

CITY *of* CALABASAS
2030 General Plan

IX – Community Design Element



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CITY of CALABASAS

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IX. COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

The Community Design Element focuses on creating a desirable environment in which to live, work, and play. While the Community Design Element is an elective and not required element of the General Plan, community design includes the relationship between buildings, streets, land uses, open space, circulation, height, massing, natural features, and human activity and, as one of the most visible aspects of the City, warrants comprehensive coverage in the General Plan.

The goal of the Community Design Element is to maintain a high quality appearance in the existing and future built environment, while protecting and preserving the hillsides, ridgelines, and open space areas that provide the visual backbone for the community and are the connecting fabric for a variety of community neighborhoods and uses.

The Community Design Element begins with an overview of the existing physical development and regulatory framework of the City. Next, objectives and policies are organized under following topics:

- *Citywide Community Design*
- *Neighborhoods*
- *Scenic Corridors*

Community Character

Calabasas draws its identity from the beauty of its natural environment: the rolling hills, oak woodlands, canyons, wildlife, and its overall suburban and semi-rural character. Entering Calabasas from the east, there is a sense of leaving metropolitan Los Angeles behind. Vistas become broader and the sight of undeveloped hillsides dotted with oak trees signals an exit from suburbia.



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The following features combine to create Calabasas' unique character:

- *An impressive physical setting, dominated by rolling hills, oak woodlands, canyons, riparian areas, and wildlife;*
- *Large areas of natural hillsides visible from the Ventura Freeway, and a community character as seen from the Freeway that is dominated by natural environmental features;*
- *Diverse topography with large areas unbroken by man-made slopes, and long-range vistas of open ridgelines and mountain slopes that define the extent of urban development;*
- *A sense of leaving the Los Angeles metropolitan area upon entering Calabasas due to the contrast between the intensity of the metropolitan area and the openness and scenic beauty of the community's natural environment;*
- *The historic identity and the western character of Old Town and an emphasis on Old Town as a community cultural center and gathering place;*
- *A low-rise character in the City's commercial and office areas;*
- *A compact, well-defined urban area that is bounded by semi-rural residential and natural open space;*
- *Availability of nearby commercial facilities, services, and office uses in business districts that are separated from the City's residential neighborhoods; and*
- *A lack of night lighting and existence of dark skies, enhancing the visibility of stars at night.*



A key element of Calabasas' character is the contrast between the intensity of the metropolitan area and the openness and scenic beauty of the City's environment.

The existing development patterns of Calabasas are characterized primarily by low density residential development with concentrations of commercial and office



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development adjacent to the freeway corridor. Due to the abundant and wide distribution of open space, a variety of neighborhoods and uses are linked by open space. The typical uses are segregated into several general types of development: single family residential tract development; semi-rural residential development; multiple family residential development; commercial, office, and industrial development; and public uses.

Single family residential tract developments in Calabasas are usually relatively small residential enclaves surrounded by natural areas such as open hillsides and canyons. Some of these enclaves have been developed as private, gated communities with only one or two main access roads. While this development pattern provides residents with a feeling of security, it tends to restrict inter-neighborhood connections and create inwardly focused neighborhoods. This type of development stands in sharp contrast to the more semi-rural, less formal development style of neighborhoods constructed over a period of many years.



Semi-rural residential development is also found in the City, mostly in the southern portion of the City along canyons and in the hills. Architectural styles of semi-rural residential development vary widely and landscaping is informal or natural. The semi-rural character is reinforced through minimal public improvements such as the lack of streetlights, sidewalks, and curbs and gutters. The City will continue to ensure that new development is harmonious with surrounding natural areas.



Multiple family residential development is concentrated in Malibu Canyon, Lost Hills, and the eastern Calabasas Park area. Some multiple family residential



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development lacks sufficient landscaping and provides little architectural interest or detail to contribute to the desired community character.

Commercial, office, industrial development can be generally categorized into four types: freestanding and strip mall developments located along the Ventura Freeway, a large “lifestyle” commercial center (i.e., The Commons), business park uses along Agoura Road, and the Old Town commercial district. While some older commercial projects present a positive image for the City, other projects lack interesting building forms and details, adequate landscaping, screening of parking and storage areas.

Public and quasi-public uses in the community are focused along Las Virgenes Road and near The Commons while schools are located throughout the community with a concentration on the east side of the City along Mulholland Highway.

Existing challenges created by the current community form are:

- *Managing future development and redevelopment to minimize impacts to open space and viewsheds*
- *Improving connectivity between uses, neighborhoods and open space*
- *Creating desirable pedestrian environments and gathering spaces*
- *Establishing community gathering places and focal points for the east and west sides of town*
- *Ensuring high quality design consistent with Calabasas’ desired character*

Existing Regulations

The form, and to some extent the architectural design, of the urban environment is largely the result of standards and regulations imposed on new development. For many years, the Los Angeles County Zoning Ordinance was relied upon as the primary document used to regulate development in Calabasas. Upon incorporation, the City adopted the County’s Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances pending completion of its own development standards. After incorporation, the City adopted its own General Plan and Municipal Code aimed at more effectively controlling development. The City has also enacted ordinances, processes and master plans, including those described below, to help shape community design and character in a manner that is much improved with respect to overall design, landscaping, and compatibility with surrounding open spaces and land uses.



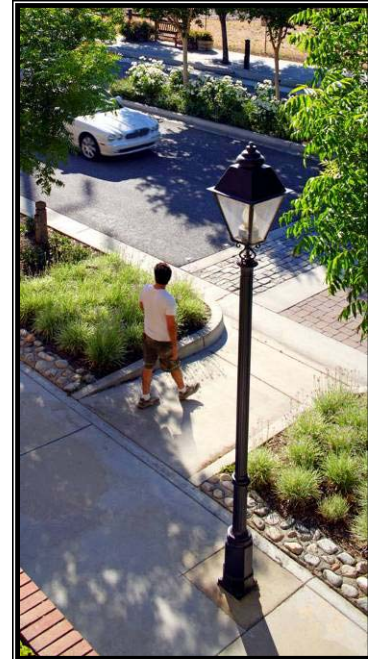
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Site Plan and Development Review

Since incorporation, the City has also enacted a Site Plan Review Ordinance and a Development Review Process. These items currently provide the regulatory standards, design guidelines, and procedures for the review of all development projects in the City, including the exterior appearance of buildings.

