INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL PLAN
JUNE, 2011

A. Purpose and Intent of the General Plan

This General Plan for the City of Santa Clarita has been prepared pursuant to California Government Code Sections 65300 et. seq., which require that each city and county within the state “adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and of any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency’s judgment bears relation to its planning.” The General Plan and its various elements are required to function as an integrated, internally consistent, and compatible statement of policies regarding land use and development. State law also recognizes that special local conditions and circumstances must be accommodated, and that general plans can take differing forms while meeting the requirements of the law.

The General Plan serves as a foundation for making land use decisions based on goals and policies related to land use, transportation, population growth and distribution, development, open space, resource preservation and utilization, air and water quality, noise impacts, public safety, infrastructure, and other related physical, social, and economic factors. In addition to serving as a basis for local decision making, the General Plan establishes a clear set of development guidelines for citizens, developers, neighboring jurisdictions and agencies, and provides the community with an opportunity to participate in the planning process. The purpose of this General Plan is to comply with state requirements and to provide the City with a comprehensive, long-range policy guideline for future development.

In accordance with California Government Code Section 65302, the General Plan contains the following elements: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. In addition, an Economic Development Element was included. For purposes of organizing the document more efficiently, the issues of conservation and open space have been combined into a single chapter. Each of the elements contains maps and text setting forth goals, policies and programs for the long-range physical development within the City’s planning area.

Development within the incorporated boundaries of the City will be directly guided by the maps, goals and policies contained in the General Plan. As specified in State law, the General Plan must also address “any land outside its boundaries which...bears relation to its planning.” Therefore, the term planning area as used in this document also includes land within the Santa Clarita Valley that is outside of the current incorporated boundary of the City. Some of this additional area is included within the City’s adopted sphere of influence, a boundary established by the Los Angeles County Local Agency Formation Commission to delineate land that may reasonably be expected to annex to the City at some time in the future, and for which the City must provide planning for land uses and public facilities in its General Plan.

In addition to including the city and sphere of influence in the planning area, the City Council has deemed it beneficial to plan within a regional context, addressing the broader issues of growth, traffic congestion, water supply, open space, job creation, economic development, and other characteristics that are not contained within jurisdictional boundary lines. Recognizing that the City of Santa Clarita is located within and is an integral part of the greater Santa Clarita Valley, the City Council and Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors initiated a joint planning effort concurrent with their respective General Plan update processes. Called One Valley One Vision, this joint planning effort resulted in agreement between the City and the County on major
plans and policies to guide growth and development within all portions of the Santa Clarita Valley. Exhibit I-1 shows the planning area, including the incorporated City boundaries, the adopted sphere of influence, and the greater Santa Clarita Valley addressed in the One Valley One Vision planning effort.

B. One Valley One Vision Planning Process

The One Valley One Vision planning process reflects the City's and County's mutual decision to coordinate land uses and the pace of development with provision of adequate infrastructure, conservation of natural resources, and common objectives for the Valley. Major goals of the One Valley One Vision joint planning effort were to achieve greater cooperation between the County and the City, coordinated planning for roadways, infrastructure, and resource management, and enhanced quality of life for all who live and work in the Santa Clarita Valley.

The One Valley One Vision project included public input during all stages of the planning process. Community participation was solicited through surveys, meetings and workshops, mailings, maintenance of an informational website, stakeholder interviews, children's and youth activities, visioning workshops, outreach to Spanish-speaking residents through meetings and personal contact, placement of door-hangers, bus-shelter advertising, newspaper advertisements, the Valley Congress, correspondence, study sessions, and public hearings. An initial year-long public participation process resulted in formulation of community recommendations for the future of the Valley. These recommendations were published and ratified by a diverse collection of community representatives as the Vision and Guiding Principles, and are set forth in their entirety in Section N. The Guiding Principles also form the basis for more specific issue-based goals and policies contained in the various General Plan elements.

Concurrently with adoption of the City's General Plan, the County of Los Angeles adopted the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan as a component of the Los Angeles County General Plan. The Area Plan provides focused goals, policies, and maps to guide the regulation of development within the unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley. The updated OVOV Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan replaced in its entirety the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on February 16, 1984 (and subsequently updated on December 6, 1990), and serves as the basic planning tool for the unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley.

The County's Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan was prepared to ensure consistency with both the County's comprehensive General Plan and with the City of Santa Clarita's General Plan. The Area Plan does not include all of the mandatory general plan elements, because the County's overall General Plan addresses these mandatory issues on a countywide basis. The Area Plan contains detailed background, maps, goals and policies regarding land use and circulation planning, and policy-level discussions of other issues relating to specific needs and characteristics of the Santa Clarita Valley, such as open space preservation, trail planning, hillside development, and historic preservation.

Implementation of the One Valley One Vision policies will be managed by the County of Los Angeles through adoption of the updated Area Plan as a part of its General Plan, and through use of the Area Plan to establish zoning regulations and guide new development proposals within unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley. The County will also adopt community standards districts to establish development regulations appropriate for specific
areas of the Valley. Those portions of the planning area within the incorporated boundaries of the City of Santa Clarita will be regulated by adoption of this updated General Plan, which has also been prepared to reflect the common goals and policies agreed to as part of the One Valley One Vision project.

The City has adopted Special Standards Districts for the areas of Happy Valley, Sand Canyon and Placerita Canyon, and these districts will remain in place after adoption of the General Plan update. In the future, the City may consider adoption of other special standards districts, as appropriate.

The City’s General Plan and the County’s Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, as they may be amended from time to time, are intended to serve as a long-term blueprint for development of the entire Santa Clarita Valley over the next 20-year planning period, except where specific policies target other dates as set forth in the plan documents.

Together, the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and the City’s General Plan will clarify and articulate the County’s and City’s intentions with respect to the rights and expectations of the general public, property owners, special interest groups, prospective investors, and business interests. Through these documents, the County and the City inform the community of their common goals, policies, and standards.

C. Documents Adopted to Implement the One Valley One Vision Planning Effort

The joint City-County effort to provide for comprehensive planning of the Santa Clarita Valley has resulted in adoption of the following planning documents:

- This City of Santa Clarita General Plan, adopted by the City Council on June 14, 2011 by adoption of Resolution No. 11-63. The City’s General Plan includes all elements mandated by State law (Section 65300 et. seq. of the California Government Code), with open space and conservation combined into one element, as follows:
  - Land Use;
  - Circulation;
  - Housing;
  - Noise;
  - Conservation and Open Space;
  - Economic Development; and
  - Safety.

- The Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on __________ by adoption of Resolution No. ____________. The Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan includes the following elements, with maps, goals and policies specifically targeting the Santa Clarita Valley:
  - Land Use
  - Circulation
  - Public Safety (including Noise)
  - Conservation and Open Space
Both documents became effective on their respective date of adoption. As required by State law, all subsequent planning and development decisions within the Santa Clarita Valley planning area shall be determined to be consistent with these documents, except as provided herein for any land use applications pending during the plan preparation and adoption process.

D. Environmental Impact Report

Separate Environmental Impact Reports were prepared for the One Valley One Vision project, which addressed the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and the City’s General Plan Update, respectively. The Draft Environmental Impact Report for the City’s General Plan (SCH # 2008071133) was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act and was circulated for a 150-day public review beginning on September 23, 2010. Responses to the comments received on the draft EIR were prepared and transmitted to responding agencies. The Draft EIRs were reviewed by the Planning Commissions of both the County of Los Angeles and the City of Santa Clarita at noticed public hearings. Responses to comments and other relevant documentation were incorporated into the Final EIR for the City’s General Plan, which was certified after public hearings by the City Council on June 14, 2011.

