

CHAPTER 3 Project Description

3.1 BACKGROUND

The current General Plan for the City of Simi Valley was comprehensively updated in 1988 and contains ten elements. Since that time, there have been periodic amendments to various elements. Development of the City over the years has resulted in substantial build-out of properties on the valley floor and new residential communities in the hillside and canyon areas surrounding the City. The General Plan Update redirects new growth inward rather than continuing outward expansion into the surrounding hillsides and natural open space areas. The goals and policies of the General Plan Update are intended to guide this transformation through a comprehensive set of updated goals and policies and are based on a critical analysis of what types of land uses will be allowed, where development will occur and in what amounts, and what it will look like in order to achieve the community's vision for development within Simi Valley until 2030. This vision is addressed in the Plan's emphasis on reuse and infill development within the existing footprint of development in the City and focusing growth in areas around transit stations and along corridors where transit is available or is anticipated to be available in the future.

A Climate Action Plan (CAP) was also prepared in support of the General Plan Update. Any potential impacts associated with the implementation of the CAP are also analyzed in the EIR. The CAP achieves a purpose and a series of goals by providing: an analysis of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and sources attributable to land uses in the City of Simi Valley; estimates on how those emissions are expected to increase; recommended policies and actions that can reduce GHG emissions to meet state, federal and international targets; a timeline of implementation; and a defined tracking and reporting mechanism that will measure progress toward the goals. To fulfill the purposes of the CAP, the City identified the following achievement goals:

- Provide a list of specific actions that will reduce GHG emissions, with the highest priority given to actions that provide the greatest reduction in GHG emissions and benefits to the community at the least cost
- Reduce emissions attributable to Simi Valley to levels at or below 1990 GHG emissions by year 2020 consistent with the target reductions of AB 32
- Establish a qualified reduction plan for which future development within the City can tier and thereby streamline the environmental analysis necessary under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

3.1.1 Requirements for a General Plan

A general plan is a state-required long-range policy document that provides guidance to decision-makers regarding the allocation of resources, and the future physical form and character of development for cities, counties, and other agencies with land use authority. It is the official statement of the jurisdiction regarding the extent and types of development needed to achieve the community's physical, economic, social, and environmental goals. Although a general plan consists of individual sections, or "elements," that address a specific area of concern, it also embodies a comprehensive and integrated planning

approach for the jurisdiction. The courts held in *Lesher Communications, Inc v. City of Walnut Creek*, 52 Cal. 3d 531 (1990), that a general plan is the “constitution for all future developments” and clearly established the general plan at the top of the planning hierarchy, thereby requiring that all other planning documents be consistent with the general plan.

A general plan clarifies and articulates a city’s intentions with respect to the rights and expectations of the general public, property owners, special interest groups, prospective investors, and business interests. Through its general plan, a city informs the community of its vision, goals, policies, and development standards, thereby communicating the city’s expectations of the private sector in meeting the intentions of its general plan.

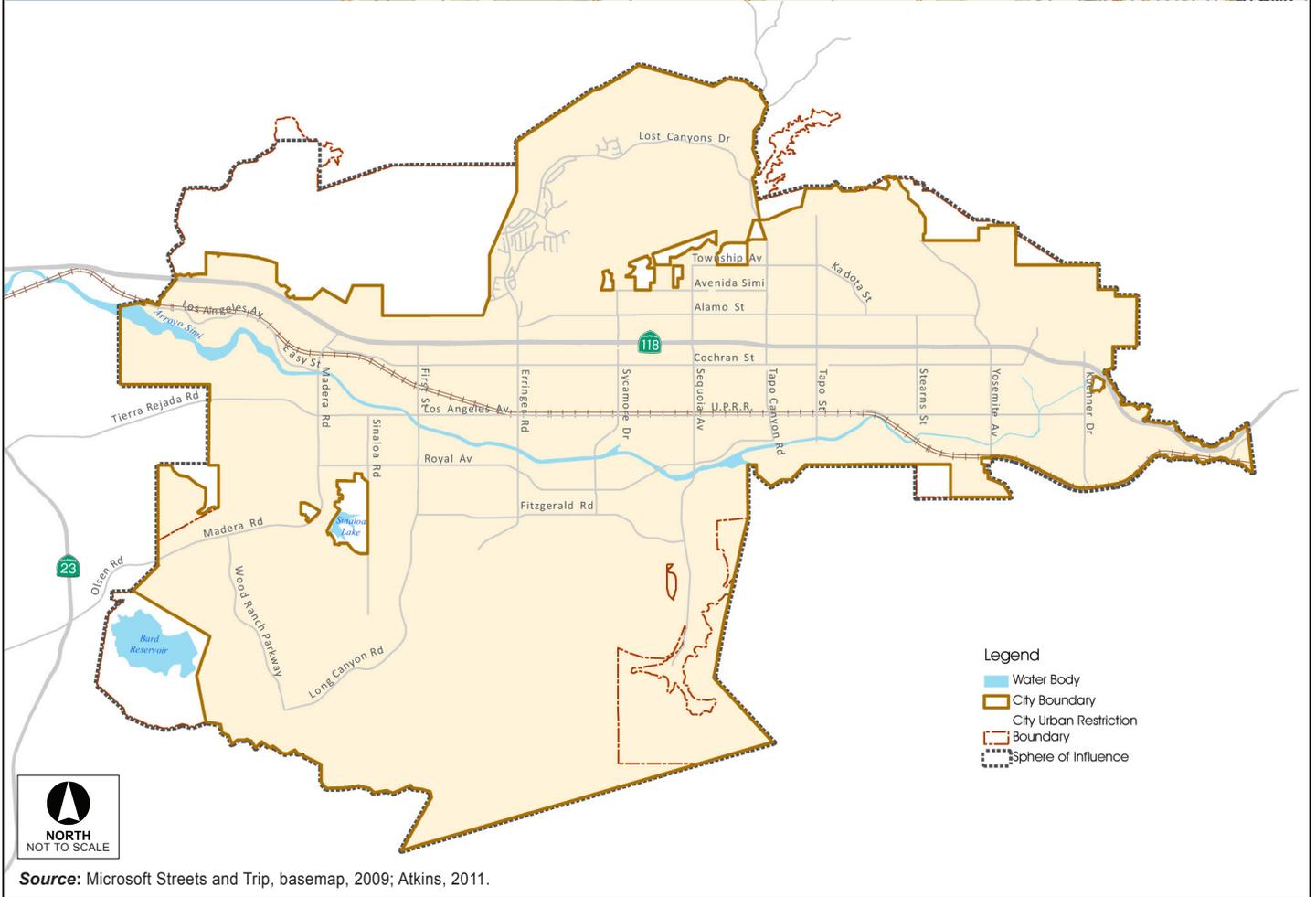
Under state law, California Government Code Sections 65303 et seq., each general plan must contain seven elements (Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety). The Government Code permits local jurisdictions to formulate other elements that, in the “judgment of the planning agency,” relate to the physical development of a region. Once adopted, these “optional” elements are as legally binding as a mandatory element. The existing Simi Valley General Plan includes four optional elements: Recreation, Community Services, Economic Development, and Air Quality.

The General Plan Update is intended to provide a meaningful guide for the future growth and development of Simi Valley over the next twenty years and fulfills statutory requirements. It is a comprehensive framework for the City’s physical, economic, and social development that sustains natural environmental resources. It is also long range—looking ahead to 2030 and beyond—while at the same time presenting policies to guide day-to-day decisions.

A local jurisdiction may adopt a general plan in the format that best fits its unique circumstances (California Government Code Section 65300.5). In doing so, the jurisdiction must ensure that the general plan and its component parts comprise an integrated, internally consistent, and compatible statement of development policies. In updating the General Plan, the City of Simi Valley consolidated some of the mandatory elements and re-organized the content by related topics. Important themes, such as community livability, sustainability, and global warming, are woven throughout the Plan rather than structured as independent topics.

3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND LOCATION

The City of Simi Valley lies in southeastern Ventura County, next to the northwestern perimeter of the San Fernando Valley. The community straddles the Ronald Reagan Freeway (SR-118), and is close to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Simi Valley is within a crescent-shaped valley surrounded by steep hills. It is separated from the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles County by the rugged Santa Susana Mountains north and east, rising to more than 3,000 feet, which also separate it from the Fillmore-Piru valley to the north. The Simi Hills to the south, rising to approximately 2,500 feet, separate the valley from the Conejo-Coastal Plain of Ventura County (refer to Figure 3-1 [Project Location] and Figure 3-2 [Planning Area]). The City is connected to regional centers by Amtrak and Metrolink, and scheduled transit service is provided by VISTA Coastal Express buses and the Simi Valley Transit Division.

