

View of San Gabriel Mountains from Palmdale



*Envision*  
**PALMDALE 2045**  
a complete community



## Chapter 2

# History and Profile

Palmdale's history, regional setting, and demographic makeup play a key role in understanding key issues, opportunities, and the community's vision. This chapter provides a brief overview of Palmdale's history and community profile.

# City of Palmdale Profile

## Location and Planning Boundaries

Palmdale is located in northern Los Angeles County situated in the Antelope Valley region of Southern California, approximately 60-miles driving distance from downtown Los Angeles, as shown in Figure 2.1. The Planning Area for the 2045 General Plan includes land within Palmdale City Limits, Sphere of Influence (SOI), and several unincorporated Los Angeles County areas. Together, these areas measure a total of 129,032 acres (or 201.6 square miles) as shown in Figure 2.2.

Palmdale City Limits covers 68,019 acres (or 106.3 square miles), making it one of the largest cities (in terms of land area) in the United States. The Sphere of Influence (SOI), or area outside the City’s limits but within its legal planning area, adds another 44,241 acres (or 69.1 square miles). Included in the SOI, City of Palmdale has four distinct unincorporated County Islands<sup>1</sup> within the Planning area which total 16,772 acres (or 26.2 square miles).

### Sphere of Influence

The Sphere of Influence (SOI) is the “probable physical boundaries and service area” of a city, as defined by the State General Plan Guidelines. Within these areas the City of Palmdale has power to affect developments, though formal authority is limited. Palmdale’s Sphere of Influence spans 69 square miles and includes the County Islands mentioned in the previous section as well as land to the south near the Little Rock Creek Wash and San Gabriel Mountain range, as well as a small area to the west near Leona Valley.