Old Town Calabasas Master Plan and Design Guidelines and Commercial Zoning District

The purpose of the Old Town Calabasas Master Plan and Design Guidelines, adopted in 1994, is to ensure that a “sense of place” special and unique to the City of Calabasas could be retained and enhanced to reflect the history and spirit of Calabasas. The design guidelines are intended to facilitate and define the theme of “Old West” by establishing high quality streetscape, site, building, and landscape designs to complement the project setting. Both public and private improvements are addressed in the document.



The Old Town Calabasas Commercial Zoning District, last updated in 2003, specifies a variety of office, retail, and other commercial uses that are appropriate within Old Town, and ensures that development is designed to preserve and enhance the area’s historic character and comply with the Old Town Calabasas Master Plan and Design Guidelines. It is noted that portions of Old Town are within the City of Los Angeles and any applicable regulations from that jurisdiction would apply to those areas.

Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone

The purpose of the Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone, first adopted in 1991 and most recently updated in 2006, is to protect an important economic and cultural base of the City by preventing the destruction of the natural beauty and environment of the City; to safeguard and enhance property values; to protect public and private investment and buildings and open spaces; and to protect and enhance the public health, safety, and welfare.

The Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone is intended to be applied to major roadways within the City, from which the traveling public may enjoy scenic views of the hill and mountain



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areas to the north and south of the community and scenic views of the City itself and surrounding landscape, from the hill and mountain areas within the City. The boundaries of the Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone along designated roadways includes all properties located within 500 feet of the right-of-way of the road designated as a scenic corridor, located between the right-of-way of the designated road and the prominent ridgeline that defines the viewshed from the scenic corridor, and where the director determines development may have an impact upon the designated scenic corridor. Designated scenic corridors within Calabasas include: Mulholland Highway, Las Virgenes Road, Old Topanga Canyon Road, and the Ventura Freeway. Scenic corridors are discussed in section IX.C of this element.

Las Virgenes Gateway Master Plan and Las Virgenes Road Corridor Design Plan

The Las Virgenes Gateway Master Plan and the Las Virgenes Road Corridor Design Plan, both adopted in 1998, are companion documents. The Gateway Master Plan provides direction on the planned development or redevelopment of private properties along the corridor while the Corridor Design Plan focuses on the desired appearance and functionality of the public realm, including the roadway, sidewalks, street lighting and furnishings, landscaping, etc.

The Las Virgenes Gateway Master Plan recognizes the location of the intersection of Las Virgenes Road and the Ventura Freeway as a gateway to the San Fernando Valley and Santa Monica Mountains as well as the City of Calabasas. The area contains some of the most scenic and diverse topography in the region and past urban development has threatened to negatively affect much of the natural semi-rural character. The Las Virgenes Gateway Master Plan sets goals and objectives to guide land use planning efforts, revitalization plans, and the review of new private development proposals. The Master Plan provides specific land use and development criteria and design guidelines for this section of the City. A semi-rural theme, rooted in California's history of simple, massive (adobe and timber-based) construction, is emphasized with "Monterey" style cited as an example of appropriate architectural design.

The Las Virgenes Road Corridor Design Plan provides a comprehensive master plan for a six mile length of Las Virgenes Road addressing beautification and circulation planning. A unified landscape plan is provided addressing signing, street lighting, street trees, parkway landscaping, medians, sidewalks, street furnishings and other elements establishing suitable character for various zones along the corridor. Native landscaping and rustic themes are emphasized.



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West Calabasas Road Master Plan

The West Calabasas Road Master Plan, adopted in 2006, provides design direction on the planned development or redevelopment of private properties along the corridor as well as on the desired appearance and functionality of the public realm, including the roadway, sidewalks, street lighting and furnishings, landscaping, etc.

Guidelines provide instruction on design details to create “upscale country” and “country corporate” themes that build on both the history of the area and the more recent developments to unify West Calabasas Road and provide a cohesive environment. Two distinct types of land uses are addressed: vehicle dealerships and medical facilities and accompanying overnight accommodations. The guidelines address overall design principles, site planning, landscaping, building design, and site features.

Mulholland Highway Master Plan

The Mulholland Highway Master Plan, adopted in 1997, not only provides for traffic and circulation infrastructure but also provides guidance regarding beautification, landscaping and utility improvements. The goal of the plan is to help restore the original beauty of Mulholland Highway.

IX.A Citywide Community Design

The objectives and policies in this section relate to a larger community design ethos that necessarily involves entire neighborhoods, districts, or other sub-regions of the City. Within these areas, multiple parcels and a mixture of land uses are typically affected.

Objectives

- ❖ Focus new development in and near areas that already contain existing development.
- ❖ Preserve significant natural features, designated open space, and biological habitats.
- ❖ Preserve and enhance a pleasant visual experience for residents and visitors, emphasizing prominent and distinctive vistas, view corridors, and natural features.
- ❖ Create pedestrian access and connectivity opportunities as well as human-scaled gathering places.
- ❖ Promote high quality design for structures and building sites.



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General Plan Approach

Community design focuses on defining the physical forms and environmental features that contribute to community character. The themes of environmental sensitivity, compact urban form, and inviting pedestrian access are key elements to future development in Calabasas. It is a high priority of the City to protect the natural environment, hillsides, open spaces, and views as the City continues to realize some future development. Calabasas is committed to promoting sustainable practices through General Plan community design goals and policies that complement such policies in the Conservation Element.

