LA COUNTY PLANNING

AMY J. BODEK, AICP
Director,
Regional Planning

DENNIS SLAVIN
Chief Deputy Director,
Regional Planning

April 25, 2025

TO: Stephen J. Sass, Chair
Benjamin J. Kahle, Commissioner
Yolanda Duarte-White, Commissioner
Carol A. Kearns, Commissioner
Sharon Sand, Commissioner
Historical Landmarks and Records Commission

FROM: Mark S. Herwick, Supervising Regional Planner
Department of Regional Planning

APRIL 25, 2025 HLRC MEETING
DRAFT SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AREA PLAN HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

I. Overview

This memo presents an overview of the Draft Historic Context Statement ("HCS") prepared as part of the San Fernando Valley Area Plan project ("SFVAP"). This item is for discussion purposes only and no action is required.

In 2015, the County adopted a comprehensive update to its General Plan with the horizon year of 2035. The General Plan is intended to serve as the foundation for community-based planning initiatives. This foundation is called the Planning Areas Framework, which divides Los Angeles County into 11 Planning Areas.

As shown on the following map, the San Fernando Valley Planning Area includes the unincorporated communities of Kagel and Lopez Canyons, Sylmar Island, Oat Mountain (including Twin Lakes), West Chatsworth (including Lake Manor), Westhills, and Universal City.

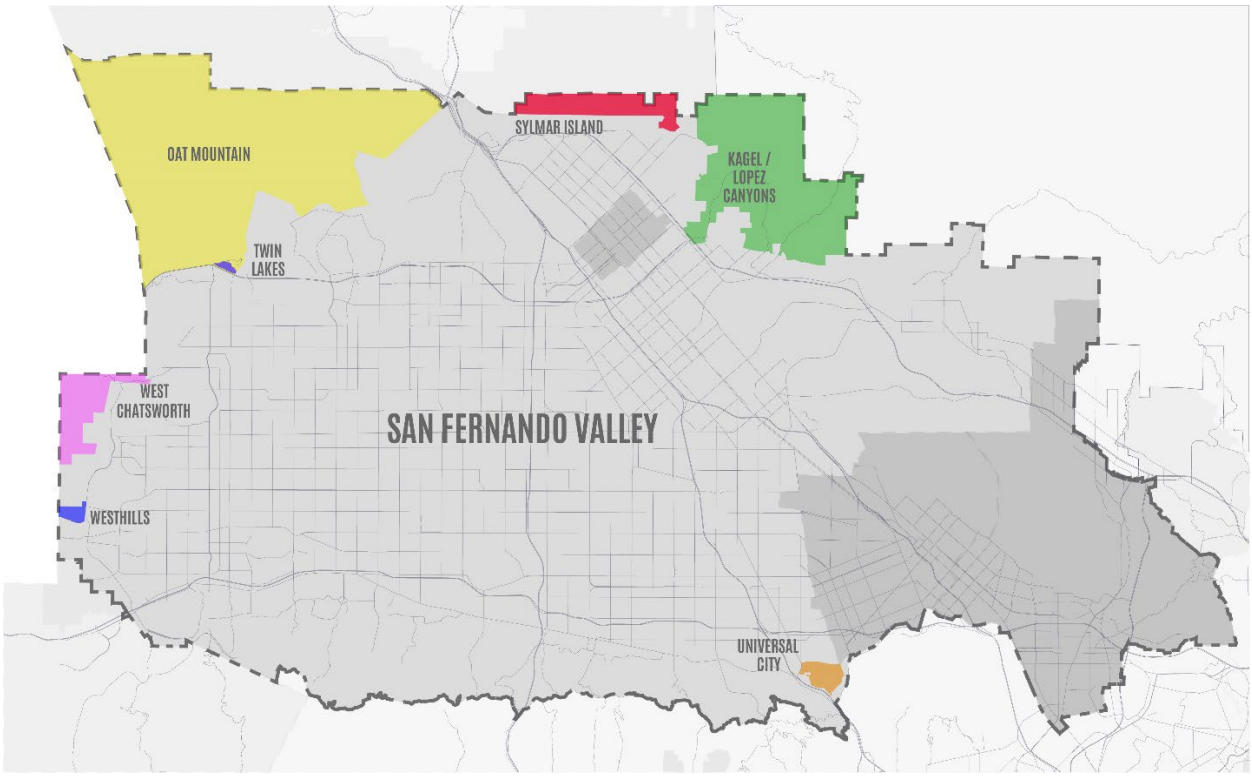


Image: Map of the unincorporated communities in the San Fernando Valley Planning Area.

The HCS summarizes the history of the region as it relates to the development of these unincorporated communities. There are also separate individual narratives on each within the HCS.

The purpose of the HCS is to:

- Identify the significant themes relevant to the history and development of the San Fernando Valley's built environment;
- Provide an analytical framework for future historical evaluations within the unincorporated areas of the San Fernando Valley;
- Inform the SFVAP's Historic Preservation Element, Implementation Program, and the SFVAP Environmental Impact Report's Cultural Resources section; and
- Provide the background information for future historic resources surveys.

The Draft HCS is included as Attachment A. The remainder of this memo summarizes the major sections of the Draft HCS.

II. Draft HCS

Themes

The Draft HCS provides a historical background of the San Fernando Valley, touching on the Native American Period (before 1769), Spanish Colonial Period (1769-1821), Mexican Period (1821-1848), Early American Period (1848-1908), Agriculture and Entertainment (1908-1945), and Post World War II Suburbanization (Post-1945) (Attachment A, pages 9-19). The HCS then focuses on community-specific development histories for each community (Attachment A, pages 19-35).

Finally, the HCS identifies several significant themes of the San Fernando Valley's historical development. These themes represent the major patterns, trends, and types of development the unincorporated areas of the San Fernando Valley experienced during an established Period of Significance. The themes are:

- Residential Development
- Commercial Development
- Civic and Institutional Development
- Industrial Development
- Agricultural Development

For each of these significant themes, the Draft HCS (Attachment A, pages 36-43) identifies associated property types that may best convey the theme and provides eligibility standards, or the criteria, integrity considerations, and registration requirements, required for a historical resource to be eligible under County, State, and National criteria for its association with the applicable theme.

Architectural Styles

The Draft HCS identifies eight architectural styles found in the unincorporated San Fernando Valley, including:

- Vernacular
- Craftsman
- Spanish Colonial Revival
- Tudor Revival
- American Colonial Revival
- Minimal Traditional
- Mid-Century Modern
- Ranch

For each, the Draft HCS (Attachment A, pages 43-48) provides a discussion of the style's origins, photos of extant examples, a list of character-defining features intrinsic to the style, and eligibility standards for each. A property that is eligible for designation as a rare, or good/excellent example of its architectural style retains most – though not necessarily all – of the character-defining features of the style and continues to exhibit its historic appearance.

Recommendations

The final section of the report includes recommendations for additional research and lists properties identified for further study (Attachment A, pages 49-50). Some of the recommendations include:

- Reconnaissance-level Historic Resources Survey
- Inventory of eligible historic resources
- Intensive-level survey of eligible historic resources
- Thematic studies (e.g., ethnic/cultural history, filming/entertainment industry sites)
- Local landmark nominations

III. Public Outreach

Starting in 2023 and moving into 2024, staff participated in walking tours through the unincorporated communities of the San Fernando Valley to hear from the community leaders on its history, valued resources, and priorities for the future. Staff created a survey and interactive GIS map to collect feedback on places of historical importance to the community and introduced the effort to develop a historic context statement during a virtual community meeting held on July 17, 2024. In-person meetings held at Chatsworth Park South on August 17, 2024, and at Dexter Park in Kagel Canyon on August 28, 2024, provided additional opportunities to collect feedback from the communities. Additional virtual meetings were held on September 17, 2024 and February 24, 2025.
On February 6, 2025, staff emailed the SFVAP distribution list with the draft HCS along with an invitation to the virtual community meeting on February 24, 2025, where the Draft HCS was discussed in greater detail. The subsequent revision of the Draft HCS will address comments received from the public and the Commission. The HCS will be revised accordingly and will be available on the project website by June 2025.

For questions, please contact Kristina Kulczycki at kkulczycki@planning.lacounty.gov.

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Attachment: Draft San Fernando Valley Area Plan Historic Context Statement (3/2025)

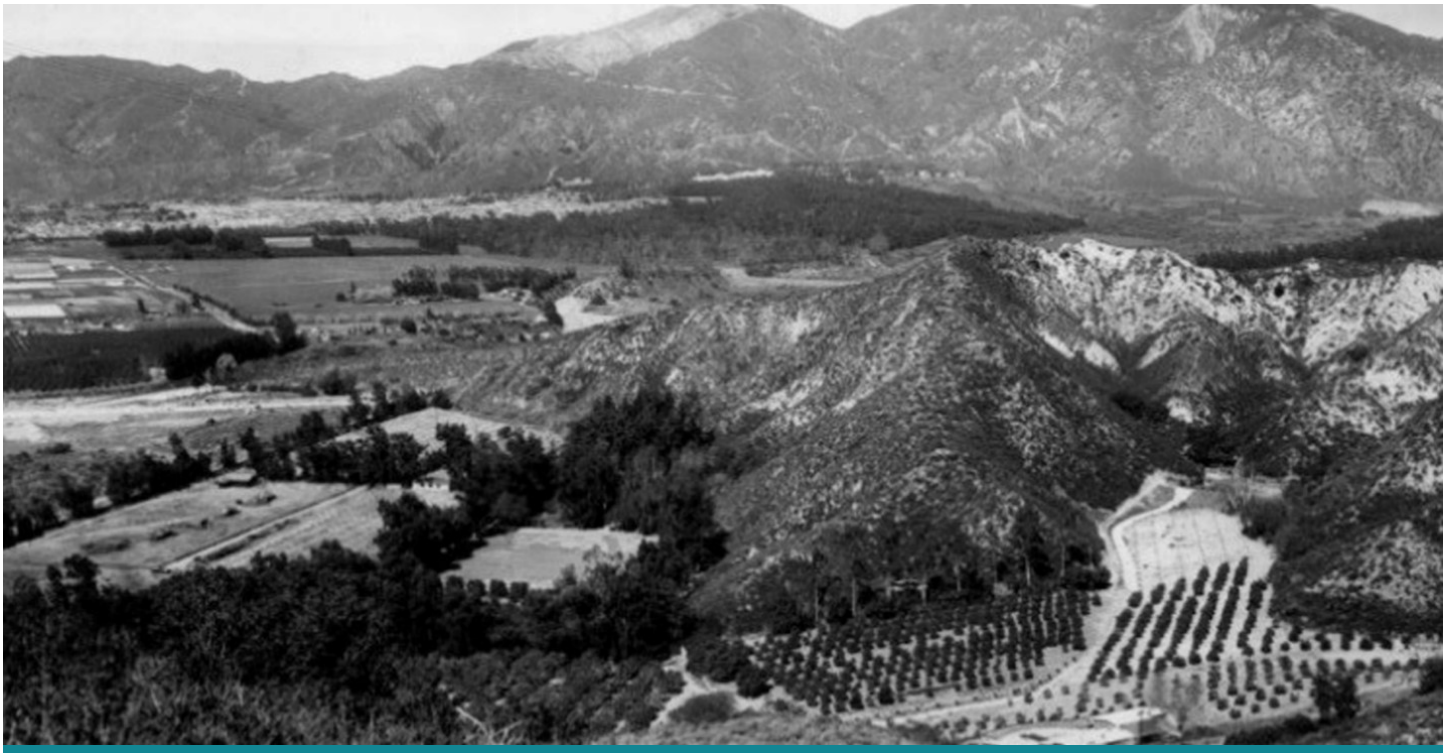
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HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

1 Introduction
2 Scope and Methodology
3 Regulatory Environment
4 Historic Context
5 Recommendations and Further Study
6 Selected Bibliography

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Los Angeles County San Fernando Valley Area Plan



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

This historic context statement is one component of the larger San Fernando Valley Area Plan project, which will culminate in the production of a policy document that will be used to guide long-term growth within the Planning Area.

This historic context statement is intended to inform the San Fernando Valley Area Plan project as it relates to historical resource considerations. It will help inform planning and land use decisions involving historical resources and future historic resource survey efforts.

Historic context statements are important historic preservation planning tools. According to the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), historic context statements "are critical tools for understanding, identifying, evaluating, and protecting those resources which give each community its individual character and sense of place."[1] They are used to guide historic resource surveys systematically and efficiently, and also to inform land use and planning decisions involving historic and cultural resources.

The scope of this document is a historic context statement for unincorporated communities located in the boundaries of the San Fernando Valley Planning Area. This includes the six unincorporated communities of Kagel/Lopez Canyons, Sylmar Island, Twin Lakes/Oat Mountain, West Chatsworth, Westhills, and Universal City. However, the unincorporated community of Universal City has been evaluated for historical resources with the development and adoption of the NBCUniversal Specific Plan. Therefore, this Historic Context Statement will refer to the Specific Plan and related Guidelines for context.[2]

Each of the communities addressed herein has a unique developmental history and collection of built resources. While these communities are rooted in some common historic themes, they are distinct geographic entities

1 California Office of Historic Preservation, "Historic Contexts," accessed May 2021.
2 https://planning.lacounty.gov/long-range-planning/nbc-universal-evolution-plan-universal-studios-specific-plan-and-guidelines/, accessed October 30, 2024.

that developed independent of one another. This historic context statement is structured accordingly, to account for the breadth and diversity of built resources represented across the full extent of the Planning Area. The document begins with a historical overview of the San Fernando Valley as a whole, beginning with the contributions of Indigenous Californians and continuing through the post-World War II era, when the region was transformed from agricultural hinterlands into a populous suburban enclave. It then provides a developmental history specific to each of the above-listed communities in the Planning Area. The document concludes with the identification of applicable historic themes to establish a framework for identifying and evaluating historical resources, and recommendations for future planning and preservation efforts related to the Planning Area.

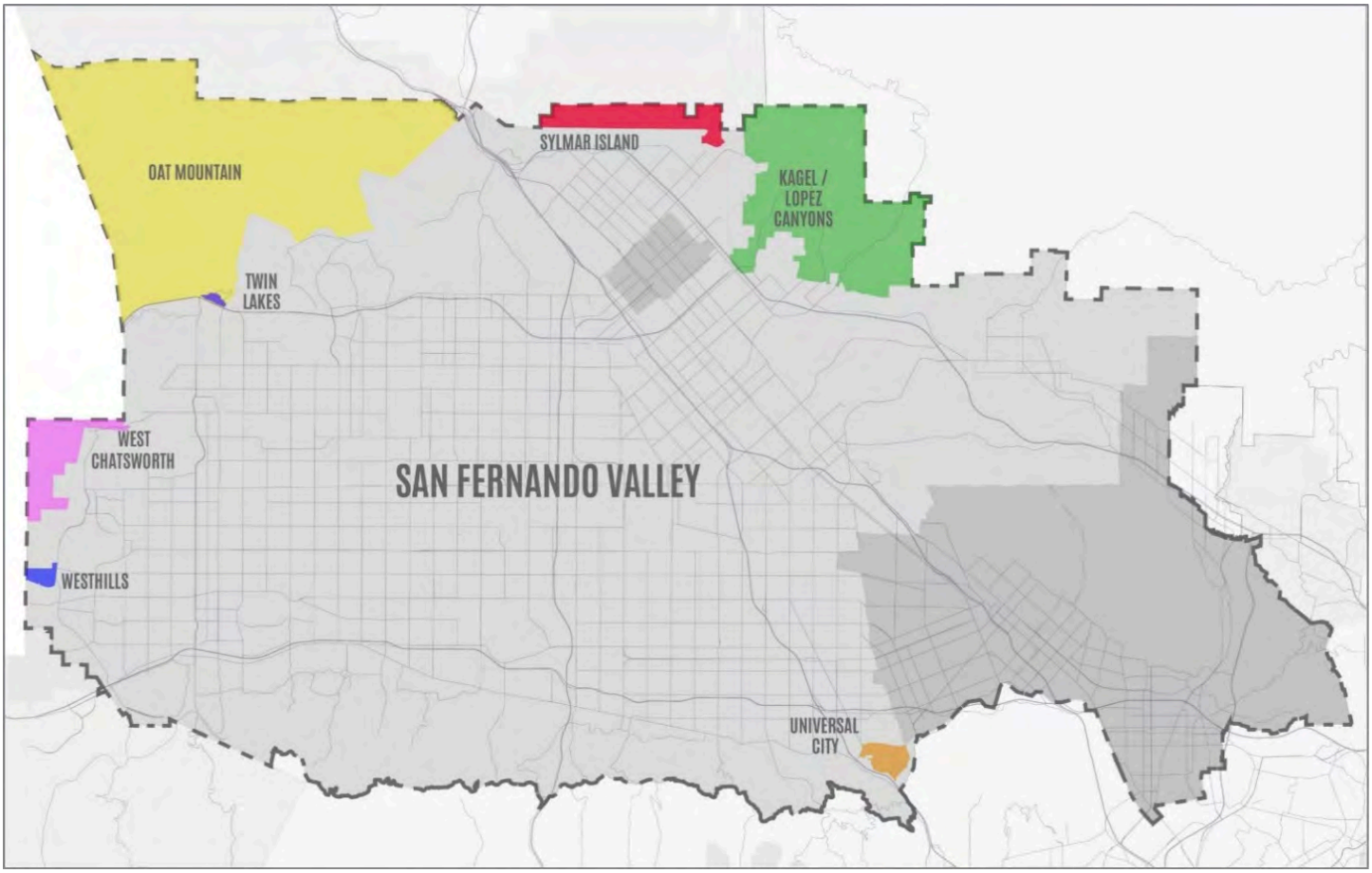
1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

This historic context statement has been prepared for unincorporated communities of Los Angeles County located within the boundaries of the San Fernando Valley Planning Area.

In 2015, the County of Los Angeles adopted a General Plan Update, creating a policy framework for the roughly 2,650 square miles of unincorporated land in Los Angeles County. The General Plan Update divides the County into 11 geographic zones ("Planning Areas"). The creation of Planning Areas accounts for the diversity of communities within unincorporated areas of the County, and allows the DRP to develop and implement Area Plans that are specifically focused on community-based planning initiatives.

The San Fernando Valley Planning Area is one of the 11 Planning Areas created under the auspices of the 2015 General Plan Update. The Planning Area encompasses the San Fernando Valley and is generally bordered by the Santa Clarita Valley and Angeles National Forest on the north, the Santa Monica Mountains on the south, the San Gabriel Valley on the east, and the Ventura County line on the west.

Only a small portion of the Planning Area is unincorporated. Nearly all of the land area in the San Fernando Valley falls within the boundaries of the incorporated cities of Los Angeles, San Fernando, Glendale, and Burbank. Unincorporated portions of the Planning Area are generally located on its north and west peripheries, and occupy geographically complex terrain in the foothills of the Simi



Map of the San Fernando Valley Planning Area, showing the locations of unincorporated communities. Note that Universal City was evaluated for its historical resources with the development of the Universal Studios Specific Plan.

Hills (west), Santa Susana Mountains (northwest) and San Gabriel Mountains (north).

For purposes of this historic context statement, unincorporated portions of the Planning Area are divided into the following six communities:

- Kagel Canyon/Lopez Canyon
- Sylmar Island
- Twin Lakes/Oat Mountain
- West Chatsworth
- Westhills; and
- Universal City

Descriptions of each community are included in the sections below.

Kagel Canyon/Lopez Canyon

Kagel Canyon/Lopez Canyon is an unincorporated area in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. It comprises 8.75 square miles of land area in the northeast San Fernando Valley, north of the Los Angeles city limit and the community of Lake View Terrace, which is located in the City of Los Angeles. Kagel Canyon contains a small rural community, which is primarily developed with single-family houses. Most houses occupy several small lots that have been consolidated to make viable building sites. There is also a small number of commercial and institutional uses. Kagel Canyon is divided between two sections: Lower Kagel Canyon, which is located to the south nearer the mouth of the canyon, and Upper Kagel Canyon, which is located further upslope. Two cemeteries are located between these sections of the canyon. A fire station and public park (Dexter Park) are located on the east side of Lower Kagel Canyon.

