

This community-specific section of the West San Gabriel Valley Area Plan includes an introduction, issues and opportunities, and policies tailored to address the distinct character, needs and priorities of Altadena. The community-specific policies were guided and developed through input shared by residents during community outreach and engagement activities.

8.2 Altadena

A. INTRODUCTION

Altadena is an unincorporated community in Los Angeles County just north of the City of Pasadena in the northwest part of West San Gabriel Valley. The 8.5 square mile community is home to a population of 43,344 people. Altadena is bounded on three sides by open space including the Arroyo Seco, Angeles National Forest, and Eaton Canyon, providing access to parks, trails and recreational amenities. Parts of northern Altadena bordering the Angeles National Forest fall within the Altadena Foothills and Arroyos Significant Ecological Area (SEA).

Prior to the housing boom that followed World War II and brought widespread residential development to Altadena, many notable properties were erected by early residents. Built in the traditional architectural styles of the era, these properties include the McNally House, the Holmes House, and the Zane Grey Estate. Today, the community is largely characterized by single-family homes. Some multi-family residences are located near commercial corridors, including Lake Avenue, Altadena Drive, Fair Oaks Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, and Washington Boulevard. In addition to access to open space, Altadena contains numerous public facilities, including schools, libraries, supermarkets, and a weekly farmers market.

B. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This section presents a summary of issues and opportunities learned from community feedback and an analysis of existing conditions in the community. These issues and opportunities inform the preparation of community-specific land use, zoning, and policies for Altadena.

1. Housing

Aging housing stock and high housing costs. A significant portion of the housing units in Altadena were built before 1979. This aging

housing stock, combined with a low vacancy rate, contributes to high housing costs and a limited supply of affordable housing.

Rent burden. While there is a relatively low number of renters compared to homeowners, nearly half of Altadena’s residents who rent their homes are classified as rent-burdened.

2. Mobility

Topography. Topographic constraints can be a barrier to walking or biking for some residents. Promoting transit for streets in the hillsides is a possible solution to this issue.

Pedestrian safety and connectivity. For walkability and pedestrian safety, continuous and uniform sidewalks should be provided along major corridors and routes to local amenities. Sidewalk gaps exist along Altadena Drive, Fair Oaks Avenue, and Lincoln Avenue. In addition, many neighborhood roads do not have sidewalks, impacting residents ability to walk to amenities, including Loma Alta Park, Hahamongna Watershed Park, Eaton Canyon, and local trails. Residents have expressed a desire for off-road pathways made of non-concrete surfaces to preserve the community’s rural character, which may also double as equestrian trails. Furthermore, the combination of wide roads, large curb radii, and elevated vehicle speeds increase pedestrian exposure and creates uncomfortable crossing environments, particularly at the intersections of Lake Avenue/Altadena Drive, Altadena Drive/Allen Avenue, New York Drive/Allen Avenue, and Fair Oaks Avenue/Mariposa Street.

Bicycle safety and connectivity. Altadena has a bicycle network with approximately seven miles of designated bikeways. However, there are significant network gaps between neighborhoods and community destinations. Certain streets exhibit collision hotspots, posing significant safety concerns for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists within the communities. Among these streets are Altadena Drive and Mendocino Street Collision data point to the need to focus safety improvements on Altadena Drive, Lake Avenue, and Woodbury Road and continue to monitor collision data to guide safety improvement priorities.

Obstructions to evacuation routes. Neighborhoods situated north of Loma Alta Drive fall within the Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Residents have reported instances of vehicles parking and obstructing evacuation routes.

Transit. Existing fixed transit services cover the south portion of the community, with limited facilities serving areas north of Altadena Drive and New York Drive. Neighborhoods north of Loma Alta Drive are not served by Metro Micro transit. Moreover, the existing bus frequency falls short of meeting the needs of residents, revealing a gap in transit adequacy. This issue is particularly pronounced in relation to commuter travel to key job centers, like Burbank and downtown Los Angeles. There is also an absence of transit serving key recreational destinations, including the Sam Merrill Trail, Upper Arroyo Seco Trail, Eaton Canyon Trail, and Chaney Trail.

3. Land Use and Community Design

Diversification of land uses. Lake Avenue presents an opportunity to provide a greater mix of land uses, including pedestrian and active transportation connectivity, enhanced community identity, beautification, and economic development.

4. Equitable Altadena

West Altadena. Due to historical disinvestment, West Altadena should be prioritized for investments in local infrastructure for access to recreation, walkability, transit, and traffic calming, with resources to support the development of locally-owned commercial services and goods along Lincoln Avenue.

C. COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC POLICIES

The following provides the policies for Altadena, organized to implement each of the six elements of the Area Plan and address the community-specific issues and opportunities presented above. Each policy is linked to a relevant vision statement (referenced as “VS”), as presented in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, of this Area Plan.

VS 1 – Harmonious and Coordinated Growth

Policy AL-1.1: Orderly and sustainable growth. Focus moderate growth along primary roads such as Lake Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, Washington Boulevard, and Allen Avenue where access to services, amenities, existing infrastructure, and transit is higher. Ensure development fits the community character.

See Land Use Policy LU-1.1.

Policy AL-1.1

COMMERCIAL CENTERS AND CORRIDORS

See Land Use Policy LU-6.2.

Policy AL-1.2

Policy AL-1.2: Commercial accessory units. Allow for commercial accessory units on corner lots along east west corridors, including East and West Altadena Drive.

See Land Use Policy LU-3.4.