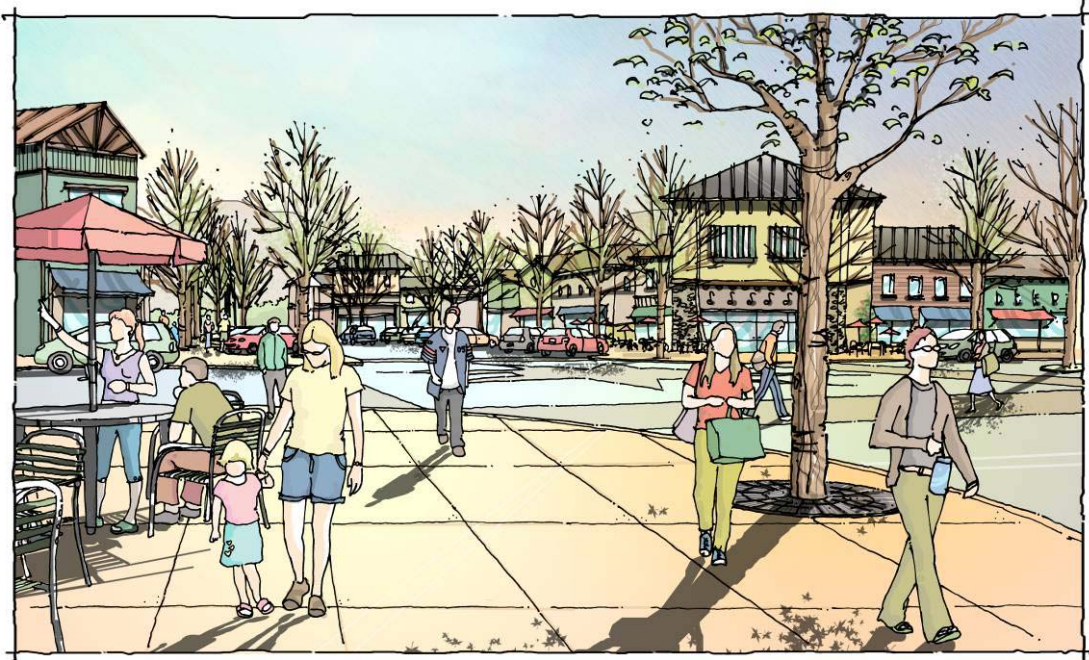
The primary community design concept for the General Plan is that new development should conform to the character of its natural setting. Therefore, new development should be accomplished through infill and revitalization of existing developed areas in order to conserve undeveloped areas. By creating a more compact urban form, many benefits may be realized, including maximizing open space, reducing energy costs, enhancing public transit feasibility, creating more walkable environments, and providing greater connectivity and synergy between land uses.



The challenge lies in how to accommodate and shape future development in infill locations in a way that retains the character of Calabasas and minimizes environmental effects. With this infill approach in mind, the City also seeks to accommodate housing demand through the redevelopment of commercial areas of the community with somewhat higher density mixed use development. This will create a series of mixed use community areas linked by open space and areas of larger residential development. Within the mixed use areas, the formation of inviting pedestrian areas and local gathering spaces will be important in creating a desirable atmosphere and a sense of community.



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Calabasas recognizes that it is, and will continue to be, a low-profile, residentially-oriented community and the City intends to maintain its unique character as a friendly, family-oriented community in a picturesque natural setting.

Residential “mansionization” (building of excessively large houses on small lots) is perceived by some as a concern in Calabasas. This type of development can result in houses with large bulk that are out of scale with existing neighborhoods and that have the potential to change the character of the neighborhood. It can also result in minimal setbacks and landscaping along street frontages; decreased availability of light, air, and privacy; view blockage; and excessive grading for large building pads. The General Plan aims to prevent overbuilding by requiring that new residential construction be compatible with the surrounding community character and the physical limitations presented by the natural terrain. The City recognizes that development of individual small lots, in itself, does not necessarily create negative impacts, as long as certain key design concepts are incorporated to mitigate potential negative impacts.

Policies

- IX-1 Through community input and design review, ensure that new development and redevelopment is of high quality design, is aesthetically pleasing, and contributes to a positive image for the City.



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- IX-2 Preserve, protect, and enhance landmarks, sites, historic landscapes and districts, and areas of historical, cultural, and urban design significance.
- IX-3 Ensure that new development projects become assets to the community through direct contribution to the enhancement of Calabasas' visual environment.
- IX-4 Protect and enhance historic resources such as Old Town, in collaboration with all other affected jurisdictions as appropriate.
- IX-5 Ensure that new development is aesthetically compatible with the area's natural environment and that it contributes to a positive image for the City.
- IX-6 Require that new developments preserve views of identified scenic resources from designated corridors.
- IX-7 Where applicable, enhance view corridors that are oriented toward existing or proposed community amenities, such as recreation facilities, parks, open space, or natural features.
- IX-8 Require that new developments establish architectural and siting design themes that are compatible with the surrounding context, including:
- *Prominent design features existing in the immediate area (i.e. trees, landforms, historic landmarks);*
 - *Existing and planned development, buildings and structures; and*
 - *The natural environment (i.e., hillsides, washes, native vegetation, community landscaping).*
- IX-9 Require that new developments create pleasing transitions to surrounding development. For example, where applicable:
- *The bulk of new structures should be compatible with the area's environment and with adjacent development;*
 - *Setbacks from streets and adjacent properties should be in proportion to the structure and the function of the street and shall encourage pedestrian scale and uses (for example, zero setbacks from property lines and street right-of-way are appropriate within Old Town); and*



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- *Multi-story structures should be made less imposing by physically stepping the upper stories of the structures back from street level.*

IX-10 Within residential neighborhoods, protect neighborhood character by maintaining the mass, scale, and height of structures at a size that is compatible with the size of the parcel upon which the structure is located, as well as the size of adjacent development.

IX-11 Promote an assembly of distinct neighborhoods that encompass a range of housing types which:

- *Provide a refuge from the congestion of the adjacent metropolitan area;*
- *Are visually attractive and compatible in intensity, dwelling unit size, and structural design with the need to protect the surrounding natural environment; and*
- *Meet the needs and suit the lifestyles of current and future residents.*

IX-12 Provide appropriate transitions between different projects and between suburban and rural/semi-rural land uses through the provision of buffer areas, landscaping, and other similar treatments, such as hedges, walls, fences, berms, or landscaped open space.

IX-13 Promote the establishment and maintenance of the following features to enhance community character:

- *Gathering, meeting, and recreational places;*
- *Commercial facilities that facilitate, rather than hinder, pedestrian circulation within the facility, as well as between commercial facilities and adjacent residential neighborhoods;*
- *Development designs that enhance a feeling of being safe*
- *Traditional, rather than trendy or "franchise" architecture that complements the natural character of Calabasas' setting;*
- *Distinctive buildings that contribute to, rather than detract from, Calabasas' character;*
- *Hillside residential development designs that feature natural rather than manmade forms and that emphasize the use of custom foundations in place of slab construction;*



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- *House sizes and flat pad areas in hillside areas that are consistent with the natural character and setting; and*
- *Community entry statements and landscaping that accurately portray community character.*

IX-14 Promote lower level lighting/illumination citywide through implementation of lighting standards such as the City’s “Dark Skies” ordinance.

