

Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

West San Gabriel Valley Area Plan: Land Use Element Summary

1. Existing Conditions

PLANNING AREA AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

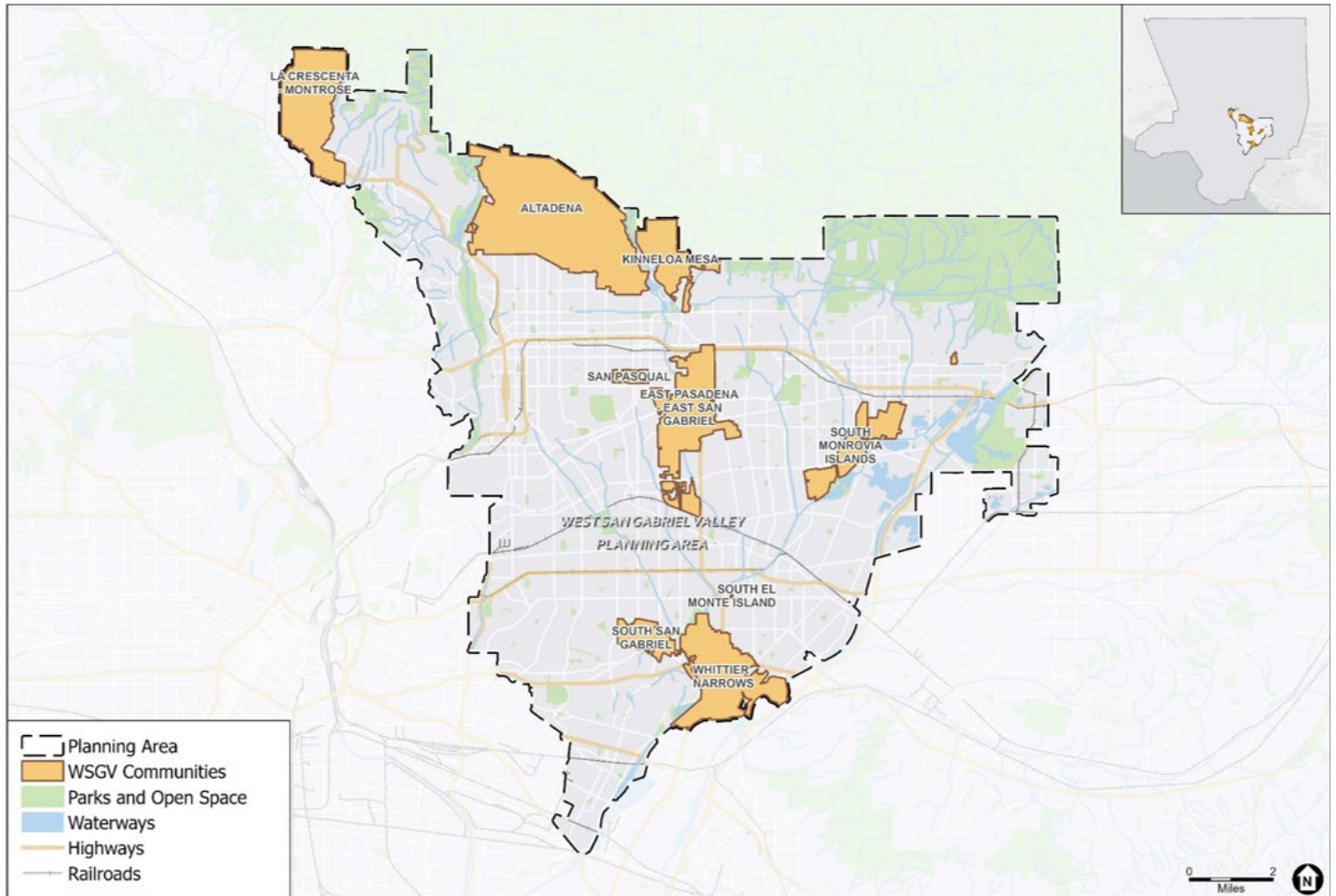
The WSGV is generally located in the central portion of Los Angeles County and is composed of a largely developed collection of nine unincorporated communities sharing boundaries with other jurisdictions (**Figure 1**). The nine unincorporated communities are fairly spread out across the WSGV and contain varied topographies. The combined Planning Area makes up 23.2 square miles and is primarily single-family residential, with some commercial corridors and some concentrated areas of open space. The area is served by five freeways, as well as a handful of major highways, secondary highways and parkways running through the WSGV area.

