SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AREA PLAN

Acknowledgements

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1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Figure 1-1. Map of Los Angeles County.

A. OVERVIEW

The San Fernando Valley Area Plan (SFVAP or Plan) is a policy document intended to direct future development and land use decisions for the unincorporated areas in the San Fernando Valley through 2045. It establishes goals and policies specific to the needs of the unincorporated communities in the San Fernando Valley Planning Area (Planning Area) and provides a framework for the County of Los Angeles (County), the development community, business owners, and residents to shape the future character of the communities. The SFVAP is one of eleven planning areas in the County and focuses on land use and policy issues specific to the SFVAP communities.

B. VISIONING STATEMENT

The San Fernando Valley's unincorporated communities will continue to thrive, preserving their unique charm and natural beauty. The strong bonds within these unincorporated communities will preserve their character and enhance safety, resilience, and harmony with nature for future generations.

C. COMMUNITIES

The San Fernando Valley, spanning about 260 square miles in Greater Los Angeles, combines urban, suburban, and rural areas. Surrounded by mountains, it includes parts of Los Angeles, Glendale, San Fernando, Burbank, and nearby unincorporated communities. The SFVAP includes the following unincorporated communities:

- Kagel Canyon/Lopez Canyon/Sylmar Island;

- Oat Mountain;

- Twin Lakes;

- West Chatsworth; and

- Westhills.

While the unincorporated Universal City is located within the San Fernando Valley, the area is governed by the NBC Universal Evolution Plan: Universal Studios Specific Plan.
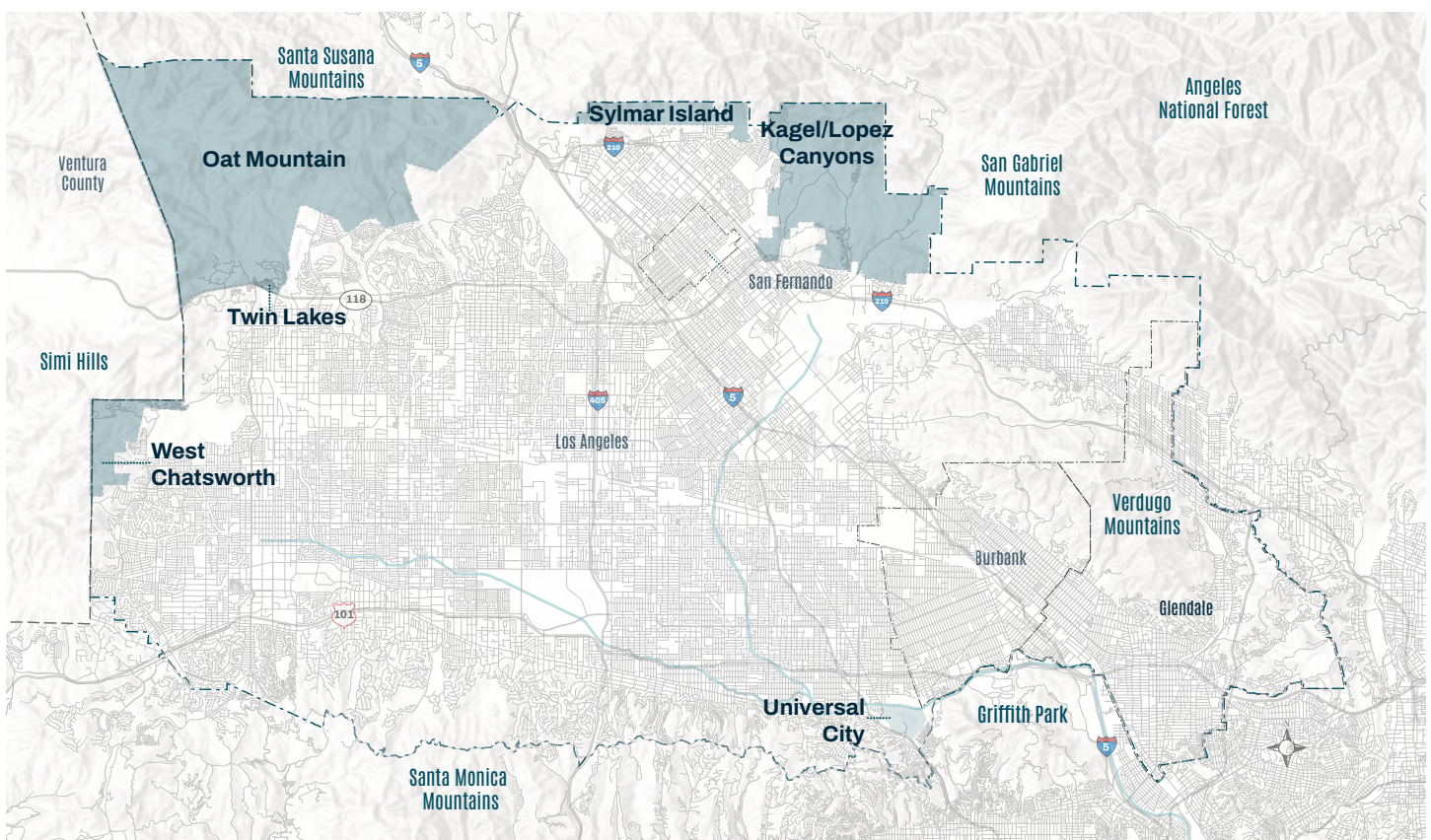
Figure 1-2. San Fernando Area Plan Communities.

1.2. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

A. LOS ANGELES COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

General Plan Framework: The Los Angeles County 2035 General Plan (General Plan) is the guide for long-term physical development and conservation through a framework of goals, policies, and implementation programs. It also lays the foundation for future community-based planning initiatives, such as area plans. To capture the unique aspects of each area and to allow for a more refined level of community-driven planning, the General Plan divides the County up into 11 planning areas, and calls for an area plan to be developed in each of the planning areas.

Area Plans are a component of the General Plan (see figure 1.3) and establish the long-range vision for preservation, growth, and reinvestment, and include goals, policies, and programs that are specific and focused on a region of the County. Community plans cover smaller geographic areas within one of the 11 planning areas identified by the General Plan and address neighborhood or community-level policy issues. Within the San Fernando Valley Planning Area, the Twin Lakes Community Plan was adopted in 1991.

Figure 1-3. Depicts the relationship between the General Plan and the Area Plan.

General Plan Guiding Principles: The General Plan is grounded in six guiding principles of:

1. Smart Growth: Focus growth in areas with access to resources and transit, while preserving important farmland and areas of ecological importance.

2. Adequate Services and Infrastructure: Coordinate an equitable sharing of public and private costs associated with providing appropriate community services and infrastructure to meet growth needs.

3. Strong and Diverse Economy: Protect areas that generate employment and promote programs that support a stable and well-educated workforce. This will provide a foundation for a jobs/housing balance and a vital and competitive economy in the unincorporated areas.

4. Environmental Resource Management: Carefully manage the County's natural resources, such as air, water, wildlife habitats, mineral resources, agricultural land, forests, and open space, in an integrated way that is both feasible and sustainable.

5. Healthy, Livable, and Equitable Communities: Design communities that incorporate their cultural and historic surroundings, are not overburdened by nuisance and negative environmental factors, and provide reasonable access to food systems. These factors have a measurable effect on public well-being.

6. Promotion of Strengths, Community Voice, and Equity Outcomes: Seek out special places or traditions that are significant to the community and recommend ways to preserve and celebrate them.

The County is committed to actively promoting equity throughout its policies and practices. The County's Racial Equity Strategic Plan provides a multi-dimensional definition of equity:

• Procedural equity – fair, transparent, and inclusive processes that lead to more just outcomes and opportunities for individuals impacted by inequity. Procedural equity can be achieved through processes that acknowledge power imbalances across stakeholders and aim to rectify them by recognizing diverse forms of power and expertise, namely expertise from lived experiences integral to informing more equitable and effective public decision-making.

• Distributional equity – the most understood form of equity, achieved through fair allocation of resources such as goods and services, as well as societal benefits and burdens.

• Structural equity – addresses the root causes of inequities, including underlying systemic structures, policies, societal norms, and practices that contribute towards disparate population-level outcomes.

B. SAFETY ELEMENT

The Los Angeles County Safety Element is a component of the Countywide General Plan, which outlines policies and strategies to ensure the safety and well-being of its residents from natural and human-made hazards. The Safety Element addresses a wide range of safety

issues, including:

- **Seismic Hazards:** Mitigation strategies for earthquakes, such as building codes and retrofitting structures to withstand seismic activity.

- **Flooding:** Policies for managing flood risks, including the maintenance and improvement of drainage systems and floodplain management.

- **Wildfires:** Strategies to reduce wildfire risks through vegetation management, fire-resistant building materials, and emergency preparedness plans.

- **Landslides:** Identification of landslide-prone areas and measures to prevent and mitigate landslide risks.

- **Hazardous Materials:** Guidelines for the safe handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials to prevent spills and contamination.

- **Climate Change:** Adaptation strategies to address the impacts of climate change, such as increased temperatures, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events.

- **Emergency Preparedness:** Plans for emergency response and recovery, including coordination among various agencies and community education programs.

The Safety Element aims to create a resilient community by reducing vulnerabilities to hazards and enhancing the county's ability to respond to and recover from emergencies.
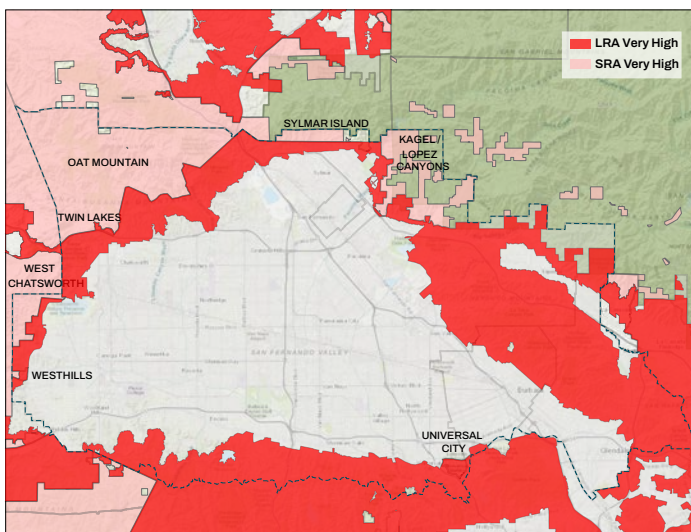
Figure 1-4. Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map

C. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2045

The 2045 Los Angeles County Climate Action Plan (CAP) is a sub-element of the General Plan Air Quality Element that contains a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting sustainability, and enhancing community resilience to climate impacts. The plan focuses on increasing renewable energy use, improving energy efficiency, waste reduction, water conservation, climate adaptation, and ensuring environmental justice and equity. By fostering green jobs and providing workforce training, the plan aims to support a green economy. Several implementation projects of the CAP are underway including the development of a Countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and related Community Wildfire Protection Ordinance (CWPO) that will enhance wildfire safety and preparedness in Los Angeles County. The CCWPP proactively plans and prioritizes wildfire risk reduction through vegetation management, prevention strategies, risk assessment, and resource allocation for existing communities. The CWPO strengthens building regulations for new development in high-risk areas, focusing on construction standards and evacuation routes to minimize future wildfire impacts.
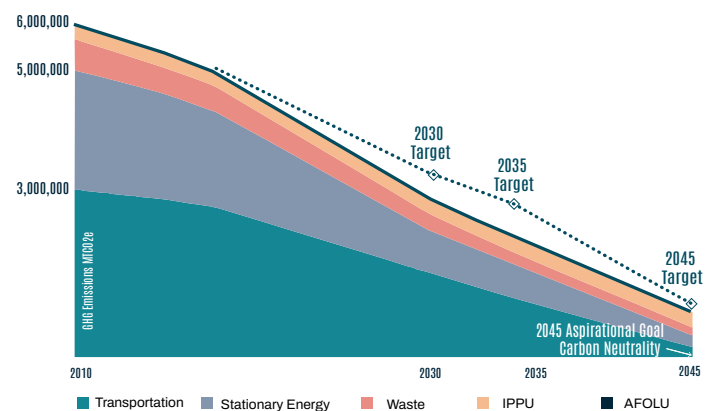
AFOLU = agriculture, forestry, and other land uses; IPPU = industrial processes and product use; $MTCO_{2e}$ = metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Figure 1-5. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Path to 2045 Carbon Neutrality and 2045 CAP Targets.

C. LOS ANGELES COUNTY BICYCLE MASTER PLAN

The Los Angeles County Bicycle Master Plan (BMP) is a sub-element of the General Plan Mobility Element with a strategic framework created by County Public Works to enhance and expand the County's network of bikeways. First established in 2012 and currently being updated for 2025, the BMP aims to develop a safe, accessible,
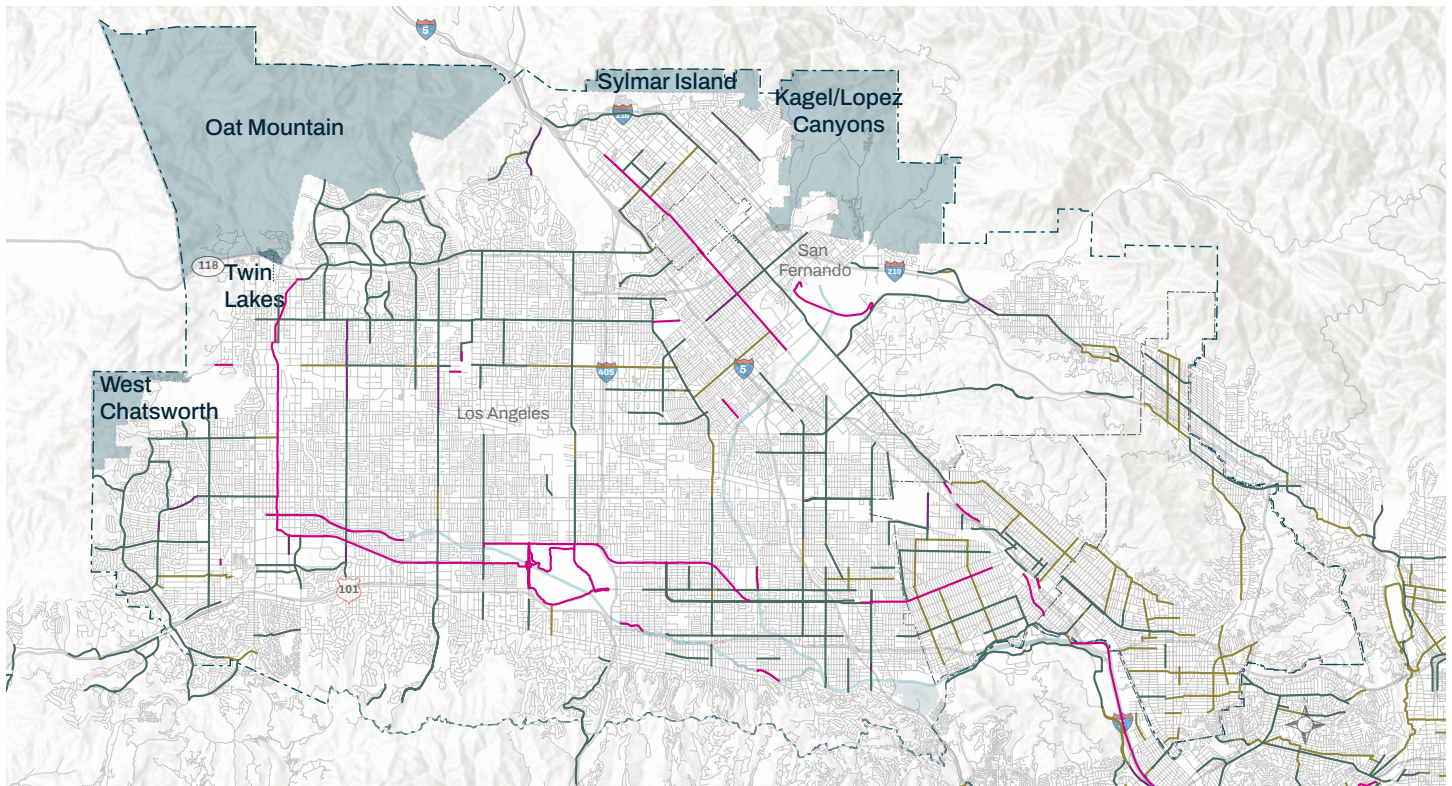
Figure 1-6. 2025 Bicycle Master Plan Network Proposed for San Fernando Valley.

and extensive network of bike paths and lanes that link communities throughout the County. The primary objective is to encourage biking as a secure, efficient, and eco-friendly transportation option, thereby fostering healthier and more interconnected communities across Los Angeles County.

D. STEP BY STEP LOS ANGELES COUNTY

The Step by Step Los Angeles County: Pedestrian Plans for Unincorporated Communities" was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in 2019 and provides a policy framework on how the County proposes to get more people walking, increase pedestrian safety, and support healthy and active lifestyles. It also includes community pedestrian plans for unincorporated communities in the County.

E. VISION ZERO LOS ANGELES COUNTY: A PLAN FOR SAFER ROADWAYS

"Vision Zero Los Angeles County: A Plan for Safer Roadways" is an initiative aimed at eliminating traffic-related fatalities on unincorporated County roadways by 2035. Launched by the County Board of Supervisors, the plan focuses on systematic safety improvements and speed management to reduce traffic deaths.

Key components of the plan include:

- Infrastructure Enhancements: Installation of high-visibility crosswalks, pedestrian head-start signals, ADA curb ramps, and speed cushions to improve safety for all road users.

- Data-Driven Approach: Identification of "Collision Concentration Corridors" where interventions are prioritized to address high rates of severe collisions.

- Community Collaboration: Engagement with local agencies, community groups, and residents to ensure the safety measures meet community needs.

- System Fixes and Speed Management: Targeting speed as a critical factor in severe collisions and implementing systemic changes to reduce speeds and enhance road safety.

F. LOS ANGELES COUNTYWIDE COMPREHENSIVE PARKS AND RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PARKS NEEDS ASSESSMENT PLUS (PNA+)

The Los Angeles Countywide Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment (CPRNA), initiated in 2016, aimed to evaluate and document the county's existing park and recreation facilities while identifying community needs for additional or improved amenities. Through extensive

community engagement, surveys, public meetings, and workshops, the assessment provided a detailed inventory of current resources, highlighted service gaps, and prioritized areas for investment. The findings have been instrumental in guiding resource allocation and funding decisions, including the Safe, Clean Neighborhood Parks and Beaches Measure (Measure A) passed in 2016.

Parks Needs Assessment Plus (PNA+), launched in 2020, builds on the CPRNA. PNA+ focuses on equity, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience within park and recreation facilities. Through continued community engagement and updated data collection, it aims to ensure all communities, especially underserved ones, have access to quality parks. The assessment informs policy decisions, funding priorities, and strategic planning to create more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient park systems. PNA+ calls for a holistic approach to conservation through both the conservation and protection of existing valuable natural resources and the restoration of urban degraded lands, forming the basis of the County's strategy to conserve at least 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030 (30x30). It also identifies priority areas for regional recreation and rural recreation using various indicators of population vulnerability and other factors such as access to regional and rural recreation sites via different modes of travel, the availability of such facilities, and the amenities they offer.

G. CONNECT SOCAL

Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) updated Connect SoCal, the Regional Transportation Plan/ Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), in April 2024. It is a long-range transportation plan and sustainable communities strategy for Southern California that aims to enhance mobility, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote sustainable development across the region. The plan integrates transportation, land use, and housing policies to create more livable and resilient communities. Key components include expanding public transit, improving active transportation infrastructure, and fostering smart growth. Connect SoCal provides a comprehensive framework for coordinating regional efforts to address transportation challenges and support economic vitality and environmental sustainability.

