

Chapter 2

COMMUNITY VISION

“We value connectedness and vitality with a wide variety of safe housing choices, quality schools, neighborhood-serving stores, access to parks and recreation, community facilities and open spaces in close proximity to regional shopping centers. Economic energy and opportunities for employers and employment in Downtown Glendale and along South Glendale’s commercial streets, particularly at the Glendale Galleria and The Americana at Brand, along the Brand Boulevard of Cars, and at the Glendale Memorial Hospital and Health Center, is dispersed throughout South Glendale. Access to regional freeways, rail and public transportation connects Glendale to the surrounding region. We seek to advocate sustainable and responsible development, enhance neighborhood character, provide transportation options for local and regional connectivity, and balance land uses.”

2.1 The City of Glendale and the San Fernando Valley

South Glendale is located at the eastern edge of the San Fernando Valley, south of the 134 Freeway. It is an urban area that shares borders with the incorporated City of Los Angeles areas of Atwater Village and Eagle Rock. Dominated by the downtown skyline to the north and Adams Hill and Forest Lawn Memorial Park to the south, South Glendale is generally flat, sloping gently and steadily towards the Los Angeles River to the south and west. South Glendale aerial photos emphasize the strong physical presence of the freeways, railroad and the flood control system for the Los Angeles River and its tributaries. While some of these features lie just outside the City, they form both connections and barriers for South Glendale.

South Glendale is where the City of Glendale originated. An outgrowth of the Verdugo family Spanish land grant, it was incorporated in 1906 and later absorbed the early farming community of Tropic. Downtown Glendale, the heart of the City, grew into a bustling commercial, retail, and entertainment destination, centered on the regional shopping draw of the Glendale Galleria and The Americana At Brand, the entertainment and cultural offerings of the historic Alex Theater and Maryland Art and Entertainment District, and the commercial and business activities housed in downtown's office towers. In the 1980s and 1990s Glendale undertook a policy shift that directs residential growth and higher densities into the downtown area, while reducing residential density in other areas.

A variety of transportation modes crisscross South Glendale, providing links to the surrounding region. Historically, Red Car street car lines connected South Glendale to other points in Los Angeles, while the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot provided regional and national access via rail. The Glendale Station is still here today as the Glendale Transportation Center, the City's transit hub that provides regional access via Metrolink and statewide and national connections via Amtrak. Meanwhile, Brand Boulevard, Glendale Avenue, Central Avenue and San Fernando Road serve as north-south connectors that link to area freeways, accommodate bus transit and provide access to a wide range of commercial activities, including downtown's stores and restaurants and auto retailing along Brand Boulevard south of downtown. Glendale Avenue provides an important arterial connection between South and North Glendale, while San Fernando Road provides an arterial connection to Burbank and points beyond. Colorado, Broadway, Chevy Chase Drive and Los Feliz Boulevard provide primary east-west connections, linking to area freeways, accommodating bus transit, and providing access to a variety of commercial activities and neighboring communities.



2.2 Building Upon Past Plans

This Community Plan is built upon decades of concerted effort by residents, business owners, city staff and past City Councils to chart the future of South Glendale. Since the 1920s, the city has commissioned various planning studies and programs to examine specific topics or issues in South Glendale, such as multi-family zoning standards, neighborhood revitalization, or commercial redevelopment. Each plan or program was the product of extensive public engagement, appropriate to its time and scope. While each planning study is described in Appendix B, a number of these efforts stand out for their comprehensive vision and scope, and serve as the basic policy framework for the present South Glendale Community Plan.

2.2.1 Residential

South Glendale originally developed primarily with traditional single-family residential neighborhoods with streets aligned in a regular grid-pattern. Pacific Electric Railway Red Cars provided Glendale's first mass transit; a number of higher density residential apartments were scattered along and within easy walking distance of Red Car routes. Although the neighborhoods were predominantly detached single family in character, much of the underlying zoning allowed for higher density multiple residential dwellings. Post WWII saw development trends whereby single-family homes were altered to provide multiple units. An apartment building boom in the 1980s saw hundreds of six, eight and twelve unit apartments replace existing single family homes on lots throughout South Glendale. Public outcry over the change in neighborhood character led to comprehensive down-zoning efforts in 1986 and in 1990, resulting in the multiple dwelling zone densities that Glendale maintains today. As a consequence of this re-zoning, many apartment and condominium buildings in South Glendale became "non-conforming," exceeding the now-lower allowable density on their lots. The most enduring legacy of these down-zonings may be seen in some of the area's aging buildings and neighborhoods, as over-capacity parcels provide no incentive for private reinvestment at equal or greater densities than currently exist.

