

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): State law that requires any new development and projects to have environmental review to determine what the environmental impacts will be.

City Planning Commission: A permanent committee of five or more citizens who are appointed by the City to review matters related to planning and development.

Community Plan: A component of the Land Use Element. It focuses on a particular community within the City, such as Encino–Tarzana.

Density (residential): The number of units permitted per acre of land.

Environmental Impact Report (EIR): Type of environmental review prepared when the City determines that a project has the potential to have significant impacts.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR): The ratio of the gross floor area of a building to the area of the lot where it is located.

General Plan Framework: An element of the City General Plan that states that the goals and policies on a number of topics related to growth and services. All General Plan Elements need to be consistent with the Framework.

General Plan: A General Plan is the City’s guide for its future growth and development. Every city is mandated by the State of California to adopt a General Plan. The lifespan of a General Plan is typically a period of 20–30 years and must be updated periodically. The General Plan is required to cover seven topics called elements, such as Land Use, Housing, and Safety.

Height District: Establishes the height and FAR limitations.

Implementation Tools Overlay: Zones or plans in addition to the zoning regulations and a part of the Community Plan to ensure that the goals of the plan are met when new development takes place.

Infill Development: Development of vacant or underutilized land within urban communities that are nearly fully developed.

Infrastructure: The public and quasi-public facilities required in order to serve the development and operational needs of a community, such as roads, water, and sewer systems.

Land Use: Land Use designates the general location and intensity of the different uses of land, such as residential, industrial, commercial and open space. Each land use designation has a list of corresponding zones, available within that designation.

Mixed–Use Development: A project that combines compatible uses within the same structure or parcel, such as residential uses above ground floor commercial space.

Ordinance: A law or statute enacted by a city government. Zoning is established by ordinance.

Specific Plans: A Specific Plan is a comprehensive planning and zoning document for a defined geographic region of the City. They are sometimes instituted in addition to Community Plans to create a cohesive area, and can be spread over more than one Community Plan area.

Transit Oriented Development: Development that is located near transit. The City’s General Plan encourages locating new housing and businesses near transit as a way to give people the option of using transit and getting around by travel means other than a car (e.g. walking, bicycle, public transportation).

Zoning: Zoning determines the specific uses permitted on a parcel and provides regulations for development including height, bulk, and setbacks.

Southwest Valley Community Plan Update

THINGS TO KNOW



What is a Community Plan?

The City of Los Angeles’ General Plan Land Use Element comprises 35 Community Plans. Each Community Plan contains policies reflecting a future vision for neighborhoods and designates land for the range of uses needed, including jobs, housing, transportation, open space, and amenities.

The Plans tell stakeholders what type of development will be permitted, at what densities and intensities, and outlines strategies for how to accommodate planned growth. The policies in the Plans are used to guide decision-making when projects are proposed. For these reasons, Community Plans are an important tool in the development of the City, and it is essential that they are up-to-date.

What is the purpose of the plan update?

The update of the Southwest Valley Community Plans (Canoga Park–Winnetka–Woodland Hills–West Hills, Reseda–West Van Nuys, and Encino–Tarzana) takes cues from the City’s General Plan and the changing needs of the community. The City’s General Plan Framework Element is a long-term growth strategy for Los Angeles. It lays out goals, objectives and policies for the range of land uses throughout the City, including the Southwest Valley, and is used to guide the development of community plans according to projected population growth over a 20-year period of time.

Updating these three Community Plans will build on the Southwest Valley’s diverse character and history and will apply new zoning tools developed as part of the City’s re:code LA project. An updated plan will address incompatible land uses and modernize zoning to help maintain the integrity of single-family neighborhoods, while allowing some areas to have a diversity of uses that weren’t possible under the old code. Although the Planning Department may not be able to dictate what types of projects can be built, the department can make sure that the uses and zoning are up-to-date.

What is the “end” product?

The Community Plan process results in three final products for each Community Plan area. First, the Community Plan text, which houses all of the goals, policies, and programs is created. Second, the Community Plan Land Use Map is created (aka General Plan Land Use Map), which designates each property within the plan area for a particular land use. And finally, implementing ordinances, such as zoning, are created.

Why is the Department of City Planning here?

The City of Los Angeles’ Mayor and City Council have committed to comprehensively updating all 35 of the City’s Community Plans within a six-year span of time, envisioning that groupings of Community Plans would be updated simultaneously over the course of three years. The Southwest Valley plans are the first to kick off that process. The current Community Plans for the Southwest Valley were last updated in the late 1990s, and need to be updated both to reflect the current needs and aspirations of local stakeholders, and to accommodate more contemporary projections about population, employment and housing growth. A new plan would allow the community to shape the vision for the area for the next 20 years. In order to update the plans, the Department of City Planning needs to hear from the community on what their vision for the community is.



For More Info:

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How is the public part of the process?

The public is asked by the Department to identify issues and opportunities in the current plan areas that land use and zoning might be able to address. The Department will engage the public for input through a variety of means: community meetings, public events, and online feedback. After hearing from community members, the Department will present a draft plan that addresses the issues and opportunities presented within a planning context.



When were the plans last updated?

The current Encino–Tarzana Community Plan was adopted in 1998. The Canoga Park–Winnetka–Woodland Hills–West Hills and Reseda–West Van Nuys Community Plans were adopted in 1999. Those prior updates started several years before the plans were adopted, placing the start of the update over 20 years ago.



How does a Community Plan relate to zoning?

Zoning is the foremost tool used to implement the goals and policies of a Community Plan. When a Community Plan envisions vibrant, walkable commercial districts, there needs to be zoning tools that actually mandate that new buildings are pedestrian-oriented, and that small businesses can open without a myriad of complex requirements. When a Community Plan envisions that stable intact neighborhoods would be preserved, there needs to be zoning in-place that prescribes an appropriate size and configuration for new houses to be compatible with the existing neighborhood.

Fortunately, the City is in the process of re-writing its zoning code, so that there will be a vastly improved array of zoning tools available for the Southwest Valley Community Plans, and a major component to the Community Plan process will be working with stakeholders to determine which new zones should be applied where.



How far into the future do we plan?

The current projected horizon we are planning for is 20 to 25 years in the future.



How do I get more information?

While we plan on hosting workshops in the community, we also encourage you to visit us at swvalleyplans.org—the official City website for the Southwest Valley Plans—for updates and documents, and to subscribe to us on Facebook (facebook.com/swvalleyplans) and Twitter ([@swvalleyplans](https://twitter.com/swvalleyplans)). There we will post updates for upcoming meetings and on the progress of the plans. We encourage you to reach out to us at swvalleyplans@gmail.com or Adam Villani, City Planner at adam.villani@lacity.org or (818) 374–5067 for any questions or concerns you may have about the update.

The Process of Developing a Community Plan

