

SurveyLA

Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey

Historic Resources Survey Report Sylmar Community Plan Area



Prepared for:

City of Los Angeles
Department of City Planning
Office of Historic Resources



Prepared by:

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP
Pasadena, CA

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Project Overview

This historic resources survey report (“Survey Report”) has been completed on behalf of the City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning’s Office of Historic Resources (OHR) for the SurveyLA historic resources survey of the Sylmar Community Plan Area (CPA). This project was undertaken from July 2014 to June 2015 by Historic Resources Group (HRG).

This Survey Report provides a summary of the work completed, including a description of the Survey Area; an overview of the field methodology; a summary of relevant contexts, themes, and property types; and complete lists of all recorded resources. This Survey Report is intended to be used in conjunction with the **SurveyLA Field Results Master Report** (“Master Report”) which provides a detailed discussion of SurveyLA methodology and explains the terms used in this report and associated appendices. The Master Report, Survey Report, and Appendices are available at www.surveyla.org.

SurveyLA Methodology Summary

Below is a brief summary of SurveyLA methodology. Refer to the Master Report discussed above for more information.

Field Survey Methods

- Properties surveyed for SurveyLA are evaluated for eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources, and for local designation as Historic-Cultural Monuments (HCM) or Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZ), commonly known as historic districts.
- Field surveyors cover the entire area within the boundaries of a CPA. However, only resources that have been identified as significant within the contexts developed for SurveyLA are recorded.
- Consultants making resource evaluations meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards in Architectural History, History, or a related field.
- Surveys focus on identifying significant resources dating from about 1850 to 1980.
- All surveys are completed from the public right-of-way (from vehicles or on foot as needed).
- Digital photographs are taken of all evaluated resources.

Field Surveys do not include:

- Individual resources and historic districts (including HPOZs) that are already designated (listed in the National, California or local registers).
- Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) surveys conducted within the last five years
- Potential Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) areas which have been surveyed in the last five years and are in the process of being designated.

SurveyLA Resources Types

SurveyLA identifies individual resources, non-parcel resources, historic districts and district contributors and non-contributors. Each of these is described below. Appendices A, B, and C are organized by resource type.

- **Individual Resources** are generally resources located within a single assessor parcel, such as a residence. However, a parcel may include more than one individual resource, if each appears to be significant.
- **Non-Parcel Resources** are not associated with Assessor Parcel Numbers (APNs) and generally do not have addresses. Examples include street trees, street lights, landscaped medians, bridges, and signs.
- **Historic Districts** are areas that are related geographically and by theme. Districts may include single or multiple parcels, depending on the resource. Examples of resources that may be recorded as historic districts include residential neighborhoods, garden apartments, commercial areas, large estates, school and hospital campuses, and industrial complexes.
- **District Contributors and Non-Contributors** are buildings, structures, sites, objects, and other features located within historic districts. Generally, non-contributing resources are those that are extensively altered, built outside the period of significance, or that do not relate to historic contexts and themes defined for the district.
- **Planning Districts** are areas that are related geographically and by theme, but do not meet eligibility standards for designation. This is generally because the majority of the contributing features have been altered, resulting in a cumulative impact on the overall integrity of the area that makes it ineligible as a Historic District. The Planning District determination, therefore, is used as a tool to inform new Community Plans being developed by the Department of City Planning. These areas have consistent planning features – such as height, massing, setbacks, and street trees – which warrant consideration in the local planning process.

Project Team

The Sylmar CPA survey was conducted by Historic Resources Group. Personnel included Kari Michele Fowler, Senior Preservation Planner; Christine Lazzaretto, Principal; Laura Janssen, Senior Architectural Historian; Heather Goers, Architectural Historian; Robby Aranguren, Planning Associate, and Christy Johnson McAvoy, Founding Principal. Additional assistance was provided by intern Lauren Postlmayr. Kari Fowler served as the project manager. The project team also included Kevin Roderick, journalist, editor, and author of *The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb*. Kevin provided valuable expertise and input regarding the San Fernando Valley and its significant resources throughout all phases of the project.

Survey Area

Description of the Survey Area

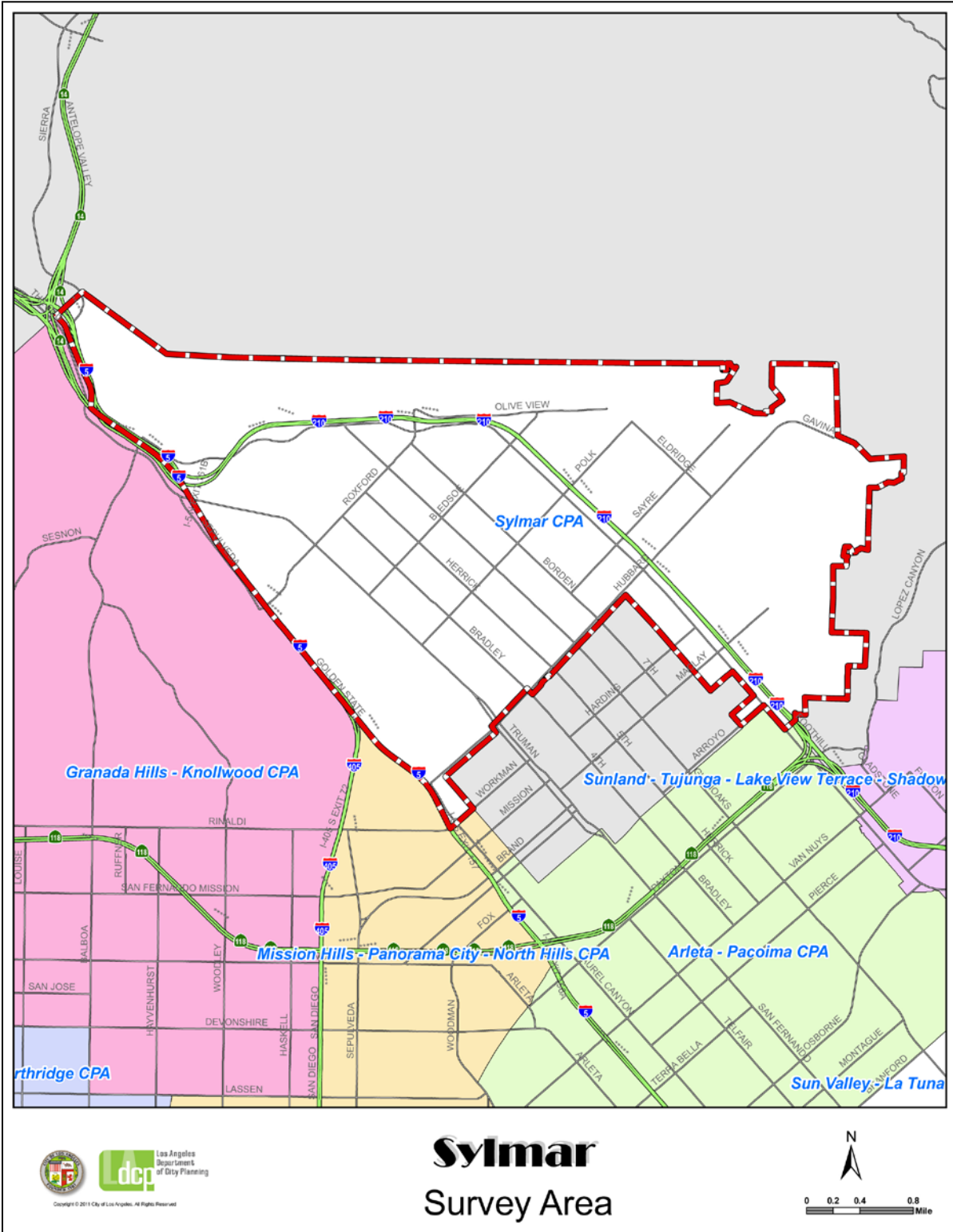
The identified survey area (“Survey Area”) corresponds with boundary for the Sylmar Community Plan Area (CPA). Located in the northern portion of the San Fernando Valley, the Survey Area is bounded generally on the west by the Golden State (5) Freeway, and Sepulveda Boulevard; on the north and east by open space, including Elsmere Canyon, Saddletree Open Space, and Wilson Canyon Park. The CPA abuts the City of San Fernando on the southeast. The Survey Area borders the CPAs of Granada Hills–Knollwood and Mission Hills–Panorama City–North Hills to the west. (*See Survey Area Map below.*)

