

COMMUNITY ISSUES

**III. COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND DESIGN**



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III. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, DESIGN, AND RELATED ISSUES

A. POPULATION

POPULATION GROWTH CHARACTERISTICS

**Past Growth Trends.** Rapid growth has characterized western Los Angeles County over the past decade. By 1990, the population of Calabasas and its surrounding sphere had reached 20,671<sup>1</sup>. Three census tracts and six block-groups are located within the City.

Table III-1  
Calabasas Census Locations

Census Tracts	Block-Groups
8001.00	1, 8, 9
8002.00	1, 9
8003.01	9

Source: Urban Research Associates,  
November, 1992.

**Growth Projections.** A continuation of recent growth trends points to an average annual population growth rate of at least three percent. At such a rate the population of Calabasas and its surrounding sphere would reach 27,771 by the year 2000.

POPULATION GROWTH ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS

*What is an appropriate buildout population and development intensity for the City? To what extent is the City willing to regulate future growth?*

The City has a number of options with regard to policies that establish the intensity of General Plan study area buildout and annual growth rate, as well as with regard to the manner which will regulate new development. They include:

- Ensure that General Plan policies will yield the types of development consistent with local community values. In addition, establish an annual growth rate cap based on Statewide growth, historical trends, or availability of municipal services and facilities.

<sup>1</sup> This number is based on the 1990 Census. Previous City documents used a population figure of 26,910, which was based on the number of registered voters, and was established upon incorporation pursuant to State law. The 1990 Census figure used in this document is considered to be a more accurate population figure; however, the higher population figure will continue to be used as the basis for State subventions through the City's first eight years.

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- In lieu of an annual growth rate, ensure that General Plan policies will yield the types of development consistent with local community values. Establish performance standards for the adequacy of infrastructure and municipal services and facilities, and allow growth that conforms to General Plan policies (such as environmental protection) to occur at a rate consistent with those standards.
- Identify the minimum development intensity that could be legally applied to existing open lands within the General Plan study area, and reflect those intensities on the General Plan Land Use map.
- Define future land use intensities based on the carrying capacity of the land in a manner consistent with local community values.
- Identify the minimum development intensity that would be feasible given reasonably foreseeable market conditions and that would also be consistent with environmental protection needs, and reflect those intensities on the General Plan Land Use map.
- Revise General Plan land use intensities within currently developed areas to reflect existing land uses.
- Allow for intensification of existing development in certain specified areas where local traffic improvements can be provided concurrently to ensure no net decrease in roadway levels of service, and where such intensification can provide increased municipal revenues without increasing impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.
- Establish development restrictions and requirements equivalent to those existing in the Los Angeles County General Plan prior in corporation, and ensure that these restrictions and requirements are enforced.
- Maintain the development intensities similar to those shown on the Los Angeles County General Plan Land Use map prior to incorporation, and prepare stricter policy-based development restrictions and requirements than those that existing under County jurisdictions.
- Designate as permanent open space on the General Plan Land Use map all parcels within "density controlled" subdivisions that were set aside and not developed as a trade-off for smaller parcels in other portions of the development site.
- Designate as open space on the General Plan Land Use map only those parcels that are owned by public agencies or private entities that are clearly committed to permanent open space through natural or active park use, or that have open space deed restrictions or easements.

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POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

In general, people of the community describe Calabasas as a City with a diverse population. However, the following statistical evidence points to socially and economically homogeneous population.

**Race.** The ethnic/racial composition of the Calabasas population is predominantly White/Non-Hispanic. 87.6 percent of the population falls into that category, while 6.4 percent is classified as Asian and 4.3 percent as Hispanic (all races).

**Income.** The median household income in Calabasas and its surrounding sphere in 1990 was \$66,421 compared with the median income for Los Angeles County which was \$34,965.

**Age.** The population of Calabasas is dominated by young adults and families with children. The median age of residents in Calabasas and its surrounding sphere in 1990 was 32.6. The two largest age cohort groups are 40-49 and 20-29.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS

*Should the City take active steps to encourage the development of a more socio-economically diverse community?*

The City has a number of options relative to creation of a more socio-economically diverse community than presently exists. They include:

- Undertake an aggressive program to increase the percentage of dwelling units affordable to low, moderate, and middle level income households.
- Undertake programs to provide additional dwelling units affordable to low, moderate, and middle level income households at levels with the requirements of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments.
- Continue to allow the real estate market to continue determining the socio-economic composition of the City.
- Recognize Calabasas as an upper-end community with significant environmental and traffic constraints, and undertake only such housing programs, if any, as are consistent with those constraints, even if it means risking a legal challenge to the City's General Plan Housing Element.

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B. HOUSING

HOUSING UNIT CHARACTERISTICS

**Unit Type.** There were 8,864 housing units in the Calabasas Sphere of Influence in 1990. Three-quarters of the units were single family residences, attached and detached. Only nineteen percent of the units were multiple family dwellings.

The building boom of the 1980s led to a significant increase in the number of higher-density condominiums and apartments. Apartment construction was concentrated during that time in two areas: Malibu Canyon and the area south of the freeway and east of Lost Hills Road.

**Tenure.** Over 76 percent of the housing units in the general plan study area are owner-occupied, compared with 48.2 percent for Los Angeles County.

The proportion of renter-occupied housing has grown significantly in recent years. Of the 3,008 housing units built during the period 1985 to 1990, 1,274 units or 42.4 percent were occupied by renters in 1990. That compares with a renter-occupied proportion of 11.9 percent for housing units constructed prior to 1985.

**Vacancy.** Housing unit vacancy in the Calabasas area is nearly twice that of Los Angeles County. In 1990, 9.6 percent of the units in the sphere were vacant, compared with a 5.5 percent rate for the County. Single family homes had a slightly higher vacancy rate, 9.5 percent, while multiple family housing units had an average vacancy rate of 8.5 percent.

