP)

## Public Realm

Street trees are prevalent along residential streets, but less frequent along the sidewalks of main roads. Several freeways and major roads create barriers to non-vehicular access, such as sidewalks or bike paths. Cinder block walls along many major roads are a common feature of the built environment. They can result in featureless main roads and create physical barriers to connectivity. However, there also neighborhoods with frontage roads that can provide opportunities for neighborhood-scale gathering spaces. There are a few water channels that run through multiple unincorporated communities that are sometimes unofficially used for biking. There are only two established greenways, and both run parallel to existing waterways.

## 3. ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

### Improved Beautification, Place-making, and Connectivity

Despite proximity to nature and scenic mountains views, resident quality of life is negatively impacted by the lackluster development of commercial areas, poor connectivity between residential areas and services/goods, limited spaces for gathering, heavy congestion on roads and freeways, and a need for community character and placemaking. The lack of connectivity and car-oriented development pattern reinforces single-driver travel, both out of convenience and concern for pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

### Improved Commercial Areas

Regulatory standards can be added to improve the design and appearance of commercial centers and allow for the inclusion of gathering areas. Some of the larger shopping centers are made up of several parcels, often under different ownership, which can result in confusing parking layouts. As businesses come and go, parking requirements for different uses have altered parking layout and striping over time. Lot consolidation incentives may help address this issue. Parking pressures can be a key stressor and contribute to negative experiences in the commercial areas. Regulatory options facilitating shared parking between uses occupied at different times of day could address some of the parking pressures. Parking structures, shared parking, or other regulatory and design options would help to reduce the total amount of required parking, concentrate parking where most it is needed, and promote pedestrian-orientation and design improvements for the commercial areas.

## Improved Public Realm

Streets are often wide, and in some cases overbuilt. They also have inconsistent tree canopy which a coordinated street tree plan can help to address, prioritizing areas of greatest need for street trees and shade. Beautification along the major roads can help create a sense of place. In addition, in some communities the blocks are very large, called superblocks, with minimal road crossing opportunities, limited connectivity, and can facilitate high speed traffic. While the major roads are wide, sidewalks are narrow creating an uncomfortable pedestrian experience. Sidewalk construction in neighborhoods is also inconsistent. However, where frontage roads exist, there is opportunity for urban greening and active transportation in the curbed street separations. Corridor design standards, public realm enhancements, public art, and placemaking can add a sense of place to the commercial corridors, public spaces, greenways, and key neighborhood nodes.

## Accessible Waterways

Many communities have waterways and drainage channels where there may be sufficient space for adjacent pathways. Some communities have channel-side pathways, but they could benefit from beautification through place-making projects. These provide a potential opportunity to connect neighborhoods to the San Gabriel River through an extended greenway network. These can be used by walkers, bikers, and equestrians. There are opportunities for better connections from residential neighborhoods to riverside and hillside greenways and trails via bike and walking paths. The current routes have major gaps in safely connecting neighborhood paths to recreational paths.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

### Enhance Community Identity and Character

Ensure that residential, commercial, mixed-use, open space, and public realm improvements enhance the community identity and character.

### Streetscapes and Outdoor Public Facilities

Foster the design of streetscapes and outdoor public facilities that provide active and passive programmable environments.

### Walking and Biking Paths

Support walking and biking path opportunities from residential neighborhoods to commercial areas, services, goods, parks, and public facilities to encourage healthy living, and safe access for all ages.

### Pedestrian-Oriented Development

Improve the existing commercial character of major streets and centers by ensuring that mixed-use and commercial developments are designed at a pedestrian-scale with buildings fronting the road and a limited setback. Developments

## ESGVAP Parks and Recreation Summary Draft

should include storefront displays and articulated entryway details on the ground level. Parking should be placed behind, under, or above active uses to reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts.

### **Neighborhood-Service Commercial Uses**

Create neighborhood-oriented mixed-use centers that provide goods and services in proximity to existing neighborhoods. Ensure residential, commercial, and mixed-use projects foster active connections between neighborhoods.

### **Waterways and Greenways**

Enhance waterways to develop greenways and connective paths through residential neighborhoods to support active transportation and well-being.