E. Planning Area

Location and Setting

The One Valley One Vision planning effort encompasses the entire Santa Clarita Valley, generally bounded on the west by the Ventura County line, on the north by the Los Padres and Angeles National Forest lands, on the east by the Angeles National Forest, and on the south by the major ridgeline separating the Santa Clarita Valley from the San Fernando Valley. The County’s Area Plan includes unincorporated areas which include the communities of Stevenson Ranch, Castaic, Val Verde, Agua Dulce, Westridge, and the future Newhall Ranch. The incorporated City of Santa Clarita communities of Canyon Country, Newhall, Saugus, and Valencia are included in the City’s General Plan update. The entire planning area includes over 480 square miles, of which 432 square miles are in the County unincorporated area (including 235 square miles within the United States Forest Service boundaries) and 52 square miles are within the City limits. The City’s adopted sphere of influence includes approximately 29 square miles which, although still under County jurisdiction, are also addressed in the City’s General Plan. Table I-1 below summarizes jurisdictional areas, and Figure I-1 shows the planning area boundaries.
### Table I-1
Jurisdictional Areas in Santa Clarita Valley Planning Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Area (Square Miles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Planning Area</td>
<td>485.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Forest Service Area</td>
<td>235.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Valley One Vision Area (excluding USFS)</td>
<td>250.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County of Los Angeles (including USFS)</td>
<td>432.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Santa Clarita (incorporated boundaries) as of 2009</td>
<td>52.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City’s Adopted Sphere of Influence*</td>
<td>29.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The City’s Sphere of Influence is included in County area, but must also be included in the City’s General Plan area boundaries.*
The planning area is located approximately 30-40 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. Existing land use patterns can be traced largely to the influence of geographic constraints. The valley is framed by mountain ranges, including the San Gabriel, Santa Susana, and Sierra Pelona ranges. Angeles National Forest land, most of which is undeveloped and protected, surrounds much of the planning area. The natural topography of the Santa Clara River and its many tributary canyons, in conjunction with the National Forest holdings, has focused growth in the Santa Clarita Valley on the more central, level areas between the Valley’s two major freeways. Most of the development has occurred adjacent to the Golden State (Interstate 5) and Antelope Valley (State Route 14) freeways, concentrating urbanization within a “V” shaped area formed by these two major transportation routes.

The Valley’s topography is characterized by rolling terrain, canyons, creeks, and the Santa Clara River. The river flows from east to west for almost 100 miles from its headwaters near Acton to the Pacific Ocean, through a valley formed between the Santa Susana Mountains. That portion of the river within the planning area is known as the Upper Santa Clara River, and has a watershed consisting of approximately 680 square miles.

The Santa Clarita Valley is located at the convergence of several major transportation and utility facilities. The Union Pacific Railroad, the Golden State and Antelope Valley freeways, and two major aqueducts traverse the Valley. Oil, natural gas and power lines enter from the north through the Tejon Pass, cross the Valencia-Newhall community, and then exit the Valley near Newhall Pass.

**Governance**

The Santa Clarita Valley contains territory under the jurisdiction of two political entities. The unincorporated areas under the jurisdiction of Los Angeles County are addressed in the County’s Area Plan, and the incorporated territory within the boundaries of the City of Santa Clarita is included in this General Plan. Both agencies have revised their General Plans to reflect the goals and policies of the One Valley One Vision planning process. The City’s jurisdiction is located generally in the central portion of the valley, and is largely developed. The unincorporated area generally surrounds the City and much of it is either undeveloped or is developed with lower density residential and rural uses. However, there are several areas within the County’s jurisdiction that have developed or are in the process of being developed with urban uses; some of these areas have been developed through adoption of specific plans, as described in Section F.

The City of Santa Clarita incorporated on December 15, 1987. At incorporation, the City boundaries included 39.786 square miles and a population of about 130,000. From 1987 through 2006, the City processed 28 annexations, expanding its boundaries to include territory for which residents or property owners had petitioned to join the City. The City’s 2006 population was 177,400, representing a three percent annual growth rate since incorporation (including natural growth, in-migration and annexation).

The City’s policy on annexation requests has been to welcome additional residents who wish to join the City and to provide new residents with full representation and City services. Both the City and the County have taken the position that residents in unincorporated areas have the right and responsibility to determine the jurisdictional boundaries that are appropriate for their area.
Historical Overview

The earliest physical evidence of human occupation in the Upper Santa Clara River area dates from 7,000 to 4,000 years ago, and was recovered from two sites near Vasquez Rocks. The identity of the area's first inhabitants is unknown. The Tataviam peoples, Uto-Aztecan speakers of Shoshonean descent, began to reach the planning area in approximately A. D. 450. They were described as a distinct linguistic group when they were first encountered in 1776 by Spanish explorer Pedro Fages. The Tataviam lived primarily on the upper reaches of the Santa Clara River, east of Piru Creek and extending from the Antelope Valley to the San Gabriel Mountains. Archaeological data indicate that subsistence patterns and ritual practices were similar to neighboring Chumash and Gabrielino culture groups; these groups were hunter-gatherers, subsisting on acorns, yucca, juniper berries, seeds, and small game. Many of the place names in the valley, such as Castaic, Piru, Camulos, and Hasley, reflect a Tataviam linguistic origin.

Spanish explorer Gaspar de Portola’s chronicles of his 1769 expedition from San Diego to Monterey provide the first European documentation of the Santa Clarita region. The expedition passed north through the San Fernando Valley to Newhall and on to the Castaic Junction area, then west along the Santa Clara River to San Buenaventura, and from there north to Monterey. The trail blazed by Portola became known as El Camino Viejo (The Old Road).

After establishment of the Mission San Fernando in 1797, much of the Santa Clarita Valley was used by the Mission for ranching. Known as the Estancia de San Francisco Xavier, the estancia buildings were constructed in 1804 near the confluence of Castaic Creek and the Santa Clarita River.

With the Mexican Revolution of the 1820s and 1830s came secularization of the former mission lands. In 1839 the Rancho San Francisco, comprising 48,000 acres of the Santa Clarita Valley, was granted to Ignacio Del Valle, mayor of Los Angeles and later a state legislator. However, falling cattle prices and financial woes brought the ranch land back on the market in the 1860s, where it again changed hands several times before being purchased on January 15, 1875 by Henry Mayo Newhall.

The first documented discovery of gold in California occurred in Placerita Canyon in 1842, near what is now called the Oak of the Golden Dream. Nearly 1,300 pounds of gold was retrieved from Placerita Canyon between 1842 and 1847. Anecdotal evidence has been found indicating that placer gold mining occurred in Hasley Canyon and other areas of the Valley as early as the 1820s.

Various mineral resources discovered throughout the Valley spurred development of mining camps and settlements. San Francisquito Canyon was one of the first canyons to be mined and settled. Both copper and gold bearing quartz veins were mined into the 20th Century, although the rush was over by about 1875. In addition to gold, the local canyons yielded silver, lead, borates, manganese, titanium, gravel, agates and other gemstones and minerals.

