

CHAPTER 5: CULTURE



Overview

One of six entries in Merriam-Webster's on-line dictionary defines the word "culture" as

the characteristic features of everyday existence shared by people in a place or time.

Explored through the lens of place, this definition is the first in which the word "culture" is applied. The second is conveyed by Encyclopedia Britannica which states that the most quoted definition of culture was developed in 1871 by English Anthropologist, Edward Burnett Taylor, who said

Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Given the breadth of everyday existence and the habits of society, this chapter explores the culture surrounding the lower Ventura River in two parts: Part I is titled Cultural Resources; Part II is entitled Community of Stakeholders. Cultural Resources (Part 1) are features which have static

physical components associated with them. They provide settings for the community and opportunities for visitors of the proposed Lower Ventura River Parkway to draw literal and figurative connections to the river and its environs. The Community of Stakeholders (Part II) includes the community; the people, their sources of income, and the challenges that face them.

Compartmentalized for inventory purposes, the community and its resources are interwoven to form the culture of Ventura, a fabric with both strengths and weaknesses. Identifying the weave of this fabric was greatly aided by Ventura residents. Local knowledge of issues and their implications guided many of the discussions in Part II of this chapter. Metaphorically speaking, strong fibers exist within the weave; however, as in any community some fibers are frayed or overburdened. These threads together create a tapestry whose overall scene is one of both bucolic respite and urban plenty, but one that is not without environmental inequities.

Part I: Cultural Resources

The area surrounding the proposed parkway is graced with a rich variety of resources. As identified here these resources fall into three types; land use and circulation, community resources, and sensory resources. The context in which the proposed parkway may be placed is defined by the attributes of these resources, and their relationship to members of the population and the Ventura River. Additionally, these resources and their distribution patterns present challenges and significant potential for community members and the proposed parkway.

LAND USE AND CIRCULATION The Region

Characteristic features of everyday existence, such as shelter or transportation, are organized by land use, creating patterns which allow for resource provision and become resources in and of themselves. Figure 5.2 provides an overview of rural and urban landuse elements across the region. According to planning research conducted by the University of Southern California (USC) for The Green Visions Plan for the 21st Century, Ventura County boasts approximately 603,574 acres of recreational open space (Sister 2007a). Open space includes both city and county parks and state and federal lands, such as Ventura County's 550,000 acre Los Padres National Forest. (Sister 2007a). Figure 5.2 also indicates that the distribution of recreational open space is predominately located within the northern portion of the county, much of it held in Los Padres National Forest, while other landuses dominate the southern half of the county. According to the California Department of Conservation, as of 2004 there were 326,148 acres of agricultural land, 124,023 acres of land categorized as undifferentiated wildlands, and 101,841 acres of urbanized lands in Ventura County (California Department of Conservation 2006).

Circulation across the county is largely dependent on the network of regional and local streets seen in figure 5.2, only one of which cuts into Los Padres' expanse of open space. This network of roads is primarily accessed by private vehicles. In 2005 80.2 percent of working Venturans drove to work alone, while only 1.1 percent used public transportation (Ventura County Civic Alliance 2007). However, thirteen transit services do utilize the county's network of roads (Ventura County Transportation Commission 2008, Chapter 5). Most providers concentrate services in one of the nine cities within the county. However their regional capacity to reach the majority of the county's recreational open space is limited in that only two providers offer intercity bus routes, and of the three northern cities only one has fixed route service available to the general public. In addition to street based services, rail service is also available with Amtrak providing commuter and long distance service lines, while two shorter lines provide freight service near the harbor. However, these services are also not organized to bring urban residents into the remote areas closest to the majority of the county's open space acreage. Figure 5.2 illustrates the narrow integration of recreational open space and transportation at the regional scale.

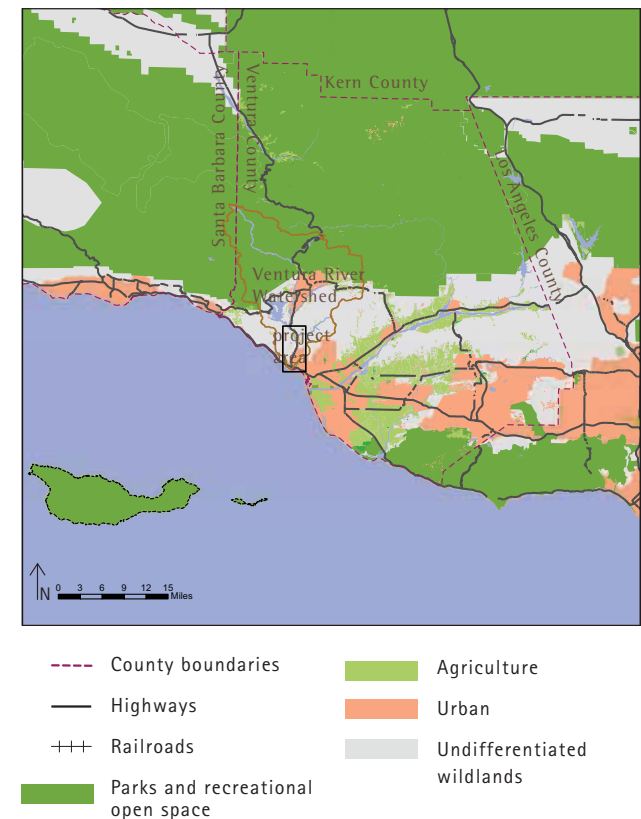


FIGURE 5.2 Regional Land Use and Circulation. Data source: SCAG.

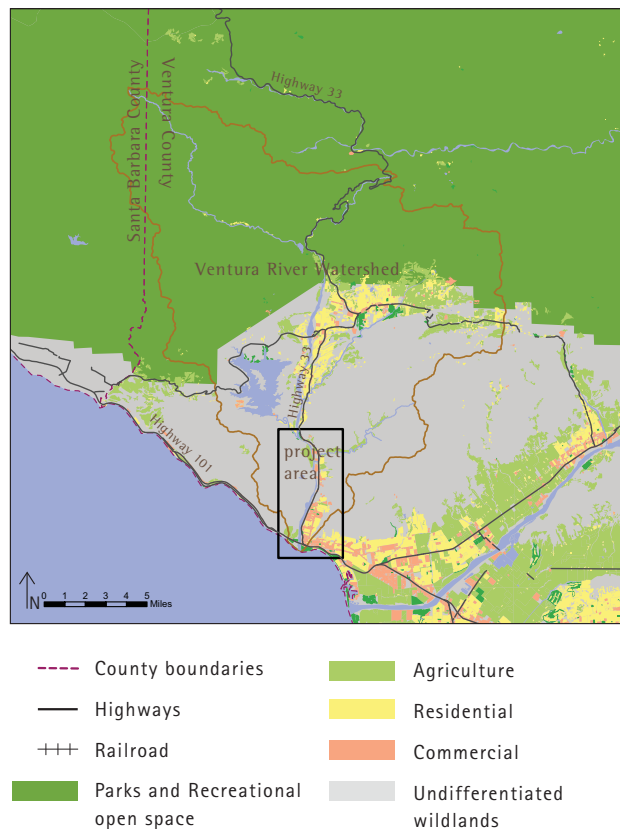


FIGURE 5.3 Watershed Land Use and Circulation. Data source: SCAG.

The Watershed

Figure 5.3 further illustrates segregation between recreational open space and the human population. Showing a pattern of agricultural and urbanized land uses congregating around the Ventura and Santa Clara rivers, and their tributaries, figure 5.3 also emphasizes human attraction and dependence on rivers. The proposed parkway project will serve residents living in the urbanized area adjacent to the lower Ventura River, providing them with a greater integration of recreational open space and cultural resources.

Major transportation routes seen at the watershed scale are Highway 33 and Highway 101. Highway 33 runs down the watershed alongside the Ventura River and through the heart of the parkway project area. It is a state registered scenic highway, making it a motorized recreational opportunity. Highway 101 passes through the southern ends of both the Ventura River and Santa Clara Watersheds. Additionally, a railroad is located between Highway 101 and the coast.

Project Area

While urbanization represents only a small percentage of land area at the county and watershed scales, in the project area there is a significant amount of urban development. Figure 5.5 delineates these land uses. In addition to the amount of space dedicated to each land

use, the relationships between them are significant for the proposed parkway. While current and past economic activities have largely contributed to these characteristics, the greatest use of developed land within the project area is housing. Recreational open space represents the least usage, and the designation with the greatest proximity to these parks is commercial, rather than residential. This configuration indicates a high number of potential park users in proximity to relatively few park acres, an open space to housing imbalance. This imbalance is particularly significant for residents of multi-family units, which typically afford limited private outdoor space. Nearest the river the adverse affects of such an imbalance appear to



FIGURE 5.4 Agricultural lands and undifferentiated wildlands in the project area.

be compounded by the side-by-side relationship of industrial land uses to multi-family designations.

Site visits provided a detailed perspective on the conditions which exist within the area's land use designations. Industrial areas are populated by; stone yards, scrap and recycling yards, auto-repair, furniture and other types of heavy and light manufacturing, and extraction related businesses. As is visible from the street, many properties are populated by dirt and asphalt parking lots filled with trucks, cargo containers, and single story administrative and warehouse type buildings. Commercial areas at the southern end of the project can be described as thriving, while those to the north appear to be struggling. Orchards populate the agricultural lands located in the northwestern corner of the project area, the southwestern corner supports strawberries and other row crops. Hundreds of inactive and active oil wells dot the hillsides on both sides of the river in the central section of the project area (California Department of Conservation 2002).

The current pattern of land use in the parkway project area points to a need for recreational open space in the central and north-central portions of the project area, specifically in the Westside and North Avenue communities. While the urbanized character of the southeastern quarter of the parkway project area presents a limited number of opportunities to meet this need, a significant amount of land in the western and northern portions holds promise. The open and minimally developed lands adjacent to the lower Ventura River in these areas may provide opportunities for recreation, education, and stewardship. Additionally, open space improvements can enhance wildlife habitat and natural processes.

Circulation

The parkway project area's circulation patterns are represented in figure 5.6. In addition to two highways, one railroad line, a number of rural roads and a network of collector and local roads, there are several bicycle and pedestrian paths. The California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) reports 42,000 vehicles on Highway 33 between Highway 101 and Stanley Avenue.

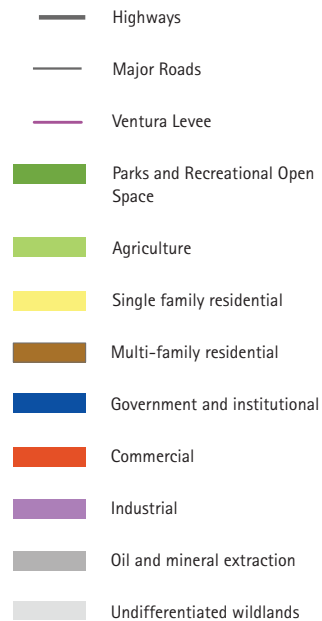


FIGURE 5.5 Project Area Land Use. Data source: City of Ventura. Source: SCAG.

At Casitas Vista Road the AADT indicates 27,000 vehicles (Caltrans 2007). In the south, exiting vehicles utilize a grid of surface streets that stretches east beyond the project area and north into the hills. In the northern three-quarters of the parkway project area the average width of the grid equals only two to three east-west blocks that, with one southern exception, do not extend into the hills. Public access westward across the Ventura River is limited to Main Street Bridge to the south and Casitas Vista Bridge in the north. Another bridge located at Shell Road, in the middle of the project area, provides only private access across the river.

Gold Coast Transit operates two routes that run the length of the parkway, one of which goes into Ojai, and several

routes serving coastal areas (Ventura County Transportation Commission 2008). Long haul carriers utilize Highway 101 and Amtrak provides commuter and long distance service along the coast (Ventura County Transportation Commission 2008, Chapter 5). Bicycle routes share surface streets and are primarily identified by signage. However, some routes do have painted lanes that identify bicycle right-of-ways.

Main thoroughfares and most streets in the downtown area are flanked by wide sidewalks with frequent pedestrian crossing provisions. However, many of the smaller side streets in the Westside and North Avenue communities tend to favor automobile use. These streets typically have narrow sidewalks or no sidewalks at all and lack pedestrian crossing provisions.

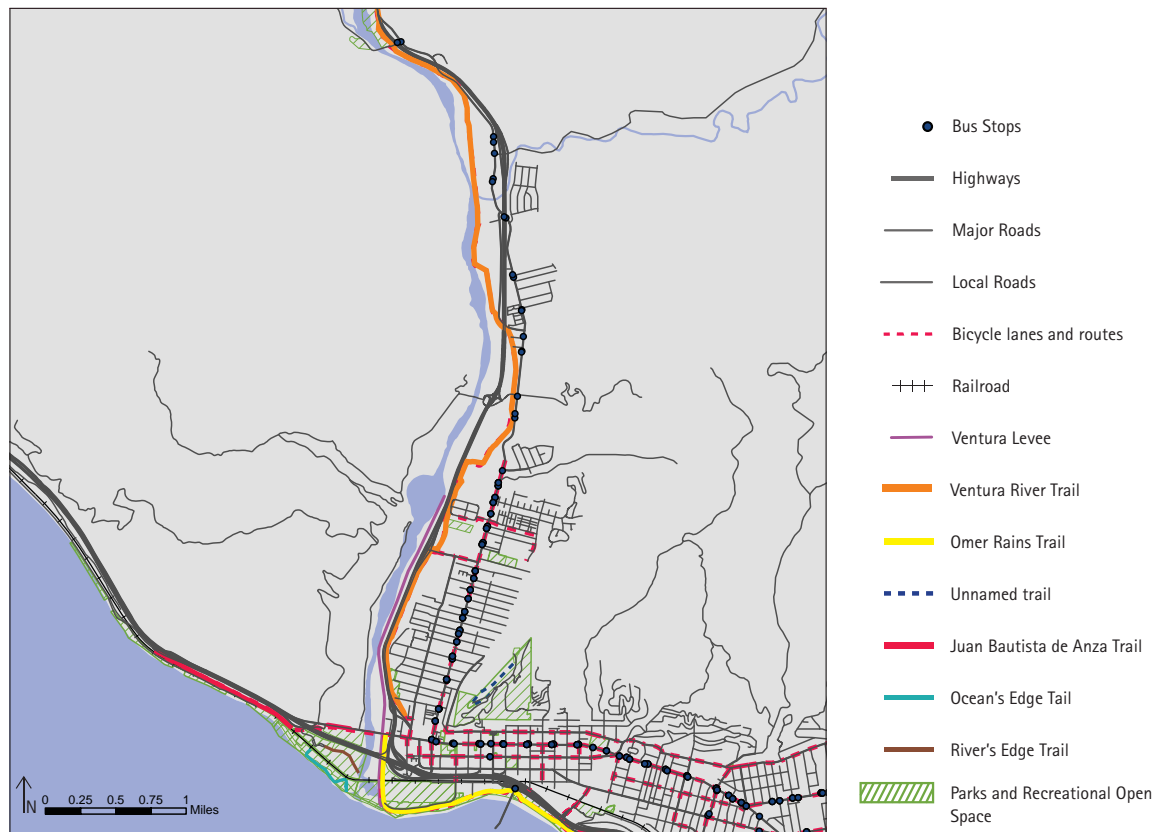


FIGURE 5.6 Project Area Circulation. Data source: Ventura Hillsides Conservancy; City of Ventura; SCAG; California State Parks.

Discreet bicycle and pedestrian trails include the Ventura River Trail, unnamed trails in Grant Park, Ocean's Edge Trail, River's Edge Trail, and Juan Bautista de Anza Trail.

The Ventura River Trail shown in figure 5.6 could provide critical access for the proposed parkway. It runs parallel to the Ventura River along a former railroad right-of-way between Dubbers Street at the south end of the project area, and Foster Park at the north end. The official trail head is marked by a sign located at the intersection of Omer Rains Trail and Main Street Bridge. However individuals not familiar with the area quickly find that the southernmost entrance to the trail is not located here. In fact, this trail's path begins several blocks to the north. Once pedestrians and bicyclists locate the

entrance amidst industrial land uses and alongside a freeway entrance, they find that the trail passes through a number of settings.

The southern portion of the trail is primarily industrial and at times very narrow. This is especially true where the trail is sandwiched between Highway 33 and several large industrial buildings. Along the northern section the trail corridor opens to reveal a more agrarian and natural setting, but it is important to note that this does not indicate multiple views of an idyllic rushing river. The views of the river can only be seen from the Ventura River Trail at the river's confluence with Cañada Larga. Finally, the Ventura River Trail meets the Ojai Valley Trail at Foster Park.

At and near the beaches of the project's southern most limit, several trails converge and provide users with a variety of recreational experiences. Juan Bautista de Anza Trail is over 1,200 miles long, stretching from Arizona to San Francisco, and includes a driving route and separate paths for pedestrians and cyclists (National Park Service n.d.). The section which passes through the Emma Wood State Beach campground was part of Bautista de Anza and his companion's original travel route. Omer Rains Trail is a paved eight mile long coastal trail that connects Ventura State Beach with Emma Wood State Beach. Ocean's Edge Trail connects Emma Wood State Beach with Seaside Wilderness Park, providing a walking path and pamphlets for interpretive information. River's Edge Trail is wholly contained in Emma Wood State Beach and guide maps can be requested ahead of time through California State Parks.



FIGURE 5.7 Southern most entrance to the Ventura River Trail, set alongside an on-ramp to Highway 33.

SENSORY RESOURCES

Ventura's quality of life, lifestyle options and experiences are created by opportunities allowing for full sensory immersion into a colorful world of viewsheds, microclimates and auditory experiences. These experiential resources provide a rich variety of compelling opportunities for the planning and design of the proposed parkway. Surrounded by an abundance of sensory opportunities, Ventura's hillsides, valleys, and floodplains are staging grounds for all manner of human activity.

