

Subarea Report: Foothill

July 2021



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Introduction

Ventura is home to a rich mosaic of neighborhoods with their own look, feel, and sense of place. While each has its own distinctive charm, each also faces its own unique set of conditions – such as housing quality, walkability, and park access – that have implications for residents’ quality of life. To better understand these differences, this report provides an overview of the Foothill subarea in Ventura, delineating its predominant uses, overall character, and prevailing issues. It is one in a series of twelve (12) standalone reports on existing subareas in the City of Ventura.

Land Use	Percent
Residential	64.7%
Single-Family Detached	64.7%
Commercial	0.3%
Commercial Recreation	0.3%
Public/Institutional	3.2%
Religious Facilities	2.5%
Water	0.7%
Open Space	19.6%
Parks / Recreation	17.3%
Natural / Conservation	2.3%
Agriculture	9.6%
Vacant/Other	2.5%

Foothill Overview

The Foothill subarea is a group of two predominantly residential neighborhoods in the Los Padres foothills, bounded by Foothill Road to the south and undeveloped hillsides on all other sides. It is a largely upscale community distinguished by its location, topography and building scale, as there are several two-story homes with desirable viewsheds of the city and ocean. Nearly three quarters of the residential population (73.4 percent) lives in “very high fire risk” areas, leaving it highly vulnerable to natural disaster as climate change intensifies. Figure 1 shows an aerial view of the Foothill subarea.

Existing Land Use

As Figure 2 shows, the Foothill subarea is an overwhelmingly residential district, with residential uses – all of which are detached single-family homes – occupying 64.7 percent of land. Agriculture (9.6 percent) and Open Space (19.6 percent) together comprise nearly another third of land in the area, including a mix of small farms, undeveloped open space, a tennis court, and the 129-acre Arroyo Verde Park. Public/Institutional uses, primarily reflected in two churches, comprise another 3.2 percent of land are located on the southwest end of the community along Foothill Road. About 2.5 percent of land sits vacant, due in part to property destruction from the 2017 Thomas Fire, and only 0.3 percent of land is dedicated to commercial uses.



Arroyo Verde Park. Source: Visit Ventura

Neighborhood Statistics



3,049 residents
(2.8% of City)



1,284 units
(3.0% of City)



2.6 units per residential acre
(Citywide: 7.8)



3.6 people per acre
(Citywide: 7.7)



median income
\$150,831
(Citywide: \$78,882)



median home value
\$860,250
(Citywide: \$570,100)



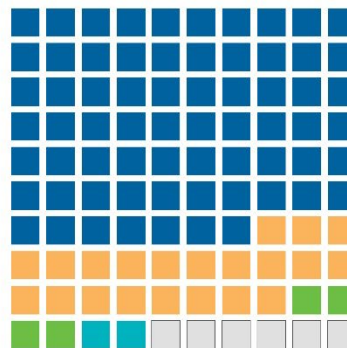
137 jobs
(0.3% of City)



31% residents aged 65+
(Citywide: 15.8%)



15% residents aged 18 or under
(Citywide: 21.8%)



- White (77%)
- Hispanic/Latino (11%)
- Asian (4%)
- Black (2%)
- Other/Two or More Races (6%)



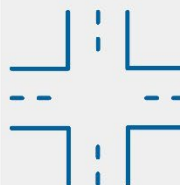
42.6 park acres per 1,000 residents
(Citywide: 7.2)



12.6% residents five minutes from park
(Citywide: 40.2%)