Lopez Canyon is located to the west of Kagel Canyon. Almost all of Lopez Canyon is composed of undeveloped open space and mountainous terrain. The south end of Lopez Canyon contains a mobile home park, a truck parking and storage facility, a small number of automobile salvage yards, and other industrial uses. There is also a landfill, operated by the City of Los Angeles, which closed in 1984 but is still imprinted on the landscape. Located further up the canyon is a 71-acre transitional and supportive housing facility (Hope Gardens), which occupies a site that was originally developed in the early twentieth century as a tuberculosis hospital.

Sylmar Island

Sylmar Island refers to a narrow strip of unincorporated land along the base of the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. It is located north of the Los Angeles city limits and the community of Sylmar in the City of Los Angeles. The area is mostly undeveloped. Development is limited to a 97-acre County-operated public park (Veterans Memorial Community Regional Park) at the north end of Sayre Street, and retention basins and flood control infrastructure. The area also contains one single-family house at the far north end of Polk Street, in a subdivision that is otherwise located entirely within the City of Los Angeles.

Twin Lakes/Oat Mountain

Twin Lakes/Oat Mountain is an unincorporated area to the north of State Route 118/Ronald Reagan Freeway, between the Los Angeles city limits and the Ventura County line. It encompasses 19.97 square miles of land area, most of which consists of mountainous terrain and undeveloped open space. However, near the southern end of the area are developed communities. Twin Lakes, located at the north end of Topanga Canyon Boulevard and north of State Route 118, is a rural residential community with an eclectic collection of single-family houses, small parcels, and a narrow network of private streets. Deer Lake Highlands, now referred to as Deerlake Ranch, is a contemporary subdivision of suburban single-family houses that is located to the northeast of Twin Lakes and is currently under construction. To the west of Twin Lakes is the community of Indian Springs, a gated enclave of contemporary single-family houses. An apartment complex and townhouses are located to the east of Indian Springs.

Oat Mountain, which is the highest peak in the Santa Susana Mountains, refers broadly to the undeveloped area north of Chatsworth and the unincorporated communities of Twin Lakes, Deer Lake Highlands, and 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.

Universal City

Universal City is entirely surrounded by incorporated cities; generally bounded by the Los Angeles River Flood Control Channel on the north, existing residential properties within the City of Los Angeles to the east, the Hollywood Freeway to the south (except for the southwest corner of the area, which abuts hotel and office properties in the City of Los Angeles), and Lankershim Boulevard to the west. Universal City is divided between two jurisdictions: unincorporated

County and City of Los Angeles. However, approximately 85% of the area is located within the unincorporated County. The area consists of a unique collection of land uses involving movie and television production, offices, a cinema, restaurants, entertainment, and themed attractions. For more than 100 years Universal City has served as a motion picture and television production facility, entertainment attraction, and business center. The original 230-acre site served as the location for one of Southern California's first motion picture studios, and beginning in 1915, the studio began regular public tours. As of 2013, with the adoption of the Universal Studios Specific Plan (Specific Plan), new development proposals within the unincorporated County portions of Universal City must comply with the Specific Plan and related Guidelines.[3]

West Chatsworth

West Chatsworth is an unincorporated pocket of land between the Los Angeles city limits and the Ventura County line. It is located to the north and west of the Chatsworth Nature Preserve (originally the Chatsworth Reservoir), at the base of the Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains. West Chatsworth includes the unincorporated Los Angeles County portion of Chatsworth Lake Manor, a rural community that is predominantly residential but also contains a few neighborhood-oriented commercial and institutional uses.[4] It also includes two mobile home parks (The Summit, Mountain View Village) and a gated residential subdivision (Woolsey Canyon View Estates), the latter of which consists of six single-family houses oriented around a cul-de-sac. The mobile home parks and gated subdivision are located to the west of Chatsworth Lake Manor, and are accessed via Woolsey Canyon Road. Much of West Chatsworth consists of mountainous terrain and undeveloped open space.

Westhills

Westhills is an unincorporated community at the far west end of the San Fernando Valley, surrounded by the nearly-identically-named community of West Hills, which is located in the City of Los Angeles. Unincorporated Westhills is small, encompassing 0.22 square miles of land area at the base of the Simi Hills. It occupies the area west of Valley Circle Boulevard, between Vanowen and Kittridge streets, extending west to the Ventura County line. Most of Westhills consists of a residential subdivision comprising single-family tract houses. This subdivision has a single point of ingress/egress via Kittridge Street. Westhills also includes an additional street (Corie Lane) of single-family tract houses organized around a cul-de-sac, a townhome development at the northwest corner of Valley Circle Boulevard and Vanowen Street, and a small commercial strip mall on the south side of Vanowen Street. The westernmost portion of the area, next to the Ventura County line, consists of undeveloped open space.

1.3. PREVIOUS PLANNING STUDIES

No previous historic context statements or comprehensive studies relating to the history of the San Fernando Valley Planning Area have been completed to date. Summary information about the developmental history of the San Fernando Valley was included in the San Fernando Valley Planning Area Background for Planning (1967), an area-wide planning study that was commissioned by the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission. Cursory information about the history of the Twin Lakes community was included in the Twin Lakes Community Plan (1991), which was prepared by the DRP to address the developmental and infrastructure concerns specific to Twin Lakes.

2. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Project Scope

The scope of this project included the development of a historic context statement for the San Fernando Valley Planning Area.

This historic context statement accounts for all types of extant built resources including residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial properties, as well as infrastructure and natural resources including trees and landscapes. It includes individually significant properties, concentrations of properties bearing similar contextual and physical characteristics (historic districts), and non-building resources (structures, objects, and sites).

This document provides a focused discussion of the Planning Area's developmental history, with particular emphasis on extant built resources relating to the various contexts and themes discussed in the following sections of this report.

3 Documents may be found on LA County Planning website: https://planning.lacounty.gov/long-range-planning/nbc-universal-evolution-plan-universal-studios-specific-plan-and-guidelines/

4 Chatsworth Lake Manor is divided between Los Angeles and Ventura counties, with County Line Road as the dividing line. The area south of County Line Road is in Los Angeles County and is included in the scope of this project; the area north of County Line Road is in Ventura County and is not included in the scope of this project.

2.2. Field and Research Methods

This historic context statement was prepared in accordance with the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) approach developed by the National Park Service (NPS). Often applied to large-scale historic resource surveys, the MPD approach streamlines the evaluation process by distilling major patterns of development into themes that are shared by multiple properties within a study area. The MPD approach streamlines the evaluation process by ensuring that properties with shared associative and/or architectural characteristics are evaluated in the same manner and against the same evaluation criteria.

The historic context statement was developed in accordance with the following reference materials maintained by the NPS and the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP):

- National Register Bulletin (NRB) 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation;
- NRB 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form;
- NRB 16B: How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form;
- NRB 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning;
- NPS Technical Preservation Services, Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment, and Management of Historic Landscapes;
- California OHP: Writing Historic Contexts; and
- California OHP: Instructions for Recording Historical Resources

Preparation of the historic context statement included the following tasks:

- Review of all background materials including applicable sections of the County's General Plan, specific plans, and Municipal Code as well as past historic resource survey data, historic assessments, and other documentation to the extent that these materials were available;
- Review of materials developed for San Fernando Valley communities as part of SurveyLA, to glean general background information that is also applicable to unincorporated County communities.
- Review of state and federal technical bulletins, ordinances, and other materials related to historic context statements and the evaluation of historic and cultural resources;
- Creation of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps to graphically convey chronological patterns of development;
- Completion of extensive primary and secondary source research about the developmental history of the Planning Area using local and online repositories.
- Consultation with local area experts, residents, and other stakeholders and community members knowledgeable about aspects of the Planning Area's history;
- Completion of a reconnaissance-level survey, taking note of prevailing development patterns, architectural styles, and the general age and integrity of buildings and other resources; and
- Preparation of a historic context statement in accordance with best professional practices.

3. REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

3.1. National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (National Register) is the nation's master inventory of known historic resources. Established under the auspices of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and includes buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that possess historic, architectural, engineering, archaeological, or cultural significance at the national, state, or local level. Eligibility for listing in the National Register is addressed in National Register Bulletin (NRB) 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. NRB 15 states that in order to be eligible for the National Register, a resource must both: (1) be historically significant, and (2) retain sufficient integrity to adequately convey its significance.

Significance is assessed by evaluating a resource against established eligibility criteria. A resource is considered significant if it satisfies any one of the following four National Register criteria:[5]

- Criterion A (events): associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of

5 Some resources may meet multiple criteria, though only one needs to be satisfied for National Register eligibility.

our history;

- Criterion B (persons): associated with the lives of significant persons in our past;
- Criterion C (architecture): embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; and
- Criterion D (information potential): has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Once significance has been established, it must then be demonstrated that a resource retains enough of its physical and associative qualities – or integrity – to convey the reason(s) for its significance. Integrity is described as a resource's "authenticity" as expressed through its physical features and extant characteristics. Generally, if a resource is recognizable as such in its present state, it is said to retain integrity, and if it has been extensively altered then it does not. Whether a resource retains sufficient integrity for listing is determined by evaluating the seven aspects of integrity defined by NPS:

- Location (the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred);
- Setting (the physical environment of a historic property);
- Design (the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property);
- Materials (the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular manner or configuration to form a historic property);
- Workmanship (the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory);
- Feeling (a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time);
- Association (the direct link between an important historic event/person and a historic property).

Integrity is evaluated holistically by weighing all seven of these aspects together, and is ultimately a "yes or no" determination – that is, a resource either retains sufficient integrity, or it does not.[6] Some aspects of integrity may be weighed more than others depending on the type of resource being evaluated and the reason(s) for the resource's significance. Since integrity depends on a resource's placement within its historic context, integrity can be assessed only after significance has been established.

3.2. California Register of Historical Resources

The California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) is an authoritative guide used to identify, inventory, and protect historical resources in California. Established by an act of the State Legislature in 1998, the California Register program encourages public recognition and protection of significant architectural, historical, archeological, and cultural resources; identifies these resources for state and local planning purposes; determines eligibility for state historic preservation grant funding; and affords certain protections under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The structure of the California Register program is similar to that of the National Register, though the former more heavily emphasizes resources that have contributed specifically to the development of California. To be eligible for the California Register, a resource must first be deemed significant under one of the following four criteria, which are modeled after the National Register criteria listed above:

- Criterion 1 (events): associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States;
- Criterion 2 (persons): associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history;
- Criterion 3 (architecture): embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values;
- Criterion 4 (information potential): has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, state, or the nation.

Mirroring the National Register, the California Register also requires that resources retain sufficient integrity to be eligible for listing. A resource's integrity is assessed using the same seven aspects of integrity used for the National Register. However, since integrity thresholds associated with the California Register are generally less rigid than those associated with the National Register, it is possible

6 Derived from NRB 15, Section VIII: "How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property."

that a resource may lack the integrity required for listing in the National Register but still be eligible for listing in the California Register.

Certain properties are automatically listed in the California Register, as follows:[7]

- All California properties that are listed in the National Register;
- All California properties that have formally been determined eligible for listing in the National Register (by the State Office of Historic Preservation);
- All California Historical Landmarks numbered 770 and above; and
- California Points of Historical Interest which have been reviewed by the State Office of Historic Preservation and recommended for listing by the State Historical Resources Commission.

Resources may be nominated directly to the California Register. State Historic Landmarks #770 and forward are also automatically listed in the California Register. There is no prescribed age limit for listing in the California Register, although guidelines state that sufficient time must have passed to obtain a scholarly perspective on the events or individuals associated with a resource.

3.3. County of Los Angeles Historic Preservation Ordinance

The County of Los Angeles adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance (HPO) in 2015. The HPO enumerates policies and procedures for designating properties in unincorporated areas of the County to a local register, called the County of Los Angeles Register of Landmarks and Historic Districts.

Eligibility criteria for local designation in the County of Los Angeles Register of Landmarks and Historic Districts are enumerated in Chapter 22.124.070 (Criteria for Designation of Landmarks and Historic Districts) of the Los Angeles County Code of Ordinances.

A. A structure, site, object, tree, landscape, or natural feature may be designated as a landmark if it is 50 years of age or older and satisfies one or more of the following criteria:

    1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the history of the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
    2. It is associated with the lives of persons who are significant in the history of the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
    3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, architectural style, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is of significance to the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located; or possesses artistic values of significance to the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
    4. It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, significant and important information regarding the prehistory or history of the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
    5. It is listed, or has been formally determined eligible by the United States National Park Service for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places, or is listed, or has been formally determined eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing, on the California Register of Historical Resources;
    6. If it is a tree, it is one of the largest or oldest trees of the species located in the County;
    7. If it is a tree, landscape, or other natural land feature, it has historical significance due to an association with a historic event, person, site, street, or structure, or because it is a defining or significant outstanding feature of a neighborhood.

B. Property less than 50 years of age may be designated as a landmark if it meets one or more of the criteria set forth in Subsection A, above, and exhibits exceptional importance.

C. The interior space of a property, or other space held open to the general public, including but not limited to a lobby, may be designated as a landmark or included in the landmark designation of a property if the space qualifies for designation as a landmark under Subsection A or B, above.

D. Historic Districts. A geographic area, including a noncontiguous grouping of related properties, may be designated as a historic district if all of the following requirements are met:

    1. More than 50 percent of owners in the proposed

7 California Public Resources Code, Division 5, Chapter 1, Article 2, § 5024.1.

district consent to the designation;

2. The proposed district satisfies one or more of the criteria set forth in Subsections A.1 through A.5, above; and

3. The proposed district exhibits either a concentration of historic, scenic, or sites containing common character-defining features, which contribute to each other and are unified aesthetically by plan, physical development, or architectural quality; or significant geographic patterns, associated with different eras of settlement and growth, particular transportation modes, or distinctive examples of parks or community planning.

4. HISTORIC CONTEXT

4.1. Introduction to the Historic Context Statement

Historic and cultural resources are significant because of their association with trends and patterns that came together to shape a community's development over time. As such, a community's historic and cultural resources cannot be fully evaluated without first taking into account the historic context(s) with which they are associated. In National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning, the National Park Service (NPS) defines historic contexts as "broad patterns of development in a community or its region that may be represented by historic resources."[8]

Those historic contexts that are relevant to a particular community and are expressed in its built environment are identified and examined in a technical document known as a historic context statement. A historic context statement examines a community's history through the lens of its built fabric, links extant built resources to the key pattern(s) of development that they represent, and establishes a clear analytical framework by which historic and cultural resources can be evaluated.

Historic context statements are important preservation planning tools. They are used to systematically and efficiently guide future historic resource surveys, and inform land use and planning decisions involving historic and cultural resources. Per the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), historic context statements "are critical tools for understanding, identifying, evaluating, and protecting those resources which give each community its individual character and sense of place."[9]

4.2. Organization

This historic context statement has been structured to account for the multitude of individual communities and diversity of development patterns and built resources that are represented within the San Fernando Valley Planning Area. The information herein is organized into the following sections:

- **Historical Overview.** Section 4.3 includes a summary overview of the development history of the San Fernando Valley as a whole, to provide essential background about key events and development patterns that have shaped the area and its built environment over time.
- **Community-Specific Historical Backgrounds.** Section 4.4 incudes a focused discussion of the development history of each community within the San Fernando Valley Planning Area: Kagel/Lopez Canyons, Sylmar Island, Twin Lakes/Oat Mountain, West Chatsworth, and Westhills.[10]
- **Historic Themes.** Section 4.5 identifies historic themes that are represented across all of the communities in the San Fernando Valley Planning Area.

4.3. Historical Overview of the San Fernando Valley

Native American Period (Pre-1769)

The first occupants of the San Fernando Valley were Indigenous Californians, who are believed to have resided in the area for at least 7,000 years before the arrival of Spanish colonizers in the eighteenth century.[11] By virtue of its location, the San Fernando Valley was a convergence point between several Indigenous populations including the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash people. Much of the area comprising the San Fernando Valley was located in Tovaangar, the ancestral land of the Tongva people, which encompassed much of what is now the Los Angeles region. Areas along the north and west peripheries of the San Fernando Valley were occupied by the neighboring Tataviam and Chumash people, respectively.

8 Ibid.
9 California Office of Historic Preservation, "Historic Contexts," accessed Sept. 2024.
10 As previously noted, although Universal City is within the San Fernando Valley Planning Area its historic resources were evaluated with the development and adoption of the NBCUniversal Specific Plan and therefore, a historical background is not included in this document.
11 Tongva People, "Villages," online, accessed Sept. 2024.

Indigenous settlement patterns consisted of semi-ephemeral villages, each with a population ranging from between approximately 50 and 200. In the San Fernando Valley, villages tended to be located in wooded, watered areas around the perimeter of the San Fernando Valley and in its foothills. Documentation of Indigenous settlements is incomplete, but known villages in the San Fernando Valley included Kaweenga and Siutcanga, which were located on the banks of the Los Angeles River in the southern portion of the San Fernando Valley; Muuhonga and Pakooynga, which were located in the northeast corner of the San Fernando Valley; and Achooykomenga, which occupied an area that was later selected by Spanish colonizers as the site of the Mission San Fernando.[12]

Located at the far northwest corner of the San Fernando Valley, near present-day Chatsworth, was a Tongva village called Momonga, which was located at the base of the Simi Hills and the Santa Susana Pass. Momonga occupied an important location for trade between the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples, and was located along a heavily-trafficked trail that connected the San Fernando and Simi valleys and approximated the route of present-day State Route 118.[13] The Momonga site is notable for its collection of rock art, suggesting that the village also played an important ceremonial role in Tongva culture.[14]

Further west in the foothills, the present-day locations of the Chatsworth Nature Preserve and the Burro Flats Painted Caves were important gathering places and trading posts among Indigenous populations.

Spanish Colonial Period (1769-1821)

The lives of the Indigenous Californians were upended with the arrival of Spanish colonizers in the mid-eighteenth century. In 1769, Captain Gaspar de Portolá and Father Junípero Serra led an expedition between Baja and Alta California, passing through the Los Angeles area that summer. As they traveled north, the Spanish explorers founded a network of 21 missions (religious centers) with the purpose of converting Indigenous Californians to Catholicism and, by extension, it was believed, into loyal subjects of Spain. In addition to the missions, the Spanish founded presidios (military fortifications) and pueblos (civilian settlements) to support their colonial ambitions.[15] Spain's goal was to create a self-sufficient colony that would be protected from foreign incursion and would cement its influence on the Pacific Rim.

In 1797, Spanish colonizers, led by Franciscan missionary Father Fermín Lasuén, founded the Mission San Fernando Rey de España on the site of the former Indigenous village of Achooykomenga. The mission was named for Ferdinand III, a thirteenth century Spanish king. San Fernando was the seventeenth of California's 21 missions, and was equidistant to existing missions at San Gabriel (east) and San Buenaventura (west), each of which was about a day's walk away.[16] Typical of the Spanish missions, San Fernando was organized around a quadrangle, anchored by an adobe chapel building and flanked by ancillary uses that faced inward toward a central patio.[17] A distinguishing feature of the mission was a colonnaded convento building (completed 1822), which was used to house friars and their guests. The convento, which is extant, is the largest adobe structure in California.[18]



Figure 1. Photograph of the Mission San Fernando, ca. 1870 (Water and Power Associates).

The success of Spain's colonial aspirations was contingent on Indigenous labor. Thus, the Spanish conscripted Indigenous Californians to relocate to the missions, convert to Catholicism, and work at the missions and in their hinterlands – sometimes by coercion, and often by force.[19] Those who were repopulated to the missions, who were called neophytes, were required to abandon their traditions, cultural practices, languages, and religious beliefs. Many

12 Sean Greene and Thomas Curwen, "Mapping the Tongva Villages of L.A.'s Past," Los Angeles Times, May 9, 2019.
13 "The Chatsworth Momonga/Mission Trail," staff report prepared by the Los Angeles Department of City Planning for the Cultural Heritage Commission, Nov. 15, 2018, 4.
14 Albert Knight, "Rock Art at Momonga," manuscript, Jul. 20, 2018.
15 Mary Floyd Williams, "Mission, Presidio and Pueblo: Notes on California Local Institutions under Spain and Mexico," California Historical Society Quarterly, Vol. 1.1 (Jul. 1922), 23-25.
16 California Missions Foundation, "San Fernando Rey de España," online, accessed Sept. 2024.
17 Ibid.
18 Mission San Fernando Rey de España, "Brief History," online, accessed Sept. 2024.
19 Daniel Prosser, "SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement, Context: Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement, 1781-1849," prepared for the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources, Feb. 2016, 5.