The Los Padres National Forest provides a number of sensory opportunities, such as those found when climbing the 8,831 foot Mount Piños (Murphy 1979), camping in the Smith Wilderness, or visiting the Sespe Condor Sanctuary. Additionally, each of the county's three watersheds provides slightly varied views of California's geology. Some areas reveal sheets of uplifted rock that eventually erode to sand;



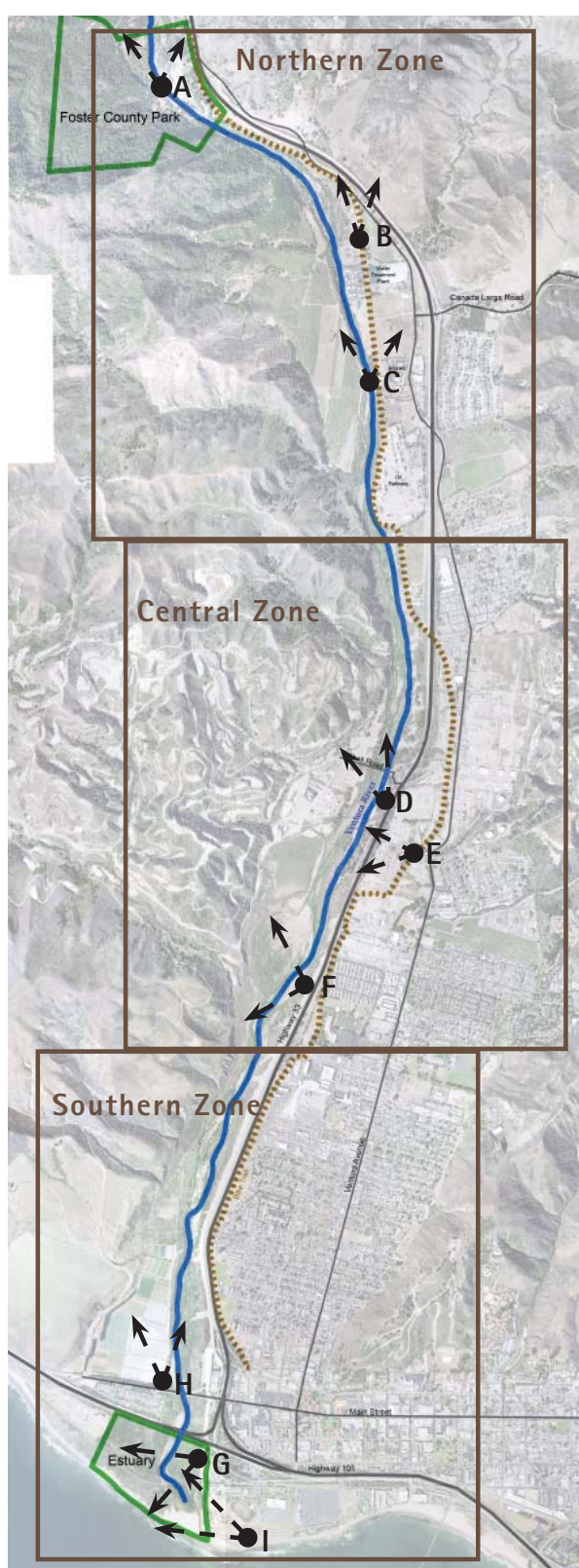
FIGURE 5.8 *Matilija Creek in the upper watershed.*

crumbling boulders are seen in shades of red, brown, and gray. The county's river systems lead to rocky shores, sandy beaches, and steep bluffs. The Channel Islands also provide sensory opportunities through colorful underwater patterns, neutral terrestrial tones, and whistling winds.

Steep dry hillsides in the Ventura River Watershed consist of dry expanses of coastal sage and chaparral habitats. They are crossed by more than a dozen tributaries that run through canyons and crags shaded by oak woodlands and riparian vegetation. The waters of Matilija Creek, the North Fork, the Ventura River, and their ephemeral tributaries provide plants with moisture, color the surrounding in refreshing gray and green colors, lower ambient temperatures, and contribute bold rushing sounds along with quiet tinkling ones. Surrounding lands are dotted by orderly swaths of orchards and crops, rambling wildlands, rural settlements, and an urban center, all of which provide tantalizing sensory experiences.

To the symphony of experiences available at the regional and watershed scales, the parkway project area contributes its own rich notes. There is a multiplicity of locations which provide both stunning and sublime views of the surrounding landscape. Figure 5.9 introduces some of these viewsheds and identifies the parameters of experiential zones across the parkway scale.

[OPPOSITE] FIGURE 5.9 *Northern, central, and southern experiential zones, with sample viewsheds A-I. Orthophotography: CIRGIS.*



A. Dry channels at Foster Park looking north.



B. The Ventura River Trail.



C. The Ventura River south of its confluence with Cañada Larga.



D. Shell Bridge.



E. Oil wells with western hills in the distance.



F. The Ventura River, and hillsides with extraction activities seen from the Ventura Levee.



G. Ventura River estuary, and Pacific Ocean with Channel Islands in the distance.



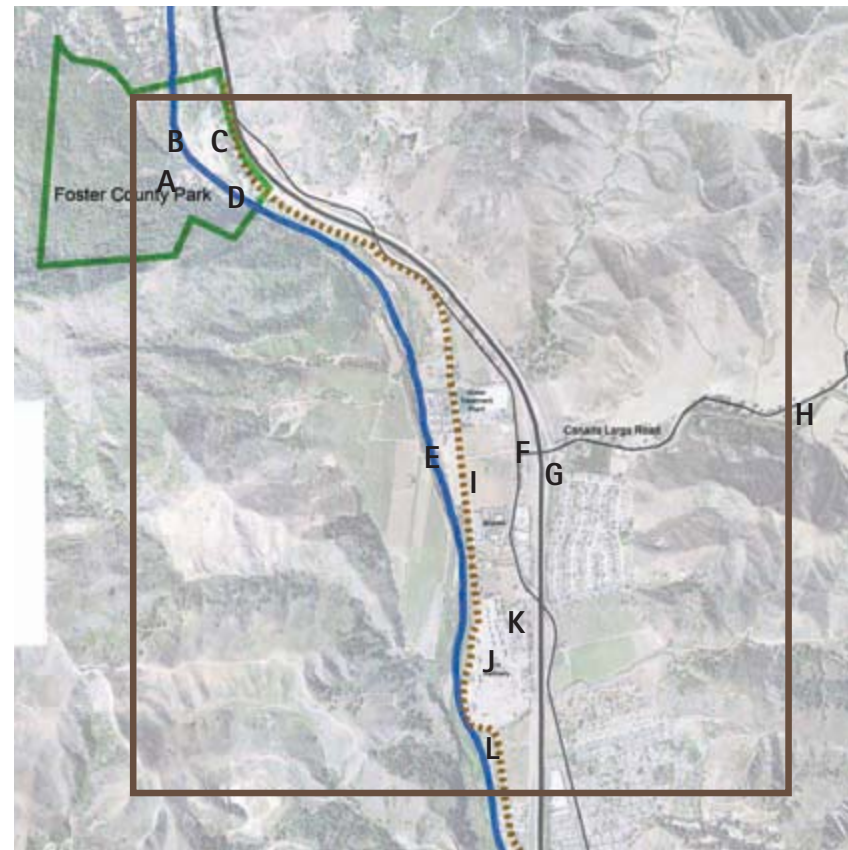
H. Agricultural service road with view of the river valley.



I. Seaside Wilderness Park from Omer Rains Trail.

Northern Experiential Zone

The northern end of the project area offers many tranquil views and settings in shades of deep green, faded gray, and washed out yellow, all set against stunning blue. One location where the public is welcome to enjoy this setting is at Foster Park, which provides overnight camping, an amphitheater and a shady oak woodland. Foster Park's day use area, located just off of Highway 33, is frequently dappled by sunlight filtering through giant California sycamores (*Platanus racemosa*) whose need for wet roots is met by the underlying groundwater that feeds the river. At lowland points within this zone one sees the cobble filled river, feels cool water temperatures and hears the murmur of the gently sweeping river. Agriculture, industry, residential development, and urbanization are also on view within this zone. Sweeping panoramas of orchards and grazing cattle set on hillsides are subtle reminders of food sources. Generous streets flank the houses of a lone development introducing suburban peace. Derelict structures with the appearance of abandonment provide opportunities for illicit works of art, while hard gray concrete reconfigures and impedes the natural flow of sections of the Cañada Larga and other tributaries.



[ABOVE AND RIGHT] FIGURE 5.10 Northern experiential zone and sample locations A-L.
Orthophotography source: CIRGIS.



A. Oak shaded lane in upper Foster Park.



B. Dry channel with cobbles, native, and invasive vegetation.



C. California sycamore (*Plataunus racemosa*) in day use area of Foster Park.



D. View from Casitas Vista bridge looking south.



E. Wildlife resting among rocks at the confluence of Cañada Larga and the Ventura River.



F. Looking west from near Ventura Avenue over Cañada Larga.



G. Drainage channel running past development near Cañada Larga.



H. Bluff overlooking Cañada Larga.



I. North of the former USA Petroleum Refinery site.



J. Corroded and vandalized storage tanks on refinery site.



K. Cracking towers, and barrels on refinery site.



L. Business identified as providing chemical services located in what is apparently a dry river channel.

Central Experiential Zone

The central zone of the parkway project area is both industrial and rural. Fenced off and guarded, packed gray earth is overlain by steel that is corroded or shiny with enamel paint. It has out of reach views of figures placed on oversized ground: gray earth punctured by blue, white, and red. Colors of bare and eroded earth shift from umber to gray to clay red. The color of vegetation ranges from yellow-brown to light and dark green. Ocean breezes carry moisture, but the sun bakes dry creek beds. Wells extract the accumulation of life lived over millions of years, pumping oil up from underground. Meanwhile, earth's life source--water--is only glimpsed in this landscape.



[ABOVE AND RIGHT] FIGURE 5.11 *Central experiential zone and sample locations A-L.*
Orthophotography source: CIRGIS.



A. Oil wells in the river and on the horizon.



B. Oil well in dry river channel with sign reading "Aera Ventura Field..."



C. Native and exotic riparian vegetation along the Ventura River Trail.



D. Cattails (*Typha latifolia*) with oil tanks in the mid-ground and on the bluffs above.



E. Oil field with associated equipment.



F. Oil pipes.



G. View of the Ventura River and western hillsides from the Ventura Levee.



H. Western bluffs seen from Ventura Levee.



I. Service road on western bluffs.



J. "Oil Country" building.



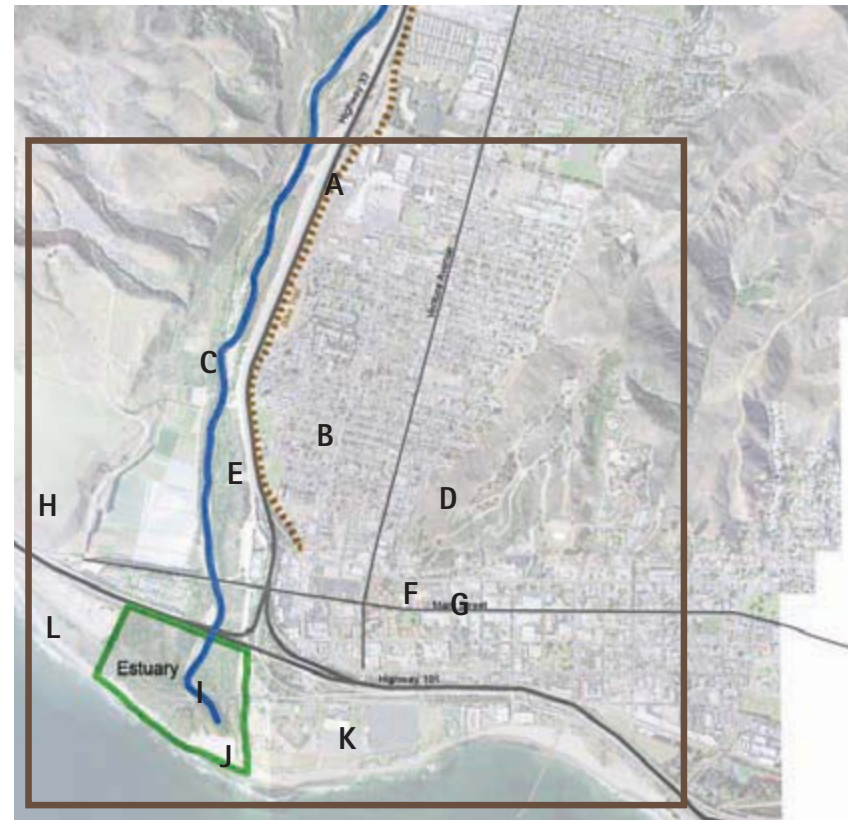
K. Ventura River Trail with overhead pipes.



L. Looking north near the end of the Ventura Levee.

Southern Experiential Zone

Sensory resources of the southern zone provide a distinct combination of rural environments existing alongside dense urban landscapes. Working class neighborhoods, industry, and commerce are surrounded by natural abundance. Urbanized lowlands surrounded by mostly undeveloped hillsides create a sense that urban development and the natural environment are stacked one against the other. On one side the sea collides with the land and on the other human constructs press in. Outdoor recreational opportunities within the southern zone include surfing, bird watching, camping, walking and bicycling along pedestrian trails. The Channel Islands can be seen from the shore line. Experiencing the estuary on a cloudy day, one is shrouded in gray, touched by cool moisture in the air, and surrounded by muffled sounds of seagulls crying. On a sunny day the grays become brilliant blue, cool moisture is a comfortable breeze, and the cries turn to screams. Not far away at an intermittent second mouth the ground plane is colored by yellows and reds punctuated by green. River cobble and drift wood cover the beach with colors of faded grays and reds, and the low roar of the surf is ever present.



[ABOVE AND RIGHT] FIGURE 5.12 Southern experiential zone and sample locations A-L.
Orthophotography source: CIRGIS.



A. "Mark". Public art displayed along the Ventura River Trail.



B. Street in the Westside Community.



C. Cottonwoods (*Populus fremontii*) and service road.



D. Grant Park overlooking the Westside Community.



E. Stormdrain outfall.



F. Albinger Archeological Museum and site, part of the Mission Compound.



G. Main street, Downtown Ventura.



H. Strawberry fields overlooking the Pacific Ocean with Channel Islands in the distance.



I. Railroad trestle that crosses the estuary.



J. The river's estuary and primary mouth.



K. Parking at the Ventura County Fair Grounds.



L. Driftwood at Emma Wood State Beach with Seaside Wilderness Park in the distance.

Figure 5.13 provides locations of a number of the community resources in the project area. Their identification demonstrates some of the available opportunities for reconnecting the Ventura River to the local culture. The resources identified represent the knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, and laws contributing to local culture. Through its function each type of community resource provides opportunities to promote and display interconnections between the culture of Ventura, the Ventura River, and the proposed Lower Ventura River Parkway.

- Libraries
- Community Centers
- Religious Facilities
- ✚ Medical Facilities
- ▲ Fire Stations
- Law Enforcement Offices
- Landmarks
- Historic Districts
- Schools
- ▨ Parks and Recreational Open Space
- ← 0 Item number in Figure 5.14

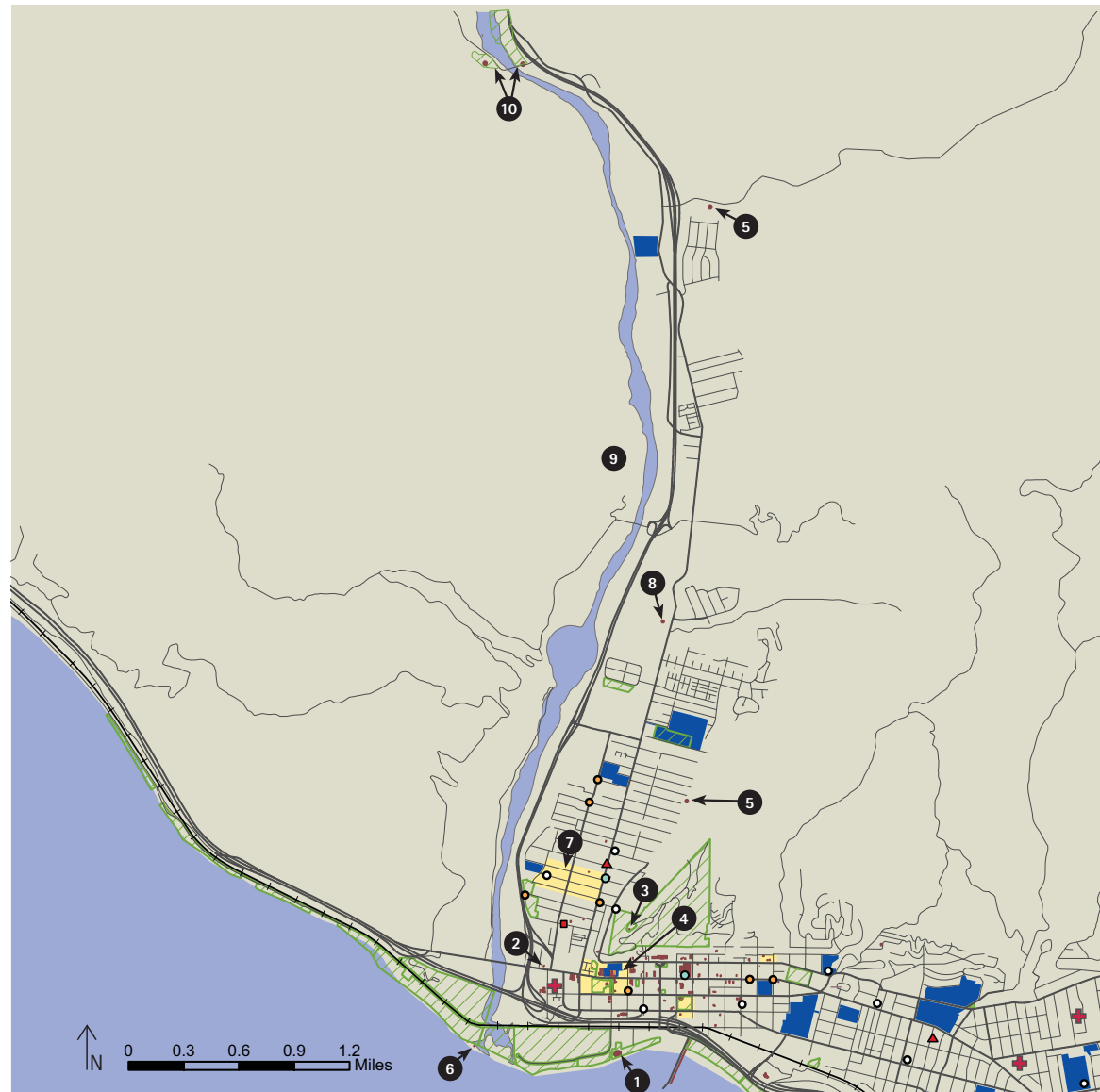


FIGURE 5.13 Community Resources in the Parkway Project Area.
Data source: City of Ventura; SCAG. After: Google Maps.

Name and map item	Status	Description
Shishalop Village, or Cabrillo's Landing ①	State listed site	This former village was regionally significant to the Chumash when the Spanish arrived in 1542.
Ortega Adobe ②	City Landmark. National Register evaluation, 1988.	Home of the Ortega family Built in 1857 by the father of Emilio, founder of Pioneer Ortega Chili, the first commercial food processing operation in California.
Junipero Serra Cross ③	State listed site	The original wooden cross was erected in 1782 by Father Junipero Serra. The current cross was raised in the 1940's. Located in atop mountainous terrain which overlooks the City of Ventura.
Mission Compound ④	National Register of Historic Places	Includes Mission San Buenaventura, Albinger Archaeological Museum, and the Mission Water Filtration Building which is the oldest standing structure in Ventura County.
Mission Aqueduct remnants ⑤	National Register of Historic Places (north section) City Landmark	Seven mile aqueduct built 1805-15 by the Chumash for Mission San Buenaventura.
Battery Two and Hobo Jungle ⑥	Historic site, California Parks and Recreation	The site of a World War Two coastal defense battery including two concrete Panama mount gun emplacements. This area was also used by squatters during the Great Depression.
Simpson housing tract ⑦	City Historical District	One of Ventura's oldest neighborhoods, includes the historical Casa de Anza building which has housed apartments, art galleries, and Avenue Library.
E.P. Foster home and Avenue School ⑧	San Buenaventura Conservancy Landmark	Seven acre parcel with three household buildings built in 1881, as well as an elementary school. The school was donated by Foster to the Ventura Unified School District and the home donated after his death.
Ventura Avenue oilfield ⑨	--	Oil extraction began here in 1914, and peaked in 1954. Though greatly reduced it is still a producing oil field.
Foster Park stone gates and amphitheater ⑩	Ventura County Historical Landmark	Foster Park was first developed in 1906, its stone lion entrance markers are dated 1908.

