

Hillsides in the Southwest Valley

Hillside areas represent a sizable portion of the Southwest Valley, amounting to approximately 32% of the Canoga Park-Winnetka-Woodland Hills-West Hills Community Plan Area and over 50% of the Encino-Tarzana Community Plan Area. Most of the hillside is located south of Ventura Boulevard, with some in the northwest corner of West Hills. The majority of hillside areas are located in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, where existing substandard streets can pose access challenges for emergency response crews. In light of these conditions, the update to the Southwest Valley Community Plans seeks to direct anticipated growth away from the hillside areas, limit grading, and preserve existing open space to support ecological resources and wildlife.

Zoning Strategies for the Hillside

Existing Overlays & Regulations

The Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan includes regulations for land uses, grading, height, setbacks, fences, gates, lighting, and landscaping. It also includes environmental protection measures for prominent ridges, streams, land around parklands, protected trees, archaeological and paleontological resources, in addition to right-of-way regulations that are intended to preserve hillside views, minimize development impact, and protect ecological, cultural and historic resources. The Valley Circle/Plummer Street Scenic Corridor Specific Plan limits grading and requires preservation of natural terrain and vegetation to the extent possible. It seeks to preserve a clear line of sight from the roadway to the mountain crest, while employing landscaping to enhance the scenic views of the hillside. Both the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan and the Valley Circle/Plummer Street Scenic Corridor Specific Plan will remain as they exist today. The Baseline Hillside Ordinance (BHO) regulations will be integrated into the base zones as part of the update to the Southwest Valley Community Plans.

Haul Route Limitations

In order to minimize the impact of hauling trucks and reduce carbon emissions, the Southwest Valley Community Plans propose to apply new truck hauling operation standards in order to limit the number of trucks allowed in total and per hour, and new control measures for their travel routes. These Hillside Construction Regulations (HCR) currently apply in other hillside communities within the City of Los Angeles.

Development Review for Projects Exceeding 17,500 Square Feet

The Southwest Valley Community Plans propose to apply a development review threshold for homes exceeding 17,500 square feet, a regulation that also currently exists in the Hillside Construction Regulations (HCR) applied in other parts of the City. This discretionary review is intended to support safety in the hillside, as grading activity and related hauling trucks can occupy residential streets during any one time.

Open Space and Wildlife

The Southwest Valley Community Plans seek to support urban habitats and opportunities for recreation by redesignating existing open space owned by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority to the Open Space land use designation. This can protect natural features and wildlife habitats, while reducing the risk of structure fires and other hazards.

Promote Safer Pedestrian Circulation

A 3-foot clear depth from the front lot line within the required front yard setback is being proposed to allow for safer pedestrian circulation around substandard streets (streets that are less than 20 feet in roadway width) in the hillside. This 3-foot clear depth would require it to be clear of any structures, including fences.

Parking Requirements on Red Flag Streets

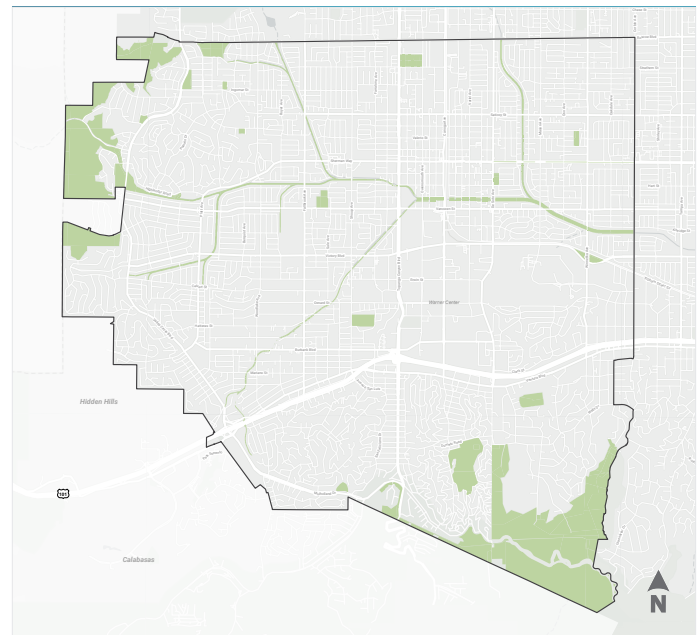
Today the Baseline Hillside Ordinance (BHO) requires that lots located on Substandard Hillside streets provide additional parking onsite, above the two parking spaces required, when the Residential floor area exceeds 2,400 square feet. One additional parking space needs to be provided for each additional increment of 1,000 square feet or fraction thereof of floor area up to a maximum of five onsite parking spaces. This requirement is being extended to substandard and Red Flag streets in order to promote safety during times of emergency.