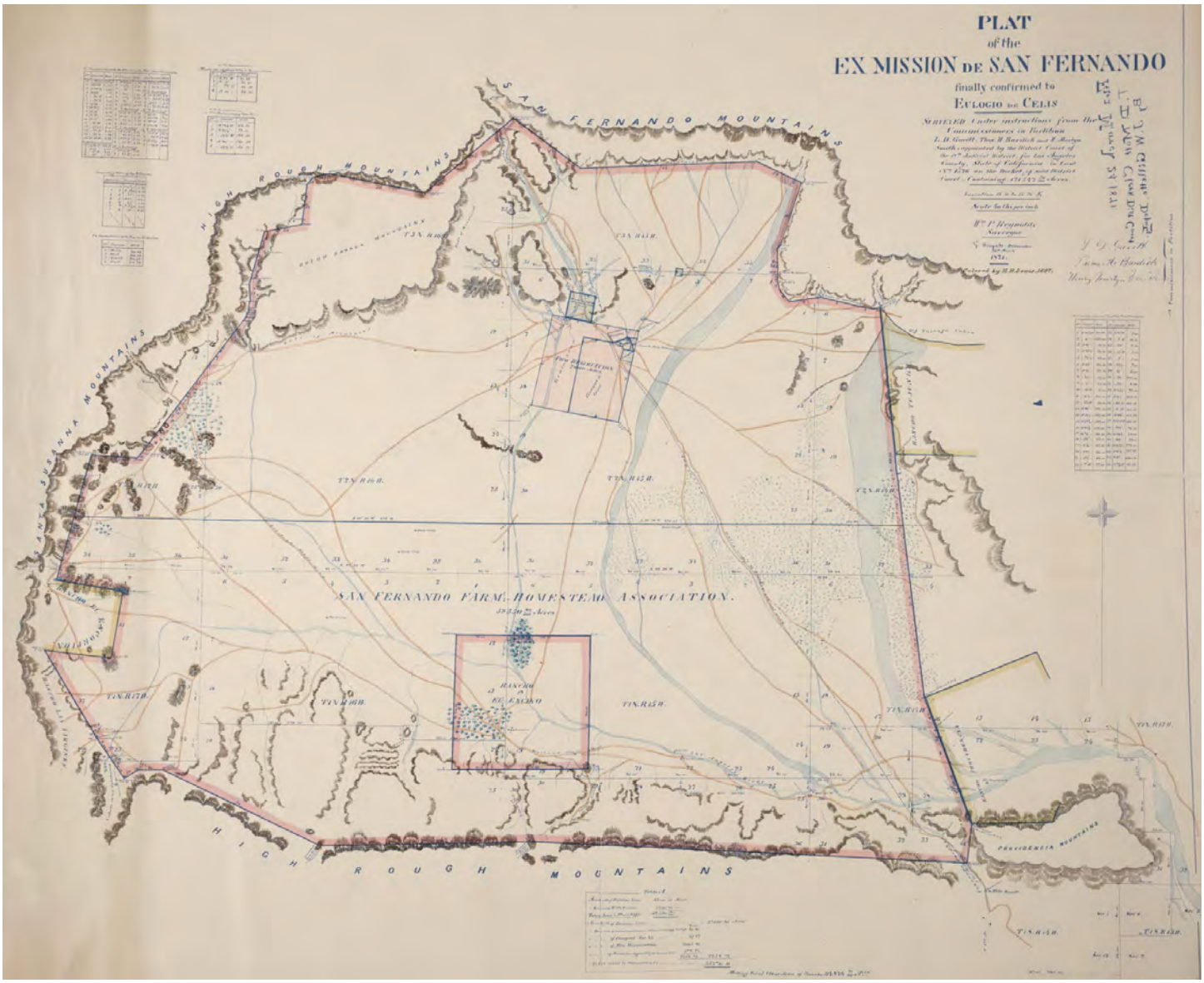


Figure 2. Plat of the Rancho Ex Mission San Fernando, 1871 (Huntington Library).

succumbed to smallpox and other communicable diseases introduced by the Spanish, for which they had no immunity.[20] By the early 1800s, about 1,000 Indigenous Californians lived at the San Fernando Mission.[21] They were forced to tend to livestock, cultivate crops including grapes, pomegranates, figs, and olives, and support the mission's operations.

All of the Indigenous Californians who were sent to live and work at the Mission San Fernando were referred to by the Spanish as Fernandeños – a name that made no distinction between their tribal affiliation, language, or village of origin. The area around the mission and its hinterlands became known as the San Fernando Valley.

Mexican Period (1821-1848)

Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821. In the 1830s Mexico secularized the Spanish missions, a process that transferred ownership from the Catholic church to the Mexican government and was intended to quell any lingering Spanish influence over California.[22] Land associated with the former missions was divided into large grants, called ranchos, which were awarded to those held in high esteem by the Mexican government. This practice was carried over from the Spanish Colonial period.

20 Benjamin Madley, "California's First Mass Incarceration System: Franciscan Missions, California Indians, and Penal Servitude, 1969-1836," Pacific Historical Review 88 (2019), 14-47.
21 Water and Power Associates, "Early Views of the San Fernando Mission," online, accessed Sept. 2024.
22 W.B. Campbell and J.R. Moriarty, "The Struggle Over Secularization of the Missions on the Alta California Frontier," The Journal of San Diego History, Vol. 15.4 (Fall 1969).





Figures 3 and 4. Stagecoach road through Santa Susana Pass (left), ca. 1890 (Water and Power Associates); Beale's Cut (right), n.d. (UCLA Library Digital Collections).

Mission San Fernando Rey de España was secularized by California Governor José Figueroa in 1834, a process that would take years to implement.[23] The secularized mission lands were subsequently parsed into ranchos and sold. In 1846, California Governor Pio Pico sold a large, 116,858-acre tract called Rancho Ex Mission San Fernando to Eulogio de Celis, in part to help finance the Mexican-American War. It encompassed a vast area that consisted of nearly all of the San Fernando Valley, aside from the mission proper. Other ranchos that were located at the edges of the San Fernando Valley included Rancho Tujunga (1840), a 6,661-acre grant in the northeast corner of the San Fernando Valley near present-day Sunland-Tujunga; Rancho Providencia (1843), a 4,064-acre grant near present-day Burbank; and Rancho El Escorpion (1845), an 1,100-acre grant on Bell Creek, near present-day West Hills. In addition, Rancho Los Encinos, originally granted in the Spanish era and re-granted in 1845, comprised 4,460 acres at the south end of the San Fernando Valley.[24]

Most of the rancho lands that were granted in the Mexican era of California history were used for cattle grazing. Cattle were raised for their hides (skins) and tallow (rendered fat); hides were exported to produce shoes and other leather goods, while tallow was sold to make candles and soap. The hide trade became the linchpin of California's economy under Mexican rule, with hides (known colloquially as "California Banknotes") being California's main export.[25]

The Mexican-American War, a territorial dispute between the United States and Mexico, commenced in 1846 and continued until the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Mexico ceded 55 percent of its territory, including all of Alta California, to the United States under the terms of the treaty.[26]

Early American Period (1848-1908)

In 1850, U.S President Millard Fillmore signed into law a bill admitting California to the Union as the thirty-first state.[27] By this time, the small pueblo of Los Angeles had developed into a fledgling town, but the San Fernando Valley, which was located some 20 miles away, remained rural and sparsely developed.

In 1859, the California legislature appropriated funds to improve a trail over the Santa Susana Pass to accommodate stagecoach traffic. The route re-opened in 1861 as the Santa Susana Stage Road and was part of "the main commercial overland [stagecoach] route between Los Angeles and San Francisco," shuttling mail and passengers between the two cities in as little as 72 hours.[28] As it approached the Santa Susana Pass near present-day Chatsworth, the stage road traversed some of the area's most challenging terrain; the most perilous portion of the route was located at the east end of the pass and was called Devil's Slide, which consisted of steep drop-offs that required drivers to blindfold horses. Travelers were often required to "drag heavy blocks of wood or have their back wheels tied to the wagon frame to slow their descent."[29]

A second stage road was constructed at the north end of the San Fernando Valley. In 1862, Edward F. Beale, the appointed Surveyor General of California and Nevada, widened a narrow gauge through the mountains between

23 "Mission San Fernando," Los Angeles Times, Sept. 7, 1997.
24 W.W. Robinson, "The Rancho Story of the San Fernando Valley," The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly, Vol. 38.3, 1956, 225-234.
25 Sherman Forbes Dallas, "The Hide and Tallow Trade in Alta California: 1822-1846," Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, Jun. 1955. 26-38.
26 National Archives, "The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo," online, accessed Sept. 2024.
27 UC Santa Barbara, "The American Presidency Project: Millard Fillmore," online, accessed Sept.2024.
28 Carlos V. Lozano, "Stage Coach Has Dust of History," Los Angeles Times, Jun. 18, 1990.
29 Ibid.

Sylmar and Newhall to accommodate stagecoach traffic. Known as Beale's Cut, the route was considered, at the time, to be a "significant technological and physical feat consisting of breaching the former impassible geographic barrier of the San Gabriel and Santa Susana mountain ranges."[30] It was notably the only point of ingress to the San Fernando Valley from the north. Chinese immigrant laborers played an instrumental role in constructing Beale's Cut, which was completed in 1863.

As California transitioned from Mexican to American rule in the second half of the nineteenth century, its rancho lands were whittled down and sold off, sometimes many times over, and often due to discrepancies that arose between Mexican and American title law. In 1869, the San Fernando Valley was divided into north and south halves. That year, a consortium of investors called the San Fernando Valley Homestead Association, which was led by Northern California stockman and grain farmer Isaac Lankershim (known as the "Wheat King"), acquired 60,000 acres in the southern half of the San Fernando Valley.[31] The buyers used the land for sheep and cattle grazing, and later for wheat and barley farming. In 1874, the heirs of Eulogio de Celis sold 56,000 acres in the northern half of the San Fernando Valley to a triad of Northern California investors: State Senator Charles Maclay, shoe manufacturer George Porter, and Porter's cousin, Benjamin Porter, who divided the land into three areas of roughly equal size. The line between the north and south halves of the San Fernando Valley was a ploughed furrow along the route of present-day Roscoe Boulevard.[32]



Figure 5. First known photograph of the San Fernando Valley, 1873 (Burbank Public Library).

Rail transportation first came to the San Fernando Valley in the 1870s. In 1876, the Southern Pacific Railroad completed a new railroad line between San Francisco and Los Angeles as a southern extension of its transcontinental line. The new Southern Pacific line traversed the San Fernando Valley en route to its southern terminus in Downtown Los Angeles. In 1885, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad opened a second transcontinental line to Los Angeles, which arrived from the east. The competing operators sought to dominate the marketplace by undercutting one another, engaging in a fare war that dropped the cost of a one-way ticket from Chicago to Los Angeles from $125 to one dollar.[33]

The construction of transcontinental railroad lines weighed heavily in the development history of Southern California; in just a decade, the population of Los Angeles County more than tripled, from 33,318 in 1880 to 101,454 in 1890, as the affordability and convenience of rail travel made it possible for droves of newcomers to come to Southern California from destinations further east.[34]

Eager to capitalize on this phenomenon, investors subdivided swaths of peripheral land into new communities in the late nineteenth century and offered lots for sale, often on speculation. This pattern of speculative development expanded the footprint of urban Los Angeles and resulted in the formation of dozens of new towns, including several in the San Fernando Valley. The first town in the San Fernando Valley was San Fernando, which was founded in 1874 and was located directly alongside the route of the forthcoming Southern Pacific line.[35] Burbank was founded in 1887, along with the arrival of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe line, as were the communities of Toluca (later Lankershim, and now North Hollywood) and Pacoima.[36] Chatsworth Park (now Chatsworth) was founded in 1888, and benefited from the construction of a Southern Pacific spur line from Burbank to the western edge of the San Fernando Valley in 1893.[37]

Overall, however, the San Fernando Valley remained geographically remote and sparsely developed. With the exception of the aforementioned towns, which were small in size, the San Fernando Valley's vast expanses of undeveloped land were occupied by farms. The dry farming of wheat, barley, and other grains was common at this time due to the lack of a reliable water supply.

30 California Office of Historic Preservation, "Beale's Cut Stagecoach Pass," online, accessed Sept. 2024.
31 Marco R. Newmark, "Historical Profiles," The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly
32 "Los Angeles History: Jewish Dreamers, Schemers of the San Fernando Valley," Jewish Journal, Oct. 3, 2013.
33 John Sedgwick, "How the Santa Fe Railroad Changed America Forever," Smithsonian Magazine, Jul. 2021.
34 Los Angeles Almanac, "General Population by City, Los Angeles County, 1850-1900 U.S. Census," online, accessed Sept. 2024.
35 City of San Fernando, "History," online, accessed Sept. 2024.
36 Water and Power Associates, "San Fernando Valley Communities," online, accessed Sept. 2024.
37 Ann Vincent (Chatsworth Historical Society), "Chatsworth Past and Present," Apr. 2014.

Agriculture and Entertainment (1908-1945)



Figure 6. Wheat harvesting near Van Nuys, ca. 1890s (USC Digital Library).

Plans to build a water conveyance system to Los Angeles were conceived shortly after the turn-of-the-twentieth century. In 1904, three engineers, William Mulholland, Frederick Eaton, and J.B. Lippincott, devised a plan to build an aqueduct between the fertile land of the Eastern Sierras and the arid Los Angeles basin. In 1905, Los Angeles residents, feeling the effects of a drought, approved the sale of municipal bonds to finance its construction. The mammoth civil engineering endeavor was touted as one that would provide the greater Los Angeles region with all of the water that it would ever need.[38]

Powered entirely by gravity, the 233-mile-long aqueduct was regarded as a remarkable feat of engineering when it was built. It carried water from the eastern Sierra Nevada mountains to the Los Angeles basin via a route that passed through the Owens Valley and Mojave Desert, crossed over the San Gabriel Mountains, and traversed the San Fernando Valley.

The promise of the aqueduct touched off a real estate boom in the San Fernando Valley. Its swaths of arid land would now lay directly in the path of a rich riparian corridor, lending themselves to expanded agricultural production and the creation of new town sites. “Doubtless these lands if irrigated would soon become densely populated suburban additions to a greater Los Angeles,” foreshadowed Mulholland, the aqueduct’s chief engineer.[39] Indeed, new town sites were founded when the aqueduct was under construction. In 1909, a syndicate called the Los Angeles Suburban Homes Company was established by Harry Chandler (publisher of the Los Angeles Times) and developers Hobart Whitley, Isaac Newton Van Nuys, and James Lankershim. The Los Angeles Suburban Homes Company purchased 47,000 acres, or almost all of the southern San Fernando Valley. They subdivided their acquisition into three new town sites: Van Nuys, Marion (now Reseda), and Owensmouth (now Canoga Park).[40]



Figure 7. Los Angeles Aqueduct dedication, 1913 (Los Angeles Public Library, Herald Examiner Collection).

The aqueduct was completed in 1913.[41] However, access to its water rights was contingent on land being located within the Los Angeles city limits. This led to a massive annexation effort in 1915, in which almost all of the land area in the San Fernando Valley (108,732 acres) was annexed by the City of Los Angeles, greatly expanding the city’s geographic footprint. Some communities in the San Fernando Valley initially resisted annexation but later acquiesced; this included the towns of Owensmouth (annexed 1917), West Lankershim (now a part of Van Nuys, 1919), Chatsworth (1920), and Lankershim (now North Hollywood, 1923). The Los Angeles Suburban Homes Company sold off portions of their vast holdings to other developers, resulting in the creation of new towns including Tarzana (1919), Girard (now Woodland Hills, 1922), Winnetka (1922), and Sherman Oaks (1927).

38 “Stupendous Aqueduct Project Will Make Los Angeles Great,” Los Angeles Times, Jun. 23, 1907.
39 David Colker, “From a Desert to a Sea of Suburbia,” Los Angeles Times, Dec. 19, 1999.
40 Water and Power Associates, “San Fernando Valley Communities: Name Origins and Brief History,” online, accessed Sept. 2024.
41 Nathan Masters, “Canoga Park at 100: A Brief History of the Birth of Owensmouth,” KCET, Apr. 4, 2012.



Figure 8. Postcard view of Van Nuys, ca. 1911 (Water and Power Associates).

Still, there were pockets of the San Fernando Valley that chose not to become a part of the City of Los Angeles. This included Glendale, San Fernando, and Burbank, which incorporated as independent cities between 1906 and 1911 and formed their own water districts; and areas on the far periphery of the San Fernando Valley and up into its foothills, which were not well suited to agriculture or conventional development, generally because of their mountainous terrain, challenging topography, and highly remote locations that were difficult to access.

The San Fernando Valley emerged as an epicenter of agricultural production following the completion of the aqueduct. Beginning in the 1910s, the San Fernando Valley was peppered with numerous citrus and walnut orchards, poultry and dairy farms, and field crops. Very generally speaking, field crops including alfalfa and beans were concentrated in the more arid central and west areas of the San Fernando Valley, citrus groves were located in the frost-free north and northeast San Fernando Valley, olive groves were located north of San Fernando, and poultry and dairy farms were clustered in the west. Deciduous fruits and walnut trees were distributed across the entire valley floor.[42]





Figures 9 and 10. San Fernando Valley orange grove (top), 1937 (Los Angeles Public Library, Herman J. Schultheis Collection); pumpkin field in the San Fernando Valley (bottom), n.d. (Los Angeles Public Library, Security Pacific National Bank Collection).

Large quantities of cash crops were grown, processed at local packinghouses, and loaded onto freight railroads for export. The San Fernando Valley landscape was dominated by gentleman farms, or suburban farmsteads that tended to be small in scale and independently operated.

In addition to agriculture, the entertainment industry was integral to the San Fernando Valley's economic base before World War II. In 1914, a 230 acre tract of land was purchased by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company as a motion picture production plant. The property, which was located at the south end of the San Fernando Valley at the Cahuenga Pass, opened in 1915 as Universal City, which was "the world's first self-contained community dedicated to making movies."[43] The Universal Studios Specific Plan and Historic Preservation Plan include an evaluation of historic resources on the property and detail next steps for rehabilitation, maintenance, repair, and new construction on the Universal Lot.

42 Richard E. Preston, "The Changing Landscape of the San Fernando Valley Between 1930 and 1964," essay prepared for San Fernando State College, 1965, 61.

43 Universal Studios Lot, "Universal Studios," online, accessed Sept. 2024.



Figure 11. Postcard of Universal City, c. 1920 (Loyola Marymount University, William H. Hannon Library).

Other major studios that opened production plants in the San Fernando Valley included First National Pictures (later Warner Brothers), which constructed a studio lot in Burbank in 1926; the Mack Sennett Studio (later Republic Studios, and now Radford Studios) in Studio City, which was founded in 1928; the RKO Encino Ranch, which opened in 1929; and a backlot for Columbia Pictures known as the Columbia Ranch, which opened in Burbank in 1934. These production plants occupied large tracts of affordable land in close proximity to Hollywood.