FIGURE 5.14 Historical resources with particular significance to the proposed parkway. Sources: City of Ventura; CERES

Services

Schools, libraries, religious facilities, and community centers are primary locations for education and communal exchange. Community members rely on such facilities for critical information on all aspects of life. They function as resources for information and public gathering spaces and provide educational and social opportunities for re-introducing the Ventura River into daily life. Locations dedicated to health care, law enforcement, and fire safety also present significant opportunities to disseminate information about using the Ventura River as a location that can support health and inspire civic engagement. Collectively these resources represent significant opportunities to act as locations where the community is inspired and engaged in the process of planning and developing the proposed Lower Ventura River Parkway.

Historical Locations

Historical resources remind today's generation of the influence past generations have had on forming present culture and, comparisons can be made from which to measure the effect of the passage of time on quality of life. Organizations identifying significant historical resources



FIGURE 5.15 Water filtration building, part of the Mission Compound.

Name	Description
Fragile Sands project and website	Documents the conditions and future plans for Seaside Wilderness Park. Sponsors events and exhibitions in honor of the park, its founder E.P. Foster, and natural environments.
Shellie the Shopping Cart	A narrative told from the point of view of an abandoned shopping cart highlighting riparian species. Part of the Fragile Sands project.
Ventura River Trail public art	Sculptural pieces located intermittently along the trail route reflect the agricultural and industrial history of the area.
Once Upon a Wetland	Students work to restore native plant communities, learning about watersheds and the Ventura River Watershed's connection to the local ocean environment. Collaborates with Fragile Sands.
Tortilla Flats Mural and Reunion Project	Documents early to mid twentieth century working class neighborhoods on Ventura's westside.
Portrait of a Neighborhood	Mural commemorating the history of the Westside including Chumash settlement, agriculture, oil extraction, and suburban neighborhoods.
Ventura Hillside Music Festival	Annual music event to raise money and awareness for the Ventura Hillside Conservancy features local, up-and-coming, and top name artists.
Ventura Hillside Wild & Scenic Film Festival	Film festival in Ventura sponsored by Ventura Hillside Conservancy featuring films from the national Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival. The 2010 festival featured the film <i>Watershed Revolution</i> by Ventura filmmakers and producers, a documentary that describes efforts to protect the Ventura River.
Municipal Art Acquisition Program and Collection	Artworks of distinctive artistic merit created by residents of Ventura County or individuals who have made significant contributions to the history of Ventura.
Ventura Public Art Program	Incorporates artists' visions into capital improvement projects.
Ventura Hillside Wild & Scenic Film Festival	Annual program of family friendly environmental films designed to motivate people to make a difference in their communities and around the world.

within and around the proposed parkway project area include the National Park Service, California State Parks Office of Historic Preservation, Ventura County Genealogical Society, San Buenaventura Conservancy, and the City of Ventura. Documents referenced in order to identify historical resources with particular relevance to the proposed parkway included the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, Ventura County Genealogical Society's list of Historical Landmarks in Ventura County, the 2007 Historic Resources Survey Update: Downtown Specific Plan Area for the City of Ventura, the San Buenaventura Conservancy's list of landmarks, and *An Introduction to the Ventura River Parkway* produced by The Trust for Public Land. Figure 5.14 identifies historical resources with a high relevance to the proposed parkway based on location and function.

The Arts

Art, in all its forms and mediums, is generally thought of as a reflection of the societies in which they were produced. However, art theory also notes the ability of art to transcend reflection in order shape and inform culture. Community narrative, the stories a culture or sub-culture tells and believes about itself, is one instance in which art is theorized to inform culture (Thomas 1996). Some claim that the sources of

transcendence in the arts are their ability to provoke thought, including that derived from strong emotional response, and a work's ability to elicit a collective understanding.

Private citizens, organizations, and City government all promote the arts through sponsorship and participation in the arts and arts programming. Additionally, the arts are both propagated and consumed in the Ventura River area. The arts are therefore demonstrated to be of significance to the culture, identity, and community narrative of the City of Ventura. As a localized communication tool, art- especially publicly available art-has the potential to play an important role in ingraining the proposed Lower Ventura River Parkway into the fabric of Ventura's culture. Figure 5.14 is a partial listing of existing art projects and programs with relevance to the Ventura River and its environs. Furthermore, the Ventura River, including its hydrological and biological processes, and its relationship to current and past cultures, provides opportunities to elicit strong emotional responses. Future works of art may have the ability to enhance the relationship between the Ventura River and the culture of Ventura by utilizing universally recognized themes of interdependence, isolation and separation, loss of innocence, celebration, and food as they relate to the relationship of people with the river.

[OPPOSITE] **FIGURE 5.16** *Arts related projects located near or with thematic relevance to the Ventura River and proposed parkway. Sources: websites and publications for each project.*

PART II: COMMUNITY OF STAKEHOLDERS

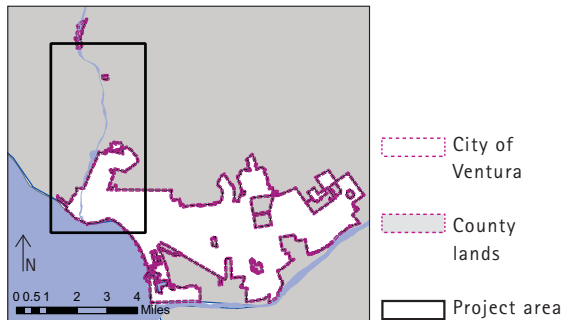


FIGURE 5.17 City Scale. City and County jurisdictions are examined at this scale. Data source: City of Ventura.

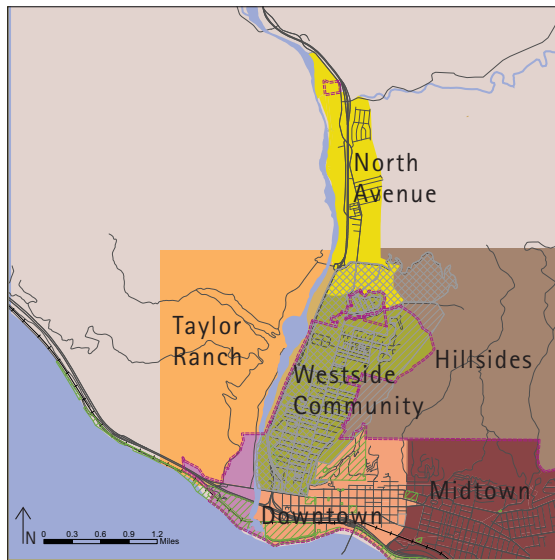


FIGURE 5.18 Planning Community boundaries as indicated by the City of Ventura are shown here, in addition to the census tract boundaries approximating the Westside Community. All are located within project's site limits. Data source: City of Ventura. After: City of Ventura.

DEMOGRAPHICS: STAKEHOLDERS AS INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

The proposed parkway's large stretches of publicly accessible open space, proximity to urban amenities, natural experiences, and historical and arts resources will draw local users and visitors from afar. Identifying the needs, desires, habits, and ways in which visitors may utilize such a project is directly linked to its success. Additionally, area residents and enterprises with apparently little relation to the proposed parkway area may also be impacted by its planning, development, and operation. Collectively, potential visitors and individuals interest in the proposed parkway other than its use make up the parkway's community of stakeholders. It includes people of varying ethnicity, socio-economic background, age, experience, values, and perspectives. The community of stakeholder's needs, desires, and abilities to contribute to the planning and development are critical to the creation of the parkway and should be balanced with the necessities for restoring greater stream function and ensuring healthy ecosystems. Part II of this chapter, presents an inventory of the diverse factors influencing this community of stakeholders.

Where appropriate, the regional, watershed, and project area scales introduced in Chapter 1, The Planning Context, are discussed in this section. However, much of the information presented here is defined by jurisdictional and social boundaries, which do not entirely align with the planning scales previously introduced. As such this section makes

several modifications to the scope of information presented at the planning scales previously used in this document, and introduces two new scales. The regional scale continues to focus on information within the jurisdictional boundaries of Ventura County but sometimes compares Ventura County to Kern, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara counties, which border it. Use of the watershed scale is very limited, in its place the City Scale is introduced (figure 5.17). References to this scale present information regarding jurisdictional areas of the City and Ventura County of Ventura. It is also sometimes necessary to present information pertaining to geographical units smaller than the parkway project area. Figure 5.18 identifies city defined planning communities within the parkway project area, and the census tracts that most closely correlate to the neighborhood nearest the river, the Westside Community.

Moving from the discussion of available cultural resources presented in Part I of this chapter, Part II begins by introducing demographic information, continues with a discussion of stakeholder groups, reviews community input gathered by this project, and ends by discussing select community issues arrived at through the guidance of local stakeholders. In addition to the environmental services discussed in chapter 3 Hydrology, and 4 Ecosystems, through these analyses the parkway is shown to have the potential to greatly serve the community by contributing to the equitable distribution of healthy ecological, economic, and social environments in the project area.

Census data paints a generalized picture of individuals and families who are members of the project's community of stakeholders. Comparing demographic information to studies and other indicators provides insight regarding recreational demand and preferences, as well as educational and well being needs of potential users. Such comparisons will inform design proposals for this vision plan. To provide context, selected demographic information is compared against the same information at other planning scales. Additional detail is successively examined at each of the finer scales, allowing for a broader understanding of individual and family stakeholders, who based on proximity, are most likely to frequent the parkway.

Regional Population

Census 2000 found 753,197 residents living in Ventura County (United States Census Bureau [USCB] 2000). The 2006 American Community Survey estimated that the population had grown to 799,720 (USCB 2006). By comparison the 2006 survey estimated a population of 780,117 in Kern County to the north, 9,948,041 in Los Angeles County to the east and 400,335 in Santa Barbara County to the west (USCB 2006). California state wide projections estimate a 37 percent increase in population between 2000 and 2030 (USCB 2004). Based on projections the total population for each of these counties may increase by 1.23 percent annually into 2030. If projections come into being the four counties will have a combined population of 12,515,082 by 2010, indicating an immediate regional need for additional recreational open space. Based on data from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Figure 5.18 illustrates the density and distribution of

populations across the four counties. Figure 5.19 also shows the Ventura River's demarcation of the western urban edge of Ventura and Los Angeles Counties. The Ventura River's western urban edge uniquely positions the proposed parkway as a figurative pressure valve for residents of the surrounding urban region. The abundant acreage of the Ventura River Parkway would provide and support the large regional population with an outdoor recreational resource. The parkway's proximity to various amenities and accommodations will enhance visitor attraction to the area.

The City of Ventura and the Westside Community

The City of Ventura's census data and the data pertaining to the two census tracts which correspond most closely to the Westside Community's boundaries are presented. These census tracts more accurately reflect urban conditions present in the parkway project area than does county census tract data. The 2006 American Community Survey estimated that the City of Ventura had a population of 104,092, whereas Census 2000 data indicated a population of 100,916 (USCB 2006). The two census tracts which comprise the Westside had a combined population of 13,204 at the time of the 2000 census (USCB 2000). The Westside Community therefore accounts for approximately 13 percent of the City of Ventura's population. The similarities and differences between the city's population and the population in closest proximity to the proposed river parkway point to overlapping and diverging needs and preferences. Ultimately all are critical to development of this vision plan and the future parkway.

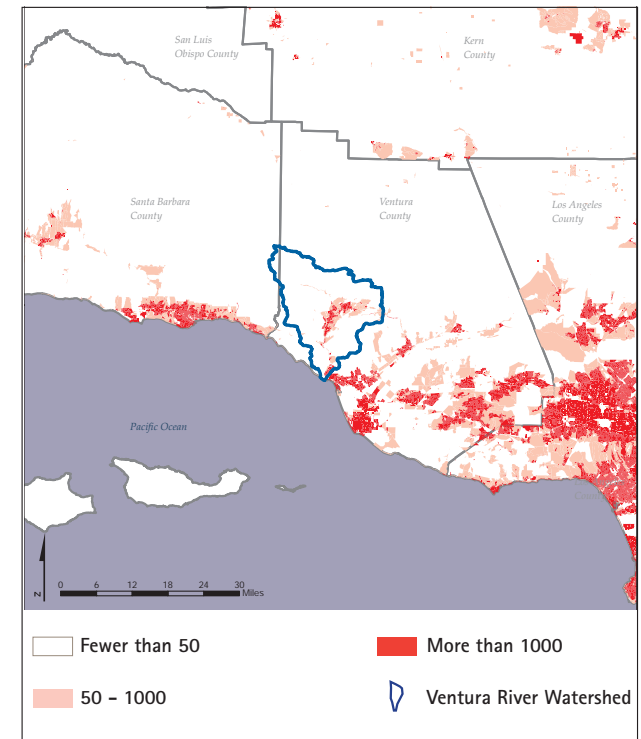


FIGURE 5.19 Population Density per Square Mile. Regional scale. Data source: California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Ethnicity and Age

Research has shown that ethnicity and age are good indicators of user needs and behaviors regarding outdoor space. Statistics regarding ethnicity and age reveal a dichotomous relationship between the City of Ventura and the Westside. Figure 5.20 highlights the racial and ethnic balance for the City of Ventura in comparison to

the Westside. Figure 5.21 illustrates age distribution across the Westside and throughout the City of Ventura. Together these charts indicate that potential parkway users living in the City of Ventura and the Westside come from a range of ethnic backgrounds and varying ages. Users living closest to the proposed parkway are likely to be Hispanic and are primarily under the age of sixty. In contrast, the city population is primarily white. Users from the city as a whole are also likely to be older.

The United States Forest Service has identified some preferences in recreational behavior based on race and ethnicity (Dwyer 1992). This research shows that Hispanics frequently use outdoor recreational space to socialize, such as for family picnics. Other common activities associated with Hispanics are swimming and playing soccer. While whites also engage in sport activities, such as such as hiking and individual exercise, they have less of a tendency to engage in purely social activities, such as group gatherings

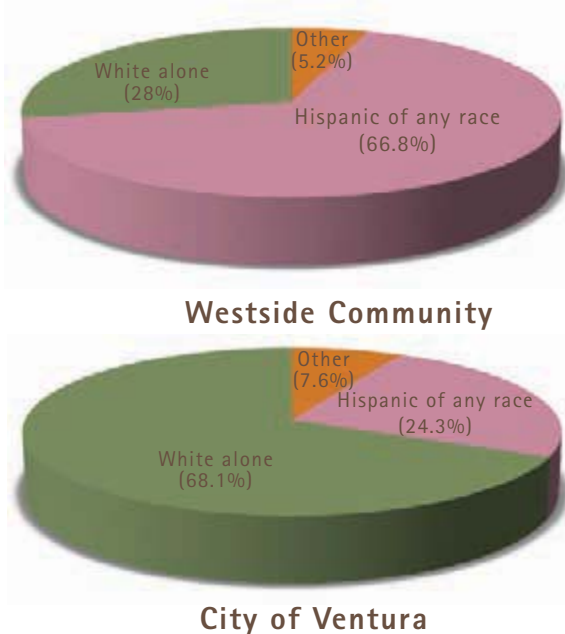


FIGURE 5.20 Percentage of population by race and ethnicity. Data source: USCB 2000.

(Dwyer 1992).

User age also indicates the range of activities that users will engage in as well as design elements needed to support such activities. Cooper Marcus (1998) suggests providing areas where children can meet their need to manipulate and act on their environment, while also providing locations where older users can observe and to some extent be protected from their environment. The broad range of ages and ethnicities in the Ventura area necessitates that this vision plan and subsequent documents meet diverging needs through inclusive planning, design, and programming.

Education and Income

The need for the Ventura River Parkway to be developed as publicly accessible recreational open space that also provides educational opportunities comes into focus with this Vision Plan. In a report on the correlation between educational attainment and income, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) found that “On average, just having some college adds 25 percent to earnings” and “Compared to a high school level education, an associate degree increases income by 47 percent, a bachelor’s degree by 108 percent, and a graduate or professional degree by 189 percent” (CPEC 2007). This same report further found that when comparing incomes of high school graduates and those holding a bachelor’s degree for members of Hispanic, African American, and Asian groups their incomes more than doubled (CPEC 2007).

Figure 5.22 illustrates that for individuals over 25 years old, members of the largest group by educational attainment in the Westside Community, have less than a ninth grade education (USCB 2000). Meanwhile, the largest single group in the City of Ventura is composed of individuals who have completed some college (USCB 2000).

Figure 5.23 compares household income ranges for the Westside Community to the city as a whole. Just over one-third of households throughout the city had an annual income range between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in

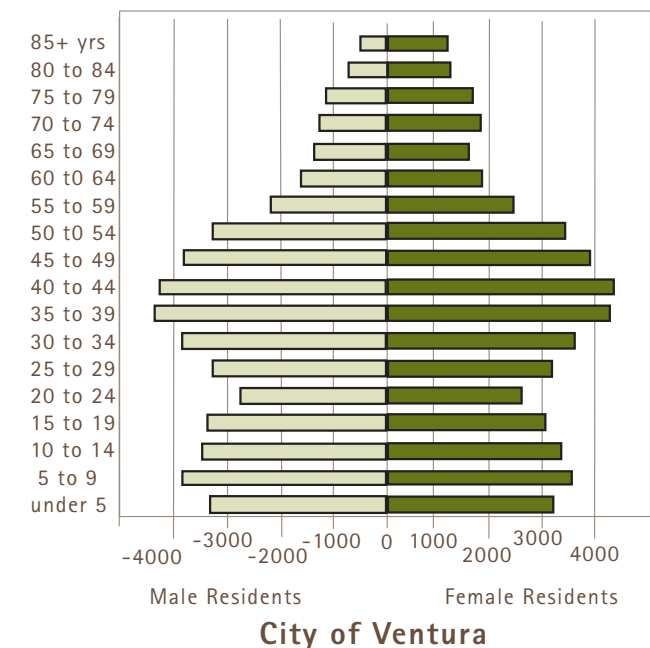
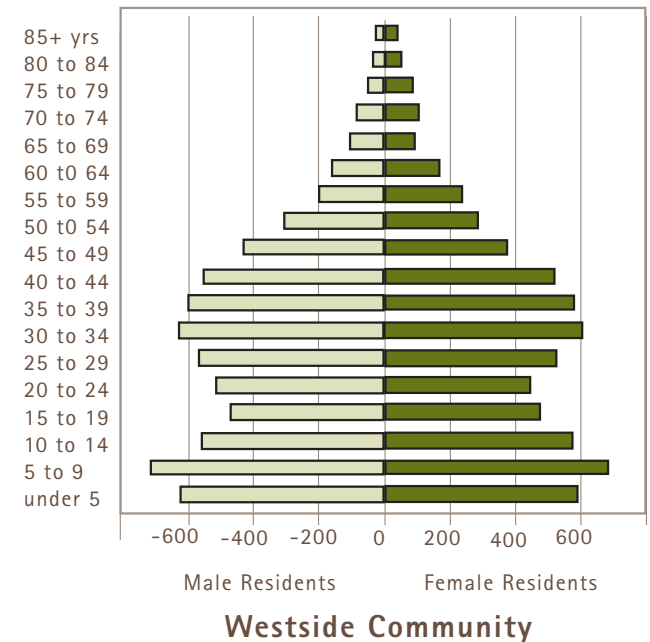


FIGURE 5.21 Age Distribution for the Westside Community and the City of Ventura. Data source: USCB 2000.