H. METRO'S ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIC PLAN

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) recently updated its Active Transportation Strategic Plan (ATSP) in 2023. This updated plan aims to improve and expand active transportation options like walking, biking, and transit use across the County of Los Angeles. The plan prioritizes safety, accessibility, and connectivity, focusing on creating a more integrated and user-friendly transportation network. It includes infrastructure development, community engagement, and policy integration to reduce car dependency, lower emissions, and promote healthier lifestyles. The ATSP serves as a strategic roadmap to build a sustainable, equitable, and vibrant transportation system in the region. For the San Fernando Valley area, the ATSP anticipates an increase of 12,187,914 bicycle trips, reduction of 4,652 tons of CO2e of greenhouse gases and a 55% reduction in collisions, though a majority of those are likely to be in incorporated areas.

1.3. PLANNING PROCESS

The San Fernando Valley Area Plan (SFVAP) Project officially began in April 2024, but significant preparation happened beforehand. County staff connected with LA County Planning colleagues living in the San Fernando Valley to gather crucial local insights, establish contacts, identify important places, and understand community concerns. Additionally, Land Use Regulation colleagues provided tours of the unincorporated communities, highlighting their unique features and landmarks.

The San Fernando Valley Area Plan (SFVAP) planning process was meticulously designed to engage a broad spectrum of residents within the Plan area. This included individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, varying socioeconomic statuses, different age groups, all abilities, and those residing in various housing types and tenures.

Throughout every phase of the project, education and outreach efforts were driven by clear objectives and intended outcomes. A key commitment was transparent communication regarding how community input would be integrated into the plan. To ensure widespread participation, a variety of online and in-person platforms were utilized, with events scheduled at convenient times and locations. The County also maintained a regularly updated website to document information and feedback, and employed multiple methods to notify communities about upcoming events.

A. COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The SFVAP implemented a robust public engagement strategy, blending innovative digital tools with established community outreach methods. This approach successfully encouraged contributions from a diverse array of citizens, ensuring a wide range of voices were heard, from large public forums to more focused, smaller stakeholder discussions on specific topics.

1. Community Walk-Throughs

To ensure a community-centric approach from the outset, dedicated walk-throughs were organized with key representatives from Kagel Canyon, Lake Manor, Westhills, Twin Lakes, and Universal City. These immersive tours proved highly effective in building rapport and enabling residents to articulate the nuances of their communities. Through their narratives, a deep understanding was gained of critical local issues, treasured assets, historical significance, and the interplay of natural landscapes and valued architectural elements.

2. Mailings

In June 2024, informational postcards were mailed to all 2,187 property owners in the unincorporated San Fernando Valley. This mailing served to introduce the project, publicize upcoming community meetings, and guide community members to the project website for further details and to participate in the online survey.

Later in Summer 2024, targeted letters were dispatched to property owners with potentially impacted parcels, specifically those facing proposed adjustments to zoning or land use designations. These adjustments were primarily corrective, addressing instances of split-zoning or misaligned designations. This proactive communication allowed for direct, personalized discussions (in-person or by phone) regarding individual property proposals, preceding the scheduled community meetings in August and September 2024.

3. Language Access

To ensure no community members were excluded from the process, comprehensive language access was integrated throughout the project's development. This included providing project summaries in both Spanish and Chinese. For all in-person and virtual meetings organized by the planning department, simultaneous interpretation in Spanish was readily available.

4. Tribal Consultations

Prior to the project's commencement, initial introduction letters were dispatched to all tribal representatives listed on the California Native American Heritage Commission's mailing list. These early communications were instrumental in refining the process for collecting information on potential historic sites, ensuring the robust protection of sensitive data. A second consultation letter was subsequently issued to all listed tribes in March 2025. This mailing served to formally share the Historic Context Statement and provide official notification of the Project, in full compliance with Senate Bill (SB) 18 requirements.

5. Government Coordination

Throughout the project lifecycle, staff actively engaged in monthly County Community Engagement Coordination Meetings. These inter-departmental gatherings ensured consistent project updates and identified valuable opportunities for coordinated outreach efforts across County departments.

Beyond internal coordination, staff conducted individual meetings with planning representatives from the Cities of Los Angeles, San Fernando, Glendale, and Burbank, as well as Ventura County. These direct engagements introduced the project and gathered crucial insights for effective inter-agency coordination.

Furthermore, staff participated in a multi-agency oil well walk-through in Westhills. This event fostered collaborative understanding and problem-solving, providing an additional layer of coordination with state agencies, including the Department of Conservation and staff from the State Water Resources Control Board.

6. Community Groups

To ensure broad outreach across the Planning Area, planning staff actively engaged diverse community groups. Staff convened meetings with organizations including the Chatsworth Historical Society, students and staff from Cal State Northridge, Tree People volunteers, Chatsworth Park Elementary School Planning Magnet staff, and management from the Los Angeles Unified School District. Planning staff also met with developers and closely coordinated with representatives from the Kagel Canyon Civic Association, Westhills Homeowners Association, Twin Lakes Property Owners Association, Deerlake Homeowners Association, and NBCUniversal staff and Community Advisory Panel.

Beyond these individual meetings, planning staff participated in various pop-up community events, such as the Chatsworth Preserve Earth Day Event, Winter Solstice Event, and the Cal State Northridge Wildfire Symposium.

The Department also hosted a series of introductory public meetings in July, August, and September 2024 at the Chatsworth Park South Recreation Center and Dexter Park. Two virtual meetings were also conducted in July and September 2024. These virtual sessions introduced the project, gathered feedback for the Historic Context Statement's development, and were recorded for posting on the project website, ensuring access for those unable to attend live.

7. Digital Engagement

Digital Engagement was another vital tool for communication and engagement. A webpage (planning.lacounty.gov/sfvap) was developed that provided a space to communicate the project scope, provide project summaries translated into Spanish and Chinese, receive feedback through an online survey, share information through mapping applications, and provide project updates. Meeting presentations and recordings were posted on the website along

with drafts for review. On the website, there was a place to sign-up for project updates using Constant Contact e-newsletters. Flyers advertising upcoming events were created that could be distributed through community email lists and posted on online platforms. These flyers were also posted on the Department's social media accounts.

8. Community Survey

Early in the Discovery phase, a survey was made available on the project website to gather feedback from community members regarding important local issues. Although the unincorporated areas of the San Fernando Valley have fewer than 2,200 property owners, the survey received 82 responses.

The survey results revealed that a majority of respondents chose the community for its access to nature, rural lifestyle, and neighborhood charm, indicating a strong desire to preserve its existing character and sense of community. Key concerns included potential increases in traffic, homelessness, loss of dark skies and natural spaces, and hazard impacts. Residents prioritized infrastructure improvements for traffic and speeding, as well as the preservation of open space, natural areas, animal keeping, parks, trails, traffic safety, and dark skies. The community was defined by respondents as fostering neighborly friendship through nature walks, local gathering spaces, and events, underscoring a desire for inclusion in County infrastructure planning.

These survey responses, along with summaries from in-person community meetings, directly informed the creation of the draft goals and policies for the Area Plan.

9. Drone Photography

Drone photography provided access to inaccessible areas, offering a unique aerial perspective for comprehensive visual documentation, enhancing community engagement and overall project awareness.

Drone photography proved crucial for the project, providing a complete visual overview of areas, such as rugged terrain, that were otherwise inaccessible on foot. In coordination with the communities, the Department's Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Program programmed flights over each of the unincorporated communities in the San Fernando Valley. Beyond offering additional opportunities to coordinate with community leadership, drone photography captured unique aerial perspectives, providing high-resolution visual documentation that comprehensively illustrates topography, land use, vegetation, and community layout for stakeholders and public outreach.

Drone pilots also attended in-person meetings to share more about the drone flights, raise awareness for the program, and help boost attendance.

2

PLANNING AREA

2.1 HISTORY

The San Fernando Valley, a sprawling urban and suburban landscape in Southern California, boasts a rich and complex history. From its origins as a thriving Indigenous homeland to its transformation into a suburban powerhouse, the Valley's story is one of continuous change, marked by waves of settlement, development, and adaptation.

EARLY INHABITANTS

The San Fernando Valley was originally home to Indigenous Californians, including the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash people, who lived in the area for thousands of years. Their villages, particularly near waterways and in the foothills, served as convergence points for these diverse populations.

SPANISH COLONIZATION

In 1797, Spanish colonizers, led by Father Fermín Lasuén, established the Mission San Fernando Rey de España on the site of the Indigenous village of Achooykomenga. Many Indigenous Californians were coerced or forced into the mission system, where they were conscripted as "neophytes" to tend to livestock, cultivate crops like grapes and olives, and support the mission's daily operations.

MEXICAN RULE AND AMERICAN ANNEXATION

After Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, the missions were secularized, and their lands were divided into ranchos granted to military officers and other esteemed

individuals. The Mission San Fernando was secularized in 1834, and by 1846, most of the San Fernando Valley was sold to Eugolio de Celis.

In 1848, as a result of the Mexican-American War, Alta California, including the San Fernando Valley, was ceded to the United States. Two years later, in 1850, California officially became the thirty-first state.

TRANSITION TO AMERICAN RULE AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

During the second half of the 19th century, under American rule, the former rancho lands were gradually subdivided and sold, often due to

conflicts between Mexican and American land laws. By 1869, most of the San Fernando Valley was divided into north and south halves, with a ploughed furrow near present-day Roscoe Boulevard serving as the dividing line.

The arrival of railroad connections in the 1870s and 1880s spurred the creation of some town sites. However, the arid climate meant that the Valley primarily remained an agricultural area, cultivating wheat, barley, and other crops requiring minimal water.

Early settlers, such as Henry Kagel, homesteaded in the periphery of the Valley. Kagel, a miner, built an adobe house in what is now Kagel Canyon around 1900, believed to be the first permanent structure in the area. Other homesteaders also established roots in the far northwest, contributing to the formation of communities like Twin Lakes and Chatsworth Lake Manor.

THE AQUEDUCT'S IMPACT AND AGRICULTURAL BOOM

The Los Angeles Aqueduct, completed in 1913, proved to be a transformative infrastructure project for the San Fernando Valley. Devised by William Mulholland, Frederick Eaton, and J.B. Lippincott, the aqueduct brought water from the Eastern Sierras to the arid Los Angeles basin. By 1915, most of the San Fernando Valley was annexed by the City of Los Angeles, securing

Wheat harvesting near Van Nuys, ca. 1890s (USC Digital Library).

access to this vital water source.

This influx of water led to an agricultural boom in the 1910s, with the Valley becoming dotted with citrus and walnut orchards, poultry and dairy farms, and various cash crops. However, peripheral areas along the foothills, less suited for agriculture, remained unincorporated.

THE RISE OF THE FILM INDUSTRY

Beyond agriculture, the film industry played a crucial role in the Valley's early economy. In 1915, the Universal Film Manufacturing Company opened Universal City, the world's first self-contained community dedicated to filmmaking, at the southern edge of the Valley.

The rugged backdrops and rural settings of areas like Chatsworth made them ideal for shooting Westerns and other films. Independent movie ranches, such as the prominent Iverson Movie Ranch, emerged during the Golden Age of Hollywood, serving as versatile filming locations for countless movies and television programs.

Filming at the Iverson Movie Ranch, ca. 1926.

EARLY VACATION COMMUNITIES AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

In the 1920s, unincorporated areas of the Valley began to see development primarily as vacation sites, offering an escape from urban Los Angeles. Developers subdivided land in places like Kagel Canyon, Chatsworth Lake Manor, Deer Lake Highlands, and

Tract homes under construction in the San Fernando Valley, ca. 1950s.

Kagel Canyon, 1956.

Boaters in Twin Lakes Park.

Twin Lakes Park. These communities featured small, substandard-sized lots for weekend cabins and were organized around narrow access roads.

Developers enticed buyers with recreational amenities, and some communities, like Twin Lakes, even adopted unique architectural themes, such as a Mayan motif by architect Robert Stacy-Judd. These cabin parcels were marketed as affordable, some selling for as little as $100. While mostly residential, some communities included compatible commercial uses like real estate offices, stores, and restaurants.

Postcard of Universal City, c. 1920 (Loyola Marymount University, William H. Hannon Library).

Mayan-inspired entrance arch at the Twin Lakes development.

Advertising brochure for Twin Lakes Park, ca. 1927.

Between 1925-1926, the United States Veteran's Bureau Hospital was built in Sylmar, becoming the first of its kind on the Pacific Coast. This massive institution, comprising 20 concrete buildings, provided medical care for military veterans.

United States Veteran's Bureau Hospital on Sayre Street, 1948.

The ambitious plans for these vacation communities were largely hampered by the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s. However, some individuals took advantage of the small, affordable lots, which they used to build permanent dwellings. Kagel Canyon also benefited from New Deal programs, which brought improvements to Dexter Park, in the Kagel Canyon community, including retaining walls, picnic areas, and landscaping.

Twin Lakes Park tract office, 1927.

Dexter Park Community Center under construction (left), 1956.

POST-WAR SUBURBANIZATION

Following World War II, the San Fernando Valley underwent a dramatic transformation, shifting from an agricultural heartland to a thriving suburban landscape. This change was fueled by the influx of jobs from aerospace and defense contractors. The population surged, reaching approximately 400,000 by 1950 and 840,500 by 1960.

As suburban development expanded, the Valley's extensive citrus and walnut groves and other agricultural lands were increasingly acquired and subdivided. Postwar development pressures also pushed new construction into the semi-rural areas overlooking the Valley, including Kagel Canyon, Twin Lakes, and Chatsworth Lake Manor. While these areas saw incremental development of houses and local businesses, they largely retained a semi-rural character.

An exception to this pattern was Westhills, a suburban tract home development that began in 1965 at the far west end of the Valley. This project, with its 175 original suburban houses, marked a significant step towards the more fully developed suburban communities that define much of the San Fernando Valley today. The Westhills subdivision was built out by 1969, though future development projects would later be built in the vicinity, both in the context of additional subdivisions (1979) and additional commercial development to serve the neighborhood (1984).
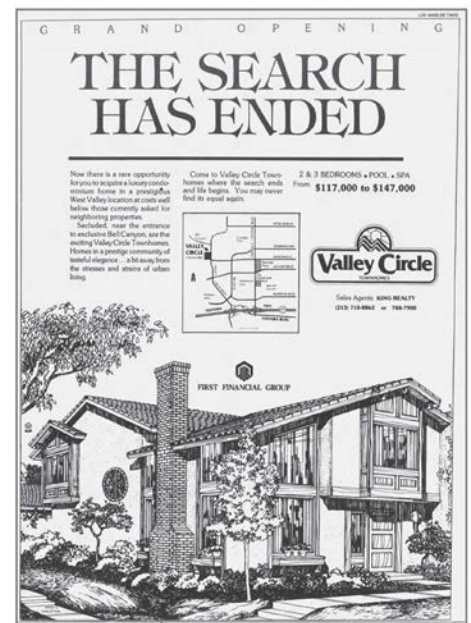
Advertisement for the Valley Circle Townhomes, 1983.

2.2 ARCHITECTURE

The San Fernando Valley Planning Area is characterized by its significant wilderness and undeveloped open space. While development is limited to several small communities, each with unique histories, broad historic themes apply to the built environment across these areas.

RESIDENTIAL

Early settlements were homesteads on rugged, water-scarce public lands in areas like Kagel/Lopez Canyons, Twin Lakes/Oat Mountain, and West Chatsworth, usually small houses for dry farming or mining. This evolved into Early Single-Family Residential Development with diverse architectural styles. Rapid growth after WWII fueled Post-World War II single-family residential development and more standardized designs. Subdivisions and planned communities emerged as larger, comprehensively designed areas.

NON-RESIDENTIAL

The Planning Area's non-residential styles showcase its diverse economic and public functions. Commercial development includes varied retail and other business-focused buildings. Civic and institutional architecture covers buildings designed for public and community benefit. This broad category includes places of worship, government service buildings, and recreational facilities. The design of these structures prioritizes functionality, accessibility, and a sense of public dignity, reflecting their crucial role in serving and improving community life. As such, they often become significant landmarks, embodying the shared values and identity of the community they serve.

2.3 PEOPLE, HOUSING, AND ECONOMY

39.62

Area in sq. mi.

5,608

Population

79.3

Diversity Index

2.73

Household Size

$1,051,700

Median Home Value

$124,236

Median Household Income
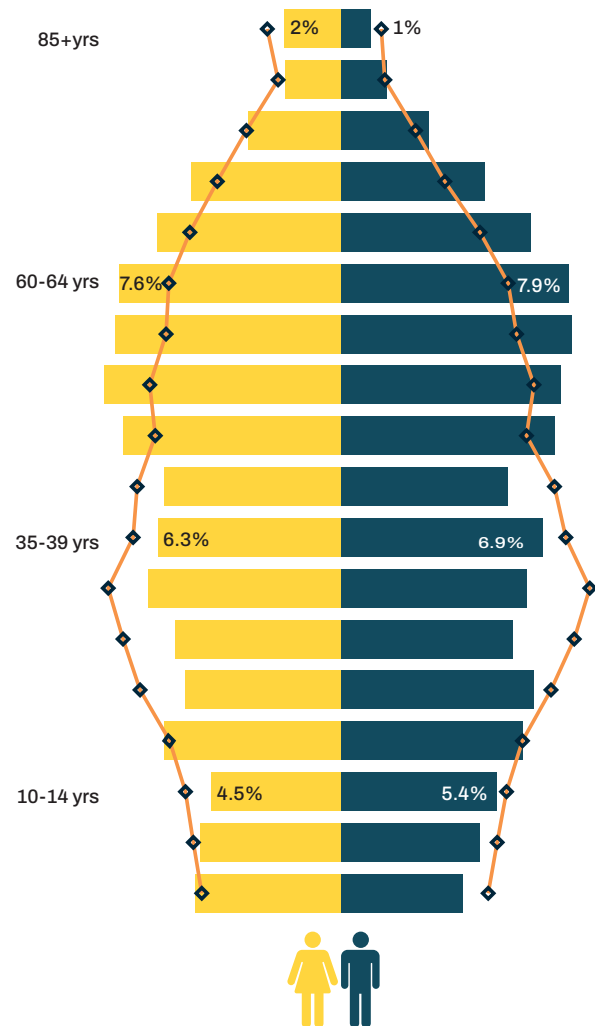
SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

The Planning Area has a total population of 5,608 residents and a
The Planning Area has a total population of 5,608 residents and a
moderate diversity index score of 79.3, indicating a rich and varied mix
of racial and ethnic backgrounds. Of those that responded to the 2020
Census that did not self-identify as Hispanic or Latino (28.4%) the
remaining 71.6% is predominate comprised of individuals who self-
identify as White (51.3%). The breakdown of the remaining includes
Black (3.6%), Asian (11.1%), Pacific Islander (0.1%), and Other (0.7%).
13.7% of those that responded to the survey are two or more races.

Residents are primarily employed in the white-collar sector (77.9%),
followed by blue collar (12.5%) and service sector (9.5%). The median
household income is approximately $124,200, which is significantly
higher than the County median of $87,900. Nearly 70% of residents
own their home in the Planning Area, with the median home value over
$1.05 million. The average household size in the Planning Area is 2.73
which is lower than the average of the unincorporated areas of the
County (3.30).