**Age of Units.** Housing in the Calabasas general plan study area is relatively new. Only seven percent of the units (625 units) are over 30 years old.

**Condition of Units.** Housing throughout the community is well-maintained and exceeds minimum habitability standards. Although in some of the older, rural areas, quality is variable. In those parts of the community, older units, some in need of repair, may be interspersed with more recently constructed units.

Thirty years is often regarded as the age when major repairs become more likely or obsolescence begins to set in. As of 1990, 625 units were more than 30 years old. By the year 2000, that number will increase by 1,574 to a total of 2,199.

**Affordable Units.** Past efforts by the County have produced approximately 275 affordable housing units.

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**HOUSING UNITS ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS**

*What is the appropriate range and mix of housing types for the City?*

The City has a number of options regarding the future range and mix of housing types. They include:

- Maintain approximately the same mix of housing types and densities in the future as currently exists.
- Place a greater emphasis on the development of clustered housing developments as a means of preserving open space lands. As a trade-off for the provision of greater amounts of open space, permit increased densities within those remaining areas that are permitted to develop.
- Place a greater emphasis on the development of clustered housing developments as a means of preserving open space lands, but do not permit increased densities within those remaining areas that are permitted to develop.
- Identify appropriate locations and increase the proportion of small lot single family, attached single family, and multi-family developments as a means of increasing the community's range of housing types.
- Reduce residential densities to place a greater emphasis on large lot single family development.
- Undertake an aggressive program to increase the percentage of dwelling units affordable to low, moderate, and middle level income households.
- Undertake programs to provide additional dwelling units affordable to low, moderate, and middle level income households at levels with the requirements of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments.
- Develop restrictions or limitations on the development of new gated communities.
- Develop regulations setting a maximum size for new housing units in relation to the size and steepness of development sites.
- Continue to allow the real estate market to determine the housing mix of the City.
- Recognize Calabasas as an upper end community with significant environmental and traffic constraints, and undertake only such housing programs, if any, that are consistent with those constraints, even if it means risking a legal challenge to the City's General Plan Housing Element.

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HOUSING COSTS CHARACTERISTICS

**Housing Purchase Cost.** Owner-occupied housing in the Calabasas general plan study area is expensive. According to the 1990 census the median cost of a single family home was \$450,000, more than double the Los Angeles County median of \$223,800.

Pending development proposals emphasize upscale single family and custom home sites and apartments. This points to continued expansion at the upper and lower ends of the Calabasas' housing market.

**Housing Rental Cost.** Monthly renter costs, while higher than in the adjacent San Fernando Valley, are less skewed toward the upper end than are owner costs. The median monthly rent in 1990 was \$925 compared with median monthly owner costs in excess of \$2,000. Despite high housing costs in the community, housing affordability is not a major concern for most Calabasas households. However, the lack of support in the community for additional higher density housing, may make it difficult for the City to provide affordable housing and to meet its share of the regional need for low and moderate income housing.

HOUSING COSTS ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS

*How will the City meet affordable housing requirements established pursuant to State Housing Element law?*

The City has a number of options as to the manner in which it addresses affordable housing requirements. They include:

- Undertake programs to provide additional dwelling units affordable to low and moderate income households at levels consistent with the requirements of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments.
- Recognize Calabasas as an upper end community with significant environmental and traffic constraints, and undertake only such housing programs, if any, that are consistent with those constraints, even if it means risking a legal challenge to the City's General Plan Housing Element.

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

**Household Type.** Calabasas mirrors Los Angeles County in the proportion of households consisting of couples with children. Calabasas has a higher proportion of households consisting of couples without children, and lower proportions of single-parent and single-individual households.

**Household Size.** The average household size in Calabasas, at 2.57 persons per household, is substantially smaller than the 2.90 average for all of Los Angeles County.

**Education.** The Calabasas population is generally well educated. According to the 1992 Community Attitude Survey, 74.1 percent of all responding households contain at least one member with a college degree.

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**Household Income.** Calabasas has a high median annual household income of \$66,421. Nearly one-third of all households earn more than \$100,000 per year. Yet the city also is home to a substantial number of low and moderate income households, with 12.9 percent of all households earning less than \$25,000 per year.

**Single Parent Households.** The 1990 census identified 441 single-parent households in the Calabasas area or 5.6 percent of the total. Of those, 397 were headed by females and 44 by males. Female-headed households tend to have lower incomes than male-headed households, thus limiting housing availability for this group.

**Large Households.** A second category of special-needs households involves large families and the related issue of overcrowding. Large households occur infrequently in Calabasas, where 92.2 percent of all households contain 4 or fewer persons.

**Elderly Households.** Calabasas is still a relatively young community. The total population over age 65 in 1990 was 1511. This accounts for 7.3 percent of the total population, with the 55 to 64 population accounting for another 8.5 percent.

Because the 1990 census indicated a relatively small number of residents aged 50 or older and a much larger population aged 40 to 49, a major increase in the over-65 population is not likely to occur until the after the year 2005.

**Disabled Persons.** According to the 1990 census, 426 residents of Calabasas and its surrounding sphere are handicapped due to mobility or self-care limitations. This represents two and one-half percent of the total population over age sixteen. Not surprisingly, the percentage of individuals with mobility and self-care limitations is substantially higher among older residents.

**Low-Income Households.** The Calabasas share of the regional housing need will not be established until the next Regional Housing Needs Assessment is completed by SCAG in 1993 at the earliest. However, it is possible to arrive at a rough estimate of existing low-income housing need by applying a methodology similar to that published by SCAG in the 1988 Regional Housing Needs Assessment. Using this methodology and data from the 1990 census, the existing need for low income households in Calabasas would be 788 households or 9.8 percent of the 8,014 occupied housing units.

