SOUTHWEST VALLEY COMMUNITY PLANS

Complete Neighborhoods and Livable Communities

LOS ANGELES CITY PLANNING



The Southwest Valley Community Plans Update includes draft land use policies and zoning regulations that encourage the creation of complete and active neighborhoods through pedestrian-oriented design, a mix of uses, and various housing options.

Complete neighborhoods and livable communities integrate local-serving commercial uses within a ten or fifteen-minute walk of residential neighborhoods. They have public places for people to gather and interact, and a range of housing options to meet the needs of community members of all income levels and ages. Furthermore, all travelers are prioritized regardless of their age, ability, or their mode of travel. Be it walking or rolling, bicycling, or using public transportation, residents have options for safely getting around beyond just driving in a car. To facilitate this, complete neighborhoods are built at a walkable and bikeable scale by reducing the distances that people have to travel to get to their destinations.

Historically, land use planning practices in the Southwest Valley (as in many places across the U.S.) separated land meant for residential use from land meant for commercial, industrial, and other uses in a manner that led to "car-oriented" environments where most goods, services, activities, and resources require driving to access them. This planning approach also created a Southwest Valley where single-unit residential development is prioritized and permitted on over 64% of the land area across the three Community Plan Areas (only about 2% of land is reserved for lower density multi-family, and about 3% of land permits higher density multi-family developments). Over time, this approach created the following issues that affect the creation of complete neighborhoods:

- Limited production of a variety of housing options that are now critically needed in order to meet the housing needs of all Angelenos at various affordability levels and life stages.
- Disproportionate development pressure on areas with existing rent-stabilized multi-family apartments, which often leads to displacement of low-income residents.
- Decreased walkability across the Southwest Valley neighborhoods, which contributes to traffic congestion across the region.
- A jobs to housing imbalance where 80% of the people who work in the Southwest Valley live outside the area, and 56% of them have to travel over 10 miles to get to work.

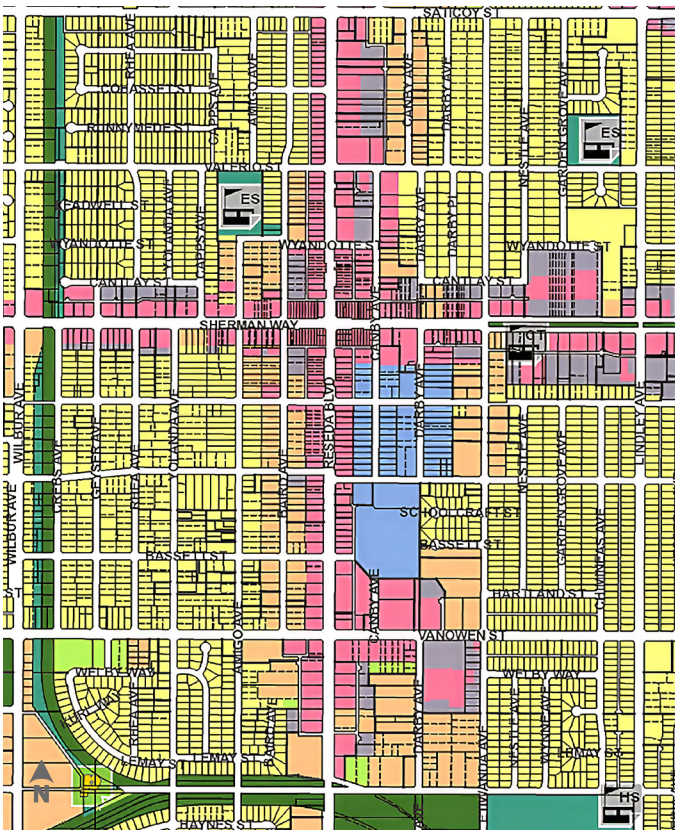
While many people already wish to have more housing options and/or use non-car modes of transportation to get to work and other destinations in the Southwest Valley, these options are often infeasible due to the realities created by outdated car-oriented land use planning. And while street infrastructure changes and transit investments are an important part of making these options more feasible, land use planning that supports pedestrian-scale environments is an equally important part of creating more equitable and complete neighborhoods in the Southwest Valley Community Plan Areas. Both land use changes and street infrastructure investments are needed to make walking or rolling, bicycling or scootering, and public transportation more reliable, safe, and appealing options. The Community Plans include the following strategies to create complete neighborhoods and livable communities.