IX-15 Ensure that public improvements such as streets, sidewalks, drainage facilities, and streetlights are aesthetically pleasing and contribute to a positive image for the City. For example, where applicable:

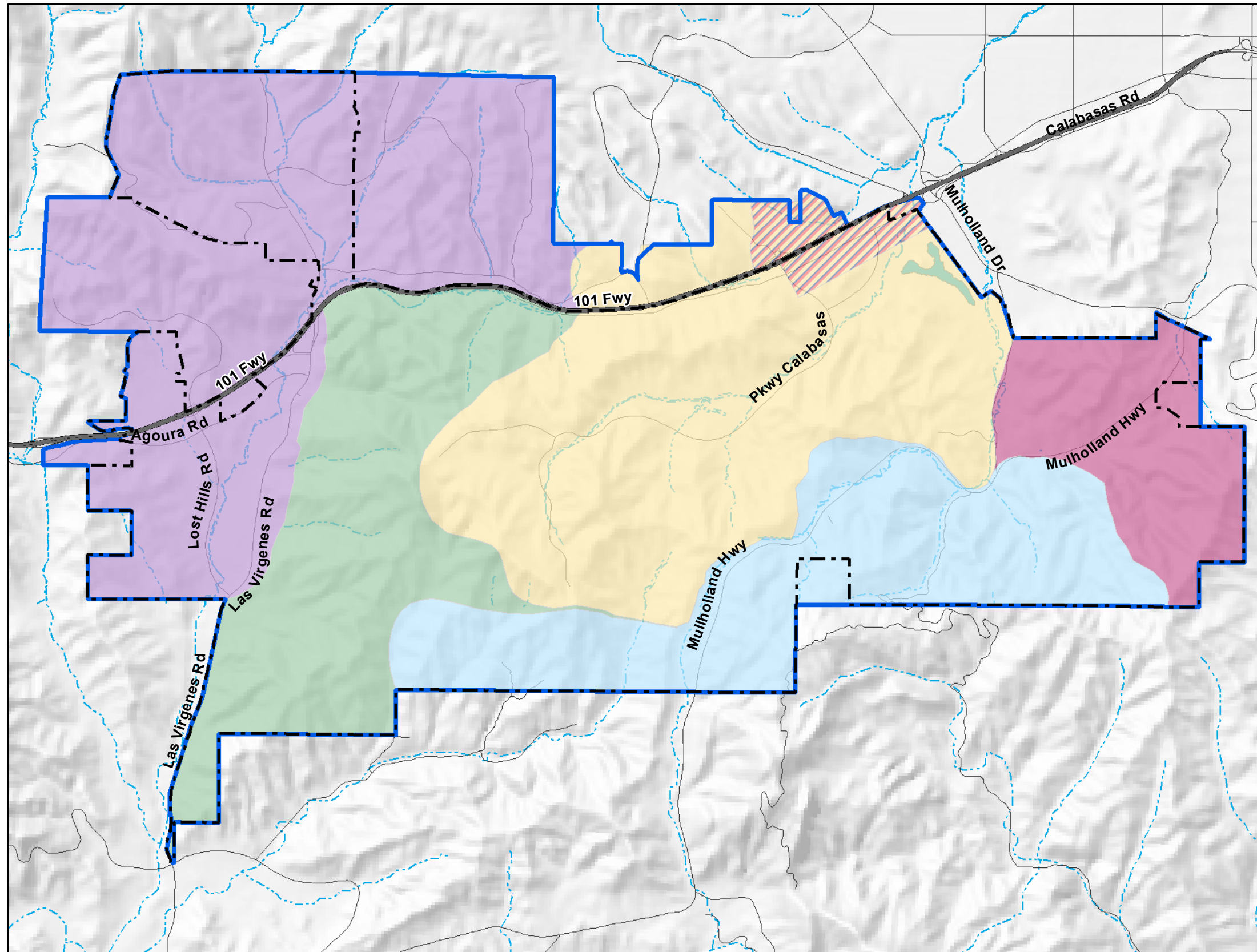
- *Use earth-tone tinted concrete for drainage features;*
- *Provide natural-looking treatments for culverts incorporating native stone material; and*
- *Install streetlights and traffic signals that are attractive and low glare.*

IX-16 Integrate sustainable practices into the design of developments, including site planning, building form, materials, and landscaping.

IX.B Neighborhoods

Different areas of Calabasas exhibit a variety of design characteristics and themes. This variety is an important component of the community identity of Calabasas. Several neighborhoods within Calabasas warrant specific design direction. The following four neighborhoods are a focus of this section: Las Virgenes/Westside, East Village, North Mulholland, and South Mulholland. For the purposes of this section, the subtitle “neighborhoods” refers to subareas of the City that are actually collections of neighborhoods located in the same general area. **Figure IX-1** shows the location of each neighborhood.





LEGEND

- Calabasas City Boundary
- Plan Area Boundary
- Major Roads
- Las Virgenes/Westside
- Old Town/East Village
- Open Space
- Greater Mulwood (North Mulholland)
- South Mulholland
- Greater Calabasas Park

N
0 0.5 1 Mile

Figure IX-1
Calabasas Neighborhoods

Basemap imagery provided by USGS, 2002. Additional data layers from City of Calabasas, 2007, RRM Design Group, 2008, and Rincon Consultants, 2009. Updated March 2014.



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General Plan Approach

As stated earlier, strategic infill development is preferred to development in undisturbed, natural areas. The greatest opportunities for strategic infill development in Calabasas lie at the western and eastern gateways to the City, in the Las Virgenes/Westside and East Village neighborhoods. Mixed use infill development will characterize these neighborhoods. Additionally, none of the major entrances to the City, such as the East and Las Virgenes/Westside areas, currently presents a significant visual entry statement. Development of these entrances should include recognizable elements that represent the quality development and way of life of Calabasas. The North Mulholland and South Mulholland neighborhoods are more residentially focused neighborhoods; therefore, protection of the existing community character is an important community design concept for these neighborhoods.

Las Virgenes/Westside

The Las Virgenes/Westside area encompasses the portions of the City of Calabasas along Las Virgenes Road and Agoura Road. Currently, the area hosts a variety of uses from business park, commercial, and hotel to single and multi-family residential uses. Visitor-serving support uses, such as gas stations and drive-thru restaurants, are situated near the freeway. The character of Agoura Road and Las Virgenes Road ranges from an urban feel of larger office complexes and small retail operations to a semi-rural, ranch, natural character. There is a need to create a focal point and more integrated, inviting mix of land uses, gathering places and pedestrian environment. This area is also considered a gateway to the Santa Monica Mountains and the western entry into the City; Las Virgenes Road is also designated as a scenic corridor, as discussed later in this element.