According to the 1990 Census, approximately 12.9 percent of all households in Calabasas were low and moderate income, earning less than \$25,000 a year. For housing units to be affordable to these residents, no more than 30 percent of their household income could be spent on housing. This would restrict rent or mortgage payments to no more than \$625 a month for those households earning \$25,000 a year. Just under 7 percent of the rental housing units and 12 percent of the homes in Calabasas cost \$625 or less. However, for homeowners, it is likely that mortgage payments below this amount are for homes purchased 15-20 years ago and are not an indication of the number of homes affordable to low and moderate income residents.



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**Farmworker Households.** Housing for farmworkers is not a serious issue in Calabasas. Farmworkers comprise only 1.2 percent of the resident work force in the community. Based on that figure, the number of farm worker households is estimated to be less than 100.

**Homeless Population.** In the attempt by the 1990 census to count the "street" homeless, no homeless persons were identified within the area occupied by Calabasas. This does not mean that homelessness is completely absent from Calabasas and its sphere. No dependable estimate exists for the number of Calabasas residents needing emergency shelter over the course of a year. There are no shelters in the Calabasas vicinity, although several exist in the San Fernando Valley. One recent study of a community roughly comparable to Calabasas suggested an annual need for emergency shelter equivalent to one person for every 2,000 in the population. For Calabasas, that would equate to approximately ten needy persons.

**HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS AND  
SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING ISSUES**

*How does the City plan to address the housing needs of the special needs populations within the City?*

The City has a number of options relative to meeting the housing needs of identified household groups. They include:

- Provide an aggressive program of density bonuses, land cost write-downs, and/or expedited processing for residential development that guarantee the provision of dwellings that meet the needs of identified household needs groups.
- Provide a moderate program of assistance to facilitate the provision of housing that meet the needs of identified needs groups pursuant to the requirements of State Housing Element law.
- Do not provide any programs to facilitate the provision of housing that meet the needs of identified needs groups, even if it means risking a legal challenge to the General Plan Housing Element.

**HOUSING CONSTRAINTS**

**Governmental Housing Constraints.** The City recognizes that officials report that housing permit requests are processed in a timely manner. Local concerns have been incorporated into the development review process through the adoption of the Scenic Corridor Ordinance and the Site Plan Ordinance. These ordinances have clarified community goals and eliminated timely processing delays experienced prior to incorporation of the City.

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The recent Community Attitude Survey identified strong 'slow growth' sentiments among a broad cross-section of residents. These sentiments may exert an influence on public policy and, if strict growth limitations are ultimately adopted, be defined by the State Department of Housing and Community Development as a governmental constraint to the provision of affordable housing.

**Nongovernmental Housing Constraints.** A more serious constraint on residential development are the steep slopes and sensitive environmental features found throughout much of the undeveloped land of the City and its surrounding Sphere, as well as existing traffic congestion problems. If development were to occur, it would very likely be at low densities. In some cases, steeper slopes may be unsuited for development even at low densities. Environmental constraints on future development also stem from the inclusion of the sphere within the borders of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

High land costs are also a significant contributor to non-governmental housing constraints within Calabasas.

**HOUSING CONSTRAINT ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS**

*How will the City remove governmental and nongovernmental constraints to the development of housing in the City?*

The City has a number of options related to the removal of governmental and nongovernmental constraints on housing development. They include:

- Ensure that policies, programs, and regulations related to environmental protection, the preservation of open space, urban design, municipal services and facilities, and other identified community issues are, in fact, necessary requirements, and do not unnecessarily increase the cost or decrease the future availability of housing.
- Formulate growth-related and environmental protection policies which are sufficiently clear so as to ensure that growth-related and environmental protection policies are equitably applied to proposed types of developments.
- Utilize available housing programs to minimize the impact of nongovernmental constraints (e.g. protection of sensitive environmental features, land costs).

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C. LAND USE

DEVELOPMENT PATTERN AND INTENSITY CHARACTERISTICS

**Residential Uses.** Residential land use development in Calabasas has followed a general east to west course since the 1960s. The easternmost part of the City experienced its most rapid growth in the 1960s and 1970s, but slowed noticeably during the 1980s. The central portion of the City west of Old Topanga, experienced substantial growth during the 1970s with even more rapid increases during the 1980s and 1990s. The western portion of the City, west of Las Virgenes experienced nearly all of its residential growth during the last decade.

**Nonresidential Uses.** Non-residential land use development is generally younger than residential development, having followed residential uses to the area.

Calabasas lacks a well-defined historical commercial core. Old Town Calabasas, located at the northeast corner of the City near Calabasas Road and Mulholland Drive, is home to some structures associated with 19th century overland travel. Although it is not located within the current City limits, Old Town is a focal point for the community.

**Annexations.** At the time of incorporation in 1991, the City occupied approximately 11.4 square miles. Subsequently, two annexations have received approval. One, the Micor property located east of Las Virgenes Road and north of Mulholland Highway, consists of approximately 1.5 square miles. The second is a small 6-acre parcel located along the western edge of the City north of the Ventura Freeway.

**Approved Projects.** Seven major new projects in the City and its environs are currently under development or awaiting approval. Completion of these projects, as proposed, would result in the construction of approximately 6,389 dwelling units and over 316 acres of retail, hotel, and office uses.

**Community Character.** Calabasas can be described as a partially built-out residential community with large areas of undeveloped land and open space.

**Existing Land Use.** Land uses in the City of Calabasas can be grouped into four general categories: residential, business, public facilities, streets, and vacant land.

Calabasas can be described as a partially built-out residential community with large areas of undeveloped land and open space. The City contains relatively little commercial or industrial land, a reflection on its residential character and the close proximity of built-up areas in the San Fernando Valley to the east.