Aerial View of Palmdale/Antelope valley

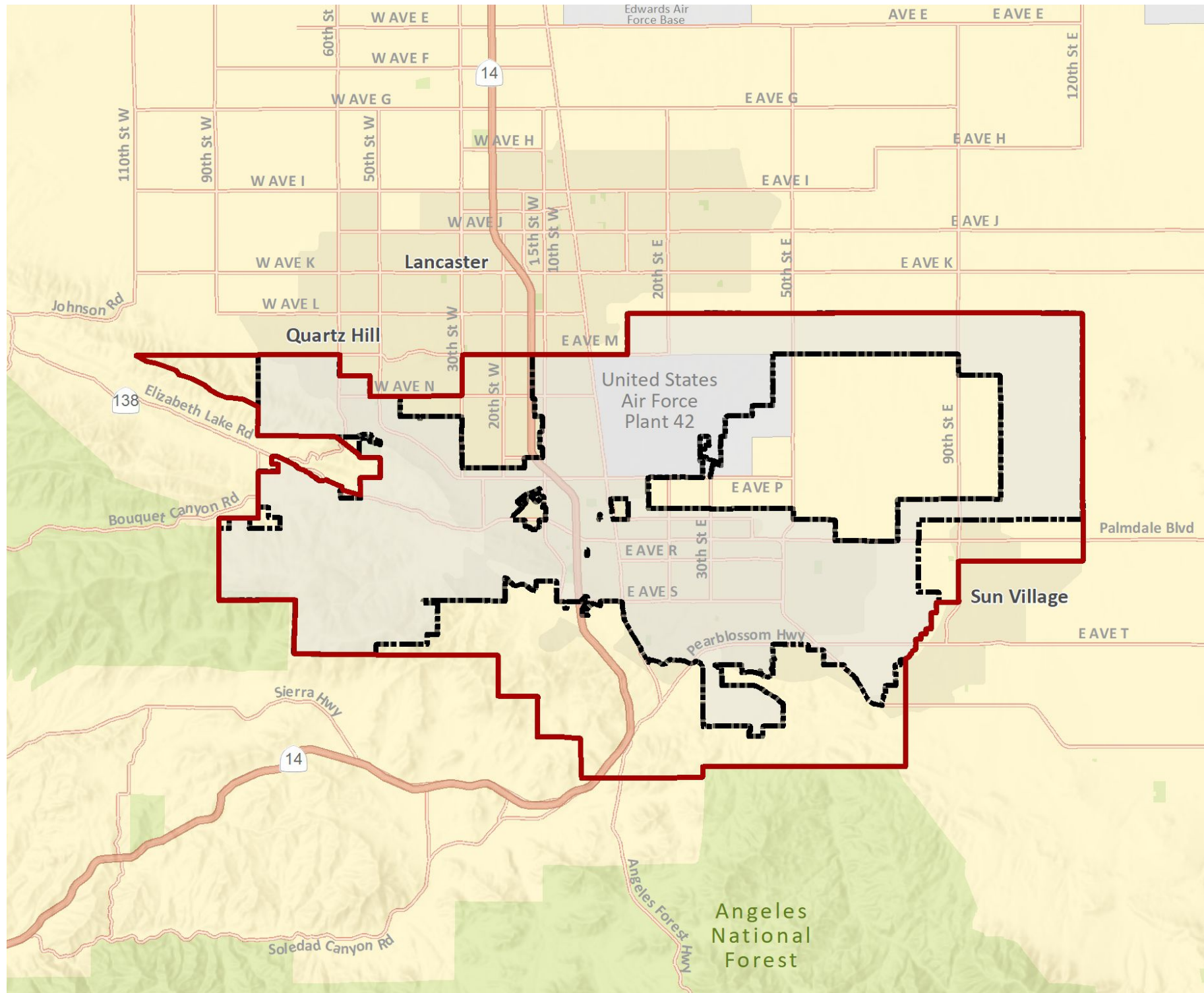
### Unincorporated County Islands

The four incorporated County Islands areas including the area located east of Plant 42, currently owned by Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) measuring 16,381 acres (or 25.6 square miles); Desert View Highlands which is recognized as a census-designated place, entirely developed with residential homes, commercial uses, and two elementary schools, spanning 273 acres; a small area north of Avenue Q and east of 3rd Street East that encompasses a mobile home park and vacant land; and 118 acres of duplexes, light industrial, and vacant parcels in an area bounded by East Avenue Q, Sierra Highway, 10th Street East, and East Avenue P-8. .

