

TO: Members of the Planning Commission
FROM: General Plan Update Team
DATE: September 23, 2009
SUBJECT: General Plan Final Draft

Purpose

The final draft of the General Plan and corresponding Implementation Plans are being presented for your review. These elements were prepared with input from the public, and other various Commissions of the City of Torrance.

The purpose of this workshop is to review the final drafts of the General Plan Elements and to receive comments from the Planning Commission and the public. On October 14, 2009, staff will be bringing forward the General Plan and Environmental Impact Report for your consideration followed by a Public Hearing conducted by the Planning Commission on October 28, 2009 to consider and make recommendations on the draft General Plan and draft Environmental Impact Report to the City Council.

The General Plan Consultant, Hogle Ireland, will give a presentation on the General Plan Process, Planning Commission role, overview of the General Plan Elements and next steps.

History of General Plan process

Since its beginning in 2004, the General Plan process has included 18 Planning Commission General Plan Workshops. Input has also been received from various other City Commissions, including the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission, Traffic Commission, Community Services Commission, Library Commission, Youth Council, Commission on Aging, Parks and Recreation Commission, Cultural Arts Commissions, Water Commission and the Disaster Council. In addition, meetings were held with a number Homeowners Associations and with the Coalition of Homeowner Associations and one-on-one interviews were conducted with a number of Council Members, business people and residents of the City. Some of the ideas and concerns raised at these meetings included:

Land Use – Preserving neighborhood character was a major concern. In recognition of this, with input provided by the Coalition of homeowners the City was divided into discrete neighborhoods and the special characteristics of each area were highlighted. Maintaining a balanced community and strengthening the industrial base were also areas of concern. The City was analyzed in early meetings and areas of transition or blight were identified; these areas later became the focus areas. Accommodating hospital expansion and future health care needs resulted in the Hospital-Medical land use designation and the concept of the hospital “sphere of influence”.

Circulation/Infrastructure—Much concern was expressed regarding anticipated increases in traffic and additional burdens on streets and roadways by new development. Alternative modes of transportation, including transit, pedestrian and bicycle were discussed as were mobility and transportation needs for seniors and the disabled. Potential roadway system levels of service enhancements as well as maintaining appropriate for utility and infrastructure systems (water, sewage, storm water, energy) were also areas of concern.

Community Resources—This element, which is comprised of the former Conservation, Open Space and Parks and Recreation elements includes policies for historic preservation, which was a key area of interest. Climate change, air quality, and green House Gas legislation (AB 32, SB 375) as well as Green/Sustainable development and low impact development have received greater emphasis based not only on community interest but also on current state mandates regarding these areas. Maintaining level of service and public access to the City's Park, Recreation and Community Facilities as well as protecting open space and wildlife habitats were areas brought up as important to the community during the workshops.

Safety Element—In discussing the Safety Element, Disaster preparedness, Emergency response and Airport and railroad impacts and safety were the key issues.

Noise Element-- Noise from airport and train operations remain a concern for residents as does construction and leafblower noise and roadway and traffic noise.

Housing Element-- The need for affordable housing units (rental & for sale), both for the general population and for special needs groups such as seniors, the disabled, and homeless was a key issue, with strong feelings on both sides of the issue. Meeting future housing needs for all income groups and maintaining a Jobs-Housing balance were also areas of discussion and dissention.

Notable changes

Some of the changes in the new General Plan as a result of community input, analysis of State and Federal requirements and analysis of existing and projected needs and conditions include:

Creation of the Residential-Office land use designation to allow less intense office use, mixed-use development and multiple-family housing adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods.

Creation of the Hospital Medical land use designation for the orderly expansion of hospital and medical facilities for Torrance Memorial and Little Company of Mary hospitals.

The elimination of the Local Commercial designation and incorporation of parcels previously designated as Local Commercial into General Commercial and Residential

Residential Office, thereby providing greater flexibility in land use and while discouraging incompatible land uses.

Modification of the allowable density range for the Medium Density Residential designation from 18-28 dwelling units per acre to 18-31 dwelling units per acre, to coincide with State guidelines allowing a presumption of credit for land so designated towards low-income unit requirements.

Consolidation of the Conservation, Open Space, and Parks & Recreation elements into the Community Resources Element.

Addressing of green house gas emissions and climate change in greater detail, as required by the State.

Identification of six Residential Neighborhood Districts each defined with their own set of distinct neighborhood characteristics. They include North Torrance, Old Torrance, Central Torrance, West Torrance, South Torrance, and Hillside.