# CITY OF CALABASAS GENERAL PLAN:

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The following land use acreage have been identified for the City of Calabasas:

**Table III-2  
Land Use Acreage**

	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>		
Single Family Residential	1,854	22.4
Multi-Family Residential	161	1.9
Mobile Homes	30	0.4
<b>Total Residential</b>	<b>2,045</b>	<b>24.7</b>
<b>BUSINESS</b>		
Retail	72	0.9
Office/Light Industrial	114	1.4
<b>Total Business</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>2.3</b>
Public Facilities	117	1.4
Streets and Roads	711	8.6
<b>VACANT AND OPEN SPACE</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>8.6</b>
Vacant Open Space	80	1.0
Undeveloped Land	4,414	53.4
<b>Total Vacant</b>	<b>5,210</b>	<b>63.0</b>
<b>Total All Uses</b>	<b>8,269</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Urban Research Associates, November, 1992.

Office land use includes a minor amount of light industrial uses occurring in complexes largely devoted to service business and office functions. Vacant land, as categorized in this report, is distinguished from undeveloped land by evidence of grading, site preparation, or other disturbances. Undeveloped land may include incidental grazing activities. No significant commercial agriculture exists in the community.

**Residential Uses.** Residential development in Calabasas may be described as fragmented, due in part to the freeway and topographic barriers and the shortage of through streets.

Gated communities comprise approximately 496 acres (24.3 percent) of the residential land use, dominate the central portion of the City west of Old Topanga Canyon Road. They also occur at scattered sites in the hilly southeastern sections of the City.

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Large-lot custom homes and rural housing can be found along major roads throughout much of the hilly terrain in the southern portion of the study area.

Higher density apartments and condominiums occupy 161 acres, largely concentrated at four sites. These include the extreme eastern corner of the City near the intersection of Mulholland Highway and Mulholland Drive, in the northeast portion of the City along Park Granada Boulevard and Park Street near the Calabasas Inn, in the Malibu Canyon area along Las Virgenes Road north of the 101 freeway, and at Lincoln Malibu Meadows to the southwest along Las Virgenes Road.

**Commercial and Industrial Land Uses.** Retail, office, and industrial land uses occupy a small portion of Calabasas. Altogether, 186 acres or 2.3 percent of the City is in business uses. An additional 53 acres of offices occurs within the unincorporated portion of the Sphere north of the freeway in the vicinity of Parkway Calabasas.

**Public Facilities.** Public facilities in the City of Calabasas include city, fire district, school district, and water district properties. They occupy 117 acres or 1.4 percent of the City. There are four elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and one continuation school. In addition, there is one city park found in the City of Calabasas.

# CITY OF CALABASAS GENERAL PLAN:

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**Existing Zoning.** Zoning in the City of Calabasas has been adjusted from Los Angeles County. At the present time, land in the City is zoned as follows:

**Table III-3  
Existing Zoning**

Zoning Category		Acres
A	Agriculture <sup>1</sup>	3,273 (39.6%)
C	Commercial	231 (2.8%)
CM	Commercial Manufacturing	12 (0.1%)
CPD	Commercial Planned Development	135 (1.6%)
MPD	Manufacturing Planned Development	32 (0.4%)
OS	Open Space	82 (1.0%)
R	Residential	929 (11.2%)
RA	Residential Agricultural	39 (0.5%)
RPD	Residential Planned Development	2,811 (34.0%)
RR	Resort and Recreation	14 (0.2%)
	Roads and Freeway	711 (8.6%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>8,269 (100%)</b>

Source: Urban Research Associates, November 1992.

<sup>1</sup> Residential uses are permitted in the existing Agricultural Zones.

**Interagency Land Use Coordination.** Agencies involved in land use issues likely to affect Calabasas or be affected by developments in Calabasas include:

State of California: Malibu Creek State Park;  
Department of Interior: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area;  
Ventura County: Ahmanson Ranch development;  
City of Los Angeles: Motion Picture and Country House;  
County of Los Angeles: Proposed projects in sphere of influence, including the potential Soka expansion, Malibu Terrace; and Continental Communities.

In the past incorporation efforts, the City has worked closely with the communities of Monte Nido, Cold Creek Canyon, and Agoura Hills.

Based on the zoning of vacant land, the build-out potential for residential uses within the City is 6,800 persons. Existing vacant and undeveloped land within the city limits zoned for agriculture will support an additional 5,300 persons, if developed to be maximum

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permitted by the zoning code. Land within the sphere of influence that is currently proposed for residential development would add another 4,645 persons. Based on a three percent per year growth rate, undeveloped residential land in Calabasas and its immediate sphere represents the equivalent of about a fifteen year supply.

Commercial land located in the City and northern sphere amounts to 239 acres. It is estimated that the existing and proposed commercial acreage is sufficient to meet the needs of a population of 27,000 persons. At three percent average annual growth, Calabasas would reach that figure in about ten years.

**DEVELOPMENT PATTERN AND INTENSITY  
ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS**

*To what extent does the City wish to retain its present land use pattern?*

The City has a number of options related to its land use pattern. They include:

- Confine commercial and office uses to areas where they now exist and areas where commercial development has already been approved.
- Restrict the intensification of commercial and office development within existing developed areas.
- Allow for the expansion of commercial and office development into new areas where local traffic improvements can be provided concurrently to ensure no net decrease in roadway levels of service, and where such intensification can provide increased municipal revenues without increasing impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.
- Allow for intensification of existing commercial and office development in certain specified areas where (1) local traffic improvements can be provided concurrently to ensure no net decrease in roadway levels of service, (2) such intensification can provide increased municipal revenues without increasing impacts on surrounding neighborhoods, and (3) such intensification is consistent with General Plan policies related to urban design and environmental protection.
- Develop restrictions or limitations on the development of new gated communities.