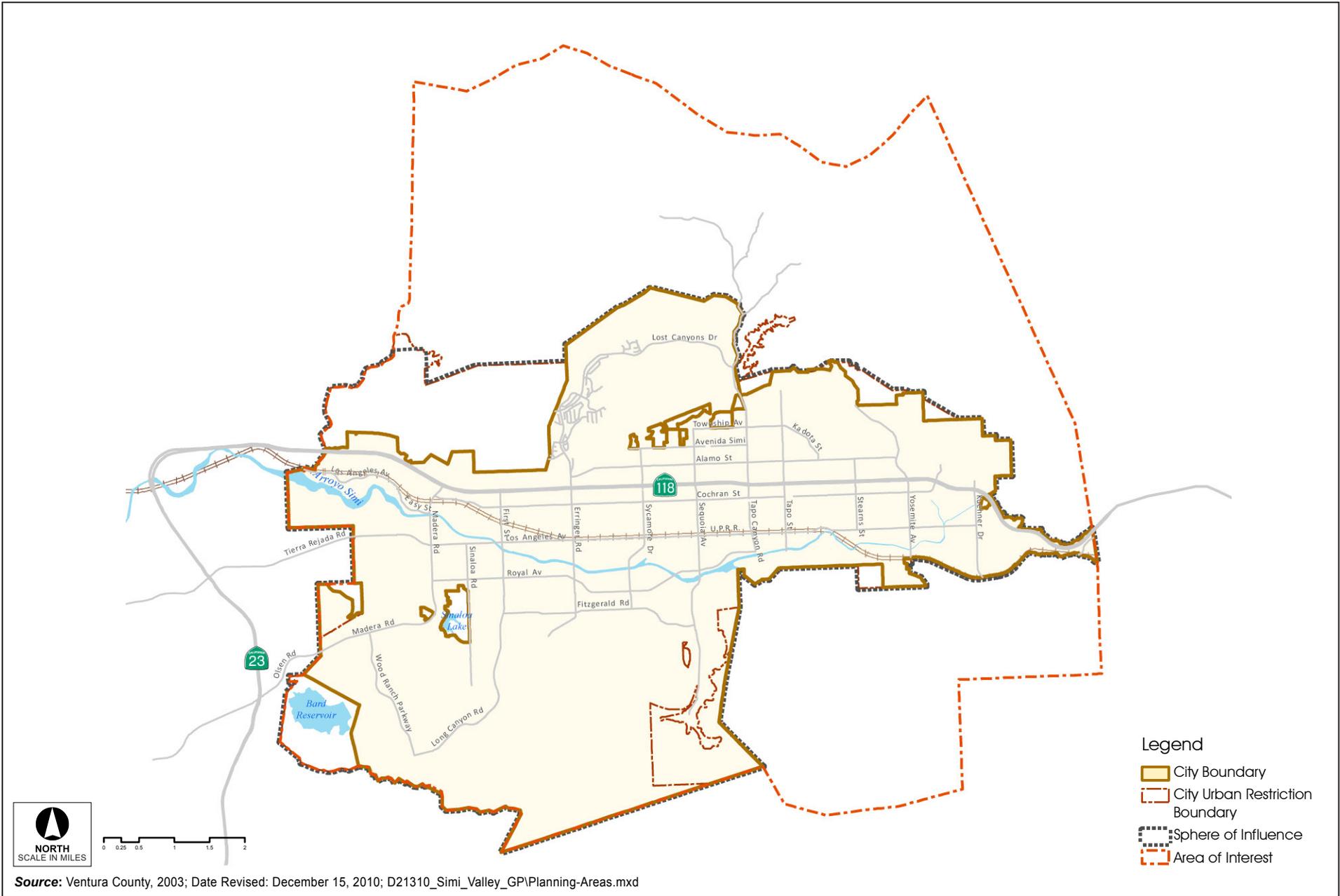


0D2131000 | Simi Valley General Plan Update EIR



Source: Microsoft Streets and Trip, basemap, 2009; Atkins, 2011.

Figure 3-1
Project Location



Source: Ventura County, 2003; Date Revised: December 15, 2010; D21310_Simi_Valley_GPIPlanning-Areas.mxd

Figure 3-2
Planning Area

3.2.1 City Urban Restriction Boundary (CURB)

The unique character of Simi Valley and many aspects of the quality of life in the community are influenced by the substantial amount of open space and rural and agricultural lands that surround the community. Due to the continuing concern about the impacts of urban encroachment into these lands, the electorate of Simi Valley in November 1988 adopted an urban growth boundary line named the Simi Valley Urban Restriction Boundary (CURB) line. The purpose of the CURB line is to protect existing agricultural, open-space, viewsheds, wildlife areas, and watershed land surrounding the community from the impact of development and to limit urban sprawl.

Until December 31, 2020, the City of Simi Valley must restrict urban services (except temporary mutual assistance with other jurisdictions) and urban land uses within the Simi Valley CURB. Urban land uses are defined as any development that would require establishment of a new community sewer system or the significant extension of existing community sewers, the creation of residential lots less than 10 acres, or establishment of non-agriculture or mineral-related commercial or industrial uses. Exceptions include completing roadways identified in the 1988 General Plan Circulation Element and construction of public potable water facilities, public schools, public parks, and other government facilities.

The Simi Valley CURB cannot be amended or altered except by a vote of the people. Exceptions to amendments include the provision of affordable housing to comply with State law if there is no existing residentially designated land available within the CURB to accommodate this development.

3.2.2 Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources (SOAR)

In addition to the CURB, Save Open Space and Agricultural (SOAR) boundaries are the result of various Save Our Agricultural Resources (or in some instances Save Our Agricultural and Open Space Resources) initiatives that have been approved by the voters as ordinances for the County of Ventura and, to date, eight of the 10 cities in the County, including Simi Valley.

3.2.3 Sphere of Influence (SOI)

Typically, a sphere of influence (SOI) is the territory a city or district is expected to annex. Thus, spheres of influence are usually larger in area than the actual boundaries of a city or district, although they can be the same as the city or district boundaries. Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) are responsible for establishing a sphere of influence for each city and district whose boundaries are regulated by LAFCO. A SOI is defined as, “A plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency, as determined by the Commission.”

With a few exceptions, the CURB line is generally coterminous with the 1988 SOI boundary established by LAFCO. However, although the CURB line is established in the same location as the SOI boundary, the CURB line is not intended to inhibit the LAFCO from changing or altering the SOI boundary in accordance with State law.

3.2.4 Area of Interest

The Simi Valley Area of Interest extends past the City's CURB boundary and into areas currently under the jurisdiction of the County of Ventura. The purpose of the Area of Interest in the General Plan Update is to allow the City to examine land uses under the jurisdiction of adjacent agencies that may affect the City's growth and development. The Ventura LAFCO established areas of interest in Ventura County in the late 1960s. Areas of interest divide the south half of Ventura County (the non-Forest Service land) into fifteen major geographic planning areas (including Simi Valley) based primarily on topography and community identity. The basic policies are to have no more than one city in any area of interest and to have areas of interest serve as planning referral lines between the County and cities for discretionary land use entitlements. Areas of Interest are reviewed and updated periodically in conjunction with the LAFCO Guidelines for Orderly Development and the County of Ventura General Plan. Areas of Interest do not apply to special districts and are separate from greenbelts, SOAR and CURB lines, and spheres of influence.