Designation of seven study areas identified in community workshops as either transitional, non-functional or blighted. These seven areas, comprising less than 2% of the total land area of the City, are the areas proposed for changes in land use designation, either to recognize existing patterns, to allow for development more in keeping with surrounding conditions or to encourage redevelopment of blighted areas.

The changes incorporated into the Draft General Plan are intended to help the City to meet State and Federal Mandates, including the requirement for a Certified Housing Element, in such a way that the integrity of the City as a whole is maintained while still recognizing the need to plan for future growth in a careful and managed way.

Prepared by,


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Respectfully submitted,


Ted Semaan
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Attachments

1. Final Draft General Plan (limited distribution)
2. Responses to Public Comment from workshops on Draft General Plan Elements
3. General Plan Workshops and Pubic Outreach Efforts

Responses to Public Comment from Workshops on Draft General Plan Elements.

In response to a request from the Commission regarding tracking of public input, staff has provided the following list of comments and responses. Some grouping has occurred with common topics.

Comment:

Add Triangle Park at Cota & Engracia and the open space at Border & Dominguez to the Special Use Properties/Facilities page CR-17.

Response: Triangle Park will be added. Border & Dominguez is being further researched to determine if it will be added to list.

Comment:

Additional natural habitat and wildlife areas should be acknowledged in General Plan. These include: Entradero Park, Henrietta Sump, Los Arboles Park, Torrance Beach, and Walteria Detention Basin

Response: These areas were included on page CR-54.

Comment:

Explore adding the acreage of athletic fields/tennis courts at public schools to the City's recreational resources.

Response: While school facilities are a useful form of recreational resources, typically only City Owned recreation property is accounted for in the General Plan.

Comment:

Explore feasibility of a land bank system whereby land is acquired for future recreational use.

Response: Within the Implementation Program, Page A-37, the land bank system is included.

Comment:

Determine whether the Methane Gas sites listed in the Safety Element are sites where methane gas is known to accumulate or places where explosions have occurred as a result of methane gas accumulation.

Response: According to the Fire Department Hazardous Material office, the City of Torrance has not had a methane explosion, nor a methane accumulation problem.

Comment:

In discussions of the Torrance Municipal Airport, helicopters should be listed along with single and twin-engine airplanes with regard towards weight limits.

Response: On page S-26, the word "plane" will be changed to "Aircraft", to encompass Helicopters and the word "helicopters" will be added to the next sentence thereafter.

Comment:

Explore synchronization of traffic signals.

Response: Signal Synchronization is discussed on page CI-25 of the Draft General Plan and is included in the Local Circulation Objectives and Policies beginning on page CI-33.

Comment:

Review a potential shuttle service along Hawthorne Boulevard.

Response: This comment has been forwarded to our Transit Department and beginning on page CI-35, the General Plan discusses alternative forms of transportation; including providing Objectives and Policies on page CI-41.

Comment:

Consider making some major arterials one-way, i.e. Hawthorne Blvd. southbound only and Crenshaw Blvd. northbound only.

Response: This comment has been forwarded to our Transportation Planning Division. The General Plan extensively discusses the Circulation Plan beginning on page CI-11 and discusses Local Circulation Objectives and Policies on page CI-33. There are also lists of Roadway improvements to be completed prior to 2010, and in the Near-Term and Long Term in Tables CI-3 and CI-4.

Comment:

Consider impact of late night train noise.

Response: The Noise Element discusses noise from trains on page N-9. Objective N.2 discussed policies related to transportation related noise, including trains.

Comment:

Draft General Plan mentioned Honda headquarters, but forgot Toyota.

Response: Both headquarters are noted on page LU-59.

Comment:

Note that the Top 10 employers in Torrance Table (LU-4) that these are private sector.

Response: Table updated.

Comment:

Note that at least one of the businesses included in the Table H-10, Top 10 employers in Torrance, no longer exists.

Response: Table is explicitly addressing the year 2007.

Comment:

Define the term "open space" more clearly.

Response: Definition of "open space" is provided in the Glossary page B-12 and further discussion is provided on page CR-5.

Comment:

Include a notation that Torrance was founded in 1912.

Response: Noted in Introduction page 1.3

Comment:

Absence of a listing for Lomita in Table H-1, Population Growth.

Response: Table updated.

Comment:

Table LU-2, should include columns listing the current number of dwelling units and the current population.

Response: This information is included in the Housing Element, page H-12.

Comment:

The General Plan should identify the location of the small strip of land within Torrance designated as MRZ-2, which indicates the presence of mineral deposits.

Response: Location provided page H-72.

Comment:

Concern about allowing mixed use development at a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 1.0. with no provision for development standards.