The upper Santa Clarita Valley was the first location of oil drilling in Southern California, after oil seeps were discovered by American settlers in Pico Canyon in 1865. (The seeps had been known for centuries to the Tataviam, who had used the raw asphaltum for waterproofing and other purposes.) Mexican General Andres Pico and other investors sold their oil fields in Pico Canyon in 1875, along with the oil company they had formed to extract and process the oil. Their California Star Oil Company (CSO) later became part of the Standard Oil Company of
California. CSO’s new superintendent, Charles Alexander “Alex” Mentry, laid the groundwork for an oil town that became known as Mentryville, after deepening an older well, Pico No. 4, to produce a “gusher” on September 26, 1876. By the 1880s there were nearly 100 families living in Mentryville, which included Mentry’s 13-room mansion known as the “Big House.” Pico No. 4 became the longest-running oil well in the world before it was taken out of service in 1990, having pumped crude oil almost continuously for 114 years. In 1976 the well site was dedicated as a California State Historic Landmark, and a plaque now marks the historic oil well’s location. Although the Big House, the 1885 schoolhouse and certain other buildings remain, most of Mentryville’s early homes and company structures were either dismantled and removed in the early 20th Century, ravaged by fire, or destroyed by the 1994 earthquake. The site is now overseen by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, which has begun renovation of the Big House.

The completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad through the area in 1876, along with the development of the Pico oil field and construction of the Pioneer Oil Refinery in the mid-1870s, spurred an oil boom in the Valley. Pico Canyon oil flowed to the refinery via a pipe, and was refined into kerosene, lamp oil, naphtha and other petroleum derivatives. The remnants of the Pioneer Oil Refinery, which was the first viable oil refinery in the State, were damaged in the 1994 earthquake. Now owned by the City of Santa Clarita, along with 4.5 acres of land donated by Chevron Oil, the site is being evaluated for partial restoration as a historical depiction of an early oil refinery.

American explorer John C. Fremont, who would later challenge Abraham Lincoln for the Republican nomination for U.S. president, arrived at Castaic Junction with his “Buckskin Battalion” in 1847, following the future route of SR-126 from Ventura. After camping for two days in the Santa Clarita Valley, he crossed into the San Fernando Valley near the present alignment of Sierra Highway. Near the current Universal Studios Hollywood, he accepted the surrender of California from General Andres Pico. Fremont’s crossing point through the Santa Susana Mountains occurred at what became known as Fremont Pass, and is now known as Newhall Pass.

In 1854, Phineas Banning made a 30-foot cut in the pass to allow the first stagecoach through. The Butterfield Overland Stage took the “Great Southern” route from St. Louis to San Francisco over Fremont Pass from 1858 until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. In 1863, under a construction contract awarded by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, General Edward F. Beale’s workers cut a 90-foot deep passageway through the pass between the present alignments of SR-14 and Sierra Highway to improve the roadway. Beale also constructed a toll house when the pass was widened, and collected toll for the right of passage for 22 years before the County halted the practice. Beale’s Cut was a vital route that served the Southern California area until it was bypassed by the Newhall Tunnel in 1910. By 1915, the Ridge Route extended from downtown Los Angeles north through the Newhall Tunnel and into the San Joaquin Valley.

In 1875 most of the Rancho San Francisco was purchased by Henry Mayo Newhall, a San Francisco entrepreneur. Much of the Valley’s history from that time has been linked to the activities of Newhall and the company formed by his heirs, The Newhall Land and Farming Company. When Henry Newhall purchased the Rancho, he knew the Southern Pacific Railroad intended to lay tracks north out of Los Angeles to join with the Central Pacific and its connection to the Transcontinental Railroad. A rail route through his property would increase its value, so he sold an alignment to the Southern Pacific for $1 and a square-mile townsit to the railroad’s development company for another $1.
Three months after Newhall’s land purchase, the Southern Pacific began tunneling through the mountains and the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys. Built with Chinese labor, at 6,940 feet the San Fernando (Railroad) Tunnel was the third-longest tunnel in the United States when it was completed on July 27, 1876. As the Southern Pacific extended track to the north, the Central Pacific was coming south to meet it. The two companies joined track near Lang Station in Canyon Country in a “golden spike” ceremony on September 5, 1876. The following month, on October 18, 1876, the Southern Pacific began subdividing the town of Newhall.

Initially the town was located at Bouquet Junction, in what would later become Saugus, named for Henry Newhall’s home town in Massachusetts. Little more than a year later, in January and February 1878, the town moved three miles south to its present location at Old Town Newhall, probably because of better water availability from a natural artesian spring. The Pioneer Oil Refinery, which handled the oil piped from Pico Canyon and was initially set up along the wagon route in the Newhall Pass, moved to present-day Pine Street in Railroad Canyon next to the new train tracks. The earliest productive refinery on the West Coast, it operated until 1888.

A unique feature of Santa Clarita’s historical setting is the extent of early filming in the Valley, due to its proximity to Hollywood and the presence of distinctive topographic and geologic features used as settings for early Western films. The community of Newhall contains many notable Hollywood movie sets and is the site of the Walk of Western Stars. Some of the Western relics in downtown Newhall include the Tom Mix cottages, used as housing for the early motion picture industry; the American Theater (originally the Tumbleweed Theater) designed by Charles S. Lee and funded in large part by Actor William S. Hart in 1940; Melody Ranch (also known as Placeritos Ranch and Monogram Ranch), built in the early 1920s and owned from 1952 to 1990 by actor Gene Autry and used as a location for hundreds of Western films, television series and commercials; and the Walt Disney Company’s Golden Oak Ranch in nearby Placerita Canyon. Heritage Junction on Main Street has been set aside for the preservation of several local historic structures.

The Valley was also the location of the second-worst disaster in California history. In 1908, the City of Los Angeles obtained rights to the watershed of the Owens Valley. Under direction of William Mulholland, chief engineer for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, the project was expanded in the 1920’s into San Francisquito Canyon, where the St. Francis Dam was completed in 1926. From there the aqueduct traversed the eastern part of Newhall Ranch and crossed over San Fernando Pass to the spillway above the San Fernando Reservoir. In 1928 the concrete dam failed. The resulting flood of the river valley on March 12 and 13 caused at least 450 deaths and destroyed 990 homes and large areas of farmland. It was America’s worst civil engineering failure of the 20th Century. In 1932-34, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power built a new earthen dam in Bouquet Canyon.

By the 1940’s, Santa Clarita’s population had reached 4,000 residents. Six years later, the first high school was dedicated, and the first tract homes were built in Rancho Santa Clarita. From the 1960’s on, growth in the Santa Clarita Valley was fueled by the need for affordable housing in proximity to the Los Angeles basin and San Fernando Valley. In 1963, Canyon Country was founded, and the community of Valencia was dedicated in 1967, with homes selling for $25,000. During the late sixties and early seventies, the College of the Canyons and California Institute of the Arts, established by Walt Disney, were established to serve the needs of the growing community. Magic Mountain Theme Park opened in 1971, bringing thousands of tourists to the area and providing a significant landmark. In 1975 the Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital was founded, as well as the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Foundation.
Post-war suburban growth pushed its way north from the San Fernando Valley after the designation and expansion of Interstate 5 as a federal highway in the 1960s. Based on statistics from the County’s Department of Regional Planning, the Santa Clarita Valley grew by over 45,000 dwelling units from 1960 through 1989, with over 20,000 units constructed during the 1980s. Rapid residential growth during this period led to a call for local government. In 1985 the Chamber of Commerce initiated a study on the economic feasibility of becoming an incorporated city. Two years later, the voters approved incorporation and on December 15, 1987, the City of Santa Clarita was formed, becoming the largest City to incorporate in the State’s history.

After incorporation, residential growth continued within both City and County areas and development of commercial retail, office, and industrial uses increased, particularly along the Interstate 5 corridor. According to County estimates, there are now approximately 56,000 dwelling units within the City and 24,500 units in County unincorporated areas. An additional 40,500 units have been approved (7,000 in the City and 33,500 in the County), and other applications for new development are pending. Moreover, planning for areas adjacent to the Santa Clarita Valley, such as Tejon Ranch north of Castaic and the growing cities of Lancaster and Palmdale to the north along State Route 14, are expected to impact transportation and other infrastructure within the Valley. A major challenge in future planning for the Santa Clarita Valley will be managing the anticipated growth within the north Los Angeles County region, in a manner that preserves both quality of life and the environment.