2.2.2 Brand Boulevard of Cars

Since Glendale's earliest days, the South Brand Boulevard area has been a center for automobile dealerships and related businesses, with direct access provided by the Red Cars between Downtown Los Angeles and Burbank. The area's identity as a regional retail destination grew organically, though auto-oriented uses and development patterns prevailed, replacing general retail, along some of South Glendale's corridors, while high-density residential increasingly infilled the surrounding low- and medium-density neighborhoods. While the 1992 South Brand Boulevard Specific Plan was seen as a modern and comprehensive solution to these issues, it was later replaced with conventional zoning and new parking regulations in 2012. Both the Specific Plan and the rezoning/parking district effort involved extensive input from area residents and businesses. Today, Brand Boulevard of Cars continues to be a major economic engine that must respond to the changing needs of its stakeholders while remaining a good neighbor and a useful artery connecting Downtown Glendale with points south of the city.

2.2.3 East Colorado Street

Revitalization of Colorado Street, a critical east-west arterial, has long been a goal of the City. A 1994 corridor study by planning students at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona included a public workshop to develop the community's vision for the corridor and resulted in design guidelines for Colorado Street. The section of East Colorado Street connecting neighboring Eagle Rock (City of Los Angeles) to Downtown Glendale, ultimately received extensive streetscape upgrades. However, while the study considered both urban design and land use, the result produced neither a consistent identity nor the revitalization sought by the community.

2.2.4 Downtown

Greater Downtown Strategic Plan (1996)

Lacking a growth management strategy for Downtown Glendale, a partnership between business leaders and the City produced a 1994 visioning document for the area. The City Council appointed a Steering Group of community members, business leaders, and public officials, working with the Neighborhood Task Force, to produce the Greater Downtown Strategic Plan (GDSP) in 1996. The plan's intent was to "significantly increase the amount of public open space and developed parkland in the downtown," and "[strengthen] the interdependence between downtown and [the] surrounding neighborhoods." One of the most prominent outcomes of the GDSP was the identification of a "Town Center" at the south end of Downtown which was eventually realized as the Americana at Brand.

Downtown Specific Plan (2006) and Downtown Mobility Study (2007)

In 2004, the City initiated an effort to implement the vision, goals, and policies of the GDSP. This resulted in the Downtown Specific Plan and the Downtown Mobility Study, a pair of planning documents that have considerably reshaped Downtown Glendale. A large advisory committee worked to refine the City's policy proposals and framework for the area, followed by hearings before boards and commissions and adoption by the City Council. The confluence of economic forces and the two plans' new policies provided for rapid revitalization of Downtown Glendale.

2.2.5 San Fernando Road

San Fernando Road is the backbone of Glendale's industrial base. In 1992, two decades of planning efforts began with its declaration as a redevelopment area, followed by a 1997 Redevelopment Plan proposing new urban design guidelines and zoning changes. Implementation of the plan brought facade upgrades and public improvements, and the adoption of new mixed-use zones in 2004. In 2009, the GRA introduced its "Creative Corridor" initiative to grow San Fernando Road's creative industry, which then accounted for over 1/3 of area businesses. The corridor continues to evolve with a mix of industrial and light industrial uses north of Pacific Avenue, and creative arts and infill housing projects defining the area between Pacific Avenue and Tropic.

2.3 Vision

The South Glendale Community Plan envisions the maintenance, enhancement, or transformation of South Glendale’s various neighborhoods, centers, and corridors over the next quarter century. In general, the scale and character of South Glendale’s residential neighborhoods are maintained, while corridors such as Central Avenue, Colorado Street, and portions of Broadway and Glendale Avenue are transformed with higher-density, mixed-use buildings that take advantage of existing and proposed transit routes. Meanwhile, the multi-family blocks parallel to the Broadway, Central Avenue, and Colorado Street transit corridors are re-zoned as an “affordable housing overlay zone” to provide affordable and inclusionary housing.

Centers such as Tropico and Pacific Edison are also transformed with the introduction of transit-oriented development, while Glendale Memorial Hospital expands and rebuilds in response to State-mandated requirements and the Glendale Community College - Garfield Campus is intensified with additional classroom space, housing, parking, and medical offices. New investment and modest development is encouraged in South Glendale’s small neighborhood business districts such as Adams Square, South Glendale Avenue south of Palmer Avenue, Columbus School/Pacific Gateway, Verdugo Road, and East Colorado east of Verdugo Road, while continued investment and economic development is fostered along the Brand Boulevard of Cars and within the Downtown Specific Plan.

It is anticipated that this growth may add approximately 7,000-9,000 units in South Glendale to the existing 80,000 units citywide. This growth will be largely dependant on the establishment of new transit lines and stations that connect Glendale to the larger region. This expanded network consists of the following bus and rail lines and station areas:

- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along Central Avenue and Broadway.
- Pacific Edison Center/West Colorado as the hub for a Colorado Street station along the Metrolink/High Speed Rail/Eco-Rapid Transit rail corridor.
- Pacific Gateway as the hub for a potential Pacific Avenue station on a 134 Freeway east-west rail line.
- Verdugo Road as the hub for a potential Verdugo Road/Chevy Chase Drive/Adventist Hospital station on a 134 Freeway east-west rail line.
- A Brand Boulevard - Glenoaks Boulevard streetcar line, with stations approximately every ¼ mile starting from the Glendale Transportation Center.

