

Pink Castle

IV

Community Design

Community Design

Goals

- 1.1 Encourage overall development of the community in a manner which is visually pleasing, which preserves and enhances the semi-rural character of the local environment, and which protects the scenic qualities of the community.
- 1.2 Through cooperation between City government and commercial sector, encourage a thriving, well designed, aesthetically pleasing commercial area, preserving a strong tax base, compatible with the residential nature of the surrounding community.
- 1.3 Provide standards and guidance for the design and development of commercial facilities in the community which enhance the City's appearance, aesthetic qualities and business potential.

2.1 RESIDENTIAL

The City of La Canada Flintridge maintains a distinctive community life style. Much of the community was developed prior to mass grading techniques utilized in the 1950's and 1960's. As a consequence, the hillside construction practices in the City resulted in a residential community harmonious with the topography upon which it is located. The net visual impact of these practices is today's semi-rural appearance: winding streets, extensive areas containing native vegetation and homes that blend into the hillsides.

2.2 COMMERCIAL

The commercial area of the City is substantially developed. The commercial district along Foothill Boulevard resembles many other "strip" commercial areas in Southern California, with stores fronting on the sidewalk having limited setbacks, moderate or inadequate off-

Conditions, Trends

street parking, no unified design theme for structures and virtually no landscaping. Exceptions to these are along the north and south side of Foothill Boulevard easterly of Oakwood Avenue. This stretch of the boulevard presents an image more consistent with the overall character of the residential community. The landscaping is generous and the front setbacks of the structures are such that pedestrians do not feel constricted between buildings and the streets.

Commercial activity in the City is oriented to the local residents. It is the City's desire to continue this orientation of a commercial base which also has a regional appeal. It is anticipated that future commercial expansion is likely to be limited and would not include a regional shopping mall.

2.3 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Both the residential and commercial sectors are essentially "built out". In the residential sector, it is estimated that there will be only 300 to 400 new dwelling units constructed in the entire City in the next five years, representing an increase of less than five percent in the City's housing stock.

In the commercial sector, orientation will continue to be community/local rather than regional; thus, existing structures will generally suffice. It is anticipated that with City initiative and encouragement, there will be significant reconstruction and remodeling. Since incorporation, the City has reviewed and maintained approval authority over the architectural design of commercial building construction and reconstruction. No such architectural review process has been applied to residential development. However, it is anticipated that future hillside development on slopes exceeding forty (40) percent will be subject to architectural review considerations.

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Issues

3.1 HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT

The hillside areas of the community for which further development has been proposed by the property owners represent a potential risk to continued maintenance of the semi-rural character of the City. While these areas are relatively small in total acreage, substantial portions of them are visually very prominent from much of the community. Future construction in such hillside areas should be of a type and style of development - architecture, building materials, colors and landscape scheme - which supports rather than conflicts with the existing community image of a wooded semi-rural area. Components of the City's development regulations focusing specifically on hillside development is accomplished in a manner consistent with the goals and policies articulated in this General Plan.

3.2 COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Piecemeal commercial development of the community's business district has resulted in inconsistencies in development standards, parking capacity, landscaping, architectural and design character the entire length of Foothill Boulevard. However, because the existing commercial development is functional for current and predictable future needs, there may not be sufficient incentive to stimulate commercial reconstruction or remodeling on a scale large enough to substantially upgrade the visual and aesthetic qualities of the commercial sector in the foreseeable future. Six principal areas of the commercial sector which would help enhance the overall appearance of the community and which mandate prompt attention are: (1) a lack of adequate front setbacks on many commercial structures resulting in structures which crowd the sidewalk and street; (2) general lack of landscaping - a problem amplified by the inadequate setbacks described above; (3) a lack of sufficient

