3. Project Description

3.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The City of Torrance is in southwestern Los Angeles County, in the highly urbanized South Bay region. The South Bay consists of the cities and communities of Compton, Gardena, Carson, Redondo Beach, Palos Verdes Estates, Lomita, Rolling Hills Estates, Rancho Palos Verdes, San Pedro, Wilmington, Harbor City, portions of Long Beach, and Torrance, as shown in Figures 3-1 and 3-2.

Communities directly adjacent to Torrance include Rolling Hills Estates and Palos Verdes Estates to the south, Redondo Beach to the east, Gardena and Lawndale to the north, and Carson to the west. The Pacific Ocean forms a small portion of the western border of the City. Interstate 405 (I-405) transects the northern portion of the City, and provides regional access, along with I-110.

3.2 STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The following objectives have been established for the City of Torrance General Plan Update project and will aid decision makers in their review of the project and associated environmental impacts:

- To provide a comprehensive update to the City's General Plan that establishes the goals and policies that create a built environment that fosters the enjoyment, financial stability and well being of the entire community.
- To designate the distribution, location, balance and extent of land uses including residential, commercial, industrial and open space.
- To ensure that future development will occur consistent with the high standards that the City has set and that make Torrance a desirable place to live.
- To preserve the City's valuable industrial core and jobs base.
- To accommodate a diverse range of commercial uses at locations throughout Torrance to meet the local shopping and service needs of residents, and to create opportunities for revenue generation at regional centers.
- To encourage the revitalization and conversion of older, under-performing, blighted commercial and industrial areas.
- To support, on a limited basis, mixed-use development approached where such development is compatible with surrounding uses.
- To ensure that future growth will be respectful towards the City's cultural resources and architectural heritage, and to encourage preservation of Old Torrance's distinct character and unique characteristics, including the street layout and structures.
- To encourage alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, bicycling and transit.

- To seek ways to enhance the level of service of the citywide roadway system while minimizing traffic intrusion into residential neighborhoods.

- To continue to maintain a high level of public services to the community by protecting and enhancing public resources such as schools, libraries, the airport, hospitals, parks and open space, and community centers.

3.3 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

"Project," as defined by the CEQA Guidelines, means "the whole of an action, which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and that is any of the following: (1)…enactment and amendment of zoning ordinances, and the adoption and amendment of local General Plans or elements thereof pursuant to Government Code Sections 65100–65700." (14 Cal. Code of Reg. 15378[a]). This DEIR compares the buildout potential for the proposed land use plan with the existing baseline condition (see Chapter 4, *Environmental Setting*).

3.3.1 Existing General Plan

The current general plan for the City of Torrance was adopted in 1992. The existing land use map consists of various land use designations, which can be seen in Figure 3-3, *Existing General Plan Land Use*. Broad categories of these designations include residential, commercial, recreation/open space, industrial, public/quasi-public and miscellaneous. Tables 3-1 and 3-2 summarize the residential and nonresidential buildout estimates of the current *General Plan*, respectively. The tables show that Torrance is primarily a residential city (5,092 acres out of 13,245 acres).

Table 3-1
Residential Buildout Estimates
Current General Plan

Land Use Designation	Estimated Density (du/acre)	Acres[1]	Dwelling Units	Persons per[2] Household	Population[3]
Residential					
Low Density	6.8	3,998	27,189	2.63	69,506
Low Medium Density	13.5	426	5,751	2.63	14,702
Medium Density	21.00	591	12,401	2.63	31,700
Medium High/High Density	33.00	262	8,643	2.63	22,094
High Density	45.00	5	207	2.63	529
General Commercial			14		36
Commercial Center			272		695
Subtotal		**5,252**	**54,476**		**139,262**

Source: 1996 General Plan Land Use Map and subsequent amendments as incorporated in GIS database/mapping developed by Dudek for the City (2005)