3.2.5 Existing Land Uses

Existing land uses in the planning area have been classified into six primary categories and are illustrated on Figure 3-3 (General Plan Land Use Map):

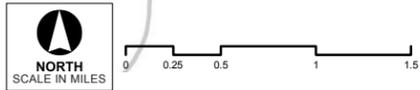
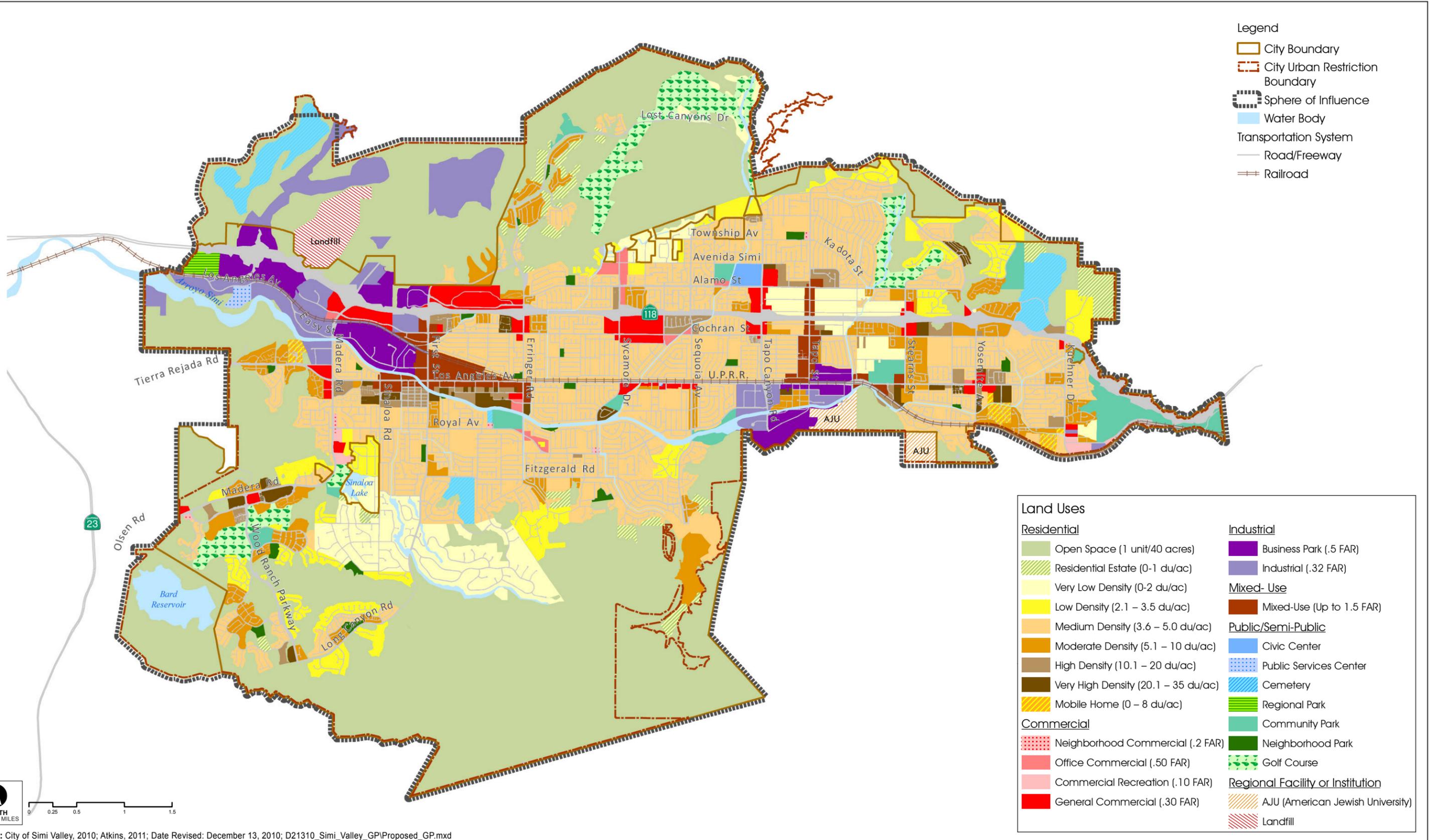
■ Residential/Open Space

Simi Valley is characterized by its visually and socially distinct neighborhoods and areas. Residential land uses represent the vast majority of the total land area in Simi Valley and the SOI (70 percent). Most of the housing units in Simi Valley are single-family homes. Types and forms of residential land uses include "traditional" residential neighborhoods generally located along the valley floor, which typify much of the older residential developments in Simi Valley. These neighborhoods were typically built during the 1950s to 1970s.

Newer types of residential neighborhoods include master-planned developments located to the north and south of the community within hillside and canyon areas. Residences are often located on lots along curvilinear street patterns, typically with cul-de-sacs. Single-family development at Big Sky and Wood Ranch are examples of the newer types of development.

Other residential communities include large-lot homes, such as the Kadota Fig neighborhood. These types of neighborhoods have homes that are often older and custom built by individuals, rather than by a single developer. While typically large-lot residences, they may be rural or suburban in character.

Other types of communities include mixed-density residential neighborhoods. These neighborhoods incorporate a variety of housing types ranging from single-family detached/attached, low-rise townhomes, to garden apartments. Only a few mixed-density neighborhoods exist in Simi Valley and are primarily newer developments. The new El Paseo Simi development at Tapo Canyon Road and Alamo Street is an example of a mixed-density residential area. One mixed-use development is located along Tapo Street between Eileen Street and Carlotta Street and includes a mixture of single-family attached and multi-family residential, with commercial development facing Tapo Street. This area is regulated by



Source: City of Simi Valley, 2010; Atkins, 2011; Date Revised: December 13, 2010; D21310_Simi_Valley_GPIProposed_GP.mxd

Figure 3-3
General Plan Land Use Map

the Tapo and Mixed-Use Overlays and the Commercial Planned Development Zoning District. According to the City's 2000–2005 Housing Element, there are several factors contributing to the mix of housing in the City, including a high market demand for detached single-family dwellings and a General Plan policy that requires that densities be directed toward an overall 80 percent single-family/20 percent multi-family mix, except for senior housing.

■ Commercial

Retail, administrative, professional, and service commercial uses are located throughout the community and account for approximately three percent of the land uses within the City's municipal boundaries and the SOI. Commercial areas in Simi Valley include commercial corridors, commercial strip centers, corner retail centers, neighborhood shopping centers, and regional retail centers.

Major commercial corridors in the community include Los Angeles Avenue, certain portions of Cochran Street, First Street, Tapo Canyon Road, Tapo Street, Yosemite Avenue, and Madera Road. Commercial uses along much of Los Angeles Avenue include older retail areas and mixed commercial districts with small retail shops, located on comparatively small lots (typically 10,000 to 18,000 square feet), with limited parking. Other commercial uses include commercial strip centers, with shops and businesses located to the rear of parcels along the street corridor and expanses of parking lots along the front. Examples of commercial strip centers are located along Los Angeles Avenue, Tapo Street, portions of Cochran Street, and portions of Alamo Street.

Corner retail centers are located within some residential areas and provide local retail and services to the immediate neighborhood. These centers are smaller than grocery shopping centers and tend to be more pedestrian-oriented due to proximity to residential neighborhoods. Often these centers contain a mix of retail, medical, professional, and personal services such as restaurant, dental and chiropractic offices, post office, and dry cleaner.

Regional commercial centers are typically situated on a large site that contains multiple tenants in an integrated complex of buildings surrounded by parking. The primary regional shopping center in the community is the recently constructed Simi Valley Town Center located within northwest Simi Valley, north of the SR-118 and east of First Street. In addition to the Simi Valley Town Center, larger commercial developments in Simi Valley include the Mountain Gate Plaza, Royal Plaza Shopping Center, Simi at the Plaza (Wal-Mart, Office Depot, Home Depot), the El Paseo Simi, the Tapo Plaza Shopping Center, and the Simi Valley Civic Center Plaza at the intersection of Alamo Street and Tapo Canyon Road.

Office commercial uses in Simi Valley include professional legal services, real estate, medical, investment, and other services. These uses are located in several areas of the community, such as near the Simi Valley Town Center, Tapo Canyon Business Park, and Simi Valley Hospital.

■ Mixed Use

The Mixed-Use land use designation provides for the development of properties and buildings that integrate a diversity of uses such as retail, office, restaurant, entertainment, and residential and are developed as quality places to live, work, shop, and be entertained. The Mixed-Use designation provides

the opportunity for the development of housing with General Commercial and/or Commercial Office uses to enable residents to live in proximity to commercial services, entertainment, and employment and participate in multiple daily activities at one location. This is intended to reduce the number of vehicle trips generated, fossil fuel consumption, air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions, while improving walkability and the quality of life for residents. All contribute to improving Simi Valley's environmental sustainability, enhancing economic vitality by locating customers closer to businesses, and improving public health by increased pedestrian activity.

■ Industrial

Light industrial activities typically contain industrial buildings that include warehousing and light manufacturing. Approximately 2 percent of land uses within the City's municipal boundaries and SOI are industrial. Industrial development within Simi Valley is characterized by light industrial land uses and business, research, office, and development parks. Most of the City's industrial development is located within the West End Specific Plan, which is primarily located west of First Street, north and south of SR-118, and along the Easy Street corridor. Business parks, such as the Tapo Canyon Business Park located in southeastern Simi Valley near Tapo Street and Los Angeles Avenue, are typically a collection of buildings of medium to large scale, developed in a landscaped, campus-like setting. Business parks may contain office or high-tech industrial uses, conveying a corporate character that does not distinguish between the two uses.