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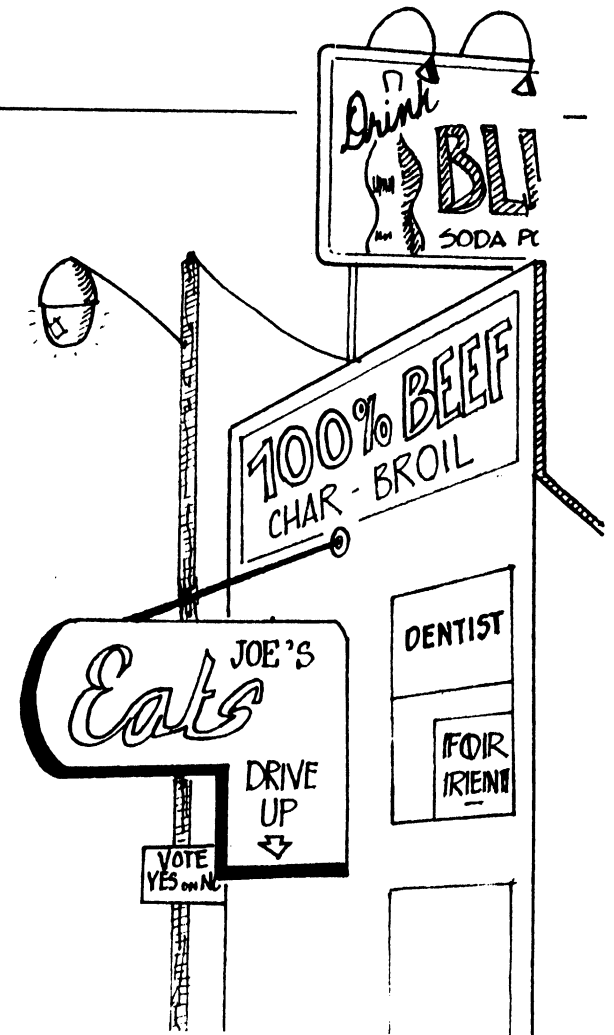
and/or well-designed off-street parking, resulting in general inconvenience, traffic congestion, and potential traffic safety hazards; (4) an excessive number of signs, many of which lack good design; (5) exposed roof mounted apparatus on commercial structures; and (6) public utility lines.

3.2.1 FRONT SETBACKS

In response to the need for increased front setbacks, the City has, in practice, discarded setback provisions of the adopted Los Angeles County Zoning Ordinance and has required ample setback for new commercial development. This practice has resulted in the development of a more open style and has allowed for increased landscaping. The City's policy should specify a minimum public sidewalk width and setbacks be measured from the inner edge of the public sidewalk. Finally, since many of the commercial lots have depths that are substandard by most modern requirements, application of setback policy necessitates that consideration be given to such constraining factors.

3.2.2 LANDSCAPING

Many of the modern commercial structures in La Canada Flintridge have incorporated extensive landscaped areas in their designs, which softens the traditional formal exterior of commercial establishments. Landscaping is an important component of a favorable visual impact. It is important along Foothill Boulevard as well as in the parking areas. Large, striped, unlandscaped asphalt parking lots are aesthetically inconsistent in character with the semi-rural image of the community. On the other hand, parking lots which are landscaped with trees and shrubbery become important components of the open and green space image desired by community residents.



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3.2.3 COMMERCIAL PARKING

Establishments within the City provide off-street parking that is inadequate by today's standards in both area and design. On the south side of Foothill Boulevard, shallow lots have forced commercial structures to suffer from proportionately shallow depth and have restricted parking to very tight areas. On the north side of Foothill Boulevard, commercial lots are generally larger, but parking arrangements are still functionally insufficient and in most cases not visually attractive. A review and revision of local ordinances regulating parking standards will be necessary to significantly improve these conditions. It is essential that the City encourage that the design and layout of commercial parking facilities enhance the semi-rural character of the community.

3.2.4 COMMERCIAL SIGNING

Existing commercial signing does not in certain instances reflect the quality and attractiveness of this community. There are too many signs competing with one another at the expense of the enterprises they are intended to identify; a large number of freestanding and roof signs dominate their surroundings; several commercial developments with a high ratio of signing to commercial building area; and large off-site billboards which dwarf local businesses adjacent to them. Ideally, all commercial signing, particularly large or highly visible signs, would be designed in such a fashion that the scale of adjacent facilities would be respected and the signing would be aesthetically compatible with its surroundings.



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3.2.5 ROOF MOUNTED APPARATUS

Both old structures which are upgraded for user comfort and new structures which are designed with modern conveniences frequently have exposed air conditioning units, compressors, piping and other equipment or apparatus mounted on the roof. The negative visual appearance of such equipment can be eliminated by proper design in the early stages of the remodeling or construction planning; or minimized by location and screening when such equipment is placed on existing buildings.