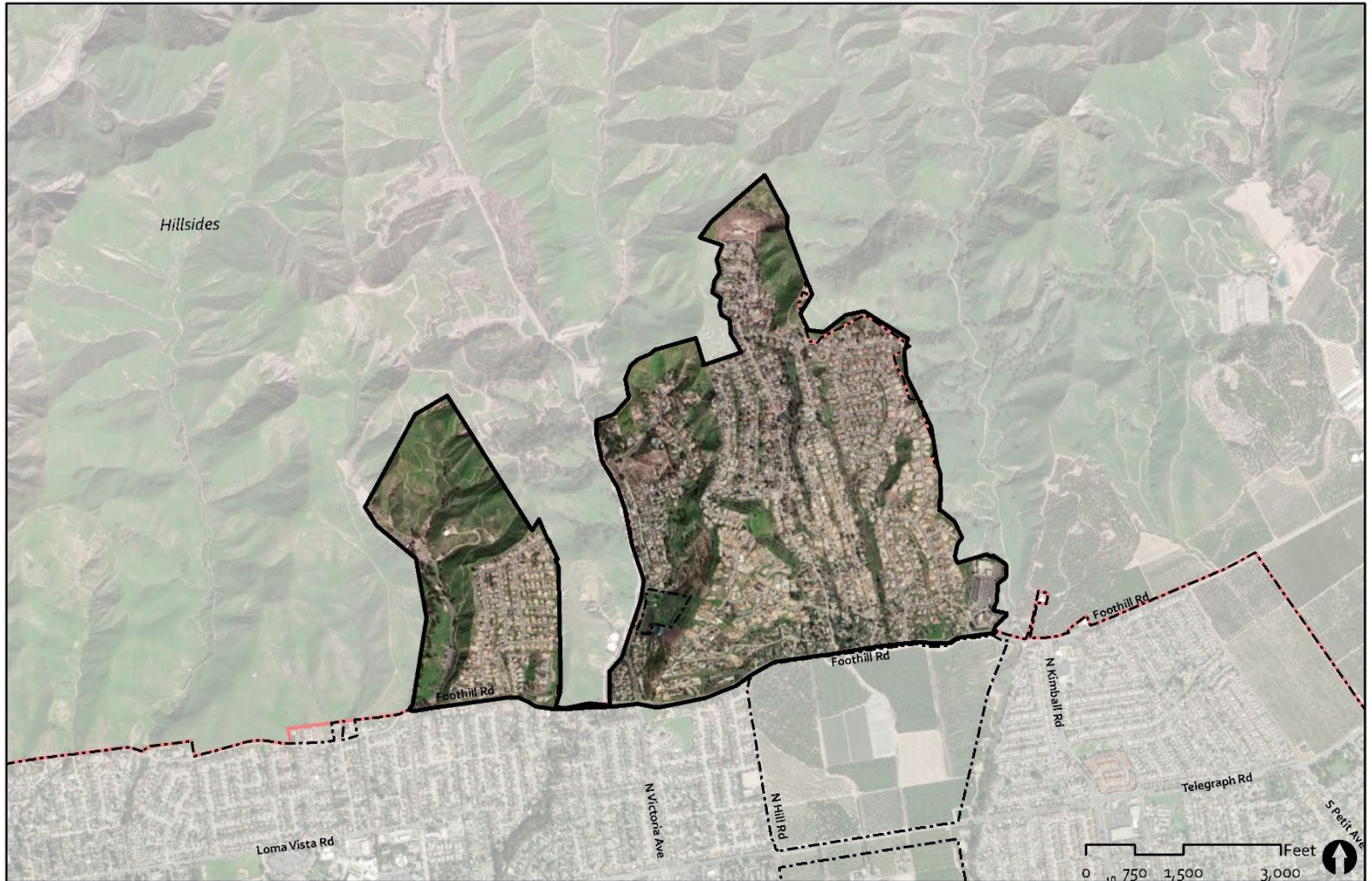


73.4% residents at very high fire risk
(Citywide: 10.7%)



40.6 intersections per mi²
(Citywide: 92.7)