*How aggressive should the City be in affecting the pattern and intensity of growth within its Sphere of Influence, as well as in surrounding communities?*

The City has a number of options in relation to affecting the pattern and intensity of growth in its Sphere of Influence and surrounding communities. They include:

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- Provide comments on proposed development projects within Los Angeles County, Ventura County, and surrounding communities as they are submitted to the City of Calabasas for review.
- Work with Los Angeles County on both the staff level and the City Council - Board of Supervisors level to convince the County to establish development standards and requirements within the City's Sphere of Influence that are equivalent to City standards.
- Work with surrounding jurisdictions on both the staff level and the City Council - Board of Supervisors level to establish basic principles for development review and mitigation of cross-jurisdictional impacts consistent with the concept that the impacts of new development must be offset by project-related benefits *within each of the jurisdictions in which the impacts will be experienced*.
- Establish a regional council made up of representatives of the City and County of Los Angeles; Ventura County; the cities of Calabasas, Agoura Hills, and Hidden Hills; and other agencies as appropriate to discuss and resolve issues of mutual concern, assist in the mediation of conflicts between jurisdictions, and pursue programs of mutual benefit.
- Work with groups such as the California Coastal Commission, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy; area homeowners associations; and local environmental, public interest, and social service groups to forge coalitions to ensure that the impacts and benefits of new development in surrounding communities are equitably distributed between all affected jurisdictions.
- Pursue litigation in those instances where development proposed in surrounding communities would create impacts within the City of Calabasas without providing offsetting project-related benefits to Calabasas residents and businesses.
- Support the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in their pursuit to acquire identified properties even if it means establishment of a National Recreation Area headquarters at the site, along with related traffic impacts.
- Pursue joint land use planning efforts with residents of the City's Sphere of Influence to resolve their land use concerns and resolve municipal service provision issues, thereby facilitating annexation of sphere areas.



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D. COMMUNITY DESIGN

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

**The Natural Environment.** Community design deals with the image of a community, expressed through its physical environment. Calabasas' identity is based on the beauty of its natural environment, rolling hills, oak woodlands, scenic canyons, abundant wildlife, and overall rural character.

**Scenic Features.** Scenic features include the Calabasas Grade, Calabasas Ridge, Calabasas Creek, Malibu Creek and tributaries.

**Significant Ridgelines.** Significant ridgelines are found throughout the study area and are defined as those that visually dominate the surrounding landscape through their size, through the creation of a silhouette against the sky, and through their proximity to, and view from, existing development, or through their ecological, historical, or cultural importance.

**Scenic Corridors.** The City also identifies four scenic corridors: Mulholland Highway Scenic Corridor, Las Virgenes Scenic Corridor, Old Topanga Canyon Scenic Corridor, and the 101 Scenic Corridor.

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS

*In addition to the Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance and the Scenic Corridor Ordinance, what actions should the City take to preserve the natural environment within and surrounding the City?*

The City can take a number of actions related to protecting the natural environment, including:

- Formulate requirements that new development within sites containing significant environmental features be clustered, increasing the density of those portions of the site which are permitted to be developed in exchange for the permanent preservation of those features within individual development projects.
- Within the General Plan, identify features worthy of protection and preservation.
- Establish performance standards for the protection and management of significant natural features within the General Plan study area. Ensure that these performance standards are met in the review of individual development projects, and utilize them as "thresholds of significance" in the review of development projects pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

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- Initiate a program to purchase such development rights as may be attached to properties containing significant natural features to be funded through a community wide assessment.
- Initiate a transfer of development rights program to ensure the permanent preservation of significant environmental features in exchange for increased development density elsewhere in the City.
- Continue to pursue the protection of significant natural features by reviewing projects and placing appropriate conditions of approval on a project by project basis.
- Work with Los Angeles County to adopt environmental protection standards equivalent to those of the Calabasas General Plan for enforcement by the County within the City's sphere of influence.
- Implement additional measures to secure cooperation of surrounding jurisdictions to establish consistent environmental protection regulations are included in the Community Development portion of this document under the discussion of consistent development regulations.

EXISTING DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

**Community Image.** The development pattern, or image of the study area, is one of primarily low density, residential character with concentrations of commercial and office development adjacent to the freeway corridor. Commercial architecture creates a mixture of urban and semi-rural character.

**Single Family Residential.** Generally, two categories of single family development can be identified; the more traditional single family tract development and the rural custom home development. Many of the traditional residential tracts are private, gated communities surrounded by walls with only one to two main access roads. This pattern of development restricts inter-neighborhood connections and creates inwardly focused neighborhoods. These neighborhoods include full urban improvements and are usually characterized by elaborate entry statements, often with gates and guard houses.

**Rural Residential.** Rural residential development is located primarily in the study area's southern portion along canyons and in the hills. Architectural styles vary widely and landscaping is informal or natural. Recent additions to these areas are large, custom estate homes.

**Multiple Family Residential.** Multiple family residential development tends to be concentrated in the Malibu Canyon, Lost Hills, and eastern Calabasas Park area. For the most part, these developments are well planned, however, in the Malibu Canyon area few amenities exist and there is a lack of sufficient landscaping and setbacks from the street.

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**Commercial and Industrial Development.** Commercial/office/industrial development within the study area can be generally categorized into three types: freestanding and strip mall developments located along the 101 Freeway; business park uses along Agoura Road; and the Old Town commercial district.

**Public and Quasi-Public Development.** The development of public and quasi-public uses in the study area is characterized by a lack of concentration and focus. This is primarily due to the recent incorporation of the City and the absence of a civic center.

**EXISTING DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS  
ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS**

*Should the City preserve the existing character of residential developments, or does the City want to take actions to change existing residential image?*

There are several options the City can explore in relation to this issue. They include:

- Establish restrictions or limitations on the development of new gated communities.
- Develop techniques to promote the construction of a variety of housing types.
- Continue to permit residential development in compliance with existing codes and standards.

*Should the City pursue development of a city core to serve as a focus for community activities?*

Although the City does not currently have a central core, the City has a number of options in relation to this issues. They include:

- Identify and promote one central area for development as a "downtown". This area could include: a civic center, a community center or park, commercial and offices uses and multi-family development.
- Instead of promoting a single central core, identify and promote the development of several smaller locations throughout the City to serve as neighborhood "nodes". These areas could include: neighborhood shopping, offices and a park or school.
- Continue to function without identified urban spaces.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

SPECIFIC URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS

**Hillside/Ridgeline Development.** Because of the City's unique terrain, hillside views help to create the character and identity of the community. Development on hillsides and ridgelines largely destroys the scenic value of these natural features and degrades the image of the City.