The CPA consists of a total of 15,146 parcels. Of these, approximately 13,114 parcels were surveyed by SurveyLA. SurveyLA generally does not include properties constructed after 1980, or resources that have been designated under Federal, state, or local programs.¹

The topography of the Survey Area is generally flat, a characteristic which is reflected in the area’s largely orthogonal street patterns. Those portions of the Survey Area to the north east, closest to the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, exhibit a more curvilinear street pattern which follows the area’s hilly topography. The Survey Area is traversed by several major thoroughfares, including San Fernando Road and Foothill Boulevard; these roads are generally parallel to each other, running to the north and south, and reflect the development of early transportation corridors. The Survey Area is accessed from the west by the Golden State (5) Freeway, and from the north by the Foothill (210) Freeway, which veers south to bisect the CPA.

¹ For designated resources within the CPA at the time of the survey, refer to the Designated Resources map below. For the most up-to-date information on designated resources, go to zimas.lacity.org or www.HistoricPlacesLA.org, or contact the Department of City Planning’s Office of Historic Resources.

Survey Area Map.



The Survey Area is composed of low- to medium-density urban land uses, including residential, commercial, agricultural, institutional, and industrial properties. The majority of the Survey Area is composed primarily of low-density single-family residential neighborhoods; multi-family residential development is generally located along the Foothill Boulevard corridor and also in the easternmost portion of the CPA, to the east of El Cariso Community Regional Park. Commercial development is primarily located along the major traffic corridors of San Fernando Road and Foothill Boulevard. Industrial properties are concentrated in the western portion of the CPA, particularly along San Fernando Road.

Open space within the CPA includes several parks throughout the Survey Area; the largest of these is the El Cariso Community Regional Park, located in the eastern portion of the CPA. Other parks have been developed on the site of early ranches, including Stetson Ranch Park and Carey Ranch Park. Sylmar Park is also located in the Survey Area, and is the site of the Sylmar Recreation Center.

Development History

The land comprising the Survey Area was first settled by the Native American Tongva tribe, who would later become known as the “Gabrielino” Indians when the Mission San Gabriel Arcangel was established on Tongva land.² The first European settlers in the area were a group of explorers led by Spanish expeditioner Gaspar de Portola, who traveled north through the San Fernando Valley on August 7, 1769. Mission San Fernando Rey de España was founded by Franciscan missionary Father Fermin Lasuen on September 8, 1797, approximately three miles to the south of present-day Sylmar. The missionaries recognized that the climate and topography of the area resembled that of their native Spain, where crops of olives grew in abundance, and began to develop the area for similar crops. By the early nineteenth century the Mission had evolved into a robust agricultural operation, selling fruits, vegetables, wine, livestock, and olives. The Mission was subsequently secularized, with the lands surrounding the mission subdivided as a land grant known as the Rancho Ex-Mission San Fernando. The mission itself, however, remained the center of regional trade and commerce in the Valley until 1874,³ when Charles Maclay and his business partner, George K. Porter, purchased 56,000 acres of the rancho – which comprised the entire northern San Fernando Valley – and founded the nearby City of San Fernando. An accompanying Southern Pacific railroad line, completed in 1876, linked San Fernando to downtown Los Angeles and San Francisco, opening up trade routes and increasing access to the

² Some sources credit the Tataviam as the earliest settlers of the area; the tribe was quite small and was heavily influenced by the larger neighboring Tongva tribe, with whom the Tataviam shared common ancestral ties. See “L.A.’s Original Peoples,” <http://www.laalmanac.com/history/hi05.htm> (accessed April 2015).

³ “Sylmar Community Plan, Chapter 2, Community Background (DRAFT).”

Valley region. The completion of the railroad tracks connected the Valley to the rest of the region and was crucial to Sylmar's early development.⁴

As a part of his development of San Fernando, Charles Maclay set aside forty acres for a non-sectarian cemetery. At the time the cemetery, which was dubbed Morningside Cemetery, was only the second in the Valley – and the only cemetery outside the Mission available to non-Catholics.⁵ In later years, however, the City of San Fernando voted to shrink its borders; Morningside Cemetery was now outside the San Fernando city limits and was subsequently absorbed by the larger community of Morningside, which eventually became present-day Sylmar. The cemetery stands as the only extant example of development from this early period within the Survey Area; it is a designated City Historic-Cultural Monument.

Many smaller farming operations began to emerge on the outskirts of San Fernando as the Valley's agricultural operations took hold. The area comprising present-day Sylmar passed through several changes of ownership before the land was purchased by a group of Decatur, Illinois, businessmen around 1890. Calling themselves the Los Angeles Olive Growers Association, the group sought to capitalize on the area's established success in growing the crop and planted over 1,000 acres of olive trees east of the railroad tracks on San Fernando Road and south of Roxford Street. By the turn of the century, the operation – which also included a packing plant – was so successful that the now 2,000-acre grove was reputed to be the world's largest.⁶ Residents were drawn to the area as commerce expanded. Extant examples of single-family residences from this early period of development are very rare: two known examples include properties at 13298 Herrick Avenue (1905) and 13301 Hubbard Street (1908).