Far corners of the San Fernando Valley were also eyed by producers as locations for filming Westerns and other productions requiring rugged backdrops. The Chatsworth area, with its rural setting and boulder-strewn hills, was the site of independent movie ranches that proved especially well-suited to this genre. These movie ranches "typically stood in for a variety of locations and appeared in an array of films under the guise of different settings and backdrops." [44]

One of the most well-known ranches was the Iverson Movie Ranch, which was first used as a filming location in the 1910s and later became a prominent filming location for Western films and television programs. The southern portion of the Iverson Ranch was located in the Los Angeles city limits, but about 320 acres comprising the northern portion of the ranch – known as "Upper Iverson" – fell within unincorporated Los Angeles County. As many as 2,000 productions are believed to have been filmed at the Iverson Ranch.[45] The Iverson Ranch has been described as "possibly the single most important and most heavily filmed outdoor filming location in the history of the movie industry" by historian and researcher Dennis R. Liff.[46]

Nearby, the Spahn Movie Ranch was founded to accommodate overflow demand from the Iverson Ranch, and was used for filming B-list movies and television shows.[47]

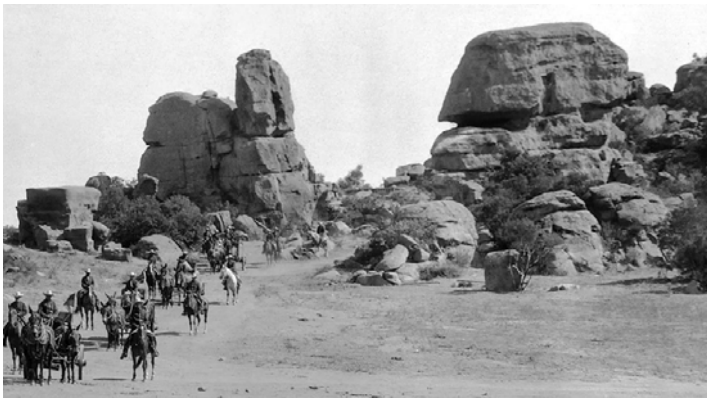


Figure 12. Filming at the Iverson Movie Ranch, ca. 1926 (Iverson Movie Ranch Blog).

By 1940, the population of the San Fernando Valley had grown to 155,443, an increase of approximately 77,000 since 1930. Most of the population growth in the San Fernando Valley was clustered in communities at its southeast corner, which was the area closest to and most accessible from central Los Angeles and Hollywood.[48] Communities such as North Hollywood and Van Nuys increasingly took on a suburban flavor. Van Nuys was selected as the site of an auxiliary civic center complex and civic administration building, which was built in 1932 to serve San Fernando Valley communities and was designed to be a scaled-down replica of its Downtown counterpart.[49] The north and west sections of the San Fernando Valley, by contrast, continued to be less populated and dominated by agricultural fields, which continued to be the San Fernando Valley's primary economic engine through World War II.

Post-World War II Suburbanization (Post-1945)

The San Fernando Valley emerged as an important center of

44 SurveyLA, Los Angeles Historic Context Statement, "Context: Entertainment Industry, 1908-1980; Theme: Filming Locations Associated with the Motion Picture and Television Broadcasting Industries, 1908-1980," prepared by Historic Resources Group and Christy Johnson McAvoy for the Los Angeles Department of City Planning, Sept. 2019, 19.
45 Ibid, 19-20.
46 Written correspondence from Dennis R. Liff, received via e-mail Jul. 19, 2024.
47 The Iverson Movie Ranch, "Connecting the Dots Between the Iverson Ranch and its Infamous Neighbor, the Spahn Movie Ranch, Once Home to the Manson Family," online, Jul. 10, 2015, accessed Sept. 2024.
48 Preston, "The Changing Landscape of the San Fernando Valley Between 1930 and 1964," 1965, 63.
49 Ibid.



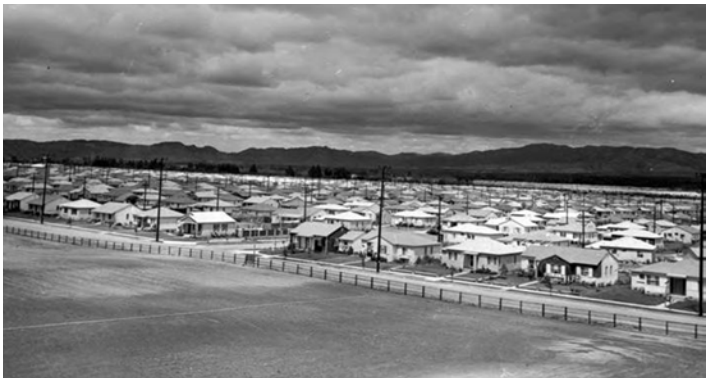
Figure 13. Map of the San Fernando Valley, ca. 1940s. Some communities had begun to suburbanize by this time, though the area was still dominated by agricultural uses (Water and Power Associates).

the aerospace industry during World War II. The aerospace manufacturer Lockheed, which was based in Burbank, employed roughly 90,000 people at its peak in 1943, as the company produced tens of thousands of aircraft to support the war effort.[50] Aerospace and defense interests further coalesced in and around the San Fernando Valley in the postwar period, "playing key roles in developing rockets, missiles and man's journey to the moon."[51] Companies like Rocketdyne, Bendix Aviation, Litton Industries, and Ramo Woolridge became major employers in the area. In 1959, firms located in the San Fernando Valley "worked on a quarter of the country's missiles and accounted for $3.85 billion and aircraft and missile hardware," according to historian Jackson Meyers.[52]

After World War II, the agricultural hinterlands of the San Fernando Valley were replaced by new suburban development, due in no small part to the jobs brought about by aerospace and defense contractors. Confronted with a shortage of housing and a glut of prospective homebuyers, many of whom were military veterans and qualified for low-interest home loans provided by the Veterans Administration (VA), developers and merchant builders began acquiring swaths of agricultural acreage and subdividing them into new suburban tract communities. By 1950, the population of the San Fernando Valley had grown to approximately 400,000; by 1960, that number had risen to 840,500, and the population density had increased from 2.7 to 5.6 people per acre.[53]

Postwar suburbanization in the San Fernando Valley took a variety of forms. It ranged from the acquisition and development of small farmsteads into individual residential tracts, to the development of master planned suburban communities. The development of Panorama City is an example of the latter. Conceived in 1947 by developer Fritz Burns and industrialist Henry Kaiser, Panorama City spanned some 400 acres and adhered to a master plan developed by the Los Angeles-based architectural firm of Wurdeman and Becket. It included more than 4,000

50 Martha L. Willman, "Valley's Aviation History Is Full of Sore Spots," Los Angeles Times, Dec. 18, 1999.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.





Figures 14 and 15. Tract homes under construction in the San Fernando Valley, ca. 1950s (Historical Photo Collection of the Department of Water and Power, City of Los Angeles).

mass-produced tract houses, 31 acres of commercial development, and 25 acres of parking, all oriented around a network of new curvilinear streets. The houses in Panorama City were built and sold by Kaiser Community Homes, a subsidiary of Kaiser's industrial empire, and applied many of the same mass-production principles that Kaiser had developed for the production of ships during World War II. The mass production of these single-family houses helped keep costs to a minimum, which were passed on to buyers; two-bedroom, 800-square foot houses with attached garages sold for less than $10,000, an attainable sum for middle-income families.[54]

With the rise of new suburban development came a decrease in the prevalence of agricultural uses that had long dominated the San Fernando Valley. The suburbanization of the post-World War II era "marked the finish of the [San Fernando] Valley as a significant agricultural area."[55] Increasingly, the area's abundant citrus and walnut groves and other agricultural uses were acquired and subdivided into new residential neighborhoods, with low-scale commercial development clustered along major vehicular thoroughfares.



Figure 16. Aerial view of Panorama City, 1960 (Water and Power Associates).

Suburban development in the San Fernando Valley catered to, and was dependent on, the automobile. New development was sprawling in form and low in scale, and was oriented around a network of boulevards and arterial streets. Homes in these suburban developments had attached garages and other accommodations for the automobile. By the 1960s, the San Fernando Valley's population included "at least 1.4 automobiles per household, and approximately 45 per cent of the households have two cars or more."[56]

Part and parcel of the San Fernando Valley's suburban expansion was the construction of an expansive regional freeway network across Southern California. The construction of the Golden State Freeway (I-5), the San Diego Freeway (I-405), the Hollywood Freeway (SR-170), the Ventura Freeway (US-101), and the Foothill Freeway (I-210) provided access to the San Fernando Valley from central Los Angeles and other destinations, and made the San Fernando Valley a viable place to set down roots. The Simi Valley/Ronald Reagan Freeway (SR-118), which opened in 1979 and was expanded to Moorpark in 1993, provided access to the northern reaches of the San Fernando Valley, and was one of the last freeway segments to be built in the greater Los Angeles region.

The San Fernando Valley's growing population was accompanied by heightened demand for new commercial and institutional development. In 1947, the Clarence W. Pierce School of Agriculture (now Pierce College) opened in Woodland Hills, providing instruction in the fields of crop cultivation and animal husbandry. In 1956, ground was broken on a new California state college campus on a former orange grove in the community of Northridge to serve San Fernando Valley residents. The campus was originally known as the San Fernando Valley State College, and is now California State University, Northridge. New regional

54 Kevin Roderick, The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times Books, 2002), 127.
55 Ibid.
56 Preston, "The Changing Landscape of the San Fernando Valley Between 1930 and 1964," 1965, 63.

shopping malls were built to serve the area's growing population, and abundant public and private institutions were constructed to accommodate the demands imposed by the area's rapidly growing population.

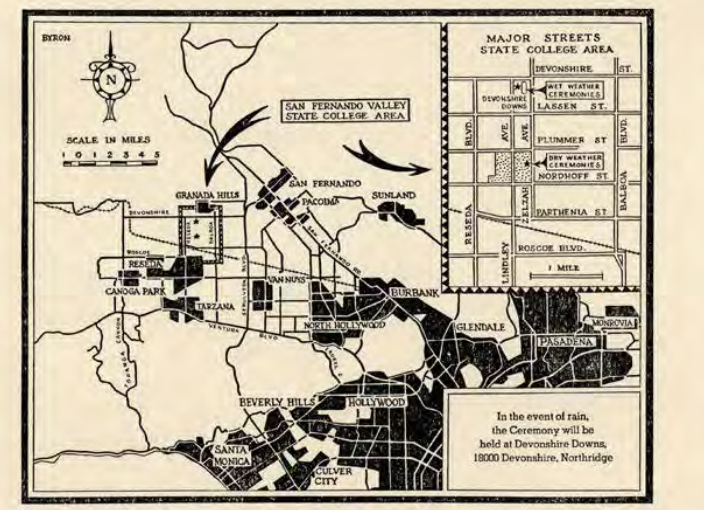


Figure 17. Groundbreaking ceremony invitation for the new San Fernando Valley State College (now California State University, Northridge), 1956 (CSUN University Library Digital Collections).

The San Fernando Valley's population continued to grow in the latter decades of the twentieth century. By the 1980s, almost all of the land area in the San Fernando Valley was developed, with the only remaining areas being vestigial agricultural parcels and peripheral areas on the far edges of the San Fernando Valley. The area sustained widespread damage as a result of the Northridge Earthquake, a 6.7 magnitude temblor that occurred in January 1994 and, at the time, was the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history.[57] Across the San Fernando Valley and throughout Southern California, roads buckled, gas lines and water mains ruptured, and scores of buildings either collapsed or were damaged beyond repair.

Since the San Fernando Valley is largely built out, contemporary development generally consists of infill and redevelopment, particularly along heavily-trafficked commercial corridors. A nominal amount of new suburban development has occurred in the farthest reaches of the San Fernando Valley, including the Deerlake Ranch community north of Chatsworth, which falls within the jurisdictional boundaries of unincorporated Los Angeles County and is addressed in more detail herein.

4.4. COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC HISTORIC BACKGROUNDS

Kagel/Lopez Canyons

The first known settler in the unincorporated community of Kagel Canyon was Henry Kagel (whose surname is alternatively spelled Kegal), for whom the canyon is named. Kagel, who was a miner, came to the area in the late nineteenth century and homesteaded the land, filing mining claims for an isolated, oak and sycamore-studded canyon to the north of San Fernando in the 1880s.[58] Kagel constructed a small adobe house for himself in the canyon circa 1900, which is believed to be the first permanent structure to be constructed in the area. The house was located near the entrance to the canyon.[59]

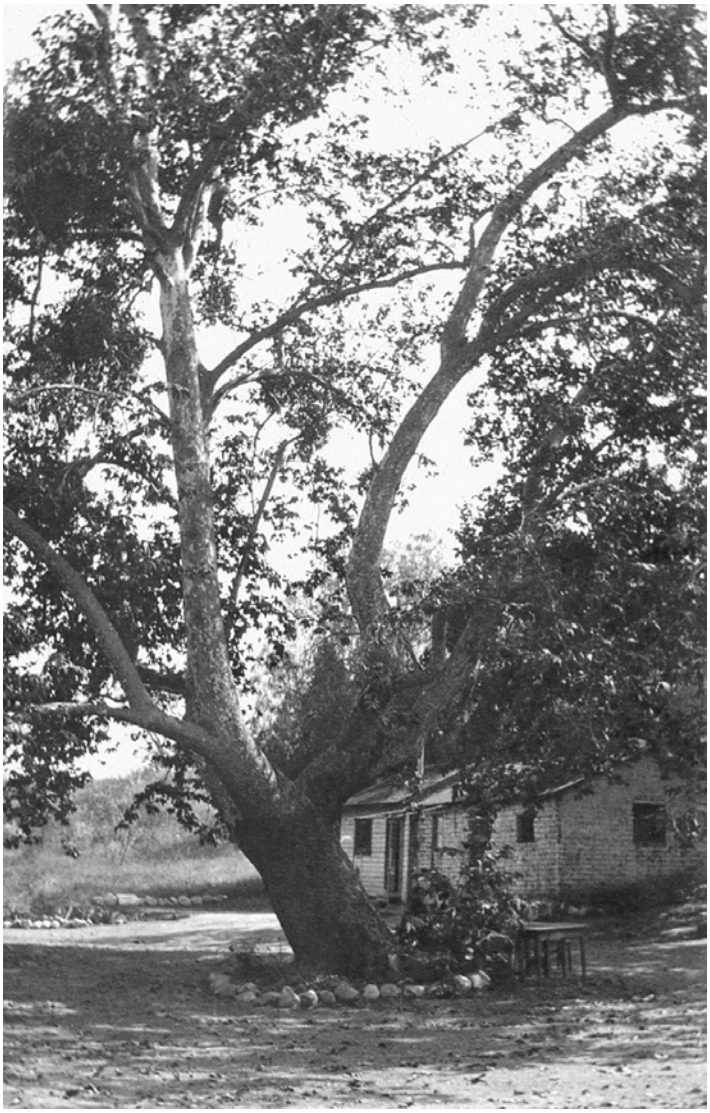


Figure 18. Home of Henry Kagel and sycamore tree, ca. 1900 (Museum of the San Fernando Valley).

57 Roderick (2002), 13.
58 Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
59 Ibid; Ralph Vradenberg, "Kagel Canyon," essay, 1969.

At the time, Kagel Canyon was nearly impossible to access. It was miles away from any established community, and there were no roads leading to it. In 1909, Nathaniel Wheaton Dexter settled in Kagel Canyon when his brother and a business associate purchased a lemon grove near the mouth of the canyon. Later reflecting on his arrival to the area, Dexter remarked that "there was no road or entrance to the canyon, nothing in sight all over the valley except a few ranches miles apart and extremely large. Just a wild country anyway you looked. Quiet, beautiful hills, wonderful air, and only [a] half dozen or so homes."[60]

In 1911, the International Order of Foresters (IOF), a fraternal benefit society, chose a remote site in Lopez Canyon as the location of a new tuberculosis sanitarium. The facility would serve members of the IOF who lived in the Western United States. Construction commenced soon thereafter, and the first section of the sanitarium opened in 1913. Additional buildings were added to the site throughout the 1920s and 1930s.[61] Buildings in the facility were small, residentially-scaled cottages where those suffering from tuberculosis could reside and convalesce. The remote site in Lopez Canyon was selected on account of its proximity to nature and its clean air, which were seen as antidotal to the disease.

Eventually, a road was graded to provide access to Kagel Canyon from the San Fernando Valley below. This road (called Kagel Canyon Road) approached the canyon from its mouth, near present-day Lake View Terrace, following the contour of the canyon and running alongside a natural stream that passed through it. Kagel Canyon Road was deeded to the County of Los Angeles in 1914 as the result of a lawsuit.[62]

The canyon continued to be sparsely populated and inhabited by just a small handful of intrepid homesteaders. Part of the challenge of settling the canyon was the lack of a consistent and reliable water supply. In 1915, a homesteader by the name of Richardson, who occupied a swath of land in the upper (north) portion of the canyon, was the first to file a claim to water rights. In 1918, graphite was discovered in the mountains east of Kagel Canyon, resulting in the formation of a mining operation called the Los Angeles Graphite Company. The company spent upwards of $100,000 to build a road to the mine and other site improvements, including bunkhouses and a mill.[63] However, "the lack of water in the summer months was the deciding factor in the ultimate failure of this enterprise."[64] Specifically, the lack of water resulted in the graphite exhibiting an impurity that made it unusable for commercial purposes.[65]

By the early 1920s, there were four residences in Kagel Canyon, including the aforementioned adobe house constructed by Henry Kagel and three other dwellings which were occupied by other homesteaders. One of the houses barely qualified as such, with less than 150 square feet of space.[66] The canyon continued to exude a far-flung identity that appealed only to the most rugged of individualists.

The first concerted effort to develop the canyon dates to 1923. That year, a development entity called the Peters-Rhoades Company acquired approximately 80 acres of canyon land and subdivided it into diminutive lots that were intended to be developed with weekend cabins. The development was known as the Kagel Canyon Park tract. Lots were small – with most measuring a mere 40 feet wide by 60 feet deep – and the tract's developers platted a network of narrow streets across the length of the canyon to provide access to individual parcels, many of which were unbuildable because of the local topography.

The lots were marketed as future cabin sites, ideal for city dwelling Angelenos in search of respite from the bustle of urban life. Many were purchased and subsequently improved with small cabins serving principally as summer homes and weekend retreats. About 200 cabins were constructed.[67] To entice prospective buyers, the Peters-Rhoades Company also advertised a variety of recreational amenities that sought to leverage the development's rural, rustic backdrop. Advertisements for the cabin community often described it as "the Switzerland of America," a "Mecca for pleasure seekers," and "little Yosemite," reflecting the hyperbolic prose characteristic of the era.[68]

A handful of commercial uses were built to serve the essential needs of the nascent community. A general store opened in the lower (south) portion of the canyon in 1927, originally operating as Martin's General Store and selling key provisions. The building subsequently reopened in 1947 as a bar and restaurant called The Hideaway, which remains

60 Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
61 South Environmental, "Cultural Resources Technical Report: Hope Gardens Sequoia Building Project, Los Angeles County, California," prepared for Union Rescue Mission, Jan. 2021, 30-34.
62 Ibid.
63 "Local Land Office Judgment Affirmed," Los Angeles Times, Apr. 7, 1923.
64 Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
65 Ralph Vradenberg, "Kagel Canyon," essay, 1969.
66 Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid; "A Little Yosemite," Los Angeles Times, Nov. 18, 1923.

in operation and is a focal point of the community.[69] A small garage adjacent to the general store was used as a gas station.[70]

Throughout the 1920s, Kagel Canyon primarily remained a vacation community. In addition to its dozens of small summer and weekend cabins, there were also about 15 permanent dwellings in the canyon enclave.[71] The upper portion of the canyon included some small-scale agricultural uses, including 160 acres of citrus, olive, and avocado groves in the area now occupied by the Glen Haven Memorial Park.[72]

Settlement in the canyon witnessed a shift with the onset of the Great Depression and the economic calamity that ensued. Confronted with financial challenges, some home seekers took advantage of the area's small and affordably priced lots, either using the cabins for full-time living or using them to construct new permanent dwellings. In 1930, the Kagel Canyon Improvement Association was formed to identify and advocate for community needs, including the provision of gas and electricity and the improvement of roads and other public works.[73] The group also advocated for improved water access. In 1935, it lobbied the County Board of Supervisors to create a new water district to serve the canyon, and in 1936 the County and the federal government allocated funding for the construction of two new wells.[74]

Plans for Dexter Park, a public park for the Kagel Canyon community, were conceived in 1934, when the County of Los Angeles negotiated a land swap deal with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That year, the County traded a swath of mountainous land near Wrightwood in exchange for a smaller, 40-acre parcel of federally-owned acreage on the east side of Kagel Canyon. The park was improved with new picnic tables and fireplaces, and the grounds were planted with various types of trees.[75] Stone retaining walls and stairways were also built at the site as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.[76]

In 1940, 160 acres of land in the Upper Canyon that had previously been used for agriculture was developed into a private cemetery called the Glen Haven Memorial Park. The cemetery grounds were designed by landscape architect Ralph D. Cornell, one of Southern California's most influential and prolific landscape architects of the twentieth century.[77] At the same time the cemetery, opened, the Kagel Canyon Improvement Association petitioned the County Board of Supervisors "to zone the canyon for residential purposes only, to safeguard it against undesirable uses."[78] The issue was again brought before the Board of Supervisors in 1948.[79] The request for residential zoning corresponded with the canyon becoming increasingly occupied by a permanent base of residents, as opposed to an itinerant community of pleasure-seekers and cabin dwellers.