F. Previous Planning Efforts

The Santa Clarita Valley has been the subject of several previous planning efforts by both the County of Los Angeles and the City of Santa Clarita. Following is a brief summary of prior adopted plans.

1984 Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan (County of Los Angeles)

The initial Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan was adopted in 1984, based on assistance from the Santa Clarita Valley Planning Advisory Committee (a citizens’ advisory committee representing a variety of local interests and expertise). It was designed to provide decision-makers with a policy framework to guide development decisions in the Valley.

Following its adoption by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in 1984, two significant changes occurred which affected the Area Plan. The first of these was the incorporation of the City of Santa Clarita in 1987, including the communities of Newhall, Valencia, Saugus and portions of Canyon Country and Sand Canyon. Second, growth in the Santa Clarita Valley during the 1980’s exceeded initial expectations, requiring revision of growth projections for population, employment, and housing. To reflect these changes, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopted a comprehensive update of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan in 1990.
City of Santa Clarita General Plan

Introduction

City of Santa Clarita Plans

After its incorporation in 1987, the City undertook preparation of its first comprehensive General Plan, which was adopted on June 26, 1991 by City Council Resolution 91-98. The City’s first General Plan included the following elements: Land Use, Housing, Community Design, Economic Development, Circulation, Human Resources, Public Services, Parks and Recreation, Open Space and Conservation, Air Quality, Noise, and Safety. Various elements were updated from time to time to reflect changing conditions, requirements, and policies.

To implement its General Plan, the City adopted a Unified Development Code, containing zoning and subdivision regulations, which was most recently updated in 2011. In 2001, the City adopted the Santa Clarita Beautification Master Plan, which contains citywide design guidelines as well as specific guidelines tailored to maintain community character within Canyon Country, Newhall, Saugus, and Valencia. According to the document, “the Beautification Master Plan addresses concepts for streetscape design, landscape enhancement, gateways, and monumentation and signage, on both a regional and a community scale. The Master Plan strives to maintain the identity of individual communities while unifying the entire City through design”.

In addition, the City adopted a set of Architectural Guidelines in 2002 for the purpose of giving “clear direction for the renovation of existing buildings and construction of new buildings”. These guidelines were updated in 2009 and retitled the Community Character and Design Guidelines. The Guidelines were prepared with the stated intent of retaining and encouraging architectural variety, promoting quality, and maintaining the scale and appearance of the City, with attractive development that preserves and enhances natural features and provides amenities for enjoyment of the community.

Specific Plans

Both the County and the City have used the specific plan process to provide comprehensive planning for large residential communities and business complexes in the planning area. As described in the State’s General Plan Guidelines, a specific plan is often used to address the development requirements for a single project, such as a planned community. It may combine policy statements with development regulations, and typically emphasizes development criteria and standards. The text and diagrams of a specific plan address necessary infrastructure and facilities as well as land uses and open space, including programs and regulations necessary to finance infrastructure and public facilities. Specific plans may be adopted by resolution or ordinance, and although they are not part of the general plan, they must be consistent with the general plan.

Table I-2 summarizes some of the major specific plans already adopted within the planning area that govern land use and development for larger development projects:

Since adoption of the previous City and County plans in the 1990s, the Santa Clarita Valley has evolved from a rural and suburban bedroom community into more of a sustainable community with commercial centers, balancing the small town charm with urban sophistication. Valley residents and policy makers have recognized the need for updated planning that focuses on the challenges and opportunities of the coming decades, leading to the One Valley One Vision planning process.
### Table I-2
**Adopted Specific Plans in Planning Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Uses</th>
<th>2011 Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newhall Ranch</td>
<td>County</td>
<td>11,963</td>
<td>20,885 du*</td>
<td>Two tracts pending (10,686 du)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevenson Ranch</td>
<td>County</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>3,400 du, 110 ac. commercial, 3 schools, parkland</td>
<td>Partially built; Phase 5 pending (2,467 du on 1,750 ac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northlake</td>
<td>County</td>
<td>1330</td>
<td>3,623 du, 2 schools, commercial area</td>
<td>Specific plan amendment in process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair Oaks Ranch</td>
<td>County</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>796 du</td>
<td>Partially constructed; several hundred units to be built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Valencia I</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000 du, 636,000 sq. ft. commercial, 167,000 sq ft. industrial, open space, parkland and elementary school</td>
<td>Constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Valencia II</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>1,900 du, 150,000 sq. ft. commercial</td>
<td>Constructed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Porta Bella</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>2,911 du, 96 ac commercial/office, open space, parkland and elementary school</td>
<td>Awaiting clean-up of hazardous materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Newhall</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>1,092 new du, 1,017,000 new sq. ft. commercial</td>
<td>Adopted Dec. 2005; public street improvements underway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista Canyon</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1,100 new du, 950,000 sq. ft. non-residential, possible new Metrolink station</td>
<td>Awaiting annexation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*du=dwelling units

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**G. Overview of the City of Santa Clarita**

**Setting**

Located in a picturesque valley just north of Los Angeles, Santa Clarita is a premier community for raising families and building businesses. The City has committed to maintaining a quality living environment through long-term planning, fiscal responsibility, community involvement, respect for the environment, and support for business development. The City encompasses over 52 square miles, with a 2008 population of over 177,000. The number of housing units in 2008 was 58,714.
At 1,200 to 1,400 feet above sea level, the City enjoys a mild Mediterranean climate, which is generally semi-arid and warm. Summers are dry with temperatures as high as 110 degrees F. Winters are somewhat cool with temperatures as low as 20 degrees F. Average rainfall is about 17.6 inches per year in the flat areas and about 27 inches in the mountains. The region is subject to wide variations in annual precipitation and also experiences periodic wildfires.

**Government**

The City of Santa Clarita is a general-law city operating under a council-manager form of government, with the City Council acting as the part-time legislative body of the City. Five members are elected to the City Council at-large on a nonpartisan basis, with members serving four-year terms. Elections are staggered every two years, with the Council-appointed mayor serving a one-year term and acting as the Council’s presiding officer.

The City Council appoints a City Manager as chief administrative officer, responsible for day-to-day operations of the City. The City Manager’s duties include appointing department directors who are each responsible for department operations, including selecting division managers and support staff. Also appointed by the City Council is the City Attorney, who serves as legal advisor to the Council, commissioners, and other City officials.

Assisting the City Council in serving the residents are a variety of boards and commissions appointed to address specific needs within their realm of responsibility. The Planning Commission is a five-member commission appointed by the City Council to review various applications for land use and land development in the City. The Planning Commission also provides recommendations to the City Council on legislative acts such as General Plan Amendments, revisions to the Unified Development Code, specific plans, and land use ordinances. Volunteer boards and committees formed by the City Council to advise them on issues pertaining to local neighborhood areas. In addition, a five-member Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Commission provides recommendations on recreation services and facilities.

