



NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY | A LOOK INTO THE PAST

Valley Glen's rich history comes from a strong and proactive community. The desire to create a sense of identity was what led to the inception of Valley Glen. Once divided into portions of Van Nuys and North Hollywood, Valley Glen is now recognized as its own neighborhood. Local residents established the need to separate their community in order to beautify and preserve the quality of the neighborhood. Through activism and perseverance, the neighborhood residents made this happen in less than a decade. It is evident that the Valley Glen neighborhood is strong-willed and unites its residents with a common goal to build a visually attractive and safe haven community. This chapter is more than just the origin of Valley Glen's name. It encapsulates the notable key events in the neighborhood that enriches Valley Glen's history as it defines itself at the heart of the Valley, which sets the footprint for its future.

Valley Glen is situated between Van Nuys and North Hollywood and spans 4.8 square miles in the heart of the San Fernando Valley. It is bounded by Burbank Blvd. on the south, Hazeltine Ave. on the west, Sherman Way on the north, and east along the Hollywood Freeway (Highway 170). Bisecting Valley Glen is the Tujunga Wash and the flood control channel that connects to the Los Angeles River, which runs north-south of the valley.

Major Development and Infrastructure Prior to Valley Glen

Prior to becoming Valley Glen, the area was predominantly agricultural in the early 1900s. During the post-war in the 1950s, the entire valley experienced rapid suburbanization in which wheatfields and ranchlands made way for tract housing development. Erected in 1950, the Hollywood Freeway runs north-south between San Fernando Valley and Downtown Los Angeles, which was later extended through North Hollywood along the boundaries of what is now Valley Glen in 1966.¹ Next to the freeway was the popular Victory Drive-In Theater, which was built in 1947.² The theater was closed in the mid-1970s and replaced by what is currently the Victory Plaza shopping center.³ Conveniently located next to the existing freeway, Victory Plaza is the only power shopping center in Valley Glen, which consists of 132,995 square feet of retail space. The shopping center is currently anchored by LA Fitness, CVS Pharmacy, Vallarta Supermarket, and Citi Bank.

Bisecting the southwest part of Valley Glen is the former Southern Pacific Railroad Burbank Branch right-of-way that runs east-west across the valley, which was used by steam locomotives, electric trolleys, diesel trains for nearly 100 years.⁴ From 1904 to 1920, the railroad carried passengers through the stations located in North Hollywood and Van Nuys. The right-of-way also supported the Pacific Electric Red Car service from North Hollywood to Van Nuys from 1938 to 1952.⁵ The railroad was later abandoned and is now being used as a 14-mile busway by the Metro Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), with two transit stations located within Valley Glen, which opened in 2005.

Valley Glen's Inception

Valley Glen was a part of Van Nuys and North Hollywood until 1998. The community came together to beautify the area through an anti-graffiti project led by the local neighborhood watch program.⁶ In 1994, neighborhood residents sought to create an identity separate from Van Nuys by proposing a new name that would help establish a sense of community, preserve the quality of their neighborhood from urban blight, and reduce crime rates.⁷ Ideas for naming the community included *College Park*, *Erwin Oaks*, *Valley Oaks*, *Erwin Ranch* and *Walnut Grove*.⁸



Detail of a 1925 rail map of Los Angeles County showing the Southern Pacific's Burbank Branch, which is now used as a designated busway for the Metro Orange Line.



Tujunga Wash connecting the Los Angeles River.



Source: Los Angeles Public Library < <http://jpg1.lapl.org/00103/00103538.jpg> >

Opened in 1953, the Victory Drive-in Theater was located on 13037 Victory Boulevard, which is now replaced by the Victory Plaza Shopping Center.



Source: Los Angeles Public Library < <http://jpg1.lapl.org/pics43/00041116.jpg> >

Aerial view of Hollywood Freeway Extension in 1965.

