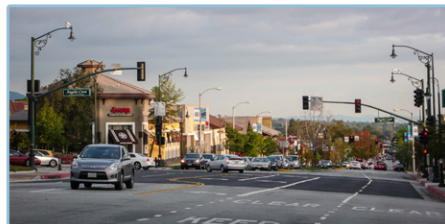




# Chapter 1

## Introduction





# 1.0

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Setting

La Cañada Flintridge is approximately 8.6 square miles in area. It is located approximately 13 miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles and 6 miles northeast of Burbank in Los Angeles County, as shown in Figure 1-1. The City is

bordered by Pasadena to the east, Glendale to the south, the Angeles



National Forest to the north, and unincorporated county areas of La Crescenta and Montrose to the west. It is situated in the Crescenta Valley along the Interstate (I) 210 Freeway corridor between the San Gabriel Mountains to the north and the San Raphael Hills to the south. Figure 1-2 shows its location in the local setting.

### 1.2 Purpose of the General Plan

California State law requires each city and county to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan to guide the physical development of the incorporated city and any land outside of the city boundaries that bears a relationship to its planning activities. A general plan is the foundation for local land use planning and provides a vision for a jurisdiction's foreseeable planning period. The general plan translates the community's long-range vision into goals, objectives, and policies for the future distribution of land uses, both public and private. In essence, a city's general plan serves as the blueprint for future growth and development. As a blueprint for the future, the plan must contain policies and programs designed to provide decision makers with a solid basis for land use related decisions. The general plan is the official statement of policies governing all city council, advisory committee, and administrative decisions regarding zoning, subdivisions, and public improvements.

The general plan must address many issues that are directly related to and influence land use decisions. In addition to land use, State law requires that the plan address circulation, housing, conservation of natural resources, preservation of open space, noise, and protection of public safety. These issues are to be discussed to the extent that they apply to a particular jurisdiction. The general plan also may cover topics of special or unique interest to the jurisdiction.

## 1.2.1 A Vision for the Future

Whether the general plan is a blueprint, constitution, or set of instructions, it must be based upon a community vision. The vision for La Cañada Flintridge – *Vision 2030* – was derived from input received during the public participation process, and was instrumental in preparing the *City of La Cañada Flintridge General Plan* (General Plan). It provides direction for the City’s 2030 planning period and serves as a reminder of the future to which the community aspires. The vision is to be achieved by implementation of the General Plan goals, objectives, and policies. *Vision 2030* is as follows.

### **Vision 2030**

La Cañada Flintridge is a desirable community that has retained its quiet, safe, small-town feeling, and semi-rural, predominantly single-family character amid the beauty of its natural open spaces, trails, trees, parks, wildlife, and stunning mountain views. Neighborhoods and homes are well maintained, with landscaping and diverse housing styles that are in scale with their surroundings. La Cañada Flintridge remains an equestrian-friendly community. The downtown is vibrant, attractive, and modern, and caters to the City’s residents with quality shopping and dining establishments and local-serving businesses within a walkable, pedestrian-scale village atmosphere. New housing opportunities for senior citizens and families are provided within mixed-use developments that are close to businesses, health care services, community and recreational facilities, and transit. Friendly, caring, and involved citizens of all ages share a commitment to their community and to each other. Premier schools continue to achieve the highest academic standards in up-to-date facilities, and opportunities exist for teens and pre-teens to be active and involved. The City is run efficiently and maintains positive, effective relationships with neighboring cities and regional and state agencies to address and resolve regional issues cooperatively, such as air quality, traffic, and noise.