1999, while nearly the same number of households in the Westside had a range of only \$10,000 to \$30,000 in that same year (USCB 2000). It is important to note that the average household size for the City of Ventura is two, while the Westside average is four (USCB 2000). On average, lower household incomes in the Westside sustain more people than in the city as a whole. Finally, by combining the two census tracts representing the Westside Community the distribution range of household incomes and educational attainment for the community reflects higher household incomes and education levels than if the census tract nearest the river had

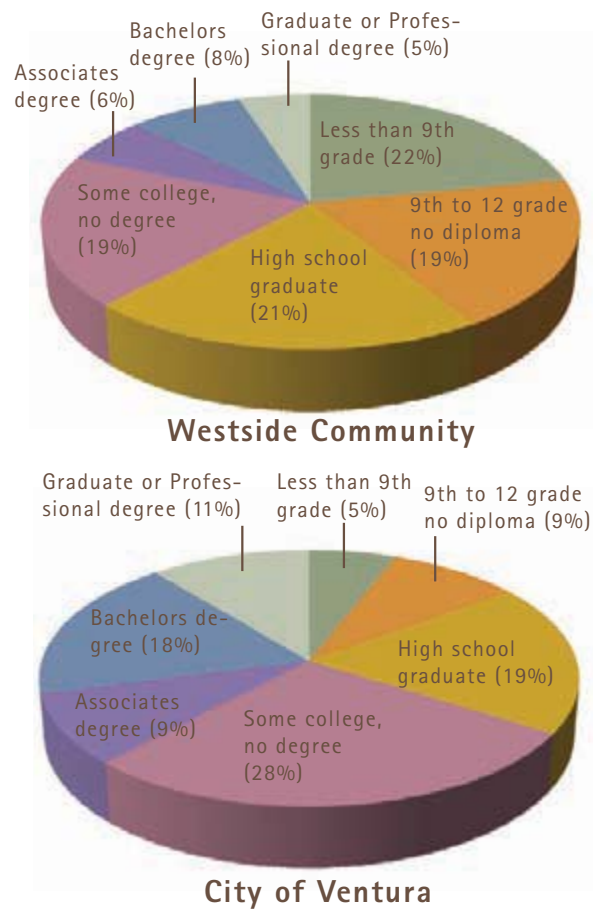


FIGURE 5.22 Level of Education Attained by those over 25 years of age. Data source: USCB 2000.

been considered alone (USCB 2000).

The Office of Educational Research in the United States Department of Education recognizes that a number of studies have identified student engagement as key to attaining advanced levels of education (Rossi 1994). Some of these studies identify factors that contribute to student engagement, including the provision of high quality education (Rossi 1994). The role of the natural world in the provision of quality of education is gaining recognition. According to their official web site the United Nations Education Sciences and Culture Organization (UNESCO) have developed six internationally agreed on education goals through Education for All (UNESCO 1995). Goal number six is improved quality of education. Content further delineating potential components of improved quality of education includes the use of curriculums that provide learning opportunities based on the local environment, while also developing broader knowledge and competencies applicable to student's lives (UNESCO 1995). UNESCO's recognition of local environments as providing opportunities to improve the quality of education supports the creation of the Ventura River Parkway. As an educational tool, the Ventura River Parkway can provide locally based curriculums that develop broader knowledge and inspire engagement, increasing the economic well being of Westside community members and ultimately the broader community.

Examining demographic information in relationship to the Ventura River reveals the need for the proposed Lower Ventura River Parkway across regional, city, and neighborhood boundaries. For the region, a well connected system of open space that creates a balance between wilderness, amenities, and accommodations has the potential to provide much needed respite. For the city, potential visitors represent tourism dollars: an important economic resource. For the Westside Community, easy access and close walking distance to recreational opportunities that include design features which support education and social interaction may ultimately improve quality of life.

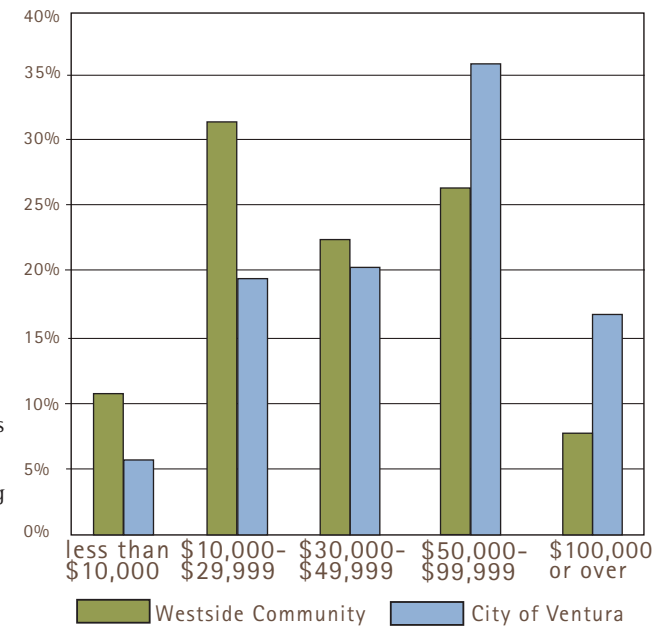


FIGURE 5.23 Median Household Income for 1999. Data source: USCB 2000.

Information regarding economic activity and employment sectors at multiple scales provides a picture of the community of stakeholders through their common economic interests. This examination provides insight into the daily lives of potential parkway users and clues as to how the proposed parkway may be received by employers and employees.

Stakeholders as Collective Groups

THE ECONOMY

Economic Stakeholders Beyond the Parkway Project Area

From 2000 to 2005 Ventura County's top three employment sectors were respectively; service based businesses, such as tourism and professional services, retail trade and agriculture (VCCA 2007). Average annual salaries in these sectors were between \$20,000 and \$32,000, representing the county's lowest average wages (VCCA 2007). As an indicator of the number of jobs represented, in 2000 there were 30,000 agricultural jobs (IRWMP 2006). In contrast, between 2000 and 2005 some of the largest individual employers in the county were Amgen, Countrywide Financial, and the United States Navy, whose average wages were as much as two and a half times higher than for service based and retail trade sectors (California Employment Development Department 2007). Additionally, in 2000 Ventura County had the highest absolute employment in agriculture in southern California. According to the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) by 2030 agricultural jobs will decrease by 29 percent compared to 2000. Such a decrease will contribute to the largest anticipated change in the county's economy as well as in land use, from agricultural to urbanized lands (IRWMP 2006).

In their 2004 Labor Force Profile the City of Ventura's top two employment sectors were also services and retail trade, with government in third place (City of Ventura 2008a). Notably, according to the Economic Development Strategy 2005-2010 tourism contributes more than \$715 million dollars annually to the local economy (City of Ventura

2005a). As in the rest of the county, large numbers of jobs in these sectors are a result of many employers rather than several large employers. Testament to this fact is that once again the top three individual employers were not entirely within the three largest sectors, those employers were; the County of Ventura, Ventura Unified School District, and the Ventura County Health Care Agency (City of Ventura 2008b).

The consideration of county and city data including average wages, household incomes and the anticipated shift of land use from agricultural open space to urbanized land provides justification for development of a public parkway with low cost access, and also provides clues for gaining potential allies. With government, education and health care making up the largest individual employers in the city, a significant number of city residents may view the Ventura River Parkway as providing material support for objectives they support through their employment. Finally, many employers outside the proposed project area will be watching its planning and development from the perspective of it becoming a regional attraction. If approached without finesse and consideration for stakeholders in outlying areas, the parkway may be viewed as competition for tourism and retail trade dollars. However, collaboration with economically attentive organizations and their members may help alleviate potential for this perceived threat and encourage a perspective market for additional services, retail trade and tourism. Figure 5.24 identifies stakeholder organizations operating beyond the project area.

Organization Name and Internet Address	Activities
Central Coast Tourism Council http://www.centralcoast-tourism.com	Promotion of attractions, services, events, and resources in California's Central Coast region.
Ventura County Civic Alliance http://www.vccf.org/civicalliance	Community issues, engagement, and leadership.
Ventura County Economic Development Association http://www.vceda.org/	Environmental policy, land use, housing, transportation and workforce education.
Economic Development Collaborative-Ventura County http://www.edc-vc.com/	Public-private partnerships, attraction, retention, and expansion of business in Ventura County.
Ventura Chamber of Commerce http://www.ventura-chamber.org/	Business and community development, public policy.
City of Ventura Community Development Department http://www.cityofventura.net/community_development	Planning, zoning, economic development, housing and redevelopment, special events, regional planning, and open space.
Ventura Visitors and Convention Bureau http://www.ventura-usa.com/	Promotion of attractions, services, events, and resources in the City of Ventura.

FIGURE 5.24 Stakeholder groups working on economically related issues operating at the regional and city levels. Sources: individual group informational and promotional materials.



FIGURE 5.25 A government maintenance yard in the project area.

Economic Stakeholders in the Parkway Project Area

As with the economic stakeholders in outlying areas, employers and employees in the project area are potential allies for the proposed parkway development. The cultivation of positive relationships may greatly aid in the parkway's reception. Site visits reveal that employment closest to the Ventura River generally fall into three sectors: agriculture, retail trade and industry, including manufacturing and oil extraction. A limited number of professional services, such as health care are also present. Additionally, with many single and multi-family housing units, commercial and residential real estate markets contribute to the local economy. As shown in Figure 5.5, SCAG's land use data supports this breakdown, which is also consistent with the city's overall employment picture. Figure 5.26 indicates some of the individual businesses and government entities operating in the project area.

Despite economically productive operations (Figure 5.26) and ongoing city support for the revitalization of the Westside and North Avenue communities, (City of Ventura 2009; City of Ventura 2005a; City of Ventura 2002) vacant, unkempt lots, and under-stocked retail establishments indicate that revenues and economic activities outside of the beach and historical corridors are insufficient in meeting population needs. The 1980s flight of a significant portion of the oil industry is cited as a primary factor in the economic devaluation of the area (City of Ventura 2005a). Additionally, with the two lowest paying employment sectors providing significant numbers of jobs, opportunities for residents to work locally are likely to be low paying. While higher paying industrial and professional services have fewer job opportunities, they also require higher levels of education which is atypical of Westside Community residents (Figure 5.21).

Business or Agency	Activities
Addison Main Street Trust- Bell Arts Factory	art studios and community space
Von's	retail services
Aera Energy LLC	energy production/oil extraction
Taylor Ranch Partnership	agriculture
Mobile Oil Corp.	energy production/oil extraction
Edison	energy production
Brooks School of Photography	advanced education
Mission Avocado	agriculture
Pepsi Co.	food production
Cabrillio Economic Development Corporation	housing and community services
Arrowhead Water Company	food production
Bilingual Vocational Center	advanced education
Westside Market	retail services
Bike Depot	retail services
Ventura County Medical Center: Women's Health Center	medical services
Pacific Stone Works	retail and wholesale services
CalTrans	transportation services
Division of Fairs and Expositions, California Department of Food and Agriculture	fairgrounds administration
California State Parks	parks administration

FIGURE 5.26 *Businesses and government agencies represented in the project area. Sources: individual group informational and promotional materials.*

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The final stakeholder type is composed of individuals who have chosen to actively participate in their community. At all planning scales, community organizations, government entities and a number of grassroots and government sponsored programs and projects exist that focus on the improvement of hydrological, ecological and social systems.

Both individuals and organizations have expressed support for a parkway along the lower reaches of the Ventura River. Some have shown willingness to partner and share resources with other agencies and individuals working towards the river's realization. They have offered a considerable amount of information and support for the production of this document and are seen as invaluable resources in future planning,

promotion and operation of the Ventura River Parkway. Figure 5.27 provides an overview of community organizations whose missions coincide with the goals and objectives of the Ventura River Parkway. Currently, no entities have stated opposition to the parkway.

Organization Name and Internet Address	Mission Statement
Surfrider Foundation Ventura County Chapter http://www.surfrider.org/ventura/	We recognize that all things are connected and everything we do impacts our coastline. To this end, for the past decade we have been working on integrated solutions to the problems that face our ocean, waves, and beaches.
Ventura Stream Team http://www.sbck.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=19	Ventura Stream Team (Santa Barbara Channelkeeper and Surfrider Foundation, Ventura Chapter) has three major goals: to collect scientifically sound, baseline data on the health of the watershed; to recruit and train a force of watershed stewards in the community; and to identify sources of pollution throughout the watershed.
Ventura County Watershed Protection District http://portal.countyofventura.org/portal/page?_pageid=876,1324092&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL	The District's mission is to protect life, property, watercourses, watersheds, and public infrastructure from the dangers and damages associated with flood and stormwaters. Goals of the District include: Comprehensive, long range watershed planning, collaboration with watershed stakeholders, administration of adopted regulations, policies, and resolutions responsible and accountable use of public resources, and excellence in public service.
Los Padres Forestwatch http://www.lpfw.org/	A community-based nonprofit organization that is leading efforts to protect the Los Padres National Forest and other public lands along California's Central Coast.
Matilija Coalition http://www.matilija-coalition.org/	An alliance of community groups, businesses, and individuals committed to the environmental restoration of the Ventura River Watershed.
Save Open-Space and Agricultural Resources http://www.soarusa.org/	A local nonprofit organization dedicated to making Ventura County a better place to live by limiting urban sprawl, protecting open space and agricultural lands, and promoting livable and sustainable communities in Ventura County.
Ventura Hillside Conservancy http://www.venturahillside.org/	A 501(c)(3) nonprofit public benefit corporation working with land owners, conservation organizations, and public agencies to preserve and restore the hillside and open space resources in the Ventura region.
Boys and Girls Club of Ventura http://www.bgclubventura.org/	A positive place for all youth, and quality programs to help them become healthy, responsible, confident and productive members of our community.

FIGURE 5.27 Stakeholder organizations representing environmental and social needs with relevance to the proposed parkway. Sources: individual organization informational and promotional materials.

Local Knowledge

COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND SURVEYS

The authors obtained information for this document through a number of sources. However, information gathered from local residents provided essential understanding and guidance leading to a greater understanding of the social value of the Ventura River during recent history, challenges to its ecological function, and the social pressures which currently impact the river and will likely confront future parkway development. Such local knowledge has often been underutilized compared to expert knowledge provided by planning and design professionals. While expert knowledge in these fields is irreplaceable, there is a growing recognition of the importance of local knowledge that is attained from community participation in the planning, design, implementation, and maintenance of public spaces. In the case of the Ventura River Parkway, the participatory planning process has merely been initiated. Achievement of a truly participatory planning process will require an ongoing effort.

City and county documents produced with a high level of citizen involvement prior to this visioning process provided indirect sources from which to access stakeholder values and to gather local knowledge. Local documents, such as Save Our Agricultural Resources (SOAR) legislation, indicate the citizens' desire to maintain the open space and agricultural character of specified areas that are already associated with such activities and characteristics. Other examples include efforts from the City of Ventura, which has engaged in a number of participatory planning processes. This is true of the 2005 General Plan which identifies preservation of natural resources and well planned communities as key areas of importance for the city.

Direct stakeholder input for this visioning process was gathered through two community meetings, site visits, spontaneous interviews with individuals encountered during site visits, a survey distributed at the Fifth Annual Ventura Hillside Conservancy Membership Meeting, and the attendance of neighborhood gatherings unrelated to

the project. Additionally, local residents who are experts in hydrology, Geographic Imaging Systems (GIS), civil engineering, and environmental cleanup were consulted.

Four questions were asked of stakeholders at community meetings focused on the parkway visioning process and in the survey distributed at the Fifth Annual Ventura Hillside Conservancy Membership Meeting. These questions were:

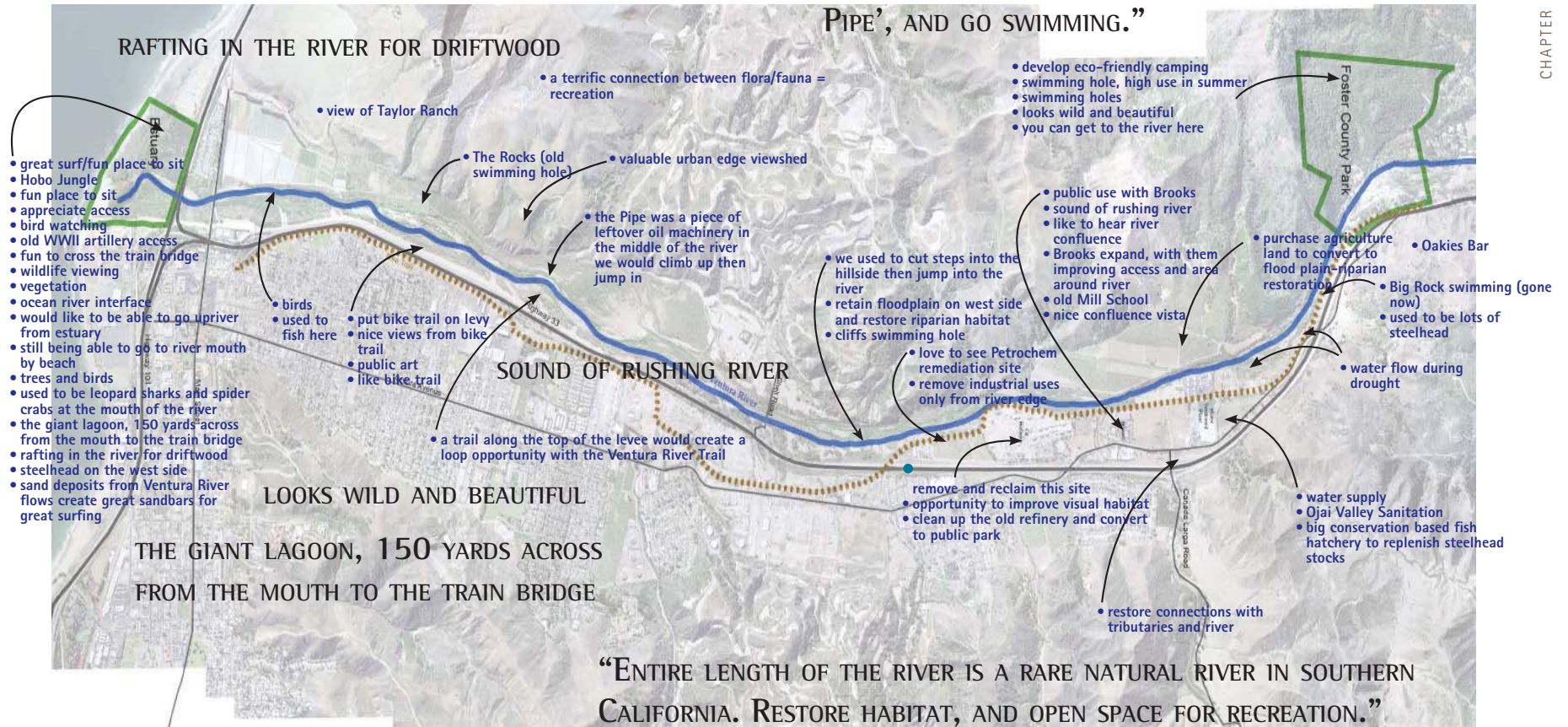
1. Please share a personal experience or memory of the Ventura River.
2. On the map provided, please identify your likes and dislikes regarding the river and why.
3. What would you like to see happen on the river?
4. Do you have any additional comments you would like to share?