Table 3-2
Nonresidential Land Buildout Estimates
Current General Plan

Land Use Designation	Estimated Intensity (FAR)[1]	Acres	Square Footage
Commercial			
Local Commercial	0.30	236	3,078,000
General Commercial	0.35	668	10,177,000
Commercial Center	0.40	402	7,001,000
Residential Office	0.5 FAR/23.25 du/ac	41	441,000
Industrial			
Heavy Industrial	0.10	859	3,745,000
Light Industrial	0.45	533	10,440,000
Business Park	0.45	929	18,218,000
Public/Quasi-Public/Open Space			
Public/Quasi-Public/Open Space	0.15	1,241	8,109,000
Airport	0.01	284	124,000
Other		72.5	
Total		5,254	60,892,000

Notes:
[1] FAR = Floor Area Ratio.
[2] Expected FAR figures are based on established development patterns for newer uses.
[3] Solely commercial uses in the general commercial designation are limited to a maximum FAR of 0.6. To enable development of mixed commercial and residential projects within this designation a maximum FAR of 1.0 will apply to mixed-use projects only.
[4] For nonhospital uses in this designation such as medical related offices, general office, and other nonmedical uses, a maximum FAR of 0.6 will apply. The maximum FAR may be exceeded for a full-service hospital and related uses with the approval of the planning commission or city council.

3.3.2 Description of the Project

The proposed project is an update to the City of Torrance General Plan. This update involves a revision to the land use map and a revision to elements required by the State of California and two additional optional elements. Tables 3-3 and 3-4 show the residential and nonresidential buildout estimates for the proposed general plan update.

Table 3-3
Residential Buildout Estimates
Proposed General Plan

Land Use Designation	Estimated Density (units/acre)	Acres	Dwelling Units	Persons per Household	Population
Residential					
Low Density	6.8	4,002	27,210	2.623	69,559
Low-Medium Density	13.5	420	5,666	2.623	14,484
Medium Density	23.25	606	14,085	2.623	36,006
Medium-High Density	33.0	274	9,039	2.623	23,106
High Density	45.0	5	207	2.623	529
Subtotal		**5,307**	**56,207**		**143,684**
Mixed-Use					
General Commercial	0.35 FAR		42	2.623	107
Commercial Center	0.4 FAR		816	2.623	2,086
Residential Office	0.5 FAR/23.25 du/ac		471	2.623	1,204
Subtotal			**1,329**		**3,397**
Total			**57,536**		**147,081**

Assumptions:
a. Persons per household figure of 2.623 is from California Department of Finance data, 2006.
b. Residential occupancy rate of 97.46% is from California Department of Finance data, 2006.
c. FAR for public/quasi-public/open space and airport land uses is not considered an appropriate measure of the intensity of impacts. Expected intensity (FAR) is for analysis purposes only.
d. Density (du/ac) for the residential land use designations is based on 75% of maximum allowed density. As Torrance is mostly built out and development has not, and is not expected to, reach the maximum allowed intensity over the life of the plan, the 75% figure is used to estimate future conditions.
e. Expected FAR figures are based on established development patterns for newer uses.
f. Residential office assumes 50% residential, 50% office.

Notes:
[1] For the low density residential designation, a density of 6.8 dwelling units per acre is expected based on existing conditions and on the limited likelihood that densities in these neighborhoods will increase over the life of the General Plan. All other residential land use designations are based on 75% of maximum allowed density.
[2] Dwelling units in the commercial center and general commercial designations are based on housing units created within the Hawthorne Boulevard Specific Plan Corridor between the 10-year period from the specific plan's inception in 1996 to 2006. The calculation assumes that the same number of units created in that time period will be created in the next two 10-year periods (20 years). (Figure = current units + units created in the next 20 years.)