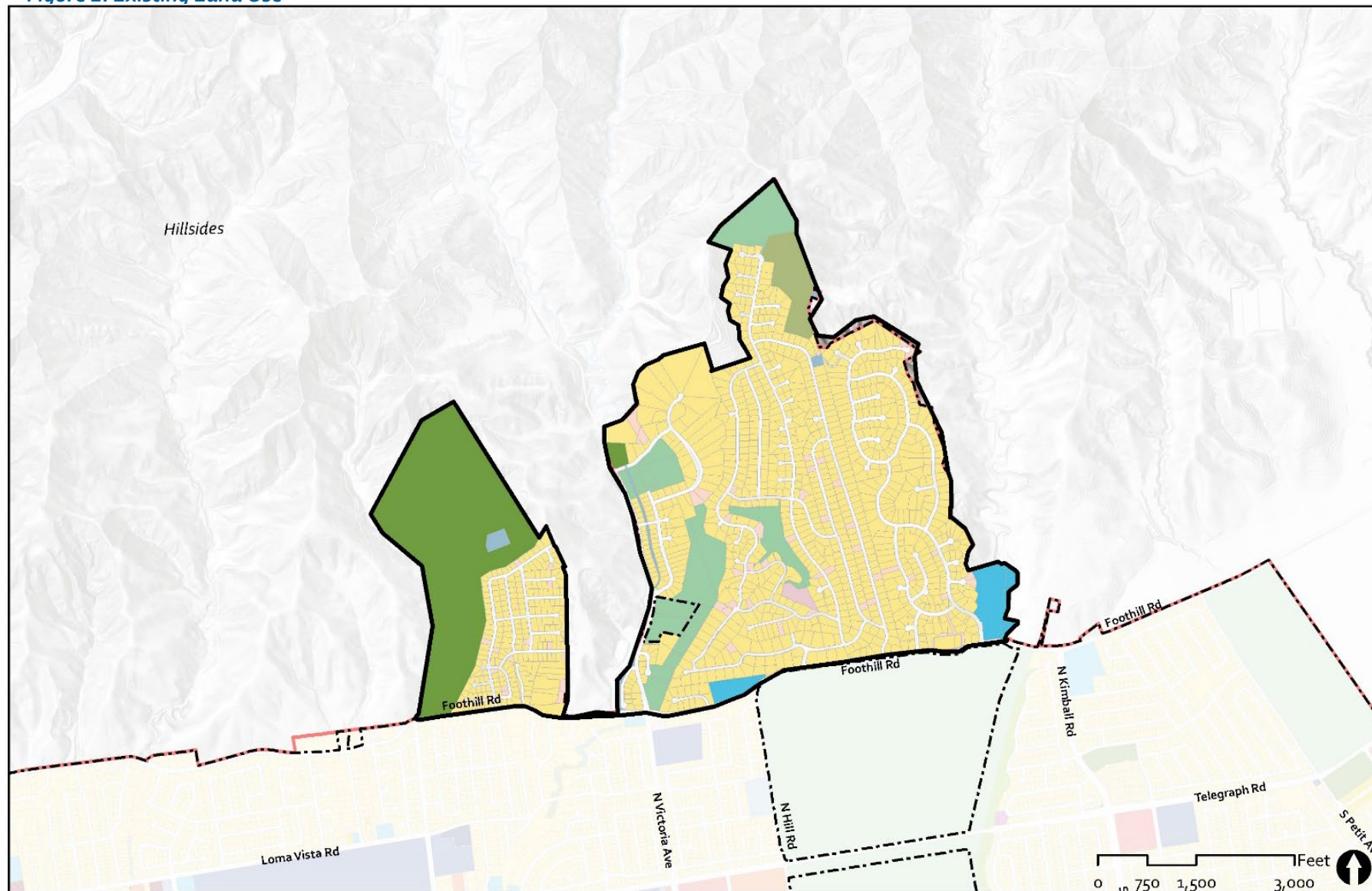
Figure 1: Aerial



-  Foothill Subarea
-  Ventura City Limits
-  Sphere of Influence



Figure 2: Existing Land Use



Foothill Subarea	Single-Family Detached	Mixed-Use Commercial	Commercial Centers	Civic Facilities	Parks / Recreation	Open Space	Transportation
Ventura City Limits	Single-Family Attached	Commercial Recreation	Office	Religious Facilities	Agriculture	Water	
Sphere of Influence	Multifamily			School	Natural / Conservation		
				Hospitals			



Neighborhood Features and Challenges

- **Extremely High Fire Risk:** Given the subarea’s hillside location, occupying a steep terrain near the Los Padres National Forest, a staggering 73.4 percent of Foothill residents live in “very high fire risk” areas – by far the highest share of any subarea. The destructive potential of this urban-wildland interface has already been evidenced by the 2017 Thomas Fire, which damaged or destroyed an estimated 686 structures in the city, of which many were in the Foothill subarea. Because events of this nature may become more frequent as climate change intensifies, enhanced disaster preparedness is needed to mitigate their impact. Strategies include strengthening both evacuation routes and water supply systems. Figure 6 shows fire risk in the Foothill subarea.
- **Vacant Residential Properties:** As indicated above, the 2017 Thomas Fire caused considerable damage to the district’s housing stock. Several properties near the urban peripheries were burned and sit vacant to this day, though on a handful of sites, residential re-construction has already begun. In addition to the improvements noted above, the City could consider several land use strategies on these sites to further mitigate threats to life and property. One example would be acquiring vacant properties and re-purposing them as agriculture or open space, which would provide a critical buffer at the urban-wildland interface. New development regulations could also mandate the use of additional fire-resistant landscaping and building materials beyond what is already required in the California Fire and Building Codes, and by local ordinance.
- **Flooding and Sea Level Rise:** No part of the Foothill subarea is at risk of flooding or sea level rise.