Valley Glen's Name Change

November 1997

More than 70% of the area's homeowners signed a petition requesting the name change to Valley Glen.⁹

February 1998

City Council Member Mike Feuer endorsed the creation of Valley Glen as a new neighborhood and proposed to neighboring areas in Van Nuys if they wanted to join Valley Glen or remain a part of Van Nuys.¹⁰

June 1998

Changing the name of the neighborhood to Valley Glen became official on June 23, 1998. The approved boundaries included portions of Woodman Ave. and Coldwater Canyon, Sherman Way and Burbank Blvd.¹¹ The Department of Transportation mounted 12 new signs of the new name throughout the neighborhood.¹²

April 2006

The Greater Valley Glen Council held a logo design competition to represent Valley Glen's civic diversity. The competition was open to high school and college students in the area.¹³

September 2008

The United State Postal Service formally recognizes Valley Glen as a neighborhood and officially designated three zip codes from Van Nuys and North Hollywood as Valley Glen, which incorporated the zip codes 91401 and 91405 from Van Nuys, and 91606 from North Hollywood.¹⁴



Source: The Greater Valley Glen Council Homepage <<http://www.greatervalleyglencouncil.org/files/>>

A neighborhood watch was established in the Valley Glen area in the early 1990s. Significant efforts made from the residents involved in the program have paved the way to renaming to the neighborhood to Valley Glen.



Source: Valley Glen Neighborhood Association Website <<http://valleyglen.org/map/>>

Blue signs of the new name Valley Glen were placed throughout the community after it was officially established as its own neighborhood.

Key Moments in the History of the Neighborhood (1949-Present)

Los Angeles Valley College (1949)



The campus of Los Angeles Valley College (LA Valley College) is bounded by Oxnard St. on the north, Fulton Ave. on the west, Burbank Blvd. on the south, and the Tujunga River to the east, and figures significantly into the social and physical context of the neighborhood. Founded on September 12, 1949, the college was initially located on the campus of Van Nuys High School at 6535 Cedros Ave. until 1951 when it moved to its current location. The physical development of the current campus took place over the course of four phases, which was completed in 1959, 1961, 1963, and 1973, respectively. The Valley College Historical Museum, the only museum dedicated to the history of the San Fernando Valley, was established in 1974.¹⁵

The top communities that the LA Valley College serve include North Hollywood, Van Nuys, Burbank, Panorama City, Sherman Oaks, Sun Valley, Arieta, and North Hills. As of the Fall 2013 semester, there were 18,397 students enrolled at the college with 18% of the students attending full-time. There are 200 full-time faculty members and 398 part-time faculty members. LA Valley College offers 61 Associates of Arts degrees, 19 Associates of Science degrees, 57 Certificates, and a number of special programs.¹⁶

With more than 1,600 different trees and plants, the LA Valley College campus is known for its urban forest. In fact, Valley College has been named a “Tree Campus USA” by the Arbor Day Foundation in 2011 and 2012, the only campus in LA and the only community college campus in California to receive the honor. To preserve the campus’ natural beauty, Valley College established an Urban Forest Master Plan in 2010.¹⁷

The Great Wall of Los Angeles Art Mural (1974)



The Great Wall of Los Angeles is an art mural that stretches 2,754 feet long along the concrete walls of the Tujunga Flood Control Channel of San Fernando Valley beginning at W Oxnard St. and Burbank Blvd. alongside the LA Valley College. At a half-mile long, the mural is considered the longest mural in the world.¹⁸ In 1974, the Army Corps of Engineers collaborated with Judith F. Baca and her organization, Social and Public Art Resource (SPARC), to create a mural along the flood control channel as a part of a beautification project.¹⁹ Baca designed the mural to reflect California's history beginning with prehistory and colonialism followed by important events leading up to the 1950s.

In 1976, Baca recruited a team of community members, artists, and historians to bring the mural to life. The mural took five summers to complete.²⁰ However, the mural was flooded several times between 1976 and 1983. Though it was not damaged by the floodwater, the mural's condition began to deteriorate after being exposed to air pollution and direct sunlight over time. The mural was restored in 2011 by Baca, students from UCLA, local artists, and community members.²¹



Source: Social and Public Art Resource Center Website < <http://sparcinla.org/the-great-wall-part-2/>>

Baca and a team of community members, artists, and historians completed the 2,754 foot mural in five years. The mural is one of Valley Glen's prized asset in the community.



Source: Social and Public Art Resource Center Website < <http://sparcinla.org/the-great-wall-part-2/>>

The historical content and drawings for each panel of the mural along the Tujung Wash took approximately one year to research and prep before transferring the artwork to the walls.