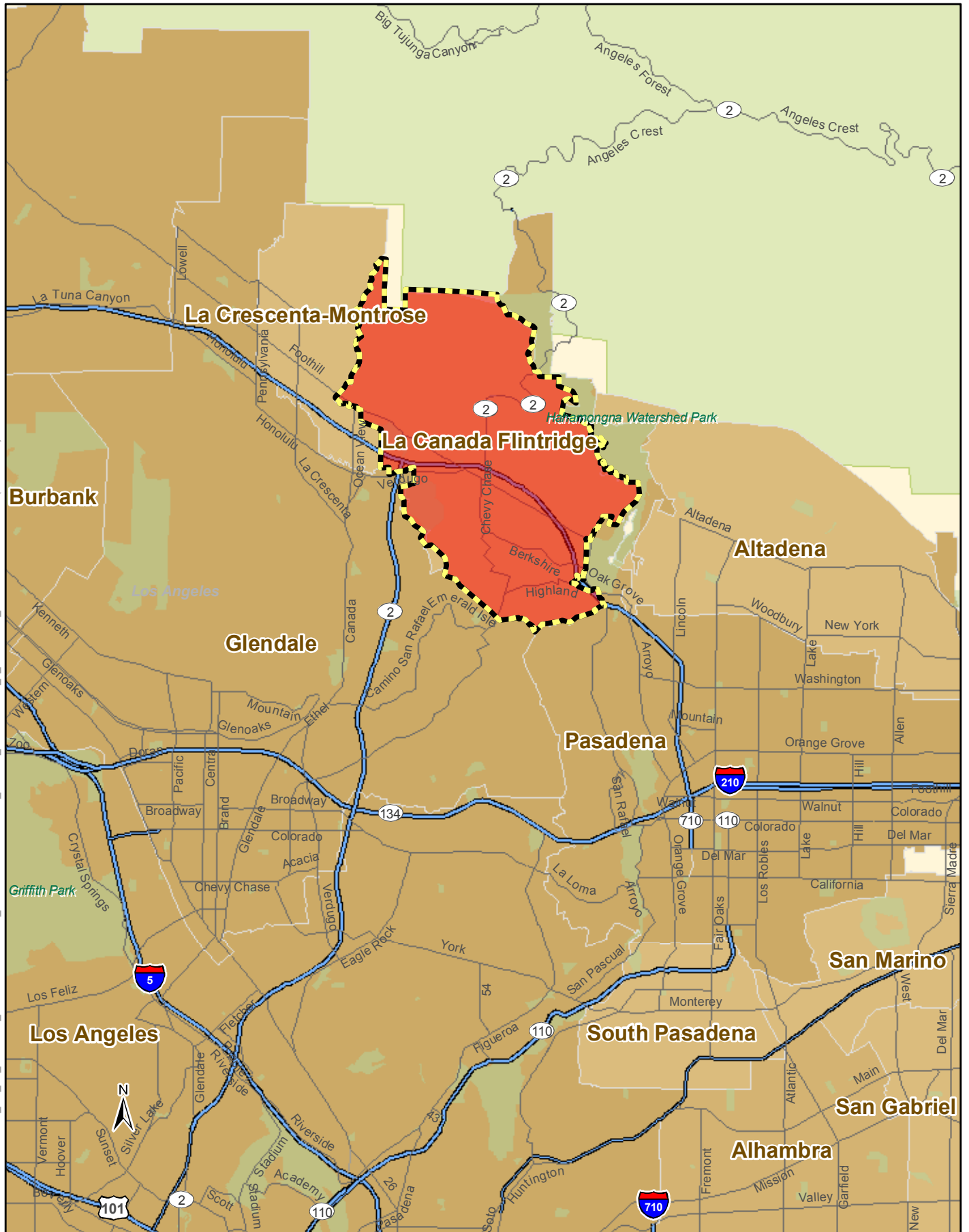
K:\GIS\Projects\City\_of\_La\_Cañada\_Flintridge\00096\_07\mapdoc\Screen\_Check\_Draft\Figure1\_1\_Regional\_Location.mxd AWC (08-07-08)

Source: ESRI Streetmap USA (2006)

**Figure 1-1**  
**Regional Location**  
**City of La Cañada Flintridge**



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SOURCE: ESRI Streetmap USA (2006)

**Figure 1-2**  
**Project Vicinity**  
**City of La Cañada Flintridge**





## 1.2.2 Need for a Revised Plan and Previous Planning Efforts

The effectiveness of a city's general plan is contingent on the practical applicability of the plan to changing priorities and conditions. Monitoring and reevaluating the validity of general plan policies and periodically amending the plan is essential to ensure its continued consistency and usefulness.

While there is no State requirement that a general plan be updated within a certain time frame (except for the Housing Element), the *State of California General Plan Guidelines* (Governor's Office of Planning and Research 2003) recommends an update every 10 years. A comprehensive update of the plan should be undertaken often enough to ensure that it accurately reflects the city's policies; conforms to changes in State law; reflects current court decisions; and provides an integrated and internally consistent set of goals, objectives, and policies designed to reflect the changing characteristics and growth of the community. In addition, general law cities, such as La Cañada Flintridge, may amend their general plans up to four times per year to address short-term issues, approve specific and area plans, modify zoning ordinances, accommodate certain developments, and address other similar issues. General law cities are required to maintain consistency between their zoning and their general plans.