■ Open Space

Open space within the City's outlying hillsides and canyons is a large component of the land use within Simi Valley. This land consists of large, undeveloped privately held parcels and open space areas preserved as a component of Specific Plans and areas maintained by Mountain Recreation Conservancy Authority (a joint powers authority comprised of Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and Conejo Recreation & Park District). Within the City's General Plan, the majority of the community's open space uses is classified as a residential land use. Density levels for much of the City's open space areas are limited to one unit per 40 acres and are regulated by policies and criteria contained in the General Plan and by the City's Hillside Performance Standards.

■ Public/Semipublic

Public and semipublic uses include such facilities as City Hall, the East County Courthouse, Senior Citizens Center, Simi Valley Library, the police station located north of Alamo Street and west of Tapo Canyon Road, the Cultural Arts Center, fire stations, and the Simi Valley Hospital. Other uses include all public and private schools, neighborhood, community and regional parks, private and public golf courses, cemeteries, and other uses. Cemeteries in Simi Valley include Mount Sinai Memorial Park, Rancho Simi Cemetery, and Assumption Cemetery.

■ Regional Institutions or Facilities

Other land uses within Simi Valley include the Simi Valley Landfill and Recycling Center located in northwestern Simi Valley outside of the City's municipal boundaries but within its SOI. A detailed

discussion of the Simi Valley Landfill and Recycling Center is provided in the Technical Background Report for the General Plan Update, Section 3.4 (Solid Waste Management).

A limited amount of area within Simi Valley is used for agricultural uses, primarily for grazing and dry farming and some irrigated agriculture. Approximately 14 percent of Simi Valley and SOI land is used for transportation, communication, and utilities, including roads, railings, and infrastructure related to the Bard Reservoir facility located within the City's SOI.

3.3 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The City of Simi Valley has developed a set of guiding principles or objectives that provide a framework for planning and confirming growth and land use development demands. These principles direct how and where growth will be distributed throughout the City within the context of natural resource protection and neighborhood conservation. Guiding principles are non-negotiable criteria that will guide updating the General Plan. The principles guide development of a land use plan and constitute a set of rules by which updated policies will be written and enforced. The guiding principles also aid in ensuring internal consistency throughout the document.

■ Natural and Environmental Resources

- > Preserve the natural hillsides setting surrounding the City for its valuable aesthetic and visual qualities intrinsic to Simi Valley's landscape and identity.
- > Maintain the City's hillside preservation standards as a means to protect natural environments and open spaces surrounding Simi Valley.
- > Enhance the Arroyo Simi as a natural resource that serves as a scenic recreational resource as well as a public safety resource for flood protection.
- > Improve air quality through development patterns that reduce the need for automobile travel and minimize congestion.
- > Achieve sustainable levels of energy and resource consumption through efficient land use, transportation, building design, construction techniques, waste management, and efficient infrastructure design and operation.
- > Strengthen the City's water recycling program to reduce water consumption and lessen the need for imported water.
- > Partner with the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District to promote open space attainment.

■ Community Identity, Character, and Design

- > Provide a diversity of neighborhood environments.
- > Focus higher density developments and mixed-use projects in areas adjacent to transit stations, along transit corridors and commercial corridors, near job centers, and in strategic opportunity areas throughout the City.
- > Promote neighborhood design for development that is compatible with the scale and character of existing adjacent development.

- > Promote livable and well-designed neighborhoods with a mix of uses and services that are walkable to support improved health and the needs of families, youth, seniors, and a growing population.
- > Create vibrant public areas that serve as gathering places, town centers, and villages for the community.
- > Locate and design buildings, streetscapes, and public spaces that are pedestrian-friendly.
- > Promote developments that foster accessibility and connectivity between areas, and safely and efficiently accommodate a mixture of cars, transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians.
- > Guide new development with design standards that promote well-designed properties that are context sensitive.

■ Land Use and Growth Management

- > Utilize infill development and re-use, while maintaining important qualities of community character.
- > Prioritize the reuse of obsolete or underutilized commercial centers.
- > Promote land uses that achieve the City's regional fair share of housing and strengthen its economic and jobs base.
- > Utilize sustainable development and land use planning practices that provide for the needs of existing residents and businesses while preserving choices for future generations.
- > Maintain the City Urban Restriction Boundary (CURB) as a means to maintain the City's distinct identity and to limit inefficient urban development in the natural areas surrounding Simi Valley.
- > Prioritize infill development and redevelopment within areas currently developed consistent with community character objectives.

■ Neighborhood Security and Housing Choice

- > Foster public safety through good community design and the use of Crime Prevention through Community Design (CPTED) concepts.
- > Maintain the City's rating as one of the safest cities in the nation by continuing to provide a high level of public safety services.
- > Minimize the City's vulnerability to natural and manmade disasters and strengthen the City's emergency response systems.
- > Provide a mix of housing to meet the needs of current and future residents, including an equitable distribution of affordable housing, throughout the City.
- > Encourage a mix of housing types within neighborhoods to promote a diversity of households for residents of all ages and income levels.

■ Economic Vitality and Security

- > Maintain a broad range of jobs that are accessible to all residents.
- > Attract highly skilled and professional jobs in finance, professional services, and biotech industries to match residents' education and skills.
- > Promote strategic reinvestment in underperforming commercial centers as potential for job centers and mixed-use neighborhood centers.

- > Promote clean industries and businesses that provide job opportunities, enhance the local economy, and encourage new businesses to locate adjacent to existing and planned business parks and transit corridors.
- **Public Services, Infrastructure, and Mobility**
 - > Promote a high level of public services to maintain the quality of life that Simi Valley residents have come to expect through good traffic circulation systems and other infrastructure including water and sewer.
 - > Reduce the City’s need for imported water through increased water conservation practices and recycling.
 - > Partner with the Simi Valley Unified School District to promote quality education and continued high levels of educational attainment in Simi Valley.
 - > Pursue additional commuter transit service to the west end of the City by Metrolink as a means to decrease roadway congestion and enhance regional mobility for residents and visitors to the City.
 - > Provide a range of transportation choices to residents that promote alternatives to automobile use including walking, biking, and public transit.
- **Health, Social, and Cultural Well-Being**
 - > Recognize and preserve areas of Simi Valley that contribute to the City’s history and culture.
 - > Recognize the need to provide a variety of recreation and leisure activities for the diverse population of Simi Valley as a means to support active and healthy lifestyles for residents of all ages and income groups.
 - > Support community health by promoting the availability of organic and whole food choices to residents.
 - > Recognize that trails are an important recreational asset that may be integrated with transportation systems to encourage mobility within the City.
 - > Promote ongoing volunteer opportunities and civic engagement as a means to provide social opportunities and enhance community life.

3.4 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

The General Plan Update is a comprehensive update of the current General Plan. It establishes an overall development capacity for the City, its sphere of influence (SOI), and surrounding areas, and serves as a policy guide for determining the appropriate physical development and character of the City. The General Plan applies to all properties within the City of Simi Valley and its SOI.

While the Plan’s narrative text and maps frame the key proposals, the essence of the Plan lies in its goals, policies, and implementation measures. As manifestations of the community’s Vision, these statements set forth the City’s approach to various issues, and are defined as follows:

- **Goals** describe ideal future conditions for a particular topic, such as traffic congestion or sustainability. Goals are general expressions of community values and are broad and typically not quantifiable or time-dependent.

- **Policies** provide guidance to assist the City as it makes decisions relating to each goal. They indicate a City’s commitment to a particular course of action. Policies tend to be action-oriented, and they must be clear and unambiguous in order to be useful in judging whether local development decisions are consistent with the General Plan. Some policies address guidelines or standards against which development decisions can be evaluated, such as local noise standards or traffic level of service standards.
- **Implementation Programs** identify the specific steps to be taken by the City to implement the policies. They may include revisions of current codes and ordinances, updates to capital improvement plans and programs, and identification of new programs and actions the City will undertake. The programs identify the timeframe and the City department responsible for carrying them out after the General Plan is adopted.