Valley Glen Community Park (2000)



Source: Valley Glen Neighborhood Association Website < <http://valleyglen.org> >

The largest park in Valley Glen is the Valley Glen Community Park, which is located determined by Erwin St. on the north, Atoll Ave. on the west, Ethel Ave. on the east, and the termination of Mary Ellen Ave. on the south. Initially known as the Erwin Street Park until the early 2000s, residents successfully lobbied the city to change the name of the park to Valley Glen Community Park to better reflect the neighborhood's identity.²² There is one large tree in the park that may soon be removed because it is dangerous to visitors.

The park includes a number of picnic tables, small paved areas with benches, and an unlit baseball diamond, the backstop of which may soon be removed and placed elsewhere.²³ The park also received a brand new Universally Accessible Playground from Shane's Inspiration, an organization that has built 40 similar playgrounds around the world.²⁴

Additionally, there are two mini parks located in Valley Glen—Kittridge Mini Park and Hartland Mini Park. Kittridge Mini Park is located on the southwest corner of Kittridge St. and Greenbush Ave., and includes a large area paved in concrete with three benches and two trash cans. There is a small strip of grass with trees against a brick back wall. The park is within walking distance to Kittridge Street Elementary School.²⁵

Hartland Mini Park is located on the southeast corner of Hartland St. and Woodman Ave. Like the Kittridge Mini Park, the Hartland Mini Park includes a large paved area. There are five trees located against the stone back wall, and two more along the curb. The park is a short walk to the busy commercial intersection at Woodman Ave. and Vanowen St.²⁶

Metro Orange Line (2005)



Source: Los Angeles Photo Archive <http://www.you-are-here.com/transport/orange_line.html>

The Metro Orange Line is a 14.5 mile bus rapid transit (BRT) route that runs east-west of the San Fernando Valley, which also connects to the Metro Red Line to North Hollywood. The origin of the name and color of the Orange Line reflects the history of citrus trees that are planted throughout the valley.²⁷ Opened to the public on October 29, 2005, the Valley Glen Neighborhood Association celebrated the grand opening of the Orange Line at the Van Nuys Station.²⁸ The Orange Line consists of 14 transit stations that are located at approximately one mile apart. There are two stations located in Valley Glen—Woodman/Valley Glen Station and the Valley College Station. The Orange Line runs primarily along a two-lane dedicated busway within an abandoned rail right-of-way.²⁹ To reduce the noise pollution generated from the Metro liner vehicle nearby the residential neighborhoods, Metro installed rubberized asphalt pavement along the residential section of the busway.³⁰

The Orange Line also supports bicycling as part of its system. Running parallel to the BRT is the Metro Orange Line bicycle path, which serves as a mix of a Class I bike path and a Class II bike lane. The Valley College Station, located on Burbank Blvd. and Fulton Ave., includes 8 bike rack spaces and 8 bike lockers. The Woodman/Valley Glen Station, which is located on Oxnard St. includes 12 bike rack spaces and 8 bike lockers.³¹ According to Metro's ridership statistics as of February 2014, the Orange Line BRT sees 30,164 boardings in an average weekday, compared to 14,255 boardings on the Silver Line BRT.³² In 2013, the Valley College Station experienced an average of 1,325 weekday boardings, whereas the Woodman/Valley Glen Station experienced an average 928 weekday boardings.³³



Source: Los Angeles Metro Website <<http://www.metro.net/riding/maps/>>

Tujunga Wash Greenway and Stream Restoration Project (2007)



As a tributary to the Los Angeles River, the Tujunga Wash is a 13-mile long stream that runs across the Los Angeles County. Roughly 2 miles of the stream runs through the Valley Glen neighborhood. Along the Tujunga Wash is a 9-mile flood control channel, which was built in the early 1950s, to funnel rainwater to the Los Angeles River.³⁴ As part of the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, the Tujunga Wash Greenway and Stream Restoration Project aimed to transform the pathway along the Tujunga Wash into a 15-acre riparian habitat that would conserve water and beautify the flood control channel.³⁵

Completed in 2007, the project was a collaboration of a multi-agency partnership between Los Angeles County, the City of Los Angeles, and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, which includes the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Rancho Simi and Conejo Recreation and Park Districts.³⁶ The project is located on the east and west sides of the Tujunga Wash between Vanowen Ave. and Oxnard Blvd. There are three entrances to the greenway, which are located at Vanowen Ave. and Fulton Ave., Victory Blvd. and Ethel Ave., and Oxnard Blvd. and Coldwater Canyon Ave.