The City's General Plan has been updated periodically over the past 30 years. This update of the General Plan is the first comprehensive update since the first General Plan was adopted in 1980 following the City's incorporation. Following is a list of elements addressed in the 1980 General Plan, as well as the date on which each was most recently adopted:

- Land Use Element (1993)
- Housing Element (1993)
- Circulation Element (1995)
- Environmental Resource Management Element (1980)
- Community Design Element (1980)
- Noise Element (1980)
- Safety Element (1980)
- Air Quality Element (1995)

Each of the General Plan elements examines a specific issue area, such as land use, resource management, or infrastructure. Despite the subject division, each element's content and policies partially overlap and support the goals and policies of other elements. In addition, there may be specific themes that link most or all of the elements, depending on a city's particular circumstances. Therefore, the General Plan elements must be considered as an integrated document, that, when applied together, reflect and guide realization of the community's vision.

### 1.2.3 Organization of the City's General Plan

The General Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of State law and addresses all required issues and topics. This update of the General Plan includes two documents: 1) the General Plan, which provides a brief summary of background information and issues for each element and provides goals, objectives, and policies, an implementation program, and maps to direct the City's future development and redevelopment; and 2) an environmental impact report (EIR), which evaluates the impact that implementation of the changes identified in the General Plan will have on the City and provides mitigation measures. (Note: A Background Report was prepared to assess existing conditions and provide technical information to guide the update process. Much of that information became the basis for the EIR and background summary information for the General Plan. It is on file with the Community Development Department and will remain a part of the complete public record.)

State law requires seven mandatory elements: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. Jurisdictions may include optional elements to address their specific issues and circumstances. As long as all of the elements are compatible and consistent with each other, the State leaves the organization and representation of this information to the discretion of the city.

The La Cañada Flintridge General Plan is composed of the following chapters.

1. The **Introduction** presents the vision for La Cañada Flintridge, explains the purpose and need of the General Plan, outlines the process that was used to guide development of the updated Plan, and presents the structure and outline of the General Plan.
2. The **Land Use Element** designates the type, intensity, and general distribution of uses of land for housing, business, open space, education, public buildings and grounds, waste disposal facilities, and other categories of public and private uses.
3. The **Open Space and Recreation Element** details plans and measures for the long-range preservation and conservation of open-space lands, including open space for the preservation of natural resources, the

managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, and public health and safety.

4. The **Conservation Element** addresses the conservation, development, and sustainable use of natural resources.
5. The **Safety Element** establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flooding, and wildfire hazards.
6. The **Circulation Element** is correlated with the Land Use Element and identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares and transportation routes; bicycle, hiking, and equestrian trails; and addresses other local public infrastructure, utilities, and facilities.
7. The **Noise Element** identifies and appraises noise problems within the community and informs the types and distribution of land uses.
8. The **Air Quality Element**, which is an optional element, summarizes local and regional air quality conditions, and identifies ways the City can reduce its emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases (GHG) to assist the City and region in meeting federal and State air quality and GHG standards and mandates.
9. The **Housing Element** is a comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community. In addition, it embodies policies for providing adequate housing and includes action programs for that purpose.

## 1.3 Public Participation Process

The public played an important role in the preparation of the General Plan. Citizen input was essential in formulating *2030 Vision* and goals, objectives, and policies. Public participation in the General Plan preparation process occurred through the following methods.

- The City Council appointed a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), a group of individuals representing the stakeholders groups, to oversee the preparation of the Draft General Plan process. Fifteen GPAC meetings were held to consider the background information, opportunities, and constraints that were included in a Background Report, which is on file with the Community Development Department; consider public input;



Citizens at Public Workshop

develop and refine *Vision 2030*; and provide input and direction regarding the goals, objectives, and policies.

- Public workshops were held in the City to both inform the citizens about the General Plan process and gather input and maximize participation.
- A separate session was held with a La Cañada High School senior government class to gain the perspective of local youth.
- The draft General Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) were made available on the City's website for public comments.
- The Planning Commission held four public hearings to consider the proposed revisions and accept public comments regarding the 2010 Draft General Plan and EIR.
- Various elements of the 2010 draft General Plan were reviewed by three other City commissions, including the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Safety Commission, and the Public Works and Traffic Commission.
- The City Council received public input, considered the various Commissions' and staff's recommendations regarding the draft General Plan and EIR.