**Community Character**

The City supports a strong and diverse economy through cooperation with local businesses, a highly-skilled labor pool, a variety of transportation facilities, available land and leasable space, available housing, and a high quality of life. Since 2000, local jobs in Santa Clarita have grown by 5.6% annually and the City continues to have the lowest unemployment rate in Los Angeles County. Top employers in the Valley include Six Flags California, Princess Cruises, HR Textron, Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital and the local colleges and school districts. Over 125,000 workers participate in the City’s labor force, of which over 60 percent are college graduates. Median household income is over $84,000 annually. Almost 20,000 students are enrolled in the City’s three colleges. A diverse array of housing communities meets the needs of Valley residents, including family-oriented neighborhoods, executive estates, apartments, condominiums, and senior communities.
City Accomplishments

Since its incorporation as a city on December 15, 1987, much has been accomplished by the residents of Santa Clarita. Highlights from the last 23 years are listed below:

- Three Metrolink stations and the McBean Transfer Station were constructed, and Santa Clarita Transit’s ridership increased ten-fold.

- The City instituted Youth in Government, Camp Clarita, an Anti-Gang Task Force, after-school latch-key care, and other programs for local young people.

- A new 17,000-square foot community center was established in Newhall at a cost of $7 million, offering programs ranging from boxing to folk dancing, homework help, basketball, performance areas, and a Sheriff’s substation.

- The City has increased available improved parkland to over 240 developed acres within 17 parks, 10 of which were constructed since 2000. This also includes a 20-acre sports complex, completed in 2003, with an aquatics center, skate park, basketball, racquetball, and activities center.

- An extensive trail system was planned, of which over 11 miles have been improved; when complete, the system will include 34.6 miles of trails.

- The City undertook an urban forestry program with a goal of planting 1,000 trees per year; currently the City maintains approximately 50,000 trees.

- The City initiated programs for street maintenance, street widening, graffiti removal, weed abatement, and sidewalk repair.

- Construction of the 8.5-mile, $245-million Cross Valley Connector (CVC) began in fall, 2004. This 8-lane roadway will ease traffic between Interstate 5 and State Route 14 is open to the public which includes the Golden Valley Interchange/Bridge that was opened in 2005.

- The Transit Maintenance Facility, built with environmentally-sensitive materials and design methods, opened in 2006.

- The Veteran’s Historical Plaza was dedicated in 2005.

- In 2004, the City Council adopted the Big Picture Community Strategic Plan, developed with an unprecedented level of community participation and focusing on the City’s key priorities. By 2005, notable progress had been made in every area of the strategic plan, including traffic management, air quality, youth activities, and economic development.

- In 2005, the Downtown Newhall Specific Plan was adopted to aid in revitalizing Old Town Newhall.

Identified as one of the “Top Five Most Business Friendly Cities” by the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation for the years 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Identified as one of the “Top 25 Retail Markets in California” in the California Retail Survey, 2007 and 2008.

Identified as the “Best Place to Live in California” by CNN/Money Magazine, 2006.


Named “Model Community” for the City’s commitment and action to improve the air we breathe, by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, 2008.

H. Planning Issues for the Santa Clarita Valley

Through the planning and visioning process of the One Valley One Vision project, the County and City identified issues of Valley-wide significance that they felt would be best addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. In recognition of the anticipated continuation of rapid growth, the One Valley One Vision planning effort focused on ways to manage this growth and addressed the need for mutual cooperation on the following issues:

1. Phasing of new development with provision of adequate infrastructure required to serve such new development, in a manner that does not adversely impact existing residents;

2. Planning for adequate sports, park and recreation facilities to serve both City and County residents;

3. Coordination on planning and construction of streets, including location, design, and timing of improvements, in order to increase mobility and access, and reduce congestion;

4. Preservation of an open space greenbelt around the urbanized central portions of the Valley, in order to preserve hillside areas and significant ridgelines, conserve biological resources and water quality, provide opportunities for recreation, and make more efficient use of existing urban infrastructure in the core areas;

5. Planning for integrated trail systems, including bikeways, walkways, and multi-purpose trails;

6. Planning for a balanced mix of residential and business-oriented uses that will increase job creation, promote a vibrant economy, provide a wide variety of goods and services to residents, and ensure adequate housing opportunities to serve all income levels and household types;

7. Preservation and enhancement of rural, suburban, and urban lifestyles and community character within the diverse communities comprising the Santa Clarita Valley;
8. Conservation of significant resources, including historic and cultural sites, riparian and other protected habitat areas, water quality, and scenic areas;

9. Preservation of public health, safety, and welfare, through identification of natural and environmental hazards, including noise, seismic, fire, and airborne emissions, and designation of land uses in an appropriate manner to mitigate these impacts;

10. Creation of vibrant town centers with access to public transit systems through planning for transit-oriented development around rail stations;

11. Coordination on enhancing public and community services such as law enforcement, fire protection, libraries, and cultural centers;

12. Planning for those intensive uses with potential land use and environmental impacts which are needed to support the Valley's anticipated growth, including landfills, aggregate mining and processing, waste transfer and processing facilities, and similar facilities;

13. Planning for social infrastructure and services needed to ensure that the basic needs of all Valley residents are met, including emergency housing, transitional housing, social care facilities, medical care and related services, and ongoing coordination with school districts and colleges; and

14. Growing the economy at a rate commensurate with residential growth, in order to generate financial resources needed to support provision of services to the public at acceptable levels of service.

I. Organization of the General Plan

The City of Santa Clarita General Plan consists of seven elements along with an introduction as described below. Some of the elements, such as Land Use and Circulation, encompass the entire Santa Clarita Valley Planning Area, including both City and County territory as depicted on Exhibit I-1, and are jointly adopted in the City's General Plan as well as the County's Area Plan. The Housing Element is applicable only to the City of Santa Clarita because the County of Los Angeles has prepared a separate Housing Element as part of the Countywide General Plan. In addition, the City prepared a non-required Economic Development Element. The applicable planning areas for each element are clarified in the following descriptions.

Each element of the City's General Plan contains background information followed by goals that describe the end result to be achieved through the related policies and programs. A goal statement expresses an end, not an action. Goals are more specifically defined through policies. A policy statement guides decision-making and indicates a commitment of the City Council to a particular course of action. Implementation measures listed at the end of each element outline specific actions, procedures, and programs that will be undertaken to carry out general plan policies and achieve the intended goals.

Introduction

The Introduction of the updated General Plan describes the framework for the One Valley One Vision joint planning effort between the County of Los Angeles and the City of Santa Clarita for the Santa Clarita Valley, and provides background information on plan development and the
project area. In addition, the Introduction contains the Vision and Guiding Principles, jointly established between the City and the County based on extensive public input, to guide future development of the Santa Clarita Valley.

**Land Use Element**

The Land Use Element contains a land use map and descriptions of the designations applied to land within the Santa Clarita Valley to guide the type, intensity, and density of future uses. The element also contains goals and policies to ensure that new development and the use of land reflect community goals; enhance quality of life; are supported by adequate services, utilities, roadways and other infrastructure; ensure public safety through consideration of hazardous land use conditions; and conserve valuable resources and amenities within the Valley.

This Element was jointly adopted by the City in this General Plan and by the County as part of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan.

**Circulation Element**

The Circulation Element contains a map showing major transportation facilities within the Santa Clarita Valley, including streets and highways, rail and public transit routes, stations and terminals, and airport facilities. Descriptions of each type of transportation facility are given in the Element, along with goals and policies to ensure that circulation needs are met in a timely manner to meet the needs of Valley residents.

This Element was jointly adopted by the City in this General Plan and by the County as part of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan.

**Housing Element**

The Housing Element was prepared for the City’s General Plan and contains policies and programs to ensure that adequate housing is provided to meet the needs of all City residents. The element addresses the need for affordable housing, housing for people with special needs, constraints to providing affordable housing, the City’s progress in meeting its housing goals, quantified objectives for provision of housing, a survey of adequate sites for housing, a resource inventory, and identification of at-risk affordable units and methods of preservation.

