

The following information contains excerpts from letters submitted by stakeholders in the La Crescenta-Montrose community. Edits to wording and content have been made to the letters to remove identifying personal information, but substantive elements of the letters are maintained. These letters were submitted in response to a May, 2024 call for letters that describe the real lived experience of local residents and their hopes for the future.

The first letter in this list is the specific call for community letters, available to the public in May, 2024.

Dear Community Member,

We're excited to invite you to participate in shaping the future of your community! Your voice and lived experience are invaluable in guiding the policies and actions included in the **West San Gabriel Valley Area Plan (WSGVAP)**, a plan intended to improve the built environment and community well-being.

The WSGVAP is a long-range plan that will include policies and actions on several subjects across multiple unincorporated communities, including La Crescenta-Montrose. More information about the WSGVAP is available on the Area Plan's website: <https://planning.lacounty.gov/long-range-planning/wsgvap/>

Here's how you can participate:

1. Reflect on your lived experience in La Crescenta - Montrose

Take some time to reflect on your daily experiences within your community. Consider aspects such as how easy it is to accomplish your daily needs in the community, public spaces you visit regularly, or your favorite places to relax or visit with friends and family outside of the home.

2. Choose a topic

Select one of the key topics listed below. You can certainly write about more than one topic if desired, but this selection is based off feedback received from community members during Area Plan outreach.

- **Main street: vibrant and beautiful Foothill Boulevard.** How does Foothill Boulevard meet (or not meet) your daily needs? How can Foothill Boulevard be made more vibrant, beautiful, and useful in your daily life?
- **Getting around town.** How do you travel around your community on a daily basis? Are there daily needs that you can only fulfill by car? What would need to change in your community to make it easier to get around your community?
- **Walkable La Crescenta-Montrose.** How comfortable and safe do you feel when walking in the community? Are there any areas that feel very unsafe? What can be improved to make your walking experience feel safer and more comfortable?

- **Community gathering.** Are there any spaces in your community that you think could be great for a shared public space like a square, plaza, or small park? What features or amenities would draw you to these new community spaces?

3. Share your insights

Write about your lived experience in the community; focus on the physical environment, which includes features like buildings, structures, streets, landscaping, and how it relates to your daily life. As desired, you can include in your letter suggestions for ways the community can be improved. Write as little or as much as you like.

4. Submit your feedback

Once your letter is complete, please submit it to wsgvap@planning.lacounty.gov with the subject line "LCM Letter". Please submit your letter by May 31st, 2024

Your feedback will be carefully considered as policies and actions are drafted as part of the West San Gabriel Valley Area Plan.

Thank you,
WSGVAP Team
LA County Planning

To the WSGVAP team,

I appreciate the opportunity to share some of my perspective as a La Crescenta resident, parent, and non-driver/ pedestrian/ public transportation user.

My family and I were drawn to the area because of its relatively close proximity to our workplaces in Los Angeles, the natural beauty of the foothills, the excellent neighborhood schools, and the charm, amenities and resources of downtown Montrose. While all of those elements have been benefits in our lives, all are impacted and diminished by the car-dominant design and behaviors of the community.

I'm aware that many in the community oppose the addition of bike lanes and expanded public transportation infrastructure because they feel it is not in keeping with the "suburban" or "small town" feel they believe the area should have. However, I would argue that the deficiencies in those areas diminish our overall quality of life, prioritize car users, and actively endanger large swaths of the population: students who should be able to safely walk or bike to the many neighborhood schools, the elderly who should be able to easily walk or take the bus to grocery stores, doctors appointments or social engagements, and anyone who chooses to reduce their carbon impact by walking/biking/taking public transportation.

In my own neighborhood and many in the area, despite the presence of well over a dozen public schools and close to that number of private institutions, sidewalks are a haphazard

affair. Without school buses available, endless lines of individual cars dominate the school drop off and pick up lines and the length and time those require lead to reckless driving behaviors in our neighborhoods. In walking my own child to school over the last 5 years (one school, just 3 blocks away, the second a longer 20 minute walk) I have witnessed numerous incidents of children being nearly run over while in crosswalks or walking on streets that do not have sidewalks (including one that leads directly to a high school and elementary school). I have had frightening close calls myself, being clipped by a car who turned into a crosswalk while I had a signal and was nearly halfway across the street.

Foothill and Montrose Blvd are treated by motorists as though they are freeways—speeding and ignoring signals/crossings is rampant. On Honolulu, through the center of downtown Montrose, a street that could be a vibrant pedestrian center to the community, drivers ignore traffic calming measures and frequently endanger pedestrians. Parking appears to be a higher priority than safe sidewalks and crossing for pedestrians.

This is a densely populated community with ample resources from parks to shopping to businesses and with the right infrastructure it could be a model for motivating residents to choose transportation options that are safer and better for the environment than cars. We need more housing, more buses, more bike lanes, and streets which support people, not automobiles.