1. City land surrounding a pocket of County land is commonly referred to as a County Island.

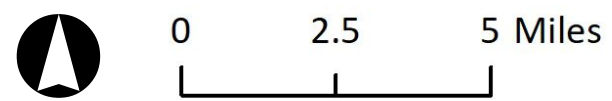


Aerial View of Palmdale

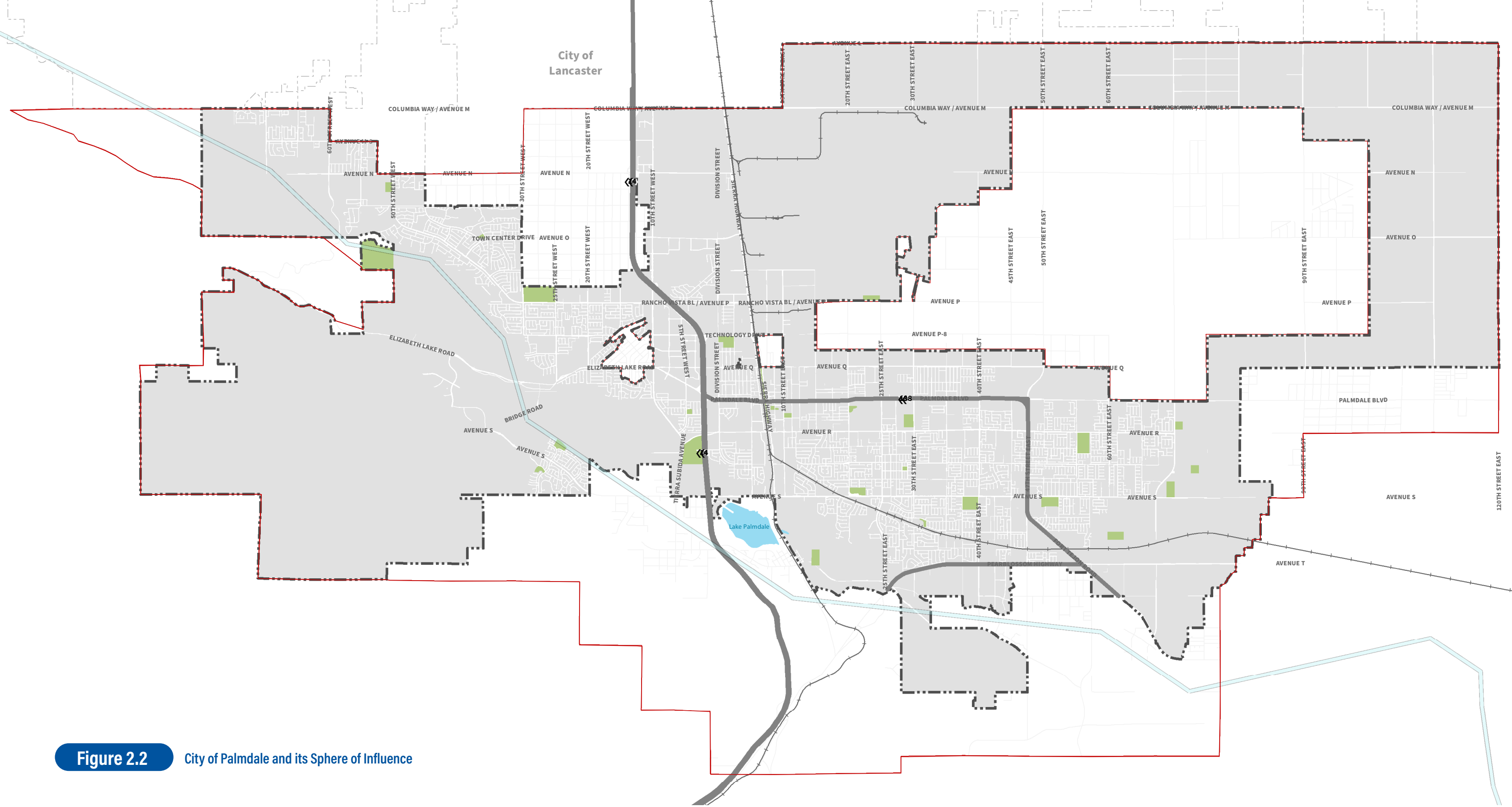


**Figure 2.1** Regional Location

- ★ California Aqueduct
- City Boundary
- ▭ Sphere of Influence

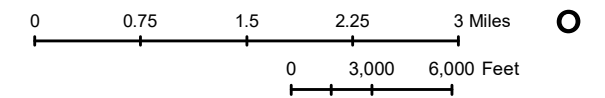


Source: ESRI and its Licensors © 2021. Additional data provided by Los Angeles County LAFCO, 2014.



**Figure 2.2** City of Palmdale and its Sphere of Influence

- City Boundary
- Sphere of Influence
- California Aqueduct
- Major Highway/Arterials
- + Railroad
- Water Body
- Park



Data Sources: City of Palmdale GIS data; World Terrain Base, 2015 ESRI, USGS, NOAA.

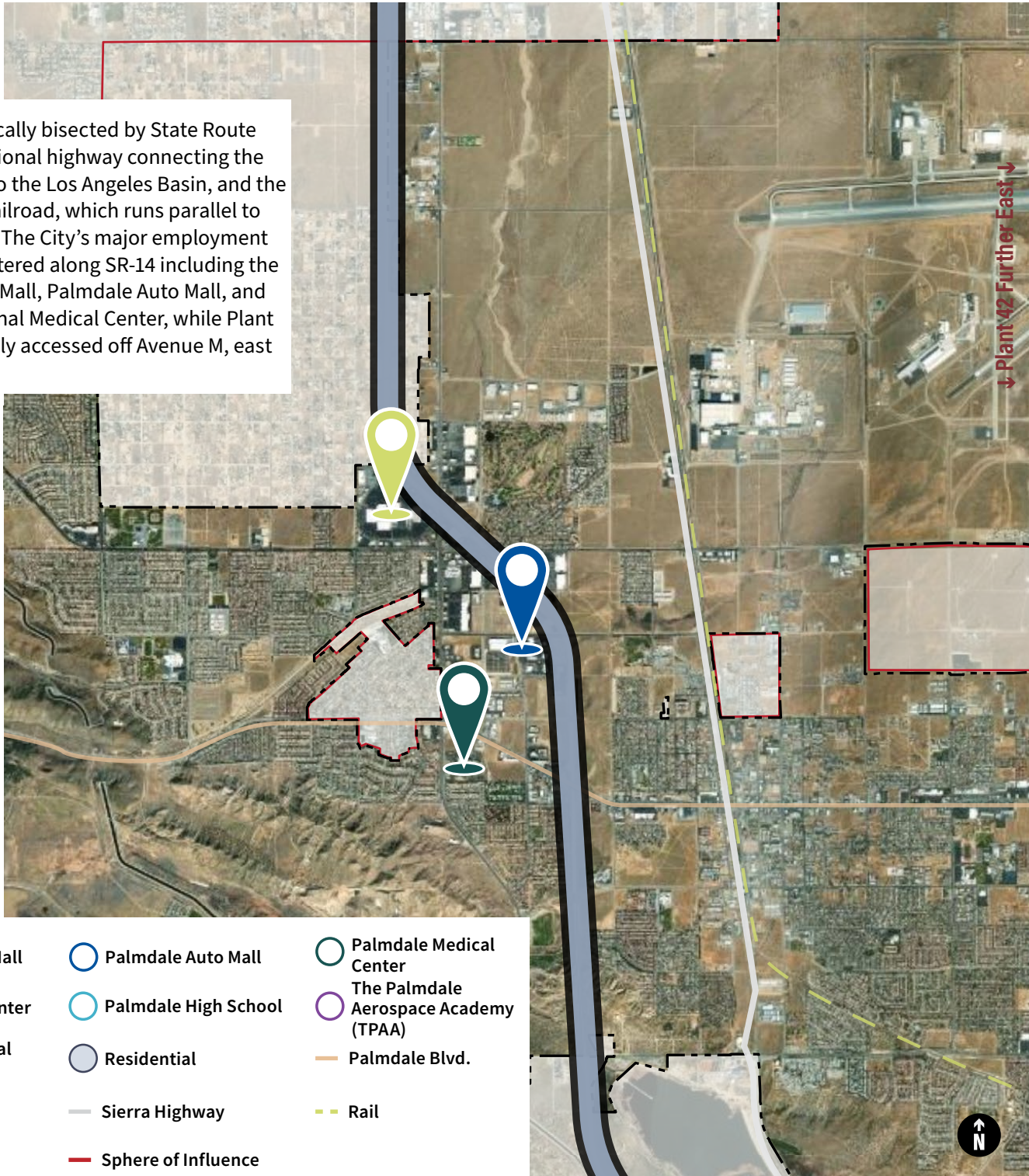
Produced by Raimi + Associates  
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# City Structure