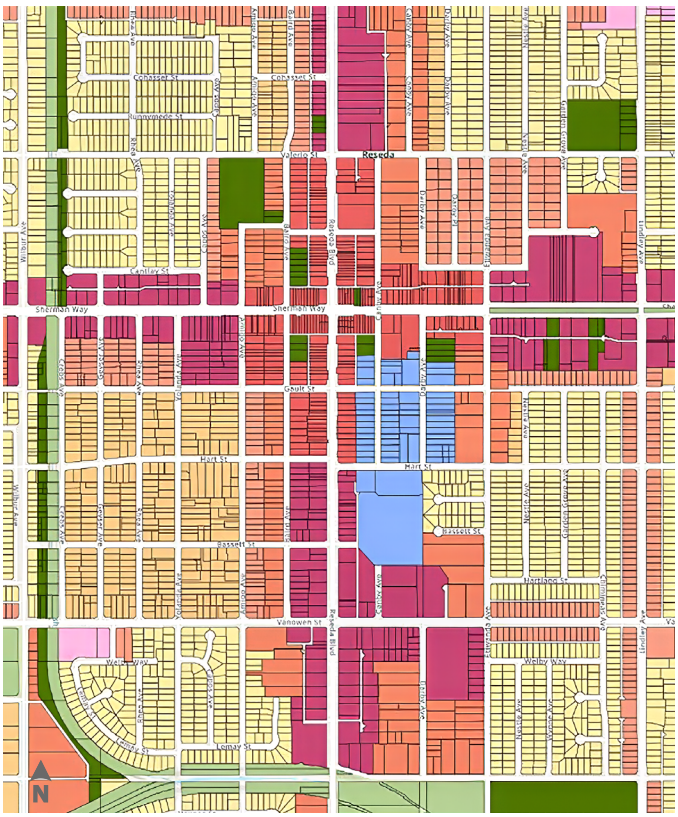
Transit-Oriented Neighborhoods

The City can help to promote more complete neighborhoods and active modes of transportation by creating more transit-oriented neighborhoods. In contrast to car-oriented land use planning, transit-oriented land use planning promotes mixed-use centers that prioritize walkability and transit access. To do this, the Plans capitalize on transit infrastructure by increasing housing capacity within a half-mile of Metro G Line (formerly Orange Line) busway stations and other intersections with high-frequency bus service. The zoning strategy for these areas emphasizes value capture, allowing for increases to the permitted density of residential units and the height and size of the building for projects that provide: on-site affordable housing units, publicly accessible open space, or other public benefits.

This example shows the proposed Village and Community Center land use designations applied to the area currently covered by the Reseda Community Design Overlay. The Village land use designation prioritizes lively and safe pedestrian environments with a range of housing types mixed with ground-floor retail. A variety of residential designations, including Medium Neighborhood Residential, Medium Residential, and Low Neighborhood Residential in the areas surrounding a Village land use designation, create housing options that support the increased foot traffic necessary for public transit–and many businesses–to be successful.

General Plan Land Use Designations at Sherman Way and Reseda Blvd





Existing

- Community Commercial
- General Commercial
- Limited Manufacturing
- Low Residential
- Low Medium I
- Low Medium II
- Medium
- Neighborhood Office Commercial
- Open Space
- Public Facilities

Proposed

- Community Center
- Village
- Neighborhood Center
- Medium Neighborhood Residential
- Medium Residential
- Low Neighborhood Residential
- Low Medium Residential
- Low Residential
- Light Industrial
- Open Space
- Public Facilities