FIGURE 5.28 Photographs from one of the Community Meetings for Lower Ventura River Parkway Vision Plan. Held at the Bell Arts Factory, February 23, 2008. Photos: Felicia Kelley.

LIKES

“WE USED TO SAY, ‘MEET YOU AT THE ROCKS’, OR ‘MEET YOU AT THE WILLOWS’ OR ‘MEET YOU AT THE PIPE’, AND GO SWIMMING.”

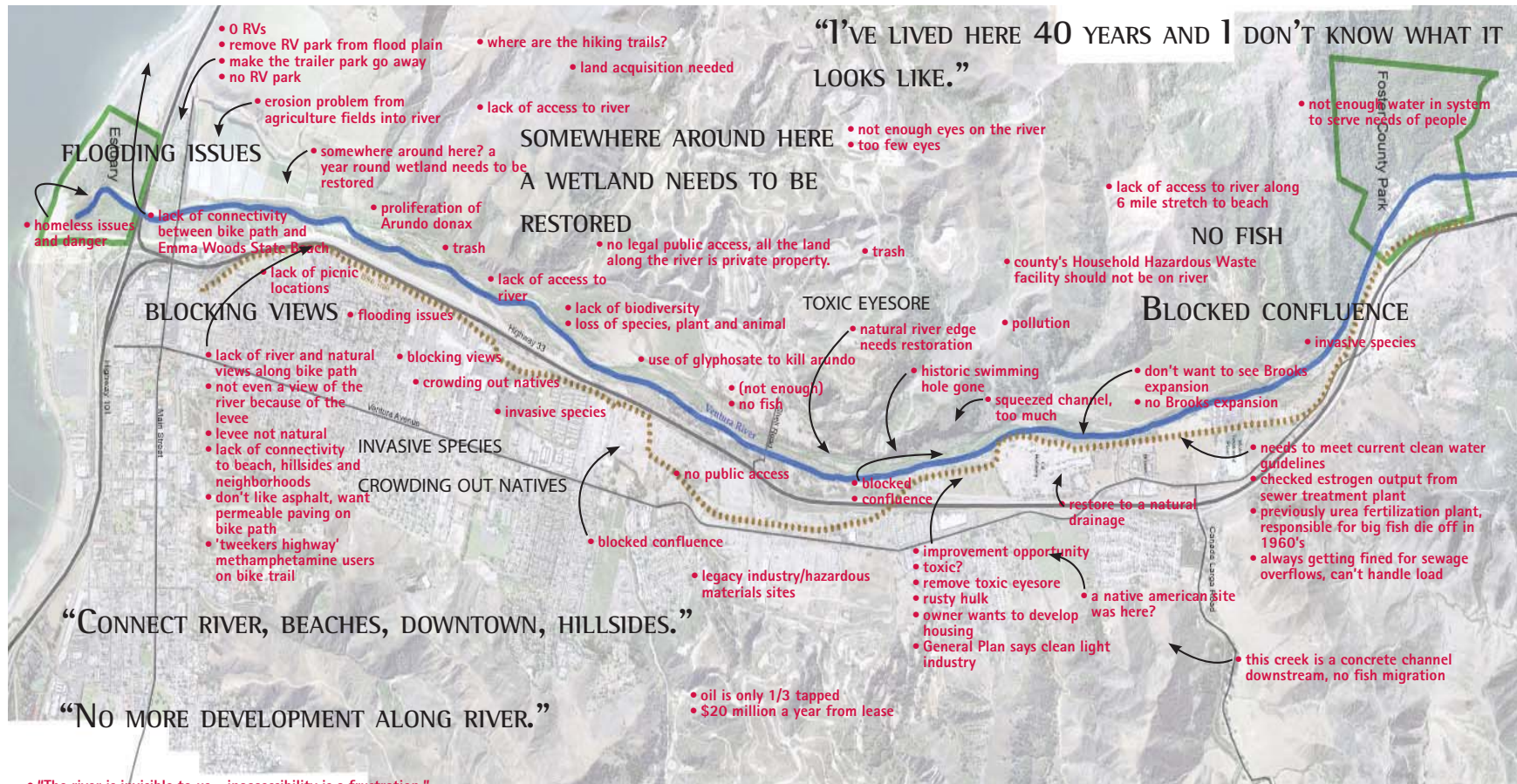


- “I like that the river runs the whole length of “The Avenue” community, making it available (potentially) to kids to be close to nature. Also, I like that it runs the length of the Class 1 bike trail—so that could be a beautiful combo.”
- Generally, this group likes that is not contained, it’s “wild.”
- “Portions of the land surrounding the estuary were given to the County by E.P. Foster between 1909–1914 with the stipulation that it remain for public use—
- “A mini Golden Gate Park was his vision.”
- “More access locations.”
- “Access to westside of river.”
- “No new development in flood plain.”
- “Good memories: growing up in Ventura, walking by the river mouth, seeing it change with season/volume of water—difference in vegetation, birds as a result of this.”
- “The parts where there are water.”
- “We are independent of outside water sources.”
- “[The oil refinery site] was offered to the Chinese [sic] for \$1, and they didn’t want the it.”
- “We used to say, ‘meet you at The Rocks’, or ‘meet you at The Willows’, or ‘meet you at The Pipe’, and go swimming.”
- “[There were so many steelhead] it looked like dolphins swimming in the evening in the golden sunset.”
- “Entire length of the river is a rare natural river in southern California. Restore habitat, and open space for recreation.”

“GOOD MEMORIES: GROWING UP IN VENTURA, WALKING BY THE RIVER MOUTH, SEEING IT CHANGE WITH SEASON/VOLUME OF WATER—DIFFERENCE IN VEGETATION, BIRDS AS A RESULT OF THIS.”

FIGURE 5.29 Community Members' Likes.

DISLIKES



- "The river is invisible to us - inaccessibility is a frustration."
- "I've lived here 40 years and I don't know what it looks like."
- "The river is trashy, dirty and not inviting."
- "Safety issue, don't know who's there. Not open to community, so people there feel threatened."
- "Remove farming and industry from 100 year flood plain."
- "Get rid of oil activities in area."
- "Make lower look more like upper."
- "Needs a couple of swimming holes, with a rope swing from a tree."
- "No access, or very limited in lower."
- "No more development along river."
- "Connect river, beaches, downtown, hillsides."
- "Bike path should be closer to the river."
- "Homeless encampments create safety issues and trash on the river."

- "Arundo donax!"
- "No good access for kids."
- "Steelhead recovery plan should be priority #1."
- "Lack of defined access. Need a path all along and protective screens for sensitive areas."
- "Need watershed wide plan."

**“THE RIVER IS INVISIBLE TO US –
INACCESSIBILITY IS A FRUSTRATION.”**

**“SAFETY ISSUE, DON’T KNOW WHO’S THERE. NOT OPEN TO COMMUNITY, SO PEOPLE
THERE FEEL THREATENED.”**

FIGURE 5.30 Community Members' Dislikes.

Figures 5.29 and 5.30 highlight some of the likes and dislikes identified by community members.

It is important to note that during introductions approximately 60 percent of community meeting attendees identified themselves as members of a community organization or government body whose purpose has at least a minimal concern for the Ventura River's functionality. Active and engaged community members are invaluable to the Ventura River Parkway project whose focus is the preservation of natural resources for public good. However, a truly inclusive participatory process must strive to include harder-to-reach community members. Case studies indicate that long term efforts in conjunction with dedicated community liaisons have some of the highest rates of engaging disaffiliated persons with community projects (Butcher 2008; Spirn 2005). The in depth and extensive nature of such efforts is beyond the scope of this study, however, initial efforts were made to reach disaffiliated, disadvantaged, or otherwise unengaged individuals. Such efforts included neighborhood canvassing in the Westside Community, distribution of flyers to agricultural field workers near the river, distribution of flyers to church groups, and posting on internet bulletin boards of local Spanish and English language radio stations. Additionally, press releases were published in the Ventura County Star and Ventura County Reporter.

OUTCOMES

Information gathered at the community meetings, from surveys, and by other resident generated materials, such as the *2005 Ventura General Plan*, has provided a wealth of local knowledge that enhanced this visioning process and provided invaluable guidance. Such knowledge and guidance led to the identification of shared local histories and of several ongoing community concerns with significance for the proposed parkway. Identification of these topics by stakeholders led to

the authors' efforts to secure greater understanding of their dynamics and how these issues might affect the planning and future of the Lower Ventura River Parkway. Figure 5.31 quantifies questionnaire responses by graphing the number of times a particular topic was identified, regardless of negative or positive context. This graph illustrates that stakeholders who attended one of the two community meetings or completed the survey were most concerned with ecological value and preservation of the river. The second and third most

frequently cited topics were access to or contamination of the river. While not largely reflected through the meetings or survey, the issue of homelessness was inevitably referenced in consultations with local experts. Homelessness and its perceived relationship to personal safety was a central topic in casual conversations with individuals encountered on site visits.

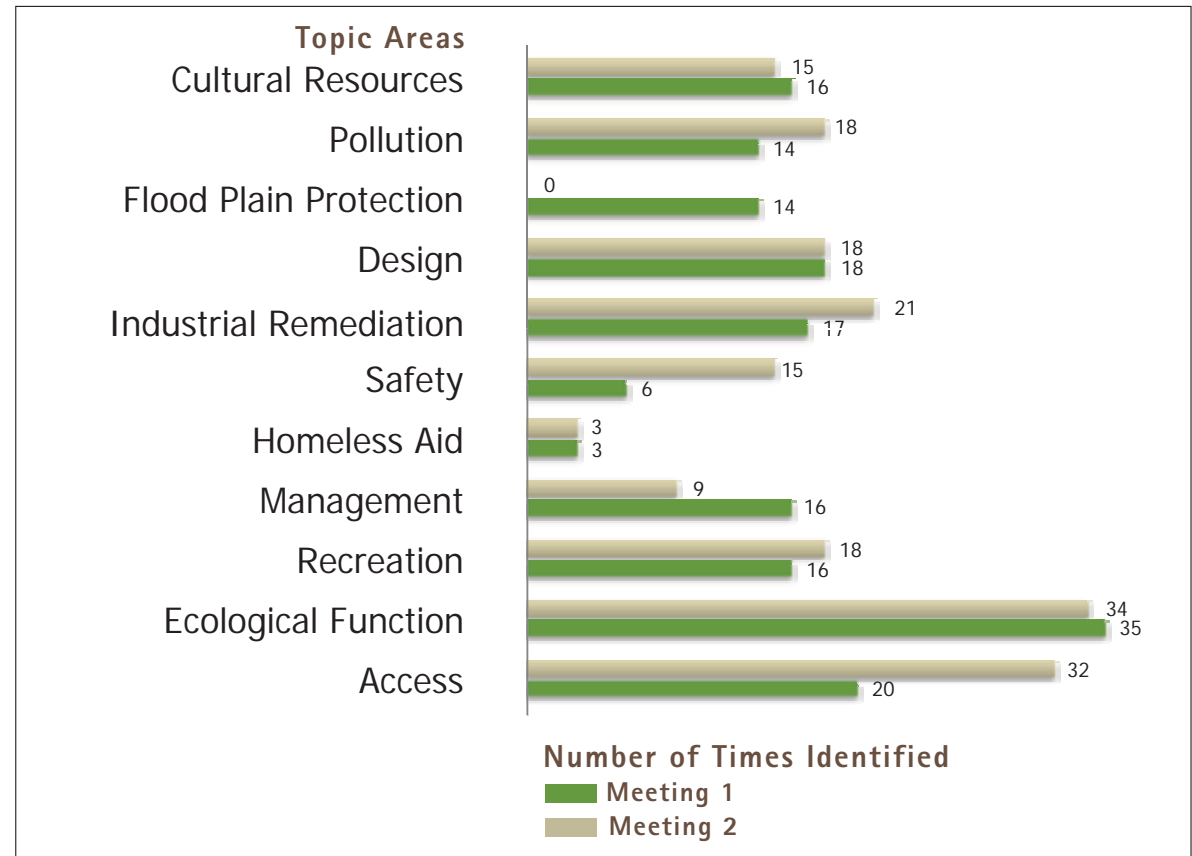


FIGURE 5.31 Topic areas cited by Community Meeting attendees and survey takers.

Community Experiences and Memories

Memories and experiences local residents shared during the visioning process provided insight upon personal relationships with the Ventura River and adjacent lands. These interactions included stories of Foster Park providing occasional respite for community members, the Ventura River Trail providing cyclists and pedestrians with a much used recreational resource, and the estuary as favorite location for bird watchers. In addition, Surfer's Point, located at the river's eastern outwash, draws local and regional surfers and kite-boarders and meeting participants identified Surfer's Point and the estuary as providing good kayaking opportunities. In general, community meeting participants conveyed a sense that they enjoy currently available recreational resources at and near the Ventura River, however, they see a potential for this area to be much more.

Those who experienced the Ventura River before the Matilija and Casitas Dams were built shared memories of fishing for steelhead and having ample catches. One resident recalled that winter catches were an important food supplement for his family. Another resident was able to share a list of the names of former swimming holes up and down the river. He described how he and his friends would pass



FIGURE 5.32 Wheeler Springs swimming hole, 1936. Source: Ventura County Star; Ventura County Museum.



FIGURE 5.33 Ventura River Steelhead Catch, 1946. Source: Tortilla Flats Mural and Reunion project.



FIGURE 5.34 The Omer Rains Trail along the Ventura River Estuary, 2008.



FIGURE 5.35 Litter and abandoned personal possessions near the Ventura River.

summer days walking and hitchhiking from one swimming hole to the next. In sharing memories residents conveyed deep pleasure and satisfaction at having had experiences that connected them to local nature and the river. Sadly there was a sense of wistfulness among residents who were reminded that, to a great extent, these opportunities have been lost.

Community Concerns

Topics identified by stakeholders provided insight on important opportunities for drawing connections to the community. Some of these opportunities may currently or potentially have negative implications for the proposed parkway. The following pages address community concerns by presenting them in an order that reflects the number of times they were identified by individuals in written form. Concerns were brought forward regarding the river's ecological value and preservation of its natural form, lack of access, contamination, personal safety, and homelessness. Further investigation into these topics reveals broader community concerns which will significantly impact the proposed Lower Ventura River Parkway.



FIGURE 5.36 Site perceived to be abandoned and contaminated.



FIGURE 5.37 Culverted and vandalized section of the Cañada Larga.

Urbanization and Loss of Open Space

Chapters 3 (Hydrology) and 4 (Ecosystems) discuss the importance of ensuring that rivers and their related habitats are preserved and that they function in a healthy manner. When considering ecological preservation from a cultural standpoint, concerns arise regarding the urban development of natural lands. The imperative need for open space retention leads to an examination of the forces which threaten this as well as some of those which protect the natural resources found near the Ventura River.

STATE AND REGIONAL FACTORS

Population growth and public policy have been two major factors influencing the balance of urbanization and open space across the state. With population growth projections of 37 percent by 2030, it is reasonable to expect that the process of urbanization will continue. At the regional scale, limits on urban growth were set by national and state policies, which lead to the creation of Los Padres National Forest and the Santa Monica Mountains Recreation Area. Figure 5.2 illustrates that the majority of Ventura County's urbanization exists in its southern extents. Here, county, state and local policy combine with population growth and market forces to form a distinct land mosaic.

According to the Ventura County Civic Alliance (VCCA), Ventura County's population grew by 1.5 percent annually between 1990 and 2004; an increase of 21 percent in 14 years (VCCA 2007). While the county's growth of urbanized

land varied from just under one percent to almost 1.6 percent annually between 1984 and 2004; a 31.2 percent increase of urban and developed land occurred throughout a 20 year period. Development during this time accounted for a 3.3 percent loss of agricultural acreage (VCCA 2007). Averaging the 20 year rate of urbanization and applying the resulting 1.56 percent annual increase of developed land to a 14 year time span reveals a 21.84 percent increase. This rate of urbanization was slightly greater than the population growth.

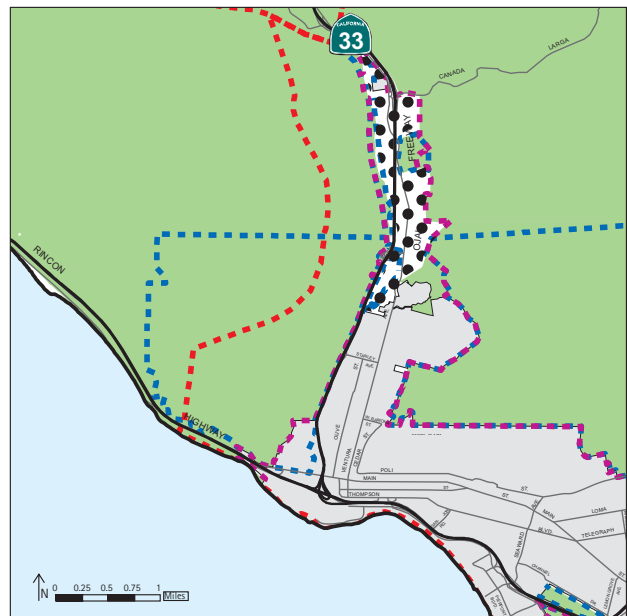
THE PROJECT AREA

The expectation that population growth will impact the City of Ventura and affect the parkway project area is derived from state projections, the county's growth history, and the awareness that open space in developed areas is difficult to retrofit. Further discussion of SOAR and Hillside Voter Participation Area (HVPA) measures (chapter 1. Policy Context) illustrates the potential for loss of open space in the parkway project area and the greater City of Ventura. SOAR guarantees citizens the opportunity to vote for or against development in the areas they constrain (Ventura County 2008). It does not guarantee that voters will choose to preserve open space rather than allow development. Additionally SOAR measures are set to expire in 2020 and 2030 (Ventura County 2008). Considering the vast pressures for development, it is perhaps overly optimistic to believe that county SOAR and city SOAR-HVPA measures will

preserve open space in the parkway project area. Recently voters have tended to favor preservation of open space, yet it is still imperative that the citizenry understand the value of open space before a vote regarding development is put forth.