Age Profile
5 yrs increments

85+yrs 2% 1%

60-64 yrs 7.6% 7.9%

35-39 yrs 6.3% 6.9%

10-14 yrs 4.5% 5.4%

Dots show comparison
to Los Angeles County

43.8
Median Age

38.2 mins

Average Commute Time

9.5% Services

12.5% Blue Collar

77.9% White Collar

Housing: Year Built

0.3% 2020 or Later

3.6% 2010-2019

9.5% 1939 or Earlier

9.4% 2000-2009

4.7% 1940-1949

13.9% 1990-1999

3.7% 1950-1959

9% 1960-1969

11.36% 1970-1979

34.3% 1980-1989
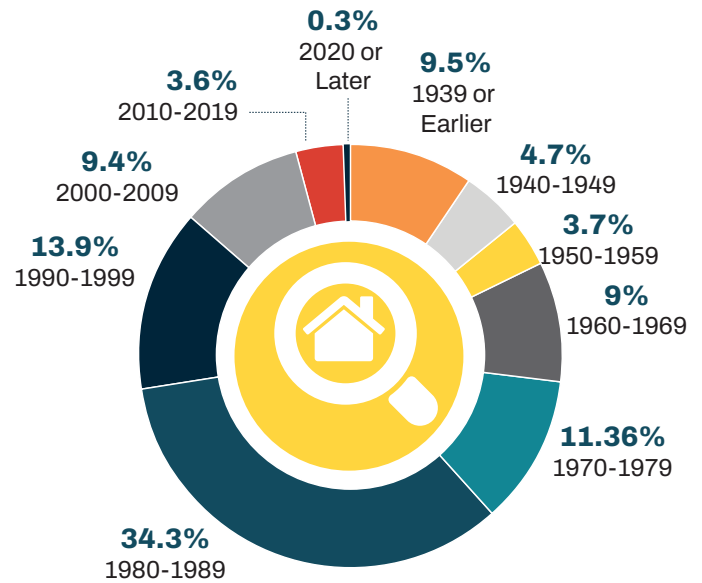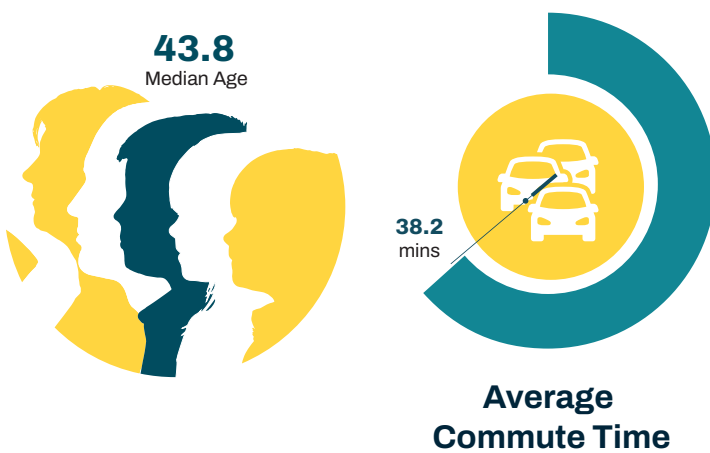
EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

Altogether, the Planning Area communities employ 767 workers, based on 2021 data. Key employment sectors include construction (10.4%), transportation and warehousing (37.2%), administration and support, waste management and premeditation (13.0%), health care and social assistance (10.2%), and arts, entertainment, and recreation (11.0%). Together, these sectors account for 81.7% of total employment in the Planning Area. Most of these jobs are concentrated in the northern portion of the Planning Area with economic activity located in Kagel/Lopez Canyons (Sylmar Island employment data is not available). Additionally, a density of employment is clustered in the northwestern portion of the Planning Area, near CA-118 in Oat Mountain/Twin Lakes. While these two areas represent 87% of jobs, the absolute number of jobs is relatively small. Beyond clusters of transportation and warehousing employment in Kagel/Lopez Canyons and Oat Mountain/ Twin Lakes, there is a relatively modest concentration of other industries. West Chatsworth has one of the few commercial corridors with intermixing of commercial business with residential development along Lake Manor Drive. Overall, the Planning Area has very modest commercial development and the overall characteristic is more rural and residential.

17.9% Grad/Professional Degree

3.5% <9th Grade

3.2% High School No Diploma

13.6% High School Diploma

1.7% GED

21.2% Some College No Degree

28.4% Bachelor's Degree

10.3% Associate's Degree

Education
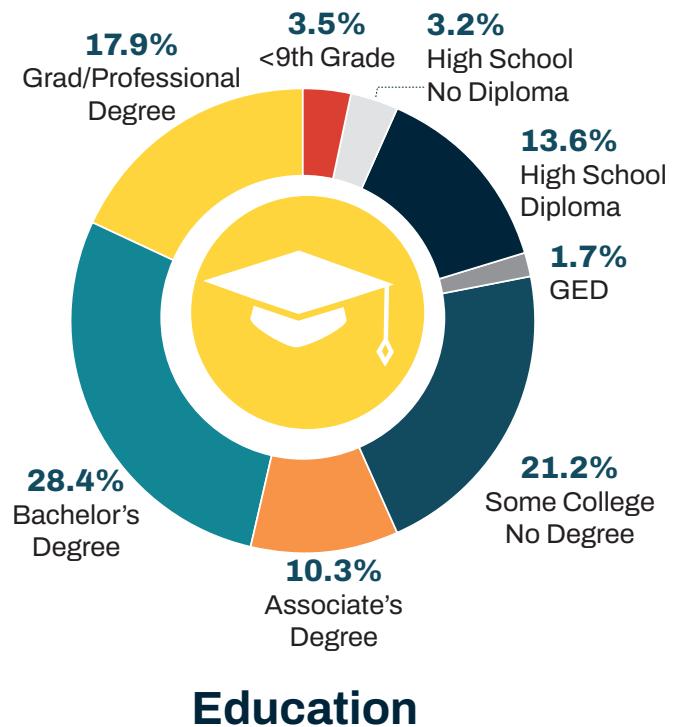
2.4 CULTURE

Artvanta is a boutique museum in Lake Manor where visitors can experience a blend of art and nature, focusing on meaningful and spiritually rich art.

Concert in the Park, Dexter Park, Kagel Canyon. Photo credit: Michele deLorimier.

The culture of SFVA communities is a rich tapestry woven from shared values, beliefs, customs, and practices that define their unique identity and guide residents' interactions. Locals often describe their homes as thriving, independent enclaves nestled in the foothills, deeply committed to preserving their rural charm and natural beauty. This dedication cultivates a strong sense of community, where neighbors genuinely connect and support each other, often through active participation in local groups such as the Westhills Homeowners Association, Twin Lakes Property Owners Association, Chatsworth Lake Manor Citizens Committee — Rural Town Council, and Kagel Canyon Civic Association. This vibrant culture encompasses everything from artistic expressions to unspoken social norms, historical narratives, and the very structure of daily life. This intricate web of shared understanding fosters a profound sense of belonging, shapes individual perspectives, and continually evolves through generations, adapting to new influences while steadfastly maintaining the core essence of the group.

The mural at Hideaway Bar & Grill depicts a Western scene with cowboys and horses, aligning with the establishment's country/Western theme, which includes welcoming horses.

The San Fernando Valley Area communities host a variety of cultural festivals and events that align with the rural and natural setting. They also have access to cultural resources and events in neighboring cities.

The Kagel Canyon messaging board is cherished by residents for fostering community culture. It connects like-minded individuals, builds shared identity, and promotes knowledge through open discussion.

In front of the Fire Station75 stands a grizzly bear statue, a notable piece by local chainsaw artist Stacy Poitras.

3

AREAWIDE GOALS & POLICIES

OVERVIEW

This chapter presents the goals and policies that apply to the communities in the San Fernando Valley Planning Area. They guide development throughout the Planning Area. These goals and policies complement those of the General Plan, with greater focus on the unique characteristics of the Planning Area and its communities. They are organized by the following elements of this plan.

- Land Use

- Mobility

- Conservation and Natural Resources

- Safety

- Public Services and Facilities

- Economic Development

- Historic Preservation

What are Goals and Policies?

Goals articulate "what we want our community to be" in the long term, providing the strategic direction for all shared endeavors.

Policies translate broad community goals into a strategic course of action. They serve a dual purpose: to direct specific activities and resource allocation effectively towards those goals, and to clearly communicate expectations and operational standards to all relevant stakeholders.

3.1 LAND USE ELEMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

The Land Use Element guides development by integrating environmental, public health, safety, and quality-of-life considerations. It strategically organizes compatible activities, addressing daily needs and long-term stewardship of housing, business, recreation, and open space with policies tailored to each community's unique historical development, geography, environmental factors, hazards, and infrastructure.

These communities in the San Fernando Valley Planning Area have largely transformed from agricultural lands into predominantly rural and suburban residential communities, featuring single-family homes, townhomes, and mobilehome parks. The Planning Area includes significant mountainous and open spaces, particularly along northern and western peripheries, are complemented by parks, recreational facilities, and interspersed commercial, institutional, and industrial uses.

Many communities have a rural identity, characterized by hillside development and natural open spaces. Valued by the communities are open space, dark skies, and low-density development. The overarching aim is to preserve the distinct, rural character and way of life by ensuring residential growth remains compatible with the natural landscape.

B. GOALS AND POLICIES

1. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Goal LU 1: Low-density rural and suburban character of the Planning Area communities and their surrounding natural areas maintained through sustainable and appropriate development.

Policy LU 1.1: Recognizing development constraints imposed by existing hazards in the Planning Area, preserve the low-density rural and suburban character of the unincorporated communities.

Policy LU 1.2: Enhance agricultural, equestrian, and animal-keeping activities in the rural communities.

Policy LU 1.3: Ensure the compatibility of low-intensity residential development through standards that reflect the community's character.

Goal LU 2: Architectural heritage and community character that are preserved through appropriate development scale and design.

Policy LU 2.1: Use lot size, height, building materials, rooflines, setbacks, landscaping, and massing to ensure cohesive residential design.

Goal LU 3: A cohesive built environment that nurtures community well-being, inclusivity, and a shared sense of belonging among all residents.

Policy LU 3.1: Foster inclusive land use planning and community partnerships that emphasize local identity and the natural environment.

Policy LU 3.2: Prioritize the development of community hubs and multipurpose gathering spaces within walking distance of residential areas, incorporating features that support diverse uses and accessibility for all age groups.

2. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Goal LU 4: A land use pattern that protects the environmental resources in the San Fernando Valley Planning Area.

Policy LU 4.1: Protect the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Valley SEA, Wildlife Linkage Corridors, and Scenic Resource Areas, which include water features, significant ridgelines, and Hillside Management Areas as indicated on the Land Use Policy Map.

3. FIRE SAFETY

Goal LU 6: Communities that are safe and resilient from natural hazards including wildfires.

Policy LU 6.1: Discourage growth in VHFHSZs where sites and structures are located in areas with topographic features such as ridgelines, hilltops, chimneys, steep draws, and saddles.

Policy LU 6.2: Integrate fire safety considerations into land use regulations and development approvals to protect life and property.

Policy LU 6.3: Strongly encourage emergency evacuation plans to be submitted as part of development proposals.

Policy LU 6.4: Ensure that designated evacuation routes have clear passage for emergency vehicles by limiting oversized vehicle parking in the public right-of-way.

3.2 MOBILITY

A. INTRODUCTION

The existing roadway and transportation system contributes to the rural and suburban character of the San Fernando Valley. The Mobility Element focuses on enhancing safe, convenient, and affordable mobility options for residents. Considerations include high automobile usage, existing transit options, limited pedestrian infrastructure, and the potential for increased recreational trail systems. The SFVAP prioritizes accessibility and emergency evacuation in hillside communities, promoting safety and traffic calming, and improving access to nature through trails.

Residents express concerns about speeding on local roads, posing direct dangers to pedestrians and other drivers. Unregulated parking on local roads of oversized vehicles creates visibility hazards and strains limited street space.

The San Fernando Valley Area Planning Area has an existing, extensive network of trails and dirt roads that traverse its scenic rolling hills, grasslands, and woodlands, providing panoramic views for hikers, runners, mountain bikers, and equestrians. Many of these trails connect through parks and other natural and scenic areas.

B. GOALS AND POLICIES

1. BALANCE MOBILITY WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Goal M1: Efficient, equitable, and environmentally sensitive transportation network throughout the unincorporated communities of the San Fernando Valley Planning Area.

Policy M1.1: Encourage transportation network improvements that align with the Planning Area's character.

Policy M1.2: Ensure all roadway improvements be conducted in a manner protective of adjacent sensitive areas (streams, drainage courses, wildlife corridors, etc.).

2. EMERGENCY ACCESS AND EVACUATION ROUTES

Goal M2: Effective emergency access and evacuation routes throughout the Planning Area's transportation network serving unincorporated communities.

Policy M2.1: Ensure the safe and functional operating capacity of emergency evacuation routes particularly in areas with limited egress, narrow roadways, and difficult terrain.

Policy M 2.2: Address private narrow roadways and potential blockages to improve emergency response.

3. ROAD WIDTHS

Goal M.3: Functional roadways that match existing conditions in the community (e.g. nonconforming buildings, oak woodland etc.).

Policy M 3.1: Streamline processes for roadway encroachment waivers and reclassification of roadway widths.

4. NETWORK OF TRAILS

Goal M 4: Comprehensive, interconnected, and accessible network of multi-use trails for recreation and active transportation.

Policy M 4.1: Support local trail connections to the Rim of the Valley trail network.

Policy M 4.2: Encourage the use of dedicated multi-use trail easements to expand the trail network.

Policy M 4.3: Prioritize the siting of trail routes to minimize potential impacts on sensitive environmental resources and ecosystems.

Policy M 4.4: Establish safe and clearly marked interim trail connections.

Policy M 4.5: Ensure proper maintenance of all existing trails and trailheads.

Policy M 4.6: Encourage community input in the planning and design of trail routes to ensure they are compatible with local needs, character, and preferences.

3.3 CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

The SFVAP area, rich in natural and scenic areas, boasts extensive open spaces, prominent mountain ranges, numerous parks, and multipurpose trail systems. Notably, over 41% of the unincorporated SFV, totaling 10,575.7 acres out of 25,727.63 acres, is open space or government-owned land. The region is bordered by the San Gabriel, Verdugo, Santa Monica, and Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills. There are significant undeveloped areas such as Oat Mountain and portions of Westhills, and Kagel and Lopez Canyons. Recreational opportunities are abundant with parks, such as Dexter Park, Veterans Memorial Community Regional Park, Stoney Creek Park, Chatsworth Trails Park, and Stoney Point Park. Trail enthusiasts can explore paths in Oat Mountain, the Aztec Drive trail in Twin Lakes/Devils Canyon, and extensive routes within the Angeles National Forest accessible via Kagel and Lopez Canyons--all contributing to the broader "Rim of the Valley" trail network.

A significant portion of open space is privately-owned, risking future development without adequate protection. The SFVAP's goals and policies strongly emphasize the protection and expansion of open space. There are also hazards present, including extreme wildfire risks exacerbated by intense heat, arid conditions, scarce rainfall, and powerful Santa Ana winds. Challenges also include limited egress and evacuation constraints due to narrow roadways and challenging terrain, topography issues leading to unstable slopes and potential landslide susceptibility, and risks of flooding and erosion. Additionally, the presence of numerous oil and gas wells and proximity to sites such as the Santa Susana Field Laboratory raise concerns about potential hazardous material releases.

The communities share a unified vision for the protection and expansion of open space, a priority that is reflected in policies to protect and conserve natural resources, enhance air, water, and biological resource quality, and encourage open space expansion.

B. GOALS AND POLICIES

1. BIODIVERSITY AND ECOLOGICAL HEALTH

Goal CNR 1: Equitable and climate resilient communities

Policy CNR 1.1: Protect habitat areas and wildlife linkages through the Simi Hills and Kagel Canyon, and nearby waterways such as creeks, streams, and washes.

Policy CNR 1.2: Include local tribes in the efforts to expand open space in the San Fernando Valley.

Policy CNR 1.3: Foster stewardship around biological conservation, restoration, and climate adaptation.

Policy CNR 1.4: Prioritize conversion of previously developed semi-public and utility sites (e.g., landfills, oil fields, natural gas storage) to public open space and recreational uses.

Policy CNR 1.5: Protect areas of environmental and cultural significance, including sites important to local tribes.

Policy CNR 1.6: Partner with adjacent jurisdictions to identify and understand areas of mutual importance, with an emphasis on enhancing natural resources.

2. NATIVE LANDSCAPE, TREE, AND FAUNA PROTECTION

Goal CNR 2: Native landscapes, trees, and fauna protected from encroaching development.

Policy CNR 2.1: Preserve the genetic diversity of oak populations native to the San Fernando Valley, including those of scrub oak (Quercus berberidifolia), San Gabriel leather oak (Q. durata var. gabrielensis), Engelmann Oak (Q. engelmannii), valley oak (Q. lobata), canyon oak (Q. chrysolepis), coast live oak (Q. agrifolia), Ewan's Oak (Q. x ewanii), and naturally occurring hybrids.

Policy CNR 2.2: Encourage the use of local and native species in landscaping. See Appendix 6.2 for Native Plant List for the San Fernando Valley Area Plan.

Policy CNR 2.3: Discourage the use of California invasive species as noted on the Invasive Plant List contained in Appendix C of the SEA Ordinance Implementation Guide.

Goal CNR 3: Native trees protected from insect infestation.

Policy CNR 3.1: Discourage private firewood dispensaries, which can facilitate the spread of insect infestations.

3. PROTECTING SCENIC RESOURCES AND THE NIGHT SKY

Goal CNR 4: Preserved scenic and natural areas of the Planning Area.

Policy CNR 4.1: Protect landscapes and natural areas for their aesthetic, cultural, and recreational value.

Policy CNR 4.2: Preserve unique rock outcroppings, geological features, and other distinctive scenic qualities that contribute to the visual character of the area.

Policy CNR 4.3: Enhance scenic corridors and areas within the Planning Area.

Policy CNR 4.4: Support conservation and expansion of open space.

Goal CNR 5: Night skies that sustain quality of life, protect wildlife and habitats, and enhance public safety.

Policy CNR 5.1: Where feasible, use energy-efficient, warm toned, shielded public street lighting to support dark skies.

Policy CNR 5.2: Require new development applications to include lighting plans.

3.4 SAFETY ELEMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

The unincorporated communities in the San Fernando Valley Planning Area are located within mapped hazard areas, such as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ), Flood Hazard Areas, and Hillside Management Areas (HMAs). These mapped areas are also characterized by limited and narrow evacuation routes. These can potentially become dangerous bottlenecks during emergencies. The presence of active oil wells in some areas further introduces potential environmental and safety risks.

Concerns about illegal fireworks, windblown and uncollected litter, and the application of poisons for vegetation management highlight a desire to ensure community well-being, enhanced safety measures, more rigorous enforcement, and emergency preparedness strategies tailored to the unique vulnerabilities of each community.

To effectively address these critical issues, a collaborative partnership between the community and the County is essential for proactively mitigating hazards and reducing health and safety risks among the communities within the San Fernando Valley Planning Area. The following Goals and Policies emphasize strategies to enhance the safety and resilience of these communities.

B. GOALS AND POLICIES

1. COLLABORATION

Goal S1: Collaborative and effective inter-agency partnerships to enhance safety.

Policy S1.1: Identify potential funding sources and local, state, and federal agencies to reduce hazard risk and improve the quality of life for residents and businesses throughout the SFVAP.

Policy S1.2: Partner with emergency response agencies to identify impediments to response and evacuation.

Policy S1.3: Increase accessibility to information associated with the Federal government cleanup of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory.

Goal S2: Safe communities supported by effective partnerships with government agencies.

Policy S2.1: Encourage residents and business owners to create an evacuation plan and maintain emergency supplies.

Policy S2.2: Prioritize increased information exchange through community messaging board installation and enhancements.

Policy S2.3: Engage with existing residents on community specific resilience focused programs and initiatives to promote hazard risk reduction.

2. MITIGATING NATURAL HAZARD RISKS

Goal S3: Safe and natural hazard prepared communities.

Policy S3.1: Prioritize community-driven processes for developing community-scale hazard retrofitting projects.

Policy S3.3: Promote community-driven design guidance that balances hazard mitigation strategies with preservation of

community character.