This element pertains only to the City of Santa Clarita. The County of Los Angeles has prepared a separate countywide Housing Element.

**Safety Element**

The Safety Element contains maps and policies to ensure that residents are not exposed to health risks due to air pollution, earthquakes, wildland fires, or other environmental hazards, and that adequate provisions are made for crime prevention, law enforcement, and fire protection services.

While the County’s General Plan contains a comprehensive, countywide Safety Element, the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan contains specific public safety information and policies to guide development decisions in the unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley based upon local conditions.
Noise Element

The Noise Element contains maps and policies to ensure that residents are not exposed to health risks or nuisances due to noise generated from freeways and high-volume roadways, airports, industrial and recreation uses, special events and other uses emitting loud sounds. Policies address sound attenuation measures such as setbacks, noise barriers, and buffering to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

While the County’s General Plan contains a comprehensive, countywide Noise Element, the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan contains specific noise information and policies to guide development decisions in the unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley based upon local conditions.

Open Space and Conservation Element

The Open Space and Conservation Element contains maps and policies to ensure preservation of an open space greenbelt around most portions of the Santa Clarita Valley, in addition to preserving water quality, historic and cultural resources, scenic views, and providing recreational facilities to enhance the quality of life for Valley residents. This element combines the two State-mandated elements of Open Space and Conservation into one chapter, to more efficiently organize the maps and policies pertaining to each.

While the County’s General Plan contains a comprehensive, countywide Conservation Element, the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan contains specific information and policies to guide development decisions in the unincorporated portions the Santa Clarita Valley based upon local conditions. A key component is preservation of resources within portions of five designated Significant Ecological Areas (SEA’s) as set forth in the County General Plan.

Economic Development Element

The Economic Development Element focuses on three primary goals relating to economic development in the Santa Clarita Valley, including: 1) establishing a jobs/housing balance through quality employment opportunities for residents; 2) building an economic base for all communities through increased sales tax generation; and 3) developing economic wealth in the Santa Clarita Valley by attracting external monies to the economy.

This Element addresses key goals of these communities as they relate to the economic prosperity of the Santa Clarita Valley. It looks at the area’s strengths, the programs and organizations fueling the Santa Clarita Valley’s economic growth and success, and the economic opportunities and challenges unique to the Valley.

J. How to Use the General Plan

In reading and interpreting this General Plan, the following guidance should be considered.
1. The General Plan is the foundation upon which all land use decisions are to be based. The document should be used as a starting point for all development decisions made in the community. Any proposal for development, whether initiated by a private or public entity, must be analyzed and tested for consistency with the goals, policies, and programs of this General Plan. The City must assure and maintain consistency between this General Plan and any specific plans, ordinances, and codes regulating land use and development.

2. The Land Use Map is never to be interpreted by itself, but must be interpreted in light of applicable written policies.

3. Whenever an uncertainty exists regarding the location of boundaries of any land use category, circulation alignment, or other symbol or line found on the official maps of the General Plan, the following procedures will be used to resolve the uncertainty:
   a. Boundaries shown on any map in the General Plan which approximately follow the corporate boundaries of the City shall be construed as following these boundaries;
   b. Boundaries shown as approximately following property lines, section lines, half or quarter section lines shall be construed as following such lines;
   c. Boundaries shown as approximately following the centerline of a stream, creek or other continuously or intermittently flowing water course shall be construed as following the centerline taken at mean low water, and in the event of natural change in the location of such streams or other water course, the boundary is to be construed as moving with the channel centerline;
   d. Boundary lines shown as approximately following street alignments shall be construed as being located at the street centerline. Where a land use designation applied to a parcel is not mapped to include an adjacent street or alley, the category shall be considered to extend to the centerline of the right-of-way;
   e. Boundaries shown as separated from, parallel, or approximately parallel to any of the features listed above shall be construed to be parallel to such features and at such distances therefrom as are shown on the map.

4. The interpretation of policy should be consistent with the Guiding Principles of the Santa Clarita General Plan.

5. While the Santa Clarita General Plan is meant to be a guide for the public in determining allowable uses of private property, the public is encouraged to consult with members of the City’s planning staff prior to investing in the preparation of development plans that might later prove to be inconsistent with the Santa Clarita General Plan.

6. All legally established uses in existence at the time of adoption of this General Plan are deemed to be consistent with this plan. Existing legal lots are not affected, and may be developed (following current development requirements).
7. Pending subdivision applications which were submitted prior to adoption of this General Plan must meet the following General Plan consistency requirements:

a. Applications pending, and deemed complete, as of the effective date of adoption of this plan, shall be found consistent with the Santa Clarita General Plan in effect as of the date such application was deemed complete.

b. Applications pending, but not deemed complete, as of the effective date of adoption of this plan, shall be found consistent with the Santa Clarita General Plan in effect at the time of final City approval of the tentative map.

8. Pending discretionary applications such as specific plans, conditional use permits, and variances must be determined to be consistent with the General Plan in effect at the time such application is approved by the City.

In addition to the direction provided by this General Plan, new development and land use activities are regulated by many agencies other than the City. Obtaining approval for certain types of actions may require proof of the availability of public services – including water/sewer, power, police, fire and schools – as well as fair-share contributions for public parks, libraries, streets, and other public facilities.

Along with the standard building requirements and zoning regulations that apply citywide, development in hillside or riparian areas often requires special considerations and permits from local, state, and federal agencies.

K. Implementing the General Plan

California Government Code Section 65103(c) requires that local jurisdictions implement their General Plans upon adoption. The City’s General Plan relies on policies, programs and implementation strategies set forth in each element, as well as the mitigation measures set forth in the General Plan Master Environmental Impact Report. The City’s Development Code, Beautification Master Plan, Community Character and Design Guidelines, Specific Plans, and other applicable codes and ordinances also play a critical role in implementing the goals and policies of the General Plan.

The Unified Development Code is the primary tool for implementing the General Plan. It regulates development through the creation of zone districts shown on the Zoning Map, with accompanying text that outlines the permitted uses allowed and development standards required within each zone. State law mandates that the City's Unified Development Code be consistent with the General Plan. Should the Unified Development Code become inconsistent with the General Plan, it must be amended within a reasonable period of time, and made consistent with the General Plan. The Unified Development Code cannot be amended if it creates an inconsistency with the General Plan. It is the City's intent to amend the Unified Development Code and Zoning Map following General Plan adoption to ensure consistency between development regulations and land use policies.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that an initial environmental study be prepared for new development projects, to include "an examination of whether the project is compatible with existing zoning and plan." The CEQA Guidelines further state that a "project will normally have a significant effect on the environment if it will conflict with adopted environmental plans and goals of the community where it is located." If the Planning Commission or the City
Council determines that a proposed development project is inconsistent with the General Plan, the project may not be approved without an amendment to the General Plan. Through the CEQA process, the City will ensure conformity between development approvals and the General Plan.

Subdivision regulation is another instrument for implementing the General Plan. Establishing statewide uniformity in local subdivision procedures, the State Subdivision Map Act (Government Code Sections 66410 et seq.) delegates the authority to regulate some aspects of the design and improvement of subdivisions to local government. State law also requires that a subdivision cannot be approved unless a finding is made that the project is consistent with the City General Plan and any applicable specific plan. The City will require that each subdivision approved in the City conforms to the General Plan.

One of the statutory responsibilities of incorporated cities and counties is to "annually review the capital improvement program of the city or county and the local public works projects of other local agencies for their consistency with the General Plan." The City will submit its Capital Improvement Program to the Planning Commission annually to ensure that a finding of conformity with the General Plan is made, prior to its adoption.