3.2.6 UTILITY LINES

The overhead utility lines on Foothill Boulevard, Verdugo Boulevard and Angeles Crest Highway are a highly visible and negative aesthetic factor in the community. For the most part, utility poles in the community carry telephone lines, local distribution, high voltage and transmission lines and transformers, as well as street lighting on Foothill Boulevard. As a result, the overhead utility lines reach highly visible heights exceeding sixty feet and carry extremely visible and obtrusive lines and utilities adding a negative factor to the community's physical appearance. The City has approved the undergrounding of utilities along Foothill Boulevard from Angeles Crest Highway to Commonwealth Avenue which is to be completed by 1981.

3.3 COMMERCIAL REMODELING

The commercial sector of the community has developed over the years without a uniform plan. The absence of good individual or supplemental architectural design; inconsistencies in building setbacks; overall deficiencies in parking; a lack of landscaping; and other factors previously identified in this Element have been factors leading to the present appearance of the commercial sector.

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It is anticipated that private redevelopment and remodeling will occur in the future. Guidance provided for the upgrading should be in the direction of long range community goals for the purpose of visually merging design elements of the commercial strip with similar elements of the residential community.

3.4 CITY IMAGE

A city's infrastructure includes utility service, sewage removal and disposal systems and transportation and communication systems. The infrastructure system is the single most prevalent and continuous element of the urban environment. Almost every resident travels on or uses the infrastructure system each day. It should, therefore, reflect the standards of the community in its design, development and maintenance. Traditionally, the elements of a community's infrastructure system were designed and constructed with little attention to the aesthetic relationship of one component of the system to another. Performance and capital cost considerations were given almost exclusive priority, and visual effects, such as a forest of overhead utility wires, were not considered important. However, changes in technology have now made it possible for communities to give consideration to aesthetic impacts, and the issue of visual quality has been given increased importance in our lives. Overhead utility installations, typically a flagrant aesthetic offense in an infrastructure system, are now installed underground simultaneously with other services such as water and gas, when development takes place. The aesthetic qualities of the City of La Canada Flintridge, positively defined by the features of its semi-rural character as discussed previously, are detrimentally impacted by several components of the community's infrastructure system. Specifically, unsightly overhead utility lines on the south side of Foothill Boulevard, from approximately the Foothill Freeway on the east to Verdugo Road on the west, detract significantly from the appearance of the City's central business district. Further, the entrance to the City at the terminus of the Glendale Freeway (State Route 2) at

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Foothill Boulevard, suffers from lack of landscaping and an abundance of starkly prominent highway signing. The underground installation of utilities, landscaping and creative treatment of street furniture (i.e. street lights, benches, trash receptacles, sidewalk paving) can be used continuously throughout a community to enhance its image.

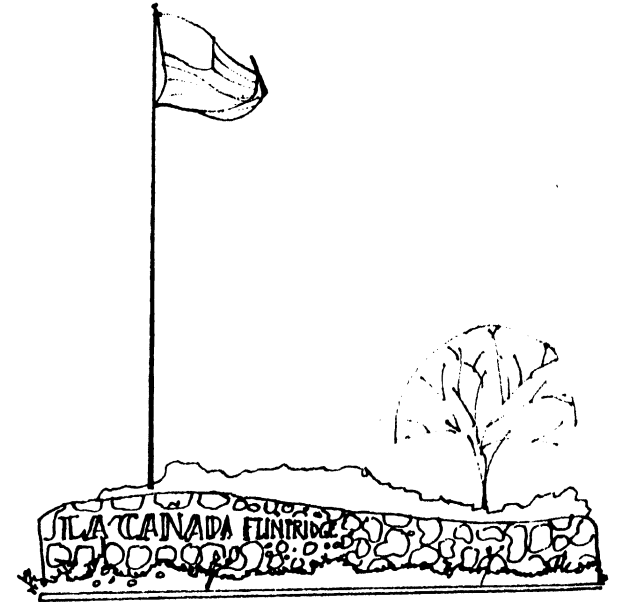
3.5 CITY MARKERS

Another aspect of City image is public signing, in particular, signs indicating that a visitor is now in the City of La Canada Flintridge. Except for the west end, the City is clearly separated from adjoining communities by natural topographic features. Because of the unique style of development, an opportunity exists to develop a signing program that depicts the desirable aspects of the community. In this regard, one concept would entail the standardization of a community logo and the placement of a number of small monuments (similar to the California State historical markers) at key entrances to the community. Since the purpose of the signing program would be to introduce the visitor to the community in its most favorable light, the precise placement of such signs is very important.