## 1.4 General Plan Implementation

Implementation of the General Plan will require City elected officials, commission and committee members, staff, and the public to put into practice the adopted General Plan goals and policies. The purpose of the implementation programs is to ensure that the overall direction set forth in the General Plan is translated from goals and policies to action.

The City will prepare new and update or coordinate existing plans, permits, procedures, agreements, and ordinances to establish the regulatory basis needed to ensure the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan will be accomplished. A plan for physical improvements and capital projects is necessary for General Plan implementation, as are conditions or requirements to be placed upon applicants during the development review process. Implementation of the General Plan will also necessitate planning and outreach initiatives, and coordination with other agencies and organizations.

In addition to potential new or updated regulatory, policy, or planning documents noted above, the City has many existing documents that either implement the General Plan or provide refined policy direction, or both. For example, the Downtown Village Specific Plan functions in a regulatory capacity as a zoning tool and provides policy direction for development on a portion of Foothill Boulevard. The *City of La Cañada Flintridge Trails Master Plan* provides direction for development, management, usage, and maintenance of the City's trail system. Many of these stand-alone plans have been referenced in the General Plan and serve to implement the goals, objectives, and policies through the planning period. They may be updated without requiring an amendment of the entire General Plan as long as the changes are consistent with the General Plan.

Given the large number of policies coupled with the limited resources that are available to the City annually, every action and program cannot be funded simultaneously. Effective implementation of this General Plan will require a periodic process to prioritize the actions and programs to determine the priority for funding specific actions and programs each year over the life of the General Plan.

## 1.5 History of La Cañada Flintridge

The following history of La Cañada Flintridge is reprinted in its entirety from the original Introduction to the General Plan, which was adopted on March 3, 1980.

### Early Settlers

Among the earliest known settlers of the La Cañada Flintridge area were the Gabrielino Indians. Gabrielino is the name given to the group of Indian inhabitants of Southern California. They are of the Shoshonean branch of the Uto-Aztekan linguistic stock. Although few traces remain due to frequent flooding, there is high probability that the streams and canyons in La Cañada Flintridge provided temporary camping grounds for these Indians. To date, remnants of large permanent camping grounds have been found in Big Tujunga and in the Linda Vista area.

### The Spanish Period

The Spanish land exploration of California began in 1769 when Captain Gaspar de Portola, Governor of Baja California, led an expedition north to the San Francisco Bay area. California remained under Spanish rule until 1822 when it became a colony of Mexico after Mexico won its independence from Spain. It was during the Spanish period that the Franciscans and other church orders established missions throughout the state. The Mission San Gabriel Archangel

was established in 1771. In 1781, Corporal Jose Maria Verdugo, who was stationed at Mission San Gabriel, petitioned Governor Pedro Fages for permission to graze livestock on 42,000 acres between the Los Angeles River and the Arroyo Seco from the new pueblo of Los Angeles on the south to the San Gabriel Mountain on the north. Although La Cañada Valley was part of this area, it probably was not used by Verdugo to graze his livestock due to its isolation and lack of a good water supply. Verdugo's grant was known as Rancho San Raphael.

## **The Mexican Period**

The missions were secularized and their lands gradually granted to private owners after Mexican independence in 1822. In 1842, Ignacio Coronel was granted 12,300 acres in the area now containing La Cañada Flintridge, La Crescenta, Verdugo Woodlands, and the San Raphael Hills. Coronel called his grant La Cañada de atras de los Berdugos. He was able to obtain his property from Governor Micheltorena over the protests of Verdugo's descendents because it was unoccupied and uncultivated.

## **United States Occupation and Statehood**

California was occupied by the United States after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican War of 1846–1848. It became the thirty-first state on September 9, 1850. For many years after the beginning of the Mexican War, land titles in California were unsettled. Ignacio Coronel sold Rancho La Cañada to two lawyers, Jonathon Scott and Benjamin Hayes, in 1852. Scott bought out his partner in 1858 and traded back Rancho La Cañada to Julio Verdugo, a descendent of Jose Maria, for what is now Burbank. Verdugo wanted the water supply in Verdugo Woodlands for Rancho San Raphael, so he had the U.S. Government Surveyor, Henry Hancock, move the southern boundary between Rancho La Cañada and Rancho San Raphael further north to a line running west from what is now Devil's Gate Dam. Rancho La Cañada was therefore reduced to 5,832 acres. Julio Verdugo owned the property until 1869 when Los Angeles County seized the property by court order to pay Verdugo's debts.