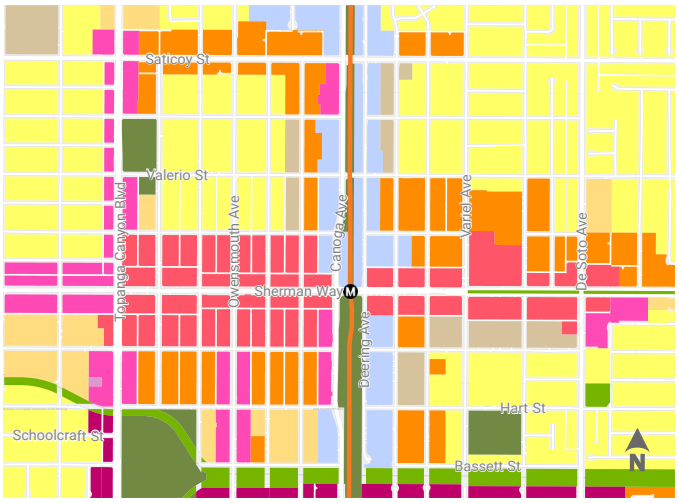
Opportunities for “Missing Middle” Housing

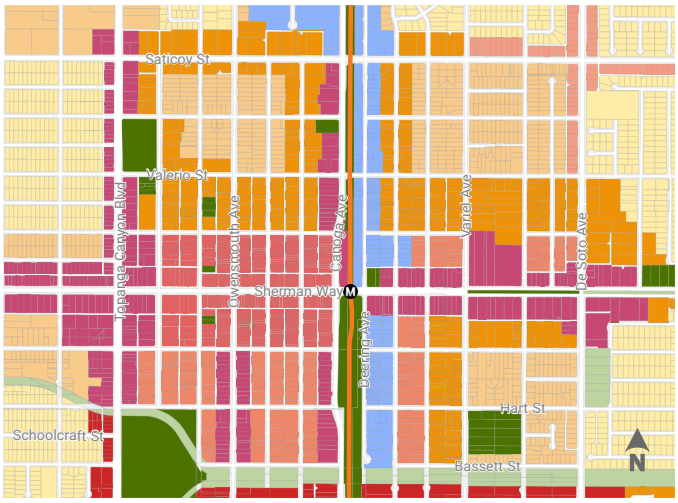
A key strategy of the update to the Community Plans is the creation of increased opportunities for what is known as *missing middle housing*. The word “middle” is used to describe this housing typology because it fills the gap in housing options between single-unit housing and mid- to high-rise apartment buildings in terms of form, scale, and more affordability levels. And the word “missing” refers to the decline in production of this type of housing across many U.S. cities since the 1980s. Examples include townhomes or small lot homes; duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes; rowhomes; and garden or cottage courtyard apartments. This type of housing is compatible in scale with detached single-unit homes while supporting additional units and in some cases neighborhood-serving commercial uses. The Low Neighborhood Residential and Low Medium Residential General Plan Land Use (GPLU) designations target the development of this sort of *missing middle housing* to meet the needs of a variety of residents at different life stages and income levels.

These proposals also build on the development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in the Southwest Valley. ADUs (in-law units, secondary units, and more) have significantly expanded across the Southwest Valley since State law changed in 2017 to permit them on lots zoned for single-unit residential. Between 2010 and January 2024, over 5,130 ADU applications were submitted across the Southwest Valley, accounting for nearly 15% of all ADU applications Citywide. Notably, the Canoga Park-Winnetka-Woodland Hills-West Hills Community Plan had the most ADU applications of any Community Plan in Los Angeles. The proposals for the Low Neighborhood Residential and Low Medium Residential land uses aim to provide a greater array of options for meeting the demand for this type of housing in the Southwest Valley represented by the expansion of ADUs.

While many areas around the Metro G (Orange) Line are envisioned as transit-oriented neighborhoods, capitalizing on the mobility benefits provided by the G Line busway, they also provide opportunities to expand the supply of missing middle housing. Seen here at the G Line Sherman Way Station in Canoga Park, the Low Medium Residential and Low Neighborhood Residential land uses promote gentle infill by expanding the housing capacity in these areas and providing a buffer between the more intense development closer to the corridor or station area and the lower-scale, primarily single-unit development at its outskirts.