Combining the desire to direct development to infill and redevelopment opportunities (versus undeveloped hillside areas) and to facilitate a “village center” for the Westside of town, the Las Virgenes/Westside concept was created. The Las Virgenes/Westside is comprised of a mixed use district with residential, retail and office space that has a distinct village feel. The area provides enhanced streetscapes and public gathering



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spaces focused on an enhanced Las Virgenes Creek walkway. Specific visioning for the Las Virgenes/Westside area was conducted and is presented on **Figure IX-2**; **Figure IX-3** provides several sketches depicting the future potential for the Las Virgenes/Westside. Portions of the vision for this area would be implemented as properties in the area redevelop over time. In addition, specific direction is provided for a prominent site east of the Agoura Road/Las Virgenes Road intersection due to the need for special standards that address unique features, conditions, and constraints. For these reasons, this site is designated Planned Development in the Land Use Element.

For the Planned Development site, a welcoming pedestrian level presence at street level along Las Virgenes Road is a key element. Buildings and uses should have a strong connection and interaction to the street in order to integrate the site with the mixed uses along Agoura Road. Store fronts at the ground level will be customer oriented, while uses above include office or residences (or perhaps commercial uses such as a restaurant with views of the Las Virgenes/Westside). Buildings are envisioned to maintain good building form, including stepbacks and balconies. High quality, iconic architecture will screen parking structures and follow architectural direction in the Las Virgenes Gateway Master Plan. Overall, the project will be nestled into the topography using techniques such as contour grading, terraced building forms and tuck-under parking.

Objectives

- ❖ Near Las Virgenes Road and Agoura Road, foster the creation of a mixed use residential, retail, and office district with a distinct village feel.
- ❖ Foster connections to Las Virgenes Creek.

Policies

IX-17 Provide a mix of uses that creates a destination area where people can come and stay – live, shop, relax, play.

IX-18 Facilitate the development of more amenities in western Calabasas, such as shopping, pedestrian facilities, and gathering places.