It's extremely disheartening that a small group of wealthy homeowners continually try to prevent development of Foothill blvd— a too-wide street on which pedestrians are struck nearly weekly, lined by half-filled strip malls— Foothill is the model of a street that should have intense traffic calming measures, multi use development, and prioritization of renewed and expanded bus lines which connect the foothill communities from Sunland/Tujunga to La Crescenta, La Canada, Altadena and Pasadena.

Thank you for the opportunity to share thoughts on these issues. Please let me know if there is anything else I can offer.

My best,
[Submitter]

My name is [Submitter], and I'm a member of the La Crescenta-Montrose community. I've lived here for about three years with my [family]. I love our new hometown, and I was so excited to hear about the vision plan to make it even better.

We are fortunate to live close to our neighborhood school, La Crescenta Elementary, and one of the biggest ways we are connected to our community is in our daily walks to and from with all the other families on our street. While this is a really loving and connected time, these walks are also a bit fraught because of the lack of sidewalks. I would love my kids to eventually walk to school on their own, but without a safe place to walk, this doesn't seem feasible. I feel this even more so for families who have to cross Rosemont. There is a pedestrian crosswalk at Rosemont/Prospect that cars do not honor, and I have seen

many near misses. It's very dangerous. Sidewalks and improved traffic calming measures would give families the peace of mind they need to allow kids to have the freedom to just be kids!

As my children grow older, I envision a community where they feel safe and supported exploring the world around them. Teenagers in La Crescenta now are somewhat limited due to lack of public transportation on Foothill between La Crescenta and Pennsylvania (a dead zone of about a mile), lack of safe biking infrastructure, and the hilly topography. A community shuttle that connects our schools, parks & playgrounds, and shops along Foothill and Honolulu would be an incredible addition, reducing the need for cars that pollute the hillside and providing an option for all members of La Crescenta. This would be game changing for so many families I know!

And finally, this community would so benefit from places/spaces for families to gather, particularly along Foothill Blvd. Through our school, my mom's group, and church, I have met so many other parents who lament the fact that they need to drive to Pasadena, Eagle Rock, or down into Glendale to find spaces where they can gather with other adults and where their children can play. As more and more young families move to this area, more and more will encounter this issue! In my travels, I have always admired how other cities prioritize beautiful public spaces and amenities like cafes in public parks and public artworks. This is sorely lacking in La Crescenta, but I feel so much momentum for change!

Thank you for spearheading this project and for all your efforts in developing our community. I am excited for great things to come!

My name is [Submitter]. I reside in unincorporated La Crescenta-Montrose and have lived in this area for 9 years.

I am used to living in vibrant and walkable/bikeable downtown areas. I moved to La Crescenta for the school district and possibility to have a space where we can grow some food and native plants. I currently live near La Crescenta Library with my [family].

My favorite things about La Crescenta are:

- **Proximity to Work/Daycare:** On most days, my husband is able to ride bike to work or take our [child] to daycare on a bike (our family shares one electric car). He does have to take Foothill Blvd, which is a high traffic corridor. I personally do not feel safe to ride a bike on this busy street—especially not alone or with my baby—but I am glad that my husband is OK with it.
- **Rosemont Preserve:** I feel very lucky that the beautiful Rosemont Preserve is in La Crescenta, allowing me to be able to easily bike there to volunteer as a docent. It's important for me to be able to engage in activities that inspire youth to take care of the ecosystems in which we live.
- **Some Walkability:** I like that I can walk to a few places, like La Crescenta Library, Ralphs, Walgreens, and USPS mailbox.

After I became a mother, I learned that raising my [child] would be so much easier and rewarding if I could meet and gather with others locally (within 10-20 minutes walking or in any kind of transportation). In this sense, La Crescenta has a lot of room for improvement to become more family-friendly. Here are some of my observations:

- **Lack of a Vibrant, Useful, and Walkable downtown:** Our downtown area near La Crescenta Library is busy, noisy, and shadeless. Unfortunately, there isn't a reason to be there unless it's running a quick errand to drop off mail at a mailbox or pick up something from Walgreens. There is essentially one restaurant in town, Tickle Tree, and one gift shop, Sidebloom (which I rarely visit because I would have to cross the 5-6 lane Foothill Blvd off Glenwood/Foothill after pressing a crosswalk button that tells me to "proceed with caution", as "vehicles may not stop"). When I used to stroll the neighborhood to give my [child] daily naps in the carrier, it was grueling to walk around with no shade in the summer, nor was there any clear destination to walk to to hang out. I see an opportunity to repurpose part of Foothill Blvd, especially given an overabundance of parking for cars that already exist today. There is opportunity to repurpose Foothill Blvd to be narrower and meander like Montrose Shopping Park, build in urban trails for walking and biking, electric bike and car chargers, among other amenities.
- **Lack of Community Gathering Spaces and Small Businesses:** In general, our community needs less dentists/healthcare institutions, tutoring centers, real estate businesses, and other types of these services taking up valuable storefront space on Foothill Blvd. Many moms and I agree that we need more family-friendly healthy restaurants (or any restaurant for that matter), little markets, community centers, parklets, community gardens, and useful everyday shops. When I think of a vibrant downtown, I think: Montrose Shopping Park, Old Town Pasadena, or Downtown Ojai. I can imagine slow-moving streets, meandering urban walking/biking trails connecting various green spaces/parks within the neighborhood and to other parts of LA like the LA River bike trail, more native tree canopy and understory, fun storefronts (with shared parking in the back like Honolulu Ave or in separate structures like in downtown Ventura), open-air plazas and parks for families to gather, safe paths for pedestrians to cross from one side to another, public water play features for babies and kids, colorful intersections, and much more. I would love to be able to walk and meander to family-friendly establishments where I can easily take (without a car, preferably) my [son] to safely play and wander, and where I can meet new neighbors and/or run into neighbors I already know.
- **Too car dependent:** As a family with one car, we try to make it work. If my husband absolutely needs the car, then I feel pretty stuck at home. Our older neighbor across the street says "you just need a car to live here and get around," even though he has a bike that he would like to use. Most of the younger families who live around us have bikes and are eager to bike or take the bus more if there were safer routes and more frequent bus/shuttle schedules. Because of the lack of family-friendly gathering spaces and restaurants, many moms including myself

have no choice but to drive to La Canada, Pasadena, or Glendale for hangouts with other moms and babies. Not only do I spend precious time driving, but my baby hates being strapped in the car. I'd rather stay local if the built infrastructure allowed for it. Not only could our neighborhood be more walkable and bikeable, but Foothill Blvd could be a strategic transportation hub that easily moves people to and from neighboring areas. For example, other moms and I have talked about how exciting it would be to have a trolley that runs up/down Foothill Blvd, to/from Deukmajian Park, to/from Descanso Gardens, and to/from Montrose Shopping Park—destinations that we all take in our separate cars. A shuttle that runs between La Crescenta to Old Town Pasadena would also be highly utilized. Metro Micro service could also be expanded in our area so that families like mine who share one car can use the service if needed.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to discussing this important topic and how we can work together to efficiently and effectively lay the foundation to build a vibrant, family-friendly La Crescenta-Montrose.

Hi,

My name is [Submitter]. I have lived and owned a home in the La Crescenta-Montrose area for 9 years with my [family].

Here are some things I love about my community:

- Our proximity to nature: I love being surrounded on all sides by the beautiful mountains
- The community feels very safe from the perspective of violent and property crime
- That most of my neighbors--many who have been here for 10 years or less--are kind and eager to form connections in the face of the challenges posed by the community.

Here are some things that would change my community for the better:

- A lack of community gathering spaces: multiple restaurant and cafe choices, book shops, parklets, family friendly breweries, etc. There is a stark lack of walkable "third places" (in Ray Oldenburg's terminology) in our community. I believe that in decades past churches may have formed a more central part of this identity, but for the increasing number of community members who are not avid churchgoers, there is little else binding us to where we live. If we want to meet up for coffee/drinks/different healthy dinner options after work, have playdates with other kids and parents (including places **both** parents and kids can enjoy together i.e. not just kids play gyms), or find a place to enjoy the generally pleasant weather with our neighbors for hours at a time, there is essentially nowhere to go except to drive to other places in the county. Instead of these gathering places, we have seemingly countless salons, dentists, tutoring centers, remodeling businesses,

and insurance agencies, most of which could arguably be in other places or at least off the main thoroughfare (on a second floor, set back from the street, etc.).

- Foothill Blvd is an unpleasant place to be when it should be a core place in our community. It does not have to carry so much weight as a thoroughfare when the 210 is nearby and parallel. Instead, there is constant loud traffic, a lack of shade, and a lack of places to go (see above about third places). There should be more native plant landscaping, slower speeds, less traffic, and more practical/fulfilling destinations, and a unified sense of design identity. While La Crescenta is safe from a property and violent crime perspective, it feels very dangerous or at least uncomfortable from a road safety perspective.

What few amenities exist in the neighborhood are widely spread out: Foothill Blvd and surrounding streets are not human scale. It is impractical to walk to nearly any destination on Foothill Blvd, and as mentioned, such a walk would be long and unpleasant. Biking is marginally more possible, but the lack of protected bike facilities makes it feel dangerous to all but the most experienced cyclists. Additionally, a parking lot is often closest to the street instead of the store fronts themselves. There is an excess of parking on Foothill Blvd, both on- and off-street, making this inconvenience all the more painful given how much real-estate we've given to parking and cars.
