

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One Valley One Vision (OVOV) is a joint effort between the County of Los Angeles (County), City of Santa Clarita (City), and Santa Clarita Valley (Valley) residents and businesses to create a single vision and set of guidelines for the future growth of the Valley and the preservation of natural resources. Realizing that development within both jurisdictions can have regional implications, the County and City have jointly endeavored to prepare planning policies and guidelines to guide future development within the Santa Clarita Valley. The result of this work effort will require the adoption of two separate documents. The County will adopt a new Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan to replace the 1990 Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and prepare its own environmental impact report (EIR) while the City will adopt a new General Plan and EIR. This EIR has been prepared to evaluate the potential impacts of the policies of the County's Area Plan.

The OVOV planning process reflects the County's and City's mutual decision to coordinate land uses and the pace of development with provision of adequate infrastructure, conservation of natural resources, and common objectives for the Valley. Major goals of the OVOV joint planning effort were to achieve greater cooperation between the County and the City; coordinated planning for roadways, infrastructure, and resource management; and an enhanced quality of life for all who live and work in the Santa Clarita Valley.

The County of Los Angeles' Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan Update (Area Plan) is the proposed project in this Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Area Plan is a component of the Los Angeles County General Plan and is intended to provide focused goals, policies, and maps to guide the regulation of development within the unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley. This updated Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan replaces in its entirety the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on February 16, 1984, and subsequently updated on December 6, 1990, which had previously served as the basic planning tool for the unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley. This Area Plan, as it may be amended from time to time, is intended to serve as a long-term blueprint for development over the next approximately 20-year planning period, except where specific policies address other target dates as set forth in the plan.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The County of Los Angeles' objectives for the programmatic Area Plan EIR are as follows:

- Identify current and projected environmental conditions, which may affect or be affected by the Area Plan.
- Update the Area Plan development projections for the year 2020, including projections for dwelling units, non-residential square footage, population and employment.
- Provide an environmental analysis of the proposed goals, objectives, and policies and disclose to the public the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Area Plan.
- Evaluate alternatives to the proposed Area Plan.
- Foster public participation in the planning process for the Area Plan.
- Conform with 21000 et seq. of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which requires that environmental impacts be addressed and mitigated. Identify a mitigation framework, which could eliminate or reduce potentially significant environmental impacts of the Area Plan.
- Provide a legally defensible environmental foundation upon which decisions may be evaluated and justified.
- Prepare and certify an Area Plan EIR (Program EIR) that will serve as a first tier environmental document, consistent with the requirements of Section 15152 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*.
- Provide a basis for informative decisions when considering the 20-year development associated with implementation of the Area Plan.

PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The OVOV Planning Area combines two geographical areas, the unincorporated area of the County within Santa Clarita Valley and the City of Santa Clarita (City) corporate limits. The OVOV Planning Area was defined mutually by the County and City and represents the area for which both jurisdictions have joint interest in planning. The OVOV Planning Area is located in Southern California in the northern portion of Los Angeles County (North County) (**Figure 2.0-1, Regional Location Map, and Figure 2.0-2, Vicinity Map**). It is situated at the convergence of Los Angeles and Ventura counties, approximately 35 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. The OVOV Planning Area includes the County communities of Stevenson Ranch, Castaic, Val Verde, Agua Dulce, the future Newhall Ranch and the City and its four communities of Canyon Country, Newhall, Saugus, and Valencia (**Figure 2.0-3, Community Locations.**)

Several mountain ranges frame the OVOV Planning Area including the San Gabriel Mountains, Santa Susana Mountains, and the Sierra Pelona Mountains. At its western most edge, the OVOV Planning Area extends from a point south of Pyramid Lake on the Ventura County border southeast to Oat Mountain and extends into the Angeles National Forest to the east. The easternmost boundary includes the community of Agua Dulce. From this point, it continues to the northwest, parallel to the southern boundary of the City of Palmdale through the Angeles National Forest, and proceeds northward approximately 5 miles north of the uppermost portion of Castaic Lake. In addition to the major ridgelines forming the boundaries of the Valley, prominent scenic resources include the Santa Clara River Valley, creeks, canyons, and forestlands. The Angeles National Forest surrounds much of the OVOV Planning Area to the south and the north (**Figure 2.0-2**).

TOPICS OF KNOWN CONCERN

To determine which environmental topics should be addressed in this EIR, the County of Los Angeles prepared and circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) from July 28, 2008, through December 31, 2008, in order to receive input from interested public agencies and private parties. On August 4, 2008, a scoping meeting was held at City Hall in Santa Clarita. The NOP and scoping meeting are discussed further under heading “EIR Format and Content” of this chapter.

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Community Services
- Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, Seismicity
- Global Climate Change
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Parks and Recreation
- Transportation and Circulation
- Utilities and Infrastructure
- Water Service

IMPACTS, MITIGATION MEASURES, AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

This EIR has been prepared to assess potentially significant impacts on the environment that could result from implementation of the proposed Area Plan. For a detailed discussion regarding potential impacts, refer to **Section 3.0** of this EIR. In accordance with Section 15126 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, a summary of project impacts is provided in the following summary table (**Table ES-1**). Also provided in the summary table is a list of the proposed mitigation measures that are recommended in response to project impacts identified in this program EIR, as well as a determination of the level of significance of the impact after implementation of the recommended mitigation measures.