Streetscape

The Foothill’s streetscape is characteristic of suburban residential neighborhoods. Given its topography and lack of commercial uses, nearly all roadways are small-scale neighborhood streets with narrow rights-of-way and large street setbacks (~20 feet). Most homes front the street with yards and/or sloped landscaping. Neighborhood roads do not follow a street grid and are generally curvilinear, thus offering limited outlets to nearby arterial streets.



Residential street. Source: Google Maps

Pedestrian infrastructure is severely limited, as many streets have virtually no sidewalks and lack any form of effective tree canopy. A relatively higher concentration of sidewalks can be founded in the western part of the Foothill area, though these too are very narrow (~5

feet). Figure 4 shows building footprints in the Foothill subarea.

Intersection Density

Intersection Density is one metric used to evaluate an area’s walkability. A high concentration (i.e., density) of intersections in a defined place is typically indicative of a gridded street pattern, which expands travel routes and connectivity, creates frequent opportunities for controlled pedestrian crossing, and can even facilitate placemaking at key nodes. Intersection densities of 140 per square mile or more are more conducive for walkability.

As Figure 3 below indicates, Intersection Density is exceptionally low in the Foothill subarea. This is because most roadways are curvilinear, with several cul-de-sacs that dead-end the street network and reduce permeability. These factors contribute to an area that lacks a street grid and instead boasts long, circuitous blocks.

Properties are relatively larger than in other parts of the city, with some two-story homes and lot sizes ranging from 0.25 to 0.75 acres in size.

Figure 3: Intersection Density

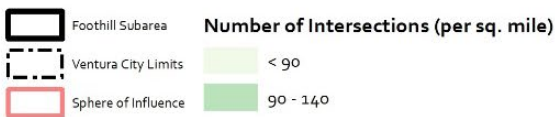
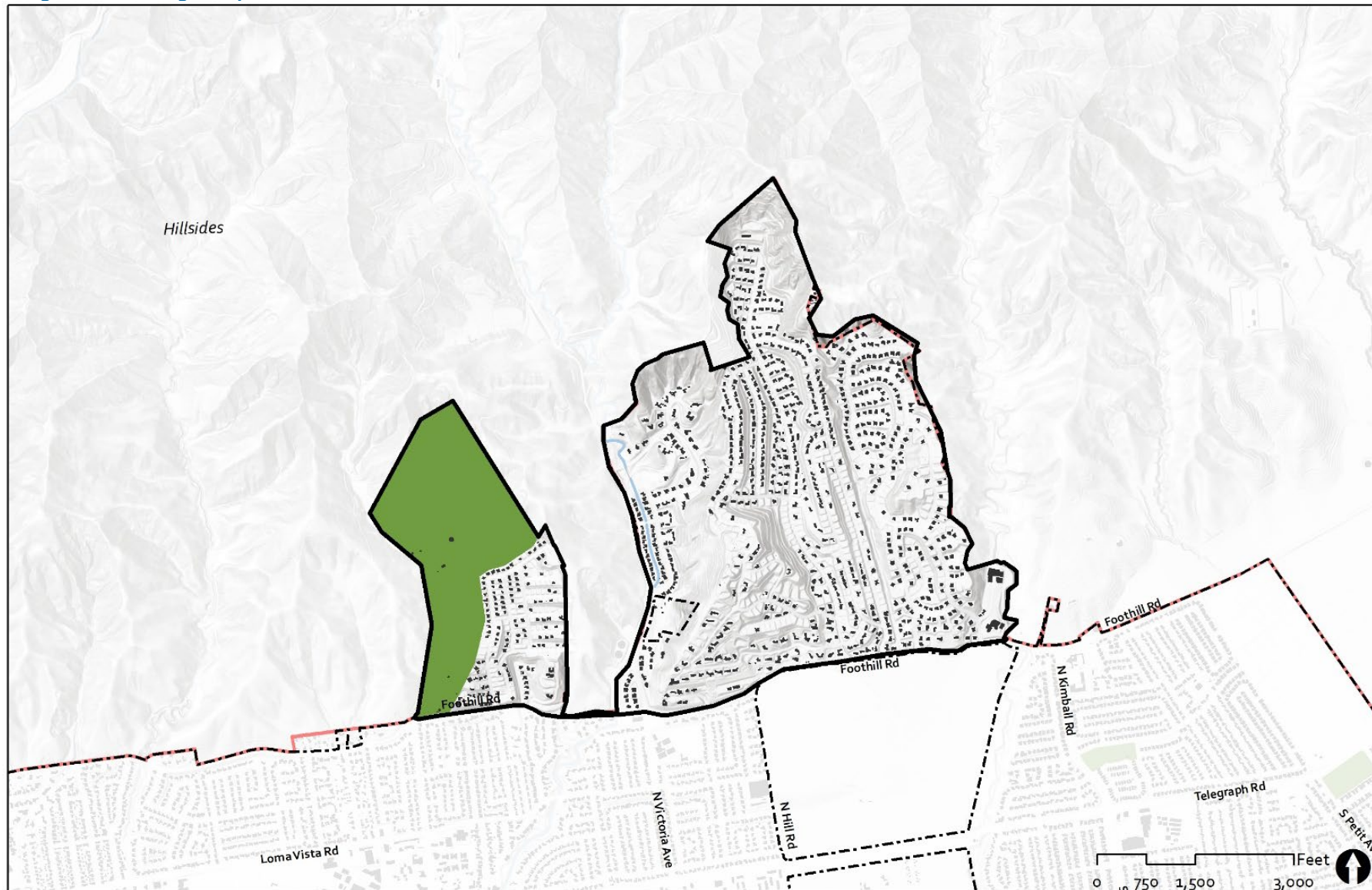