**Small Lots.** Under the control of Los Angeles County, hundreds of small "cabin" lots were approved throughout the Santa Monica Mountains. These lots were originally intended for vacation homes, and many were only 40 feet wide. In recent years, developers have begun to construct 4,000+ square foot homes on these tiny lots, dominating their surroundings and transforming the character of the area from rural to urban.

**Freeway Corridor.** Billboards and large commercial pole signs block views from the 101 Freeway corridor and stand in sharp contrast to the surrounding hillsides. The commercial area on Las Virgenes Road at Agoura Road has been identified as an area where a multitude of signs exist and create a negative image for the City.

**City Entries.** There are five major entrances to the City, however, only one at the corner of Mulholland Drive and Calabasas Road presents a significant visual entry statement into the City. This lack of concrete City boundaries has been a hindrance to creating an separate and unique identity for the City.

SPECIFIC URBAN DESIGN ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS

*What types of actions is the City willing to take to regulate development within hillside areas?*

The City has a number of options relative to managing and regulating hillside development, including:

- Identify the minimum development intensity that could be legally applied within hillside areas, and reflect those intensities on the General Plan Land Use map.
- Develop slope-density and/or slope-open space preservation formulas for implementation through the General Plan Land Use map and subsequent zoning regulations in a manner consistent with local community values.
- Designate as permanent open space on the General Plan Land Use map all parcels within "density controlled" subdivisions that were set aside and not developed as a trade-off for smaller parcels in other portions of the development site.
- Initiate a program to purchase such development rights as may be attached to current open hillside areas lands to be funded through a communitywide assessment district or other similar mechanism.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

- Continue to support regional efforts to preserve hillside open space lands.
- Formulate requirements that new development be clustered, increasing the density of those portions of the site which are permitted to be developed in exchange for the permanent preservation of open space and ridgelines within individual development projects.
- Initiate a transfer of development rights program to ensure the permanent preservation of current hillside open space lands in exchange for increased development density elsewhere in the City.
- Establish hillside design guidelines and hillside development requirements which maximize open space preservation within development sites, including regulations and guidelines for the following:
  - ▶ landform grading;
  - ▶ landform planting;
  - ▶ maximum heights for cut and fill slopes;
  - ▶ limitations on the use of retaining and crib walls;
  - ▶ maximum pad sizes based on slope;
  - ▶ rounding of the tops and toes of manufactured slopes to blend in with adjacent natural terrain.
- Prohibit development along major *and* minor ridgelines within the General Plan study area.
- Prohibit development along major ridgelines within the General Plan study area, and establish regulations to ensure that the top of structures that are constructed adjacent to ridgelines are kept a minimum distance below the ridgelines.
- Establish maximum height limitations for structures which might block views of major ridgelines based on protecting the viewshed from major vantage points within the community. Where such height limitations would prohibit economic use of the land, require, as a trade-off for obstructing views of ridgelines, the preservation of view corridors. For example, the City of Agoura Hills has adopted, as part of its zoning ordinance, restrictions on development above the 1,100' elevation line.
- Formulate and adopt requirements for the preservation of view corridors to protect views of major *and* minor ridgelines, as well as prominent hillside areas from major vantage points.

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**COMMUNITY ISSUES**

- Continue to pursue the protection of natural hillsides and ridgelines by reviewing projects and placing appropriate conditions of approval on a project by project basis.

*How will the City address the proliferation of "cabin" lots approved throughout the Santa Monica Mountains?*

The City has a number of options as to the manner in which it addresses the issue of "cabin" lots. These include:

- Formulate and adopt regulations for the merger of substandard lots under the same ownership as a means of creating parcels that meet current lot width and depth requirements.
- Identify areas with substandard lots, and work with area landowners for the voluntary incorporation of a mutual benefit corporation which would:
  - ▶ purchase the lots in exchange for shares in the corporation;
  - ▶ merge the parcels and resubdivide them into parcels that meet current lot width and depth requirements; and
  - ▶ sell the resubdivided parcels and distribute proceeds to shareholders.
- Utilize the power of eminent domain to purchase areas with substandard lots, paying for such parcels with the proceeds of the sale of these areas after parcels have been merged and resubdivided.
- Utilize the power of eminent domain to purchase areas with substandard lots with City funds, merge and resubdivide these areas, and reimburse City expenses with the proceeds from the sale of these areas.
- Establish setback, height, and maximum dwelling unit size regulations to ensure that the size of dwelling units constructed on "cabin" lots is in proportion to the size of the parcel.
- Work with the Los Angeles County Health Department to establish minimum parcel sizes for the provision of septic tank sewage systems, which would effectively require the extension of sewer or merger of lots in order for development to proceed.
- Continue to pursue design review for the construction of homes on "cabin" lots by reviewing projects and placing appropriate conditions of approval on a project by project basis.

**COMMUNITY ISSUES**

*What types of actions is the City willing to undertake to regulate signs along the Ventura Freeway?*

The City has a number of options relative to managing signage along the Ventura Freeway, including:

- Adopt a sign ordinance which provides guidelines for the design of signs, restricts the height and size of new signs, prohibits new billboards and "pole" signs, limits freeway-oriented signage on buildings, and establishes a program to amortize non-conforming signs.
- Adopt a sign ordinance which provides guidelines for the design of signs, restricts the height and size of new signs, prohibits new billboards and "pole" signs, and limits freeway-oriented signage on buildings.
- Continue to review and approve signs pursuant to existing regulations on a case by case basis.
- Embark on an aggressive code enforcement program to remove existing illegal signs.
- Promote the use of Caltrans freeway service signs.