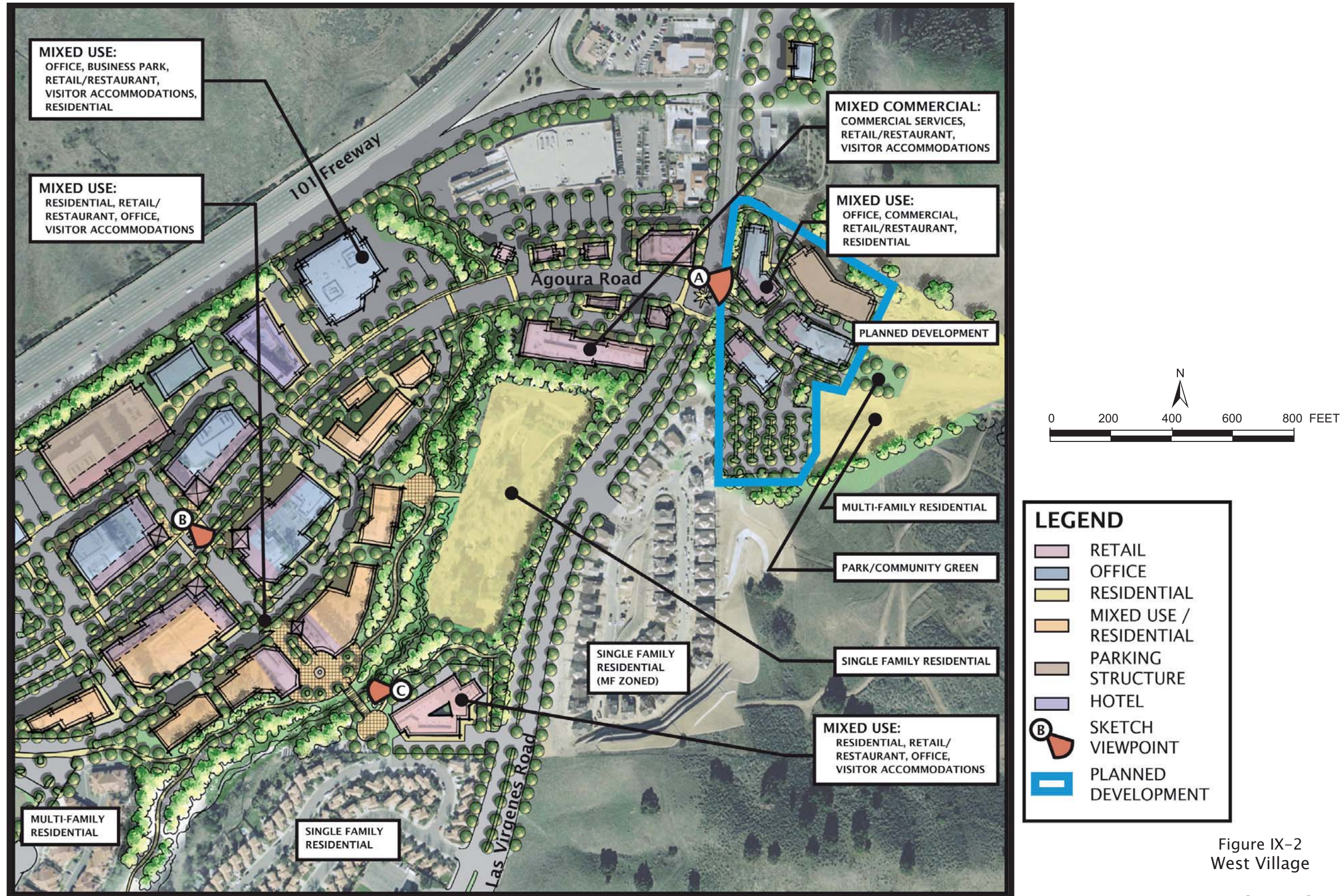


Figure IX-2
West Village

CITY of CALABASAS

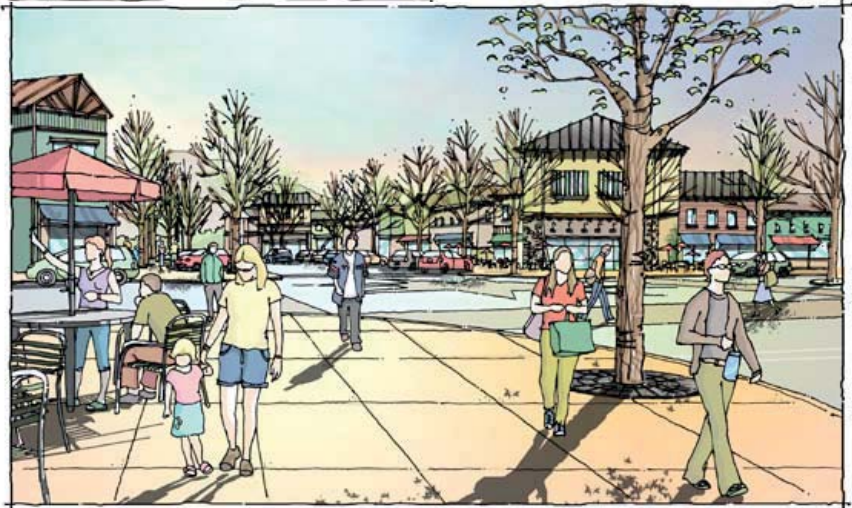
Source: RRM Design Group, December, 2008.





(A)

LOOKING EASTWARD ACROSS
LAS VIRGENES ROAD INTO
NEW MIXED USE SITE



(B)

LOOKING SOUTH ACROSS
AGOURA ROAD TOWARD
LAS VIRGENES CREEK



(C)

LOOKING SOUTHWESTERLY
ALONG LAS VIRGENES CREEK

Source: RRM Design Group, March, 2008.



Figure IX-3
West Village Sketches

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- IX-19 Facilitate the development of a mixed use commercial core along Agoura Road that is supported by office and residential uses.
- IX-20 Emphasize the use of natural materials such as wood and stone on new development in order to enhance the area's semi-rural/ranch character.
- IX-22 Develop a unified streetscape identity for Las Virgenes and Agoura Road with landscaping improvements, intersection treatment, better building street presence, and improved pedestrian orientation.
- IX-23 Create stronger connections with Las Virgenes Creek through building orientation, outdoor dining and pedestrian access.
- IX-24 Create gathering spaces in new development to enhance pedestrian activity, provide community focal points, and strengthen linkages between uses.

East Village

The East Village area is actually a collection of four distinct areas: Calabasas Park, Old Town Calabasas, The Commons, and Craftsman's Corner. Calabasas Park and Old Town Calabasas have well established identities and not much revitalization or infill is envisioned for these areas. Currently, challenges include lack of connectivity between these subareas, visual clutter along the freeway, unscreened parking lots along Calabasas Road, and the unmet opportunity for more of a downtown environment for the east side of the community.

The vision for The Commons and Craftsman's Corner areas is to create an expanded "village" environment by including new professional offices, retail commercial uses, visitor accommodations, cultural arts facilities, and residential development connected with pedestrian spaces, plazas, and parks. Specific visioning for portions of the East Village area was conducted and is presented on **Figure IX-4**.



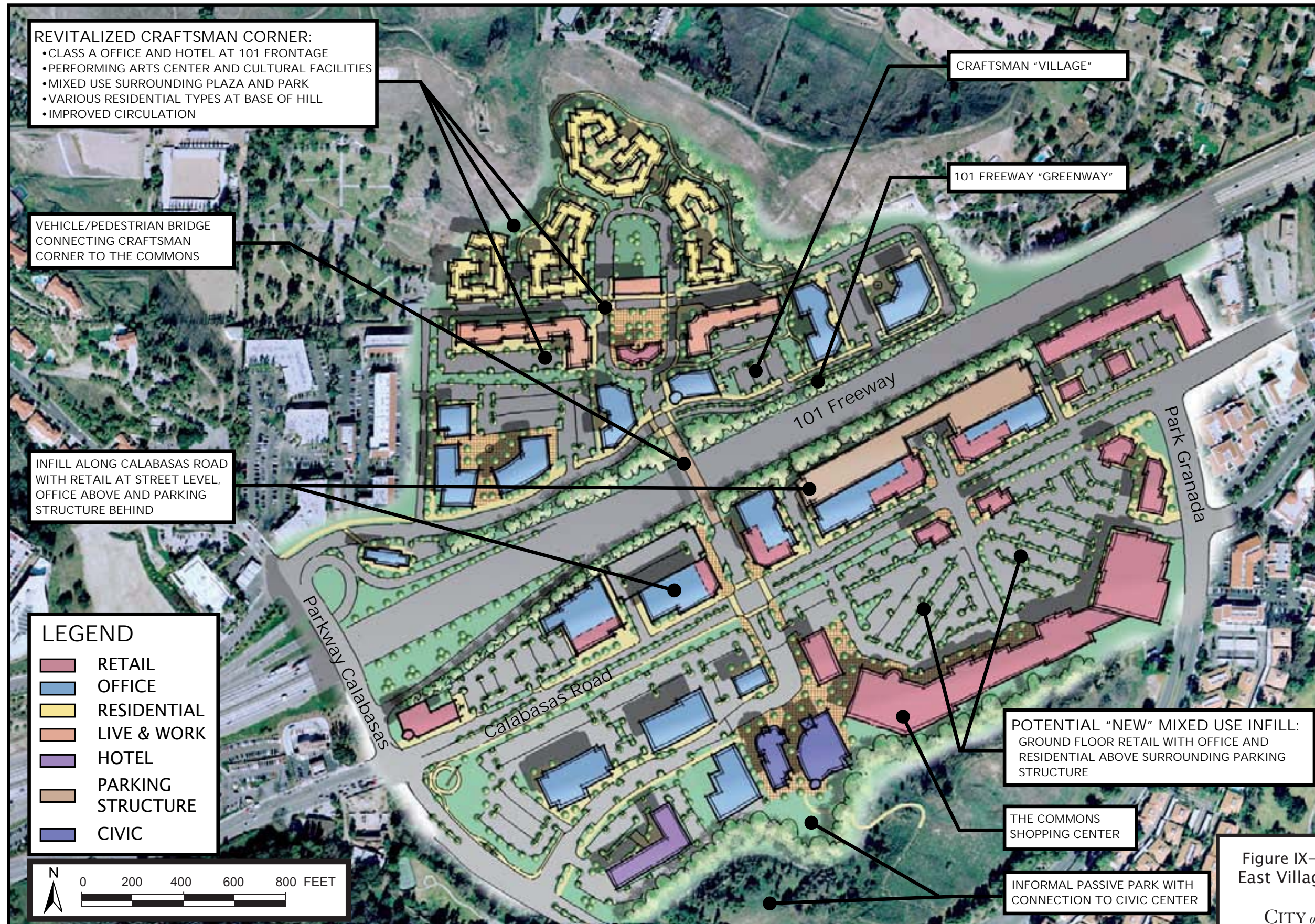


Figure IX-4
East Village

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Source: RRM Design Group, March 2008.