Policy AL-1.3

Policy AL-1.3: Vibrant commercial corridors. Support Lake and Lincoln Avenues as vibrant, walkable mixed-use commercial districts with public realm improvements, local services, and amenities that serve local residents, with particular attention to the needs of West Altadena residents.

PARKS, OPEN SPACES, AND TRAILS

See Land Use Policy LU-5.7.

Policy AL-1.5

Policy AL-1.4: Complete Altadena Crest Trail connectivity. Support the completion of the Altadena Crest Trail and close gaps to create a continuous trail, avoiding impacts to sensitive resources.

Policy AL-1.5: Additional park resources. Support additional resources for park space and varied amenities in the southern portion of Altadena. Despite Altadena's overall low park need, the community lacks gathering spaces with amenities like group picnic areas and event spaces, as well as support facilities such as concessions and restrooms.

Policy AL-1.6: Support nightly trail gate closures. Support the consistent nightly closure of the Chaney Trail gate and other trail gates to prevent nuisances from improper use, wildfires, and other threats that can cause harm to wildlife and locals.

Policy AL-1.7: Address trail user conflicts. Support increased trail safety and reduced user conflict by designating specific trails as equestrian and hiking only, and prohibit biking on such designated trails, to help prevent conflicts with mountain bikers who proceed at higher speeds, frighten horses, and cause increased trail erosion and alteration.

See Land Use Policy LU-5.7.

Policy AL-1.8

Policy AL-1.8: Improvements for Farnsworth Park. Support additional funding and resources to improve and expand park space at Charles Farnsworth Park, along the North Marengo Avenue side, with amenities that support the recreational needs of the local community.

HOUSING

Policy AL-1.9: Promote mixed use development. Facilitate mixed-use developments along major streets such as Lake Avenue, Altadena Drive, Fair Oaks Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, and East Washington Avenue.

See Land Use Policy LU-3.7.

Policy AL-1.9

Policy AL-1.10: Support multifamily housing. Support the development of multifamily housing along Altadena Drive, Lincoln Avenue, Allen Avenue, and New York Drive by prioritizing infrastructure investments in these areas to allow for increased density.

See Land Use Policy LU-3.1.

Policy AL-1.10

VS 2 – Connected and Walkable Communities

WALKING, BIKING, AND TRANSIT

Policy AL-2.1: Increase sidewalk continuity. Preserve the existing mature tree inventory and canopy while prioritizing capital improvement projects that fill existing sidewalk gaps in Altadena to connect residential areas with commercial corridors and other community destinations. Consider using appropriate alternatives to concrete that complement the community’s character.

See Mobility Policy M-3.2.

Policy AL-2.1

Policy AL-2.2: Improve intersections and crosswalks. Improve high-stress crossings, such as the intersection at Altadena Drive and Lake Avenue, and other widely spaced intersections with improvements including mid-block crossings, protected left turns, pedestrian refuge islands, and similar enhancements.

See Mobility Policy M-3.2.

Policy AL-2.2

Policy AL-2.3: Improve traffic calming for safe walking, biking, and horseback riding. Install traffic calming measures on primary and secondary roads to deter unsafe driving, prioritizing the safety of active transportation users and equestrians over traffic flow.

Policy AL-2.4: Promote a connected bike network. Create a connected network of protected bike lanes ranging from north-south and east-west throughout the community, including connections to open spaces at Hahamongna and Eaton Canyon.

See Mobility Policy M-3.1.

Policy AL-2.4

Policy AL-2.5: Address safety issues of existing bicycle facilities. Provide safety treatments, such as separated and protected bikeways, to minimize the frequency and severity of collisions and enhance safety.

See Land Use Policy LU-5.8.

Policy AL-2.6

Policy AL-2.6: Prioritize shared use paths. Prioritize shared use paths¹⁵ connecting from neighborhoods to open spaces and trails to build a network that provides equitable access to recreational opportunities for all residents.

Policy AL-2.7: Promote hillside transit service. Promote transit service for hillside communities where walking or biking is difficult.

EQUESTRIAN FACILITIES

Policy AL-2.8: Preserve and enhance equestrian culture.

Preserve the equestrian district and enhance equestrian culture, by seeking additional resources to maintain and improve equestrian facilities in the community, seeking to engage local equestrians in the process.

Policy AL-2.9: Support development of an equestrian trail on Loma Alta. Support the design and implementation of an off-road pathway for equestrian and pedestrian use along Loma Alta Drive to directly connect local equestrian facilities, trails, and open spaces.

VS 3 – Strong Social and Cultural Cohesion

See Land Use Policy LU-8.2.

Policy AL-3.1

Policy AL-3.1: Create convenient community gathering spaces. Create community gathering areas along Lake Avenue and Lincoln Avenue and other areas where access to existing amenities and services is high.

VS 4 – A Thriving Business Friendly Region

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION

See Land Use Policy LU-6.4.

Policy AL-4.1

Policy AL-4.1: Establish a biosciences hub. Encourage growth of biosciences and sustainable industries along with supportive commercial uses and bike- and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure in the business park area along Woodbury Road to create a vibrant employment and commercial corridor.

¹⁵ Shared use paths offer network connectivity opportunities beyond that of the roadway network. These facilities are often located in parks, along rivers, beaches, and in greenbelts or utility corridors where there are few conflicts with motorized vehicles (FHWA 2016).

VS 6 – Equitable Decision Making

Policy AL-6.1: Invest in West Altadena. Invest in the historically redlined area of West Altadena to support infrastructure improvements, beautification of commercial corridors, growth of local small businesses, and enhanced access to parks and public facilities to promote community wellbeing.