Table 3-4
Nonresidential Land Buildout Estimates
Proposed General Plan

Land Use Designation	Estimated Intensity (FAR)[1]	Acres	Square Footage
Commercial			
General Commercial	0.35	825	12,584,000
Commercial Center	0.40	402	7,001,000
Residential Office	0.5 FAR/23.25 du/ac	41	441,000
Industrial			
Heavy Industrial	0.10	859	3,740,000
Light Industrial	0.45	527	10,338,000
Business Park	0.45	881	17,271,000
Public/Quasi-Public/Open Space			
Public/Quasi-Public/Open Space	0.15	1,218	7,960,000
Hospital/Medical	1.0	62	2,692,000
Airport	0.01	313	136,000
Total		**5,128**	**62,163,000**

Notes:
FAR = Floor Area Ratio.
[1] Expected FAR figures are based on established development patterns for newer uses.
[2] Solely commercial uses in the general commercial designation are limited to a maximum FAR of 0.6. To enable development of mixed commercial and residential projects within this designation a maximum FAR of 1.0 will apply to mixed-use projects only.
[3] For nonhospital uses in this designation such as medical related offices, general office, and other nonmedical uses, a maximum FAR of 0.6 will apply. The maximum FAR may be exceeded for a full service hospital and related uses with the approval of the planning commission or city council.

In general, the differences in the buildout estimates between the current and proposed general plans can be summarized in Table 3-5. Overall, the proposed general plan proposes increases in the commercial, office and industrial square footage in the City.

Table 3-5
Buildout Estimates - Current versus Proposed General Plan

Land Use	Current General Plan	Proposed General Plan	Difference
Residential Units	54,476	57,536	3,060
Population	139,262	147,082	7,820
Nonresidential Square Feet	60,891,740	62,163,561	1,271,821

General Plan Elements

The update of the general plan involves revisions to the current general plan land use map and to elements required by the State of California. The City of Torrance General Plan consists of the land use, circulation and infrastructure, community resources, safety, noise, and housing elements. The project also involves a public outreach program that includes a variety of community-wide and focused public participation components.

- **Land Use Element**: focuses on the built environment of Torrance, laying out the framework for balancing development with broader community aims.

- **Circulation and Infrastructure Element**: addresses issues, goals, and policies related to circulation, traffic management, parking management, public transit, walking, biking and trails, and airports. Water supply, wastewater, storm drainage, and utilities are also discussed.

- **Community Resources Element**: examines both natural resources and the open space and other community resources created, and establishes policies to protect those resources that distinguish and define Torrance. Parks, recreation, open space, community facilities, historic preservation, air quality, water resources and conservation, mineral resources, wildlife protection, energy conservation, aesthetic resources, and sustainable practices are addressed.

- **Safety Element**: identifies hazards present in the community, defines approaches the City has taken to provide proper planning, and discusses emergency responses available to mitigate the hazards. Emergency services, hazards, flood concerns, and geologic and seismic considerations are discussed.

- **Noise Element**: identifies community noise concerns and includes policies and programs to minimize noise impacts in Torrance.

- **Housing Element**: specifies ways in which the housing needs of existing and future residents can be met. Torrance's housing element is updated every five to six years, pursuant to state law.

3.3.3 Physical Development under the Proposed General Plan

Land Use Designations

Figure 3-4, *Proposed Land Use Plan*, illustrates the proposed land use designations. The proposed land use plan contains 14 land designations divided into residential, commercial, industrial, and public categories. Land use designations define the amount, type, and nature of future development that is allowed in a given location of the City.