Figure 20. View of Works Progress Administration (WPA) crew at Dexter Park, 1937 (LA County Library Digital Collections).



Figure 21. Plot plan for Glen Haven Memorial Park, ca. 1940 (UCLA Library Digital Collections).

69 Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 "Election Set on New Water District," Daily News, Nov. 5, 1935; "Kagel Water Plan Offered to County," Hollywood Citizen News, Sept. 4, 1936.
75 Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
76 The Living New Deal, "Dexter Park – Kagel Canyon, CA," online, accessed Sept. 2024.
77 "Plan for Glen Haven Memorial Park, San Fernando, circa 1940," accessed Dec. 2024 via the UCLA Library Digital Collections.
78 "Canyon Asks for Residential Zoning," San Fernando Valley Times, Jun. 20, 1940.
79 "Kagel Canyon Civic Group to Meet," The Valley Times, Mar. 24, 1948.

Following World War II, an acute housing shortage in Southern California led more people to purchase property in Kagel Canyon with the intent of building homes. In his essay about the history of the community, Ralph Vradenberg notes that "the canyon was rapidly populated" following the war's end in 1945.[80] Vradenberg further remarks that by this time, the unconventional and somewhat haphazard manner by which the canyon had been surveyed and subdivided complicated these development efforts. "Lots were too small to build on. Roads were too narrow and too light for normal traffic. Poor surveying had located some lots on streets' rights of way, and in some cases houses were built on the street."[81]

The availability of water continued to also be an issue plaguing the community. By the 1950s, enough people were living in the canyon to render the existing wells inadequate. Water was rationed, particularly in the hot summer months, and residents – particularly those who lived in the Upper Canyon – complained about the murky and muddy quality of the scant water that they were able to access.[82]

Annexation to the City of Los Angeles was a strategy proposed as a means of improving access to water and other services. In 1951, the Kagel Canyon Civic Association petitioned the City of Los Angeles to annex a roughly- one-mile-long, 150-acre section of the canyon. Annexation was requested "in order to improve water supplies, streets, sewers, fire protection and school services" to the growing community.[83]



Figure 22. Kagel Canyon, 1956 (Los Angeles Public Library).

That request was denied, as officials determined that annexation would impose too much of a financial burden on the City coffers.[84] The group petitioned the City again in 1954, this time to annex a larger, 640-acre area covering both the east and west sides of the canyon. Proponents of annexation argued that the ability to access Los Angeles' municipal water system was the only feasible way to alleviate the canyon's acute water shortage, a request that was again rejected by City decision makers on similar grounds.[85] Finally, in 1957 an application was filed with the County Regional Planning Commission to construct a 100,000 gallon reservoir on the west side of Kagel Canyon Road, north of Vision Trail, to provide water for domestic and irrigation uses in both the canyon and its immediate environs.[86]

Dexter Park was enhanced and improved in the postwar period. As early as 1949, County officials recommended the construction of a new community center at the park.[87] The Dexter Park Community Center was dedicated in 1957, providing the community with a new communal gathering space and institutional hub. Speaking of the newly dedicated park facility bearing his name, Nathaniel Dexter made the following remarks about the park and its bucolic, naturalistic setting:

> I discovered what looked like a small place to push through the tall thick grass to enter a dreamland of oak trees, each with a woodrat nest around the base and with their burnt black, drooping branches that reached to the ground. Coyote, rabbit tracks, and big squirrels were everywhere…The size of a park is not the only important thing about it. There is also the setting. Most parks give you the feeling that someone has planted it all for you. I think that here you actually get more the feeling of being out of doors in the natural hills.[88]

In spite of its population growth, Kagel Canyon retained its quintessentially bucolic character in the postwar years. Reporting in 1964, the Los Angeles Times stated the following: "Still keeping its rustic air, however, is Kagel Canyon, where leaf-shrouded homes of all descriptions cluster around the bed of Kagel Creek."[89] That same article noted that there had been some modern encroachments into the area, including two cemeteries (Glen Haven and

80 Ralph Vradenberg, "Kagel Canyon," essay, 1969.
81 Ibid.
82 Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
83 "Kagel Canyon Annexation Proposal Strikes Snag," Citizen News, Oct. 2, 1951.
84 Ibid; "Kagel Canyon Area Annexation Meets City Council Snag," The Valley Times, Oct. 2, 1951.
85 "2 Annexation Pleas Studied," The Valley Times, May 4, 1954.
86 "Reservoir to Be Built in Kagel Canyon," Los Angeles Times, Apr.21, 1957.
87 "Park Center Backed," Los Angeles Times, Dec. 17, 1949.
88 Nathaniel Dexter, quoted in "Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
89 George Garrigues, "Civilization Reaching Into Canyons," Los Angeles Times, Feb. 2, 1964.





Figures 23 and 24. Dexter Park Community Center under construction (left), 1956; and at dedication ceremony (right), 1957 (Los Angeles Public Library).

Shalom Memorial Parks) in Upper Kagel Canyon, as well as "an unusual hillside top trailer court" on a leveled hillside at the foot of Lopez Canyon.[90]

Kagel Canyon has witnessed a number of natural disasters including wildfires, floods, and earthquakes. A confluence of factors including its historically poor access to water, its challenging terrain, and its network of narrow and substandard roads made the community especially vulnerable to damage incurred from these disasters. In 1961, a fire destroyed several homes, and subsequent mudslides caused additional damage to areas alongside the creek running through the canyon. Additional damage was sustained from a 1969 flood and then by the 1971 Sylmar Earthquake, which destroyed some 40 houses in the canyon, including some of the oldest dwellings (not built in accordance with more modern seismic and structural standards).[91] Another devastating fire, the Mill Fire, swept through Kagel Canyon in 1975, burning 47,000 acres and resulting in the loss of one additional house.[92] Local residents often took it upon themselves to shore up creeks, clear brush, and undertake other efforts to help mitigate damage from natural disasters.

Fire Station No. 74 was reconstructed in 1972, and continues to provide the community with fire suppression and protection services.[93] Repairs and improvements were also made to several of the retaining walls and other site features at Dexter Park that sustained damage.[94]

While Kagel Canyon became a small but thriving community over the course of the twentieth century, the adjacent Lopez Canyon to the west remained largely undeveloped, with the exception of the aforementioned Lopez Canyon Tuberculosis Sanitarium, which closed in 1952. In 1962, a new building was dedicated at the site and was called Forester Haven, a retirement community that was operated by the International Order of Foresters (IOF).[95] Several additional buildings were added to the Forester Haven site over the course of the 1960s and 1970s.[96]



Figure 25. Kagel Canyon residents shoring up the canyon creek, 1962 (Los Angeles Public Library).

90 Ibid.
91 Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
92 Ibid.
93 "Water Main Funds," Los Angeles Times, Nov. 1, 1972.
94 "County Approves Plans for Kagel Canyon Jobs," Los Angeles Times, May 20, 1973.
95 South Environmental, "Cultural Resources Technical Report: Hope Gardens Sequoia Building Project, Los Angeles County, California," prepared for Union Rescue Mission, Jan. 2021, 34-35.
96 Ibid.

In 1975, the City of Los Angeles opened the Lopez Canyon Landfill, a 382-acre repository for the City's garbage. As the City's landfills approached or exceeded capacity, increasing volumes of garbage were sent to the Lopez Canyon facility, which eventually took in some 80 percent of the City's one-million tons of annual trash.[97] The landfill was a point of contention among residents of the northeast San Fernando Valley, and especially among those in Kagel Canyon. In 1979, "dirty diapers and other landfill trash washed down Kagel Canyon in a storm," and in 1982, this happened once again when heavy winter rains caused a portion of the facility to collapse.[98]

Houses continued to be built on an incremental basis in Kagel Canyon in subsequent years. New development was especially pronounced in the 1980s, during which time the number of houses in Kagel Canyon nearly doubled.[99] New houses that were added to the canyon in the second half of the twentieth century tended to be more conventional in size, scale, and style than many of the earlier cabins and retreat dwellings that they sat adjacent to. Given the diminutive size of the lots in the canyon, these newer houses could typically only be constructed by purchasing multiple lots and consolidating them to create a viable building site. One of these houses, which measured 3,800 square feet, required the merging of ten tiny lots to accommodate construction.[100] The challenges associated with assembling building sites has contributed to the canyon remaining sparsely developed compared to many of the other peripheral communities near Los Angeles.

However, this sometimes produced friction between those who had lived in the canyon for decades and newer arrivals to the canyon enclave. By the late 1980s, these tensions had begun to boil over when several property owners in the Kagel Canyon community complained to County officials about the haphazard condition of some neighboring properties, which were described by the Los Angeles Times as "bootleg homesteads" that ran afoul of County zoning regulations and applicable health and safety codes.[101] The properties at issue were typically those that contained unpermitted trailers and camper shells and ramshackle shed structures, most of which lacked plumbing, electricity, or running water and were instead hooked to generators and water tanks.[102]

The Kagel Canyon Handbook describes the friction in more detail:

The primary target [of complaints] was the property of Robert Winemiller, who moved with his family to Kagel Canyon in 1930 and was among the area's first year-round residents. Since that time, Winemiller amassed a lifetime of items, including more than 70 car hulks, and allowed numerous guests to stay on trailers on his 8-acre parcel in Upper Kagel. Ultimately in October 1988, the County declared the property to be a public nuisance and brought in contractors to clear the property, despite a human blockade formed by Winemiller and friends.[103]

In 1996, the much-maligned Lopez Canyon Landfill accepted its last load of trash and was slated for closure by the City of Los Angeles. Also in Lopez Canyon, the Forester Haven retirement home closed in the early 2000s, and in 2005 the property was sold to the Union Rescue Mission, which planned to convert it into transitional housing.[104] That facility, called the Hope Gardens Family Center, opened in the site's existing collection of buildings in 2007. [105]

Kagel Canyon has sustained extensive damage from several fires that have burned through or near the community in recent years. In 2008, the Marek Fire ravaged the canyon, scorching some 5,000 acres and destroying two houses. In 2016, the Sand Fire burned portions of the canyon, and in 2017, the Creek Fire burned more than 15,000 acres in the Angeles National Forest. Several buildings in the community were destroyed by the Creek Fire, which took more than two weeks to fully contain.

Sylmar Island

The unincorporated community of Sylmar Island, which is located just past the northernmost Los Angeles city limit, consists almost entirely of undeveloped open space and mountainous terrain. Early development in this area was limited to small agricultural plots, which were largely located alongside the canyons and watersheds that descended from the San Gabriel Mountains above.[106]

Between 1925 and 1926, the United States government built

97 John Johnson and Tim May, "Lopez Canyon Closure Ends City's Long Hall as Owners of Landfills," Los Angeles Times, Jul. 2, 1996.
98 Ibid; Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
99 Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
100 Bob Pool, "County Cracks Down on Bootleg Homesteads," Los Angeles Times, Sept. 9, 1987.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
104 South Environmental, "Cultural Resources Technical Report: Hope Gardens Sequoia Building Project, Los Angeles County, California," prepared for Union Rescue Mission, Jan. 2021, 37.
105 Kagel Canyon Civic Association, "The Kagel Canyon Handbook," 2018, Chapter 1, Section B.
106 UC Santa Barbara Library, Aerial Photographs, 1928, online, accessed Sept. 2024.

a new hospital for military veterans in the area, at the mouth of May Canyon. Located at the far north end of Sayre Street, the United States Veteran's Bureau Hospital was the first Veteran's Bureau hospital to be built on the Pacific Coast. It was a behemoth of an institution, comprising 20 concrete buildings that collectively cost $1.5 million to construct. The hospital could accommodate 232 beds – and up to 1,000 in the case of an emergency – and had what was considered at the time to be "one of the finest tubercular institutions in the world."[107]



Figure 26. United States Veteran's Bureau Hospital on Sayre Street, 1948 (Los Angeles Public Library).

By the post-World War II period, areas to the south of the hospital, which were located in the neighborhood of Sylmar in the city limits of Los Angeles, began to suburbanize. Small farmsteads and agricultural plots increasingly gave way to new suburban neighborhoods of single-family tract houses. However, growth abruptly stopped at the northern city limit. Past the northern city limit, the unincorporated strip of County land directly abutting the foothills remained undeveloped, aside from the construction of retention basins and other flood control infrastructure.

In 1971, the Sylmar Earthquake jolted the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, resulting in widespread damage to buildings and infrastructure in communities throughout the San Fernando Valley and beyond. Significant portions of the hospital campus (known by this time as the San Fernando Valley Veterans Hospital) collapsed, resulting in the deaths of 49 of its patients and personnel.[108] The buildings' failure was attributed to their unreinforced concrete construction, as they had been built several years before the development of seismic engineering codes in the aftermath of the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake, which itself was a devastating temblor.[109] The extensively damaged hospital campus was demolished, and the land was given by the federal government to the County of Los Angeles.[110]





Figures 27 and 28. Damaged concrete buildings at the hospital campus, 1971 (Los Angeles Times; Los Angeles Public Library).

On the site of the razed hospital, the County of Los Angeles developed a 96-acre public park. Named Veterans Memorial Park, the facility was lushly landscaped with grass and trees, and also featured trails and a nature center.[111] The park was dedicated in September 1977, and continues to serve the surrounding community. Located at the park is a small plaque, installed in 1979, which pays tribute to those whose lives were lost when the hospital collapsed.[112]



Figure 29. Veterans Memorial Park, 1977 (CSUN University Library, Digital Collections).

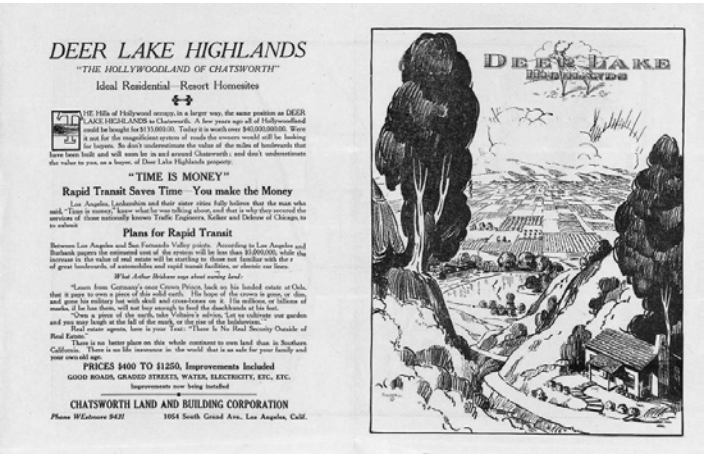
107 Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection, "United States Veteran's Bureau Hospital, San Fernando," online, accessed Sept. 2024.
108 "In Memoriam," Los Angeles Times, Sept. 22, 1977.
109 Sonja Sharp, "Housing Crisis for Vets Began With Long-Ago Jolt," Los Angeles Times.
110 "In Memoriam," Los Angeles Times, Sept. 22, 1977.
111 "160-Acre Park Named for Fire Crew to Open Nov. 1," Los Angeles Times, Oct. 24, 1976.
112 "Veterans Memorial Park," Los Angeles Times, May 27, 1996.

Twin Lakes/Oat Mountain

Prior to the early decades of the twentieth century, the area now known as Twin Lakes/Oat Mountain consisted of rural, undeveloped acreage amid a backdrop of craggy sandstone outcroppings. Located about a mile north of the small agricultural town of Chatsworth, the area was remote, difficult to access, and far removed from Los Angeles and other established population centers.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, two stone dams were built in the canyons above Chatsworth to augment the supply of water to nearby farmers and landowners. One dam was located at Browns Canyon; the second was located at Devil Canyon.[113] These dams formed two small reservoirs, which were fed by creeks that descended from the Santa Susana Mountains above.

But aside from water infrastructure, the area remained undeveloped on account of its remote location and its rugged landscape, which were not conducive to conventional modes of development or agriculture. When most of the San Fernando Valley was annexed by the City of Los Angeles in 1915, the area fell just outside of the annexation boundaries, meaning that it lacked access to Los Angeles' municipal water supply. Rather, early settlement in the hills above Chatsworth was limited to the formation of about four dozen homesteads by a handful of intrepid pioneers[114]. The area that would become Twin Lakes was occupied by three homesteads: those owned by Tavner Myers (established 1917), George Haight (1918), and Newel Asay (1923), whose holdings collectively comprised 369 acres.[115]


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CHATSWORTH LAND AND BUILDING CORPORATION

Figure 30. Sales brochure for Deer Lake Highlands, 1927 (Chatsworth Historical Society).



Figure 31. Advertising brochure for Twin Lakes Park, ca. 1927 (CSUN University Library, Digital Collections).

The seeds of the Twin Lakes community were sown in 1926. That year, an organization called the Chatsworth Land and Building Company filed a subdivision map for a new community named Deer Lake Highlands, which was located in the foothills about one mile north of Chatsworth; additional units were added to the subdivision into 1927. Deer Lake Highlands was marketed as a resort community, suited to small weekend cabins and recreational improvements. Deer Lake Highlands comprised 2,624 parcels, most measuring 30 feet wide and 80 feet deep – considerably smaller than the average residential lot.[116] The subdivision was accessed via a narrow bridge that traveled over the existing dam at Devil Canyon.

In 1927, a Boy Scout cabin was built at Deer Lake Highlands. Construction of the cabin was privately financed by residents of several local San Fernando Valley communities, and was constructed by members of a local chapter of the American Legion.[117] The cabin consisted of a large living room, fireplace, and kitchen.

Also in 1927, a second subdivision was recorded in the hills north of Chatsworth, on former homestead land to the immediate south of Deer Lake Highlands. The development was called Twin Lakes Park, so named for the two man-made reservoirs that had been created by the construction of the Browns Canyon and Devil Canyon dams. Like the Deer Lake Highlands tract, Twin Lakes Park was subdivided into 816 small residential lots averaging 30 feet wide by 75 feet deep. The subdivision was organized around a curvilinear network of narrow streets that responded to the topography of the area.

Twin Lakes Park was intended to have a Mayan theme.

113 Chatsworth Historical Society, "Twin Lakes Park & Deer Lake Highlands History," presentation, Oct. 19, 2021.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
116 "New Mountain Tract Opened," Los Angeles Times, Mar. 18, 1928.
117 "Scout Cabin to be Finished Soon," Van Nuys News, Oct. 25, 1927; "Scouts Hike to New Cabin Site," Van Nuys News, Nov. 29, 1927.





Figures 32 and 33. Views of the Mayan-themed entrance arch (left) and tract office (right), 1927 (UC Santa Barbara Art Museum, Architecture and Design Collection).

The English-born architect Robert Stacy-Judd, a key exponent of exotic Mayan and Aztec-inspired architectural movements in the 1920s, was selected to design several buildings and site improvements for Twin Lakes Park. Stacy-Judd designed a Mayan style tract office (also called the Administration Building or Observation Building) overlooking Raymond Lake, which was the name of the lower lake at Browns Canyon. He also designed a large Mayan-inspired entrance arch at the primary entrance to the development, which was located off of Santa Susana Pass Road adjacent to the site of the Iverson Movie Ranch. The arch announced the primary entrance to the development. A handful of Mayan Revival style model homes were constructed to visually convey the architectural vocabulary of the community.

To access Twin Lakes Park, motorists would enter through the arch and up Mayan Drive, a private access road. Mayan Drive was flanked by rugged boulders and sandstone outcroppings, and passed by an iconic filming location on the Iverson Ranch called Garden of the Gods. "Fishing, boating and swimming in the lakes, recreational facilities in a canyon playground, and a community clubhouse are features" of the community that were intended to attract prospective buyers.