Elements of the existing General Plan have been reorganized by thematic topic for clarity and to avoid redundancy, as encouraged by the state’s General Plan Guidelines. The City of Simi Valley General Plan Update will be organized into six comprehensive chapters in addition to Chapter 1 (Introduction) and Chapter 2 (Vision). These six chapters will include topics required by the seven mandatory state Elements in addition to optional topics proposed by the City. The General Plan is organized as follows:

1. **Introduction.** This chapter includes the purpose and legal basis for the General Plan. It describes the process for preparing the plan, and it identifies the community vision which is reflected in the broad themes, such as livability, sustainability, and climate change, that are woven throughout the document.
2. **Vision.** This chapter contains the Vision that is the foundation upon which the General Plan actions are measured, and the Guiding Principles which define the expected outcomes of the goals and policies.
3. **Community Development.** This chapter defines goals and policies regarding how existing neighborhoods, commercial districts, employment centers, and public spaces are to be maintained and enhanced, as well as where and how new development is to occur.
 - a. Land Use (LU) defines where lands are to be conserved and where growth will be targeted, and specifies the types, densities, and design characteristics of uses to be permitted.
 - b. Economic Development (ED) specifies strategies for business retention and attraction and fiscal balance.
 - c. Historic and Cultural Resources (HR) defines processes for the preservation of the City’s historic and cultural buildings and sites as the identification and treatment of potential archeological and paleontological resources.
4. **Housing.** The Housing (H) Element contains strategies and programs to address the City’s fair share of regional housing needs for all income groups and household types in the community as required by state law. *(Note: Because of the shorter update cycle and special requirements associated with the Housing Element, the Draft 2008–2014 Simi Valley Housing Element is bound separately from the Draft General Plan. Upon its adoption, Housing Element policies will be incorporated into this General Plan.)*
5. **Mobility and Infrastructure.** This chapter presents goals and policies for the provision of infrastructure and services that support residents and businesses.
 - a. Mobility (M) allows for the movement of people and goods, including autos, transit, bicycles, and other modes. It addresses key issues such as trip reduction, parking, traffic safety, and neighborhood traffic calming.

- b. Infrastructure and Utilities (IU) addresses the provision of public infrastructure, including water, sewer, storm drainage, solid waste, electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications.
- 6. **Natural Resources (NR).** This chapter discusses the management and conservation of Simi Valley’s open space and natural environment, including biological, mineral, water, energy, visual resources, and air quality.
- 7. **Community Services.** The Community Services (CS) chapter addresses a range of public services to meet the needs of residents, including parks and recreation facilities and programs, arts and cultural services, education, and library services.
- 8. **Safety and Noise.** This chapter prescribes strategies for the protection of the public health and safety and the control of excessive noise impacts to residents, businesses, and visitors to the City.
 - a. Safety (S) addresses police and fire protection; emergency preparedness for natural and man-made disasters such as flooding, geologic, and seismic hazards; and hazardous materials.
 - b. Noise (N) presents policies to mitigate the potential impacts of excessive noise in the community.
- 9. **Glossary.** This final chapter defines the terminology used in the General Plan.

3.4.1 Potential Land Use Changes

The General Plan Update focuses on how population and employment growth can be strategically accommodated to preserve the distinguishing and valued qualities of the community. For most of the City, the General Plan Update conserves the existing pattern of uses and establishes policies for protection and long-term maintenance of established neighborhoods. The General Plan Update provides comprehensive policies for the entire city and is intended to be a comprehensive update from the City’s current General Plan, last updated in 1988.

The Planning Area comprises all properties located within the following boundaries: the City limits of Simi Valley (approximately 27,056 acres [excluding nine unincorporated County areas within the City boundaries]); the Simi Valley City Urban Restriction Boundary (CURB) (3,039 acres beyond the City limits); and the City’s SOI (4,001 acres abutting the City limits); and the Simi Valley Area of Interest (total of 32,230 acres). The General Plan Update contains policies regarding future land use and development addressed from a Citywide perspective, with the majority of the proposed land use changes limited to 12 primary study areas. New development in accordance with the General Plan Update would result as re-use of economically underperforming properties and obsolete development, conversion of uses in response to market demand (e.g., office and commercial to residential) and more intense use of land in defined areas.

Table 3-1 (Existing, Proposed, and Net Difference in Land Uses) presents the proposed land uses for Simi Valley, the 1988 General Plan land uses, and the net difference. As shown, Citywide changes would occur in residential, senior housing, office, business park, industrial, and general commercial land uses.

Several study areas within the City of Simi Valley were determined to have special planning considerations and were the subjects of special study during the update process. These areas have been identified by the City as areas that could potentially change in the future and include areas that are vacant, those that offer opportunities for infill and intensification, and those with economically or physically obsolete development. Additional areas, including the Katherine Road Connection Area, the Parker

Table 3-1 Existing, Proposed, and Net Difference in Land Uses

<i>Land Use Category</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Net Difference</i>
Residential Uses				
Estate/Very Low Residential	DU	1,997	3,884	1,887
Low Residential	DU	2,591	3,206	615
Medium/Moderate Residential	DU	28,587	30,951	2,364
High Residential	DU	4,602	5,413	811
Very High Residential	DU	3,917	5,316	1,399
Mobile Home	DU	649	530	(119)
Senior Housing	DU	1,140	1,383	243
Mixed-Use Residential	DU	N/A	7,775	7,775
Commercial Uses				
General Commercial	KSF	2,704	221	(2,483)
District Comm.	KSF	3,727	25	(3,702)0
Commercial/Retail	KSF	1,685	3,916	2,231
Recreational Commercial	KSF	479,160	34	(479,126)
Neighborhood Commercial	KSF	0	0	0
Mixed-Use Commercial R	KSF	N/A	2,620	2,620
Mixed-Use Commercial O	KSF	N/A	1,948	1,948
Office Uses				
General Office	KSF	903	4,885	3,982
Mixed-Use Office R	KSF	N/A	1,127	1,127
Mixed-Use Office O	KSF	N/A	1,630	1,630
Other Uses				
Industrial	KSF	8,216	12,134	3,918
Business Park	KSF	1,144	5,743	4,599
Park	KSF	1,156	1,306	150
Civic Center	KSF	302	364	62
Elem./Junior High School	Stu	15,979	15,787	(192)
High School	Stu	7,582	7,355	(227)
Post Office	KSF	44	23	(21)
Auto Dealer	KSF	247	522	275
Pre-School	Stu	1,976	2,227	251
Hotel/Motel	Room	673	1,066	393
Hospital	Bed	145	99	(46)
Church	KSF	746	576	(170)
Golf Course	Acre	862	1,135	273

Table 3-1 Existing, Proposed, and Net Difference in Land Uses

<i>Land Use Category</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Net Difference</i>
Landfill	Acre	229	230	1
Metrolink Station	Stat	1	2	1
Rocketdyne	Emp	523	523	0
American Jewish University	Emp	50	50	0
Ronald Reagan Presidential Library	KSF	153	153	0
Cultural Arts Center	Seat	220	200	(20)
Boys & Girls Club	KSF	24	25	1
Cemetery	Acre	182	375	193

Ranch Expansion Area, and the Covington Avenue/Rudolf Drive Area, are those where only the General Plan land use designation would be changed and no additional goals or policies are required to implement the proposed changes. Land use changes for these areas are included in the land use map and the EIR will comprehensively address the impacts of all land use changes and policies throughout the City. The analysis may, as appropriate, focus on those areas where the most significant land use changes could occur, as illustrated in Figure 3-4 (Areas of Potential Land Use Change). Areas that are vacant and/or underutilized with opportunities for redevelopments and infill developments are examined to determine different types or alternative design of land uses. While the General Plan Update contains policies regarding future land use and development addressed from a Citywide perspective, the following areas have been identified for land use changes in the General Plan Update.

■ Tapo Street Overlay Area (1)

The Tapo Street Overlay area includes a substantial portion of Tapo Street, a north/south corridor in the center of the community. The area includes parcels fronting the Tapo Street from just north of Alamo Street to slightly south of East Los Angeles Avenue and parcels fronting along East Los Angeles Avenue from Bishop Lane on the west to Lucky Lane on the east. The Tapo Canyon Business Park is located to the southeast of the area, while single-family and some multi-family residential uses are located to the north, east, and west. This area includes older residential and commercial uses. The existing land uses in the area consist of a mixture of residential uses, commercial, office, and industrial uses. This area offers opportunities for redevelopment and infill development or the need to examine different types or alternative design of land uses.

■ Los Angeles Avenue Overlay Area (2)

The Los Angeles Avenue Overlay Area is located in western Simi Valley and generally includes properties along Los Angeles Avenue, the most heavily travelled local east/west roadway in the City. The predominant land use within the area is retail commercial uses. This area also contains a limited amount of light industrial, office, commercial, and residential uses. This area is within the City's Redevelopment Project Area, and includes some vacant and underutilized commercial uses, including the Mountain Gate

Plaza. Future opportunities in this area could include directing efforts to encourage revitalization and reinvestment and/or coordinate redevelopment.