The major gateways to the community exist at the terminus of the Glendale Freeway at Foothill Boulevard and at the east and west City boundaries of the 210 freeway. The City should seek State assistance in order to develop and maintain tastefully landscaped entrances to the community with appropriate markers at these locations.

Other important locations where City identification might be appropriate are:

1. Linda Vista Avenue at the City limits.
2. Berkshire Place at Oak Grove.
3. Berkshire Place at the offramp from westbound 210 freeway.
4. Angeles Crest Highway at City limits.



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5. Verdugo Boulevard near Wishing Hill Drive.
 6. Chevy Chase Drive near Figueroa Street.
 7. Foothill Boulevard at Pickens Canyon.
 8. Ocean View Boulevard northbound south of Foothill Boulevard.

Policies

- 4.1 The City's development regulations should include specific provisions to ensure the preservation of significant landforms, as shown on ~~Figure III-3~~ in the Appendix, and to guarantee that future hillside residential development is consistent with the best examples of existing development. Significant landforms are any ridges, knolls, valleys, creeks, either dry or active or other unique topographic features or views as depicted on the Environmental Resource Management Map (Figure III-3) in the Appendix.
- 4.2 The City should encourage residences developed in hillside areas to be designed, landscaped and built of materials which blend with the existing environment.
- 4.3 The City should review all plans for development within the commercial sector for compatibility with surrounding developments and guidelines.
- 4.4 The City should provide guidance for architectural design, landscaping and signing criteria for all commercial development to achieve development of the highest quality.
- 4.5 The appropriate use of landscaping should be encouraged in conjunction with architectural review of any structure and utilization of any setback.

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- 4.6 The City should require that land uses in commercial zones be landscaped, irrigated and properly maintained in required front setback areas as well as along the perimeter and interior of parking lots.
 - 4.7 The City should require a landscaped setback for commercial structures of ample depth relative to building height to assure the provision and maintenance of substantial landscaping and to achieve an architecturally integrated design and appearance from the street.
 - 4.8 The City should take steps to minimize potential negative impacts of commercial signs on the City's semi-rural image.
 - 4.9 The City should seek State assistance in the development of a landscaped entrance to the community with appropriate markers at the terminus of the Glendale Freeway off-ramp at Foothill Boulevard and at the east and west City boundaries of the 210 freeway

 - 5.1 The City has adopted and shall implement a Hillside Development Management Ordinance, into which are incorporated design criteria ensuring development of hillside properties in a manner and quality consistent with existing community character.
 - 5.2 The City shall require architectural review for projects which involve construction of a home(s) on natural or manmade slopes in excess of forty (40) percent.
 - 5.3 The City shall consider adoption of a Heritage Tree Ordinance to assure preservation of significant and native trees.
 - 5.4 The City shall adopt architectural design, landscaping and signing standards; and establish an architectural review process for all commercial development.

Programs

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- 5.5 The City shall set forth standards in the zoning ordinance for the development of landscaping of commercial uses which may require substantial building setback relative to building height from street frontage, as well as the provision for maintenance of landscaping in required front setback areas and in off-street parking areas.
- 5.6 The City shall consider adoption of an ordinance requiring that all roof mounted equipment on both existing and new structures in the commercial area be screened from public view from adjacent public thoroughfares and from the opposite side of the street.
- 5.7 The City shall consider adoption of a comprehensive sign ordinance regulating signing in the community. This ordinance shall provide for a reasonable amortization period for nonconforming signs.
- 5.8 The City shall conduct a study to determine the possibility of forming a City-wide community improvement district(s) for the purpose of improving the general appearance of the community as recommended in this and other elements of the General Plan, including, but not limited to: (1) the undergrounding of all overhead utility lines on Foothill Boulevard, Verdugo Boulevard and Angeles Crest Highway; (2) landscaping within the public rights-of-way; and (3) assisting the private sector in land acquisition and development of landscaped commercial parking areas.
- 5.9 The City shall take positive steps to improve the appearance of Foothill Boulevard, Verdugo Boulevard and Angeles Crest Highway by undergrounding public utility lines and equipment; and eliminating utility poles along these roads as economic resources permit.

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- 5.10 The City shall seek State assistance in the development of a landscaped entrance to the community with appropriate markers at the terminus of the Glendale Freeway at Foothill Boulevard and at the east and west City boundaries of the 210 Freeway.
- 5.11 The City shall require a minimum 8 foot wide sidewalk in the public right-of-way fronting new commercial development.