Palmdale is an auto-oriented city, where many of the key destinations are located near major thoroughfares and highways.

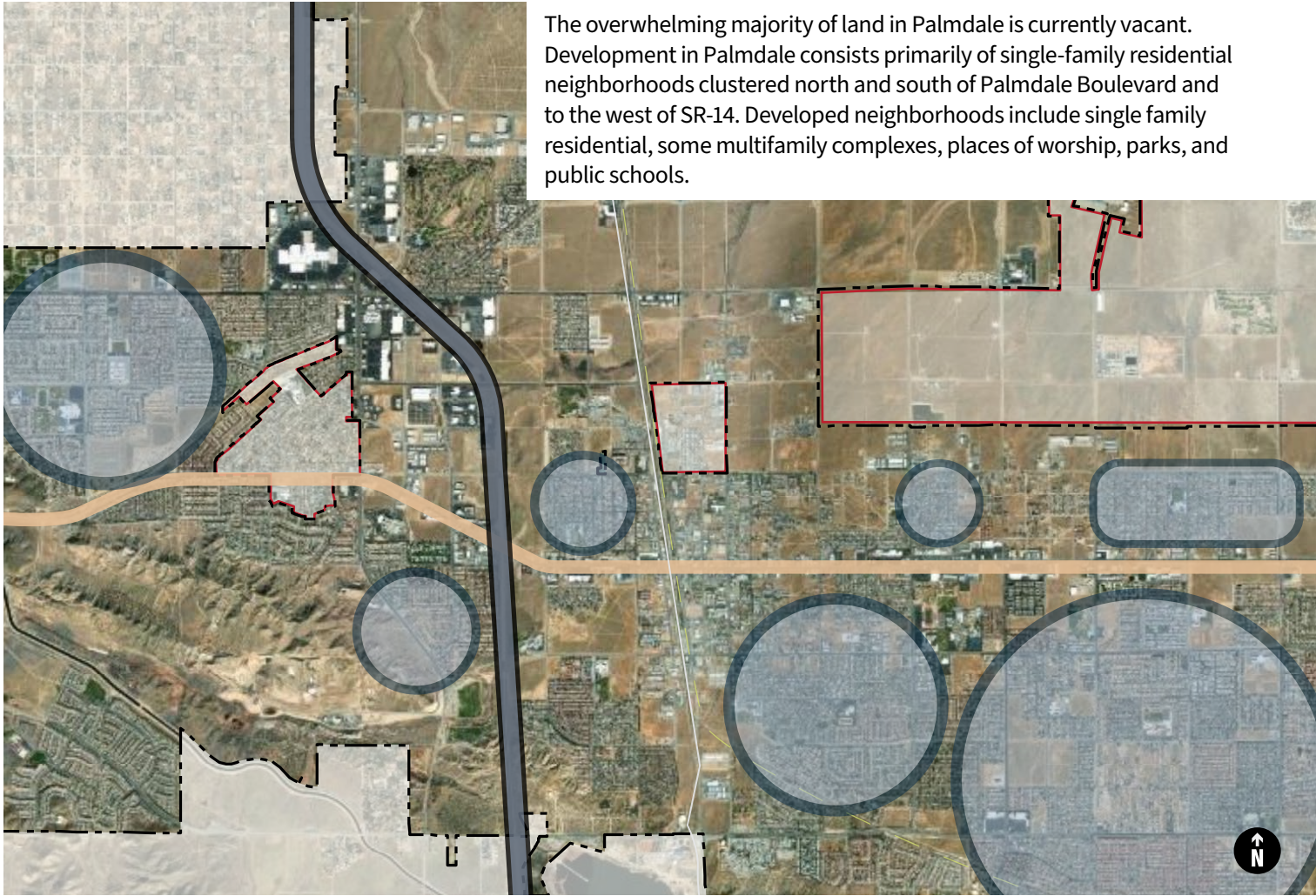
The City is vertically bisected by State Route 14 (SR-14), a regional highway connecting the Mojave Desert to the Los Angeles Basin, and the Union Pacific Railroad, which runs parallel to Sierra Highway. The City's major employment centers are clustered along SR-14 including the Antelope Valley Mall, Palmdale Auto Mall, and Palmdale Regional Medical Center, while Plant 42 is conveniently accessed off Avenue M, east of SR-14.