North Avenue Neighborhood

Figure 5.38 maps the SOAR measures in order to demonstrate the significance of local policy formulation for the proposed parkway project area. Approximately one quarter of the parkway project area falls under the jurisdiction of the City of Ventura's SOAR (Save Our Agricultural Resources). Some of this same property, as well as large portions of the local hillsides, fall under the umbrella of the Hillside Voter Participation Area (HVPA). Most of the northern third of the parkway project area falls into the county's zoning designations for agriculture, open space, or rural land use, qualifying much of the parkway area that is within county jurisdiction for a pre-development vote under county SOAR (Save Open space and Agricultural Resources). However, the dotted area falls into the county zoning classification of existing community (Ventura County 2005). There is housing and industry in this area, however site visits show that it also includes large areas of underutilized and undeveloped land, much of it adjacent to the Ventura River. With the county designation of Existing Community these parcels are not recognized as open spaces. Further, while this existing community is not part



of the incorporated City of Ventura it is within the city's sphere of influence, making this area of the proposed Ventura River parkway eligible for annexation and development by the City of Ventura and its private partners. As of the release of the 2005 to 2010 Economic Strategy Plan the City of Ventura was very interested in promoting the development of this area into a commercial and multifamily development, and subsequent plans have also supported this idea (City of Ventura 2005a; City of Ventura 2005b; California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo 2006).

A recreational resource that is publicly accessible, inviting, and responds to a wide range of users can provide opportunities for the public to understand the value of the Ventura River. Based on responses provided for this project's visioning process and language in the City's 2005 *Ventura General Plan* the community of Ventura has placed a high value on the preservation of their natural resources, however pressures to urbanize are present. For the value of the Ventura River to be understood by the electorate and for its resources to be preserved, consciousness of the river must be elevated. This is an important role for the proposed Lower Ventura River Parkway.

[LEFT] FIGURE 5.38 *City and County SOAR-HPV Boundaries along with existing community designations illustrate those areas currently ensured a pre-development vote as well as those areas without this protection. Original illustration produced by Ventura County, Resource Management Agency, GIS Development and Mapping Services. Modifications after: Ventura County 2005.*

Access

After preservation of the river system in a natural and healthy state, access to it was the topic area most cited by meeting attendees and survey takers. The prevention of the public from legal physical and visual access to the river impacts the vast majority of areas that interface with the river. The only locations from which the public can physically access the river within the parkway project area, are at the north and south ends of the six mile stretch. This restricted condition raises significant concerns and provokes questions regarding equity of recreational open space distribution in the project area and the larger context in which it is placed.

ACCESSIBILITY OF RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE

Regional Accessibility

Environmental justice and inequity are terms often associated with the assignment of locally undesirable land uses in politically and otherwise disadvantaged neighborhoods. However, there is growing recognition that access to healthful environments is a significant counterpart to the disproportionate distribution of risk-laden environments in the struggle for environmental equity. The Sustainable Site Initiative (SSI) identifies physiological function (including stress response and physical fitness), cognitive function, and social dynamics as three areas in which natural environments contribute to human well being (SSI 2007). Additionally, the Access to Parks and Park Facilities report in *The Green Visions Plan for the 21st Century* (GVP 2007) identifies equitable access to recreational open space and healthy outdoor environments as equally as important as the prevention of exposure to contaminated and unhealthful environments (Sister 2008).

As a joint venture between USC, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Coastal Conservancy and Baldwin Hills Conservancy, the GVP utilizes rigorous research methods and tools to protect and restore natural resources and provide equitable access to open space resources in southern California (Sister 2007b). The GVP (2007) study area does not include the Ventura River Watershed, rather it encompasses the adjacent Santa Clara Watershed and four watersheds to the east (Sister 2007b). None the less, research conducted by the GVP provides both regional context and tools that can be applied to the lower Ventura River parkway project area.

The GVP (2007) report identifies ten sub-regions, including areas identified as the east and west Ventura County sub-regions (GVP 2007a). This report found that, excluding National Forest land due to its remoteness, in west Ventura County less than one percent (.6 %) of the land is dedicated to recreational open space, including parks, golf courses, and sport fields. By comparison, 27 percent of land in east Ventura County is dedicated as recreational open space (GVP 2007a). Utilizing GIS data available through the GVP, figure 5.39 illustrates this distribution. City of Ventura and SCAG GIS data illustrate the distribution of comparable open space in the area of the Ventura River Watershed on the left of the figure.

In *Access to Parks and Park Facilities*, the GVP tested the theory that access to parks and open space resources are not equitably distributed among low income and minority groups when compared to other groups within the GVP

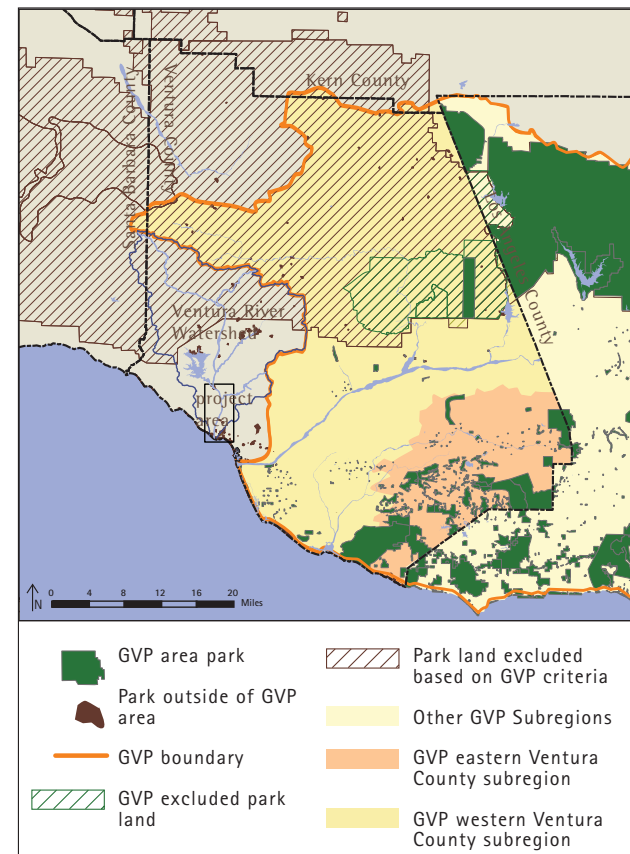


FIGURE 5.39 *Distribution of Open Space Resources. Regional scale. Data sources: GVP; SCAG; City of Ventura.*

region (Sister 2008). The GVP determined that equitable access to recreational open space is predicated on a combination of four criteria; pedestrian accessibility, park acres per capita, compatibility of facilities with user group preference, and the condition of recreational open spaces, including maintenance and safety levels (Sister 2008).

After completing several preliminary analyses, including reviews of demographic information and route simulation at several distance thresholds, the number of park acres per capita for populations within one-quarter mile access across the four largest groups by race or ethnicity in the GVP region were identified. One race or ethnic grouping was then assigned to each park and distance threshold, based

on the areas dominant race or ethnic group. The GVP found that predominately white neighborhoods have access to greater park acreage when compared to Hispanic, African American and Asian American dominated neighborhoods. The GVP emphasizes that this disparity is particularly significant for children who tend to be a greater percentage of the population in areas with fewer park acres per capita (Sister 2008).

In addition to creating models comparing park acreage, distance thresholds, and demographics, the GVP conducted internet searches and sample field audits of recreational open space resources (Sister 2008). Both types of searches

were used to identify the same criteria for available facilities, parks conditions and to assess safety levels. Criteria were then compared among racial and ethnic groups. Seven facility types; play equipment, basketball courts, baseball diamonds, soccer fields, walking and jogging paths, bench, and barbecue areas were identified. Results for the facilities category were mixed, with varied patterns that in some instances favored one group over the other. For example, whites had higher incidence of walking and jogging paths than other groups, but fewer incidence of active recreational facilities, such as soccer fields. The presence of litter, graffiti, freeway noise and overgrown vegetation were used as markers of facility condition. Here, predominately

white areas had the lowest incidence. Three indicators were established and identified for park safety levels, including emergency phones, on site staff and security. No clear pattern was identified when analyzing park safety (Sister 2008).

City Scale and Project Area Accessibility

Figures 5.40 through 5.43 illustrate the distribution of recreational open space across the city scale, using most of the GVP's criteria for determining access patterns. Figure 5.40 identifies children ages five to 17 as the critical user group. Light colored census tracts have the lowest

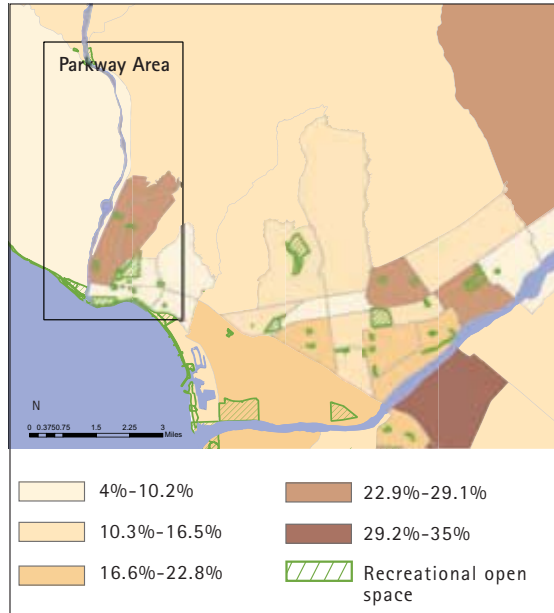


FIGURE 5.40 Children ages five to 17 as a percentage of each census tract with lightest shade representing the lowest percentage. Data sources: USCB 2000; City of Ventura; SCAG.

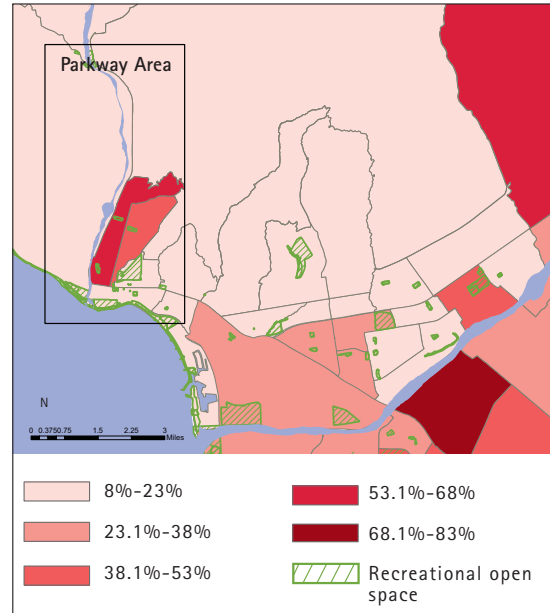


FIGURE 5.41 Hispanic percentage of population with the lightest shade representing the lowest percent. Data sources: USCB 2000; City of Ventura; SCAG.

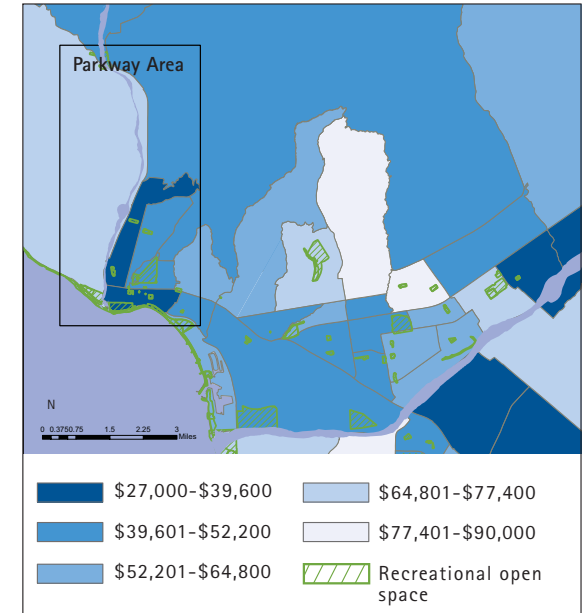


FIGURE 5.42 Median household income with the lightest shade representing the highest income range. Data sources: USCB 2000; City of Ventura; SCAG.

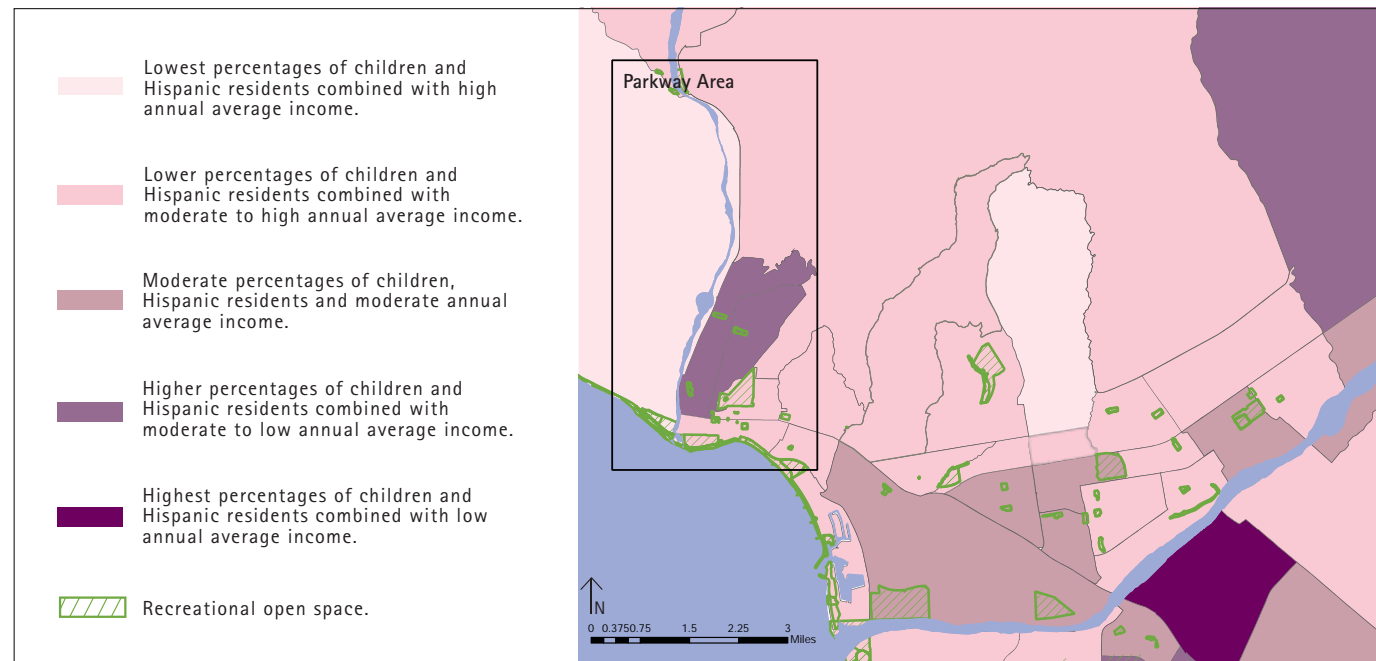


FIGURE 5.43 Figures 5.40–5.42 are combined revealing fewer park acres in tracts with higher percentages of children and Hispanics with low median income. Data sources: USCB 2000; City of Ventura; SCAG.

percentage of children, with increasing numbers as the shade darkens. Figure 5.41 also uses a color scale from light to dark, in this case to indicate percentage of Hispanic population for each tract. In figure 5.42 the darkest shade identifies tracts in the lowest median income range. Figure 5.43 combines these layers. Color density indicates tracts with the highest numbers of children, highest percentages of Hispanic residents, and lowest median incomes in the darkest shades.

A comparison of these demographic factors to the presence of recreational open spaces across the city scale indicates that tracts with low to moderate percentages of children and Hispanics and moderate to higher income have the greatest amount of park acreage. In the darkest tracts which represent low income and higher percentages of Hispanic residents and children the number of parks and their size

dwindles considerably.

The pattern is the same in the parkway area. Areas with higher percentages of Hispanic residents and children and lower average income have fewer park acres locally available to them than those of moderate to higher means. This is most strongly indicated by comparing the size and frequency of parks and recreational open space available in the tracts representing the Westside Community to those located directly south. Note that within the parkway area, the single tract which lies west of the Ventura River is not significant for this analysis due to very low population.

Using benchmarks established by GVP, accessibility of recreational open spaces across the city scale was reviewed. Figure 5.44 illustrates the results for pedestrian accessibility. Here a quarter mile distance threshold was established

around each recreational open space. Next six parks from across the city scale were randomly selected. Then street grid routes were identified from an intersection at the quarter mile threshold, to a park entrance. This sample indicates that the distances traveled to reach a park entrance by those living within the quarter mile of the park are consistently greater than one-quarter mile, with the largest parks having the longest distances between entrance points. Across the city scale pedestrian accessibility is available, but limited.

Finally, field audits were conducted at all parks and recreational open spaces at the city scale. Facilities, conditions, and safety features identified by GVP were identified. These audits reiterated the comparative lack of park acreage in areas that are both predominantly minority and low income. However, other distinctions were

also revealed. The most notable difference was that parks located within Hispanic dominated census tracts had greater incidence of litter and graffiti, compared to the almost complete absence of these indicators in parks in other tracts. In general there were fewer and smaller facilities, including barbecue amenities and soccer fields, in the parkway project area than those found elsewhere. The presence of freeway noise and a lack of safety features were found consistently throughout the city scale.

The preliminary finding regarding park access in the parkway project area for the census tracts representing the Westside Community indicates reduced ease of access for this predominately low-income and Hispanic area compared to access across the larger city scale. As a whole the parkway project area has a number of parks and recreational resources, however the distribution of these resources is weighted toward the north and south of the project area with the fewest total park acres servicing the project area's highest density of children.

Accessibility of the Ventura River

Set within the Westside Community's larger context of limited park access, the historical loss of the Ventura River as an accessible recreational resource and its continuing unfulfilled potential is a matter of both considerable concern and opportunity. The California State Constitution, Section 1., Article 10 Water, Sec. 4. reads:

No individual, partnership, or corporation, claiming or possessing the frontage or tidal lands of a harbor, bay, inlet, estuary, or other navigable water in this State, shall be permitted to exclude the right of way to such water whenever it is required for any public purpose, nor to destroy or obstruct the free navigation of such water; and the Legislature shall enact such laws as will give the most liberal construction to this provision, so that access to the navigable waters of this State shall be always attainable for the people thereof.