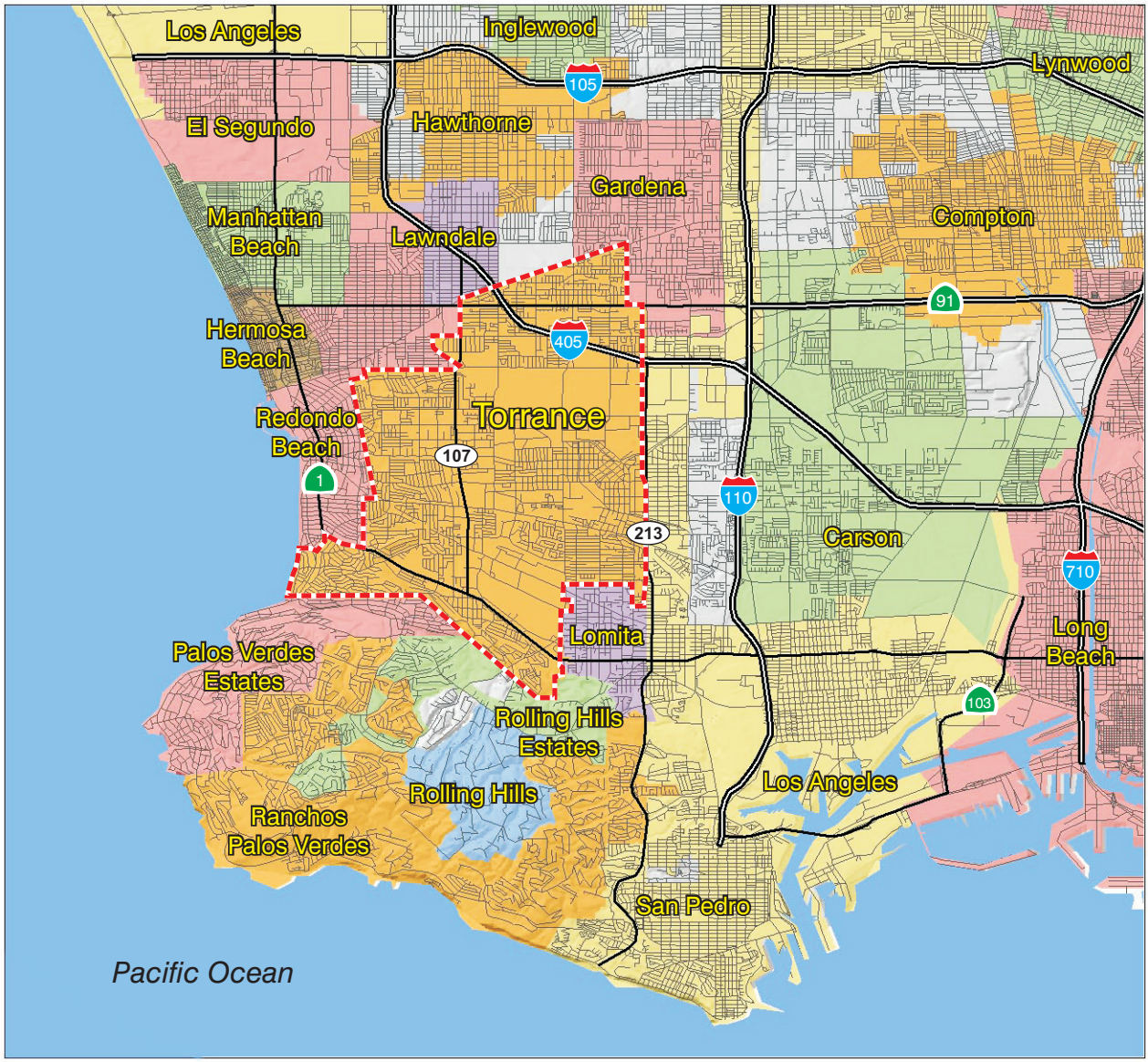
- **Residential:** Five residential land use designations allow for a range of housing types and densities. The City also permits accessory units and nonresidential uses such as schools, parks, child day care, and religious and charitable organizations in these areas, consistent with state law and the Torrance Municipal Code.

- **Commercial:** Three commercial land use designations are designed to support business activity and provide tools to help businesses and districts maximize their economic potential. There are distinctions between commercial areas that serve surrounding neighborhoods and areas that serve the region. The largest concentration of commercial development is in the Del Amo Business District, an area along Hawthorne Boulevard bounded by Torrance Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard.

- **Industrial:** Torrance originally incorporated as a "modern industrial city," and industrial uses remain a large part of the City's identity. Large industrial areas include the Central Manufacturing District, and a second industrial district located in the southern portion of the City. A small concentration of industrial uses can also be found in the East Victor precinct.

- **Public and Medical:** Three land use designations provide for open space, land owned by public agencies and jurisdictions, and land owned by private entities for uses that serve the community, such as utilities.