One of the most pivotal events in the development of the San Fernando Valley occurred in 1913, with the opening of the Los Angeles Owens River Aqueduct. Conceived by William Mulholland, the aqueduct brought water 338 miles from the Eastern Sierra, providing a steady stream of reliable water to Los Angeles. The plan for the aqueduct began in 1905, with the purchase of the land and water; construction, however, did not begin until 1908. The aqueduct originated at Owens River in Inyo County and terminated at the Lower Van Norman Reservoir in nearby Granada Hills. Most of the northern rural areas in the Valley were annexed to the City of Los Angeles around the time of the aqueduct's opening in order to gain access to the new water supply, more than doubling the size of Los Angeles.⁷ The community of Morningside was annexed in 1915 and became known as Sylmar – meaning “sea of trees” in reference to the waving olive groves that blanketed this part of the Valley. A local story states that William

⁴ “Sylmar Community Plan, Chapter 2, Community Background (DRAFT).”

⁵ Hadley Meares, “What Lies Beneath: The Many Mysteries of Pioneer Cemetery,” KCET Lost Landmarks, June 27, 2014, <http://www.kcet.org/socal/departures/columns/lost-landmarks/what-lies-beneath-the-many-mysteries-of-pioneer-cemetery.html> (accessed April 2015).

⁶ Kevin Roderick, *The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times Books, 2001), 71.

⁷ “Sylmar Community Plan, Chapter 2, Community Background (DRAFT).”

Mulholland stood on the foothills near the site of the planned aqueduct and noted that the wind caused the green and silver leaves of the olive farms to look like waves crashing against the mountains.⁸

Now equipped with an abundant water supply, by the 1920s Sylmar had grown into a flourishing agricultural center. Olive oil and pickled olives were common agricultural products, and horse ranching and poultry farming played a substantial role in the driving the economy of the area.⁹ This gave rise to the development of ranching operations, the most prominent of which was the Stetson Ranch, constructed by Henry Stetson, heir to the Stetson cowboy hat company. Smaller farms were also constructed; one such example, first developed in 1925, remains extant at 12801 Maclay Street.

The Valley's climate, ideal for agricultural purposes, was also promoted as healthful and conducive to recovering from a variety of maladies, especially tuberculosis. Apart from Sylmar's ongoing contributions to the agricultural industry, throughout the 1920s development in the area was driven largely by the establishment of two major medical facilities: the Olive View Sanatorium (now known as the UCLA-Olive View Medical Center), and the United States Veterans Administration Hospital. Olive View was first developed in 1917, when Los Angeles County purchased 480 acres in the foothills that would become the community of Sylmar for \$12,300 in order to establish a tubercular sanatorium. Three years later, the Olive View Sanatorium opened for the isolation and treatment of tuberculosis patients. Plans for expansion of the facility began almost immediately. In 1922, Olive View received a \$750,000 bond from Los Angeles County to add 750 beds to the existing facility. In 1924, the sanatorium began work to add a laundry building, a warehouse, an administration building, eight patient wards, six cottages for employees, three double bungalows for employees, and two residences for physicians. Also added was a water tank holding approximately 500,000 gallons of water, situated in the hills behind the buildings. In 1926, work began on an additional hospital unit to be used as a special care facility for patients with "extreme conditions." Designed by Allied Architects, the building included private rooms, sleeping porches, an X-ray room, two operating rooms, a diet kitchen, and special quarters for attendants, nurses, and employees. Another hospital unit opened in 1929.

The Veterans Administration Hospital was the first Veterans Bureau hospital to be constructed on the Pacific Coast, and was intended to function primarily as tubercular hospital for disabled veterans.¹⁰ The hospital complex was constructed on land offered to the government by prominent San Fernando Valley rancher Volney Craig. Craig offered the 616-acre tract, which was part of the Ford-Craig ranch, to the United States government in 1924 for \$100,000.¹¹ Plans for the hospital were prepared by the

⁸ "Sylmar Area History," Sylmar Chamber of Commerce, <http://www.sylmarchamber.com/history.html> (accessed April 2015).

⁹ "Sylmar Community Plan, Chapter 2, Community Background (DRAFT)."

¹⁰ "Stone Laid for Hospital," *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 1925, and "M'Quigg Speaks at Dedication," *Los Angeles Times*, April 11, 1926.

¹¹ "San Fernando Gets Hospital," *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 1924.

Veterans Bureau, which was assisted by the American Legion medical committee, headed by tubercular specialist Dr. Charles Browning.¹² When it was completed in 1926, the hospital complex was considered “one of the most modern in the country,”¹³ and consisted of twenty buildings with accommodations for 232 beds.

Infrastructural improvements accompanied these large construction projects, including the installation of a sewer system, street paving and widening, and highway construction. Los Angeles city planner George Gordon Whitnall spearheaded a campaign to construct four “highways” that would radiate from the San Fernando Valley into arteries leading to downtown Los Angeles. These parkway/highways were more modest in design than the modern freeway, and often featured a landscaped center strip separating opposing lanes of traffic.¹⁴ The most ambitious of these parkways was to be Whitnall Highway, which would stretch diagonally southeast to northwest from Newhall (now part of Santa Clarita) through the San Fernando Valley, and meet up with the entrance of a two-mile tunnel originating off Riverside Drive that would run under Griffith Park into Hollywood.¹⁵ A key component of the project was the installation of power lines along the parkway, which were already installed by the time the first portion of the Whitnall Highway opened in June 1927. Although the project eventually stalled over issues of eminent domain and was abandoned entirely by the mid-1930s, the power lines – as well as the land already acquired by the City in preparation for the project – remained. Today, the area is known as the Whitnall Highway Power Corridor.

Confirmation of the veteran’s hospital project, as well as news of planned infrastructural improvements like the Whitnall Highway and the nearby Pacoima Dam, sparked a surge in building activity in the Sylmar area. The *Los Angeles Times* noted in 1925 that “the Federal hospital and the flood control project represent more than half of the whole sum [of \$7,000,000 in planned building projects], but as work soon will be started on both and as the large army of workers employed at both places will receive the bulk of their supplies from here, they are looked upon to contribute in no small degree to local prosperity.”¹⁶ Residential construction in Sylmar flourished in the mid-to late-1920s and continued throughout the 1930s as access to the area improved and amenities increased. Extant examples of this trend include several single-family homes dating from 1923 to 1936, which are scattered throughout the Survey Area and reflect architectural styles popular at the time, such as Craftsman, American Colonial Revival, and Spanish Colonial Revival. Although multi-family residential construction in Sylmar was decidedly less common during this period, two examples of this type dating from

¹² “Stone Laid for Hospital,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 1925.