Response: Due to the nature of mixed use development a higher FAR is required to accommodate the various uses, circulation space, lobby areas, etc. which are characteristic of that type of development. It is important to remember that the General Plan is the long term visioning document for the city, while the Zoning Code is used to implement the General Plan. In that manner it is not typical or appropriate for the General Plan document to include specific development standards. The role of the General Plan is to express the long term vision for the city through the use of Objectives and Policies. The next step of the process will be to revisit the city's Zoning Code and develop standards and update that document as needed.

Comment:

Inadequacy of current parking and open space standards for multi-family residential.

Response: While the General Plan discusses parking and open space and its importance in the community, specific Development Standards for residential projects are included in the Zoning Code and should be reviewed in the context of a Zoning Code Update.

Comment:

Allowable residential Floor Area Ratio (FAR) should be reduced to 0.5, citywide and in Old Torrance.

Response: The General Plan discussed intensity of residential land use in terms of its Density (number of dwelling units per acre). The FAR is a Development Standard and should be reviewed in the context of a Zoning Code Update.

General Plan Update Workshops and Public Outreach Efforts

18 to workshops held to date, between February 2005 to August 2008

- [Workshop 1: Introducing the General Plan](#) **February 23, 2005**
- [Workshop 2: Defining the Issues](#) (Residential Subcommittee) **March 9, 2005**
- [Workshop 3: Defining the Issues](#) (Commercial Subcommittee) **March 23, 2005**
- [Workshop 4: Defining the Issues](#) (Historic Preservation-Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission) **April 7, 2005**
- [Workshop 5: Defining the Issues](#) (Circulation Issues) **April 13, 2005**
- [Workshop 6: Defining the Issues](#) (Industrial Subcommittee) **April 27, 2005**

- [Workshop 7: Evaluating Alternatives](#) **July 27, 2005**
- [Workshop 8: Evaluating Alternatives](#) **August 24, 2005**
- [Workshop 9: Evaluating Alternatives](#) **September 14, 2005**

- [Workshop 10: Data Review](#) **February 22, 2006**

- [Workshop 11: Data Review](#) **March 8, 2006**
- [Workshop 12: Goals and Policies](#) **March 22, 2006**
- [Workshop 13: Goals and Policies](#) **April 26, 2006**
- [Workshop 14: Goals and Policies](#) **May 10, 2006**
- [Workshop 15: Draft General Plan](#) **January 30, 2008** Community Resources and Safety Elements
- [Workshop 16: Draft General Plan](#) **April 23, 2008** Noise and Circulation Elements
- [Workshop 17: Draft General Pan](#) **July 9, 2008** Land Use Element
- [Workshop 18: Draft Housing Element](#) **August 27, 2008** Housing Element

Public outreach efforts

Notification by mail (330) sent to:

- 28 active homeowners associations
- Commission on Aging
- Cultural Arts Commission
- Development Impact Fee (DIF) notification list
- Environmental Quality & Energy Conservation Commission
- General Plan workshop attendees and interested parties
- League of Women Voters
- Parks & Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission
- Save Historic Old Torrance
- Traffic Commission
- Water Commission

Publications

- CitiCable 3 advertisements
- Daily Breeze legal advertisements
- General Plan Update Newsletter
- General Plan Update website <http://www.tornet.com/8691.htm>
- Notification e-mail 120+ individuals
- Torrance Seasons articles
- Water Bill Notification

Meetings, interviews, and community events

- June 4, 2005 Community Open House at the City Yard
- In 2005, the consultant interviewed the City Council, city executives staff, homeowners coalition representative, school district official, various members of the business community, and the League of Women Voters
- Neighborhood meetings with homeowner association groups:
 - March 28, 2007 Homeowners Coalition
 - November 7, 2007 Seaside HOA, Riviera HOA, Hillside HOA
 - November 8, 2007 North Torrance
 - November 14, 2007 Old Torrance Neighborhood Association, Madrona HOA
 - November 26, 2007 Southeast Torrance HOA, Southwood Riviera HOA, Southwood Sunray HOA
 - November 27, 2007 West Torrance HOA and Southwood HOA

Commission outreach efforts in addition to Planning Commission Workshops

- Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission 12/6/07, 8/7/08
- Traffic Commission 12/5/05, 2/6/06, 3/6/06, 4/3/06, 12/3/07, 3/3/08
- Community Services Commission
- Library Commission 12/10/07
- Youth Council 1/16/08
- Commission on Aging 1/8/08
- Parks and Recreation Commission 12/12/07
- Cultural Arts Commissions 11/19/07
- Water Commission
- Disaster Council 2/27/08