Policy S3.4: Identify key community resilience resources/facilities and areas where there are gaps in resources.

Policy S3.5: Develop mitigation strategies that account for community-oriented concerns, while effectively mitigating hazard risks, particularly associated with wildfire, slope stability, and geologic hazards.

3. BUILDING STRONGER, MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Goal S4: Resilient communities through enhanced preparedness, planning, and mitigation efforts.

Policy S4.1: Prioritize key community facility designations and enhancements to support community resilience efforts.

Policy S4.2: Support increased access for SFVAP residents and businesses to facilities that can support community needs during an emergency event.

Policy S4.3: Maintain and improve infrastructure to support daily and emergency response needs.

Policy S4.4: Balance development potential, infrastructure capacity, and hazard risks to ensure development activities meet communities' needs and standards of safety.

Policy S4.5: Ensure development activities meet the latest code requirements, standards, and best development/design practices to maximize fire risk reduction throughout the SFVAP.

Policy S4.6: Enhance wildfire response capabilities with the siting and use of helipad/heli-hydrant facilities.

Policy S4.7: Co-locate helipad/ heli-hydrant facilities with existing and new water infrastructure to enhance wildfire response capabilities and infrastructure reliability.

Policy S4.8: Prioritize parcel consolidations in areas with hazards or environmental resources.

4. EVACUATION

Goal S5: Effective evacuation routes for residents and businesses.

Policy S5.1: Ensure roadways have adequate capacity and connectivity to reduce emergency response times and improve evacuation capabilities.

Policy S5.2: Periodically assess evacuation routes for potential issues associated with wildfire, flooding, slope instability, and erosion related failures.

Best Development/Design Practices

- Minimum of two points of ingress/egress to the property;

- Use of fireproof materials;

- Water infrastructure that meets firefighting requirements;

- Expanded fuel modification zones; and

- A physical community messaging board within the same subdivision.

Helipad/ heli-hydrant facilities. Image Source: Yorba Linda Water District and Rainbow Water District.

Policy S5.3: Identify enhancements in roadways and other infrastructure to support evacuation and emergency response needs throughout SFVAP.

Policy S5.4: Retrofit existing evacuation routes to be free from obstructions and ensure addresses and entrances to existing homes are visible from the street to enhance response capabilities.

Policy S5.5: Prioritize evacuation route roads for periodic maintenance and mitigation activities, ensuring availability during emergency situations.

Policy S5.6: Encourage consistent road maintenance and vegetation control near roads for safe emergency evacuation.

Policy S5.7: Enhance roadway capacity and connectivity along major roadways and evacuation routes consistent with community character.

3.5 PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES ELEMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

The Public Services and Facilities Element focuses on equitable and high-quality public services and facilities for the Planning Area. Access to essential services, such as fire protection, law enforcement, educational facilities, parks, and libraries is fundamental for ensuring good quality of life.

The Planning Area's existing public services and facilities include Fire, Sheriff, Parks and Recreation facilities, schools, and libraries. It is particularly important to note that the unincorporated San Fernando Valley Planning Area, characterized by its extensive natural open space and sparse rural and suburban setting, benefits not only from County services and facilities but also from access to services and facilities in neighboring areas.

To ensure the preservation of existing infrastructure that supports the unincorporated communities' character this section includes goals and policies to ensure support of existing infrastructure and planned improvements.

B. GOALS AND POLICIES

1. WATER AND WASTEWATER

Goal PSF 1: Communities supported with sustainable potable water supplies and sewage disposal systems.

Policy PSF 1.1: Prioritize on-site reclaimed water use to minimize new water consumption.

Policy PSF 1.2: Promote and incentivize tertiary treatment of wastewater to enhance effluent quality and expand the safe and beneficial uses of reclaimed water.

Policy PSF 1.3: Support the expansion of existing community sewer systems in areas where a demonstrated need exists.

Policy PSF 1.4: Discourage the construction of small package wastewater treatment systems.

2. DRAINAGE AND FLOOD CONTROL

Goal PSF 2: Effective, sustainable, and environmentally sensitive community flood control management.

Policy PSF 2.1: Ensure that development aligns with natural flows, and incorporates non-erosive drainage and erosion control.

Policy PSF 2.2: Optimize flood control and water quality and promote natural flood mitigation through environmental preservation and restoration, using Best Management Practices.

Policy PSF 2.3: Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions on storm drain planning and implementation.

Policy PSF 2.4: Implement sustainable strategies and green infrastructure for water management to enhance stormwater absorption, slow runoff, and improve water quality.

3. PRESERVING COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Goal PSF 3: Context sensitive infrastructure and public services.

Policy PSF 3.1: Prioritize the preservation and adaptive reuse of existing infrastructure that are consistent with the character of the community.

Policy PSF 3.2: Provide context sensitive infrastructure and public services for suburban and rural environments.

Sustainable Strategies

Increase the use of:

- Permeable pavements;

- Rain gardens;

- Bioswales ;

- Locally native plants; and

- Green roofs.

3.6 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

The Planning Area is characterized by low-density residential development, interspersed with limited animal-keeping uses, often seen in larger lot ranches. Additionally, established industrial activity is concentrated within the Lopez Canyon area. This industrial land provides essential local employment opportunities and supports service needs for the Planning Area.

The area is served by a handful of small, local-serving legacy businesses, such as the Hideaway Bar and Grill, Log Cabin Mercantile, and Chatsworth Lake Market, alongside a small commercial strip in Westhills. These establishments are vital to their community's character and daily needs.

Community members would like to maintain small, local-serving businesses and animal-keeping uses.

B. GOAL AND POLICIES

Goal ED 1: Rural and suburban character of Planning Area communities sustained by small, local serving businesses.

Policy ED 1.1: Explore land use and economic development strategies that support small, local serving businesses, particularly existing legacy businesses, and jobs within the unincorporated communities of the San Fernando Valley.

3.7 HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

While each SFVAP community has a unique history and distinct community character they also have a common set of broad historic themes that are expressed in the built environment and discussed in the Historic Context Statement (Appendix #). The preservation of culturally and historically significant resources is an important goal of the SFVAP.

B. GOAL AND POLICIES

Goal HP 1. Preserved historic and cultural resources that contribute to community character and identity.

Policy HP 1.1: Support the identification and evaluation of historic properties and districts with potential historic significance, prioritizing those outlined in the SFVAP Historic Context Statement.

Goal HP 2. Unincorporated communities with unique historic and cultural identities that foster a sense of place and community pride.

Policy HP 2.1: Foster a sense of civic pride for the communities in the SFV through educational programming, celebrations, and other activities.

Policy HP 2.2: Celebrate the unique historical attributes and narratives of each community through initiatives such as public art installations that incorporate local history and tribal narratives in their themes and styles.

4

COMMUNITY SPECIFIC GOALS & POLICIES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the community-specific vision for the San Fernando Valley Area, focusing on following unincorporated communities:

- West Chatsworth,

- Westhills,

- Twin Lakes and Oat Mountain,

- Kagel and Lopez Canyon, and Sylmar Island.

It establishes tailored goals and policies that build upon the Los Angeles County General Plan and the Areawide Goals and Policies (Chapter 3).

A key component of this chapter is the analysis of each community's "development pattern"—the physical arrangement of the built and natural environment, including street networks, lot dimensions, building forms, and natural features. Understanding these patterns is essential for preserving a community's unique character while guiding thoughtful enhancements.

Each community profile combines quantitative data—such as demographic statistics and GIS mapping of land use, zoning, and open spaces—with qualitative insights gathered from stakeholder interviews, community surveys, and public engagement. This integrated approach ensures that the resulting planning efforts are informed by both technical analysis and residents' lived experiences.

By combining an understanding of existing conditions and community vision, this chapter shapes responsive planning goals and policies designed to:

- Strengthen local character.

- Enhance infrastructure and public spaces.

- Support ecological health.

- Improve residents' quality of life.

This chapter should be reviewed in conjunction with the Los Angeles County General Plan and Chapter 3 (Areawide Goals and Policies).
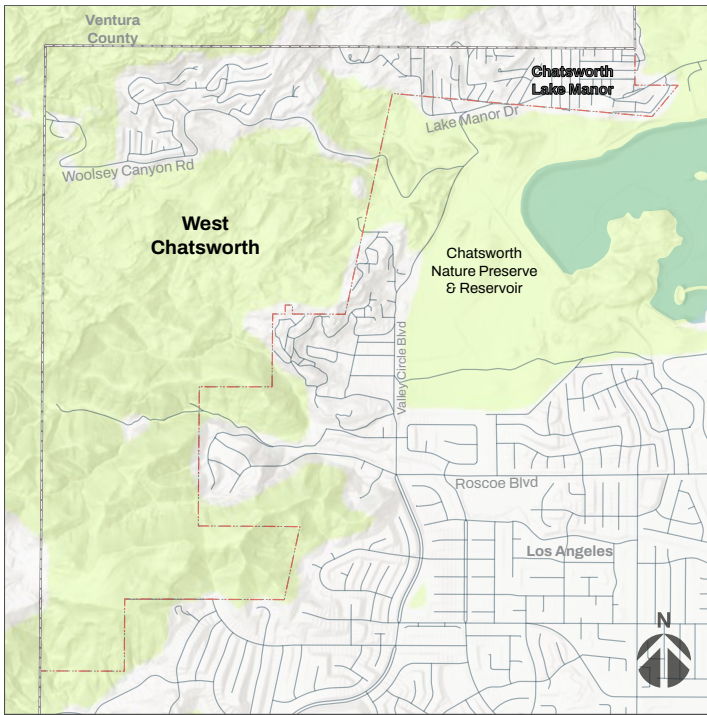
4.2 WEST CHATSWORTH

West Chatsworth is an unincorporated area situated between the Los Angeles city limits and the Ventura County line. It lies northwest of the Chatsworth Nature Preserve, formerly known as the Chatsworth Reservoir, at the base of the Simi Hills and the Santa Susana Mountains.

West Chatsworth includes Chatsworth Lake Manor, an unincorporated area in Los Angeles County that is mainly residential, with a few local commercial and institutional facilities.

The area also includes two mobile home parks, The Summit and Mountain View Village, as well as Woolsey Canyon View Estates—a gated cul-de-sac subdivision comprising six homes. These developments are situated west of Chatsworth Lake Manor and are accessible via Woolsey Canyon Road.

Location Map of West Chatsworth Community.

The drawing depicts two distinct development patterns: an organic layout in the hills and a somewhat structured, grid-like pattern in the Lake Manor area.


A. DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Development patterns vary: rural clusters along Lake Manor Drive in the eastern plains contrast with sparse, tiered hillside residential areas in the western hills, accessed via Woolsey Canyon Road. Major thoroughfares such as Lake Manor Drive and Woolsey Canyon Road follow the land's contours, offering panoramic views, while the local streets are narrow, paved, and lack shoulders or sidewalks. Lot sizes differ, with smaller, grid-patterned lots in the core area along Lake Manor Drive and larger, more irregular ones in the periphery. While traditional single-story rural ranch-style structures are common, core area development in the past two decades has introduced multi-story suburban-style buildings.
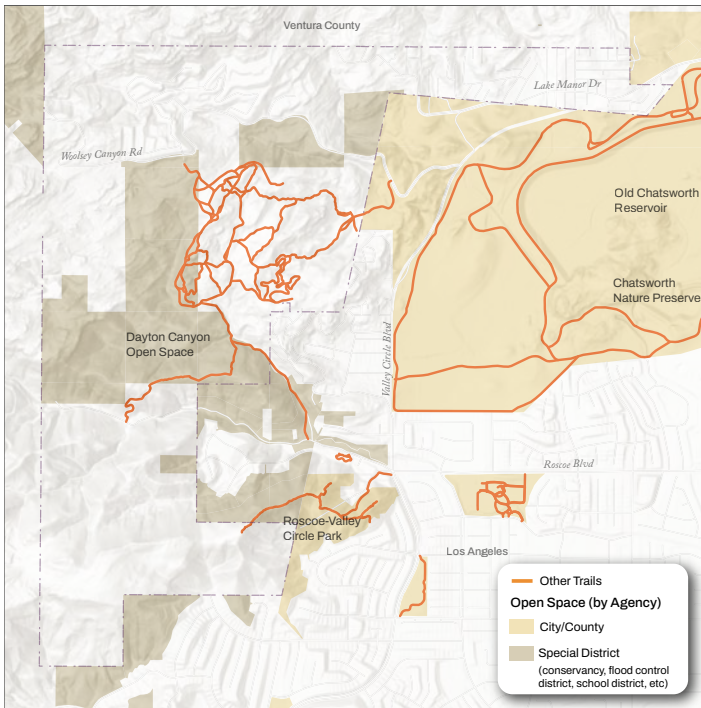
Significant Ecological Area and Wildlife Linkages Map.
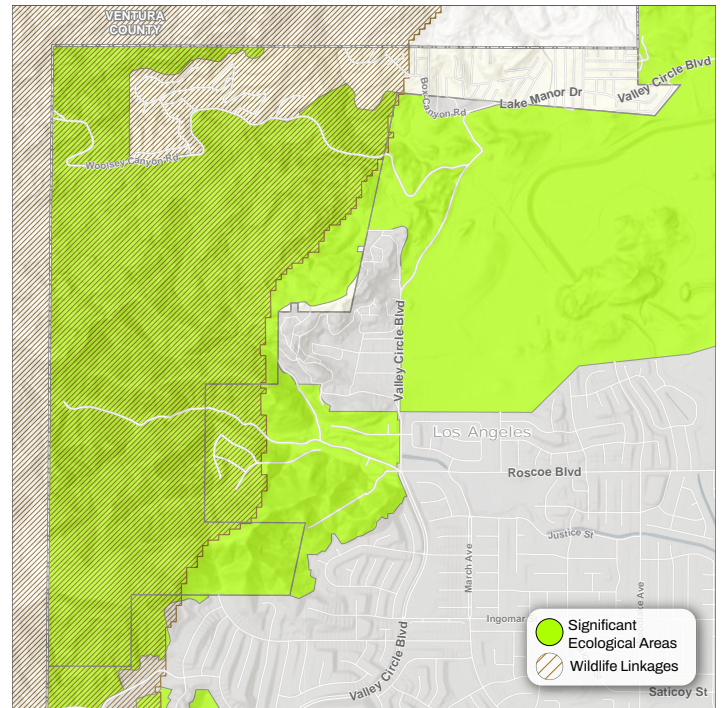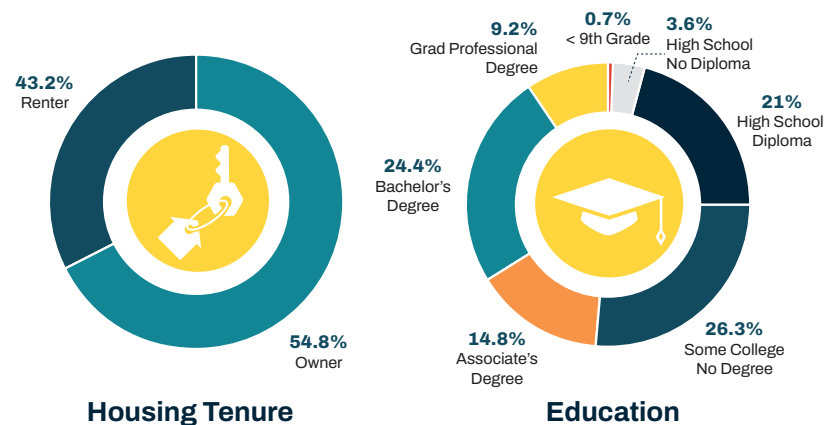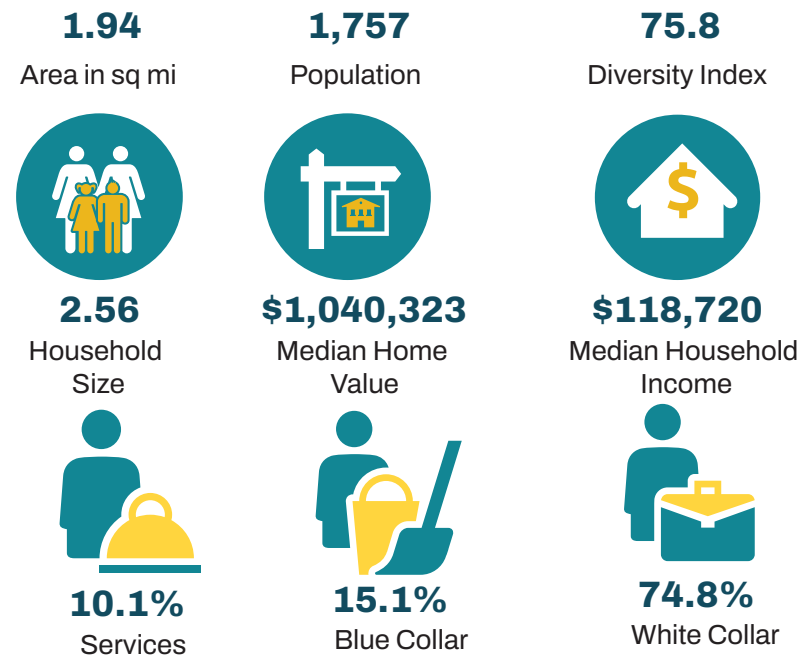

Open Space and Trails Map.

B. OPEN SPACE

A substantial portion of the community's land is dedicated to A substantial portion of the community's land is dedicated to natural preservation; 275.85 acres (22.3%) are open space or government-owned parcels, and 991.39 acres (80%) of the community's area falls within the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills Significant Ecological Area (SEA). As an SEA, it has important biological resources, featuring se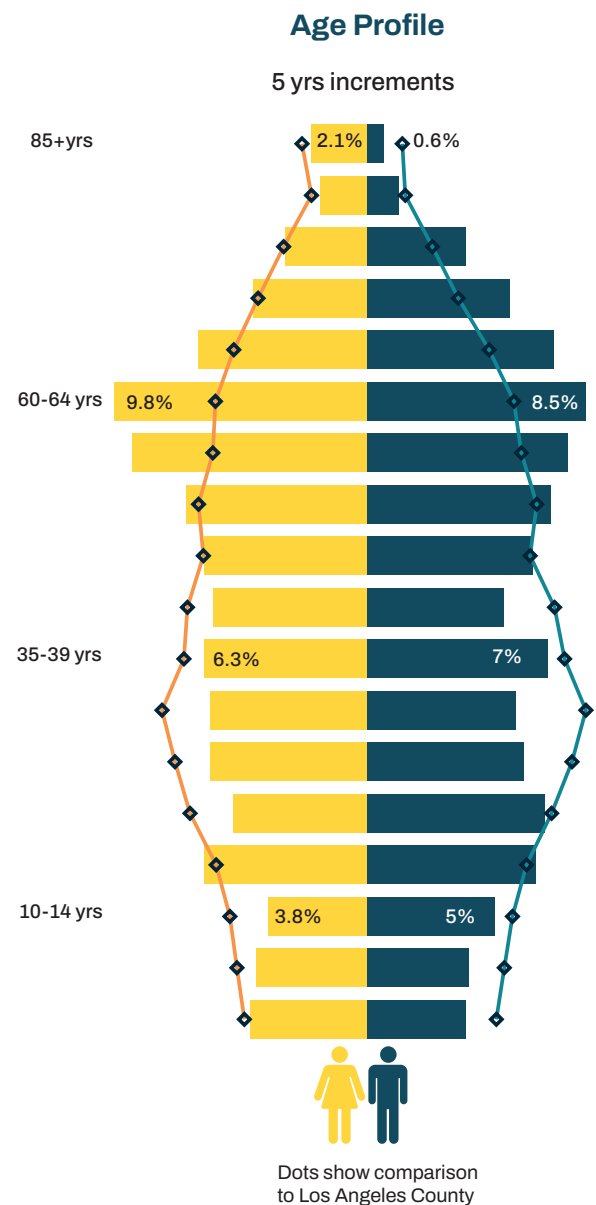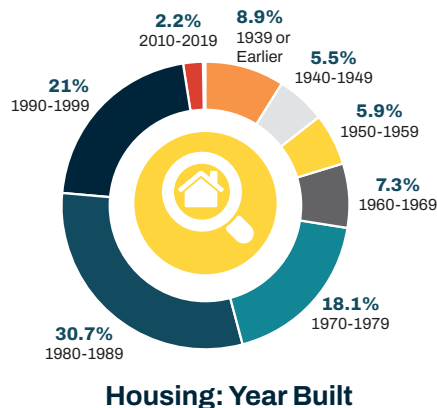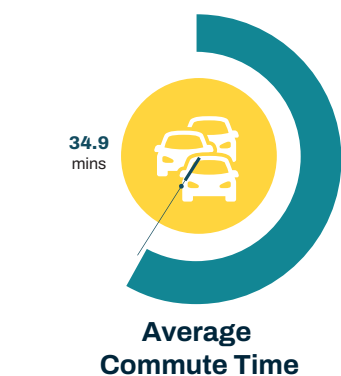nsitive plant communities like chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and grasslands. It also facilitates crucial wildlife movement through ecological linkages, with its vast habitats and abundant food sources supporting diverse wildlife. Complementing these natural assets, Dayton Canyon Open Space provides trails for hiking, running, and biking amidst its scenic landscape.