ALTERNATIVES

The purpose of the alternatives analysis is to identify potentially feasible ways to avoid or substantially lessen significant effects of the proposed project. According to the *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6, an EIR needs to examine a reasonable range of alternatives to a project, or its location, which would feasibly meet most of the basic objectives of the project while avoiding or substantially lessening significant impacts. When addressing feasibility, the *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6 states that “among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries (projects with a regionally significant impact should consider the regional context), and whether the applicant can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to the alternative site (or the site is already owned by the proponent).” Therefore, based on the *State CEQA Guidelines*, several factors need to be considered in determining the range of alternatives to be analyzed in an EIR and the level of analytical detail that should be provided for each alternative. These factors include (1) the nature of the significant impacts of the proposed project; (2) the ability of alternatives to avoid or substantially lessen the significant impacts associated with the project; (3) the ability of the alternatives to meet the objectives of the project; and (4) the feasibility of the alternatives. These factors are unique for each project. Each alternative selected for evaluation in this EIR is described in brief below. **Section 6.0, Alternatives**, provides a comparative analysis of these alternatives and concludes that the environmentally superior alternative would be Alternative 2.

Alternative 1 - No Project

Section 15126(e)(1) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires evaluation of the No Project Alternative. Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed Area Plan would not be adopted and buildout within the County’s Planning Area would continue to occur under the existing Santa Clarita Valley Areawide Plan,

Specific Plans, and Master Plans. The no project analysis will discuss the existing conditions at the time the notice of preparation was prepared as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the OVOV Area Plan (proposed project) is not approved. Buildout of the existing Areawide Plan circulation map is assumed.

Alternative 2 – Preservation Corridor Alternative

This alternative would support the South Coast Missing Linkages wildlife corridor and the proposed Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) in the region. The South Coast Wildlands is an organization that proposed a wildlife corridor between two separated parts of the Angeles National Forest. This alternative would propose a density reduction creating more open space for wildlife movement. The land use category for this region would change from 1 dwelling unit per 2 acres (1 du/2ac) to 1 du/10 ac. Policies would be developed to create minimal obstructions on these properties to allow wildlife movement.

Alternative 3 – Transit Corridor/Increased Employment Opportunity Alternative

This alternative would create a mixed use transit corridor around the proposed Lang Station. High density residential located next to a major transportation/transit corridor would support policies in Los Angeles County's Housing Element and the vision created in the OVOV planning process. The types of development recommended for this area would be designed at an urban density and have a mix of commercial uses. Adjacent to the proposed high density transit corridor would be a proposed business/office park located just north of the area. This would create an employment center near the transportation/transit corridor and give other residents an opportunity to work and live in the Valley.

Environmentally Superior Alternative

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2) requires an EIR to identify an environmentally superior alternative among those evaluated in an EIR. Furthermore, if the environmentally superior alternative is the No Project/No Development Alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative from among the other alternatives. For the OVOV Area Plan project, based on the analysis included in **Section 6.0, Alternatives**, Alternative 3 – Preservation Corridor Alternative would be considered environmentally superior to the proposed project because it would avoid and/or substantially reduce the severity of significant impacts associated with implementing the proposed project. This alternative would reduce the severity of the significant and unavoidable biological impacts to less than significant. For an environmental perspective, this alternative is superior to the proposed project as it reduces the level of impacts for all resource areas compared with the proposed project, with the exception

of impacts on agricultural resources and hazards and hazardous materials, which would be comparable. This alternative, however, would not meet all of the project objectives as would the proposed Area Plan.

AREAS OF CONTROVERSY

The *State CEQA Guidelines*¹ require that a Draft EIR summary identify areas of controversy known to the lead agency, including issues raised by other agencies and the public. In addition to those areas identified in the Notice of Preparation (NOP), as potentially significant, some issues of concern were expressed at a public scoping meeting for the draft EIR and through responses to the NOP. The following issues of concern can generally be grouped as transportation and circulation (modes such as bicycle, bus, rail, pedestrian, and automobile), trail systems (equestrian, bicycle, other recreational trails and trail access), parks and recreation, preservation of special standard districts, global climate change, sustainability, energy efficiency and alternative modes of energy; mineral resources and mining, ridgeline and oak tree preservation, location of high density areas, water planning and conservation, housing for low-income residents, teachers, government workers, and police; inclusionary zoning, cultural resources and public facilities for art/cultural uses, public health, senior housing and the aging population, noise, biological resources and open space preservation. These issues have been incorporated into the environmental analysis of the proposed project contained within **Section 3.0, Environmental Impact Analysis**, of this draft EIR.

APPROVALS AND ACTIONS

Each of the Area Plan Elements contains an outline of the steps necessary to implement each element. At the conclusion of the Area Plan EIR public hearing process, the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission will vote on whether to recommend certification of the adequacy of the Area Plan EIR to the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors and to recommend approval of the proposed Area Plan EIR. The Area Plan is a comprehensive policy-level document and future actions will be required for its implementation. These future actions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Adoption/approval of community plan updates
- Public facilities financing plan updates
- Revisions to the County's Development Code and other applicable ordinances
- Revisions to the County Zoning Ordinance and Map and Community Standards District to be consistent with the Land Use Map

1 California Public Resources Code, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, *State CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15123.

- Update of master plans for drainage, streets, trails, parks, and other County infrastructure and facilities in conformance with the Area Plan
- Amend the Highway Plan to reflect the OVOV Circulation Plan and to be consistent with the County's Highway Plan for the Santa Clarita Valley
- Adopt the Valleywide Bikeway Plan in the Circulation Element
- Revise the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to incorporate needed capital projects identified in the Area Plan update

RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

Under CEQA, a public agency, other than a lead agency, that has discretionary approval power over the proposed project is considered a "responsible agency" (*State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15381). No public agency, other than the County of Los Angeles, has discretionary approval power over the proposed project; however, if the County approves this project, subsequent implementation of various project components could require discretionary approval authority from responsible agencies. Trustee agencies have jurisdiction over certain resources held in trust for the people of California but do not have a legal authority over approving or carrying out projects (e.g., California Department of Fish and Game).