■ Patricia Avenue/Heywood Street Neighborhood (5)

This neighborhood, located in the west central portion of Simi Valley, is generally bounded by Patricia Avenue to the north, Erringer Road to the east, the Arroyo Simi to the south, and just east of First Street to the west. This neighborhood is currently undergoing significant changes. The residential portion of the neighborhood, historically characterized as a semi-rural area of single-family homes and large lots, has been changing to a more urbanized area with attached and multi-family housing. Developing a more cohesive identity and development plan is considered for this area.

■ West End Specific Plan Area (6)

The West End Specific Plan area is located in the western portion of the City adjacent to SR-118 and the Union Pacific railroad tracks, generally bounded by First Street on the east, Oak Park on the west, the City limits on the north, and the Arroyo Simi, Los Angeles Avenue, and East Street on the south. This area is characterized with general commercial, office commercial, business park, and light industrial uses, with some public facilities, including the City's Water Quality Control Facility (WQCF), and open space and vacant land. This area is included within the City's Redevelopment Project Area and part of the West End Specific Plan (adopted in 1999). As the Specific Plan is several years old, the Plan may need to be revisited to provide direction on future development.

■ Easy Street Industrial Area (8)

The Easy Street Industrial area is located in the western portion of the City south of SR-118 between First Street on the east and Madera Road on the west. The northern boundary of the area follows the Union Pacific railroad right of way (ROW), while the southern boundary is adjacent to Arroyo Simi. This area is characterized by light industrial. Alternative land uses for some of the underdeveloped parcels may need to be considered for this area to provide infill light industrial, business park, and office development on vacant and/or underutilized land.

■ Old Town Area (9)

Old Town area is located within the west-central portion of the City, south of Los Angeles Avenue and east of First Street. The area includes a group of blocks bordered by California Avenue and the Arroyo Simi to the north, First Street to the east, Ventura Avenue to the south, and Sinaloa Road to the west. This area is characterized with older homes, including homes of historical significance. Potential changes include infill residential development in areas that are vacant and/or underutilized. This area offers an opportunity to examine methods for historic preservation and/or encouraging new development that visually blends with the existing character of the area.

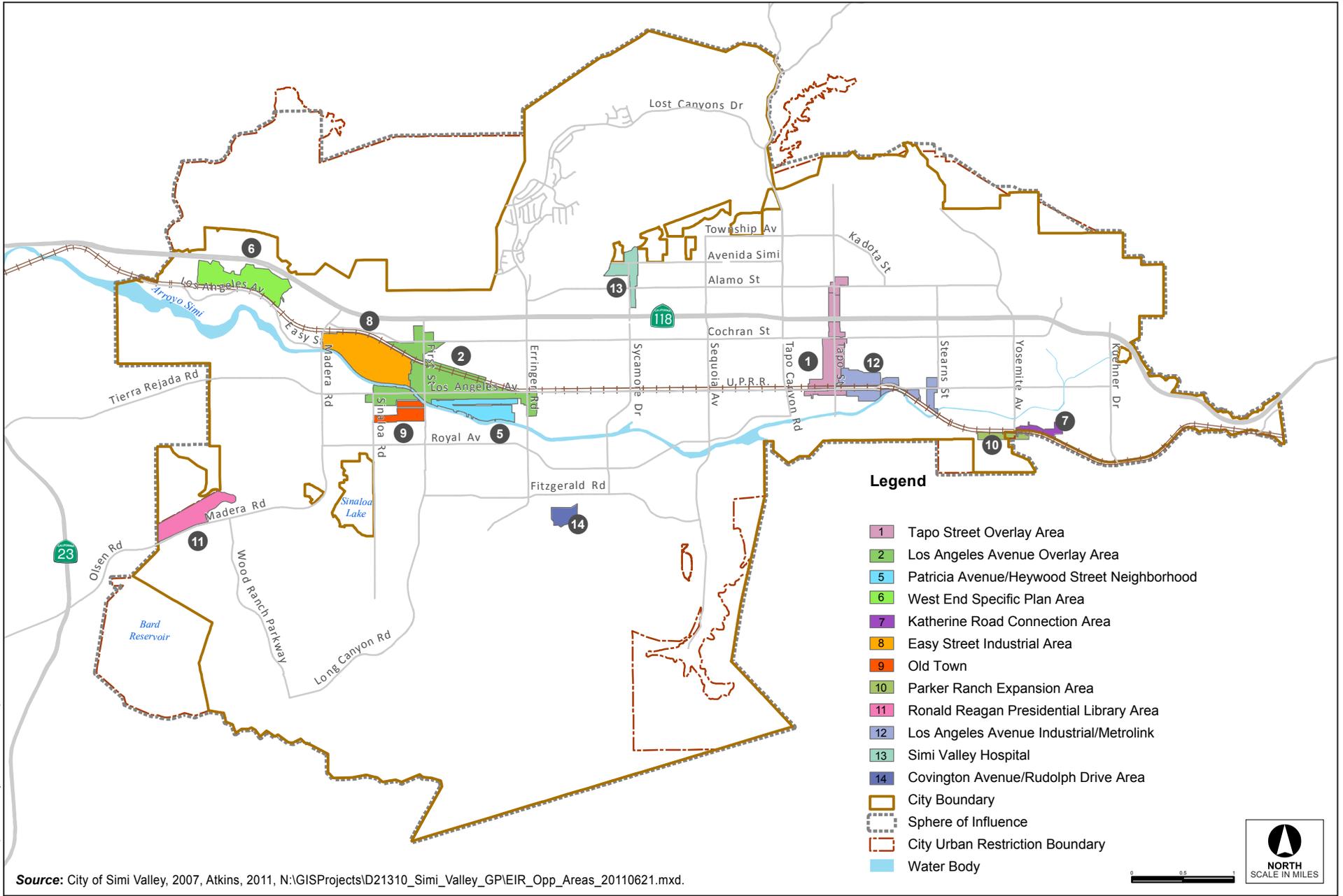


Figure 3-4
Areas of Potential Land Use Change

■ Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Improvement Area (11)

The area is located on western boundary of the City south of SR-118 and east of the SR-23, and has been recently annexed to the City. This area was identified for potential change for the purposes of facilitating the development of amenities to support visitors to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (“Presidential Library”). The vacant area around the Presidential Library within the City’s SOI is not being considered for change, as it is within the Tierra Rejada Greenbelt agreement area, limiting growth and development. The setting for the area proposed for change is directly south of the Presidential Library on properties that are generally vacant with rolling hills, a unique setting along Madera Road with more remote developments in the hillside area.

■ Los Angeles Avenue Industrial/Metrolink Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Area (12)

The Los Angeles Avenue Industrial and Metrolink Station Transit Oriented Development (TOD) area is located along Los Angeles Avenue, between Tapo Street and Stearns Street. Existing land uses include industrial, business park, residential, mobile home park, community center, and the Metrolink rail line that bisects this area. An opportunity for potential change has been identified within this area due to the amount of vacant land, the close proximity of City’s Metrolink Station, and nearby access to major arterial roads, employment and commercial centers, and residential uses.

■ Simi Valley Hospital Area (13)

The Simi Valley Hospital area is located in the central portion of the City along Sycamore Drive, between Sharp Road on the north and SR-118 on the south. The existing uses within this area include the Simi Valley Hospital, educational facilities, office/commercial uses, and single-family housing. Potential change would include a Hospital Overlay Zone, limiting permitted land uses in this area to medical-related.

■ Katherine Road Connection Area (7), Parker Ranch Expansion Area (10), and Covington Avenue/Rudolph Drive Area (14)

The General Plan land use designation would be changed for these three areas, but no additional goals or policies are required to implement the proposed changes.

The Katherine Road area is located in the eastern portion of Simi Valley, north of the community’s southeastern boundary near the Santa Susana unincorporated area. The Union Pacific Railroad line is located immediately south of the Katherine Road area. Single-family, multi-family, and mobile homes are located immediately north and east of the Katherine Road area, and single-family homes are located to the west. The right-of-way for the proposed Katherine Road connection is currently bisected by a mobile home park, vacant land, and undeveloped parcels. Nineteen of these mobile homes currently occupy property that is designated as public right-of-way that will be built to connect Katherine Road at Yosemite Avenue on the west and south of Kitsy Lane on the east. The General Plan land use designations for the area are Residential Mobile Homes and Moderate Density Residential. Some of the existing land uses are not consistent with the existing General Plan. Opportunities for potential change

have been identified in this area to provide infill residential development in areas that are vacant and/or underutilized and are not consistent with the existing General Plan. Potential development could include townhomes with open space that acts as a buffer between residential uses and the Union Pacific Railroad line.