C. QUICK STATS

1.94
Area in sq mi

1,757
Population

75.8
Diversity Index

2.56
Household Size

$1,040,323
Median Home Value

$118,720
Median Household Income

10.1%
Services

15.1%
Blue Collar

74.8%
White Collar

Housing Tenure

43.2% Renter
54.8% Owner

Education

9.2% Grad Professional Degree
0.7% < 9th Grade
3.6% High School No Diploma
21% High School Diploma
24.4% Bachelor's Degree
14.8% Associate's Degree
26.3% Some College No Degree

Average Commute Time

34.9 mins

Housing: Year Built

2.2% 2010-2019
8.9% 1939 or Earlier
5.5% 1940-1949
5.9% 1950-1959
7.3% 1960-1969
18.1% 1970-1979
30.7% 1980-1989
21% 1990-1999

Age Profile
5 yrs increments

85+yrs 2.1% 0.6%
60-64 yrs 9.8% 8.5%
35-39 yrs 6.3% 7%
10-14 yrs 3.8% 5%

Dots show comparison to Los Angeles County

44.9
Median Age

Based on American Community Survey (ACS) and ESRI Business Analyst estimates in 2024 the community has a population of approximately 1,757, which has increased from 1,586 in 2010. Of those that responded to the 2020 Census that did not self-identify as Hispanic or Latino (27.3%) the remaining 72.7% is comprised of individuals who self-identify as Black (3.6%), White (56.3%), and Asian (5.7%). Other groups represented less than one percent of the population. The community is a relatively older community, with a median age of 44.9 and a large share (64.3%) of the population between the ages of 18 and 64. The average household size in the community is 2.56 people, which is smaller than the average of the unincorporated areas of the County (3.30).

D. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Community engagement revealed a strong, deliberate prioritization of preserving their rural character. The open spaces are a defining characteristic of this area, but they are privately owned and zoned for uses permitted in the Agricultural zones, including single-family residences. The entire community is a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The area's high temperatures, low humidity, limited rainfall, and Santa Ana winds contribute to conditions that promote wildfires.

The community seeks to:

- Retain its rustic character from incompatible zoning and land use designations and development patterns and building design.

- Preserve as much open land as possible, safeguarding it from fragmented residential development, enhancing natural habitats, and offering regulated recreational and educational access.

- Explore options to acquire, protect, restore, maintain, and manage open spaces.

- Maintain the view corridors and rural center created along Lake Manor Road.

- Preserve the area's dark sky conditions.

- Create community gathering places.

- Enhance support to the community's efforts to be more resilient and prepared for natural hazards/disasters.

- Limit the density in hazard areas, ensure new development is designed to preserve rural character, minimize impacts on natural habitats, and respect property rights.

E. VISION

The community's vision prioritizes preserving its distinct rural character and extensive open spaces, while enhancing resilience against its designation as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Core objectives include retaining its rustic ambiance through compatible development standards, safeguarding open land from fragmentation, exploring options for open space acquisition and management, and fostering community gathering places.

The goals and policies advocate for clear rural development standards, dark sky protection, strategies for expanding permanently designated open spaces, and specific land use/zoning revisions to correct misalignments, facilitate a community center, and implement an overlay district for the Lake Manor Drive corridor to prevent incompatible suburban development.

F. GOALS AND POLICIES

1. LAND USE

Goal LU1: Public gathering spaces in West Chatsworth.

Policy LU 1.1: Encourage the development of community centers.

Policy LU 1.2: Promote the inclusion of parks, recreational facilities, and other public gathering places in Lake Manor to foster community interaction.

Goal LU 2: Strong community character through design standards that reflect community values and enhance neighborhood compatibility.

Policy LU2: Encourage the use and multi-use of underutilized spaces, such as large parking lots, for community-oriented uses, such as festivals and farmers' markets.

Goal LU 3: Enhanced rural town center along Lake Manor Drive to support local businesses and activities.

Policy LU 3.1: Preserve the eclectic, rural character of Lake Manor Drive.

Policy LU 3.2: Prioritize improvements to public spaces in commercial areas that promote the communities' distinct cultural and artistic identity.

2. MOBILITY

Goal M1: Enhanced emergency access and evacuation in West Chatsworth, particularly in areas with challenging road networks.

Policy M1: Enhance emergency routes in West Chatsworth with clear signage and improved accessibility.

Goal M 2: Expanded West Chatsworth trail network.

Policy M 2: Expand the West Chatsworth trail network, coordinating with the City of Los Angeles and Ventura County for connectivity and a cohesive trails network.

3.CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Goal CNR 1: Protected scenic, rural landscapes of West Chatsworth.

Policy CNR 1.1: Preserve the view corridors along Lake Manor Road.

Policy CNR 1.2: Connect open spaces to enhance the wildlife linkage corridor from Ventura County to Los Angeles County.

Policy CNR 1.3: In project design, where feasible, enhance connectivity to and between West Chatsworth's open space areas, including the Chatsworth Preserve and Chatsworth Oaks Park.

4. SAFETY

Goal S1: Resource infrastructure that supports the local community during an emergency.

Policy S1.1: Enhance community resources/facilities to better assist residents and businesses during power outage and extreme heat incidents.

Policy S1.2: Ensure roadway maintenance, improvements, and vegetation management activities occur along key roadways (Lake Manor Drive, Valley Circle Blvd, Box Canyon Road and Woolsey Canyon Road) to facilitate effective emergency response and evacuation.

Policy S1.3: Encourage the use of Fire Station 75 as a hub to support functions during emergency events.

5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal ED1: Local businesses continue to thrive along Lake Manor Drive.

Policy ED1.1: Support the operational needs of existing Lake Manor Drive businesses, recognizing their importance to the neighborhood's identity, social fabric, and local economy.

Policy ED1.2: Promote the distinctive character and diverse offerings of Lake Manor Drive businesses, to foster a strong local customer base and economic vitality.

Policy ED1.3: Encourage a greater mix of local serving uses, such as retail, small businesses, eateries, small-scale institutional, office, and other compatible uses in commercial centers.
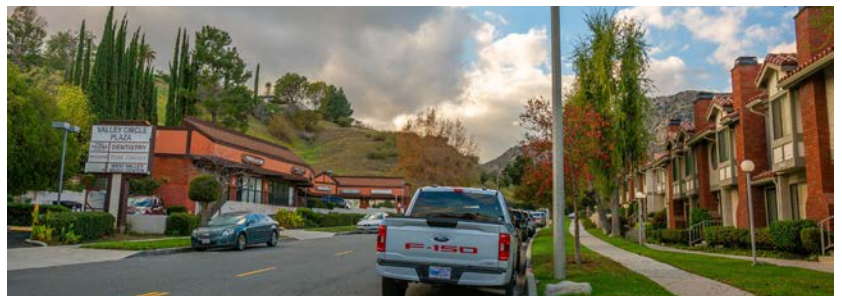
4.3 WESTHILLS

Westhills is a small unincorporated community situated at the western edge of the San Fernando Valley, bordered by the West Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles. Covering just 0.22 square miles at the base of the Simi Hills, it lies west of Valley Circle Boulevard between Vanowen Street and Kittridge Street, extending to the Ventura County line.

The community is primarily residential, made up of single-family homes accessible via Kittridge Street. Within it are Corie Lane, a cul-de-sac lined with additional homes; a townhome development at the corner of Valley Circle Boulevard and Vanowen Street; and a small strip mall along the south side of Vanowen Street.

At its western edge near the Ventura County boundary, the land transitions into undeveloped open space, preserving a natural buffer at the community's edge.

Aerial Map of Westhills Community.
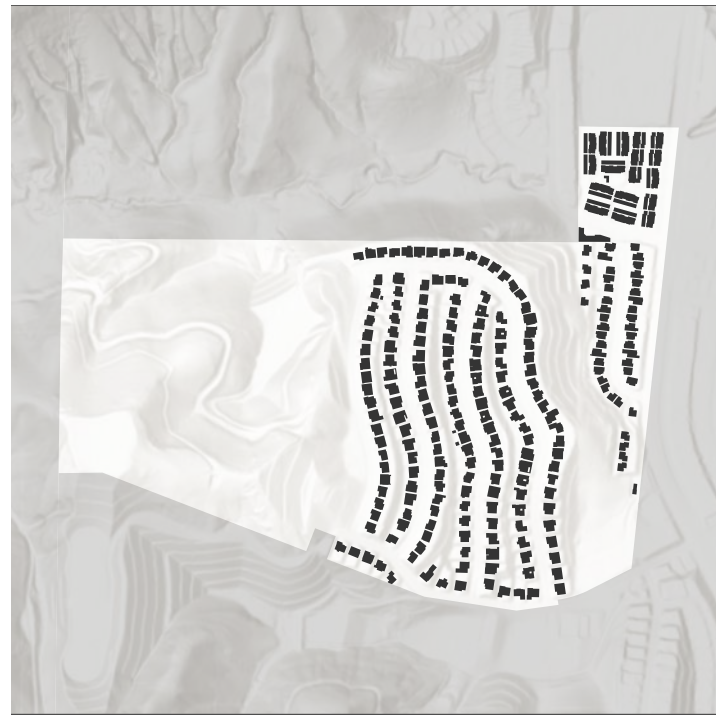
The Figure-Ground drawing shows a consistent pattern of uniform single-family homes on the hillside terraces, with townhome and commercial developments concentrated along Valley Circle Boulevard.


A. DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Westhills exemplifies postwar suburban development, characterized by its single-family homes integrated into a hillside landscape. Access to these residences is facilitated via Kittridge Street and Corie Lane, while a townhome community and a commercial strip center are situated at the intersection of Vanowen Street and Valley View Boulevard.

The neighborhood has a consistent aesthetic, largely due to uniform setbacks and a cohesive application of architectural styles, materials, and colors across all residences. The prevalence of attached garages and driveways underscores the community's car dependency. Westhills' street network is a grid of curvilinear streets ascending the hillside with a single point of ingress/egress to the community along Kittridge Street.
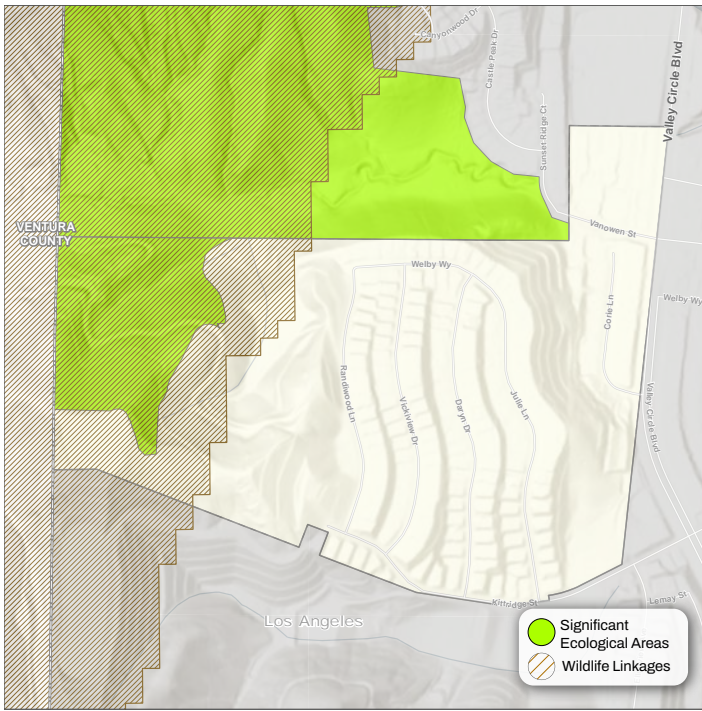
Significant Ecological Area and Wildlife Linkages Map.
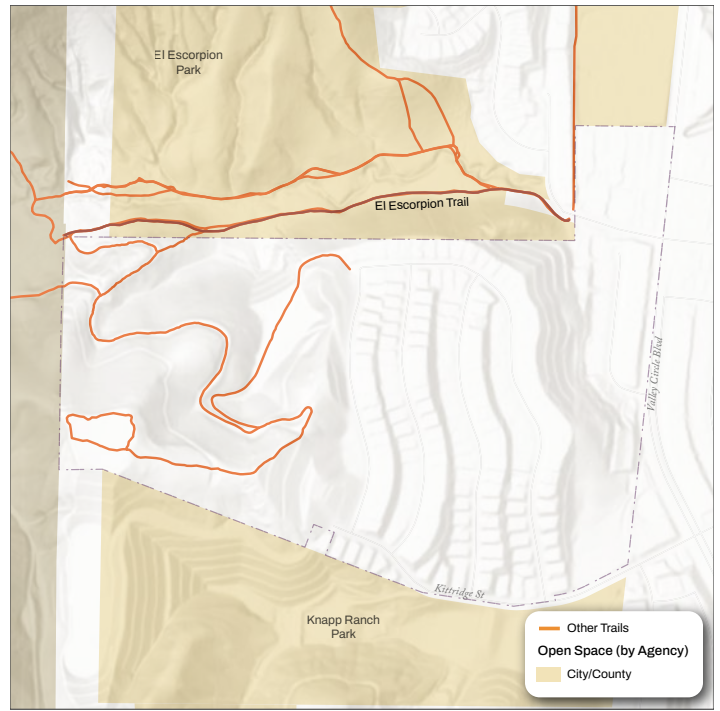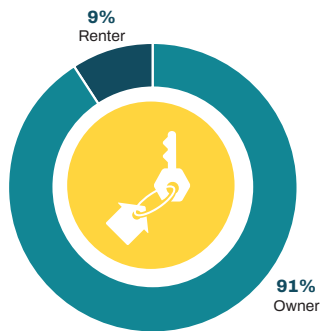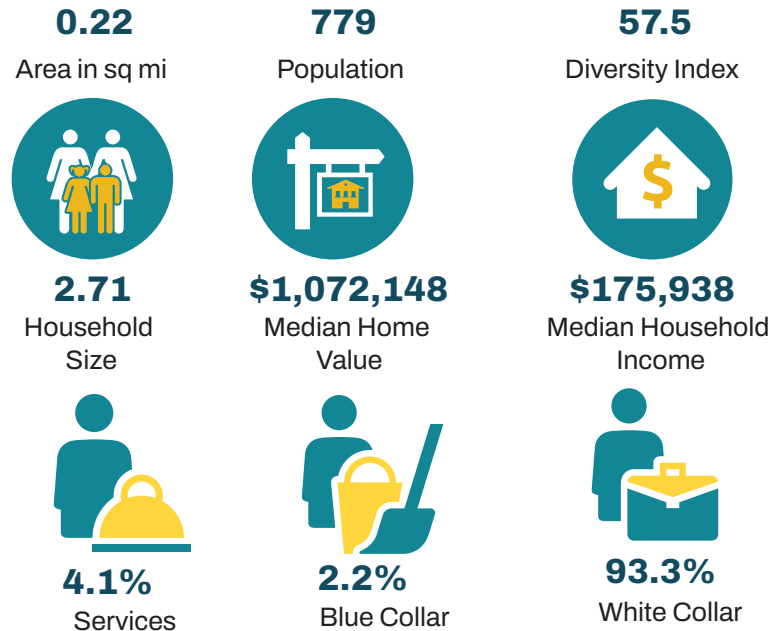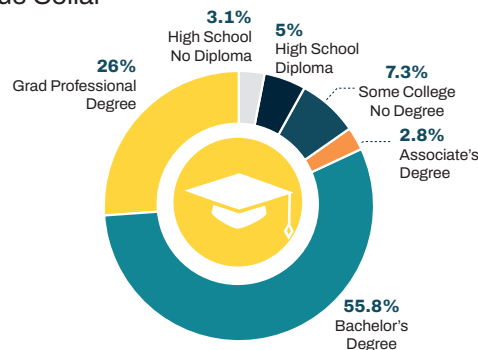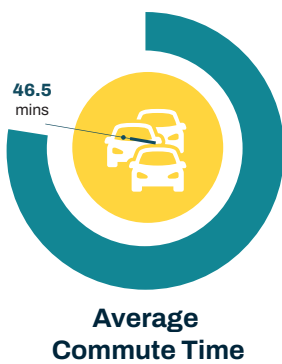

Open Space and Trails Map.