¹³ M’Quigg Speaks at Dedication,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 11, 1926.

¹⁴ Hadley Meares, “Phantom Fast Lanes: Whitnall Highway and the Footprint of Best Laid Plans,” KCET Lost Landmarks, June 28, 2013, <http://www.kcet.org/socal/departures/columns/lost-landmarks/phantom-fast-lanes-whitnall-highway-and-the-footprint-of-best-laid-plans.html> (accessed April 2015).

¹⁵ Meares, “Phantom Fast Lanes: Whitnall Highway and the Footprint of Best Laid Plans.”

¹⁶ “Many New Buildings Projected,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1924.

the 1930s remain extant: a bungalow court at 15101-15109 Roxford Street, built between 1930 and 1933 and a courtyard apartment building at 13260-13270 Maclay Street, constructed in 1938.

As the 1930s and the Great Depression progressed, development languished. Building activity focused on expansions of existing facilities in Sylmar, like the Olive View Sanatorium, and those infrastructure projects funded by Federal aid. By 1930, Olive View included a total of 150 buildings operated by some 500 employees. Patient ward buildings were one- and two-story vernacular wood-frame buildings. A series of Craftsman cottages served as employee residences, while two Spanish Colonial Revival residences were reserved for physicians. The Administration Building, an elaborate Spanish Colonial Revival courtyard building, served as the facility's public entrance. In 1935, an additional \$3 million in county funds was approved for further development of the site. That same year, work was also completed on a series of highway improvements which included construction of a bridge over existing Southern Pacific Railroad tracks near the Newhall Pass.¹⁷ The bridge, known today as the Sierra Highway Overpass, connected two major transportation corridors: State Route 99 (now San Fernando Road), and State Route 6 (now Sierra Highway).

As building activity ground to a halt during the years of World War II, the character of Sylmar remained largely rural and agricultural, and olive groves remained a part of the landscape throughout the postwar era. Beginning in the late 1940s, however, Sylmar's identity began to evolve away from that of a primarily agricultural community as returning servicemen and their new families began to flock to the San Fernando Valley. The sudden and substantial demand for housing in Sylmar effectively put an end to development of the area's iconic product, as real estate developers began to subdivide the area's ranches and farms for residential development. It was during this period, between 1940 and 1960, that much of the community's housing stock was built, with single-story ranch-style homes that still predominate many neighborhoods.¹⁸

Mobile homes also rose in popularity during the postwar years, as they offered an affordable alternative to the site-built single-family residence and could be mass-produced swiftly, in response to the sudden demand. A concentration of extant examples of postwar mobile home parks exists today in Sylmar; these include the Metrolink Mobile Home Park (1947), the Park Estates Mobile Home Park (1954), Sylmar Manor (1954), the Oakridge Mobile Home Park (1958), Rancho Hermosa (1959), and the Tahitian Mobile Home Park (1961).

With the influx of new residents in the years following the war, building activity was concentrated not only on housing, but on developing institutions to meet the demands of the growing community. Examples include Fire Station No. 91, which was constructed in 1956. A number of schools were also constructed in Sylmar to

¹⁷ "Bridge Job Near Finish," *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 1935.

¹⁸ "Sylmar Community Plan, Chapter 2, Community Background (DRAFT)."

accommodate the growing young families of the “baby boom.” Intact examples include Dyer Street Elementary School (1953), Osceola Street Elementary School (1958), Olive Vista Middle School (1958), and Sylmar High School (1961). During the early years, recreational offerings still reflected Sylmar’s agricultural past, such as the 4-H Club building built in 1946. However, later construction like the Sylmar Recreation Center, completed in 1961, exemplified the area’s burgeoning urbanization. Such trends were reflected in institutional development as well; in 1965, the Los Angeles County Juvenile Hall opened in Sylmar; it would eventually become the nation’s largest juvenile detention center. Today, the center is known as Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall, renamed in 1998 in honor of the retired chief probation officer.

Neighborhood commercial centers also grew in importance as the “bedroom communities” of the San Fernando Valley expanded. Neighborhood-serving businesses from the period include Cooper’s Hardware (1957), with its distinctive saw-shaped neon sign, and the Googie-style Denny’s (1968). One of the most significant companies to establish a presence in Sylmar during this period was the Merle Norman cosmetics company. Founded in Los Angeles in 1931 by Jack Boison “J.B.” Nethercutt, Merle Norman was named for Nethercutt’s aunt Merle and uncle Norman, who adopted the boy following the death of his parents. The Sylmar factory, first developed in 1958 with an additional building constructed four years later, was originally used by a division of Merle Norman which manufactured trap-shooting targets. The cosmetics division was eventually relocated to the Sylmar facility in 1991, and the trap-shooting plants were utilized as cosmetic packing plants. Nethercutt eventually amassed a substantial fortune selling women’s beauty products and used much of that wealth to assemble one of the world’s finest automobile collections. A third building was subsequently constructed in 1970 to house the Nethercutt Collection, which features rare collectibles, ranging from mechanical musical instruments and antique furniture, and over 250 American and European cars dating from 1898 to 1997. The Nethercutt Collection opened to the public in 1971, and the property continues to operate as Merle Norman Cosmetics and the Nethercutt Collection today.

With the expansion of population, commerce, and industry in the postwar era, the infrastructure of the San Fernando Valley as a whole became a major concern. Construction commenced on both the Golden State (5) and the Foothill (210) Freeways during this period. Additionally, in 1956, the State Department of Water Resources reported that Los Angeles was at risk of losing the rights to some water in the Eastern Sierra’s Mono Basin because the city did not have sufficient aqueduct capacity to move the water south. Thus, Los Angeles began the five-year construction of the Second Aqueduct. Completed in 1970 at an estimated cost of \$89 million, this aqueduct is 137 miles long and able to contain 290,000 cubic feet of water. As with the first aqueduct, the water flows entirely by gravity from the Eastern Sierra to the upper Van Norman Reservoir in Granada Hills. The new aqueduct increased the city’s aqueduct capacity by fifty percent. The Second Aqueduct continues to operate as a major piece of the City of Los Angeles’ water system infrastructure; together, the two aqueducts supply about seventy percent of the city’s water supply in most years.

In 1971, the San Fernando Earthquake – sometimes known as the Sylmar Earthquake – struck Southern California. With the epicenter of the quake occurring in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, the community of Sylmar sustained some of the most substantial damage; the partial collapse of each of the area’s two medical centers claimed most of the earthquake’s fatalities. The Veterans Administration Hospital was almost entirely destroyed; the only remnants from this early property is a laundry building and a series of stone walls. The newly-expanded Olive View facility had been open for just four months when the earthquake struck; the reinforced concrete building pancaked, leading to the subsequent demolition of the building in 1973. Ironically, some of the original 1920s-era buildings survive the quake unharmed.