The Parker Ranch Extension Area is located in the southeastern corner of the City and consists of five undeveloped parcels, totaling approximately 11.1 acres, generally located between the Union Pacific Railroad to the north, Crinklaw Lane to the south, Hidden Ranch Drive to the west, and Rainey Road to the east. An opportunity for potential change has been identified within this area to complement the adjacent Parker Ranch community. There are several single-family detached units within this subarea with horses and farm animals allowed by the zoning. A majority of the land is undeveloped. Surrounding this subarea to the north are medium density single-family homes, and to the south, east, and west is low-density, single-family development within the Parker Ranch community. Existing land uses within the area are consistent with the General Plan land use designations of Residential Low and Very Low. Parker Ranch, which is immediately adjacent to this subarea, is designated in the General Plan as Residential Medium. The properties located within this area could be re-designated from their current General Plan designation of Residential Very Low to Residential Medium, consistent with the adjacent land uses within the Parker Ranch community.

The Covington Avenue/Rudolph Drive Area is located south of Fitzgerald Road just east of Stanford Drive and Covington Avenue. This area is currently designated on the Land Use Map as Open Space, and a portion of it would be changed to Residential Mixed Density (Estate/Moderate Residential), as shown on Figure 3-4.

3.4.2 Goal and Policy Changes

The General Plan Update includes new and revised goals and policies, along with implementation programs, to achieve the community's vision. As noted, this vision is addressed in the Plan's emphasis on reuse and infill development within the existing footprint of development in the City and focusing growth in areas around transit stations and along corridors where transit is available or is anticipated to be available in the future. The focus of the new goals and policies is briefly described below.

■ Community Development

The Community Development chapter consists of three elements: Land Use and Community Design, Economic Development, and Historic and Cultural Resources. The Land Use and Community Design element provides a framework to accommodate future development in an efficient and sustainable manner that is compatible with the established character of the community and the protection of its surrounding natural environment. Though the City is anticipated to experience continued population growth, the supply of land available for development has been substantially exhausted with limited undeveloped land remaining outside of the hillsides surrounding Simi Valley. In accommodating this growth, the Land Use and Community Design element encourages substantial infill development within the existing footprint of the community's built environment, and limited new development in the hillsides and canyons surrounding the City. This growth strategy allows the City to provide diverse housing choices while protecting the established character of existing neighborhoods, maximizing

existing infrastructure, providing efficient service delivery, and strengthening existing districts in the community while preserving the natural landscape that helps define Simi Valley.

The Land Use and Community Design element correlates the goals and policies from each of the topical chapters into a coherent set of development policies, which serve as a central organizing element for the General Plan as a whole. As the Land Use and Community Design element serves as the final arbiter on how Simi Valley will evolve over the next 20 years, its policies are connected to and supported by those in all other General Plan sections. Policies for the conservation of natural resources and protection of residents from the risks of hazards are reflected in the distribution and densities of uses. The quantity and location of land uses are linked to the City's objectives for economic development, jobs generation, and fiscal balance, as well as its intentions for community design. Land use capacities are, in turn, correlated with the provision of adequate housing and services to meet the needs of residents, and transportation, parking and infrastructure to support residents, employees, and visitors.

The goals and policies in the Economic Development element address the City's ongoing commitment to maintaining a strong and balanced economy that provides opportunities for employment, economic growth, and community services that enhance quality of life in the community. These goals and policies provide a blueprint for sustainable economic development that revitalizes and strengthens existing commercial and industrial areas through new development activity and creates local employment opportunities for Simi Valley residents in a variety of sectors that correlate to the high education and skill levels in the community through proactive business retention and attraction strategies. Also, this strategy includes expanding visitor and tourist-related services and amenities to increase the length of stay and expenditure of visitors.

The goals and policies in the Historic and Cultural Resources element address Simi Valley's history and are intended to recognize, protect, and preserve the historic, archeological, paleontological, and natural resources that contribute to the City's historic legacy. These resources include physical elements that define the City's past, enrich the present, and give Simi Valley a unique identity and charm. When preserved and well maintained, these structures, sites, features, and points of interest provide a sense of permanence that fosters civic pride, stewardship, and community identity among City residents and businesses. The City's diversity of resources engenders an appreciation of the City's rich heritage by residents and visitors alike and importantly, differentiates Simi Valley as unique from all other communities.

■ Housing

Because of the shorter update cycle and special requirements associated with the Housing Element, the Draft 2008–2014 Simi Valley Housing Element is bound separately from the Draft General Plan. New housing goals and policies focus on providing adequate densities and development standards to facilitate and encourage a variety of housing types for all socioeconomic segments of the community, including those with special needs; facilitate and encourage the provision of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households; improve and preserve the City affordable housing stock; mitigate constraints to the development, improvement, and preservation of housing; and promote equal housing opportunity.

Policies also address the extent to which the City will facilitate or encourage infill and/or redevelopment; improve the existing jobs/housing balance under selected economic development assumptions; and identify economic goals and policies and potential implementation measures. The Housing Element is comprised of the following major components:

- An analysis of the City’s population, household and employment base, and the characteristics to identify housing needs
- A review of potential market, governmental, and environmental constraints to meeting the City’s identified housing needs
- An evaluation of opportunities that will further the development of new housing
- A statement of the Housing Plan to address Simi Valley’s identified housing needs, including housing goals, policies, and programs

■ Mobility and Infrastructure

The City of Simi Valley recognizes the importance of highly effective mobility and infrastructure systems. An efficient transportation network that moves people and goods throughout the City and beyond while minimizing impacts to the environment and local neighborhoods is a critical component of the community. Utilities that distribute water and power, infrastructure to drain stormwater, collect sewage and solid waste, and systems to provide telecommunications services to residents and businesses are necessary for commerce and a high quality of life for the community. The goals and policies in this Mobility element provide sustainable strategies to meet the City’s requirement for safe and efficient travel at the level of development anticipated to occur as the Land Use Plan is built out over the course of the next twenty years. The associated implementation plan for these strategies provides for development of the Land Use Plan in a way that is economical and efficient, and minimizes the adverse impacts of traffic to the greatest extent possible.

The Mobility element includes policies to encourage the use of intelligent transportation systems through the use of adaptive traffic controls and smart street design standards along with providing real-time travel information to system users to encourage smart travel choices. Also included are policies that encourage the adoption of travel demand management strategies, neighborhood traffic control measures, alternative means of transportation (including bicycle, pedestrian, and transit use), and land use connectivity to manage traffic on local streets and encourage non-motorized travel alternatives.

The provision of adequate infrastructure and utilities to accommodate the growth and development anticipated to occur in Simi Valley as the General Plan is built out is critical in supporting the needs of residents and businesses and ensuring a high quality of life. Water, wastewater, stormwater drainage, solid waste, energy and telecommunications systems will continue to be expanded concurrently with new development, population, and employment growth. Emphasis is placed on improving infrastructure in areas that will accommodate infill development, particularly along transit corridors and near transit stations to support intensified development consistent with the City’s priorities for compact development. Goals and policies in the Infrastructure element focus on:

- Ensuring a reliable water supply, expanding use of alternative sources of water
- Providing a sewer collection and treatment system that supports existing and planned development is provided that minimizes adverse effects to water quality

- Providing adequate stormwater drainage facilities and services are available that are environmentally sensitive, accommodate growth, and protect residents and property
- Ensuring that solid waste facilities meet or exceed requirements of state law and utilize strategies for economic and efficient collection, transfer, recycling, storage, and disposal of refuse
- Providing reliable, affordable, and environmentally sensitive energy sources
- Providing a range of innovative telecommunications services to attract and retain state-of-the-art businesses, provide access to all residents, and facilitate public education

■ Natural Resources

This element's goals, policies, design criteria, and land use densities reflect the dedication of the community to preserving its ridgelines, open space, and tree-studded hillsides as important natural and visual resources. The policies limit the amount and types of development allowed in these natural areas and guide the character of development that occurs in the hillsides surrounding Simi Valley. Many of these goals and policies are implemented through the City's Hillside Performance Standards and Tree Preservation Ordinance. These policies are further supported by the Simi Valley City Urban Restriction Boundary (CURB), which was established by a vote of the electorate in 1988 to limit urban sprawl and protect the existing agricultural, open space, viewsheds, wildlife, and watershed areas surrounding the community from the impacts of development. Sustainability comprises an important component of the General Plan's policies and programs and is woven throughout all chapters of the General Plan. Sustainable land use practices accommodate population growth in a more efficient manner than expanding the City outward into open space. It involves reinvesting in existing underutilized areas, providing housing close to jobs, promoting transit use and walking, and minimizing urban sprawl, loss of open space, pollution, and traffic congestion. Sustainable design and building practices include incorporating energy efficiency, water conservation, waste minimization, pollution prevention, resource efficient materials, and high standards of indoor environmental quality in all phases of a building's life. This chapter focuses on natural resource conservation, including vegetation and habitat; visual resource protection; water conservation; watershed protection; water quality; renewable energy resources; reduced energy consumption; and improved air quality.