(http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/.const/.article_10)

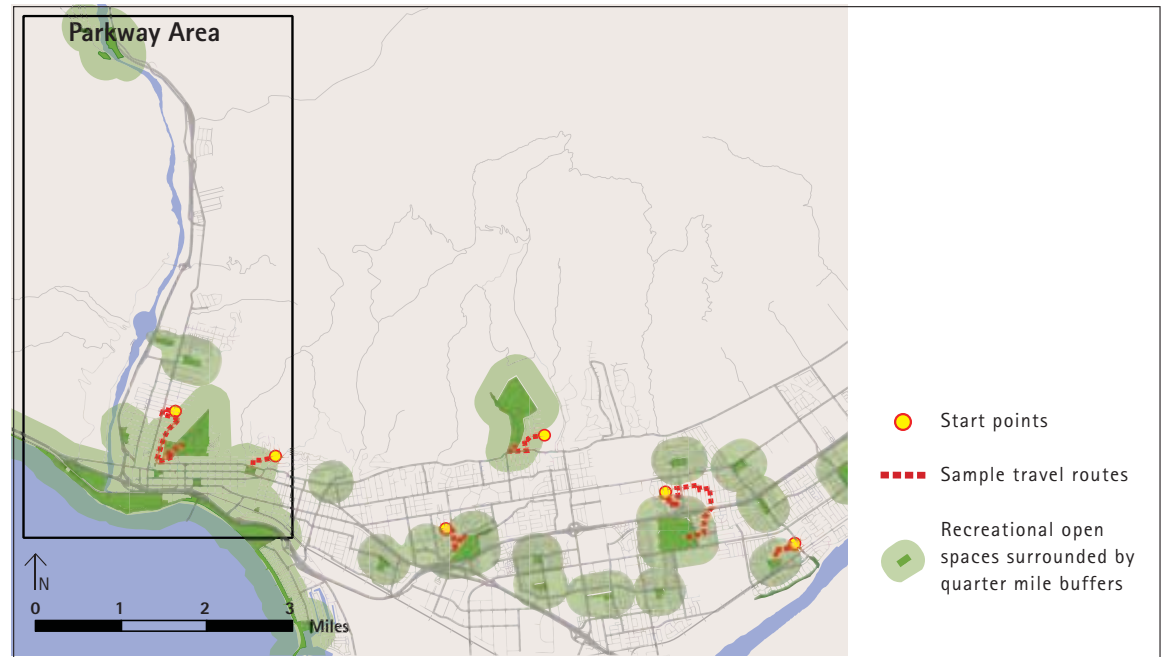


FIGURE 5.44 Distance for pedestrian access to parks as sampled by manually identifying the shortest route from a sample residence to a park entrance following the street grid. These routes demonstrate that across the city scale within buffers of one-quarter mile, actual travel distances to recreational open space are frequently greater than one-quarter mile. Data sources: USCB 2000; City of Ventura; SCAG.

Despite this provision for public access to waters such as the Ventura River, physical and legal impediments prevent the public from accessing much of its lower reaches. Some of these are beyond human control and are not reasonably expected to be within the purview of Article 10. However, other impediments do raise cause for mitigation. Currently the cumulative effect of vehicles, Highway 33 infrastructure, and the Ventura River Levee create the greatest physical barriers to access the river at its urban edge. In some cases topography is another significant barrier for river access. At rural interfaces for instance, steep bluffs line much of the river's western side. Yet, it is the dearth of easements between the far north and south ends of the lower reach that significantly limits access in rural and urban settings. In addition to these impediments "no trespassing" signs and fences block passage to the river. Signs are posted at a variety of locations; some of which cite city or county ordinances and appear to have been posted by one of these

governments, while others appear to have been posted by property owners. cursory investigation into grounds for posting "no trespassing" signs indicate protection of public safety and private property rights. Figure 5.45 illustrates routes which 12 hypothetical resident living one-quarter of a mile east of the river would travel in order to gain visual or physical access to the river. As illustrated, the effect is an almost inaccessible and unseen river.

Removing the current barriers to access on the Ventura River will require the development of alternative solutions for protecting the interests currently served by limited access to the river, and the cultivation of positive relationships between individuals traditionally viewed as adversaries. Addressing public safety, limiting liability, and arrangements for the protection of property holders' security are likely to need resolution before additional access is allowed. For private property owners, solutions may entail public passage

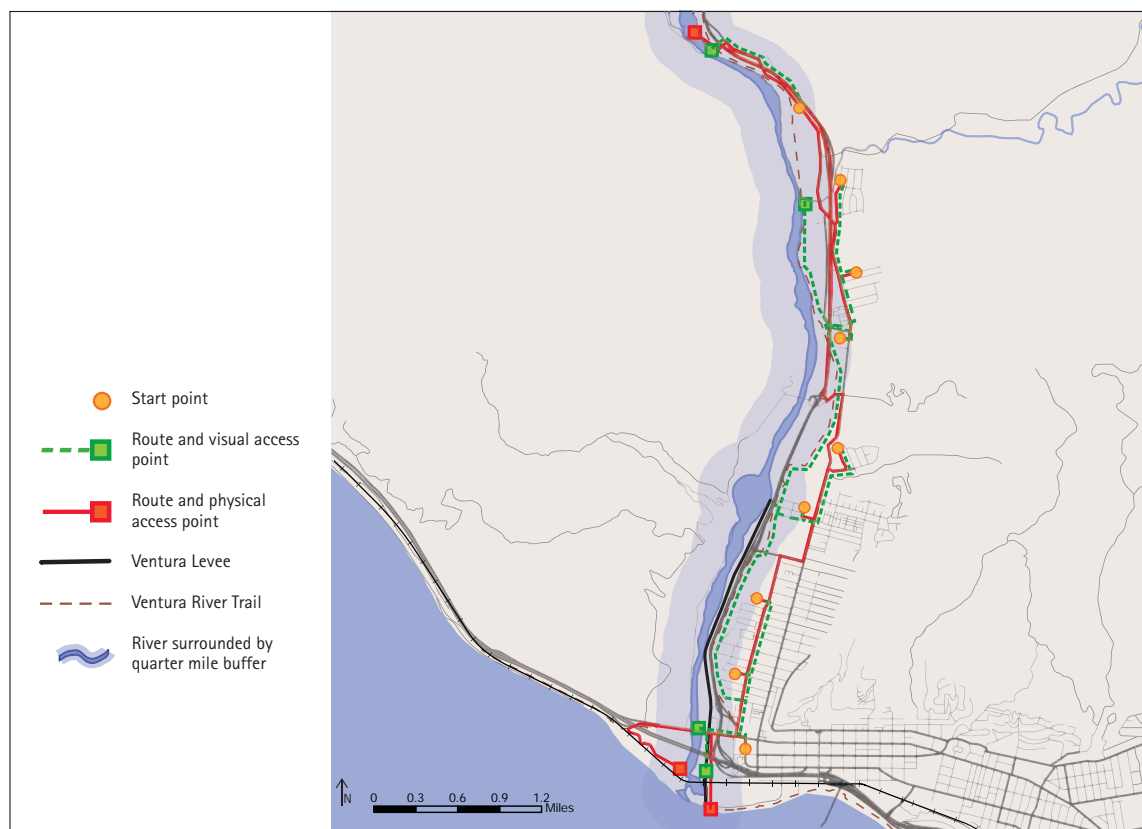


FIGURE 5.45 The shortest available route for visual or physical access to the Ventura River is identified for twelve locations one quarter of a mile east of the river. Data source: City of Ventura.

easements in which specific prohibitions and surveillance is required. The creation of larger conservation easements which perpetually preserve privately held open space as a condition of ownership may result in improved access. Shielding critical habitat from human interference is another important concern, requiring the development of specific programming and design elements. In the broader

context, developing legal parameters to guide public access to the Ventura River may be the first steps for ensuring greater equity in the distribution of recreational open space.



FIGURE 5.46 One of many posted "No Trespassing" signs along the Ventura River.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, funding from the Federal Government to any agency or contractor can be discontinued if discrimination to minority populations has been found to occur in the application of programs (United States Department of Justice 2003). In 1990 the Congressional Black Caucus presented evidence that indicated unequal application of enforcement inspections by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for minority and low-income populations and, the Caucus asserted that minority and low-income populations bore a disproportionate share of risk laden environments. As a result Executive Order 12898; Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, was signed by President Bill Clinton in 1994. It directed all federal agencies to identify and address the effects of all programs on minority and low-income populations. With enforcement rooted in Title VI, Executive Order 12898 elevated environmental justice and the distribution of environmental risk burden to a national priority (EPA 2009).

Contamination

PARKWAY PROJECT AREA

After preservation and access, concern about contamination by toxic substances near the river was the most cited topic in the community meetings. The Old Refinery site was most frequently identified. However, there are a significant number of sites in the parkway project area which have either the perception, reality, or past history of contamination. In order to assess the scope of contamination in the project area multiple sources were reviewed. Those sources included *The Historical Overview: The Ventura Brownfield Project, A Look at the Environmental History of Ventura's Westside* (Brownfield Project), and the California Environmental Protection Agency's (Cal EPA) *Cortese List Data Resources*. Extensive searches of the databases EnviroStor, through the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Cal EPA, and GeoTracker through the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) were conducted. Due to the complicated network of regulatory and clean-up programs there are both overlap and exclusions to sites identified by these sources and to sites which local resident stakeholders may perceive to be contaminated. Figure 5.47 illustrates: 1. brownfields identified by the city's Brownfield Project, 2. investigation, clean-up or monitoring sites identified by various regulatory agencies, and 3. sites which may potentially be perceived by the public as contaminated.

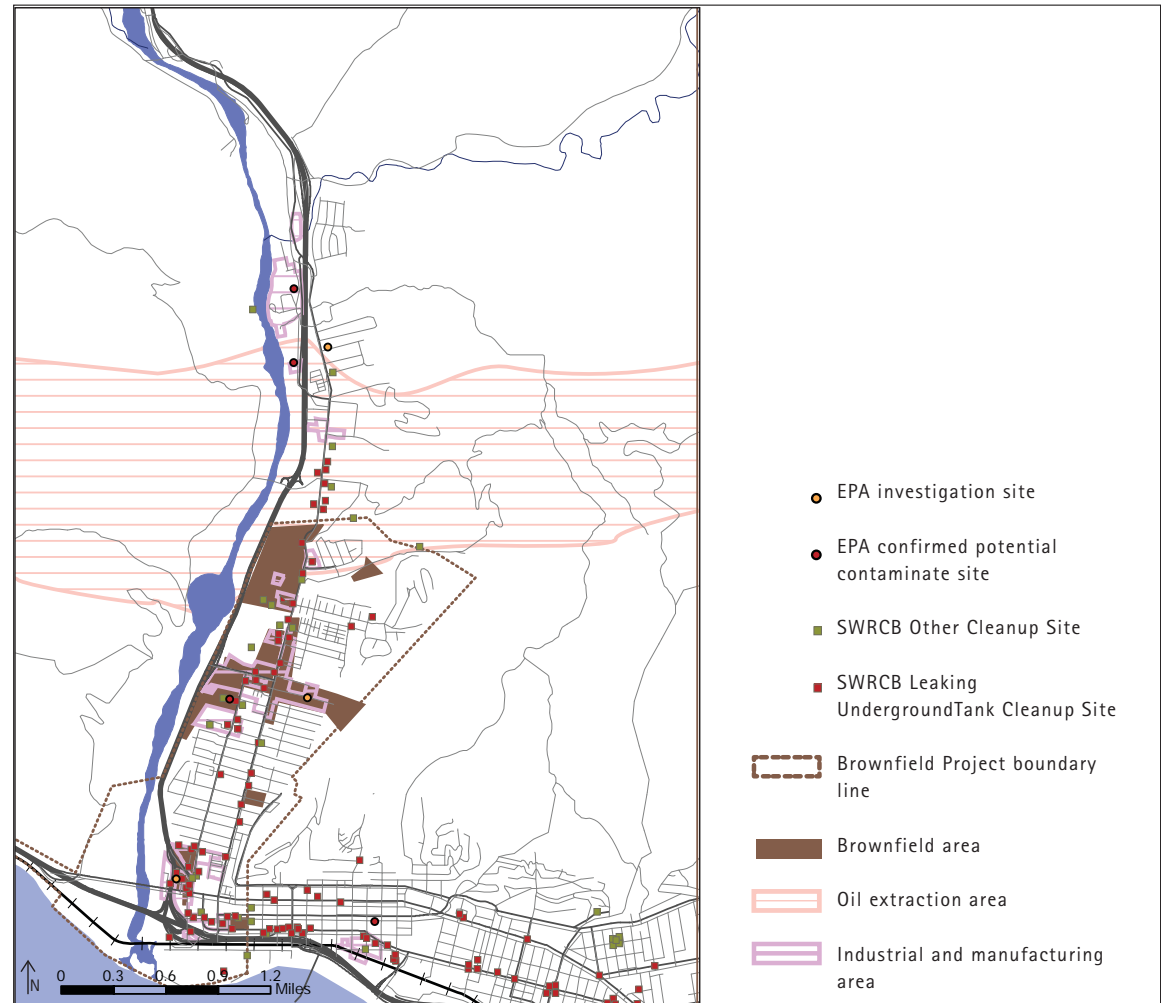


FIGURE 5.47 The purpose of this map is to provide a visual reference for the extent of toxic substance contamination which may affect the project area. The extraction area identified by the California Department of Conservation and the industrial land use areas identified by SCAG are shown here as indicators of potential land areas that may contain sites perceived to be contaminated. Unless otherwise indicated, they are not currently identified by the Brownfield Project or any oversight agency as having contaminated sites and may or may not contain sites perceived as contaminated. Data source: City of Ventura. After: Westcoast Environmental and Engineering; GeoTracker; EnviroStor; California Department of Energy.

Westside Brownfields

The Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act of 2002 defines a brownfield as any real property which is underutilized due to the perception or reality of contamination (EPA 2008a). In June, 1999 the EPA estimated that the City of Ventura had 30 brownfields spread over 1.68 square miles of the Westside (an area slightly larger than the census tracts corresponding to the Westside Community). This number is nearly twice the average number of brownfields in the City of Ventura (EPA 2008b). Through the EPA's Brownfields Demonstration Pilot Program (2001), the city published the Brownfield Project. By researching historical city directories and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, and conducting drive by site reconnaissance and data base searches, the Brownfield Project identified 11 areas where hazardous substances were historically handled. The 30 brownfield sites identified by the EPA are located within those areas.

The Brownfield Project's findings concluded that most brownfields in the project area are primarily the result of oil production and oil service industries (City of Ventura 2001). One aspect of this conclusion was found in Section 101(14) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). Known as the petroleum exclusion, the EPA interpreted this section to mean that crude oil and its gasoline and benzene derivatives are excluded from the definition of hazardous substances (EPA 2007). For this reason, sites contaminated by crude oil and its derivatives did not qualify for Brownfield Project funding and were therefore not assessed (City of Ventura 2001). The Brownfields Revitalization Act, Section 101(k) later amended this exclusion. Potential contaminants associated with local industries are identified in Figure 5.48.

The Brownfield Project further concluded that "...perception of contamination is the primary factor" resulting in the underutilization of the majority of the 30 sites identified as brownfields (City of Ventura 2001 37). One factor in this conclusion was that none of the Westside sites were considered high priority by regulatory agencies. The Brownfield Project also concluded that some of these sites may be significantly impacted by contamination. In accordance with existing legislation, it was recommended that the Westside Community Council encourage property owners to participate in voluntary clean-up. Finally, the study emphasized that none of the brownfield properties would be assessed without voluntary involvement of property owners (City of Ventura 2001 37).

Type of Industry and Typical Operations	Associated Type of Potential Contaminate
Oilfields and Oilfield Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extraction • welding • machine shops • vacuum truck services • equipment storage • waste disposal 	toxic metals, petroleum solvents, chlorinated solvents, semivolatile hydrocarbons, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)
Scrap Metal and Salvage Yards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • metal recycling • equipment/vehicle recycling • equipment/vehicle salvage • vehicle/vehicle scrapping 	toxic metals, petroleum solvents, chlorinated solvents, semivolatile hydrocarbons, PCBs
Chemical Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chemical supply • oil refining • natural gas processing • natural gas compression • bulk fuel storage 	toxic metals, petroleum solvents, chlorinated solvents, semivolatile hydrocarbons, caustics and acids, PCBs
Quarry Sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rock quarries • mining • processing • mixing 	toxic metals, petroleum solvents, chlorinated solvents, semivolatile hydrocarbons, explosive charges
Manufacturing and Light Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • metal fabrication • smithing 	toxic metals, petroleum solvents, chlorinated solvents, semivolatile hydrocarbons, PCBs
Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pesticide use • disinfection • machinery maintenance • welding 	neuro-toxic organophosphates, organochlorides, cresol-based compounds, formaldehyde, chlorine, petroleum solvents, semi volatile hydrocarbons

FIGURE 5.48 Area industries, associated operations, and types of potential contaminants. Sources: Westcoast Environmental and Engineering; OSHA.

North Avenue

In addition to sites excluded from review by the Brownfields Project other sites within the parkway project area may, for one reason or another, be excluded from brownfield funding, but are perceived by residents as abandoned and contaminated. One site not considered in the Brownfields Project but which is broadly perceived as a brownfield is the Old Refinery which was widely identified by community meeting attendees and survey respondents. The Old Refinery, or USA Petroleum, is located north of the Brownfield Project study area and was identified as both abandoned and contaminated. However, monitoring documents available through GeoTracker indicate that the property holder is known, holds a conditional use permit, and is participating in voluntary site clean-up and monitoring (Stratus Environmental 2008). Figure 5.47 shows remediation status of this and other sites identified by EnviroStor and GeoTracker.

In the parkway project area there are sites in the Voluntary Cleanup (the type of action which would apply to any of the brownfield sites identified by the Brownfield Project), State Response, Leaking Underground Tank, and other cleanup programs. Further information including potential contaminants of concern, potential effects, and in some cases investigative and monitoring documents are also available through EnviroStor and GeoTracker. This information enabled the compilation of potential contaminants in the parkway project area as seen in Figure 5.49. Cross referencing potential contaminants identified by data bases with Public Health Statements and ToxFaqs available through the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry's web site identified human and ecosystem health impacts.

All of the sites with real and perceived contamination concerns in the parkway project area pose implications for the proposed Ventura River Parkway. Many of the contamination and investigation sites are supervised under the jurisdiction of the SWRCB, pointing to concern that groundwater and/or surface water could potentially become contaminated by substances found on these properties. Groundwater and surface water contamination could potentially affect human and ecosystem health, raising issues of environmental inequity and justice. As shown by Census 2000 data, the parkway project area has a large population of minority and low income persons. Environmental inequity is described by the EPA as the distribution of environmental public health exposures and risks that disproportionately affect minority and low income populations (EPA 2009). Environmental justice ensures that people of all socioeconomic backgrounds live, work and play in healthy environments (EPA 2009). Limited access to recreational open space and a high number of contaminated sites indicates a challenge to create greater environmental equity exist within the parkway project area.

While brownfield sites in the parkway project area may or may not pose unhealthy environments through the presence of contamination, their impact on economic conditions, their proclivity to attract illicit activities, and their potential as alternatives to developing agricultural and other open lands have been established at the national level. In his introduction to *Recycling America's Land 2008; Brownfields Survey*, produced by the United States Conference of Mayors President Douglas A. Palmer writes:

The redevelopment of these sites often relieves cities and suburbs of the burden of having to build new infrastructure to meet the burgeoning demands of affordable housing,

retail, and commercial or mixed-use location space. We know that the future economic vitality of our cities lies in our ability to reuse the land, which currently has roads and sewers already in existence.