Twin Lakes Park was advertised as an accessible weekend retreat for Angelenos seeking respite from the bustle of urban life. Advertisement for the community touted its proximity to urbanized areas – it was only 25 miles north of Hollywood, and 30 miles west of Pasadena – and its reasonably-priced cabin parcels, which were sold for as little as $100. As noted in an article published in the Los Angeles Times:

> The plans call for the development of the property into small units, so that the man of moderate means may secure a site here on which to build a cabin, where he and his family, for the outlay of a comparatively small sum of money, may have a retreat to which they can go when they wish to escape from the rush and the bustle of the city.[118]

However, the timing of the Twin Lakes Park community was not particularly fortuitous. Just two years after the tract was subdivided and its lots were put up for sale, the 1929 Stock Market Crash sent shockwaves through the economy, led to a significant reduction in private development, and resulted in the worst and most prolonged period of economic hardship in the nation's history.



Figure 34. Mayan Drive, the road to Twin Lakes Park, ca. 1937 (Los Angeles Public Library).

As a result, Twin Lakes Park did not come to full fruition in the manner that its developers had hoped for. Development activity was restricted to but a few improvements: the layout of the streets, the construction of the Stacy-Judd-designed entrance gate and administration building, and the construction of a handful of model houses and modest cabins. Otherwise, its acreage remained barren and

118 Chance to Get Outdoors Provided at Twin Lakes," Hollywood Daily Citizen, May 28, 1927.



Figure 35. Boaters in Twin Lakes Park, n.d. (Chatsworth Historical Society).

undeveloped, as did the adjacent Deer Lake Highlands subdivision to the north.

Complicating matters were allegations of fraud, which were lodged against the developers of both tracts by disaffected buyers. In 1928, more than two dozen individuals accused the developers of Deer Lake Highlands of participating in an unethical scheme of "unlawful high pressure relay salesmanship."[119] According to the complaint, the Chatsworth Building Company held a sham competition and told participants they had won a cash prize, which was contingent on the sale of lots in the remote and unimproved subdivision.[120] Other complainants alleged that the company had awarded them a free membership to a promised country club that was never built, provided that they bought a lot, and yet others accused the developers of a bait-and-switch scheme in which they were told that they had "won" a free lot, only to be subsequently informed that to claim their "prize," they were required to make a down payment in addition to monthly installments.[121] The plaintiffs in these various cases all alleged that they were swindled into purchasing useless property in the Deer Lake Highlands subdivision under false pretenses.

Similar allegations were brought against the developers of Twin Lakes Park. In 1933, twelve purchasers of land in the subdivision filed a lawsuit against the Twin Lakes Park Company, alleging that they were sold land whose value was artificially inflated, and paid annual dues for improvements that were promised but never completed. The lawsuit alleged that the developers "organized to sell for $107,000 'rough, dry, brush-covered and worthless mountain lands' whose value should not have exceeded $5000, on the representation that they would beautify the property by construction of roads, maintenance of boating and fishing lakes, and establishment of stores and dining rooms."[122] By the time the lawsuit was filed in 1933, the plaintiffs complained that the development's lakes had been drained and "allowed to deteriorate into a 'dreary waste,'" and that the tract manager "had made himself disagreeable by ejecting guests from the cabins of lot purchasers."[123] A court-appointed receiver was ultimately appointed to arbitrate the dispute between the plaintiffs and the developer.

119 "New Realty Fraud Scheme Charged," The Oakland Post Enquirer, Nov. 27, 1928.
120 Ibid.
121 "'Free' Lot Deal Brings Action," Los Angeles Times, Sept. 15, 1928; "Probe of Realty Concern is Asked," The Sacramento Union, Sept. 14, 1928.
122 "Haight, Others Sued on Land Sales; Receiver Naming Asked," Daily News, Sept. 29, 1933.
123 Ibid.

The Los Angeles Times, in 1933, reported that one of the dams at Twin Lakes was damaged, causing a breach that resulted in the draining of one of the two manmade lakes. While it was possible that the dam sustained damage from the natural flow of water, those who were investigating the incident were looking "into the possibility of disgruntled land purchasers causing the escape of the water, used for boating and swimming. A considerable portion of the water flowed into a second reservoir a mile below."[124]

The Twin Lakes community remained isolated and very sparsely developed, but due to the economic ramifications of the Great Depression, home seekers increasingly looked to affordable, peripheral areas such as Twin Lakes Park as sites on which to build permanent houses. In 1931, an application for mail service was filed by 15 households who lived in the community. In 1935, a new fire station (Fire Station No. 75) was constructed on Mayan Drive to serve the small community of Twin Lakes and its outlying areas, which by virtue of their remote, mountainous setting were extremely susceptible to wildfires.[125]

Not especially advantageous to community development, investors looked to the area as a site for potential other uses. In 1933, an oil well was drilled near Deer Lake Highlands; however, no oil was found, and the well was plugged in 1937.[126]

By 1940, there were approximately 60 houses in the Twin Lakes area, including four dozen in the Twin Lakes Park subdivision and another two dozen homes in the Deer Lake Highlands subdivision.[127] The two portions of the community were connected by an existing ten-foot-wide bridge that crossed over the Devil Canyon Dam. Both of the lakes had dried up by the late 1940s; Raymond Lake (to the south) went dry following a drought in approximately 1947, and at about the same time, the upper lake (to the north) was drained after the Devil Canyon Dam was opened, allowing water to flow out and into channels below.[128] The two lakes have been dry ever since, though their depressions and imprints are still visible.

In the years immediately after World War II, the community experienced some nominal new development; by 1957, it was reported that there were about 65 houses in the Twin Lakes community, a slight uptick from previous years.[129] By this time, however, the community was encountering severe problems with the quantity and quality of its water, which was supplied by local wells. In the early 1950s, residents of Twin Lakes frequently complained of the muddy or murky quality of the water, or that they sometimes did not have access to water at all.[130] In 1957, the State Public Utilities Commission responded to these complaints by ordering the Twin Lakes Park company to improve the local water supply by rehabilitating existing wells and installing new equipment to ensure the provision of potable water.[131] Conditions did not improve. A bond was subsequently issued with the Las Virgenes Water District to build a new water tank that would supply water to the Twin Lakes community.[132]

To the north of Twin Lakes, the rural area of Oat Mountain was selected by the United States Army as the site of an anti-ballistic missile base as part of Project Nike, an air defense system that was designed to protect against a Soviet nuclear attack. It was one of 16 Nike missile bases around the Los Angeles metropolitan area that were collectively known as the "Ring of Fire," and stood as powerful symbols of national defense during the Cold War.[133] The Oat Mountain facility, which was officially known as Site LA-88, was completed in 1956, and was the last of the 16 Los Angeles-area bases to be completed. Its construction proved to be a complicated endeavor, given the area's rugged topography and its extremely remote location, which could only be accessed from a single road through Browns Canyon.

The site was a technologically sophisticated facility that consisted of three key components: the Integrated Fire Control (IFC), the Launcher area, and the Administration area. The IFC, which occupied about six acres, "contained radar control systems to detect incoming targets and to direct the missiles, along with computer systems to plot and direct the intercept."[134] The Launcher Area, which occupied about 40 acres, included underground missile magazines; the Administration area included administrative and support facilities including the battery headquarters, dormitories, and mess and recreation halls.[135]

124 "Emptying Reservoir Mysterious," Los Angeles Times, Mar. 10, 1933.
125 Chatsworth Historical Society, "Twin Lakes Park & Deer Lake Highlands History," presentation, Oct. 19, 2021.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 "Twin Lakes Area Water Plan Urged," Valley Times, Jan. 23, 1957.
131 "Twin Lakes Good Water Order Filed,'" Citizen News, Mar. 27, 1957.
132 Chatsworth Historical Society, "Twin Lakes Park & Deer Lake Highlands History," presentation, Oct. 19, 2021.
133 "16 Nike Batteries Protect Southland From Air Attack," Los Angeles Mirror, Apr. 29, 1957.
134 Nike Historical Society, "History of LA-88, Chatsworth, California," online, Oct. 2022, accessed Sept. 2024.
135 Ibid.



Figure 36. Opening of Nike Site LA-88, 1956 (Los Angeles Public Library).

Site LA-88 was decommissioned in 1974. County officials subsequently explored various options to repurpose the 33-acre site for a compatible new use, none of which came to fruition. A feasibility study which looked at converting the site into a public park concluded that this idea had "limited potential," and that the costs associated with such a project would far exceed the public benefit.[136] The County also explored acquiring the former missile base and reusing the existing dormitories, administration buildings, mess hall, and service structures for use as a juvenile probation camp providing short-term treatment for up to 60 delinquent boys.[137] That plan was also found to be infeasible.



Figure 37. Twin Lakes, 1976 (Chatsworth Historical Society).

In the 1970s, a series of fires destroyed many of the buildings in the Twin Lakes community. "About half of the 60 homes in the isolated rural community were destroyed in the Newhall-Malibu fire of September, 1970," and another fire threatened the isolated rural community in November 1975.[138] In 1978, the County determined that the only access road to areas north of the dry lakes, a ten-foot-wide private bridge on top of the dam at Devil Canyon, was unsafe for heavy fire equipment, and that the fire department would not be able to access the area in case of emergencies, hindering additional development in the area. Fire captains, in correspondence addressed to property owners north of the dam, stated that fire officials "will not drive any vehicle heavier than a one-ton pickup truck on the north side of the bridge. This will limit our emergency operations in your area to small fire and rescue situations."[139]

In 1975, the City of Los Angeles proposed to develop a 440-acre landfill in Browns Canyon, just north of the Twin Lakes community. The proposal was criticized by area residents, who expressed concern about the noxious qualities of proposal landfill and the risks that its presence would impose on their rural way of life. Ultimately, plans to develop the landfill were rejected by the Los Angeles City Council.[140]

Since the 1980s, development in the Twin Lakes area has consisted of contemporary residential subdivisions. In 1985, Eugene Kilmer, a real estate developer and the father of motion picture star Val Kilmer, subdivided a 500-acre boulder-studded ranch to the west of Twin Lakes into a prestigious residential community, which he proposed to develop into a neighborhood of large estates.[141] Kilmer's vision for the subdivision, which he called Indian Springs Estates, was for it to be "the Bel Air of the Valley."[142] Indian Springs Estates consisted of estate-sized lots, most of which were between two and four acres, and was located behind gates that controlled access to the upscale community. Purchasers of lots were bound by certain restrictions: new houses could not be smaller than 4,000 square feet, and improvements were required to "be of estate quality" and were subjected to architectural review.[143] The subdivision was developed with houses meeting these strict requirements beginning in the mid-1980s.

The most recent development in the Twin Lakes area is

136 "Nike Site Unsuited for Park," The Signal, Apr. 7, 1975.
137 Ibid.
138 Martha L. Willman, "Twin Lakes Private Bridge Found Unsafe," Los Angeles Times, Jun. 8, 1978.
139 Ibid.
140 Chatsworth Historical Society, "Twin Lakes Park & Deer Lake Highlands History," presentation, Oct. 19, 2021.
141 "Chatsworth Ranch to be New Estates," Los Angeles Times, Dec.2, 1984.
142 "Eugene D. Kilmer: Industrialist, Developer," Los Angeles Times, Apr. 30, 1993.
143 "Indian Springs Estates Features Custom Home Sites of 2-4 Acres," Los Angeles Times, Sept. 21, 1985.

a master-planned community called Deerlake Ranch, which comprises 260 acres to the north of the former lake at Devil Creek. The new development is located on what was previously the north section of the Twin Lakes Park subdivision, as well as the entirety of the Deer Lake Highlands subdivision. Still under construction, it will contain 314 single-family houses and various community amenities at completion, organized into multiple units known as "villages."[144] Development of Deerlake Ranch has resulted in area improvements, including the realignment of Poema Place, construction of a northern extension of Canoga Avenue, construction of new vehicular bridges over Devil Creek, and repurposing of the old bridge over Devil Creek into a multi-use equestrian, hiking, and mountain biking trail.

West Chatsworth

The earliest Americans to settle in the West Chatsworth area were homesteaders, who came to the remote area following the passage of the Homestead Act of 1862. Beginning in the mid-1860s, dozens of homesteads were established in the hills to the north and west of what would later become Chatsworth. Two of the larger homesteads that occupied West Chatsworth were owned by Francesca Domec and Charles Woolsey. Domec's homestead occupied most of what is now Chatsworth Lake Manor; Woolsey's occupied the area now known as Woolsey Canyon.[145]

A pivotal event in the area's development history occurred in 1917, when the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power began construction of a large municipal reservoir in a valley west of Chatsworth. It was one of 19 water retention basins to store and manage water supplied by the recently-completed Los Angeles Aqueduct. Originally called the Chatsworth Reservoir, the reservoir was created by the construction of two dams, and when it was placed into service in 1919 it was the principal water storage facility in the western San Fernando Valley.[146] The reservoir was often used as a filming location, particularly for Western films, on account of its rugged landscape, mature oak trees, and other natural features that could pass as an extremely rural setting, despite its proximity to Hollywood and its major studios.



Figure 38. Chatsworth Reservoir, ca. 1925 (Los Angeles Public Library).

Development of the Chatsworth Lake Manor community dates to the 1920s. Between 1926 and 1927, subdivision maps were filed for the Chatsworth Lake Manor tract, which was located in the unincorporated area to the north of the Los Angeles city limits and south of the Ventura County line.[147] The tract consisted of small lots for the construction of cabins, which were organized around a network of narrow private access roads. The tract was conceived and subdivided by the P.D. Estate Company, a reference to the estate of Pierre Domec, an early landowner and homesteader in the area.



Figure 39. Tract map of Chatsworth Lake Manor, 1927 (Los Angeles County Department of Public Works).

Newspaper advertisements for the development began appearing in early 1927. They advertised "mountain home sites," located amid a natural backdrop of majestic oak trees and the Chatsworth Reservoir. Lots were substandard in size – most measured only 25 feet wide by 70 feet

144 "Foremost Companies Announces Development Underway on Prime 230-Acre Deerlake Ranch Master-Planned Community in L.A. Metro," Business Wire, May 22, 2019.
145 Chatsworth Historical Society, "Chatsworth Lake Manor," presentation, Sept. 16, 2014.
146 Work Is Stated on Gigantic New Reservoir for Aqueduct," Los Angeles Times, November 4, 1917.
147 Subdivision maps RS023-037, RS024-004, and RS024-005, accessed via the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works.

deep, much smaller than the average residential lot – and were intended to be developed with mountain cabins by urban dwelling Angelenos seeking a rural getaway.[148] The peripheral community was also marketed as a health retreat upon the discovery of natural mineral springs on the property.[149]

Lots were sold for the highly affordable sums of either $25, $35, or $50. A promotional brochure for the development, undated but believed to be from the late 1920s, waxed poetic about the natural scenery and opportunities for recreation that came with purchasing a lot:

> Spend your vacation and your idle hours on your own cabin site where the cool, pure, God-given air, the hunting, hiking, and numerous other outdoor sports will send you back to your everyday life better men, women, and children. You owe it to yourself as well as to your little tots. You will never regret it. Plenty of loose stone to make a rock cabin, free.[150]

Early development in the community consisted of a handful of small cabins that were constructed on the small parcels. Water was initially supplied to the lots by a well in nearby Box Canyon, which was piped down to the community and filled the tanks of property owners.[151] Land sales were managed from a small tract office on the community's main road, which is believed to have been constructed in the 1920s and resembled a log cabin. (It is now the Log Cabin Mercantile).[152]

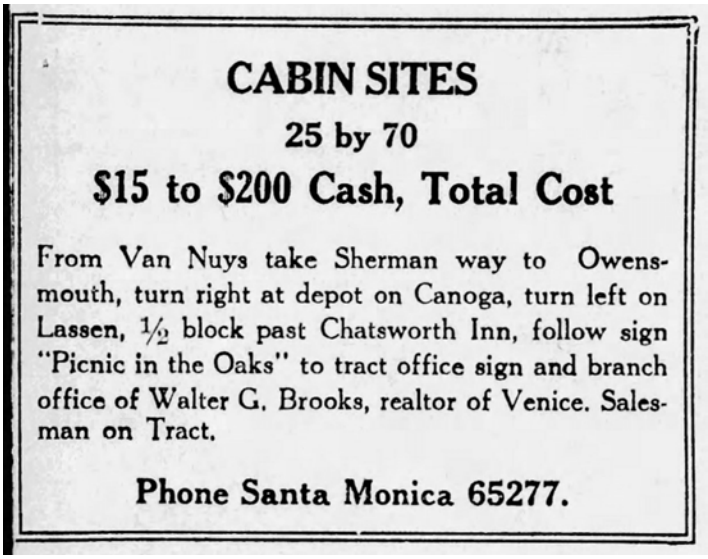


Figure 40. Advertisement for the Chatsworth Lake Manor development, 1927 (Pasadena Evening Post).

To entice prospective buyers, the developers behind Chatsworth Lake Manor advertised the availability of recreational amenities. In 1930, it was advertised that "a new dance pavilion will be opened to the public" at a new recreational venue called the Chatsworth Lake Manor Country Club. Interested parties were implored to "go to Chatsworth Dam, then to the hills and follow the signs" to partake in the festivities.[153]

Like other retreat communities such as Kagel Canyon and Twin Lakes Park, the early heyday of Chatsworth Lake Manor was short-lived. The onset of the Great Depression stymied sales, and only a small handful of weekend cabins were erected in the hillside enclave. The community witnessed some nominal growth in the 1930s and early 1940s, as several new single-family houses were constructed on sites that had previously been subdivided for cabins that were never built en masse. The fledgling community was served by a small market, which remained a local pillar until it was destroyed by fire in the 1970s.

Chatsworth Lake Manor continued to develop albeit at a slow place. Its sparsely-developed blocks were incrementally infilled with new single-family houses, and new local commercial and institutional uses were also opened to serve the needs of the growing community. In 1949, the Chatsworth Lake Community Church was formally dedicated. In 1952, a tavern called the Silver Dollar Saloon opened on Lake Manor Drive, and in 1966 a small restaurant and bar opened down the street.[154] In 1969, Fire Station No. 75, which was originally located on Mayan Drive in the nearby Twin Lakes community, was relocated to a new site on Lake Manor Drive to accommodate grading and construction of the State Route 118 Freeway through the Santa Susana Pass. The fire station was a much-welcomed addition to the small community, which on account of its location was highly susceptible to wildfire damage.

However, apart from several dozen houses and a few neighborhood-oriented commercial and institutional uses, Chatsworth Lake Manor "remained mostly undeveloped through the 1970s." Those who chose to settle in the area typically did so because they were drawn to its rural setting. "I moved here to get away from all the bustle down below," said a resident of Chatsworth Lake Manor who was interviewed by the Los Angeles Times and had first arrived in the area in 1951.[155] "It's away from the city. It's very quiet.

148 Classified Ads, Daily News, Jan. 18, 1927 and Feb. 23, 1927.
149 "Therapeutic Springs Discovered Honest Dealing Stressed: Plan Made to Establish New Health Resort," Los Angeles Times, Apr. 24, 1927.
150 Chatsworth Historical Society, "Chatsworth Lake Manor," presentation, Sept. 16, 2014.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 "Dance Prizes, Chatsworth Lake Manor Country Club," The Van Nuys News, Nov. 7, 1930.
154 Chatsworth Historical Society, "Chatsworth Lake Manor," presentation, Sept. 16, 2014.
155 Julio Moran, "Weekday Getaway: Chatsworth Lake Residents Avoid Congestion of City Life," Los Angeles Times, Dec. 5, 1994.





Figures 41 and 42. Brochure for cabin sites in the hills above Chatsworth, ca. 1920s (Chatsworth Historical Society).

You don't hear any car noises or police sirens. It's like being out in the country, but yet the city is really close," remarked another resident.[156]

The aerospace industry weighed heavily in the development of the San Fernando Valley after World War II. The Santa Susana Field Laboratory facility, though located in Ventura County, was located in proximity to Chatsworth Lake Manor. Opened in 1947 as Rocketdyne, the facility spanned 2,668 acres, and consisted of industrial buildings that were used for the development and testing of rocket engines, liquid metals, and nuclear reactors.[157] Its presence drew new residents to Chatsworth Lake Manor and other communities in the west San Fernando Valley. The facility continued to operate at this location until 2006, and over the span of its history was the site of accidents including a partial meltdown of nuclear reactors in 1959. The site became contaminated with chemicals and nuclear byproducts that continue to affect the community into the present day.