Figure 4: Building Footprints



- Foothill Subarea
- City Park/Open Space
- Ventura City Limits
- Building Footprints
- Sphere of Influence



Open Space

For Foothill residents, access to parks and recreation is mixed. The subarea features the 132-acre Arroyo Verde Park on its west end, which includes expansive open green areas, picnic sites, children’s play areas, and several miles of hiking trails. As Figure 5 indicates, all residents on the Foothill’s west end live within a 10-minute walk of the park, enabling unparalleled access to a unique regional destination. Meanwhile, on the east end, some residents are proximate to the Harmon Canyon Preserve (not shown on map). Located on lands under county jurisdiction, this expansive natural area was acquired by the Ventura Land Trust in 2020 and is now open for public access, featuring several miles of trailing for hiking, biking, running, and/or walking.

While some in the subarea are within walking distance to such unique spaces, many have poorer access. Apart from the two above parks, the Foothill subarea hosts just one other recreational space – Hidden Valley Park – which is a small, privately-managed space with a tennis court. This fact, coupled with a circuitous street network that limits connectivity, leaves many Foothill residents without easy access to outdoor recreation. In total, less than a third (32 percent) of Foothill residents are within a 10-minute walk of a public park.



Arroyo Verde Park. Source: Visit Ventura



Harmon Canyon Preserve. Source: Ventura Land Trust

Figure 5: Walk Access to Parks

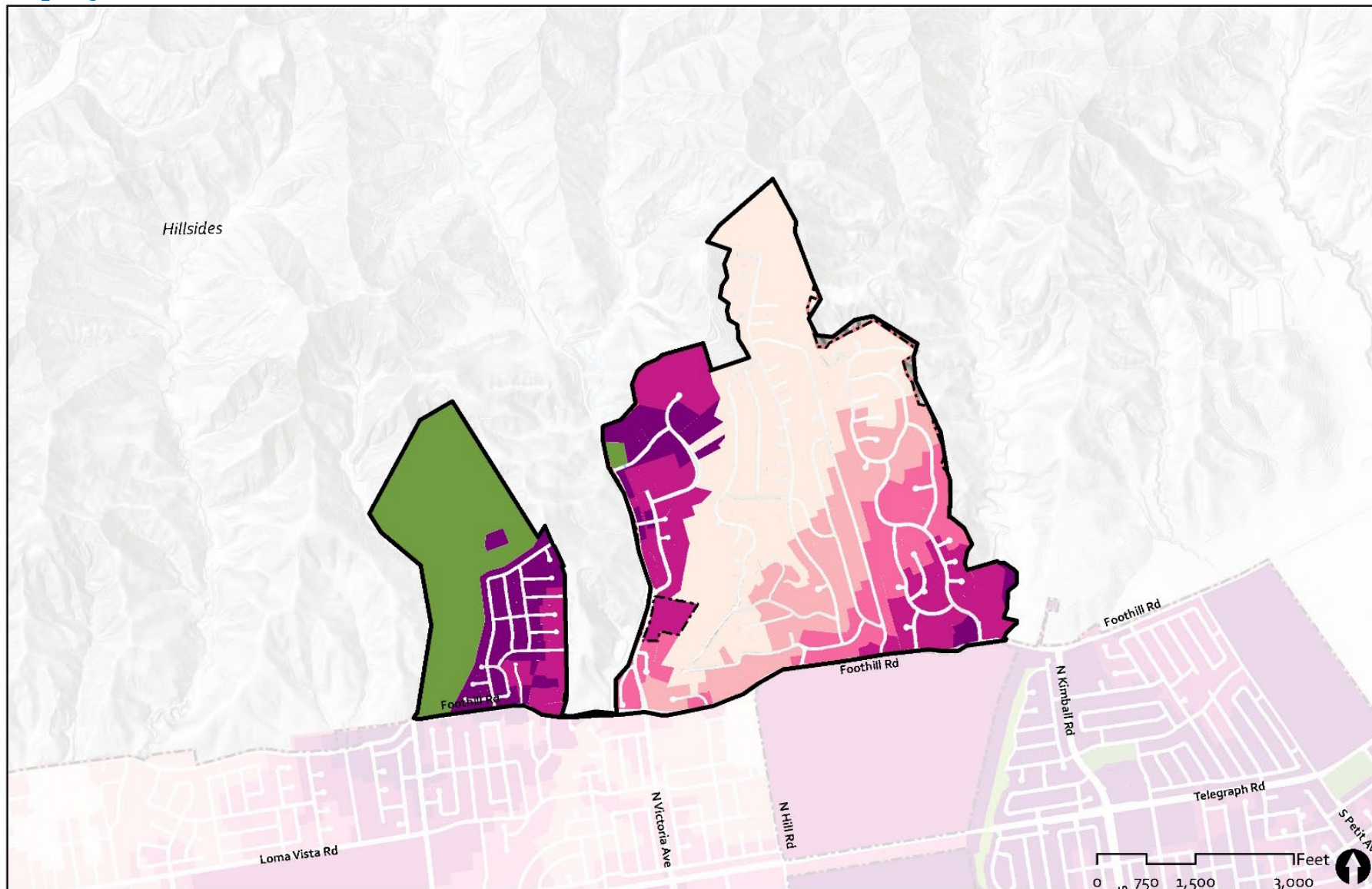
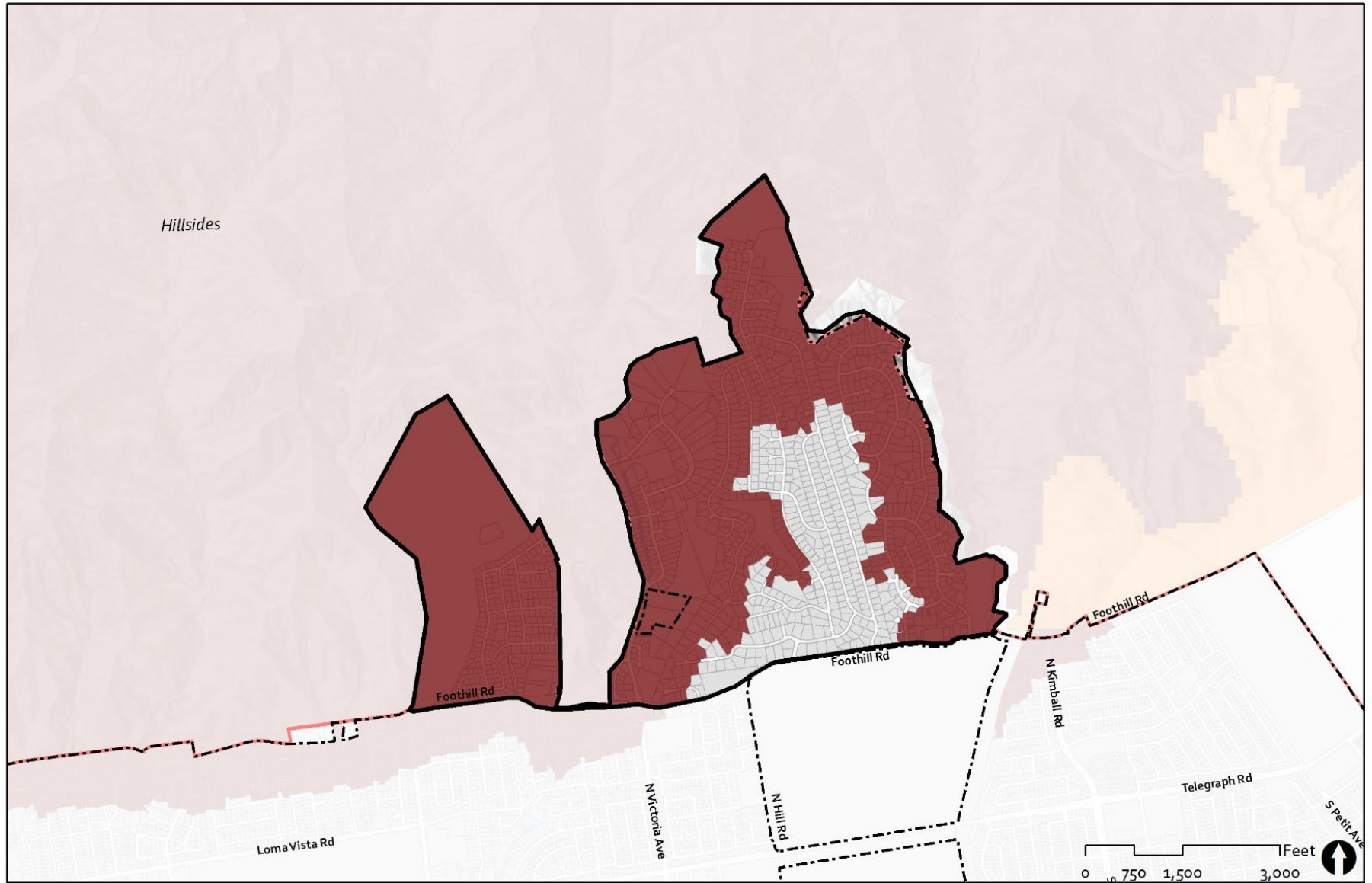