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Objectives

- ❖ Maintain the well-established traditional character of Calabasas Park and Old Town.
- ❖ Revitalize the Craftsman's Corner area and enhance The Commons area by creating an expanded village environment that includes new retail commercial, visitor accommodations, and residential development with limited new professional offices and cultural arts facilities connected through pedestrian spaces, plazas, and parks.



Policies

IX-25 Facilitate the establishment of a "downtown" district for Calabasas Road east of Parkway Calabasas emphasizing a pedestrian-oriented mix of retail, office and residential uses as well as pedestrian connections to adjacent residential areas.

IX-26 Use The Commons as a successful example for the quality of design and public spaces.

IX-27 As properties along Calabasas Road redevelop over time, require placement of buildings at the street edge to enliven the street scene and enhance the pedestrian experience and reduce the visibility of parking areas from public view.

IX-28 Reduce the visibility of parking areas from public rights-of-way using appropriate building placement, landscaping, and other design techniques.



IX-29 Annex and revitalize Craftsman's Corner through redevelopment with a mix of uses (possibly including a focus on creative or performing arts), improving



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circulation, and raising the quality of building design to meet or exceed the surrounding areas. In conjunction with revitalization, create a vehicle and pedestrian connection (freeway overpass) between Craftsman’s Corner and The Commons that may also act as a gateway element. Also, create pedestrian and bicycle connections between Calabasas and Hidden Hills.

IX-30 Beautify and buffer the freeway edge while preserving views of surrounding hillsides.

IX-31 Establish parking strategies such as shared parking facilities or establishing parking districts to increase efficiency and enable redevelopment of selected areas.

North Mulholland

The North Mulholland area encompasses the areas along Mulholland Highway in the northeast portion of the City including Mullwood, Park Moderne (also known as the “Bird Tract”), Gelson’s shopping center and a number of schools. This area is largely suburban and low density in character with four or five residential neighborhoods that are somewhat physically disconnected. Several schools in this area provide cohesive elements. Park Moderne is characterized by small winding streets and big trees. Throughout the area, original single-story homes are recycling to larger, two-story structures that are not always in scale and character with existing neighborhoods. Infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists is sometimes lacking and there is a desire to make the street environments more inviting.

Objectives

- ❖ Preserve the traditional community scale of residential neighborhoods, ensuring the consistency of new development with the existing established character.
- ❖ Enhance connectivity between diverse neighborhoods, schools, and commercial centers.



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Policies

- IX-32** Develop and implement design standards relating to floor area ratios, building setbacks, and residential design guidelines in order to ensure that home remodels are compatible with existing neighborhood character and scale, and protect neighbors' privacy.
- IX-33** Improve connectivity between neighborhoods through pedestrian and bicycle improvements and unifying design elements such as parkway landscaping and trees.
- IX-34** Improve facilities along streets for walking and bicycling.
- IX-35** Beautify streets by planting additional trees and undergrounding utilities.

South Mulholland

The South Mulholland area encompasses the south central portion of the City along Mulholland Highway and includes Calabasas Highlands and Old Topanga Canyon. Neighborhoods within this area exhibit an eclectic range from newer large homes to older, low density subdivisions. The area is characterized by a "country" feeling, often with narrow roads, abundant undeveloped lands, hilly topography, and minimal infrastructure.

Antiquated "cabin lot" subdivisions within the Santa Monica Mountains (Calabasas Highlands and Old Topanga Canyon) are located in this area of the City. These subdivisions, created prior to the adoption of the California Subdivision Map Act, were originally intended for small cabins and were designed without considering the area's steep topography and lack of services. As a result, many lots are narrow (some as narrow as 20-foot wide), have inadequate roadway access, and have substandard onsite sewage disposal systems. Because of these and other constraints, separate overlay zoning districts were established for the Old Topanga and Calabasas Highlands neighborhoods in 2000 and updated in 2003 to help address issues unique to these individual neighborhoods. In addition to adopting overlay zoning for these areas,



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another strategy successfully employed by the City has been to purchase substandard lots as the lots become available in order to retire development potential.

Objectives

- ❖ Preserve the existing semi-rural community character of this area of Calabasas by maintaining undeveloped hillsides and natural features to the maximum extent practicable.
- ❖ Encourage patterns of smaller-scale residential development that blend with the natural landscape and the traditional development of that community.

Policies

- IX-36** Maintain abundant open space and the small-scale, semi-rural character of existing neighborhoods.
- IX-37** Integrate buildings into the site topography in order to minimize visual impacts and disturbance of biological resources.
- IX-38** Maintain and complement design features that contribute to the eclectic charm of the existing neighborhoods.
- IX-39** Allow widening of streets only as necessary for public safety purposes.
- IX-40** In neighborhoods comprised of small “cabin lots”, all new residential development projects, including the construction of individual dwellings and home additions, must conform to the Overlay District standards for that area. In addition, it is the responsibility of property owners in new developments within “cabin lot” subdivisions to provide adequate and safe access, including access for emergency vehicles, and adequate off-street parking.



IX. COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

- IX-41** Continue to implement the Old Topanga Overlay zone and the Calabasas Highlands Overlay zone standards.
- IX-42** Pursue consolidation of substandard lots as opportunities are presented and funding is available in order to retire development potential.

IX.C Scenic Corridors

Much of what forms the visual image of Calabasas comes from what is seen from motor vehicles. At present, this image is one of rugged terrain, oak woodlands, ridgelines, and canyons when viewed from the majority of the City's major streets.



Exceptions to this view occur along some portions of the Ventura Freeway and along the Las Virgenes Road commercial section, where buildings and signs partially block hillside views. In the years following the City's incorporation this situation has improved significantly, although a number of nonconforming signs remain.

Objective

Protect and enhance public views from scenic corridors within the community.

General Plan Approach

The intent of establishing scenic corridors is the preservation of public views of important scenic resources such as significant ridgelines identified in the Open Space Element. A description of the Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone is provided earlier in this element under the Existing Regulations section. Four scenic corridors have been identified as described below and shown on **Figure IX-5**. The City has also enacted a Scenic Corridor Ordinance to implement policies protecting these corridors.