The earthquake dramatically shifted the pattern of development in Sylmar. Much of the construction efforts which took place throughout the 1970s were concentrated on rebuilding and rehabilitation efforts, so that commercial and institutional resources which were essential to the identity and economy of the community could be re-established. The site of the former Veterans Administration Hospital was redeveloped as Veterans Memorial Park. Conversely, it would be fifteen years before a new medical center building would be re-opened on the site of the former Olive View Hospital; the facility is now known as Olive View-UCLA Medical Center. The Los Angeles County Juvenile Detention Center was also rebuilt and expanded. The Foothill (210) Freeway was completed in 1975, the same year that the Los Angeles Mission College opened. The most recent addition to the Los Angeles Community College District, the establishment of the Los Angeles Mission College, reflected the renewed growth which occurred in Sylmar following the 1971 earthquake. This trend continued through the 1980s, when Sylmar experienced some of the highest rates of growth for population and housing in the city of Los Angeles.¹⁹

¹⁹ “Sylmar Community Plan, Chapter 2, Community Background (DRAFT).”

Development by Decade Map.



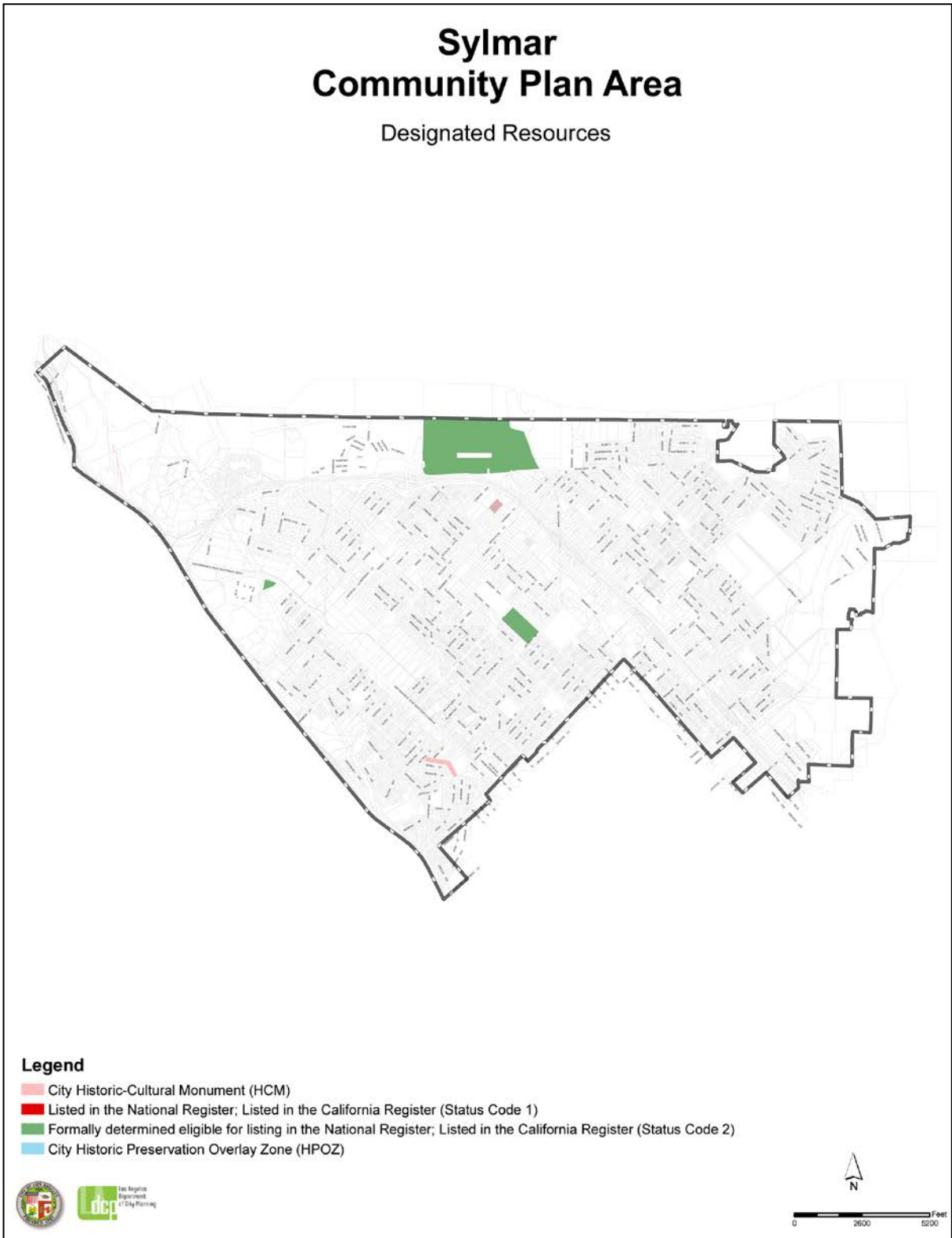
Designated Resources

The following map depicts designated resources within the Sylmar CPA at the time of the survey. These include properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NR) and/or the California Register of Historical Resources (CR), as well as locally designated Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monuments (HCMs). The CPA does not contain any designated Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs).

Designated resources in the Sylmar CPA include the site of the Missions Wells and Settling Basin (1802); the San Fernando Pioneer Memorial Cemetery, originally established in the mid-19th century; and the original Los Angeles Aqueduct, completed in 1913.²⁰

²⁰ For the most up-to-date information on designated resources, go to zimas.lacity.org or www.HistoricPlacesLA.org, or contact the Department of City Planning's Office of Historic Resources.

Designated Resources Map.



Community Plan Area Survey Methodology

The field survey was conducted using the methodology established by the Office of Historic Resources for SurveyLA, which includes the citywide Historic Context Statement and customized mobile Field Guide Survey System (FiGSS).²¹

The field work was conducted in two phases: *Reconnaissance* and *Documentation*. The Reconnaissance Phase was conducted by a team of two qualified survey professionals, both of whom meet the Secretary of the Interior's *Professional Qualifications Standards*. This phase involved a detailed and methodical review of each neighborhood, street, and individual property within the Survey Area. It was during this phase that decisions were made about which properties and districts should be documented, and how those properties should be evaluated. By making these decisions up front and as a team, this methodology ensures a more thoughtful approach to resource identification and evaluation, creates greater consensus among the field survey teams, and produces more consistent survey results. This approach also substantially streamlines the next phase of field survey, enabling the field teams to document large numbers of properties quickly and efficiently.