- Antelope Valley Mall
- Palmdale Auto Mall
- Palmdale Medical Center
- City Hall/Civic Center
- Palmdale High School
- The Palmdale Aerospace Academy (TPAA)
- Office/Commercial Space
- Residential
- Palmdale Blvd.
- State Route 14 (SR-14)
- Sierra Highway
- Rail
- City Boundary
- Sphere of Influence



The City's namesake thoroughfare, Palmdale Boulevard, is home to much of the City's local retail, office, service-related businesses, and City government offices. Palmdale Boulevard is designated as State Route 138



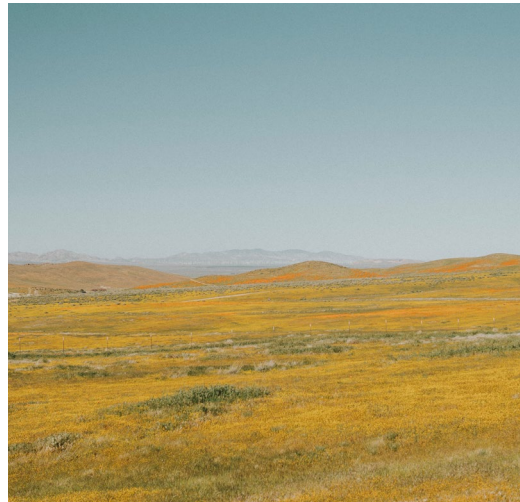
The overwhelming majority of land in Palmdale is currently vacant. Development in Palmdale consists primarily of single-family residential neighborhoods clustered north and south of Palmdale Boulevard and to the west of SR-14. Developed neighborhoods include single family residential, some multifamily complexes, places of worship, parks, and public schools.



# A Brief History of Palmdale

## Distant Past

Thousands of years ago, the Antelope Valley was a major trade route for Native Americans traveling from Arizona and New Mexico to California's coast.



## 1800's–Early 1900's

Modern settlement of Palmdale began in the mid-1800s fueled by the gold rush, cattle ranching, arrival of stagecoaches, and completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad line in 1876. Serious population growth did not occur until the California aqueduct was completed in 1913, which attracted a substantial number of farmers.



## 1960's

Palmdale became the first community in the Antelope Valley to incorporate, in 1962, with the incorporation of 1,300 acres of land around the present-day civic center.

By 1965 the new city had annexed 20 square miles of land and industry was thriving. Many investors purchased large quantities of land, including the 17,750 acres purchased by the Los Angeles Airports Division.



## 2000's

Since 2000, a voter-approved tax has funded major park and recreation expansions, including the Palmdale Amphitheater, two new pools, other recreation buildings, satellite library and DryTown Water Park. Downtown revitalization efforts included hundreds of new senior housing units, a new senior center, and expanded open space. A third high school was established in 2003, Knight High School. A Los Angeles County sheriff station opened in July 2006, the largest in Los Angeles County. Two additional fire stations have been built, one on the east side and one on the west side of town.