Accompanying South Glendale’s growth will be an expansion of South Glendale’s bicycle and open space network. The construction of the Space 134 Freeway Cap Park, a 25-acre park built over the 134 Freeway between Central Avenue and Geneva Street will not only introduce much needed park space, but will also mend the gash between the neighborhoods to the north of the freeway and downtown. Greenways will also be introduced along key streets and bicycle lanes will link Glendale residents, office workers, and commuters with South Glendale’s parks, schools, and neighborhood centers.

Finally, pedestrian improvements and traffic-calming measures will be implemented to make Glendale’s streets safe for all users.

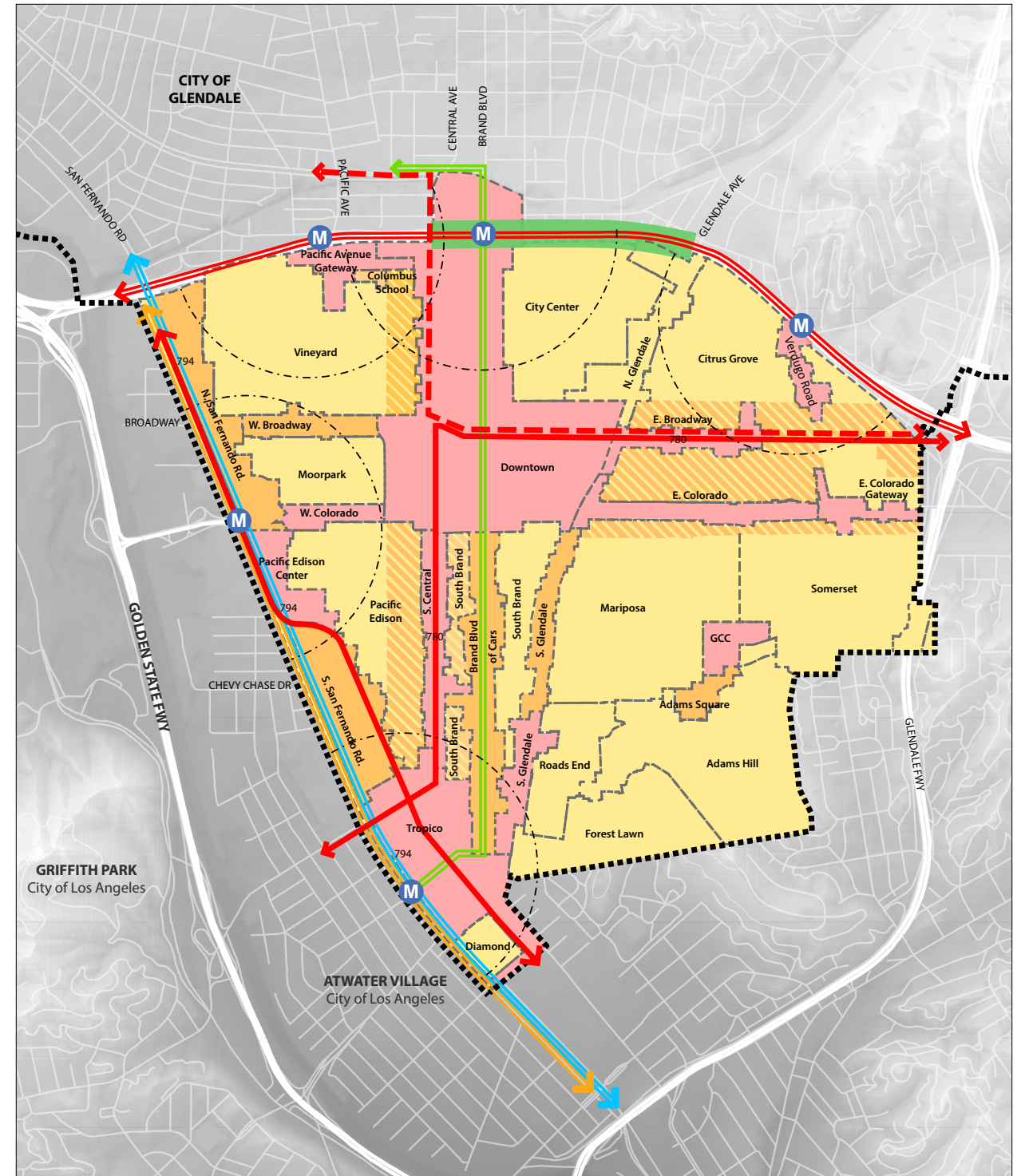


Figure 2.1 The Project

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| Areas to Maintain | Amtrak/Metrolink Trains | Metro 780 & 794 Route (Existing) |
| Areas to Enhance | High Speed Rail (Proposed) | Metro BRT (Proposed) |
| Areas to Transform | Proposed Brand Street Car | Transportation Center |
| Areas to Maintain/Enhance | Proposed Metro Light Rail Extension | Space 134 |