Once the Reconnaissance Phase was completed, the Documentation Phase began. During this phase, field work was conducted by teams of two. Properties that were identified during the previous phase, along with those that had significant associative qualities identified in pre-loaded data in FiGSS, were documented and evaluated for potential historic, cultural, or architectural significance. Documentation included a digital photograph, recordation of historic features and subsequent alterations, and the reason for a property's potential historic significance. It is also during this phase that contexts and themes are applied and evaluation status codes are assigned. All field work was conducted from the public right-of-way. Following the completion of field work, all survey data was reviewed in detail by a qualified survey professional to ensure accuracy and consistency throughout.

In addition to identifying significant properties based on physical characteristics as observed from the public right-of-way, some properties in the Survey Area may be significant for historic associations, such as an association with an important person. To address this, extensive research was conducted prior to fieldwork to assist surveyors in identifying potentially significant properties. Sources included building permits, Sanborn maps, historic photos, historic and contemporary aerial images, city directories, genealogical records, voter registration records, census records, and historical newspapers and periodicals. Research for SurveyLA utilizes the collections of the Los Angeles Public Library; University of Southern California (USC); University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA); Huntington Library; Historical Los Angeles Times; the Online Archive of California; and the Pacific Coast Architecture Database, among others.

²¹ For more information about the SurveyLA methodology, see the *SurveyLA Field Results Master Report*.

Summary of Findings

The following discussion of Property Types, Contexts, and Themes relates to the resources identified and recorded as eligible for designation.

Summary of Property Types

The Sylmar CPA contains a diverse range of extant property types, representing a number of periods of development. The following is a brief summary of those property types that were documented and evaluated as historically, culturally, or architecturally significant.

Residential Properties

The survey identified a number of 1920s single-family residences as representative of some of the area's earliest development. Also from this period is a residence constructed of local arroyo stone. The oldest extant residences identified in the Survey Area are a 1905 vernacular farmhouse and a 1908 Craftsman house. Other identified residential properties include a 1930s bungalow court, and a 1930s courtyard apartment. A small number of residences were identified for their architectural merit.

Commercial Properties

A small number of commercial properties were identified by the survey, including a Google-style restaurant, and a long-time neighborhood hardware store.

Institutional Properties

The survey identified four LAUSD school campuses dating from the postwar period, including elementary, junior high/middle, and high schools. The high school was also evaluated for its architectural merit. A number of government services properties were identified, including a fire station and a water pump plant. Other institutional examples include a public pool, a juvenile detention center, and a 1920s tubercular sanatorium.

Industrial Properties

A cluster of three industrial buildings associated with Merle Norman Cosmetics and the Nethercutt Collection were identified. In addition, the survey evaluated a 1940s agricultural-related property for its association with the 4-H Club.

Other Properties

The survey identified a number of unique property types. Examples include a 1930s concrete bridge, a transmission line corridor, and an aqueduct. Two World War II-era air raid sirens were also identified.

Summary of Contexts and Themes

Many of the Contexts and Themes developed for the SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement are represented in the Sylmar CPA. The following is a representative sampling of some of the more common Context/Theme combinations used in the survey, as well as some examples that are specific to this part of the city. Each Context/Theme is illustrated with specific examples from the Survey Area.²²

For a complete list of individual resources identified as meeting eligibility standards and criteria for the National Register, California Register, and/or local listing, see Appendix A.

For a complete list of non-parcel resources identified as meeting eligibility standards and criteria for the National Register, California Register, and/or local listing, see Appendix B.

For a complete list of historic districts identified as meeting eligibility standards and criteria for the National Register, California Register, and/or local listing, see Appendix C. This appendix also includes Planning Districts, which do not meet eligibility standards and criteria for listing but may warrant special consideration for local planning purposes.

²² While many olive trees remain throughout Sylmar today, they appear to exist individually or in small clusters, representing only fractured remnants of what was once a 2,000-acre grove. No substantial concentrations of olive trees were identified.

Context: Residential Development & Suburbanization, 1850-1980

Theme: Early Residential Development, 1880-1930

Sub-Theme: Early Single-Family Residential Development, 1880-1930

This Context/Theme was used to evaluate intact single-family residences representing the earliest residential development in Sylmar, most of which date from the 1920s. Few examples remain from this period; therefore, intact examples were identified as historically significant. Two exceptions include a vernacular farmhouse dating from 1905, and a 1908 Craftsman house; these properties appear to be the oldest extant residences in Sylmar. The property at 12801 Maclay retains a barn and several outbuildings, a remnant of Sylmar's agricultural past.



Address: 13298 Herrick Avenue
Date: 1905



Address: 13301 Hubbard Street
Date: 1908



Address: 14018 Hubbard Street
Date: 1924



Address: 12801 Maclay Street
Date: 1925



Address: 15128 Lakeside Street
Date: 1923



Address: 12622 Cometa Avenue
Date: 1928

Context: Commercial Development, 1850-1980
Theme: Commercial Identity, 1850-1980

This Context/Theme was used to evaluate a long-time neighborhood hardware store in Sylmar. Cooper's Hardware was originally founded in 1941, and has been in continuous operation at this location since 1950. The business has occupied the current building since 1957. The property includes a distinctive neon blade sign at the roofline in the shape of a saw.



Address: 13871 Foothill Boulevard
Name: Cooper's Hardware
Date: 1957



Address: 13871 Foothill Boulevard
Name: Cooper's Hardware
Date: 1957

Context: Public & Private Institutional Development, 1850-1980

Sub-Context: Education, 1876-1980

Theme: Public Schools and the LAUSD, 1876-1980

Sub-Theme: Post WWII Schools, 1946-1966

This Context/Theme was used to evaluate four examples of intact LAUSD public school campuses in Sylmar, including elementary, junior high/middle, and high schools. Dating from the 1950s and 1960s, these schools reflect LAUSD planning and design concepts of the postwar period and the increase in facilities to accommodate postwar growth in the San Fernando Valley. Sylmar High School was also evaluated for its architectural merit, as the work of architect Albert C. Martin, Jr.