The General Plan is a dynamic and multi-faceted document, which defines and addresses the changing needs of the community. To assure that the General Plan is kept current, programs and policies should be reviewed annually to reflect compatibility with budgetary priorities and related program status. Long-term programs and implementation measures should be given consideration in budgeting to assure timely funding and development of infrastructure, public services and facilities. California Government Code Section 65400(b) requires that the planning agency "render an annual report to the legislative body (City Council) on the status of the General Plan and the progress in its implementation." State law further requires that the Housing Element be reviewed and updated at least once every five years.

Through compliance with these measures, as well as through adherence to the maps, goals, policies and programs contained in this document, the City will assure ongoing implementation of the General Plan.

L. Amending the General Plan

Pursuant to State law, each mandatory element of the General Plan may be amended up to four times in each calendar year, and optional elements may be amended as needed. The City Council, Planning Commission or Director of Community Development may initiate a General Plan Amendment, or an applicant may file for an amendment by submitting an application with the City’s Community Development Department. An amendment to the General Plan constitutes a project under CEQA, and is therefore evaluated for its environmental effects and consistency with other elements of the General Plan. General Plan Amendments must be reviewed for a recommendation by the Planning Commission prior to final action by the City Council.

The State Legislature has recognized that occasions arise which require the local jurisdiction to have some flexibility in the time periods established for amending the General Plan. As set forth in the California Government Code, the following amendments are exempt from the General Plan amendment schedule.
1. Amendments requested and determined necessary for the development of a residential project, of which at least twenty-five percent (25%) of its units will be available to persons of low or moderate income; and

2. Any amendment necessary to comply with a court decision in a case involving the legal adequacy of the General Plan.

It is the intent of this General Plan to provide a flexible planning tool for the community to utilize in achieving its long-term goals. The General Plan must respond to changing community needs, values and environmental conditions to ensure continued effectiveness of the document. Monitoring of the General Plan will be accomplished through annual reviews that will help in determining when revisions are necessary. Major updates to the plan, or portions thereof, will be undertaken to reflect new conditions, local attitudes and policy changes, as needed.

M. Development of the General Plan

California Government Code Section 65351 states that during preparation of the General Plan "...opportunities for the involvement of citizens...and other community groups" must be provided "through public hearings and any other means the city...deems appropriate." In accordance with State law and in recognition of the importance and value of citizen involvement, the City has created numerous opportunities for citizen participation throughout the General Plan development process, as described in Section B of this chapter, above.

Four public workshops were conducted in diverse locations throughout the community in May 2007, for the purpose of receiving additional public input on the General Plan and to provide information to the public on the proposed land use map. Between 2008 and 2010, public workshops were held by the City’s Planning Commission to review and take input on draft elements as they were prepared. These workshops included the following: April 15, 2008 – Safety Element; June 17, 2008 – Conservation and Open Space Element; July 15, 2008 – Land Use Element; October 21, 2008 – Circulation Element; November 19, 2008 – Housing Element; February 17, 2009 – Noise Element; and March 16, 2010 - Economic Development Element. In addition a series of public informational open house events were held in November, 2008, open to both City and County residents, and held at various locations throughout the Valley.

The City worked with County staff and a team of consultants who assisted in preparing the updated General Plan. After completion of the initial visioning process, a Technical Background Report was completed and made available for public review, which contained information on existing conditions, development patterns, infrastructure, and needs and constraints within the planning area. This information, along with the community vision and guiding principles, formed the basis for preparing a draft land use plan. A circulation map was designed to support planned land uses and was tested with a traffic model by a consulting traffic engineer. Consultants also assisted with preparation of the noise model and housing programs, and with preparation of the General Plan text.

Based on input received, individual elements of the draft General Plan text with maps was released for public review between 2008 and 2010, and seven study sessions were held by the Planning Commission to receive input on the draft plan from April 2008 through March 2010. The draft General Plan and related Environmental Impact Report were presented to the Planning Commission at public hearings in 2010 and 2011 and to the City Council at a public
hearing on June 14, 2011. The Environmental Impact Report was certified and the General Plan was adopted on June 14, 2011 by adoption of City Council Resolution No. 11-64.

N. Vision and Guiding Principles

The following Vision and Guiding Principles were formulated to serve as the framework for the preparation of consistent General Plans for the Santa Clarita Valley by the City of Santa Clarita and County of Los Angeles. They have been written in consideration of the extensive public input received during the One Valley One Vision process through surveys, stakeholder interviews, children’s and youth activities, Visioning Workshops, and the Valley Congress. The Guiding Principles have been incorporated into various elements of the General Plan as part of the policies.

Vision

The Santa Clarita Valley is an ideal place to live, work, play, grow a business, and raise a family. The Valley is a mosaic of unique villages with growing ethnic diversity, each with individual identities, surrounded by a greenbelt of forest lands and natural open spaces. These villages are unified by the Valley Center activity core, a beautiful environmental setting that includes the skyline and Santa Clara River, a vibrant growing economy, and a rich history of common social values. The Valley’s network of roads, transit, and trails links these villages and provides access to a wide offering of quality education, cultural, recreation, and social services and facilities.

Life in the Santa Clarita Valley will continue to be exciting, enjoyable, and rewarding through a broad range of housing types, an increase in quality jobs in close proximity to all neighborhoods, and transit-oriented villages complemented by excellent schools, attractive parks and other recreational amenities, expanded trail networks, and preserved natural resource areas. As the Valley moves forward, it is crucial that sound and sustainable planning principles shape new villages and enhance established neighborhoods. Implementing policies to increase mobility and accessibility, increase employment opportunities, manage traffic congestion, improve air quality, and conserve water and energy resources throughout the Valley is essential to maintain the overall high quality of life.

Guiding Principles

Development in the Santa Clarita Valley shall be consistent with these guiding principles as agreed upon by the City of Santa Clarita and the County of Los Angeles. The principles will be carried out with the application of common standards for land use development, infrastructure and resource management, as appropriate or applicable. The principles implement the vision for the Santa Clarita Valley, which is intended to sustain and enhance environmental resources, economic vitality, and the social well being of its residents.
Management of Growth

1. Growth in the Santa Clarita Valley shall account for the visions and objectives for each community and must be consistent with principles, as subsequently defined in this document, for the protection of the Valley’s significant environmental resources. It must also be based on the availability of or ability to provide adequate infrastructure, schools, and public services, and must be carefully planned to benefit the community’s economy, lifestyles and needs.

2. Growth shall occur within and on the periphery of previously developed areas, rather than as “leapfrog” development or in areas of critical environmental habitat or natural hazards, and taking into consideration accessibility to infrastructure and public services.

3. Development shall be prioritized in areas for infill and redevelopment sites within currently developed areas consistent with community character objectives and those for which the City and County have approved entitlements. Commitments for new development outside of these areas shall be made in accordance with the other principles defined in this document.

4. Higher density development, including multi-family housing and mixed use projects that integrate housing with commercial uses, shall be targeted in areas adjacent to existing and planned transit corridors, stations and key activity centers, such as the Valencia Town Center and portions of Newhall and Soledad Canyon Road.

Environmental Resources

5. The natural buffer area surrounding the entire Valley, which includes the Angeles National Forest, Santa Susanna, San Gabriel, Sierra Pelona, and Del Sur mountains, shall be preserved as a regional recreational, ecological, and aesthetic resource.