General Plan Land Use Designations at the G Line Sherman Way Station in Canoga Park





Existing

- Operational Metro Rail Station
- Regional Center Commercial
- Community Commercial
- General Commercial
- Limited Manufacturing
- Low Residential
- Low Medium I
- Metro G Line (Orange)
- Low Medium II
- Medium
- Neighborhood Office Commercial
- Open Space
- Public Facilities

Proposed

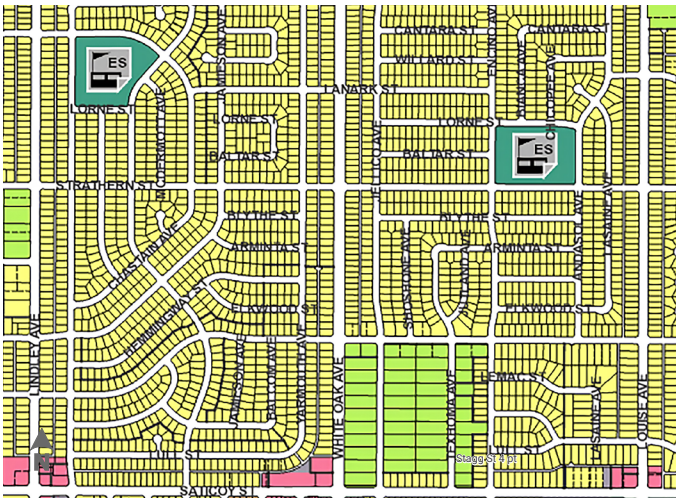
- Operational Metro Rail Station
- Regional Center
- Community Center
- Village
- Medium Neighborhood Residential
- Medium Residential
- Low Neighborhood Residential
- Metro G Line (Orange)
- Low Medium Residential
- Low Residential
- Light Industrial
- Open Space
- Public Facilities

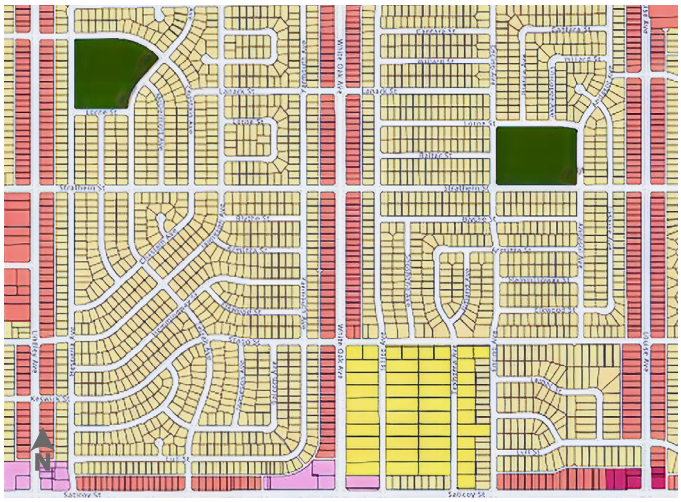
Zoning for Neighborhood Services

The Medium Neighborhood Residential and Low Neighborhood Residential land use designations and their associated zoning will implement new Residential Mixed-Use Districts. The strategy behind these Use Districts is to introduce local and small-scale commercial uses along strategic corridors across the three plan areas that are today zoned exclusively for single-unit residential use. These key areas will remain primarily residential – incorporating low-scale multi-unit housing alongside single-unit housing – but will now be permitted to integrate limited local-serving commercial uses. The size of these commercial spaces and their allowed uses will be limited to 3,000 square feet in some areas and 2,000 square feet in others in order to promote small, local businesses as neighborhood amenities between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Examples of allowed uses include daycare centers, neighborhood coffee shops or restaurants, small gyms or yoga studios, and small offices or retailers.

This example shows the Low Neighborhood Residential GPLU applied along Lindley, White Oak, and Louise Avenues in the Reseda and Lake Balboa neighborhoods. The Medium and Low Neighborhood Residential land uses are designated along wider streets (classified as Avenues or Boulevards) within existing residential neighborhoods, often with an alley for separation from the adjacent homes, to promote access to daily needs within walking distance for residents of these neighborhoods. These designations can help create connections within neighborhoods and encourage active modes of transportation.

Low Neighborhood Residential GPLU along Lindley, White Oak, and Louise Avenues in Reseda and Lake Balboa





Existing

- Low Residential
- Medium
- Neighborhood Office Commercial
- Public Facilities

Proposed

- Community Center
- Neighborhood Center
- Low Neighborhood Residential
- Low Residential
- Very Low Residential
- Public Facilities