■ Community Services

This chapter consists of the Parks and Recreation element and the Community Services element. The Parks and Recreation element contains goals and policies provide guidance to ensure that future development within the City and its planning area supports the City's commitment to high quality parks and recreational services and facilities. Parks and recreation goals and policies in this chapter focus on:

- Providing parks, recreation, and community facilities that enhance community livability and contribute to public health are available to serve the diverse recreational needs of residents and visitors
- Providing recreational programs and services that promote personal enrichment, healthy lifestyles, wellness, fun, lifelong learning, skill development, and positive relationships
- Ensuring an accessible and well-connected trails system

The Community Services element contains goals and policies that address Simi Valley’s commitment to support high quality education, library, and cultural arts programs for the anticipated growth of its population. These goals and policies further address human service programs, which include improving health, living a balanced and productive life, and preventing homelessness, and ensuring the availability of:

- A broad range of community services and programs to meet the social and human needs of residents and enrich daily living in the community
- A diversity of arts and cultural facilities and programs for people of all ages to enrich the community and enhance the quality of life for residents
- High-quality and equitably distributed educational facilities that provide an education for the children and youth of Simi Valley as well as life-long learning opportunities for all residents
- Library facilities that enhance Simi Valley’s quality of life and create opportunities for self-learning and cultural and academic enrichment

■ Safety and Noise

State law requires that the General Plan specifically identify areas in the community subject to hazards and include appropriate actions to minimize these hazards. Goals and policies in the Safety element are designed to reduce hazards from floods, seismic activity, wildland and urban fires, hazardous materials, and provide effective disaster preparedness, timely emergency response, and ongoing coordination with emergency response agencies. The goals and policies in the Noise element are designed to ensure inclusion of noise control in the planning process in order to maintain compatible land uses with acceptable environmental noise levels to protect Simi Valley residents from excessive noise, specifically minimizing land use conflicts between various noise sources and human activities, minimizing vehicular traffic and railroad noise impacts, and minimizing non-transportation noise impacts on sensitive receptors.

3.4.3 Climate Action Plan

Simi Valley has elected to be a green and sustainable community. Implementing energy and air quality goals in the General Plan’s Natural Resources Element will provide a more livable, equitable and economically vibrant community, and preserve the attributes of Simi Valley’s unique location and quality lifestyle. To achieve these goals, the City has prepared and will implement the Simi Valley Climate Action Plan (SV-CAP). The plan is designed to ensure that the impact of future development on air quality and energy resources is minimized and that land use decisions made by the City and internal operations within the City are consistent with adopted state legislation.

The City’s emission reduction efforts will coordinate with state strategies in order to accomplish emission reductions in an efficient and cost effective manner. The City developed the SV-CAP to meet the following state requirements:

- Create a GHG baseline from which to benchmark GHG reductions.
- Provide a plan that is consistent with and complementary to: the GHG emissions reduction efforts being conducted by the State of California through the Global Warming Solutions Act

(AB 32); the federal government through the actions of the Environmental Protection Agency; and the global community through the Kyoto Protocol.

- Guide the development, enhancement, and implementation of actions that aggressively reduce GHG emissions.
- Provide a policy document with specific implementation measures meant to be considered as part of the planning process for future development projects.

This EIR will also analyze and potential impacts related to the development of the SV-CAP and its associated emission reduction strategies. In developing the SV-CAP for the City of Simi Valley, Atkins has analyzed data provided to Atkins by the City and other sources to establish a baseline inventory for 2006. The purpose of this inventory is to identify and categorize the major sources and quantities of GHG emissions produced by the City's residents, businesses, and municipal operations. This inventory will serve as a reference to measure the City's progress towards reducing its GHG emissions. The SV-CAP also includes a methodology for tracking and reporting emissions in the future and recommendations for GHG reduction strategies as a foundation for these efforts.

3.5 TYPE AND INTENDED USE OF THIS EIR

Given its nature as a guidance document that does not include specific development projects, the General Plan Update requires either a program environmental impact report (EIR) or a master EIR. According to California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15168 (CEQA Guidelines), a program EIR may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related geographically; as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways. A Program EIR can provide a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in a project-specific EIR or on an individual action, ensure consideration of cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis, and allow the lead agency to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems or cumulative impacts.

The decision to prepare a program EIR instead of a master EIR was made based upon the nature of a master EIR. Master EIRs are helpful when the specifics of development of future projects are known. Future projects that are analyzed in a master EIR are permitted to make findings (showing that the project conforms to what was analyzed in the master EIR) and no further action is required. In addition, master EIRs must be updated every 5 years. Because future development allowed in Simi Valley is mostly unknown at the time of this writing, the preparation of a program EIR was determined to be appropriate.

A program EIR differs from the more common type of project EIR, which evaluates the environmental impacts of a specific development project where a development application has been filed and preliminary plans and developments schedule submitted. A project EIR examines all phases of the specific project, including planning, construction, and operation. Generally, the analysis contained in a program EIR is not as detailed as the analysis in a project-level EIR, since the specifics of projects that would, in the future, be proposed is unknown.

In accordance with California’s Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21002.1, the City of Simi Valley has prepared this program EIR for the following purposes:

- To inform the general public, the local community, responsible and interested public agencies, the decision-makers (e.g., the City Council) and other organizations, entities, and interested persons of the scope of the General Plan Update, its potential environmental effects, possible measures to reduce potentially significant environmental impacts, and alternatives that could reduce or avoid the significant effects of the General Plan Update
- To enable the City to consider environmental consequences when deciding whether to approve the General Plan Update
- To satisfy the substantive and procedural requirements of CEQA

This EIR has been prepared in accordance with CEQA (PRC Sections 21000 et seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines (CCR Title 14, Sections 15000 et seq.). As provided in both CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, public agencies are charged with the duty to substantially lessen or avoid significant environmental effects where feasible for projects subject to CEQA (refer to PRC Section 21004, CEQA Guidelines Sections 15002(a)(3) and 15021(a)(2)). In discharging this duty, the public agency has an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, taking into account economic, environmental, and social issues. The EIR is an informational document that informs public agency decision-makers and the general public of the significant environmental effects and the ways in which those impacts can be reduced to less-than-significant levels, either through the imposition of mitigation measures or through the implementation of specific alternatives to the project as proposed. In a practical sense, EIRs function as a technique for fact-finding, allowing the public and agency staff an opportunity to collectively review and evaluate baseline conditions and project impacts through a process of full disclosure. Additionally, the EIR provides the primary source of environmental information for the lead agency to consider when exercising any permitting authority or approval power directly related to implementation of the General Plan Update.

3.6 LEAD, RESPONSIBLE, AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

Per the CEQA Guidelines, this EIR defines lead, responsible, and trustee agencies. The City of Simi Valley is the lead agency for the project because it holds principal responsibility for approving the project. A responsible agency refers to a public agency other than the lead agency that has discretionary approval over the project. Potential approvals by responsible agencies are provided in Section 3.3.7 (Public Actions and Approvals Required).

A trustee agency is a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources held in trust for the people of the state that could be affected by a project. Trustee agencies for the General Plan Update include the California Department of Fish and Game, the State Lands Commission, and the state Department of Parks and Recreation.

3.7 PUBLIC ACTIONS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED

The City is the lead agency with the authority to carry out or approve the proposed project. As described in Chapter 1 (Introduction), the City’s project approvals include the adoption of the CAP, certification of

the EIR for the proposed project, approval of the General Plan Update, and adoption of Findings of Fact, a Statement of Overriding Considerations (if required), and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

In addition to the City, there are also federal, regional, and/or state responsible agencies that may have discretionary authority over specific aspects of the proposed project. Agencies that may have discretionary approval could include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Ventura County Pollution Control District (Authority to issue permits for operators that emit pollutants from a stationary source)
- State Water Resources Control Board, through the Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Authority to issue National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits, waste or discharge requirements for activities discharging waste that may affect groundwater quality, and permits for underground storage of hazardous substances)

Other agencies may use the EIR in exercising their duties even if they do not have discretionary permit approval authority over all or parts of the General Plan Update (or implementation of individual projects developed as a result of the General Plan Update).

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