Address: 14500 Dyer Street
Name: Dyer Street Elementary School
Date: 1953



Address: 14500 Dyer Street
Name: Dyer Street Elementary School
Date: 1953



Address: 14940 Osceola Street
Name: Osceola Street Elementary School
Date: 1958



Address: 14940 Osceola Street
Name: Osceola Street Elementary School
Date: 1958



Address: 14600 Tyler Street
Name: Olive Vista Middle School
Date: 1958



Address: 14600 Tyler Street
Name: Olive Vista Middle School
Date: 1958



Address: 13050 Borden Avenue
Name: Sylmar High School
Date: 1961



Address: 13050 Borden Avenue
Name: Sylmar High School
Date: 1961

Context: Public & Private Institutional Development, 1850-1980

Sub-Context: Public and Private Health and Medicine, 1850-1980

Theme: Public Healthcare/Social Medicine, 1850-1980

This Context/Theme was used to evaluate a rare remaining example of a 1920s sanatorium in Los Angeles. In 1917, Los Angeles County purchased 480 acres in the foothills that would become the community of Sylmar in order to establish a tubercular sanatorium. Three years later, the Olive View Sanatorium opened for the isolation and treatment of tuberculosis patients. Plans for expansion of the facility began almost immediately, and by 1924 the site included an administration building, eight patient wards, nine employee cottages, two physicians' residences, a laundry building, a warehouse, and a 500,000-gallon water tank situated in the hills behind the buildings. By 1930, the facility included a total of 150 buildings operated by some 500 employees.

Expansion and new construction on the site continued as the needs of the facility evolved. As the incidence of tuberculosis declined, Olive View began to devote more of its resources to the treatment of coronary disease, as well as other chronic respiratory ailments. By the 1960s, the facility's emphasis was transitioning from strictly tubercular treatment to more general medical and surgical care facility called "Olive View Hospital." Hastening the pace of change at Olive View were two natural disasters: a destructive fire in 1962, and the Sylmar Earthquake of 1971. The earthquake was particularly catastrophic for the facility which had just completed another massive expansion, including a new main hospital building designed by prolific Los Angeles architectural firms Welton Becket & Associates and Charles Luckman Associates. With this new building, various patient wards, laboratory rooms, and other uses previously housed in separate cottages were consolidated under one roof for the first time. The building replaced many of the still-existing wood-framed patient wards from the 1920s and 1930s, effectively completing the site's transformation from a strictly tubercular unit to a general medical institution, now called "Olive View Medical Center." The newly expanded facility had been open just four months when the Sylmar Earthquake struck on February 9, 1971, destroying the new building; it was subsequently demolished. It would be fifteen years before a new medical center building would be re-opened on the site.

As the facility expanded and its needs changed over time, new buildings were added while older or obsolete buildings were often abandoned or demolished. Due to the size of the site, new construction was frequently situated on previously-undeveloped portions of the property, often isolating older structures or leaving behind the remnants of earlier construction. As a result of this development pattern, today the site is a collection of buildings, features, and remnants dating from the 1920s to the present. Notable features on the site include a series of Craftsman bungalows which appear to be former employee cottages; several Spanish Colonial Revival residential buildings which appear to be former physician's residences; the original Spanish Colonial Revival-style Administration Building; a prewar warehouse building; three concrete-and-brick buildings currently occupied by the Facilities Division; a three-story Mid-Century

Modern lab building; three storage tanks in the hills at the rear of the site; and numerous other buildings and structures representing various periods of development. Other features are remnants of previous development, including granite and stone retaining walls; concrete steps, walkways, accessibility ramps, curbing and building pads; paved roadways, both current and former; abandoned surface parking lots; and light standards. Also on site are many mature trees, including Cedar, Olive, Pepper, Oak, Eucalyptus, Pine, and Palm varieties.



Location: Olive View-UCLA Medical Center
Name: Former employee cottages
Date: 1924



Location: Olive View-UCLA Medical Center
Name: Original Administration Building
Date: 1924



Location: Olive View-UCLA Medical Center
Name: Former physician's residence
Date: 1924



Location: Olive View-UCLA Medical Center
Name: Warehouse building
Date: c. 1940



Location: Olive View-UCLA Medical Center
Name: (Unknown)
Date: c. 1950



Location: Olive View-UCLA Medical Center
Name: Facilities Division (current)
Date: c. 1950



Location: Olive View-UCLA Medical Center
Name: Remnants of previous development
Date: (Unknown)



Location: Olive View-UCLA Medical Center
Name: Current hospital building
Date: 1987

Context: Public & Private Institutional Development, 1850-1980

Sub-Context: Government Infrastructure and Services, 1850-1980

Theme: Municipal Fire Stations, 1900-1980

Sub-Theme: Post WWII Fire Stations, 1947-1960

This Context/Theme was used to evaluate an excellent example of a 1950s fire station in Sylmar, which represents the expansion of municipal services in the San Fernando Valley during the postwar era.



Address: 14430 Polk Street

Name: Fire Station No. 91

Date: 1956

Context: Public & Private Institutional Development, 1850-1980

Sub-Context: Government Infrastructure and Services, 1850-1980

Theme: Municipal Water and Power, 1916-1980

Sub-Theme: Reservoirs, Dams and Water Supply Infrastructure, 1916-1980

This Context/Theme was used to evaluate the Second Los Angeles Aqueduct in Sylmar. The City of Los Angeles' second aqueduct, a water conveyance system providing much of the city's water from the Eastern Sierra, was completed in 1970. The original aqueduct, known as the Los Angeles Owens River Aqueduct, was constructed between 1905 and 1913 by William Mulholland, and brought water 338 miles from the Eastern Sierra, providing a steady stream of reliable water to Los Angeles. In 1956, the State Department of Water Resources reported that Los Angeles was at risk of losing the rights to some water in the Eastern Sierra's Mono Basin because the city did not have sufficient aqueduct capacity to move the water south. Thus, Los Angeles began the five-year construction of the Second Aqueduct. Completed in 1970 at an estimated cost of \$89 million, this aqueduct is 137 miles long and able to contain 290,000 cubic feet of water. As with the first aqueduct, the water flows entirely by gravity from the Eastern Sierra to the upper Van Norman Reservoir in Granada Hills. The new aqueduct increased the city's aqueduct capacity by fifty percent. The Second Aqueduct continues to operate as a major piece of the City of Los Angeles' water system infrastructure; together, the two aqueducts supply about seventy percent of the city's water supply in most years.



Address: 17001 Foothill Boulevard
Name: Second Los Angeles Aqueduct
Date: 1970



Address: 17001 Foothill Boulevard
Name: Second Los Angeles Aqueduct
Date: 1970

Context: Public & Private Institutional Development, 1850-1980

Sub-Context: Military Institutions and Activities, 1850-1980

Theme: Air Raid Sirens and Civil Defense, 1939-1960

Air raid sirens were evaluated under this Context/Theme for their association with World War II and Cold War military infrastructure in Los Angeles. Two examples were identified in the Survey Area.