The property was sold by the County in 1872 to A. B. Chapman and Andrew Glassell. However, after realizing there was no water source serving the property, they sold the land grant in 1876. Coronel A. W. Williams, a Civil War veteran, and Dr. Jacob L. Lanterman, a dentist, both from Lansing, Michigan, purchased the 5,832 acres of land in the San Gabriel Valley designated Rancho La Cañada and started the community of La Cañada now incorporated as La Cañada Flintridge. Growth of the community was limited until 1892 when approximately 50 area families organized a land and water company, community church, and fruit growers' association.

## Twentieth Century

In the 1920s, developers began to subdivide the land and attract buyers to the beautiful scenery. Edwin T. Earl, inventor of the refrigerated fruit railroad car, who also published the *Los Angeles Tribune Express*, bought a large parcel of land at the upper northwest corner of La Cañada for development. He called his development Alta Cañada and planted deodars for which this development is now renowned.

On the opposite side of the valley from Alta Cañada, U. S. Senator Frank P. Flint bought 500 acres of the Turner Ranch and, joining with other owners, gradually acquired 1,700 acres south of Foothill Boulevard. This land was subdivided and named Flintridge and was developed with winding streets laid out by Senator Flint on horseback. From the beginning, water was a serious problem and caused much bickering among the early settlers. Colonel Williams, not knowing anything about Southern California, had hoped to dam the canyons and use the winter rain for summer irrigation.

He did not realize the porous quality of the soil and that drainage is underground except in flood stage. Furthermore, Rancho La Cañada did not include the canyon streams that were on public section land already claimed by Colonels Pickens and Hall.

Dr. Lanterman and Colonel Williams appealed in vain to the General Land Office for a new survey, hoping to have it include the canyons with the streams within the Rancho boundaries. Finally, Dr. Lanterman personally purchased Pickens' water rights for \$1,250 and 40 acres of good land in Lot #21 of Rancho La Cañada.



La Cañada Flintridge, 1927 (Source: [www.waterandpower.org](http://www.waterandpower.org))

The Valley Water Company was formed in 1910. Wells were drilled at the corner of Hampton and Michigan avenues on Lanterman Estate property. These wells were the only source of water. The community was then sued by the City of Pasadena to obtain the rights to pump from the Raymond Basin, the underground reservoir beneath eight communities in the area. In 1937, adjudication of water rights for users of the Raymond Basin was started to determine the fair distribution of underground water to the eight communities. The suit was settled in 1943 and the State Watermaster was appointed to control

the amount of water pumped from the underground reservoir. The amount of water apportioned to the La Cañada Flintridge area was not sufficient to permit further unlimited property development.

In 1951, Assemblyman Frank Lanterman sponsored and helped plan into law a major amendment to the Municipal Water District Act of 1911, which permitted formation of the Foothill Water District. In 1952, steps were taken to join the Metropolitan Water District (MWD). Bonds were issued to pay for joining the MWD and for building a system to deliver water to the Foothill Water agencies. The first Colorado River water was delivered to the community in 1955, just in time to relieve a serious drought and heat wave. In the early 1970s, Assemblyman Frank Lanterman introduced and successfully enacted a bill to obtain a balanced blend of state water for this area from the California State Water Project in Northern California. The first water supply was received in July 1975, and after mixing with the Colorado River water, produced a satisfactory 50 percent blend to handle the needs of this and other Southern California communities.

## **Cityhood**

On November 2, 1976, citizens of La Cañada and Flintridge overwhelmingly supported and voted for the incorporation of both communities into the City of La Cañada Flintridge. The City operates with a Council-Manager form of government. The five-member council consists of local citizens elected at large for 4-year staggered terms. Annually, the City Council seats a mayor from among its members. The City Manager is appointed by the City Council and is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the City. All City functions, except planning, finance, and some public works functions, are carried out by private contractors or various departments of Los Angeles County.

On May 15, 1978, the westerly boundaries of the City were further extended as a result of annexation of land south of Foothill Boulevard.

## **Today**

Although the City is relatively young as an incorporated municipality, it is well established and nearly fully developed. As a stable, affluent, and predominantly low-density, single-family residential community with considerable open space and a trail system, La Cañada Flintridge retains a small-town feel and a semi-rural character in the midst of the urbanized Southern California region. These distinctive characteristics are highly valued by the City's residents, and it is their desire to retain these special qualities and existing community character that drives the goals, objectives, and policies of this update of the General Plan.