B. OPEN SPACE

Beyond its planned residential areas, Westhills is uniquely enveloped by nature. Approximately 0.2% (0.23 acres) of the community is open space or government-owned land, and 18.86 acres (13.3% of the community) falls within the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills Significant Ecological Area. To the south, Knapp Ranch Park offers inviting grassy areas for community recreation, complete with lighted basketball and tennis courts, a baseball diamond, playgrounds, and picnic spots. To the west, the Upper Las Virgenes Open Space Preserve boasts vast chaparral-covered slopes, serving as a crucial ecological link and wildlife corridor between the Santa Monica Mountains and northern ranges. Here, hikers, runners, mountain bikers, and equestrians can explore miles of trails through rolling hills dotted with valley oaks and sycamore-lined canyon bottoms, all offering breathtaking views of unspoiled California landscapes. This preserve also provides opportunities for climbing, camping, and discovering historical sites amidst its stunning scenic backdrop. To the north, the oak-studded hillsides of El Escorpion Park provide hiking trails with expansive views of the San Fernando Valley, vibrant wildflowers, and an intermittent stream, with the Castle Peak trail offering particularly stunning panoramas.
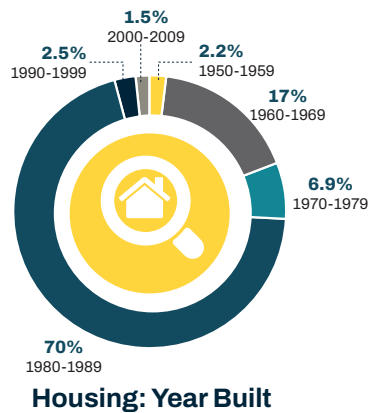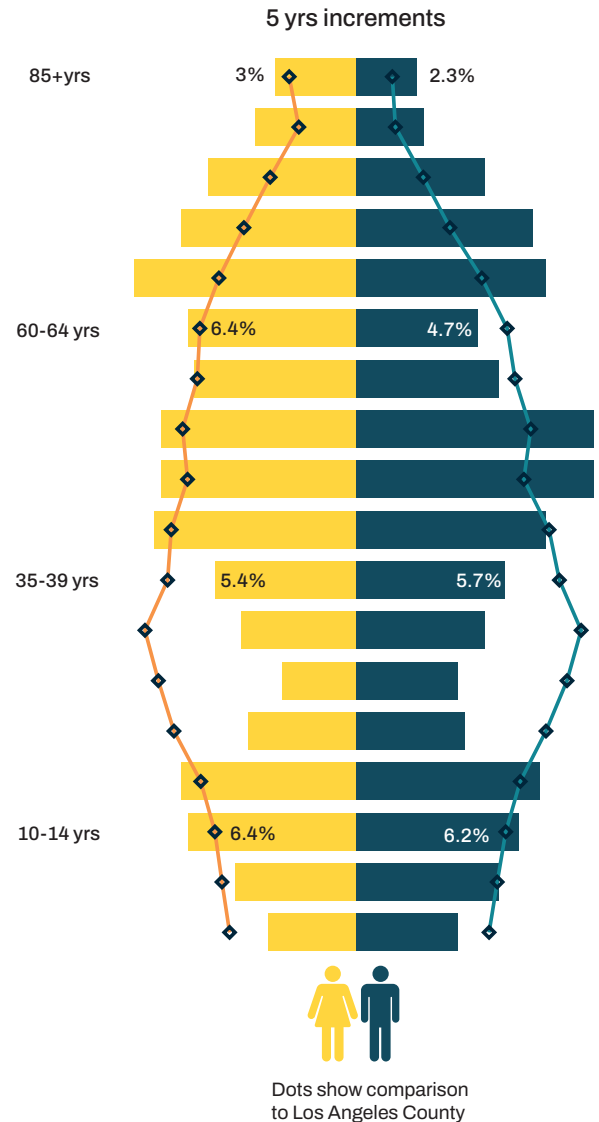
C. QUICK STATS

0.22
Area in sq mi

779
Population

57.5
Diversity Index

2.71
Household Size

$1,072,148
Median Home Value

$175,938
Median Household Income

4.1%
Services

2.2%
Blue Collar

93.3%
White Collar

Housing Tenure

9% Renter

91% Owner

Education

3.1% High School No Diploma

5% High School Diploma

7.3% Some College No Degree

2.8% Associate's Degree

26% Grad Professional Degree

55.8% Bachelor's Degree

Average Commute Time

46.5 mins

Housing: Year Built

1.5% 2000-2009

2.5% 1990-1999

2.2% 1950-1959

17% 1960-1969

6.9% 1970-1979

70% 1980-1989

Age Profile
5 yrs increments

85+yrs — 3% / 2.3%

60-64 yrs — 6.4% / 4.7%

35-39 yrs — 5.4% / 5.7%

10-14 yrs — 6.4% / 6.2%

Dots show comparison to Los Angeles County

47.1
Median Age

Based on American Community Survey (ACS) and ESRI Based on American Community Survey (ACS) and ESRI Business Analyst estimates in 2024 the community has a population of approximately 779, which has slightly increased from 787 in 2010. Of those that responded to the 2020 Census that did not self-identify as Hispanic or Latino (7.8%) the remaining 92.2% is comprised of individuals who self-identify as Black (2.0%), White (67.3%), and Asian (17.3%). Other groups represented less than one percent of the population. The community is a relatively older community, with a median age of 47.1 and a large share (25.7%) of the population over the age of 64. The average household size in the community is 2.71 people, which is smaller than the average of the unincorporated areas of the County (3.30).

D. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- The Westhills community is in a designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, where extreme temperatures, low humidity, minimal rainfall, and powerful Santa Ana winds create severe wildfire risks. The single point of access poses a critical threat to emergency response and evacuation.

- The area's defining open spaces are privately owned and zoned for residential development.

- Scenic, unspoiled landscapes surround the area, featuring a stunning eastern view of the San Fernando Valley.

E. VISION

Westhill's vision is to preserve its serene hillside environment and unique postwar character. The community aims to mitigate wildfire risks and protect its valuable open spaces from development. Westhill will achieve this by enforcing strict fire codes and evacuation routes, acquiring and restoring open land, and using architectural controls to ensure all new construction maintains the neighborhood's cohesive aesthetic.

F. GOALS AND POLICIES

1. LAND USES

Goal LU1: New development in Westhills complements the existing architectural character and scale.

Policy LU1.1: Use context-sensitive development and design standards to promote visual harmony between new development and the existing neighborhood.

2. CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Goal CNR1: The natural environment surrounding Westhills, including its ecological integrity, recreational opportunities, and scenic beauty, are preserved for current and future generations.

Policy CNR1.1: Safeguard the Upper Las Virgenes Open Space Preserve as a vital ecological corridor through collaborative conservation, responsible land management, and mitigation of development impacts.

Policy CNR1.2: Connect trails in the Upper Las Virgenes Open Space Preserve and El Escorpion Park, with an emphasis on natural resource preservation.

Policy CNR1.3: Address threats to the natural environment surrounding Westhills, such as invasive species, habitat fragmentation, and wildfire risk.

3. SAFETY

Goal S2: A community that manages impacts associated with developments.

Policy S2.1: Maintain circulation along Kittridge Street as a primary source of ingress and egress to the community.

Policy S2.2: Coordinate with regulators and operators overseeing oil well operations to understand current and future levels of activity.

4. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Goal HP1: The historic scale and character of Westhills is preserved through historic landmark designations.

Policy HP1.1: Maintain the integrity of the existing architectural form of residences in the community to retain qualification for historic district nomination.

Policy HP1.2: Recognize existing architectural styles present in the Westhills community and preserve them through historic landmark designations.

4.4 TWIN LAKES/OAT MOUNTAIN
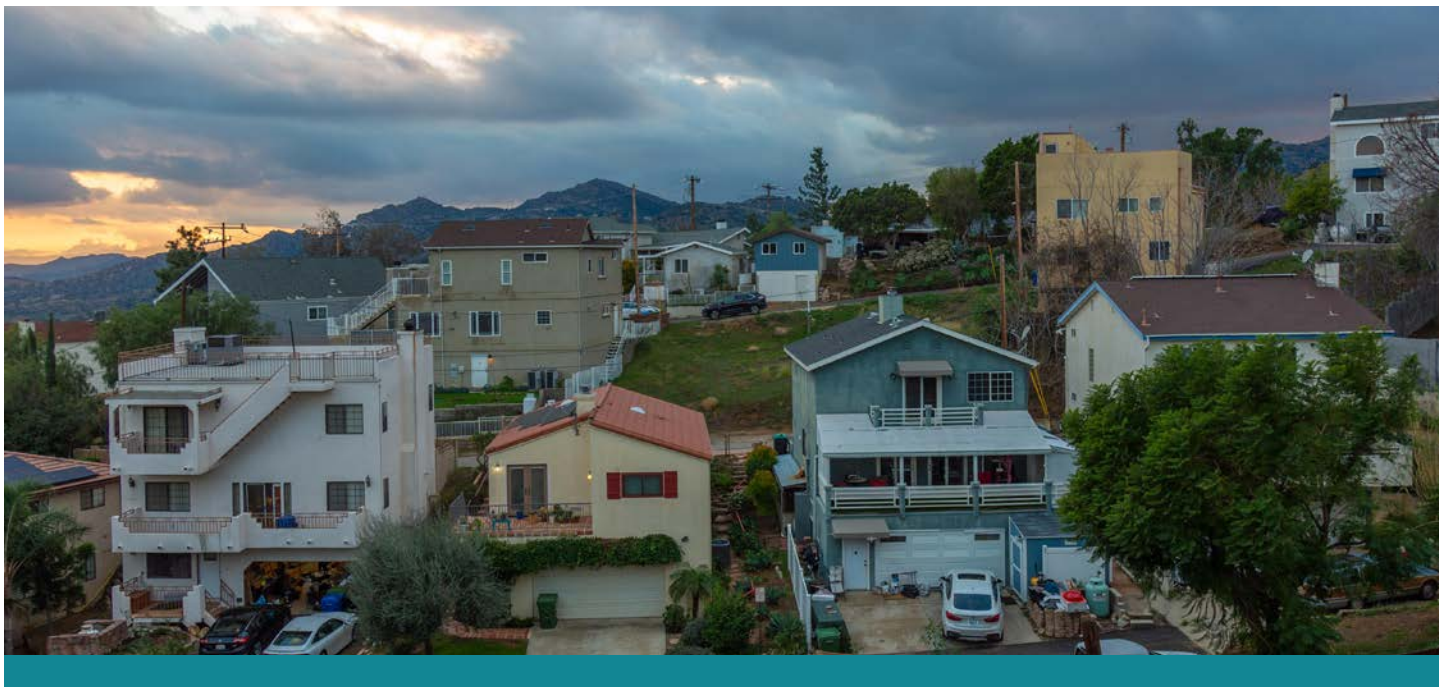
Twin Lakes/Oat Mountain is located north of State Route 118/Ronald Reagan Freeway, between the Los Angeles city limits and the Ventura County line. Covering 19.97 square miles, the area is primarily mountainous terrain and undeveloped open space, with developed communities concentrated toward the southern end.

Twin Lakes, situated at the terminus of Topanga Canyon Boulevard and north of State Route 118, is a single-family residential community featuring a diverse mix of lot and home sizes, and a network of narrow private streets. Northeast of Twin Lakes, Deerlake Ranch—formerly known as Deer Lake Highlands—is a modern subdivision of suburban single-family homes currently under construction. To the west, Indian Springs is a gated community of contemporary single-family residences, while an apartment complex and townhouses are located just east of Indian Springs.

Oat Mountain consists of open space except for utility and telecommunications facilities, oil well operations, the Aliso Canyon natural gas storage facility, and a portion of the Sunshine Canyon Landfill. It also contains some remnant features of Nike Missile Site LA-88, a Cold War-era anti-ballistic missile base that was in operation between 1957 and 1974.
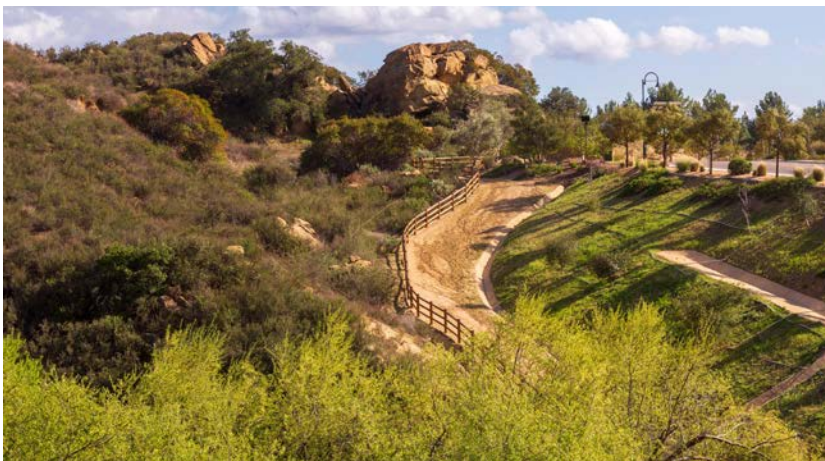
4.4.1 TWIN LAKES

Location Map of Twin Lakes Community.

Twin Lakes' development reflects its history and landscape. First subdivided for cabins in the 1920s, it has grown into a rural residential community shaped by hills, canyons, and open space.


A. DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Situated at the terminus of Topanga Canyon Boulevard, immediately north of State Route 118, Twin Lakes is approximately 45 acres in size and is a distinctive single-family residential community. Its genesis dates to 1927, when the area was subdivided into 816 modest lots, each measuring approximately 30 by 75 feet. These parcels were organized along narrow, curvilinear streets designed to conform to the existing topography. Initially conceived for recreational cabins, this foundational layout has undergone substantial transformation. Over time, residents have redeveloped and expanded these lots, resulting in a diverse architectural landscape that encompasses structures ranging from A-frames to unique geometric buildings and

modern designs. Presently, the community comprises over 100 homes that reflect its unique developmental trajectory. Notably, 100 percent of the properties in the Twin Lakes area are privately owned.

The discernible character of Twin Lakes is the confluence of its historical legacy and its remarkable natural environment. The undulating terrain, pronounced canyons, and abundant open spaces have allowed Twin Lakes to retain its rural ambiance. Community planning initiatives and regulatory frameworks prioritize the preservation of this pristine landscape and the mitigation of wildfire risks, further influencing the varied architectural styles evident throughout the area.
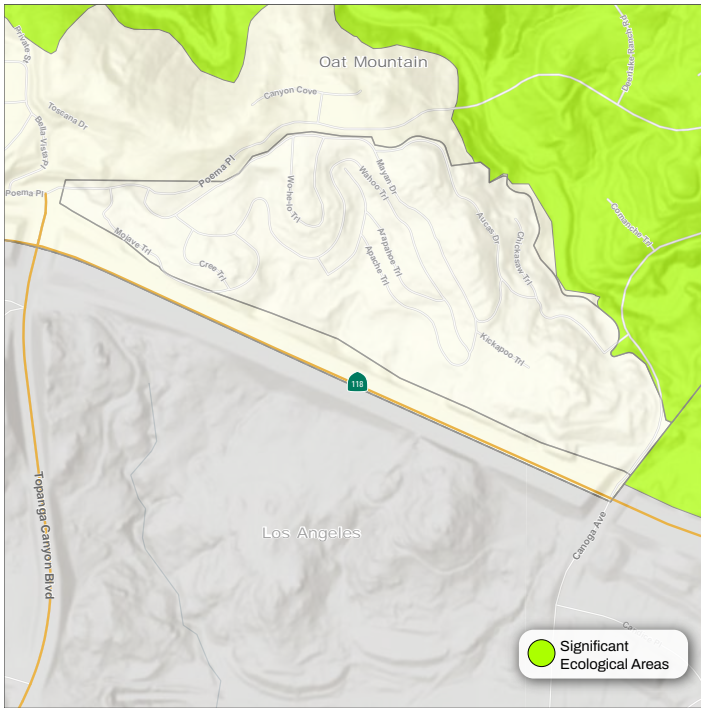
Significant Ecological Area Map.
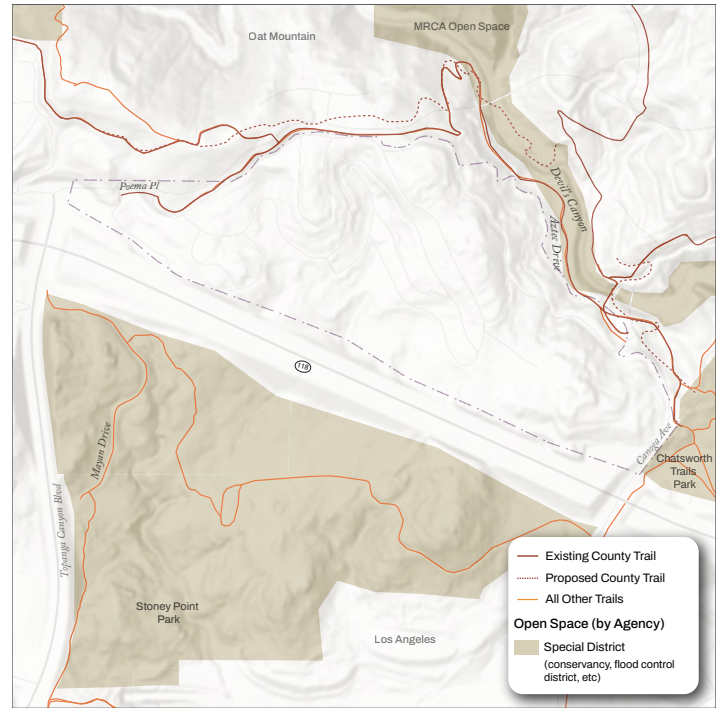
Open Space and Trails Map.

B. OPEN SPACE

Twin Lakes is exceptionally integrated within a network of natural areas. To the north, Oat Mountain offers extensive trail systems, with Aztec Drive providing direct access into Devils Canyon. To the west, Chatsworth Trails Park is situated, and south of the freeway lies Stoney Point Park, notable for its distinctive rock formations. These contiguous natural areas provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and access to natural and scenic areas.

C. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Twin Lakes grapples with significant constraints stemming from its historical development pattern and rugged terrain. The most significant hurdle is an antiquated, narrow private road system, which may hinder traffic and emergency services, complicated by misaligned easements and the impracticality of modernization due to topography and small lot sizes. The construction of oversized homes on small lots creates an urban feel, blocks views, and exacerbates parking and septic issues. Highway 118 noise detracts from the rural atmosphere. While steep slopes limit development, numerous vacant lots also restrict effective planning. Finally, there are concerns of development patterns that erode the community's rural character.

Conversely, Twin Lakes holds considerable opportunities, driven by engaged residents and natural assets. Strategic use of vacant land presents a key opportunity: merging lots can reduce density or create spaces for parking and recreation. The proximity of public sewer lines offers a solution to septic challenges. Furthermore, Twin Lakes boasts striking scenic views, a relatively secure environment, and an appealing character from its natural terrain and vegetation. The Devil Canyon stream and riparian area are valued natural resources offering both beauty and recreation.

D. VISION

The Twin Lakes community is committed to a future where development coexists with its natural environment, with a particular focus on safeguarding the scenic Devil Canyon stream and surrounding open spaces.

Key goals and policies prioritize road conditions for emergency access and compatible construction with the area's established character. This involves maintaining scenic views and ensuring new structures respect existing architectural styles and scale. The community also seeks to mitigate highway noise for nearby residents through strategies such as noise barriers, improved home sound proofing, and noise-sensitive land use planning.

4.4.2 OAT MOUNTAIN

Aerial Map of Oat Mountain Community.
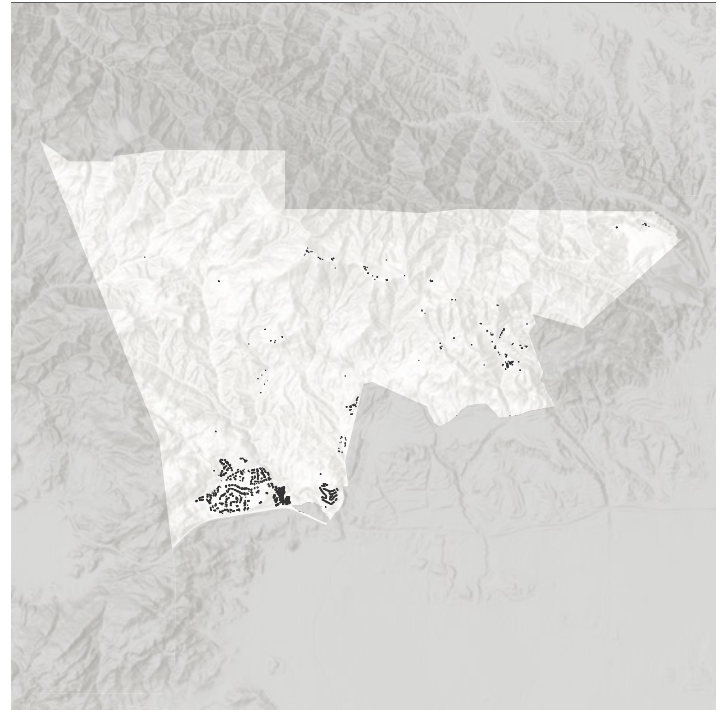
Twin Lakes' development reflects its history and landscape. First subdivided for cabins in the 1920s, it has grown into a rural residential community shaped by hills, canyons, and open space.




A. DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

The Oat Mountain region is primarily characterized by rugged, mountainous terrain and expansive, open space, fostering a strong sense of seclusion. Developed subdivisions, emphasizing privacy and security, are primarily clustered in the southern portion. The broader area offers diverse residential options, including low-density, single-family homes on large lots accessed by private, winding roads that conform to natural contours, alongside areas with apartments and townhomes. Northeast of Twin Lakes, Deerlake Ranch is a subdivision of suburban single-family

homes. To the west, Indian Springs is a gated community of contemporary single-family residences, while an apartment complex and townhouses are situated just east of Indian Springs.