Figure 6: Fire Risk



- Foothill Subarea
- Ventura City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Moderate
- Very High



Summary of Key Findings

- **Proximity to World-Class Natural Recreation:** Foothill residents are privileged with access to some of the most unique and expansive recreation areas in the city. The west end is home to the 162-acre Arroyo Verde Park, which hosts a variety of natural open areas as well as hiking trails. Meanwhile, the east end neighbors the expansive Harmon Canyon Preserve, which was acquired and opened to the public in 2020 and totals more than 2,100 acres of open space, including several miles of hiking trails. Together, these two amenities afford Foothill residents unrivaled proximity to some of the most impressive natural recreation in the city. However, accessibility for residents in more central parts of the subarea could be improved.
- **Severe Fire Risk:** While the Foothill's location at the urban-wildland interface offers unique benefits, it also brings significant drawbacks. Most residents (73.4 percent) live in "very high fire risk" areas, creating ample threats to both life and property. The 2017 Thomas Fire also wrought significant damage on the community, as several homes burned leaving several sites vacant. Moving forward, adaptation strategies related to both infrastructure and land use decisions could help mitigate these impacts. The City could strengthen evacuation plans and water supply systems, create agricultural buffers, and/or promote the use of fire-resistant building materials and landscaping.
- **Poor Walkability:** Despite being a low-traffic residential area, the Foothill's streetscape is generally inhospitable to pedestrians. Typically, sidewalks are either very narrow (~5 feet) or completely lacking on certain streets. Additionally, most of the area lacks a consistent tree canopy.

Note: Due to misalignments between subarea and Census-designated boundaries, demographic indicators presented in this report should be treated as approximations.