6. The Santa Clara River corridor and its major tributaries shall be preserved as open space to accommodate storm water flows and protect critical plant and animal species.
   a. Uses and improvements within the corridor shall be limited to those that benefit the community’s use of the river in its natural state.
   b. Development on properties adjacent to, but outside of the defined primary river corridor, shall be:
      - located and designed to protect the river’s water quality, plants, and animal habitats, controlling the type and density of uses, drainage runoff (water treatment), and other relevant elements; and
      - designed to maximize the full range of river amenities, including views and recreational access, while minimizing adverse impacts to the river.

7. The Santa Clarita Valley’s prominent ridgelines shall be preserved and hillside development shall be limited to protect their valuable aesthetic and visual qualities intrinsic to the Valley landscape.
8. Development shall be located and designed to minimize the impact on the Valley topography, emphasizing the use of grading techniques for development pads that mimic the natural topography in lieu of repetitive flat pads to the extent feasible and consistent with a community’s open space objectives.

9. Development shall be located and designed to protect oak, sycamore, and other significant indigenous woodlands.

10. Biological resources in the designated Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) shall be protected through the siting and design of development to account for and be highly compatible with the SEA resources. Specific development standards shall be identified to control the types of land use, density, building location and size, roadways and other infrastructure, landscape, drainage, and other elements to assure the protection of the critical and important plant and animal habitats of each SEA. In general, the principle shall be to minimize the intrusion and impacts of development in these areas with sufficient setbacks, or buffers, to adequately protect the resources.

11. New development shall be designed to improve energy efficiency, reducing energy and natural resource consumption by such techniques as the use of solar generators, recycling of treated wastewater, capture of storm runoff on-site, and use of recycled materials in building construction, native and drought-tolerant landscape, and energy and water efficient appliances and systems.

**Land Uses**

12. The Santa Clarita Valley shall contain a diversity of land uses that support the needs of current and future residents including housing, schools, libraries, parks, retail, business and industry, civic institutions, medical and social services, cultural, entertainment, open spaces, and comparable uses.

13. The type and density of land uses in the Santa Clarita Valley shall be varied to reflect the special characteristics, life styles, and opportunities that differentiate its communities. A choice of urban, suburban, and rural environments will be provided.

14. Valley communities shall contain a mix of uses that support the basic needs of residents – places to live, shop, work, recreate, meet, socialize, and enjoy the environmental setting – that are appropriate and consistent with their community character. Regionally oriented uses that serve residents of the entire Valley or export goods and services may be concentrated in key business centers rather than uniformly dispersed throughout the Valley communities.

15. Development in the Valley shall be guided by a common set of land use designations and standards for comparable uses in comparable locations. These standards, however, may be varied to reflect the unique intentions for the quality and character of the distinct communities that comprise the Valley.
Residential Neighborhoods

16. The Valley shall contain a mix of housing types that meet the diverse needs of residents, and offer choices for the Valley's population and lifestyles (e.g. ages, education, income, etc.) that are appropriate and consistent with their community character. This shall include a combination of single- and multi-family, owner occupied and rental units within each community, and mixed-use (i.e., integrated housing with commercial or office uses) development in key activity centers.

17. The Valley is committed to providing affordable work force housing to meet the needs of individuals employed in the Santa Clarita Valley.

18. Multi-family housing developments shall contain adequate recreational and open space amenities on-site and be designed to ensure a high quality living environment. Their architectural treatment and building massing shall complement the characteristics of surrounding single-family residential neighborhoods.

19. Neighborhood scale development shall be encouraged by promoting mixed density of housing units consistent with community character objectives and limiting the number and acreage of multi-family units that can be developed in any single location.

20. Housing developments located in the more urbanized communities of the Valley shall be designed to create a sense of neighborhood by:
   a. promoting walkability and containing places that serve as centers of activity and identity (e.g. schools, multi-purpose facilities, parks, convenience services, neighborhood commercial centers, etc.);
   b. containing a mix of housing types, densities, and parcel sizes, avoiding large areas and an over-concentration of homogeneous density units;
   c. minimizing the dependence on, prominence, and area dedicated to the automobile;
   d. featuring architectural design treatments along all frontages of new housing to promote continuity of architectural scale and rhythm and avoid "blank walls"; and
   e. including pedestrian linkages, landscaped parkways and green corridors, and separated trails (e.g. pedestrian, bicycle or equestrian) where appropriate and feasible.

Vital Economy

21. Commercial and retail uses will be expanded and new centers developed to meet the needs of the Valley's residents, as supportable by the market, to minimize the need to travel outside of the Valley, to complement (and not adversely compete with) existing uses, and to contribute to a balanced Valley economy.

22. New “clean” industries and businesses that provide job opportunities for local residents and enhance the economy shall be encouraged within and adjacent to existing and planned business centers/parks, and adjacent to transportation corridors.
23. Older commercial areas and corridors that are economically and/or physically obsolete or deteriorated, such as portions of Castaic, Val Verde, Newhall, Lyons Avenue, Sierra Highway, Main Street, Newhall Avenue, Railroad Avenue and Soledad Canyon Road, shall be redeveloped for commercial, mixed use, residential or other appropriate uses that complement and serve adjoining land uses and can be adequately supported by the market. Where appropriate, redeveloped uses and buildings shall reflect the area’s important architectural and cultural history.

**Mobility**

24. A unified and well-maintained network of highways, streets, truck routes, bikeways, and pedestrian paths will provide access among Valley communities and to regional centers outside of the Valley.

25. Santa Clarita Valley’s streets and highways shall be developed and maintained according to common standards for right-of-way, paving and other improvements, landscape, signage, lighting, and curb cuts for “like” street categories. These standards shall consider objectives for the character of the Valley’s communities, consistent with public health and safety.

26. A continuous bikeway network shall provide circulation within each community, connect the various Santa Clarita Valley communities, and provide access to surrounding open spaces.

27. An integrated transit system shall serve the Valley (rail, bus, shuttle, other) offering convenient alternatives to the automobile, minimizing congestion and providing access to regional transportation systems, such as Metrolink.

**Infrastructure**

28. The location and timing of development shall be coordinated with the provision of adequate water, wastewater treatment, storm drainage, telecommunications, energy, roads and other infrastructure.

29. Public infrastructure shall be improved, maintained and expanded as needed to meet the needs of projected population and employment growth and contribute to the Valley’s quality of life.

30. Common standards for providing utility infrastructure (e.g. flood control channels, energy transmission, and telecommunications) shall be developed and applied throughout the Valley, in consideration of the character of each community.

**Schools and Public Services**

31. The City and County shall work in partnership with the Santa Clarita Valley school districts and the State of California to ensure the development of adequate facilities and programs to serve the needs and achieve a high level of academic excellence for local students.
32. While the City and County do not have direct authority over the development of public schools, they shall continue to coordinate with the school districts on issues of mutual interest such as transportation services, shared facilities, and long-range planning for Valley schools.

33. Public services (e.g. police, fire, health care, youth, seniors, homeless, etc.) shall be expanded to support community needs and population growth.

Recreation

34. The City and County shall recognize that trails are an important recreational asset that, when integrated with transportation systems, contribute to mobility throughout the Santa Clarita Valley.

35. A continuous and unified hiking and equestrian trail network for a variety of users and developed according to common standards shall connect and unify Santa Clarita Valley communities and be interconnected with the regional and statewide system (e.g., Pacific Crest Trail).

36. New parklands will be developed throughout the Santa Clarita Valley, with priority on locations that are not now adequately served. These shall encompass a diversity of park types and functions, including passive and active areas, in consideration of the recreational needs of the residents to be served.
   a. Common park standards shall be developed and applied throughout the Valley, consistent with community character objectives.
   b. A range of parkland types, sizes and uses shall be provided to accommodate recreational and leisure activities.