Parking Requirements - Covered Parking

The BHO requires at least two of the off-street required parking spaces to be covered within a private garage. The floor area exemption for garages will continue to be allowed, but required parking would no longer need to be covered. This would help minimize grading and would also allow for greater flexibility to place parking onsite, contributing to safety in the hillsides by allowing parking to be more easily accommodated on the lot and off the street.

Proposed Open Space Land Use

Canoga Park - Winnetka - Woodland Hills - West Hills Community Plan Area



Open Space Community Plan Area

Agriculturally Zoned Lots

Today, the minimum lot size for Agriculturally zoned lots ranges between 2.5 and 5 acres, the density is one dwelling unit per every 2.5 acres, and the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is 3:1. In order to minimize grading and density, and to promote safety in the hillsides, a Slope Band Analysis is being incorporated to determine the Maximum Floor Area on a hillside lot, the FAR is being reduced to 0.25:1, and the density is limited to one unit per lot.

Fence Height

Today, Residential (R) zones allow a 3.5 foot high fence within the front yard, while Agriculture (A) and Residential Agriculture (RA) zones allow 6-foot high fences. The Southwest Valley Plans propose to continue allowing for a 3.5 foot high fence which can be fully opaque, and the fence will be permitted to reach up to 6 feet, as long as the height above 3.5 feet has a 50% opacity.

Standardized Setbacks

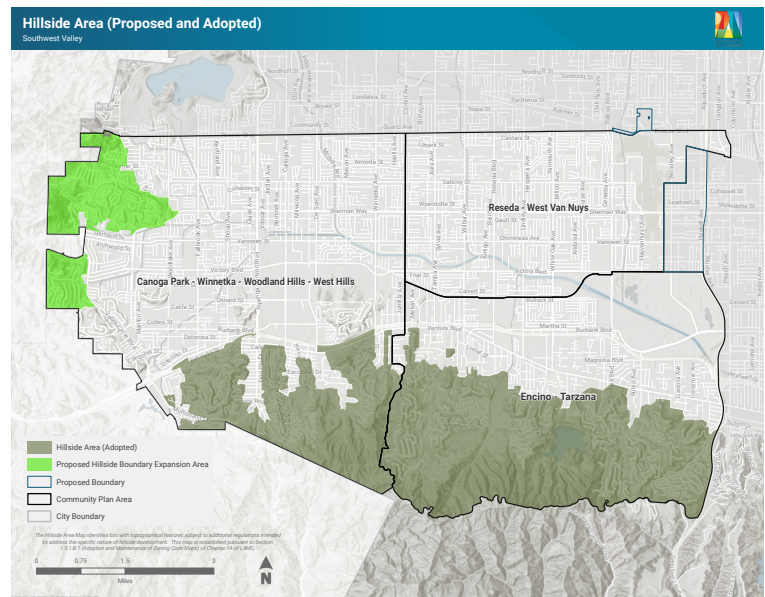
The BHO allows a variety of options for front yard setbacks, including the use of prevailing setbacks. Front yard setbacks are proposed to be standardized, requiring a 10-foot, 15-foot, or 25-foot minimum front yard setback based on the zone and the minimum size of the lot, with exception for slopes that exceed 60%.

Hillside Expansion

The existing Citywide-designated Hillside area boundary in the Southwest Valley Community Plans are generally south of Ventura Boulevard, with a parcel identified in the northwest corner along Roscoe Boulevard. The boundary is being amended to include hillside areas in the northwest of the Canoga Park-Winnetka-Woodland Hills-West Hills Plan Area, west of Valley Circle Boulevard between Collins Street and south of Vanowen Street, and west of Woodlake Avenue, north of Hartland Street and south of Roscoe Boulevard. Similar to the existing designated Hillside areas, these parcels are also characterized by varying topography, located within the State's High Fire Severity Zone, and adjacent to open space. The proposed zoning for these areas, including Form and Development Standard districts, are intended to minimize environmental and visual impacts, preserve hillside stability, and promote safe and sustainable hillside development.

Height

Existing regulations measure the Maximum Height of a structure in the hillside based on the slope of the roof. This method is being replaced by a standardized rule of measurement that is determined by measuring the vertical distance between the grade plane elevation and the top of the roof structure. A Building Module Method to determine the height of separate grade planes on a lot is also being introduced. The existing Envelope Height method is being carried forward, which measures the vertical distance from the Hillside Area Grade from the exterior walls of a structure, to a projected plane at the roof or parapet wall located directly above and parallel to the grade. Hillside structures will continue to be subject to Overall Height Maximums, now defined in the zone string's Form District, which regulate the height of buildings and structures on sloped terrain in order to minimize visual impacts in the hillside.



Addressing Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones

The majority of hillside areas in the Southwest Valley are designated Very High Fire Severity Zones, which must comply with the brush clearance requirements of the Fire Code. To minimize the impact of wildfires, density increases are being directed away from the hillside.

Implementation of haul routes, redesignating areas to open space, and minimizing grading through the expansion of slope band regulations are strategies intended to promote public safety in the hillsides.