The restoration project consists of a 1.2 mile and 50-ft wide greenway, which serves as a habitat for plants and wildlife, as well as open space and recreation for Valley Glen residents. The greenway features a natural streambed and a walking path that is landscaped with native California plants, and also includes benches and a picnic area.³⁷ In 2012, the Tujunga Wash Ecosystem Restoration Project extended the greenway by an additional mile towards the north along the banks between Vanowen St. and Sherman Way.³⁸

Current Forces of Change

A number of forces are currently helping Valley Glen to becoming a more recognizable and memorable environment. Developers and architects are beginning to see space in Valley Glen as opportunities for attractive developments. Valley College and certain portions of the Tujunga Wash are also undergoing serious changes in the near future. If planned effectively and strategically, these forces could turn out to be great assets to the community.

Victory Plaza Mixed-Use Development

Victory Plaza was set to be demolished and replaced with a 12.2-acre mixed-use development.³⁹ The development would have included 150 residential units, a hotel with 230 rooms, a movie theater, 550,000 square feet of office space, and a 285,000 square foot shopping center, all in a “village-like” setting.⁴⁰ However, on January 22, 2014, the site was acquired by the real estate investment company Kennedy Wilson.⁴¹ It is still too soon to tell how the new ownership of the site will affect the specific design of the proposal.

Great Wall of Los Angeles Pedestrian Bridge

The Great Wall of Los Angeles is situated about 13 feet below street level, which separates the view of the mural and visitors by a long chained fence. SPARC intends to change that with plans to replace the former wooden pedestrian bridge, which crossed Tujunga Wash between Miranda and Hatteras streets on Coldwater Canyon Blvd., with a new solar-lit bridge designed by wHY architects. The bridge will be constructed primarily of recycled materials, such as broken glass, recycled cans, and plastic.⁴²

A plan for the bridge restoration was approved by the LA County Board of Supervisors in January 2014. The bridge will cost about \$1.3 million and will be funded by the LA County, the City of Los Angeles, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and the California Cultural Historical Endowment. The bridge will re-open access between LA Valley College and the mural. Construction of the bridge is set to commence in February 2014, and completed by the end of the year.



Source: Dasher Lawless Inc. Website
<<http://www.dasherlawless.com/1400.xml>>

Rendering of the proposed 12.2-acre development project The Plaza at the Glen.



The pedestrian bridge on top of the Great Wall of Los Angeles will re-open access between LA Valley College and the mural.

Los Angeles Valley College Facilities Master Plan

LA Valley College embarked on a large-scale \$626 million master plan in 2003, which was updated in 2010. Steinberg Architects was selected to develop a plan for the college's future after the passage of Measure J, which dedicated \$305 million for construction on the campus. The 2010 update to the master plan outlines a number of goals, many of which focus on the quality of the student experience, maintenance of the campus' natural charm, and strengthening the identity of the college through better definition of the campus' edges and pathways. While the master plan is continually evolving as future projections for the campus' needs are updated, as of now the full buildout will include two instructional buildings and an additional parking structure.⁴³ These improvements may draw more students to the college, further influencing the character and identity of the Valley Glen neighborhood.

Crest Apartments

A new apartment building, Crest Apartments, is to be developed by-right at 13604 Sherman Way by the Skid Row Housing Trust. The apartment complex will cater mainly to low-income males, a number of whom will likely be veterans. The impact of the project, located across the street from a hotel that has had issues with narcotic sales and prostitution, must be monitored closely.

Findings and Conclusion

The common themes evoked from its key historical moments within the neighborhood involved beautifying their community and its open space, and focusing on Valley Glen as a center of education. Outside organizations also see potential in Valley Glen and have sought to make the community better. Projects, such as the Valley College Facilities Master Plan and the construction of a new pedestrian bridge over the Tujunga Wash reflect Valley Glen's vision towards sustainability, neighborhood beautification, and community unity in establishing a sense of identity. It may be a good idea to capitalize upon some of these projects and processes while formulating new identity opportunities.