Oat Mountain is home to various facilities, including utility and telecommunications infrastructure, oil wells, the Aliso Canyon natural gas storage facility, a part of the Sunshine Canyon Landfill, and the remains of Nike Missile Site LA-88, a Cold War-era missile base.
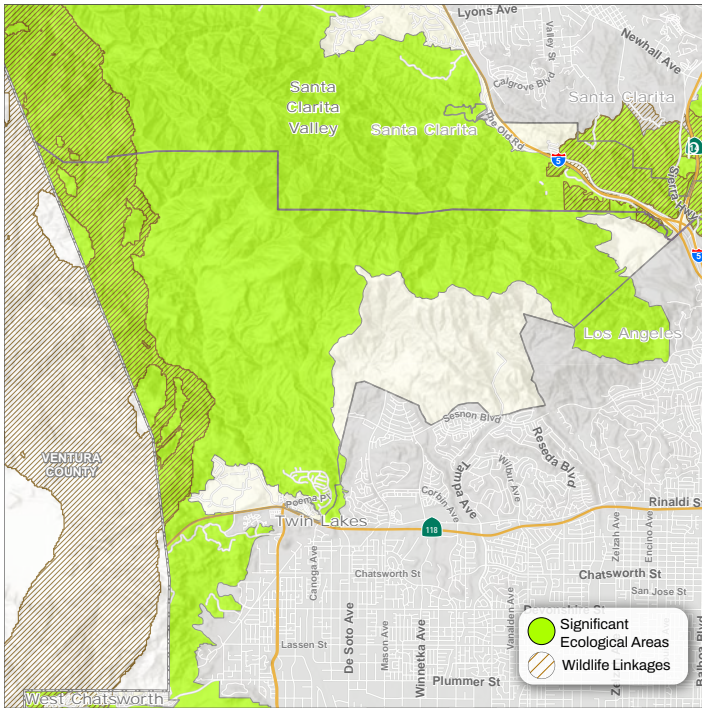
Significant Ecological Area and Wildlife Linkages Map.
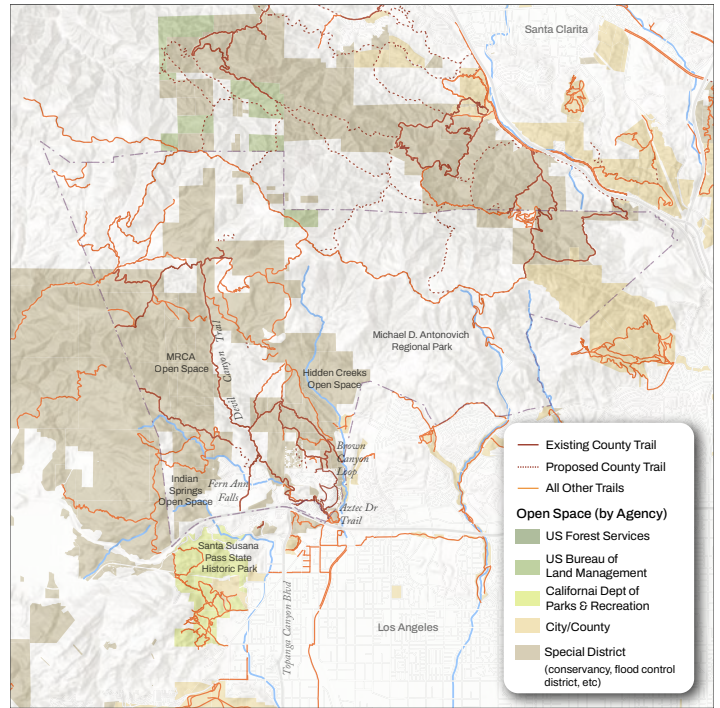
Open Space and Trails Map.

B. OPEN SPACE

Oat Mountain also boasts a stunning landscape of rolling hills and vast open spaces. Notably, 12,406 acres, or 77.2% of the Oat Mountain area, is within the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills Significant Ecological Area, with 6,024 acres designated as open space or government-owned. Its parks connect existing trails and wildlife habitats. This vast ecological area supports diverse plant communities, groundwater, and unique geological features that benefit birds, reptiles, and mammals. The western edge serves as a crucial wildlife corridor connecting the Santa Susana to the San Gabriel and Santa Monica Mountain ranges. An extensive network of trails and dirt roads winds through the rolling grasslands and woodlands, offering hikers, runners, mountain bikers, and equestrians panoramic views of the scenic terrain, distant rocky outcroppings, and canyons.
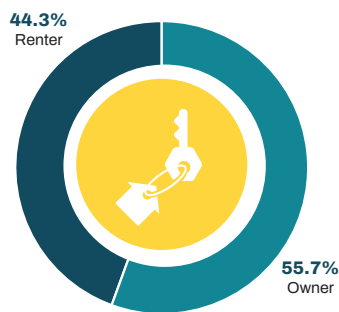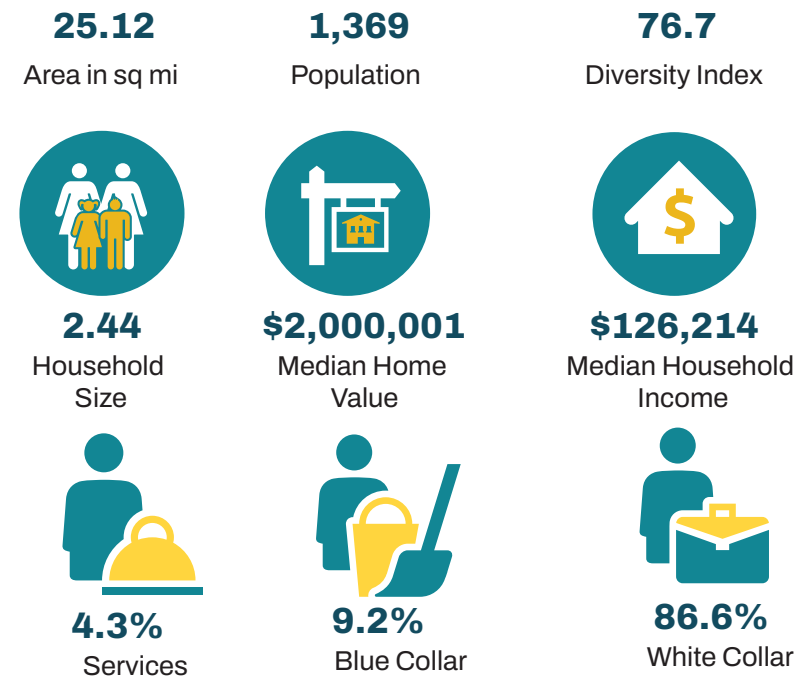
C. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- Living within a designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, the developed areas of this community face a confluence of extreme wildfire risks: intense heat, arid conditions, scarce rainfall, and the powerful Santa Ana winds. Compounding this danger, limited and in some instances gated access points could critically impede emergency response and evacuation efforts.

- All structures and landscapes in the Plan must adhere to applicable codes and regulations. Any new development must also develop a Fire Master Plan for approval by the LA County Fire Marshal.

- The significant hurdle to preserving the area's vital open spaces stems from their private ownership coupled with existing residential zoning. This allows individual landowners to develop their properties, leading to the fragmentation of large natural areas, degradation of ecological value, and erosion of the area's defining landscape character. Furthermore, private ownership limits public control and access, while residential zoning creates strong economic incentives for development, making proactive and comprehensive open space preservation a complex and challenging endeavor.

- Uphold the community's visual character by preserving the view corridors delineated by the current street and trail network, and ensure the continued enjoyment of its dark sky environment.

- On a few split-zoned parcels, the lack of a clear, unified zoning can create uncertainty for property owners regarding their development rights and the future potential of their land.

D. VISION

Oat Mountain is a community that balances privacy and security with the preservation of its extraordinary natural landscape. The vision is to protect the vast, undeveloped open spaces and crucial wildlife corridors that define the home. The community is committed to a future where it responsibly manages development to reduce wildfire risk and maintain the area's secluded character. By preserving the scenic views and dark skies, it ensures that Oat Mountain remains a resilient and harmonious community where nature and residential life coexist.

E. QUICK STATS: TWIN LAKES/OAT MOUNTAIN

25.12
Area in sq mi

1,369
Population

76.7
Diversity Index

2.44
Household Size

$2,000,001
Median Home Value

$126,214
Median Household Income

4.3%
Services

9.2%
Blue Collar

86.6%
White Collar

Age Profile
5 yrs increments

1.8% | 85+yrs | 0.7%

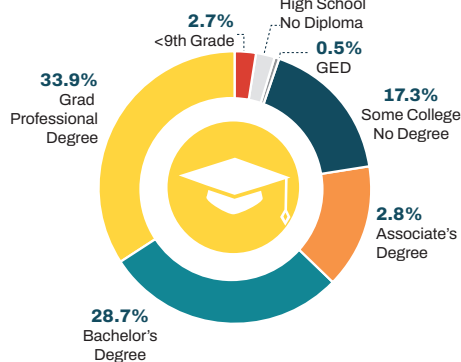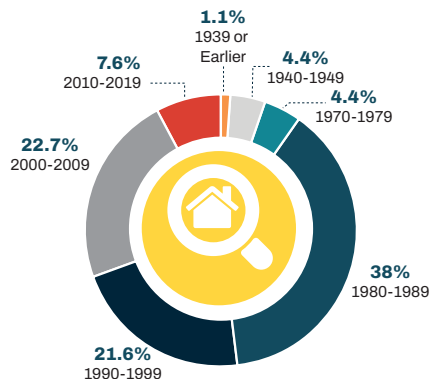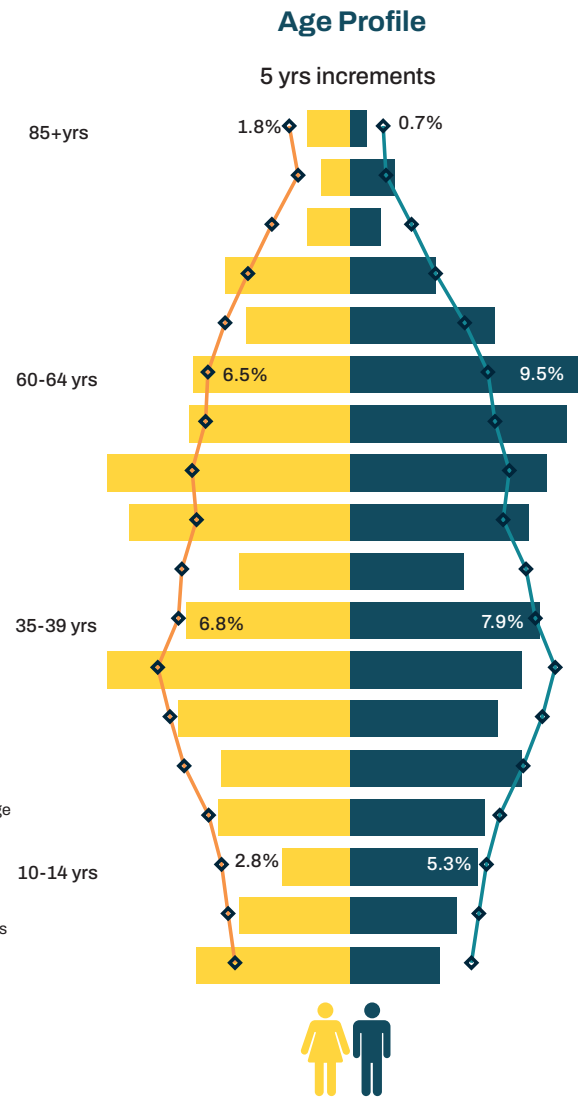6.5% | 60-64 yrs | 9.5%

6.8% | 35-39 yrs | 7.9%

2.8% | 10-14 yrs | 5.3%

Dots show comparison to Los Angeles County

42.1
Median Age

Housing Tenure
44.3% Renter
55.7% Owner

Education
2.2% High School No Diploma
2.7% <9th Grade
0.5% GED
33.9% Grad Professional Degree
17.3% Some College No Degree
2.8% Associate's Degree
28.7% Bachelor's Degree

Average Commute Time
38.1 mins

Housing: Year Built
1.1% 1939 or Earlier
7.6% 2010-2019
4.4% 1940-1949
4.4% 1970-1979
22.7% 2000-2009
38% 1980-1989
21.6% 1990-1999

Based on American Community Survey (ACS) and ESRI Business\ Analyst estimates in 2024 the community has a population of approximately 1,369, which has increased from 1,109 in 2010. Of those that responded to the 2020 Census that did not self-identify as Hispanic or Latino (18.6%) the remaining 81.4% is comprised of individuals who self-identify as Black (4.9%), White (50.4%), Asian (20.9%), and some other race (6.5%). Other groups represented less than one percent of the population. The community is a relatively older community, with a median age of 42.1 and a large share (69.3%) of the population between the ages of 18 and 64. The average household size in the community is 2.44 people, which is smaller than the average of the unincorporated areas of the County (3.30).

F. GOALS AND POLICIES

1. LAND USES

Goal LU1: The unique rural character of Twin Lakes is preserved.

Policy LU1.1: Scale new development appropriately to ensure harmony with the existing community fabric.

Policy LU1.2: Maintain important view corridors to the north and south to preserve scenic qualities.

Policy LU1.3: Provide effective noise attenuation from traffic-related noise originating from Highway 118.

Policy LU1.4: Encourage good design to improve the overall appearance of Twin Lakes.

Goal LU2: Twin Lakes has gathering places to foster a sense of community and support the residents.

Policy LU2.1: Support the development of community centers and community gathering spaces.

Goal LU3: Future development in Oat Mountain is environmentally sensitive and architecturally harmonious with the existing community character.

Policy LU3.1: Minimize negative impacts to the natural environment, including natural features, topography, and ecological considerations.

2. MOBILITY

Goal M1: Public safety in Twin Lakes is maintained through the provision of safe, accessible, and reliable streets that facilitate efficient emergency vehicle access throughout the community.

Policy M1.1: Manage the scale and density of new residential development to ensure the existing and planned road network can adequately accommodate traffic volume and maintain smooth general circulation, preventing impediments to daily travel and emergency response. This includes ongoing assessment of traffic impacts and strategic infrastructure planning.

Policy M1.2: Minimize on-street parking.

Policy M1.3: Improve road conditions, widths, and paving surfaces throughout Twin Lakes to meet or exceed Fire Department access standards and other critical service requirements for all residents.

3. CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Goal CNR1: The natural environment in Twin Lakes and Oat Mountain is enriched through interconnected ecosystems, diverse recreation, and scenic preservation.

Policy CNR1.1: Safeguard the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills Significant Ecological Area and ecological corridor linking the Santa Susana, San Gabriel, and Santa Monica Mountain ranges.

Policy CNR1.2: Improve trail access from Twin Lakes to Oat Mountain (including the Aztec Drive connection to Devils Canyon), Chatsworth Trails Park, and Stoney Point Park for hikers, runners, mountain bikers, and equestrians.

Policy CNR1.3: Preserve the ecological health and scenic beauty of the natural surroundings in Twin Lakes and Oat Mountain.

4. SAFETY

Goal S3: A resilient community that is supported and prepared for emergency response.

Policy S3.1: Protect the community messaging board as an important physical means of communication amongst the community during emergencies.

Policy S3.2: Promote community-level fuels reduction and vegetation management projects that protect all Twin Lakes properties.

Policy S3.3: Advocate for resiliency hub functionality as part of the community center (e.g., backup power, emergency supplies, robust communication).

5. PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Goal PSF1: Adequate and safe sewage disposal for the protection of public health.

Policy PSF1: Dispose of sewage in a manner which minimizes risk to public health and safety.

4.5 KAGEL AND LOPEZ CANYONS, SYLMAR ISLAND

A distinctly rural community resides within Kagel Canyon, where single-family homes, often built on combined lots, dominate the landscape. The canyon is geographically split into lower and upper sections; punctuated by a cemetery park. Lower Kagel Canyon features LA County Fire Station 74 and Dexter Park.

Lopez Canyon, west of Kagel Canyon, is predominantly undeveloped mountainous terrain. Its southern end hosts industrial sites and a mobile home park. Further up, Hope Gardens, a transitional housing facility, resides on the former grounds of a tuberculosis hospital.
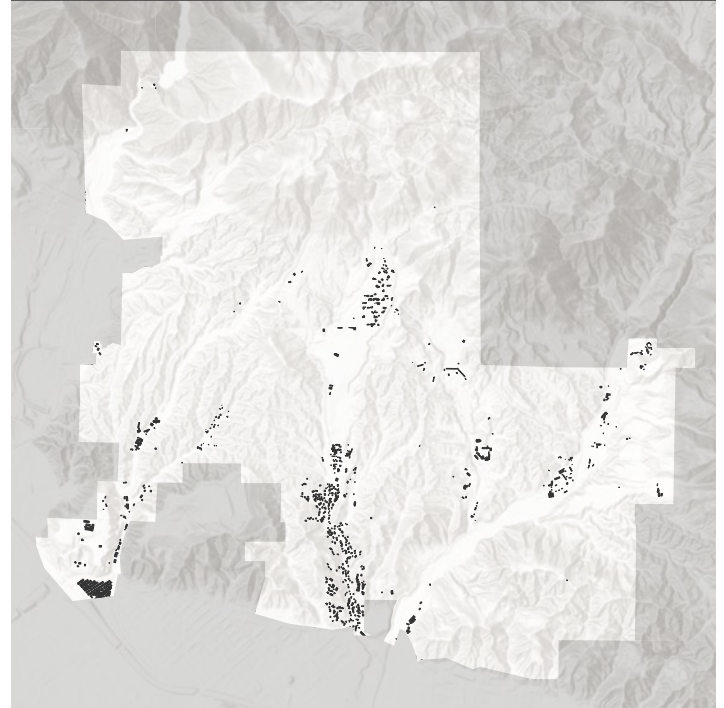
Sylmar Island, an unincorporated foothill strip, is mostly undeveloped, with Veterans Memorial Community Regional Park, flood control features, and one residential home.

4.5.1 KAGEL AND LOPEZ CANYONS

Location Map of Kagel and Lopez Canyons Community.

Kagel Canyon is a sparsely populated rural area with scattered homes. Lopez Canyon is mostly undeveloped, with a few industrial sites, a mobile home park at its south end, and a road leading to transitional housing further up.


A. DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Kagel Canyon is a rural, low-density residential area characterized by dispersed single-family homes, ranches, animal keeping, and agricultural activities, with Kagel Canyon Road as its primary thoroughfare. The community is characterized by a fire station, two cemeteries, and Dexter Park, a cherished recreational hub. Notably, 46%

(3,087.98 acres) of Kagel Canyon consists of open space or government-owned parcels.