IX. COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

The **Mulholland Highway Scenic Corridor** extends from Mulholland Drive through the unincorporated territory to Las Virgenes Road. As with all of the City's scenic corridors, the viewshed includes both rural and urban areas. The corridor contains diverse topography, including sandstone hills and ridges, immense granite outcrops, stream and riparian habitat, and open areas of rolling meadow and oak woodland.

The **Las Virgenes Scenic Corridor** is a key cross-mountain roadway that provides primary access to the Malibu Creek State Park area and the Pacific Coast. Dominant features include rolling hills, oak woodlands, and primary wildlife linkage along Malibu Creek and its surrounding wetland habitat.



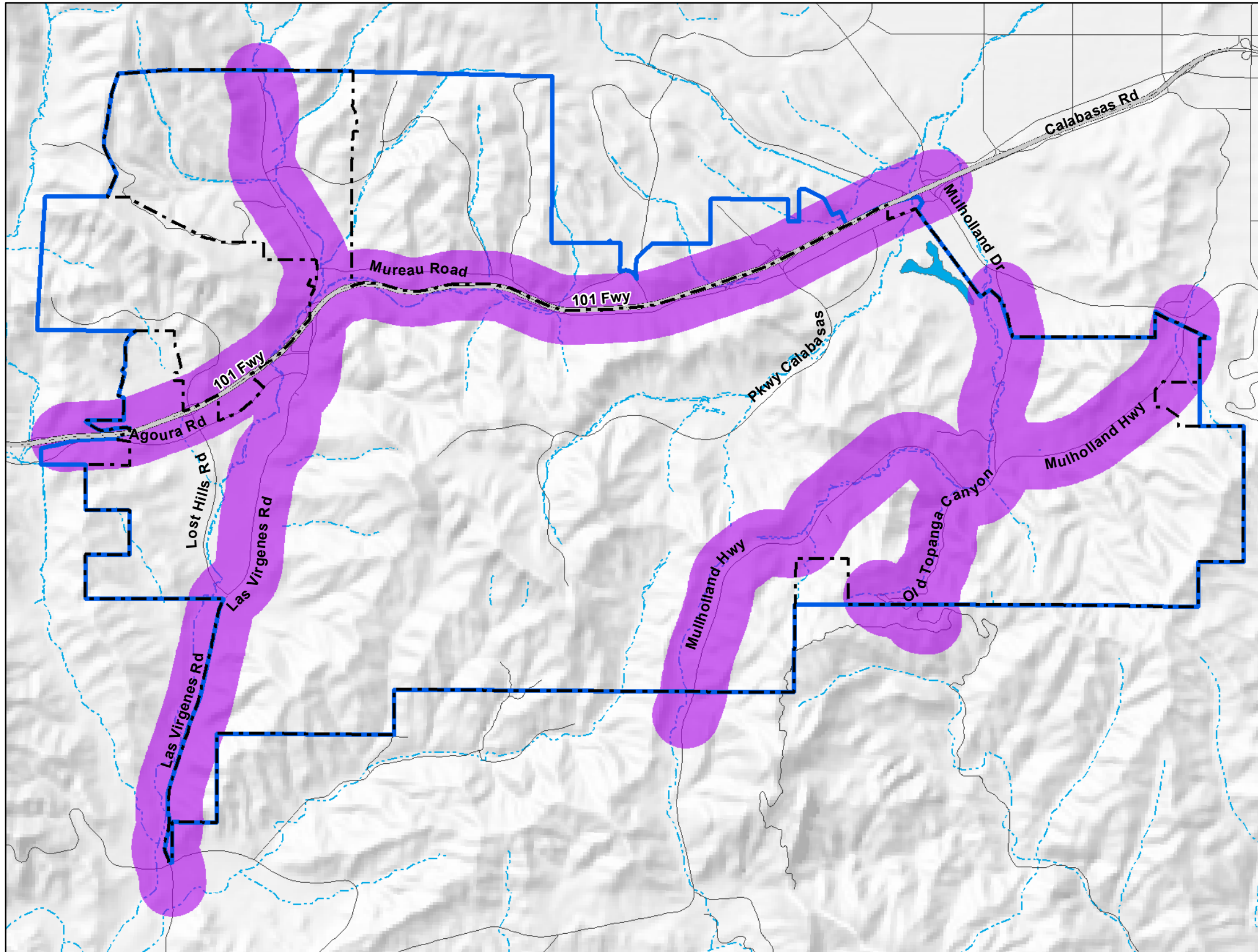
The **Old Topanga Canyon Scenic Corridor** extends from the urban residential area north of Mulholland Highway to its ascent of the Calabasas Ridge into the coastal zone of Topanga Canyon. The rural portion provides an interior route throughout the Santa Monica Mountains and contains some of the most scenic vistas of the inland valley, steep canyon walls, and a year-round watershed that fosters a riparian setting and a vigorous oak canopy.

The **Ventura Freeway Scenic Corridor** is a heavily traveled, high-density corridor that encompasses much of Old Town Calabasas, Calabasas Road, and the Calabasas Grade. Beautification of the existing 500-foot corridor and preservation of significant ridgelines, rolling hills, and oak woodlands are of concern here. Existing negative aspects of the corridor, such as freeway oriented signs and uses, are also a concern.

Policies

- IX-43** Require new development to be designed in a manner consistent with the Scenic Corridor Overlay Zoning requirements and the Scenic Corridor Design Guidelines.





LEGEND

- Calabasas City Boundary
- Plan Area Boundary
- Major Roads
- Scenic Corridors

N

0 0.5 1 Mile

Figure IX-5
Scenic Corridors

Basemap imagery provided by USGS, 2002. Additional data layers from City of Calabasas, 2007, RRM Design Group, 2008, and Rincon Consultants, 2009. Updated March 2014.



IX. COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

- IX-44** Preserve large areas of natural hillsides and other dominant natural environmental features visible from the Ventura Freeway.
- IX-45** Pursue the elimination of remaining billboards along the Ventura Freeway, amortization of remaining non-conforming pole signs, and an overall reduction of sign clutter.
- IX-46** In collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions, ensure that new development along the Ventura Freeway does not block views of significant visual features such as designated ridgelines.
- IX-47** Where barrier screening for visual or noise mitigation is necessary, such treatment shall consist of a combination of decorative walls, undulating berms of various heights and innovative use of combined evergreen and deciduous trees.



IX. COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

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