NINE UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES

1. Altadena
2. East Pasadena–East San Gabriel
3. Kinneloa Mesa
4. La Crescenta-Montrose
5. San Pasqual
6. South Monrovia Islands
7. South San Gabriel
8. Whittier Narrows
9. South El Monte Island

WSGV COMMUNITIES AT A GLANCE

1. **Altadena:** The community of Altadena is one of the largest communities in the Planning Area by both population and land cover. Altadena features many natural and cultural resources, and borders the Angeles National Forest, offering ample access to trails and open space.
2. **East Pasadena-East San Gabriel:** This community is made up of two bordering unincorporated areas totaling 4 square miles. Although the community is primarily characterized by low-density residential uses, it is divided by Rosemead Boulevard, where most of the commercial property is located.
3. **Kinneloa Mesa:** This small residential community is just 1.6 square miles and sparsely populated compared to the other communities. The northern part of Kinneloa Mesa remains largely undeveloped and is designated as a Significant Ecological Area.
4. **La Crescenta-Montrose:** This 3.45-square-mile community is just south of Angeles National Forest. Most land in the community is single-family residential. However, the commercial corridor of Foothill Boulevard runs east-west through the middle of the community.
5. **San Pasqual:** This is small community of 0.26 square miles, made up of primarily single-family uses and some multifamily housing near the central thoroughfare, Sierra Madre Boulevard.
6. **South Monrovia Islands:** This community is comprised of a 1.3-square-mile cluster of unincorporated communities. The land use setting features a mix of low-rise houses as well as the business corridor, Live Oak Avenue.



SOURCE: LA County DRP; ESA; UrbanFootprint, 2023.

West San Gabriel Valley Area Plan

FIGURE 1 West San Gabriel Valley Communities

7. **South San Gabriel:** Roughly 1 square mile, land uses in this community include single-family housing, some multifamily housing and some commercial uses near the intersections of Del Mar Avenue and Potrero Grande Drive, and San Gabriel Drive and Paramount Boulevard.
8. **Whittier Narrows:** The majority of the Whittier Narrows is comprised of the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area featuring lakes, bike trails, , and a nature center. The park provides extensive trail systems and access to the natural environment of LA County. It is also partly designated as a Significant Ecological Area, located near the junction of the Rio Hondo Channel and San Gabriel River.
9. **South El Monte Island:** This area is a 0.1-square-mile grouping of six parcels. These parcels include a commercial strip mall, as well as a trailer park.

EXISTING LAND USES

Most land in the Planning Area is designated by the County's 2035 General Plan as residential, with some concentrated areas of open space, commercial, and industrial zones. Steep slopes and urban-wildland interface areas within the San Gabriel Mountains and Angeles National Forest form the northern extent of the Planning Area. The majority of housing (72.7 percent) was built before 1979, which is similar countywide. While the roadway patterns vary among communities, many of the residential neighborhoods contain cul-de-sacs. While this urban

pattern can provide safe and quiet living environments, it creates reliance on automobiles to get to destinations quickly. It also creates a challenge for the public transit systems. While public transit serves certain areas of the WSGV, large portions of the communities do not have frequent and convenient access to public transit.

EXISTING DEMOGRAPHICS AND HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS

As of 2020, the total population of the Planning Area communities is 74,680. The predominant ethnicities are Non-Hispanic, White and Asian. Each community has larger populations of people over the age of 65 in comparison to the rest of the County which has implications for access to healthcare, social services, and mobility. As of 2020, there were approximately 17,488 workers employed across all the communities, with healthcare and social assistance sectors accounting for nearly one in three jobs. Other key sectors include retail (10.4 percent), educational services (8.9 percent), and accommodation and food services (8.5 percent).

2. Issues & Opportunities

LAND USE DIVERSITY

While the dominant presence of single-family dwellings and low-rise commercial developments may limit some residents' access to proximate essential amenities and services, it can also present an opportunity for strategic growth. By focusing development and growth along key commercial corridors and intersections, near to existing residential neighborhoods, residents will have greater access to housing, employment opportunities, and daily necessities.

DIVERSE HOUSING OPTIONS

The high cost of housing, particularly for renters, poses a significant challenge, leading to housing instability and overcrowding, especially among vulnerable groups. This highlights the need for a broader range of housing options, including affordable housing and "missing middle" alternatives like duplexes and fourplexes. Addressing the aging housing stock and ensuring housing accessibility, regardless of income or family size, can provide housing affordability and stability for all community members.

COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION

The Area Plan focuses on expanding local commercial and employment opportunities to improve economic vibrancy and access to goods and services. There is potential to support locally owned businesses and revitalize commercial areas to promote vibrant commercial spaces. Flexible zoning, mixed-use developments, and adaptive reuse of aging buildings can create thriving commercial environments, contributing to community well-being.

ACTIVE AND PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED STREETS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Opportunities exist in the WSGV to retrofit the built environment to prioritize walkability and connectivity. By creating pedestrian passageways, transforming urban streets into healthy spaces, and optimizing parking areas mobility, social interaction, and well-being can be enhanced.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND BELONGING

The unincorporated communities in the Planning Area each possess distinct characteristics, from demographics to the built environment, shaping their unique local characteristics. Yet, these communities often blend with their neighboring cities, presenting both challenges and opportunities for enhancing community identity and providing a

distinctive sense of place. Strategies focusing on enhancing gathering spaces and improving public realm design can strengthen community identity and nurture a sense of belonging.

RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Half of the communities in the Planning Area are recognized as Disadvantaged Communities (DACs), meaning that they are more vulnerable to socioeconomic challenges and environmental pollutants, including traffic and industrial pollution. Additionally, DACs face heightened risks from climate-related hazards. In addition, wildfires pose significant risks near the foothills and open spaces.

EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE LAND USE DECISION-MAKING

Equitable and inclusive land use decision-making is crucial for fostering communities that genuinely reflect the diversity and needs of community members. The complexity of planning processes can pose barriers to participation. Embracing local knowledge and engaging the community from the outset of planning processes can yield urban spaces that are sustainable and centered around community well-being.

3. Policy Recommendations

SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT GROWTH PATTERNS

Policy recommendations related to sustainable and resilient growth patterns advocate for a strategic and environmentally conscious approach to development, emphasizing sustainability, community well-being, and resilience against natural hazards. This Element recommends policies aimed at concentrating growth near transit hubs and commercial, conserving natural areas, and fostering a safe, comfortable pedestrian experience. Other policies recommend adapting underutilized spaces and directing growth away from environmental hazard areas.

THOUGHTFUL EXPANSION OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Recommendations related to planned growth underscore the importance of focusing on capital improvements and enhancement of public facilities in growth-targeted and disadvantaged communities. Other policy recommendations focus on coordinating growth with mobility enhancements, advocating for the integration of active transportation features in the built environment including bike lanes, sidewalk upgrades, and transit system improvements.

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED LAND USES

Recommended land use policies promote a mix of diverse land uses and context sensitive housing options in neighborhoods, including duplex, fourplex, and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in low-density housing areas. Other recommended policies allow for compatible uses in or near established residential neighborhoods that can bring amenities closer to home. Other policies include designating sufficient land for commercial purposes and distributing locally-serving commercial centers more equitably throughout the WSGV.

DIVERSITY OF COMMERCIAL USES

Policy recommendations focus on preserving existing commercial spaces and expanding the diversity and flexibility of uses to incentivize commercial reuse and reduce building vacancies. Strategies to achieve diversity of commercial uses include exploring the possibility of Accessory Commercial Units (ACUs) in residential zones to enhance neighborhood amenities, supporting small businesses, collaborating with neighboring cities align commercial development efforts, and promoting the development of technology and sustainability employment hubs.

LIVELY COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

A primary goal of the WSGV Area Plan is to create lively, activated commercial corridors that can serve as hubs for community gathering and encourage active transportation. Policy recommendations emphasize the activation of commercial corridors by enhancing design and infrastructure for improved walkability and bike-friendliness, in addition to beautification to create dynamic, pedestrian-centric communities that reflect community identity.

COMPATIBLE EMPLOYMENT USES

The Land Use Element strives to preserve existing employment uses in the WSGV and attract new businesses to the Plan Area, while ensuring the protection of industrial-adjacent land uses and communities. Recommended strategies to safeguard communities from environmental impacts include ensuring that developments incorporate adequate buffers for existing and proposed residential uses near industrial and commercial zones.

SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC FACILITIES

Policy recommendations highlight the need for equitable access to healthcare and a broad range of public facilities. Strategies for achieving this include creating recreational, social, and cultural spaces that reflect the community's diversity and partnering with local schools for the joint-use of school facilities.

RESOURCE PRESERVATION IN THE NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

The Land Use Element aims to direct development in the built environment to preserve existing natural resources, encouraging environmental stewardship and promoting community well-being. Biological resource policy recommendations focus on protecting natural resources and biodiversity. Water management policies advocate for green infrastructure, water conservation, and supporting water reuse technologies. Recommended agricultural land policies emphasize the preservation of agricultural lands.

ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY

The Area Plan aims to improve mobility and connectivity in the WSGV. Policies support investments to enhance pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, provide signage and wayfinding to guide residents and visitors to local services and amenities, and improve the overall pedestrian experience. Other recommended policies include repurposing underutilized surface parking for higher quality community uses and adopting flexible solutions to meet minimum parking requirements.

COMMUNITY BELONGING AND SAFETY

This Element strives to create policies that nurture community well-being and inclusivity and create a shared sense of belonging among all residents. Recommended policies foster community gathering spaces to enhance safety, visibility, and social interaction, and support additional funding and resources to maintain safe public spaces and infrastructure.

COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARACTER

The Area Plan seeks to strengthen and celebrate local community culture, enhance neighborhood compatibility, and promote functional and aesthetic cohesion throughout the built environment. This Element recommends thoughtful design standards and practices to facilitate well-designed neighborhoods and context-sensitive development.

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATIONS

The WSGV strives to be healthy, resilient and sustainable for existing and future residents. This Element support policies for WSGV communities and neighborhoods identified as high climate vulnerability per the LA County Climate Vulnerability Assessment. Recommended strategies include upgrading critical infrastructure for climate resilience, establishing community cooling centers, and expanding urban agriculture opportunities, alongside initiatives to increase emergency preparedness.

INCLUSIVE LAND USE DECISION MAKING

Equitable decision making is key to fostering a community where all residents can thrive and be heard. Strategies such as partnering with local groups on conducting project engagement and conducting early, frequent community engagement for projects to foster diverse, inclusive land use decision making.