Lopez Canyon is primarily undeveloped and mountainous, with industrial sites and a mobilehome park at its southern end. Lopez Canyon Road connects these areas and leads to the residences at Hope Gardens.
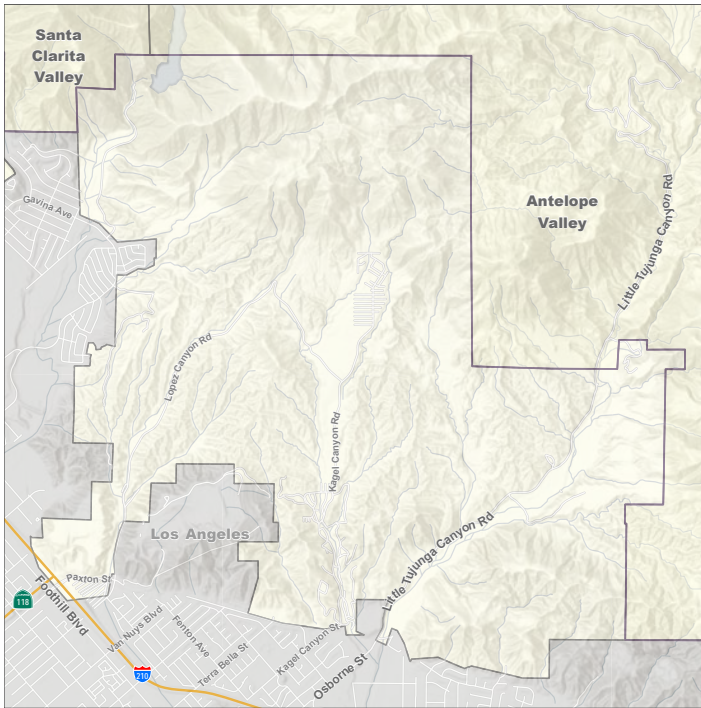
Significant Ecological Area Map.
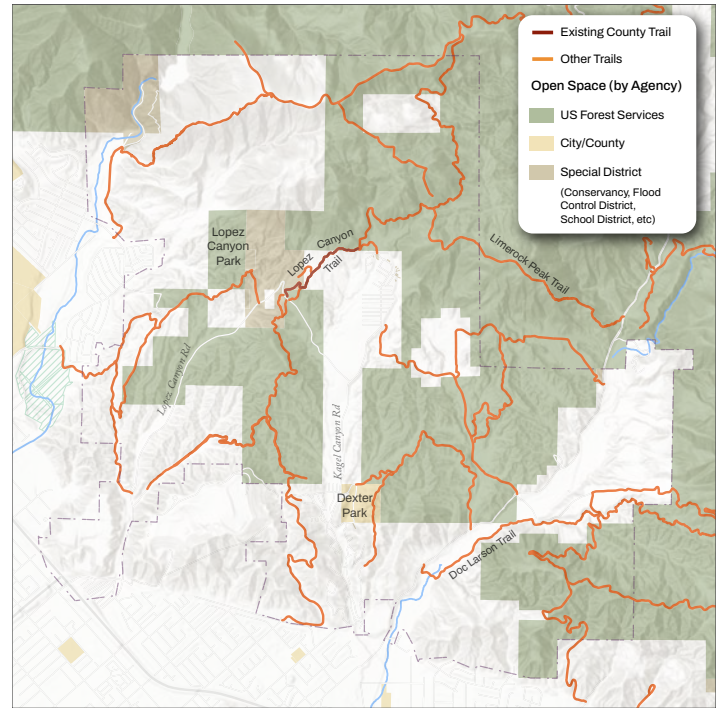
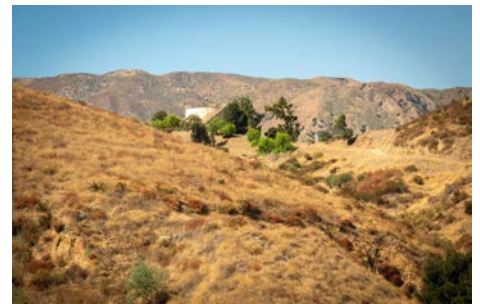Open Space and Trails Map.

B. OPEN SPACE

Kagel and Lopez Canyons serve as key gateways to the Angeles National Forest, offering community recreation and direct access to extensive hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trails.

Dexter Park anchors Kagel Canyon as both a recreational hub and a community gathering space. Its location beside the national forest enhances its role as a natural retreat while also making it a critical emergency assembly point in this wildfire-prone area. As one of the few public spaces available, it is central to the community's identity and resilience.

Lopez Canyon Park, a 125-acre trailhead, provides direct access to the Angeles National Forest, catering to hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers. Both Kagel and Lopez Canyons serve as gateways to the Angeles National Forest, offering extensive trails for hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian activities.

C. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- Kagel Canyon is in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, with wildfire risks intensified by climate change, limited access points, and more frequent, intense fires..

- The natural areas are prone to habitat fragmentation due to private ownership.

- The community also values maintaining dark skies and scenic view corridors, addressing zoning uncertainty, improving traffic safety (speeding and illegal maneuvers), managing non-conforming structures, and combating the ecological damage caused by invasive Tree of Heaven in riparian areas.

D. VISION

Kagel Canyon's vision is to be a thriving, self-sufficient community, preserving its rural character, natural environment (wildlife, habitats, creek, oaks, views, quiet, dark skies); fostering a strong sense of community; and promoting equine-keeping.

E. GOALS AND POLICIES

The goals and policies for both canyon aim to enhance emergency preparedness for residents, allow rebuilds for fire-damaged properties (especially those with site constraints), prioritize long-term open land preservation to prevent sprawl and safeguard ecosystems, protect the dark sky through lighting regulations, explore traffic calming measures such as strategic street tree planting and potential roundabouts, and develop strategies for invasive species management.

1. LAND USES

Goal LU1: A land use pattern that maintains the rural character of the Kagel Canyon area.

Policy LU1.1: Given the community history with wildfires and other related hazards, retain the low-density residential character of the Kagel Canyon community while also allowing for equestrian and animal-keeping uses in these areas where appropriate.

Policy LU1.2: Support flexibility in design and setbacks for residential development given constraints such as undersized or irregular shaped lots, oak trees, and septic systems.

Policy LU1.3: Foster a strong sense of community by encouraging community centers or gathering places.

Policy LU 1.4: Create standards for rebuilding in Kagel Canyon that allow for the existing community character to be retained while complying with Fire and Building Codes.

Policy LU 1.5: Ensure that new development in Kagel Canyon is compatible with the community character and rural design.

Goal LU2: Environmentally-sensitive industrial uses in Lopez Canyon.

Policy LU2.1: Encourage sustainable industrial uses in Lopez Canyon.

Policy LU2.2: Where feasible, screen industrial uses from the freeway.

2. MOBILITY

Goal M1: Safe streets in Kagel Canyon.

Policy M1.1: Support traffic calming to prevent fatalities and serious injuries due to illegal activities on the road, such as 'donuts' or speeding on main streets and near Glen Haven and Sholom Mortuary.

Goal M2: Enhanced equestrian mobility and connectivity through trail systems that link the community and surrounding areas.

Policy M2.1: Encourage the addition of trail crossings within and near the community to provide additional safety and connectivity.

Policy M2.2: Support equestrian mobility in Kagel Canyon through the establishment of equestrian-friendly infrastructure, such as in Dexter Park.

3. CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Goal CNR 1: Multi-purpose trails in Kagel/Lopez Canyons and Sylmar Island that connect residents to nature.

Policy CNR1.1: Enhance the network of trails within Kagel and Lopez Canyons for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians, ensuring seamless connections to the Angeles National Forest trail system.

Policy CNR1.2: Encourage the preservation of Sylmar Island and continue its valuable presence, integrating it into the broader multi-purpose trail network to enhance connectivity for the community and surrounding areas.

Goal CNR 2: Dexter Park operates as a vital community hub and critical emergency gathering point.

Policy CNR2.1: Support Dexter Park's diverse recreational facilities and natural environment to ensure a peaceful and accessible retreat for all Kagel Canyon residents.

Policy CNR2.2: Encourage spaces at Dexter Park that facilitate community interaction, social events, and community gatherings.

Policy CNR2.3: Support the use of Dexter Park as a designated emergency gathering point, with clear signage and necessary resources.

Goal CNR 3: The ecological health of riparian areas in Kagel Canyon is protected and restored.

Policy CNR3.1: Control and remove invasive species, such as the Tree of Heaven within riparian areas of Kagel Canyon to restore native plant communities and streambed ecology.

4. SAFETY

Goal S1: A resilient community that is supported and prepared for emergency response.

Policy S1.1: Support the use of Dexter Park as a resiliency hub during events such as power outages and extreme heat days/waves.

Policy S1.2: Ensure roadway maintenance, improvements, and vegetation management activities occur along key roadways (Kagel Canyon Road and Lopez Canyon Road) to facilitate effective emergency response and evacuations.

Policy S1.3: Preserve Fire Station 74 as a vital resource to the community during emergencies.

4.5.2 SYLMAR ISLAND

Location Map of Sylmar Island Community.

Veterans Memorial Park has a pavilion, recreation building, restrooms, picnic and camping areas, and the "Lest We Forget" earthquake memorial, plus one residence.

A. DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Sylmar Island consists mostly of undeveloped open space and mountainous terrain. However, there are several retention basins and flood control infrastructure in this area. There is also one residence at the far north end of Polk Street.

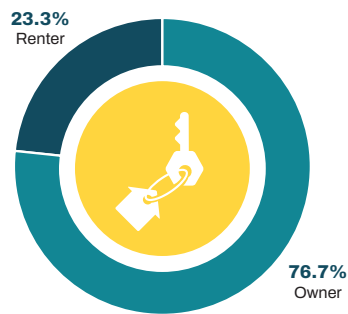Significant Ecological Area and Wildlife Linkages Map.

Open Space and Trails Map.

B. OPEN SPACE

A County-owned and operated Veterans Memorial Community Regional Park is on the site where the Veteran's Bureau Hospital used to be located. The hospital was heavily damaged and subsequently razed as a result of the Sylmar Earthquake in 1971. The 96-acre park was established in its place and contains a nature center, trails, and landscaping. Area Plan policies related to Sylmar Island center around preserving the natural open space and encouraging recreation through trail enhancements.

C. QUICK STATS: KAGEL AND LOPEZ CANYONS, SYLMAR ISLAND
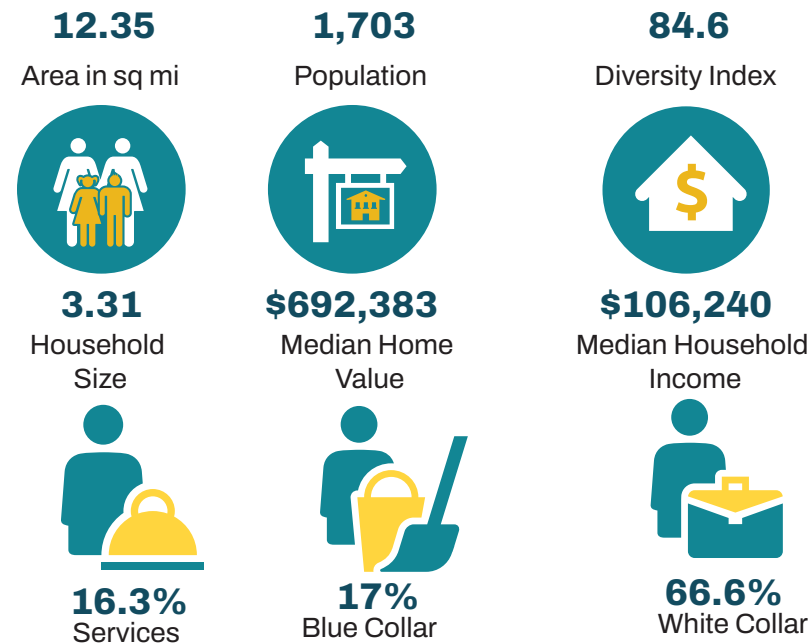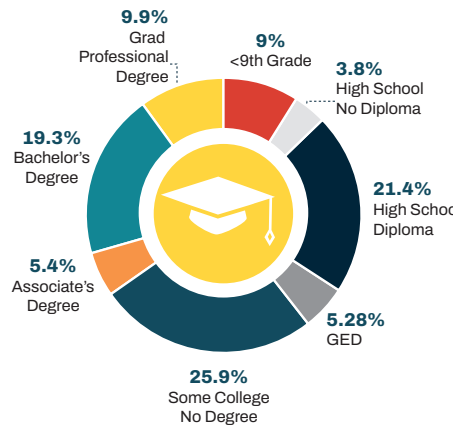
12.35
Area in sq mi

1,703
Population

84.6
Diversity Index

3.31
Household Size

$692,383
Median Home Value

$106,240
Median Household Income

16.3%
Services

17%
Blue Collar
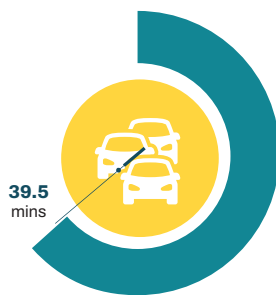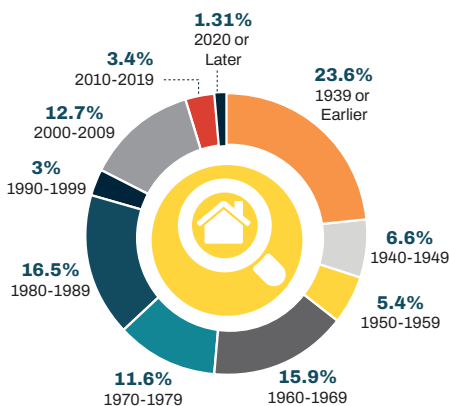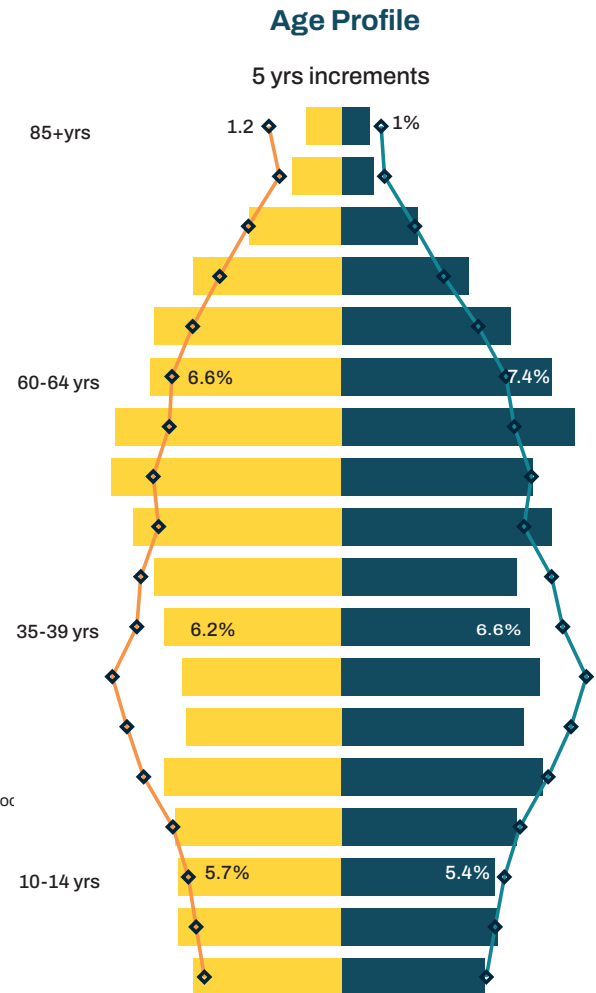
66.6%
White Collar

Age Profile
5 yrs increments

85+yrs — 1.2 / 1%

60-64 yrs — 6.6% / 7.4%

35-39 yrs — 6.2% / 6.6%

10-14 yrs — 5.7% / 5.4%

Dots show comparison to Los Angeles County

42
Median Age

Housing Tenure
- 23.3% Renter
- 76.7% Owner

Education
- 9.9% Grad Professional Degree
- 9% <9th Grade
- 3.8% High School No Diploma
- 19.3% Bachelor's Degree
- 21.4% High School Diploma
- 5.4% Associate's Degree
- 5.28% GED
- 25.9% Some College No Degree

Average Commute Time
39.5 mins

Housing: Year Built
- 1.31% 2020 or Later
- 3.4% 2010-2019
- 23.6% 1939 or Earlier
- 12.7% 2000-2009
- 3% 1990-1999
- 6.6% 1940-1949
- 16.5% 1980-1989
- 5.4% 1950-1959
- 11.6% 1970-1979
- 15.9% 1960-1969

Based on American Community Survey (ACS) and ESRI Business Analyst estimates in 2024 the community has a population of approximately 1,703, which has increased from 1,434 in 2010. Of those that responded to the 2020 Census that did not self-identify as Hispanic or Latino (48.3%) the remaining remaining 51.7% is comprised of individuals who self-identify as Black (3.4%), White (37.7%), and Asian (6.4%). Other groups represented less than one percent of the population. The community is a relatively older community, with a median age of 42.0 and a large share (63.7%) of the population between the ages of 18 and 64. The average household size in the community is 3.31 people, which is aligned with the average of the unincorporated areas of the County (3.30).

5

IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM TO BE ADDED

6

APPENDIX

6.1

NATIVE PLANT LIST

Native Plant List for San Fernando Valley Plan Area

6.1 SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AREA PLAN NATIVE PLANT LIST

West communities: Chatsworth-Westhills and Oat Mountain

East communities: Sylmar Island and Lopez-Kagel Canyon

*Unincorporated community of Universal City is subject to the Universal Studios Specific Plan.

Communities		Common Name	Botanical Name	Plant Type	Water Requirement	Ease of Care	Comments
West	East						
	Y	Acer negundo	Box Elder	Tree	Moderate	Moderate	
Y	Y	Juglans californica	Southern California Black Walnut	Tree	Low, Moderate		
Y	Y	Juniperus californica	California Juniper	Tree	Low, Very Low	Moderate	
Y	Y	Prunus ilicifolia	Hollyleaf Cherry	Tree	Low, Moderate, Very Low	Easy	
	Y	Pseudotsuga macrocarpa	Bigcone Douglas Fir	Tree	Low, Moderate		
Y	Y	Quercus agrifolia	Coast Live Oak	Tree	Low, Moderate, Very Low	Easy	
Y	Y	Quercus berberidifolia	Scrub Oak	Tree, Shrub	Low, Very Low	Easy	
Y	Y	Quercus chrysolepis	Canyon Live Oak	Tree, Shrub	Low, Very Low	Moderate	
	Y	Quercus durata var. gabrielensis	San Gabriel Oak	Tree, Shrub	Low, Very Low		
	Y	Quercus engelmannii	Engelmann Oak	Tree	Low, Very Low	Easy	
	Y	Quercus x ewanii	Ewan's Oak	Tree			hybrid between Q. d. var. gabrielensis x Q. engelmannii
Y		Quercus lobata	Valley Oak	Tree	Low, Moderate	Easy	
Y	Y	Sambucus mexicana	Blue Elderberry	Tree, Shrub	Low, Moderate		
Y	Y	Umbellularia californica	California Laurel	Tree	Low, Moderate	Easy	

6.2

GLOSSARY

6.2 GLOSSARY

Agroecology	Agroecology focuses on the relationships between plants, animals, humans, and the environment within agricultural systems, aiming to create sustainable and resilient food production.
ATSP	Active Transportation Strategic Plan
BMP	Los Angeles County Bicycle Master Plan
CAP	2045 Los Angeles County Climate Action Plan
County	County of Los Angeles
CPRNA	Los Angeles Countywide Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment
DPR	Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation
Environmental Justice	Environmental justice addresses the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens across all communities, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or other socio-economic factors. It seeks to ensure that no group of people, particularly marginalized or disadvantaged communities, bears a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences, such as pollution, hazardous waste, and other environmental hazards.
Equity	Equity refers to the principle of fairness and justice in the way people are treated, acknowledging that different individuals or groups may have different needs and circumstances. Equity involves recognizing and addressing these differences to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to achieve similar outcomes. In practice, this often means providing varying levels of support and resources to different individuals or groups based on their specific needs and situations.
General Plan	Los Angeles County 2035 General Plan
Metro	Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Planning Area	San Fernando Valley Planning Area
Public Works	Los Angeles County Public Works
PNA+	Parks Needs Assessment Plus
RTP/SCS	Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy
Rural	Rural" is defined as a way of life characterized by low densities without typical urban services. Urban services and facilities not normally found in rural areas, unless determined to be necessary for public safety, include curbs, gutters and sidewalks; street lighting, landscaping and traffic signalization; public solid waste disposal, integrated water and sewerage system; mass transit; and commercial facilities.
SCAG	Southern California Association of Governments
SFVAP	San Fernando Valley Area Plan
Vision Zero Action Plan	Vision Zero Los Angeles County: A Plan for Safer Roadways 2020-2025