*How should the City address the lack of visual entries to Calabasas?*

The City has a number of options as to how it will address visual entries into the City. They include:

- Create a series of community entry statements at major entries to the City, including monuments and landscaping which is reflective of Calabasas' unique character.
- Create City entry signage which is reflective of the community's unique character at major and minor entries to the Calabasas.
- Create a distinctive design for street signs which is reflective of Calabasas' unique character, and replace existing signs.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

E. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE CHARACTERISTICS

**Historical Resources.** There are several phases of history in the Calabasas study area: the pre-contact period of Native American settlement; the era of Spanish exploration; the Mexican rancho period; the Old West period; and modern times, when the Calabasas area became a recreational retreat, an outdoor set for films and television, and an artists' colony. There are a few structural reminders of the later periods, including Leonis Adobe and other buildings in "Old Town" Calabasas, Kennedy's Trout Pond, Saddle Peak Lodge, Warner Brothers Ranch, and several houses near Park Moderne.

**Archeological Resources.** There are 66 archeological sites recorded within the general plan study area. These sites consist of open-air settlements and rock shelters, temporary, special use sites and villages and span the time period from at least 3500 B.C. to the historic period.

**Paleontological Resources.** The study area is underlain by sedimentary and volcanic units. The two most recent geologic formations have a high potential for paleontologic sensitivity, that is, fossils are likely to be found in these rocks. Older geologic units have low and no sensitivity, due to their volcanic nature. There has been a great deal of fossil content found in the study area including ancient marine vertebrates and invertebrates, flora, and "Ice Age" animals".

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ISSUES  
AND PROGRAM OPTIONS

*To what extent should the City pursue historical and cultural resource protection programs?*

The City has a number of options as to the manner in which historical and cultural resources are managed. They include:

- Continue to analyze development proposals on a project by project basis to ensure that development will not create significant impacts on historical and cultural resources.
- Formulate standards for the protection of historical and cultural resources and incorporate these standards into the development review process.
- Adopt specific design guidelines for Old Town Calabasas that are consistent with its historical character.



**COMMUNITY ISSUES**

- Adopt historic preservation/cultural resources policies and an historic preservation/cultural resources ordinance to ensure the preservation of remaining historic structures. As part of such a program, an historic preservation board or commission could be formed to review any proposed permits for demolition or rehabilitation/remodeling of historic structures, as well as to review all development permits within designated historic districts (e.g. Old Calabasas) for consistency with adopted historic preservation/cultural resources policies.

*Does the City wish to keep the "Last of the Old West" as a community image?*

The City has a number of options relative to the "Last of the Old West" image. They include:

- Pursue the "Last of the Old West" as a general community image, and reflect that image in community signage (e.g. entry monuments, street signs).
- Promote the "Last of the Old West" as an image specific to the Old Town area.
- Promote the "Last of the Old West" as the appropriate image for the Old Town area, and expand that image along Calabasas Road to the west of Parkway Calabasas.
- Do not pursue the "Last of the Old West" as a general community image, and utilize other images, such as the City logo in community signage (e.g. entry monuments, street signs).

COMMUNITY ISSUES

F. FISCAL MANAGEMENT

**Demographic Support Base.** Commercial and service businesses in Calabasas are sustained by the residents of the City and its southern sphere, along with portions of Hidden Hills. The population of that consumer base approximates 23,000, of which about 20,700 live within Calabasas and its Sphere of Influence. Some freeway oriented retail patronage comes from persons residing outside this area in western Los Angeles County and the western San Fernando Valley, although only a few businesses such as the auto dealerships draw from the larger market area.

LOCAL RETAIL SECTOR PERFORMANCE

**Estimated Potential for Taxable Sales.** The potential for taxable retail and service sales is estimated to be \$130 to \$145 million annually, although not all of that can be captured by local Calabasas businesses because of patterns of existing competition and the city's smaller size, which places it below the locational requirements for certain types of firms, such as department stores.

**Net Outflow of Taxable Sales Potential.** Overall, the city experiences between \$39 million and \$54 million annually in net outflows of taxable sales potential. That translates into a loss of \$390,000 to \$540,000 in sales tax revenues, a sum which approaches the amount of yearly property tax receipts.

**Capturing Taxable Sales Potential.** It would be misleading, however, to suggest that most of the net outflow of sales tax dollars could be retrieved if Calabasas only possessed a wider array of shopping opportunities. Shopping patterns can become ingrained and difficult to modify. Just as an example, the magnetism of certain regional malls remains strong and can last for decades.

LOCAL RETAIL SECTOR PERFORMANCE  
ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS

*How should the City address the annual net outflow of retail sales?*

The City has a number of options as to how it might address the outflow of sales tax dollars from Calabasas. They include:

- Allow for the expansion of retail uses into new areas where local traffic improvements can be provided concurrently to ensure no net decrease in roadway levels of service, and where such intensification can provide increased municipal revenues without increasing impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.
- Allow for intensification of existing retail uses in certain specified areas where (1) local traffic improvements can be provided concurrently to ensure no net decrease in roadway levels of service, (2) such intensification can provide increased municipal revenues without increasing impacts on surrounding neighborhoods, and (3) such intensification is consistent with General Plan policies related to urban design and environmental protection.

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**COMMUNITY ISSUES**

- Confine retail uses to areas where they now exist and areas where commercial development has already been approved, while establishing retail sales tax generating uses within office developments and allowing intensification of existing development as outlined above.
- Restrict the intensification of commercial and office development within existing developed areas, while allowing expansion of retail uses into new areas as outlined above.
- Provide incentives for the establishment of retail sales tax generating uses within existing developed office buildings and business parks.
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce to establish a program aimed at informing Calabasas residents and businesses of the benefits of shopping locally.

**COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL SITE REVIEW**

**Existing Commercial and Industrial Uses.** Convenience retail need are supplied to Calabasas residents from two neighborhood level shopping centers and a handful of convenience clusters. The Parkway Calabasas Center, anchored by Ralphs, and the older Alpha Beta Center on Mulholland offer consumer staples to local residents. Within the coming months, these centers will be supplemented by at least one larger center, Calabasas Promenade and potentially another center, the Kilroy-Ahmanson project.

Office and light industrial land uses are found north of the 101 Freeway, at Parkway Calabasas. A second corporate office concentration may emerge with the completion of the Kilroy-Ahmanson development north of the Lockheed facility between Calabasas Road and Park Granada Boulevard.

**Availability of Commercial and Industrial Sites.** The proportion of Calabasas zoned for retail, service, and industrial uses is neither exceptionally high nor exceptionally low. A total of 368 acres of the City fall under one of the commercially-related zoning designations, or approximately 4.4 percent of the total city acreage. An additional 33 acres have been designated for manufacturing within Calabasas, bringing the total proportion of commercial and industrial zoning to 401 acres or 4.8 percent of the total area. Comparably sized cities typically have between three and seven percent of their total area in commercial uses and between one and twelve percent in industrial development. Outside the City, but within the Sphere of Influence there is another 147 acres designated for either commercial or industrial use.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL SITE REVIEW  
ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS

*How will the City ensure that the present amount of land zoned for commercial and service activities remains adequate to meet future population needs?*

The City has a number of options relative to the future of commercial and industrial sites within the study area. They are the same as the options for retail uses that were discussed in the preceding Local Retail Sector Performance Issues and Program Options section.

MUNICIPAL REVENUES AND COSTS

**General Fund Revenues.** In 1991, general fund receipts totalled just over \$6,510,000, approximately \$316 per person. Municipal revenues for Agoura Hills and Westlake Village, similar young, affluent cities, provide a comparative base for interpretation of Calabasas revenues. The City of Agoura Hills receives \$273 per person, while the City of Westlake Village receives \$562.

**Sources of Municipal Revenues.** Calabasas' major income sources are:

Utility Users Tax	19.3 %
Planning, Bldg & Engr. Fees	17.8 %
Sales & Use Taxes	14.9 %
Motor Vehicle In-Lieu	14.7 %
State Gas Tax Subven.	12.4 %
Property Taxes	8.5 %

At least two of these sources, development fees and transfers from state and federal sources, can be somewhat unpredictable from year to year.

**Role of Property Taxes.** As a result of the tax base sharing agreement which accompanied the incorporation of Calabasas, the City receives only 3.4 percent of the property tax levy. To gain a more equitable share of those dollars, discussions are currently underway between the City and Los Angeles County concerning the possibility of increasing the City's share of the property tax.

**Services Provided.** Calabasas operates as a contract city, therefore residents pay a number of special districts directly through their property tax bills for such services as fire protection, flood control, water supply and street lighting. As a result these costs are not evident from the City's financial statements. In addition, capital improvements are funded by new developments and for these initial years of cityhood are not included in the budget.

**COMMUNITY ISSUES**

**Comparison of City Expenditures.** 1991 and 1992 per capita expenditure figures for the City of Calabasas and neighboring communities are shown below.

**Table III-4  
Per Capita Costs of City Government**

<b>City</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Agoura Hills	\$256
Westlake Village	\$518
Calabasas <sup>1</sup>	\$264

Source: Urban Research Associates, November, 1992.

<sup>1</sup> Based on a 20,700 population.

Although the overall expenditures of Calabasas are roughly even with those of Agoura Hills, Calabasas spends far less than its neighbors for general governmental administration, one-third to one-fourth as much, and less in the community services/community development area. A lean initial staffing level at Calabasas City Hall, privatization of parks, and the existence of several gated communities providing services to their residents explains much of the fiscal variation between Calabasas and Westlake Village.

**Municipal Infrastructure and Services Financing Methods.** Service charges, bond sales, development impact fees, and various forms of special district creation enable cities to meet the challenges of municipal finance, without raising property taxes. New cities often enact two major financing devices: service contracting and special assessment district formation. Calabasas presently operates a number of contract service arrangements with the following agencies:

**Table III-4  
Contract Service Arrangements**

<b>Type of Service</b>	<b>Service Provider</b>
Police	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Fire Suppression	Consolidated Fire Protection District of Los Angeles County
Water & Sewer	Las Virgenes Municipal Water District
Flood Control	Los Angeles County Flood Control District

Source: Urban Research Associates, November, 1992.

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COMMUNITY ISSUES

The creation of special assessment districts may also fund routine services while also providing capital dollars for basic infrastructure and public facilities. More than a dozen such districts operate within Calabasas. The most prominent of these is Landscape Maintenance District #22, which serves Calabasas Park and the lake. Other special districts cover bridge and thoroughfare improvements, lighting, and street landscaping.

In addition to special assessment districts, local governments can fund facilities that benefit the general public, such as schools, libraries, and recreation facilities, through Mello-Roos districts. Areas have been created to date within Calabasas which offer a wide-ranging potential for public service and facility financing. To date, two Mello-Roos districts have been created in Calabasas, one associated with the Kilroy-Ahmanson project and another in the Calabasas Park project.

MUNICIPAL REVENUE AND COST ISSUES AND PROGRAM OPTIONS

*How will the City fund additional municipal services required in the future?*

The City has a number of options regarding the methods of funding municipal services. They include:

- Emphasize expansion of municipal general fund revenues, including increasing sales tax revenues; aggressively pursuing negotiations with Los Angeles County to increase the City's share of property tax receipts; and increasing the value of existing properties within the City.
- Emphasize user fees.
- Explore opportunities to reduce the cost of municipal services through privatization of facilities and services, cooperative agreements with surrounding communities and other agencies, expand use of volunteers, and/or elimination of non-essential services.
- Emphasize the use of development fees to finance capital facilities.
- Emphasize the use of assessment districts and community facilities districts to finance capital facilities and ongoing operations and maintenance.