1. Continue to champion Valley Glen's open space and natural environment

Valley Glen fully embraces its natural landscape and open space. For example, the recent greenway and restoration project along Tujunga Wash have completely transformed the flood control channel into a pleasant landscaped and recreational space for the community. This project also continued to extend the landscaped improvements further north towards Sherman Way, which was completed in 2012. These activities create opportunities for the development or improvements in and around the Tujunga Wash. The community could create more active open space along both sides of the Tujunga Wash to attract more people to use the green space recreationally and the space outside of it commercially—thus bringing in more economic opportunities to the area. The community could also work on connecting the Community Park and the LA Valley College campus via the quiet Ethel Ave., perhaps attracting students, faculty, and staff to the Community Park to enjoy its serenity.

2. Build upon Valley Glen's public art

The community and organizations outside of Valley Glen see potential in transforming the neighborhood aesthetically through public art and landscaping. For example, the Army Corp of Engineers had the idea of creating a mural along the flood control channel, and conservancy agencies helped to enhance the Tujunga Wash in Valley Glen. The mural has grabbed international attention as it's been dubbed the longest mural in the world. Valley Glen should extend the mural if there are enough panels along the flood channel to do so. Valley Glen could also shift focus and display public art along the Metro Orange Line busway where it can be viewed and appreciated by the transit riders. Valley Glen should consider using matching grants to invest in extended mural and/or improved parkland along the Tujunga Wash between Oxnard St. and Victory Blvd., thus connecting LA Valley College to the future Victory Plaza and tying the community together. The community should coordinate with existing partnerships, such as SPARC to establish more public art in the community. Furthermore, the Greater Valley Glen Council can work with students and faculty from the art department at LA Valley College to discover new opportunities for public beautification and art installments. For instance, Valley Glen has recently purchased a large horse figure as part of a "Valley of Horses" program. The Council could work with faculty and students from Valley College to determine not only the best location for the figure, but methods for making the structure even more beautiful and providing a landmark for residents.

3. Popularize Valley Glen as an educational hub

Residents rightfully have a lot of pride in the LA Valley College, which has been a staple of the community for over 60 years. Furthermore, Valley Glen is home to a number of additional educational institutions. The community can find creative ways to advertise the neighborhood's focus on education through design and programming. The Council could perhaps implement a widespread book-sharing program, or have a communal celebration or awards ceremony for exceptional students and faculty at any of the schools. The community may also want to invest in celebrating the achievements of LA Valley College Alumni somewhere on campus, in the Community Park, or at various other locations around Valley Glen.

4. Further develop Valley Glen's pride in its urban forestry and natural environment

For two consecutive years, LA Valley College has been named a "Tree Campus USA" by the Arbor Day Foundation. The college has even established an Urban Forest Master Plan in 2010 to help preserve the natural beauty of the campus. And known for being the urban forest with over 1,600 kinds of trees and plants, LA Valley College is truly home to trees. Valley Glen residents have long treasured and protected the local trees. There stands the opportunity of designing and producing 'The Map of Trees' in Valley Glen to amplify the value and attraction of local trees. The map will showcase the different kinds of trees on the map of Valley Glen in the simple colorful sketch style. For each place that non-Valley Glen residents might visit, look for a kind of tree near the site and put up a small designed plate on it along with a unique stamp of that tree. By collecting all the stamps that are attached to the specific trees near a site, visitors get to walk and drive around Valley Glen with more fun and stronger motivation. The completed map of trees can also be kept as a souvenir.

5. Build upon history and enhance community awareness

The Valley College Historical Museum is the only museum dedicated to the San Fernando Valley's rich history. This creates an opportunity for Valley Glen to showcase the historical timeline of events in the community, as well as key historic moments that occurred in the neighborhood that contributed to the identity of the neighborhood. The community could create a Valley Glen brochure to be distributed in the San Fernando Museum. The brochure will be designed to provide historical highlights of the community, advertisements of local businesses, and could include a map that shows various walking paths along the Tujunga Wash Greenway and other self-guided tours around the community, such as an Ethnic Food Restaurant Guide. To help these programs find success, the Council should find ways to partner with LA Valley College to advertise all that the Museum offers by speaking in classes, at sporting events, or simply putting up flyers. The Council should also give a few of these brochures to local businesses so visitors can be made aware of the history of the community.

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