The pace of new development began to pick up in the 1980s, by which time most of the San Fernando Valley had been built out and home seekers cast their sights further out into the periphery. Development continued to consist almost entirely of individually-built single-family houses, but compared to the existing stock of modest dwellings in the area these newer houses tended to be larger in size, drawing complaints that they were out of scale with the community's prevailing rural character. "Many of the small lots were combined to accommodate larger houses for more affluent residents" at this time. By the early 1990s, there were about 500 houses and 2,000 residents within the community.[158]

To the west, further up into mountains along Woolsey Canyon Road, additional residential development was accommodated with the development of mobile home parks. Two mobile home communities, known as Mountain View Village and The Summit, were graded and developed beginning in 1977, with construction continuing through the early 1980s.



Figure 43. Equipment at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory, 1956 (NASA).

156 Ibid.
157 Chatsworth Historical Society, "The History of Burro Flats, Rocketdyne and the SSFL," presentation, Jun. 30, 2020.
158 Ibid.

In 1991, the County of Los Angeles announced its intent to close Fire Station No. 75 on Lake Manor Drive. Closure of the fire station was proposed to reduce the County's operating budget amid an $11-million shortfall, and County officials contended that the residents of Chatsworth Lake Manor "could be adequately protected by three city Fire Department stations located two to four miles away from the center of the community."[159] However, plans to close the station – one of the few institutional uses in the small community – drew the ire of local residents, many of whom had lived through wildfires that had ravaged the mountains west of Chatsworth in previous years. They worried that without a local fire station, that area residents would be insufficiently protected from the threats imposed by fires and other natural disasters. The community advocates prevailed, and the fire station remained open. It continues to operate at its location on Lake Manor Drive, and continues to be a focal point of the community.

Like other peripheral communities at the far edges of the San Fernando Valley, West Chatsworth has experienced a number of devastating fires. Notably, the Woolsey Fire in 2018 burned almost 100,000 acres of chapparal-studded land near Chatsworth Lake Manor area and resulted in widespread damage.

Westhills

In 1915, almost all of the San Fernando Valley was annexed by the City of Los Angeles, following completion of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. The area remained under private ownership, with most of the land used as a dairy ranch operated by George E. Platt. Roughly 230 acres were acquired by Frank Knapp, Jr., who named the land Dry Gulch Ranch and inadvertently discovered oil while sinking a water well near the west end of Vanowen Street. Additional oil wells were drilled at Dry Gulch Ranch, though they resulted in the extraction of only a few gallons of oil. Eleven of the oil wells are extant and are vestiges of Knapp's discovery. Eventually, most of this area was consolidated into the City of Los Angeles, which annexed most of the area in 1958. The annexation pushed the city limits of Los Angeles west to Valley Circle Boulevard and facilitated the development of new subdivisions in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Canoga Park.

Westhills is located to the immediate west of the former Rancho El Escorpion, between the Los Angeles city limit and the Los Angeles/Ventura county line. Given its peripheral setting at the far west end of the San Fernando Valley, it did not witness development until well into the post-World War II period. Its development consisted of three phases between the mid-1960s and early 1980s, as detailed in the subsequent paragraphs.



Figure 43. Rancho El Escorpion prior to subdivision, ca. 1947 (CSUN University Library, Digital Collections).

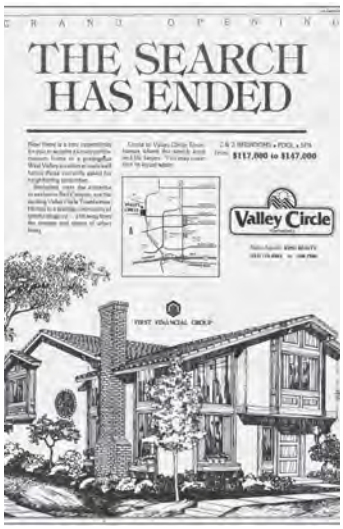
The first phase of development in Westhills commenced in 1965, when developers Spielman and Fond announced plans to subdivide the peripheral pocket of unincorporated land into a residential neighborhood of 175 single-family suburban houses. The development was named Westhills.[160] Four model homes for the development, which were designed by architect Abraham Shapiro and Associates of Los Angeles, opened for public inspection in March 1966.[161] The subdivision was built out by 1969.

Westhills typified suburban development patterns of the postwar period. The subdivision was organized around an insular network of curvilinear streets, and homes were offered in various plans and with multiple amenities: "atrium entries, one or two fireplaces, sliding glass doors, master bedroom suites with walk-in closets and balanced power kitchens."[162] Each came with a yard and an attached garage.

At the same time, a municipal park was developed on a vacant site in proximity to the new Westhills subdivision, on the south side of Kittridge Street. The site was acquired by the City of Los Angeles in 1963 to provide additional parkland in the rapidly-suburbanizing western San Fernando Valley. The previous owner, Frank Knapp, Jr., sold the land at a discounted price with the condition that the new park be named in honor of his son, who was killed in World War II. Known as Knapp Ranch Park, the site was improved using money from state bonds and was dedicated in 1968. Though it is located in, and operated by, the City of Los Angeles, Knapp Ranch Park has been an important institutional focal point for residents of the adjacent Westhills

159 Amy Louise Kazmin, "Residents Get Fired Up Over Plan to Close County Fire Station," Los Angeles Times, Feb. 7, 1991.
160 "Westhills New Name of Tract," Los Angeles Times, Nov. 7, 1965.
161 "Westhills Goes on View Today," Los Angeles Times, Mar. 20, 1966.
162 Ibid.





Figures 44 and 45. Advertisements for the Westhills subdivision (left), 1966, and the Valley Circle Townhomes (right), 1983 (Los Angeles Times).

development and has long been an important part of its community character.

In 1978, a tract map was filed for a second subdivision in the unincorporated area, at the southwest corner of Valley Circle Boulevard and Vanowen Street. This development consisted of 43 single-family suburban houses arranged around one street, Corie Lane, which terminated in a cul-de-sac. The Sunnyglen Corporation developed the tract, and architect Red Moltz and Associates of Newport Beach designed the houses.

The second Westhills tract opened in October 1979. Prospective buyers could choose from one of five floor plans, ranging in size from 1,800 to 2,657 square feet. Features included "vaulted ceilings, one or two wood-burning fireplaces, formal dining rooms and family rooms. Master bedrooms have walk-in closets and one plan offers a retreat area."[163] All of the homes within the tract had been sold by 1980.[164]

In 1982, a remaining tract of unincorporated County land at the northwest corner of Valley Circle Boulevard and Vanowen Street was subdivided for condominium development. The complex, which was developed by the First Financial Group, was built in 1983. Marketed as the Valley Circle Townhomes, it comprised 52 townhome units with four floor plans, which were designed by the architectural firm of Robbins and Bown. Design features included "rosette windows, brick fireplace with tiled hearths, tiled entries, skylights, cathedral ceilings, and luminous kitchen ceilings." Residents were also given access to shared amenities including a pool, spa, and basketball and tennis courts.[165]

On the south side of Vanowen Street was a small, wedge-shaped parcel that had been carved out of the adjacent townhome complex. In 1984, construction began on a small strip mall on the site, which was called Valley Circle Plaza and would contain nine retail units; however, construction was halted when it was discovered that the permit had been issued in error. According to County zoning officials, "a staff member consulted an out-of-date zoning map...[which] failed to show current zoning, which includes extra building setback requirements and mandates a public hearing before any permits are issued."[166] A conditional use permit was ultimately issued in December 1984, which imposed restrictions on the mall's operating hours and prohibited the operation of liquor stores, fast food outlets, and mini markets.[167]

Given its adjacency to abundant open space and undeveloped mountainous terrain, Westhills - like many of the unincorporated communities of the San Fernando Valley - is in an area highly susceptible to wildfires. The threat of wildfires has long been a defining feature of the Westhills community, which is only accessible by a single vehicular road (Kittridge Street), leaving the community with but a single evacuation route.

163 Ibid.
164 Display Ad, Los Angeles Times, Jul. 10, 1983..
165 Ibid; "Housing Developments Approaching Sellout," Los Angeles Times, May 27, 1984.
166 "Canoga Park," Los Angeles Times, Feb. 9, 1984.
167 "Operation of Shop Complex Limited," Los Angeles Times, Dec. 22, 1984.

4.5. HISTORIC THEMES

Compared to many of the other of unincorporated areas in Los Angeles County located in more urbanized environments, the San Fernando Valley Planning Area consists largely of wilderness and undeveloped open space. Development within the Planning Area is limited to several small communities, each with its own developmental history and character. Nonetheless, there are a number of broad themes that are applicable to extant built resources in all of the aforementioned communities in the Planning Area. These historic themes are summarized in the table below, and are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Summary Table of Historic Themes:

THEME	SUB-THEME
Residential Development	• Homesteads • Early Single-Family Residential Development • Post-World War II Single-Family Residential Development • Subdivisions and Planned Communities
Commercial Development	
Civic and Institutional Development	• Religion and Spirituality • Government Services • Health and Medicine • Parks and Recreation
Industrial Development	• Filming and Entertainment • Military Operations and Civil Defense
Agricultural Development	

Theme: Residential Development

Sub-Theme: Homesteads

The earliest Americans to settle in the Planning Area were homesteaders who took advantage of the chance to buy government-owned land under the auspices of the Homestead Act. Signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862, the Homestead Act was legislation that allowed private citizens to settle, or "homestead," up to 160 acres of public land provided that certain conditions were met: specifically, homesteaders had to "live on the land, build a home, make improvements, and farm for five years."[168]

Areas falling outside of the San Fernando Valley's privately-owned rancho lands or the limits of incorporated cities like San Fernando, Burbank, and Los Angeles were generally public lands that were available for homesteading. Dozens of homesteads were created in the far reaches of the San Fernando Valley in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Generally, these homesteads occupied rugged terrain that lacked a reliable water supply and thus, were ill-suited for agriculture or other income-producing land uses. Specifically, homesteads were etched across the areas that would later develop into Kagel/Lopez Canyons, Twin Lakes/Oat Mountain, and West Chatsworth.

Homesteads were typically anchored by a small house, which served as the primary residence of its owner, and were surrounded by large tracts of peripheral land. Occasionally, homesteaders would experiment with dry farming which required minimal water, but more often they would file claims for mining rights and attempt to extract natural resources from the earth. In the West Chatsworth area, homesteader Pierre Domec used his land to extract lime, which was used for various purposes including as mortar in brick construction, for the tanning of cattle hides, and for sanitation.[169] Remnants of a calera, or limestone kiln, associated with the Domec homestead are extant (but are located within the Los Angeles city limits, just outside the boundaries of the Planning Area). Domec also erected an adobe house on his homestead, which was located in the vicinity of the present-day Chatsworth Lake Church.

In the Kagel Canyon area, Henry Kagel similarly established a homestead in the late nineteenth century and filed mining claims for a swath of public land in a canyon north of San Fernando. Kagel also constructed a small adobe house near the center of his homestead, which has been altered but is extant and is believed to be the oldest building in the Kagel/Lopez Canyons community.

168 Chatsworth Historical Society, "Chatsworth Lake Manor," presentation, Sept. 16, 2014.
169 Ibid.

Sub-Theme: Early Single-Family Residential Development

Three communities at opposite corners of the Planning Area – Kagel Canyon, Twin Lakes, and West Chatsworth – share the common origin story of being subdivided in the 1920s as weekend retreats. The subdivision and formation of these retreat communities corresponded with a period of Southern California history that was marked by economic prosperity and punctuated by remarkable development and physical growth beyond the traditional confines of the city.

The Kagel Canyon Park tract (also known as El Merrie Del) was subdivided in 1923. Two retreat communities (Deer Lake Highlands and Twin Lakes Park) were subdivided in the Twin Lakes area in 1925 and 1926, respectively; and Chatsworth Lake Manor was subdivided in 1927. Though they were subdivided and planned by different developmental entities, all of these communities shared a cadre of common physical characteristics. Specifically, they were parsed into a series of diminutive lots that were intended to accommodate small cabins but were generally too small to accommodate full-size houses or other common residential building types. Often, lots were etched onto a paper subdivision map but in actuality were unbuildable because of the surrounding topography. The subdivisions were oriented around a series of narrow, privately-owned streets that adhered to the contours of the surrounding landscape, rather than in accordance with a rectilinear grid. All were marketed as affordable weekend getaways for city-dwelling Angelenos, who were promised a variety of on-site recreational amenities.

All were also beset by overly ambitious development forecasts and the economic devastation of the Great Depression. As a result, none of these communities were developed as planned. However, in Kagel Canyon, Twin Lakes, and West Chatsworth some of the lots were purchased and developed with small cabins between the mid-1920s and 1930s, some of which are extant. In most cases, these cabins took on a vernacular appearance that was consistent with the rural, rustic setting of their respective community. However, several of the early cabins in Twin Lakes were designed in accordance with a Mayan theme that characterized the enclave in its nascence.

Sub-Theme: Post-World War II Single-Family Residential Development

Most of the residential buildings in the Planning Area were built in the decades after World War II. By this time, Kagel/Lopez Canyons, Twin Lakes, and West Chatsworth had shed their earlier identities as weekend cabin retreats, and instead had become permanent, year-round communities. This shift began during the Great Depression, when the soured state of the economy led a number of individuals and households to purchase affordable plots of land on the far periphery of Los Angeles and construct modest dwellings. It intensified after World War II, when an acute housing shortage led to the rapid expansion of greater Los Angeles into areas that had previously been rural in character.

In the existing communities of Kagel/Lopez Canyons, Twin Lakes, and West Chatsworth, residential development after World War II consisted primarily of residential infill. Given the small size of the cabin lots in these communities, property owners would typically buy multiple lots and consolidate them to produce a suitable building site. On these sites, they would construct new detached single-family residences, which tended to be constructed on an individual basis and reflected the preferences of their owners. Compared to pre-World War II houses, these postwar houses tended to be larger in size.





Figures 46 and 47. Tract houses in the Westhills community.

Sub-Theme: Subdivisions and Planned Communities

The San Fernando Valley witnessed a tremendous amount of new suburban development in the decades after World War II, during which time its agricultural acreage was purchased by developers and subdivided into new neighborhoods. These new suburban neighborhoods took on a variety of architectural qualities and ranged from modest to upscale, but typically consisted of mass-produced tract houses that were built all at once and were nearly identical with respect to size, scale, style, and setback.

Because of the topography of communities like Kagel Canyon, Twin Lakes, and West Chatsworth, conventional patterns of postwar suburbanization could not be applied to most of the unincorporated Planning Area. It was more economical, and less logistically challenging, for area developers and merchant-builders to plan and build these mass-produced residential tracts in flatter areas of the San Fernando Valley.

One exception to this trend is the unincorporated community of Westhills. Located on gently sloping terrain at the base of the Simi Hills, this tract of former dairy land was suited to the larger-scale subdivision and mass production characteristic of postwar suburban developments. Westhills was subdivided into a tract of 175 suburban single-family houses in 1966, with additional houses constructed in the late 1970s.

Registration Requirements: Residential Development

Associated Property Types:

- Single-family residence;
- Historic district; and
- Planned residential community.

Eligibility Standards

- Has a direct and significant relationship to historic residential development patterns;
- Is an early or rare example of a residential property, and/or a rare vestige of early subdivision efforts and settlement patterns;
- Is the site of an event significant to the history of the nation, state, County, or community;
- Is/was the residence of a historically significant individual;
- May also be architecturally significant as an excellent or rare example of a style, type, period, or method of construction; and
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical significance.





Figures 48 and 49. Log Cabin Mercantile (left) and Chatsworth Lake Market (right), examples of commercial development in the West Chatsworth community.

Theme: Commercial Development

There is relatively little commercial development within the Planning Area. Most commercial development consists of small-scale commercial buildings that date to the 1920s and are occupied by independent businesses that have served their respective communities for generations. One example is a vernacular commercial building at the south end of Kagel Canyon, which was built in 1927 as a general store for the nascent community. It has served as a restaurant and bar called The Hideaway Bar and Grill (located at 12122 Kagel Canyon Road) since 1947. Another example is a retail store on Lake Manor Drive in West Chatsworth that resembles a log cabin. Although its exact construction date is not known, the building is believed to date to the 1920s as a real estate office. It is currently occupied by a local business called the Log Cabin Mercantile Company (located at 23300 Lake Manor Drive).

Other examples of commercial development are almost all concentrated along Lake Manor Drive in West Chatsworth. They consist of low-scale, freestanding commercial buildings that are occupied by neighborhood-oriented businesses including restaurants, markets, and retail stores. Most of the buildings along Lake Manor Drive are fronted by small surface parking lots and are accompanied by signage.

The rural character of the Planning Area is incongruent with large-scale shopping malls and commercial complexes. The lone exception to this pattern is the Valley Circle Plaza in Westhills (located at 24422-24434 Valley Circle Boulevard), a small commercial strip mall that was constructed in 1984. The permit to construct the mall was found to have been issued by mistake because of a clerical error, though after a protracted battle between the developer and nearby property owners, it was allowed to be built under a conditional use permit.

Registration Requirements: Commercial Development

Associated Property Types

- Retail building (restaurant, store, office)

Eligibility Standards

- Has a direct and significant relationship to historic commercial development patterns;
- Is an early or rare remaining example of a significant commercial property type;
- Is/was a longstanding business associated with the commercial identity of its respective community;
- Is/was associated with a historically significant business leader or merchant; and
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical significance.

Theme: Civic and Institutional Development

Sub-Theme: Religion and Spirituality



Figure 50. Chatsworth Lake Church.

There are relatively few churches and religious properties in the Planning Area. However, those that are present are important institutional anchors within their respective community. The community of Chatsworth Lake Manor is home to one church, the Chatsworth Lake Church (located at 23449 Lake Manor Drive). The seeds of the church were planted in the 1920s, when the congregation convened in a small tent on the site to hold worship services.[170] The present-day chapel building was dedicated in 1949, and its completion reflected the "labor, money and time contributed by men and women of many denominations."[171] It has since been a center of worship and fellowship among the local community. The chapel is a humble building that lacks architectural distinction and reflects the community's rural identity.

Elsewhere in the Planning Area, religion and spirituality are expressed not through churches but through other institutional property types. Near the center of Kagel Canyon (located at 13017 Lopez Canyon Road) is a Jewish cemetery called Sholom Memorial Park and Mortuary, which provides traditional Jewish mortuary services.[172] The property is located across the street from another cemetery, called Glen Haven Memorial Park, which shares a number of similar visual characteristics but is nondenominational. Both cemeteries opened in the mid-twentieth century and continue to be in operation.

Sub-Theme: Government Services

Government services in the Planning Area consist primarily of County-operated fire stations, a necessity given the area's mountainous setting and propensity for wildfire damage. There are two County fire stations within the Planning Area: one in Kagel Canyon, and another in Chatsworth Lake Manor. Both are important institutional anchors within their respective community.

County Fire Station No. 74 (located at 12587 Dexter Park Road) serves the Kagel Canyon community and surrounding areas. The current building was constructed in 1972, replacing an earlier fire station on the property that sustained extensive damage during the 1971 Sylmar Earthquake and was demolished.[173] Further west, County Fire Station No. 75 (located at 23310 Lake Manor Drive) serves the Chatsworth Lake Manor community and its surroundings. It has occupied the property since 1966, when a fire station in Twin Lakes was demolished to accommodate construction of State Route 118, and the facility was moved to a new site on Lake Manor Drive. The Chatsworth Lake Manor community organized to save the fire station in 1991 when it was slated for closure, and ultimately prevailed. Many of the local residents who protested the closure had lost homes to brush fires, and argued that "the station was an integral defense point against brush fires" in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.[174]

Sub-Theme: Health and Medicine

Some of the earliest institutional properties to be built in the Planning Area were hospitals. The construction of hospitals is believed to be associated with the rural setting of the area, and its access to nature and fresh air. Two hospitals dedicated to the treatment of tuberculosis were constructed at the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains in the early decades of the twentieth century, one private and one public. The privately-operated International Order of Foresters (IOF) hospital in Lopez Canyon was constructed beginning in 1913 and served its members until it closed in 1962. The site was subsequently repurposed into a retirement facility and is now a transitional housing shelter called Hope Gardens.