He further writes:

Brownfields are too costly to ignore, not only from the environmental standpoint of contamination, but also from the social aspect of decayed properties and the potential they hold.

With appropriate corrective action, including bioremediation and sustainable planning and development, underutilized and contaminated sites in close proximity to the Ventura River could provide a variety of uses. A vibrant urban environment connected to enriching recreational open space in natural settings can begin to stitch together an equitable distribution of healthy environments.



FIGURE 5.49 Asbestos warning posted near vandalized storage tank on the Old Refinery property.

Contaminate of Potential Concern	Media of Potential Concern	Human Health Concern	Behavior in the Environment
benzene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> groundwater soil soil vapor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fatal when inhaled at high levels nervous system distress when inhaled at low levels carcinogenic with long term exposure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most active in air can pass through soil into groundwater does not accumulate in plants or animals
ethylbenzene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> groundwater soil soil vapor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may be carcinogenic damage to inner ear nervous system distress eye and throat irritation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most common in air moves easily from water and soil to air
toluene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> groundwater soil soil vapor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may effect nervous system and kidneys not likely to be carcinogenic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> passes through soil into groundwater does not accumulate to high levels in animals
polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> soil soil vapor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some are carcinogenic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> generally low water solubility attach to solid particles accumulate in plants and animals
polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> soil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> likely to be carcinogenic nose and lung irritation blood and liver changes fatigue and depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> easily cycles between air, water , and soil accumulate in plants and animals
methyl tert-butyl ether (MTBE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> groundwater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> nausea, nose and throat irritation nervous system effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> water soluble easily passes through soil into groundwater does not accumulate to high levels in plants and animals
lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> soil 	associated with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> kidney failure, learning disabilities mental retardation coma and death other adverse health effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attaches strongly to soil accumulates in plants and animals
chromium III and VI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> indoor air soil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> carcinogenic when inhaled respiratory distress male reproductive harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shifts form easily in soil and water does not accumulate to high levels in plants and animals.
dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> soil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> affects nervous system premature birth reproductive harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> low water solubility attaches strongly to soil accumulates in plants and animals

FIGURE 5.50 Potential contaminants in the Parkway Project area. Sources: EnviroStor; GeoTracker; ATSDR.

DUMPING, FIRES, AND THE PERCEPTION OF SAFETY



FIGURE 5.51 Burnt vegetation and denuded patches in the river bottom near Main Street.

THE RIVER

Dumping, out-of-control campfires, and the perception of a lack of safety are issues that affect the Ventura River and proposed parkway. While this project team found no documented cases of dumping, the size of some refuse piles and the nature of their contents indicate that informal dumping sites have been established in the river. In addition to trash and personal possessions, sooty spots of burned vegetation and charred trees can be viewed along the river near Main Street Bridge. A conversation with a firefighter from Station 1, which is responsible for responding to river calls within city boundaries, indicated that individuals lose control of campfires approximately twice a month. He further stated that the burning of camping materials, such as bedding, emits chemicals, requiring firefighters to utilize extra protective gear. Fires are primarily attributed to the homeless population. However, there is a tradition of informal gatherings near the river mouths and in Seaside

Wilderness Park, which according to community member recollections are attended by many types of people.

CRIME

The perception of crime and a lack of safety at the river was a concern raised by a limited number of community meeting attendees, local residents during casual conversations, and by state park employees at Emma Wood State Beach and Group Camp. Analyzing theft statistics and crimes against persons, including assault and battery, both county and city jurisdictions reveal a low number of reported incidents within the reporting districts nearest the Ventura River. Figure 5.51 illustrates the number of reported crimes involving theft or person to person perpetration from July of 2003 to March of 2008 for the City, and from 1999 to 2003 for the County.

Of crimes reported from a city reporting district adjacent to the river the most prevalent crimes were theft of motor vehicles and unlawful entry/burglary (Ventura Police Department 2008). Despite the fact that most districts reported less than one crime per week annually for a five year period (Ventura Police Department 2008), crime and the perception of safety is of significant concern for the functionality of public open space.

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Guidelines (CPTED) promoted by the International CPTED Association (ICA) identifies six unsafe site elements which create an increased perpetration of crime. Currently, as noted through site visits, a lack of sightlines and the presence of hiding and entrapment spots, including trees and bushes, are two unsafe site elements that are ubiquitous in and near the Ventura River. CPTED identifies isolation, no immediate access to help, poor lighting and limited

presence of security services as unsafe, all conditions which are also present at the river. One notable example of these conditions is River's Edge Trail at Emma Wood State Beach Group Camp, where park service employees warn individuals not to travel alone. While reported incidents of crime are low in and around the river, according to CPTED Guidelines current site conditions present crime opportunities. Circumstances therefore may warrant concern for personal safety.



FIGURE 5.52 Annual Average Reported Crimes. Data sources: City of Ventura; City of Ventura Police Department; Ventura County Sheriff Department.

Homelessness and Affordable Housing

HOMELESSNESS

While homelessness was not identified as a concern by community meeting attendees, it could be a significant issue for the community and proposed Ventura River Parkway. As discussed in Chapter 3. Hydrology, the Ventura River is an EPA Section 303(d) listed impaired water body. Byproducts of unplanned habitation, including abandoned items contribute to these impairments. Past planning documents have acknowledged that unplanned human habitation in the river is an issue which adversely effects riparian biology (Hunt 1994; Wetlands Research Associates and Philip Williams Associates 1994). Additionally, conversations and interviews with experts and local residents, attendance of neighborhood council meetings and personal observations supports the conclusion that unplanned habitation in the river is of considerable importance regarding water quality, habitat disturbance, and its perceived relationship to personal safety.

The Nation and the Region

The general public sometimes sees homelessness as the result of personal choices, however researchers at the University of California have found that the strongest predictors for high rates of homelessness are in fact shortages in low income housing and in mental health care (Elliot 1991). These structural determinates of homelessness are matters of public policy, rather than personal choice, but they allude to some of the personal circumstances that contribute to the complex and persistent issue of homelessness in the United States (Elliot 1991).

The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that in 2007 there were between 65,000 and 160,000 homeless persons in California. That same year the Ventura County

Homeless and Housing Coalition (VCHHC) counted 1,961 homeless persons, including 282 children (VCHHC 2007a). During the count, which functions as a one day snapshot, VCHHC also conducted a longer survey that reached 273 homeless adults or 16.3 percent of the 1,679 adults counted (VCHHC 2007b). Information as to the personal circumstances of the homelessness in Ventura County is shown in Figure 5.52. Figure 5.53 illustrates that of the total number of persons counted on the night prior to the official count, 531 slept in locations not intended for human habitation (VCHHC 2007a). If this number is typical, the City of Ventura, which is home to approximately one-seventh of the county's population, bears the burden of just over one-third of the county's homeless population.

Project Area

Seaside Wilderness Park and the Ventura River Delta are commonly referred to as the "Hobo Jungle"; a name given to this area as a reflection of the influx of people setting up encampments during the Great Depression. Encampments continue to persist today and in November 2004 approximately 150 persons were relocated away from the river (Alvarez 2004). This effort was organized in order to prevent exposure to winter flooding and came to be known as Camp Hope. It was an example of service providers, private citizens, and public officials coming together to provide crisis management for the homeless. (Ventura County Star 2004). Initially a short term shelter was provided at the National Guard Armory and included food, showers, clothing, health care resources, and legal advice. After a few days a tent city located at Emma Wood State Beach Group Camp was granted a permit for long term temporary reprieve. However, scattered personal items, materials used for bedding and rudimentary shelter are

evidence of continuing unplanned habitation in and near the Ventura River, as shown in figures 5.55 through 5.57.

Circumstances of Homeless Persons in Ventura County	
Women	31.1%
Men	68%
Homeless one year or more	61.6%
40 years or older	57.5%
Married	11.7%
Working	24.6%
Veterans	14.3%
Mental health diagnosis	37%
Developmental or physical disability	28.2%
Heart trouble	10.6%
Victim of domestic violence	34.4%
Formerly in foster care	8.5%
Substance abuse problems	29.3%

FIGURE 5.53 A sample of the individual circumstances of the homeless in Ventura County with percent of total population experiencing them. Source: VCHHC 2007b.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Considering California's estimated 65,000 to 160,000 homeless persons and that "...housing constitutes the single largest expense for most Californians", (Housing California 2005, 2) it may not be surprising that California has a shortfall of 60,000 to 80,000 available affordable

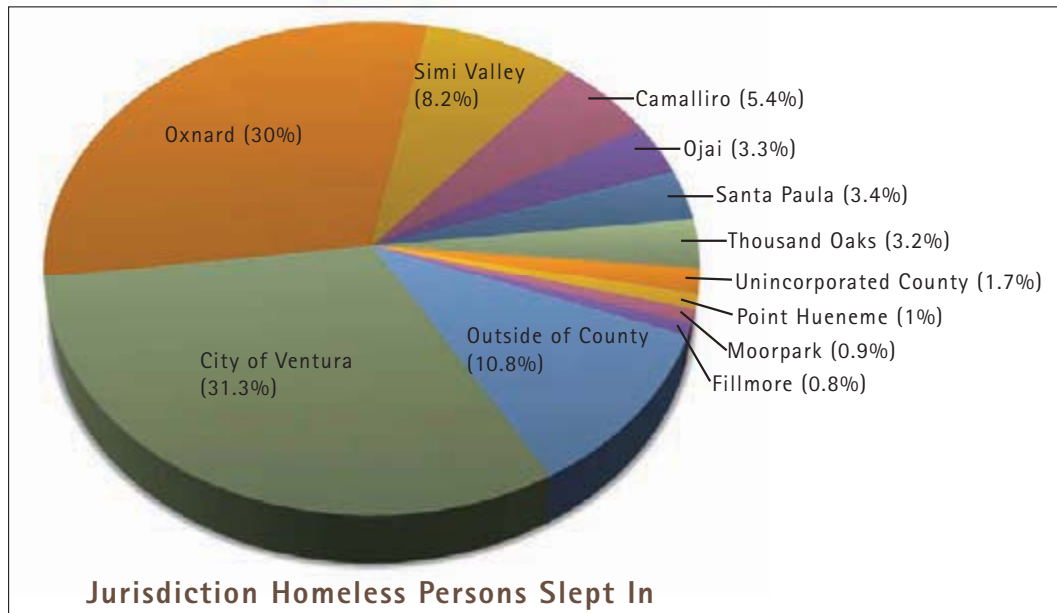


FIGURE 5.54 During the Ventura County homeless count individuals were asked where they slept the night before. Jurisdictions were identified based on their responses. Data source: VCHHC 2007a.

housing units every year (Housing California 2005). Housing California characterizes the situation through the following statement:

Lower priced housing tends to be located far from job centers, creating a severe jobs-housing imbalance that further inflates costs, stifles economic growth, swells commute times, and negatively impacts the environment and our quality of life. Those who bear the brunt of the housing cost burden—paying over a third of their income for housing—are families with children and people of color. (Housing California 2005, 2).

In Ventura County 46 percent of homeowners pay 30 percent or more of their income on housing, for renters this figure is 53 percent (VCCA 2007). VHHHC estimates that on average between 10 and 20 percent of the county's population is at risk of losing their homes (VHHHC 2007c). Additionally, in 2006 Ventura County residents needed an annual income of \$170,320 to buy a home, but the median income was only \$79,500 (Housing California 2009).

In the City of Ventura Census 2000 found that during 1999 the shortage in affordable housing exerted pressure on housing markets causing 40.6 percent of renters to pay 30 percent or more of their household income on gross rent (USCB 2000). Census tracts 22 and 23, representing the parkway project area and the Westside, had similar patterns. In tract 22, closest to the river, 49.4 percent of renters spent 30 percent or more of their household income on gross rent and of those 44.6 percent spent 35 percent or more. In tract 23, 49.9 percent of households spent 30 percent or more of their income on gross rent, but of those only 37.3 percent spent more than 35 percent of their income on housing (USCB 2000). In addition to increasing housing costs generally, the national shortage of affordable housing is consistently shown to lead to overcrowding in low income households (Housing California 2005). With a household member average of four (double the city's average), Census 2000 indicates that overcrowding may be an issue in the Westside (USCB 2000).

From the national to local scales a range of government



FIGURE 5.55 Encampment in a stand of Arrundo donax.



FIGURE 5.56 "Home Sweet Home." An above ground storage tank.



FIGURE 5.57 Abandoned items in the Ventura River.

Name of Service Provider	Service Provided
Catholic Charities ①	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency shelter vouchers • temporary emergency material aid • counseling • rental assistance • food pantries
Family Services 155 S. Oak St. ②	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meal services • food pantry • referral services
Housing Authority of the City of San Buenaventura ③	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • administers HUD Section 8 rental assistance • administers public housing
Jewish Family Service ④	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homeless services • non-housing related services
Khepera House Inc. 125 W. Harrison Ave. Khepera Recovery House ⑤	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • residential drug and alcohol recovery for men • transitional housing for graduates
Miracle House Inc. 1997 E. Main St. ⑥	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • residential drugs and alcohol recovery for women
Our Place Shelter ⑦	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • men and women singles • overnight and hygiene related services • case management
Project Understanding ⑧	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • housing assistance • eviction related legal services • non-housing related services
Senior Home Sharing Program ⑨	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • matches seniors and others in need of shared housing
Readjustment Counseling Service-vet Center ⑩	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • counseling services for veterans
Teen Challenge ⑪	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family services
Turning Point Foundation ⑫	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency shelter for singles • drop-in center • services for mentally ill • non-housing related services
Salvation Army Transitional Living Center Ventura ⑬	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transitional shelter for families with children and single women
Ventura County Behavioral Health ⑭	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency shelter for mentally disabled



[ABOVE AND RIGHT] FIGURE 5.58 There are a number of social service providers providing aid to impoverished and homeless persons in the parkway project area. In addition to this list there may be services whose locations are confidential for the protection of individuals receiving services, as in battered women's shelters. Data sources: Ventura County General Plan 2005; VCHHC 2007. After: Google Maps 2008.

actions, service providers, and community outreach programs have been developed to assist low-income and homeless persons. The need and importance of such service providers is self evident. However as with the example of Camp Hope, much of the net effect has been a fiscally and socially costly system which only manages poverty and homelessness, doing little to truly stem the dual tide of this problem (VHHHC 2007c). Figure 5.58 marks the location of providers of services for low-income and homeless persons in the parkway project area and identifies the type of services provided. In its omissions this figure points to the structural determinates of homelessness identified by Elliot (1991); shortages in low-income housing and mental health services. The most notable omission is the lack of a facility for medically supervised detoxification for low-income and uninsured persons (Wilson 2008). Permanent low-income and inclusive housing services were also not readily identified when compiling figure 5.58. Additionally, the somewhat dispersed location of services leads to the appearance that coordination between service providers is not a strong component of these programs. Uncoordinated approaches are typical in the United States despite evidence that coordinated service provision ensures ease of access to needed programs and resources, resulting in better service outcomes (VHHHC 2007c).

ENDING HOMELESSNESS

In 2001 former President George W. Bush challenged the nation's 100 largest cities to end homelessness (VCHHC 2007c). As of 2007 approximately 300 municipalities had developed plans to this end. After observing success in other municipalities and conducting extensive analysis of local dynamics, in 2007 Ventura County, the City of Ventura, other cities within the county, and public and private agencies released the 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness in Ventura County (the Strategy), (VCHHC 2007c). Implementation of this plan was scheduled to begin in 2008.

The Role of The Lower Ventura River Parkway

Finding the appropriate manner to mitigate impacts to the Ventura River from unplanned habitation necessitates an understanding of some of the recommendations found in the 10 Year Strategy. It identifies three homeless sub-populations. Those populations are the chronically homeless (homeless for a year or more), episodically homeless (homeless for up to a year), and those at risk of homelessness. The Strategy then makes twenty-two county wide planning and programmatic recommendations targeted at meeting the needs of these populations (VCHHC 2007c). Four of these recommendations have particular significance for the proposed parkway.

- Assertive community treatment that would entail bringing treatment and service options to homeless persons wherever they are located. As long as homeless people make encampments in the river there is a likelihood that this type of service would occur within the proposed parkway premises.
- Fundraising events to benefit programs related to homelessness.
- The development of community education programs regarding the scope and nature of homelessness could conceivably take place on parkway premises or be part of parkway programming.
- The Strategy recommends that non-profit organizations involved in ending homelessness in Ventura County seek out public funding, and provides a list of funding sources including general descriptions of activities they support. Many of these funding sources provide grants for programs that include physical and mental health care services (VCHHC 2007c). With a growing body of evidence that recreational open spaces provide physical and mental health benefits (Gies 2006; Morris 2003) the potential for the parkway to function in partnership with direct service providers is clearly available.

The Strategy also makes recommendations that have possible relevance to the proposed parkway, for the establishment of additional buildings for shelter, both

existing and new construction. These recommendations would result in the creation of; 300 units of permanent affordable housing, 3156 supportive housing units or beds for chronically homeless and chronically homeless and addicted men and women, 150 shelter beds, 90 transitional housing units for families and individuals, and the creation of a 20 bed medically monitored detoxification center (VCHHC 2007c). This vision plan has not analyzed appropriate siting for the future location of any of these facilities; however should planning activities determine that some percentage of them be new construction in the parkway project area it may appear at first that their development is at odds with objectives for preservation of open space in and near the Ventura River. However, in relation to the other community concerns identified for the river and project area, especially those pertaining to potentially contaminated sites and access to recreational open space, the provision of affordable housing is not in opposition to open space preservation. Rather, meeting housing needs while ensuring equitable access to recreational open space and natural environments is one aspect of ensuring that all people have healthy environments in which to live, work and play.

Ending homelessness, as defined by the Strategy, is a partnership between individuals and the community and reflects an ideological departure from past public policy. As a location which is currently impacted by the effects of homelessness and as a proposal which seeks to enrich the community, individuals representing the Ventura River and proposed parkway are one group of players in that partnership. Furthermore, for the Ventura River Parkway to benefit from the elimination of the adverse effects of unplanned habitation, parkway planners and advocates need to confront homelessness and not leave it solely for other to address. Planners and advocates must lead the quest to ensure that no individual or family ever needs to turn to the river bottom for residency. As with addressing access to recreational open space and contamination, striving to ensure that all people have access to healthy living environments is a matter of environmental equity.

Conclusion

The proposed Lower Ventura River Parkway has the potential to be a significant cultural resource; one from which people across the region will benefit. Its relevance as a resource that can augment quality of life touches not only on benefits commonly associated with recreational open space, such as environmental quality and physical fitness, but also on issues which are not always considered from within the purview of open space planning.

The Ventura River's unique position as a relatively intact natural river system, which demarcates and separates a highly urbanized region from a less developed one, presents multiple opportunities from which society can benefit by preserving and protecting this natural resource.

Development of a publicly accessible parkway along the lower Ventura River has the potential to reconnect the people and culture of Ventura to the Ventura River through brownfield remediation, urban infill, economic development, educational opportunities and therapeutic and recovery assistance.