## 1980's-1990's

The 1980s and 1990s were the decades that really started to define Palmdale's transformation. Newly constructed affordable, single-family housing caused a dramatic spike in population. The City, like its northern neighbor Lancaster, became a bedroom community for those employed in the Los Angeles basin. In 1980, Palmdale's population was 12,227. By 1990, it had grown to 68,842. In 1991, the Palmdale Auto Center (today known as the Palmdale Auto Mall) and the Antelope Valley Mall opened, which drew regional visitors and employed hundreds of local workers.

In the 1990s a dramatic increase in families moving to Palmdale from the Los Angeles basin had unanticipated consequences as crime notably worsened. In response, the multifamily zoning code explicitly discouraged middle density housing (to discourage lower-income residents), in lieu of large single-family dwellings. Due to the lack of affordable middle housing options (townhomes, apartments, duplexes, etc.), many large single-family homes are rented on a by-room basis.



# Palmdale Today

The City’s growth pattern over the last twenty years has brought together expanding residential communities, a large-scale aerospace industry, warehouse and logistics related businesses, and manufacturing companies. Despite growth and denser development in some areas of the City, the landscape also includes urban sprawl and rural communities. The City’s recent shift to district elections has signaled the importance of recognizing the unique needs and priorities of each of the five voting districts across Palmdale.

While Palmdale retains some elements of its early agricultural past, its economic base is primarily supported by aerospace and defense industries. The City is at a critical juncture in its history; having been hard hit by the Great Recession of 2007-2009, the City has begun to recover and has the potential to capitalize upon certain opportunities that could change its economic trajectory. Major transformative projects anticipated to occur over the next two decades include the planned California High Speed Rail connecting Palmdale to the rest of the State, the Brightline West train from Las Vegas to Palmdale, and the potential start of commercial air service to the new Palmdale Airport. At a time when land elsewhere in Southern California is becoming increasingly scarce, Palmdale may also be well-positioned to capture an increasing share of regional growth.



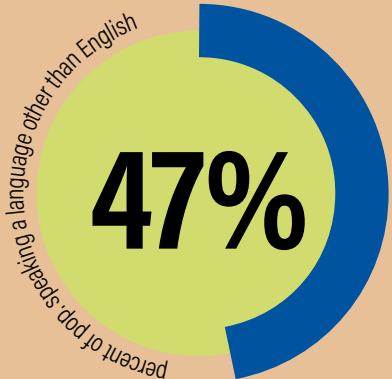
# Community Snapshot

The 2020 Census estimated a population of 169,450 for the City of Palmdale. Collectively, the population of Antelope Valley (including the City of Lancaster and surrounding unincorporated communities) exceeds half a million residents.

The residents of Palmdale make-up a culturally rich and diverse population. While English is the most common language spoken, more than 47% of residents speak a language other than English at home<sup>2</sup>. Spanish is a widely used first or second language.

To capture the local social fabric of the City, the following community profile was developed with data from the 2020 American Community Survey. The data below provides a snapshot of the City today and identifies key considerations for the General Plan goals and policies.

**169,450**  
total pop. of the City of Palmdale



## Community Profile



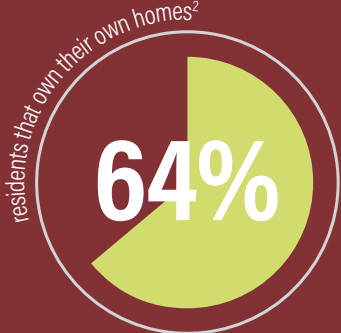
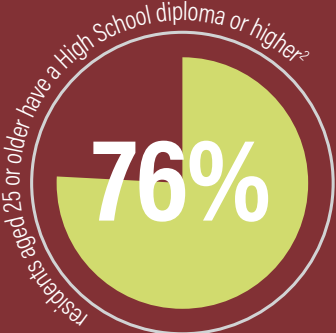
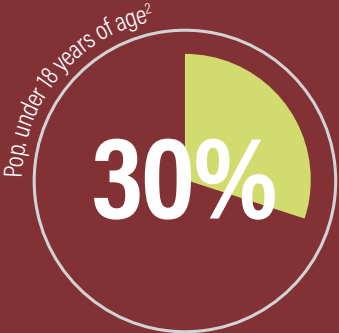
**42,687**  
Households<sup>2</sup>



**3.58 Persons**  
Per Household<sup>2</sup>



Mean travel time for workers aged 16 or older to work<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> 2016-2020 American Community Survey: Quick Facts for Palmdale, California