A second notable example of a medical facility was the San Fernando Valley Veterans Hospital. The hospital was built in 1926 to the north of San Fernando, in the unincorporated area now known as Sylmar Island. It was a sprawling site

170 Chatsworth Historical Society, "Chatsworth Lake Manor," presentation, Sept. 16, 2014.
171 "Yule Play at Chatsworth Lake," The Van Nuys News, Dec. 15, 1949.
172 Sholom Chapels and Mortuaries, "What We Offer," online, accessed Sept. 2024.
173 "Water Main Funds," Los Angeles Times, Nov. 1, 1972.
174 Michael Connelly, "Fire Station at Chatsworth Lake Wins a Reprieve," Los Angeles Times, Jul. 24, 1991.

that served military veterans, and continued to serve the surrounding community until it was extensively damaged in the 1971 Sylmar Earthquake and subsequently demolished. Today, the former hospital is the site of a public park.

Sub-Theme: Parks and Recreation

Since the 1920s, recreation has been integral to the development histories of communities within the Planning Area. The subdividers and boosters of Kagel Canyon, Twin Lakes, and Chatsworth Lake Manor all incorporated recreational amenities into their development plans as a means of enticing prospective buyers to these distant communities. Typically, access to these recreational amenities was granted after an individual purchased a lot within the respective development. In Kagel Canyon, the Peters-Rhoades Company advertised a variety of recreational amenities including a dance pavilion, swimming pool, and hiking trails; in Twin Lakes, subdividers maintained two man-made lakes created by dams, and promised an array of recreational amenities including fishing and boating facilities and athletic fields, only some of which were actually constructed. In Chatsworth Lake Manor, prospective buyers were enticed by access to natural mineral springs, which were purported to have therapeutic qualities.

In addition to private developers, public agencies were also involved in the planning and construction of parks and other recreational amenities. The County of Los Angeles, with assistance from the federal government under the auspices of the New Deal, began developing Dexter Park in Kagel Canyon in the 1930s by installing picnic benches, planting trees, and constructing retaining walls and other infrastructure. The park was further improved in the 1950s, when a community center was built at the site. Dedicated in 1957, the Dexter Park Community Center (located at 11053 North Trail) continues to be an important gathering place among members of the Kagel Canyon community.

Other public parks in the Planning Area date to later periods, and include a combination of improved landscaped parks and open space preserves. The County-operated Veterans Memorial Park (located at 13000 Sayre Street) in the unincorporated community of Sylmar Island was dedicated in 1977, following the demolition of the earthquake-damaged San Fernando Valley Veterans Hospital in 1971. In 2002, 480 acres of rugged open space in the Oat Mountain section of the Planning Area were dedicated as the Michael D. Antonovich Open Space Preserve. When it opened in 2002, the preserve was touted as "a marvelous destination for people that want to hike, ride a bike or ride a horse in one of the truly botanical areas in California."[175]

Registration Requirements: Civic and Institutional Development

Associated Property Types

- Religious building
- Civic or government building (fire station)
- Park or open space
- Infrastructure (dams/water conveyance, retaining walls, or other site features)

Eligibility Standards

- Has a direct and significant relationship to historic civic/ institutional development patterns
- Is an early or rare remaining example of a significant institutional property type
- Is the site of an event significant to the history of the nation, state, County, or community
- Is/was associated with a historically significant civic or community leader
- Is/was a gathering place or focal point important to the identity of its respective communiy
- May be architecturally significant as an excellent or rare example of a style, type, period, or method of construction
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical significance

Theme: Industrial Development

Sub-Theme: Filming and Entertainment

Entertainment, and particularly film, was among the earliest industries to establish a presence in the Planning Area, and particularly in the hills to the north and west of Chatsworth. As noted by historian and researcher Dennis R. Liff, "the northwest corner of the San Fernando Valley has quietly served as a hub of film production for more than a century."[176] In the early twentieth century, this area emerged as a popular backdrop for westerns and other productions requiring a rugged, rural setting. Cecil D. DeMille, D.W. Griffith, and Thomas Ince were among the first filmmakers to work in the area; portions of DeMille's The Squaw Man (1913), which is credited as Hollywood's first feature film,

175 Andrea Perera, "Preserve Named After Antonovich," Los Angeles Times, Aug. 13, 2002.
176 Written correspondence from Dennis R. Liff, received via e-mail, Jul. 19, 2024.

were shot in the hills above Chatsworth. Thousands of other films and television shows were shot in the area in subsequent decades, among which included iconic productions like Tarzan the Ape Man (1932), Gone With the Wind (1939), and The Grapes of Wrath (1940).[177]

Large sites known as "location ranches" operated in the boulder-studded hills overlooking Chatsworth, and appeared in a substantial number of films and television shows. The largest, and arguably most influential, of these location ranches was called the Iverson Movie Ranch. Portions of the former Iverson Movie Ranch are located within the city limits of Los Angeles, but the northern portion of the facility – which was known as Upper Iverson – is located in unincorporated Los Angeles County, in the Oat Mountain community.

The Iverson Ranch became less viable as a filming location in the 1960s, when construction of the Simi Valley Freeway (SR-118) bisected the location ranch and brought noise pollution to the area. By the 1980s, the property had been sold, and substantial portions of its once-expansive grounds were subdivided and developed. However, remnants of the former Iverson Ranch are known to still exist, including the foundation of a cabin that appeared in many productions including The Lone Ranger.[178] Other remnant features associated with the entertainment industry are known to exist within the former Iverson Movie Ranch property and other location ranches that operated nearby.

Sub-Theme: Military Operations and Civil Defense

Because of its remote and relatively isolated location, the Planning Area was conducive to the development and operation of an anti-ballistic missile base associated with the United States Army's Project Nike.[179] The base known as LA-88 was developed at Oat Mountain in the mid-1950s and began operating in 1957. It played an important role in the protection of the Los Angeles metropolitan area, and in particular its abundant aerospace and aircraft facilities, from foreign attacks.

LA-88 was a technologically sophisticated facility that consisted of three key components: the Integrated Fire Control (IFC), the Launcher area, and the Administration area. The IFC, which occupied about six acres, "contained radar control systems to detect incoming targets and to direct the missiles, along with computer systems to plot and direct the intercept." The Launcher Area, which occupied about 40 acres, included underground missile magazines. The Administration area included administrative and support facilities including the battery headquarters, dormitories, and mess and recreation halls.[180]

The site was decommissioned in 1974. Remnants of the facility, including portions of its buildings and other site improvements, are extant, and are now located within the Michael D. Antonovich Open Space Preserve.

Registration Requirements: Industrial Development

Associated Property Types

- Location ranch/filming site (remnant features)
- Civil defense facility (remnant features)

Eligibility Standards

- Has a direct and significant relationship to historic industrial development patterns
- Is an early or rare remaining example of a significant industrial property type
- Is the site of an event significant to the industrial or military history of the nation, state, County, or community
- Is/was associated with a historically significant industry leader or leaders
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical significance

Theme: Agricultural Development

Sub-Theme: Agriculture

Following the opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1913, the San Fernando Valley was provided an abundant and reliable source of water and evolved into a rich agricultural district. Large swaths of undeveloped land across the floor of the San Fernando Valley were transformed into farms where a variety of field crops were grown, transported to market, and sold for export. Oranges, lemons and other types of citrus, olives, walnuts, and deciduous fruits were commonly cultivated on Valley farms, as were wheat and other grains that required less water. Poultry and dairy farms were also located in the west end of the San Fernando

177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
179 Nike Historical Society, "History of LA-88, Chatsworth, California," online, Oct. 2022, accessed Sept. 2024.
180 Ibid.

Valley.[181]

Communities within the Planning Area were located in arid settings outside of the Los Angeles city limits, and because of this lacked access to the ample water supplied by the Los Angeles Aqueduct. These unincorporated communities typically relied on well water, which was scarce – particularly in the summer months – and was historically a hindrance to widespread development. The topography of these unincorporated communities, which consisted of rugged mountain terrain, was also not particularly well-suited to the demands of agricultural production. For these reasons, agriculture was not a particularly significant to the industrial development of these areas, as it was most elsewhere in the San Fernando Valley.

However, a few small farmsteads are known to have existed in the Planning Area. The upper portion of Kagel Canyon included some small-scale agricultural fields prior to World War II, including 160 acres of citrus, olive, and avocado groves. This agricultural acreage was located in the vicinity of the present-day Glen Haven Memorial Park, where Kagel Canyon and Lopez Canyon roads intersect.[182] Historic aerial photographs show that the southernmost portion of Sylmar Island also contained small agricultural plots; most of which were located alongside the natural creeks and washes that traversed the area.

Associated Property Types

- Grove/farmstead (remnant feature)

Eligibility Standards

- Has a direct and significant relationship to historic agricultural development patterns
- Is a rare remaining example of a historic agricultural use
- Is/was associated with a historically significant event
- Is/was associated with a historically significant individual or family associated with the local agricultural industry
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical significance

4.6. ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

Observations made during field reconnaissance indicated that generally speaking, buildings in the communities comprising the San Fernando Valley Planning Area are stylistically vernacular and eclectic. Such is especially true in the rural communities of Kagel/Lopez Canyons, Twin Lakes, and West Chatsworth, where there is no prevailing architectural language, and buildings instead reflect the whims and preferences of their individual owners and occupants. Nonetheless, most buildings in the Planning Area bear association with architectural styles that were popular in Southern California during the twentieth century, with some reading as clear expressions of a particular architectural style and others making looser reference to a given style or movement.

Key architectural styles that are represented in the Planning Area are summarized in the table below, and discussed in detail in the following sections.

Summary Table of Architectural Styles:

SUB-THEME	ASSOCIATED STYLES
Late 19th and Early 20th Century Movements	• Vernacular • Craftsman
Period Revival	• Spanish Colonial Revival • Tudor Revival • American Colonial Revival
Minimal Traditional	
Post-World War II Architectural Styles	• Mid-Century Modern • Ranch

181 Richard E. Preston, "The Changing Landscape of the San Fernando Valley Between 1930 and 1964," essay prepared for San Fernando State College, 1965, 61.
182 Ibid.

Sub-Theme: Late 19th and Early 20th Century Movements

Vernacular



Figure 51. Vernacular style residence.

From the 1870s to the early 1900s, a number of vernacular building styles applied much-simplified elements of more opulent styles like Queen Anne to modest one-story cottages. These dwellings were modest in size and appearance. They typically had complex rooflines dominated by either a gable or hipped primary roof, and some adopted features popular in the Arts and Crafts era as well as some basic characteristics of the Queen Anne style. Partial-width or full-width porches are very common features of vernacular-era buildings.

Character-defining features of vernacular-era architecture include:

- One or one-and-a-half stories;
- Box-like shape;
- Hipped or gable roof, with or without central dormer;
- Wide overhanging eaves, often boxed;
- Wood clapboard siding;
- Partial or full-width porches; and
- Single-pane double-hung wood sash windows.

Craftsman



Figure 52. Craftsman style residence.

The Craftsman style is largely a California phenomenon that evolved out of the Arts and Crafts movement at the turn of the 20th century, a time during which Southern California was experiencing tremendous growth in population, expansion of homeownership, and new aesthetic choices. Craftsman architecture combines Swiss and Japanese elements with the artistic values of the Arts and Crafts movement. The style began to lose popularity in the 1920s with the emergence of Period Revival styles.

Character-defining features of the Craftsman style include:

- One or two stories in height;
- Building forms that respond to the site;
- Low-pitched gabled roofs with exposed structural members;
- Shingled exteriors (occasionally clapboard or stucco);
- Broad front entry porches of half- or full-width, with square or battered columns;
- Extensive use of natural materials for columns, chimneys, retaining walls, and landscape features; and
- Casement windows situated into groups.

Sub-Theme: Period Revival

Spanish Colonial Revival

Spanish Colonial Revival architecture gained widespread popularity throughout Southern California after the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. The style was an attempt to create a "native" California architectural style that drew upon and romanticized the state's colonial past. The popularity of the Spanish Colonial Revival style coincided with Southern California's population boom of the 1920s. Its adaptability lent its application to a variety of building types, including single-family and multi-family residences, commercial properties, and institutional buildings. Spanish Colonial Revival architecture often borrowed from other styles such as Churrigueresque, Gothic Revival, Moorish Revival, or Art Deco.

Character-defining features of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture include:

- Complex massing and asymmetrical façades;
- Incorporation of patios, courtyards, loggias, or covered porches and/or balconies;
- Low-pitched gable or hipped roofs with clay tile roofing;
- Coved, molded, or wood-bracketed eaves;
- Towers or turrets;
- Stucco wall cladding;
- Arched window and door openings;
- Single and paired multi-paned windows (predominantly casement);
- Decorative stucco or tile vents; and
- Used of secondary materials including wrought iron, wood, cast stone, terra cotta, and tile.





Figures 53 and 54. Spanish Colonial Revival style residences.



Figure 55. Tudor Revival style residence.

Tudor Revival

The Tudor Revival style was loosely based on a variety of Medieval and English building traditions, ranging from thatched-roof Tudor cottages to grandiose Elizabethan and Jacobean manor houses. The first Tudor Revival houses appeared in the United States at the end of the 19th century. These houses were typically elaborate and architect-designed. Much like other Period Revival styles, Tudor Revival architecture became extremely popular during the 1920s population boom in Southern California. Masonry veneering techniques of the 1920s and '30s helped to further disseminate the style, as even modest houses could afford to mimic the brick and stone exteriors of traditional English designs.

Character-defining features of Tudor Revival architecture include:

- Irregular massing and asymmetrical façades;
- Steeply pitched gable roofs with a prominent front-facing gable and slate, wood shingle, or composition shingle roofing;
- Rolled, pointed, and/or flared eaves, sometimes with exposed rafter tails;
- Prominent chimneys;
- Brick, stone, and/or stucco wall cladding;
- Decorative half-timbering;
- Entrance vestibules with arched openings;
- Multi-light casement windows that are tall, narrow, and typically arranged in groups; and
- If the Storybook variation, then may have exaggerated stylistic elements and roofs that appear thatched, with uneven/undulating shingles, and that feature turrets/towers.

Sub-Theme: Minimal Traditional



Figure 56. Minimal Traditional style residence.

The Minimal Traditional style is a simple residential style historically designed to meet the demand for quick and affordable housing. It first evolved in the 1930s during the Great Depression and continued with increasing vigor in the post-World War II period. The appeal of the style was maximized in the postwar era, as it fit the mold for houses seeking Federal Housing Administration (FHA) financing. As outlined in the FHA's bulletin, Principles for Planning Small Houses, as well as in pattern books, the Minimal Traditional style is characterized by its modest size and simplicity in massing and decorative details. Approved embellishments included porches, bay windows, platform steps, and paneled front doors.

Character-defining features of the Minimal Traditional style include:

- Small, typically one-story height;
- Simple massing;
- Low-pitched, hipped, side-gable, or gable-and-wing roof;
- Double-hung windows; and
- Minimal ornamentation and architectural features, but relating to Tudor, Colonial Revival, or Ranch styles where applied.

Sub-Theme: Post-World War II Architectural Styles

Mid-Century Modern



Figure 57. Mid-Century Modern style residence.

In Southern California, Mid-Century Modern architecture was prevalent between the mid-1940s and mid-1970s. While the style was a favorite among some of Southern California's most influential architects, its minimal ornamentation and simple open floor plans lent itself to the mass-produced housing developments of the postwar period. Mid-Century Modern architecture typically incorporated standardized and prefabricated materials that also proved well-suited to mass production. The Mid-Century Modern style and its derivatives were broadly applied to a wide variety of property types ranging from residential tracts and commercial buildings to churches and public schools.

Character-defining features of Mid-Century Modern architecture include:

- Horizontal massing;
- Expressed post-and-beam construction, typically in wood or steel;
- Flat or low-pitched roofs;
- Wide overhanging eaves;
- Horizontal elements such as fascias that cap the front edge of the flat roofs or parapets;
- Stucco wall cladding at times used in combination with other textural elements, such as brick, clapboard, or concrete block;
- Aluminum windows grouped within horizontal frames; and
- Oversized decorative elements or decorative face-mounted light fixtures.



Figure 58. Ranch style residence.

Ranch

Ranch style architecture made its debut in the 1930s. Buildings designed in the style were awash in historical references associated with the vernacular architecture of 19th century California and the American West, and generally took on a distinctive, rusticated appearance. Examples of Traditional Ranch architecture were prominently featured in general interest publications, notably Sunset magazine, which perpetuated the style's popularity and led to its widespread acceptance among the American public. The Ranch style became the dominant architectural style in the postwar period, and was applied to tract developments and large-scale residential subdivisions.

Character-defining features of Ranch style architecture include:

- One-story configuration (two-story Ranch houses are rare);
- Asymmetrical composition with one or more projecting wings;
- Horizontal massing;
- Low-pitched gable or hipped roof, originally clad with wood shakes;
- Wide eaves and exposed rafter tails;
- Brick or stone chimneys;
- Combination of wall cladding materials;
- One or more picture windows;
- Multi-light wood windows, often with diamond panes;
- Decorative wood shutters;
- Dutch and/or French doors; and
- Attached garage, often appended to the main house via a breezeway.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER STUDY

5.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are intended to guide and strengthen future preservation planning efforts in the Planning Area:

A. Build upon the contents of this historic context statement:

- Prepare thematic studies on topics that may merit more focused research and/or address aspects of intangible heritage. Potential topics to this end may include (but are not limited to): ethnic/cultural history, cultural landscapes, commercial identity/legacy businesses, and sites associated with the filming/entertainment industry; and
- Complete periodic updates to the historic context statement to account for new information and/or recent-past resources that may become age-eligible in the future.

B. Document historical resources within the Planning Area:

- Conduct a reconnaissance-level historic resource survey of each community within the Planning Area; identify buildings, landscapes, districts, and natural features that appear to meet eligibility criteria for federal (National Register), state (California Register), and local (County of Los Angeles) historic designation;
- Produce an inventory of eligible historic resources, based on the findings of the reconnaissance survey;
- Conduct an intensive-level survey of eligible historic resources. Documentation should include, at minimum, an architectural description, photographs, identification of applicable historic themes, evaluation of eligibility, and evaluation of integrity; and
- Prioritize survey efforts for those communities in the Planning Area that are subject to the greatest amount of development and construction activity.

C. Preserve and commemorate historical resources within the Planning Area:

- Publicize this historic context statement, and any future thematic studies and surveys online;
- Increase awareness of, and appreciation for, local history;
- Encourage local organizations to prepare and submit nominations for historical resources in their respective community;
- Designate properties that have been determined eligible through previous evaluations, such as resources associated with Dexter Park;
- Prioritize nominations for properties identified through community input and outreach; and
- Promote the Mills Act and other preservation incentives offered by the County.





















5.2. PROPERTIES IDENTIFIED FOR FURTHER STUDY

Information about potential historic resources within the San Fernando Valley Planning Area was gleaned from background research and community outreach. Community members and stakeholders shared information about buildings and other built resources that are of interest and merit additional research and analysis to determine their eligibility for historic designation.

The following is a list of properties that have been flagged for further study through research and community outreach. Note that this list is not exhaustive and may be expanded to include additional properties upon the discovery of new or additional information.

Kagel/Lopez Canyons

- The Hideaway Bar and Grill;
- Kagel Canyon Community Board;
- Fire Station No. 74;
- Glen Haven Memorial Park and Shalom Memorial Park;
- Forester Haven/Hope Gardens; and
- Extant cabins from the initial (1920s) development of Kagel Canyon as a weekend retreat.

Twin Lakes/Oat Mountain

- Nike Missile Test Site
- Dams and other water infrastructure
- The “Lone Ranger Cabin” and other remnant features of the former Iverson Movie Ranch
- Rock formations at and near Stoney Point and Garden of the Gods
- Extant cabins from the initial (1920s) development of Twin Lakes Park as a weekend retreat
- House of Captain and Tenille

West Chatsworth

- Chatsworth Lake Church
- Log Cabin Mercantile
- Grandmother Oak Tree (9210 Ventura Way)
- Fire Station No. 75
- Chatsworth Oaks Park

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Prepared by:

County of Los Angeles, Department of Regional Planning
320 W. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012