Location: 16350 Filbert Street

Name: Air Raid Siren No. 216

Date: circa 1940



Location: Herrick Avenue at La Valle Street

Name: Air Raid Siren No. 100

Date: circa 1940

Context: Industrial Development, 1850-1980
Sub-Context: Manufacturing for the Masses, 1883-1989
Theme: Factories, 1887-1980

This Context/Theme was used to evaluate an excellent and rare example of mid-century industrial development in Sylmar, associated with the Merle Norman Cosmetics Company. The property includes two one-story industrial buildings, built in 1958 and 1962, as well as a four-story building constructed in 1970 to house the Nethercutt Collection. Merle Norman Cosmetics was founded in Los Angeles in 1931 by Jack Boison "J.B." Nethercutt. The company was named for his aunt Merle and uncle Norman, who adopted him after his parents died. The Sylmar property (known as "San Sylmar") was originally used by a division of Merle Norman that made trap shooting targets in the 1950s; the cosmetics branch of the company relocated here in 1991, using the trap shooting buildings for Merle Norman Cosmetic packing plants. J.B. eventually amassed a substantial fortune selling women's beauty products, and used much of that wealth to assemble one of the world's finest automobile collections. The Nethercutt Collection features rare collectibles ranging from mechanical musical instruments and antique furniture, and over 250 American and European cars dating from 1898 to 1997. The Nethercutt Collection opened to the public in 1971. This property continues to operate as Merle Norman Cosmetics and the Nethercutt Collection today.



Address: 15180 Bledsoe Street
Name: Merle Norman Cosmetics
Date: 1958



Address: 15200 Bledsoe Street
Name: Nethercutt Collection
Date: 1970

Context: Architecture & Engineering, 1850-1980

Theme: Arts and Crafts Movement, 1895-1930

Sub-Theme: Arroyo Stone Buildings, 1898-1930

This Context/Theme was used to evaluate one example of arroyo stone residential construction in the Survey Area. Arroyo stone houses are a particular building type in this area of the San Fernando Valley; in the teens and 1920s many residences were built here using local stone.



Address: 13166 Foothill Boulevard

Date: 1927

Context: Architecture & Engineering, 1850-1980

Sub-Context: L.A. Modernism, 1919-1980

Theme: Post-War Modernism, 1946-1976

Sub-Theme: Mid-Century Modernism, 1945-1970

This Context/Theme was used to evaluate an excellent example of Mid-Century Modern institutional architecture in the Survey Area. The public pool facility at the Sylmar Recreation Center was designed by architects Deasy & Bolling, and features two plaster-clad buildings with distinctive folded plate roofs.



Address: 13181 Borden Avenue
Name: Sylmar Recreation Center Pool
Date: 1961



Address: 13181 Borden Avenue
Name: Sylmar Recreation Center Pool
Date: 1961

Context: Architecture & Engineering, 1850-1980

Sub-Context: L.A. Modernism, 1919-1980

Theme: Post-War Modernism, 1946-1976

Sub-Theme: Googie, 1935-1969

This Context/Theme was used to evaluate an excellent example of Googie commercial architecture. The design of the Sylmar location of Denny's restaurant appears to be based on the corporate prototype by noted architects Armet & Davis; many of the Googie-style Denny's have been substantially altered or replaced by newer corporate designs.



Address: 12861 Encinitas Avenue
Name: Denny's Restaurant
Architect: Colwell & Ray
Date: 1968



Address: 12861 Encinitas Avenue
Name: Denny's Restaurant
Architect: Colwell & Ray
Date: 1968

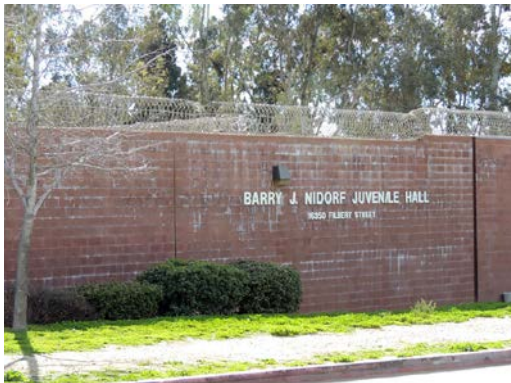
Context: Other Context, 1850-1980

Theme: Events or Series of Events, 1850-1980

The Other Context is used to capture unusual or unique property types for which a specific theme has not been developed. In this Survey Area, this Context/Theme was used to evaluate a 1960s juvenile detention center in Sylmar. This facility was originally established as the Los Angeles County Juvenile Hall in 1965. In 1978, the site underwent a series of earthquake repairs and an expansion, after which the facility had enough room for 393 youths ranging in age from 10 to 17. In 1998, the facility was renamed after retired Chief Probation Officer Barry J. Nidorf. It is the largest juvenile detention center in the nation.

This Context/Theme was also used to evaluate the Sylmar portion of the Whitnall Highway Power Corridor. Whitnall Highway was to be a portion of an early parkway system for the San Fernando Valley which was planned but not entirely built. While power lines were always an element of the 1927 design of the corridor, they were probably first installed between 1935 and 1939, when power from the Hoover Dam arrived in Los Angeles.

Also evaluated under this Context/Theme was a 1940s agriculture-related industrial property in Sylmar, originally constructed as a 4-H Club. The 4-H Club is a youth development organization administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, historically with an emphasis on developing agricultural skills. It is unclear if 4-H continues to operate this property.



Address: 16350 Filbert Street
Name: Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall
Date: 1965



Address: 16350 Filbert Street
Name: Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall
Date: 1965



Location: Whitnall Highway
Name: Whitnall Highway Power Corridor
Date: 1927



Location: Whitnall Highway
Name: Whitnall Highway Power Corridor
Date: 1927



Address: 13514 Norris Avenue
Name: 4-H Club
Date: 1946

Context: Other Context, 1850-1980
Theme: Design/Construction, 1850-1980

The Other Context is used to capture unusual or unique property types for which a specific theme has not been developed. In this Survey Area, this Context/Theme was used to evaluate a 1930s concrete bridge that carries Sierra Highway over the railroad tracks. This bridge is located at the intersection of Highway 99 (now San Fernando Road) and Highway 6 (now Sierra Highway), two important early transportation routes through the Newhall Pass.



Location: Intersection of Sierra Highway and San Fernando Road
Name: Sierra Highway Overpass
Date: 1934



Location: Intersection of Sierra Highway and San Fernando Road
Name: Sierra Highway Overpass
Date: 1934

For Further Reading

The following is a list of general sources on the history and development of Sylmar. This list is not comprehensive but is being provided for informational purposes.

Bearchell, Charles A. and Larry D. Fried. *The San Fernando Valley: Then and Now*. Windsor Publications, 1988.

Roderick, Kevin. *The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb*. Los Angeles: *Los Angeles Times* Books, 2001.

Wanamaker, Marc. *San Fernando Valley*. Images of America. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011.