Regional Vicinity Map



City Boundary

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Citywide Aerial

City Boundary

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Scale (Mile)

Source: Google Earth Pro 2008

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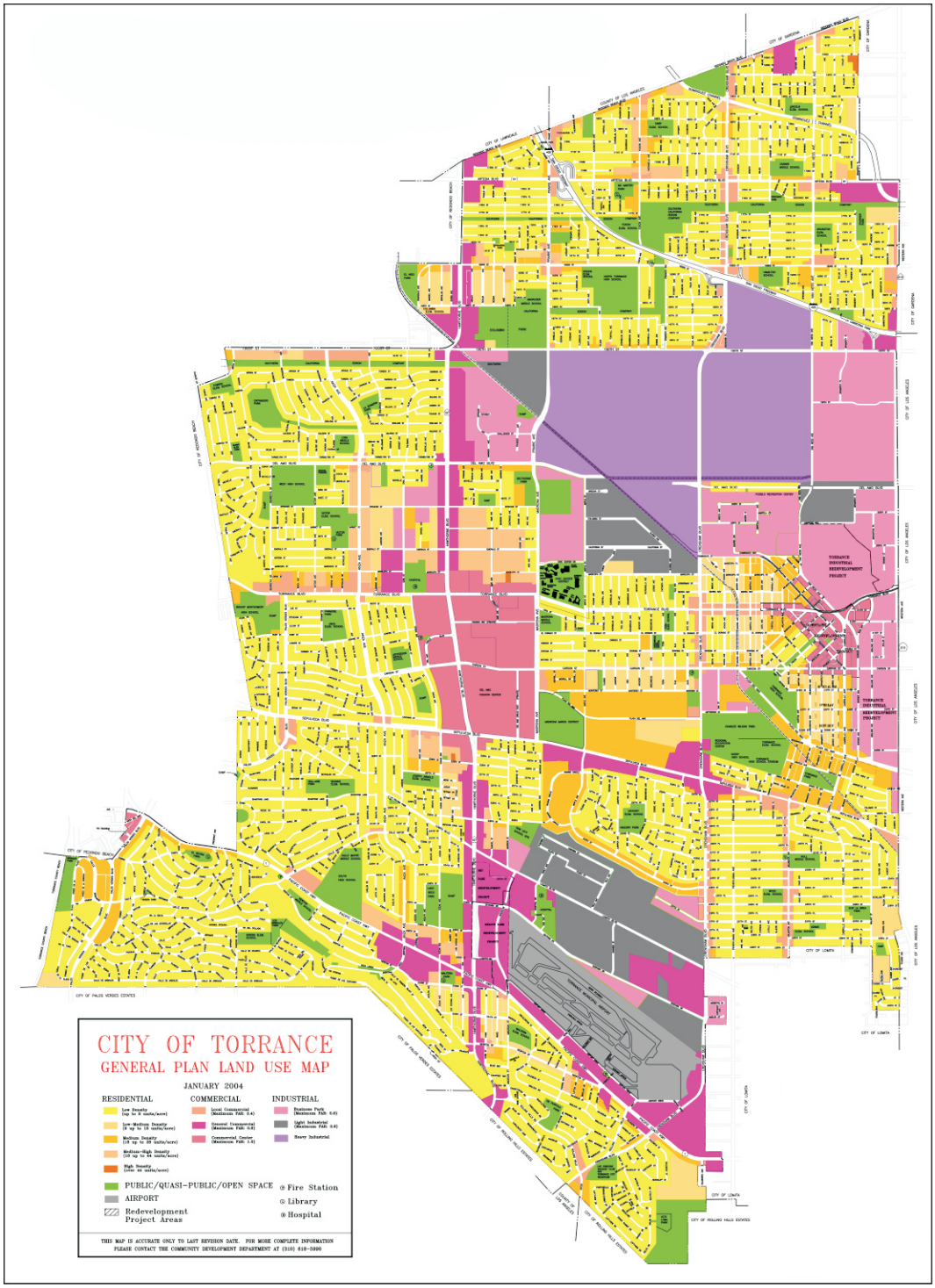
Existing General Plan Land Use



City Boundary

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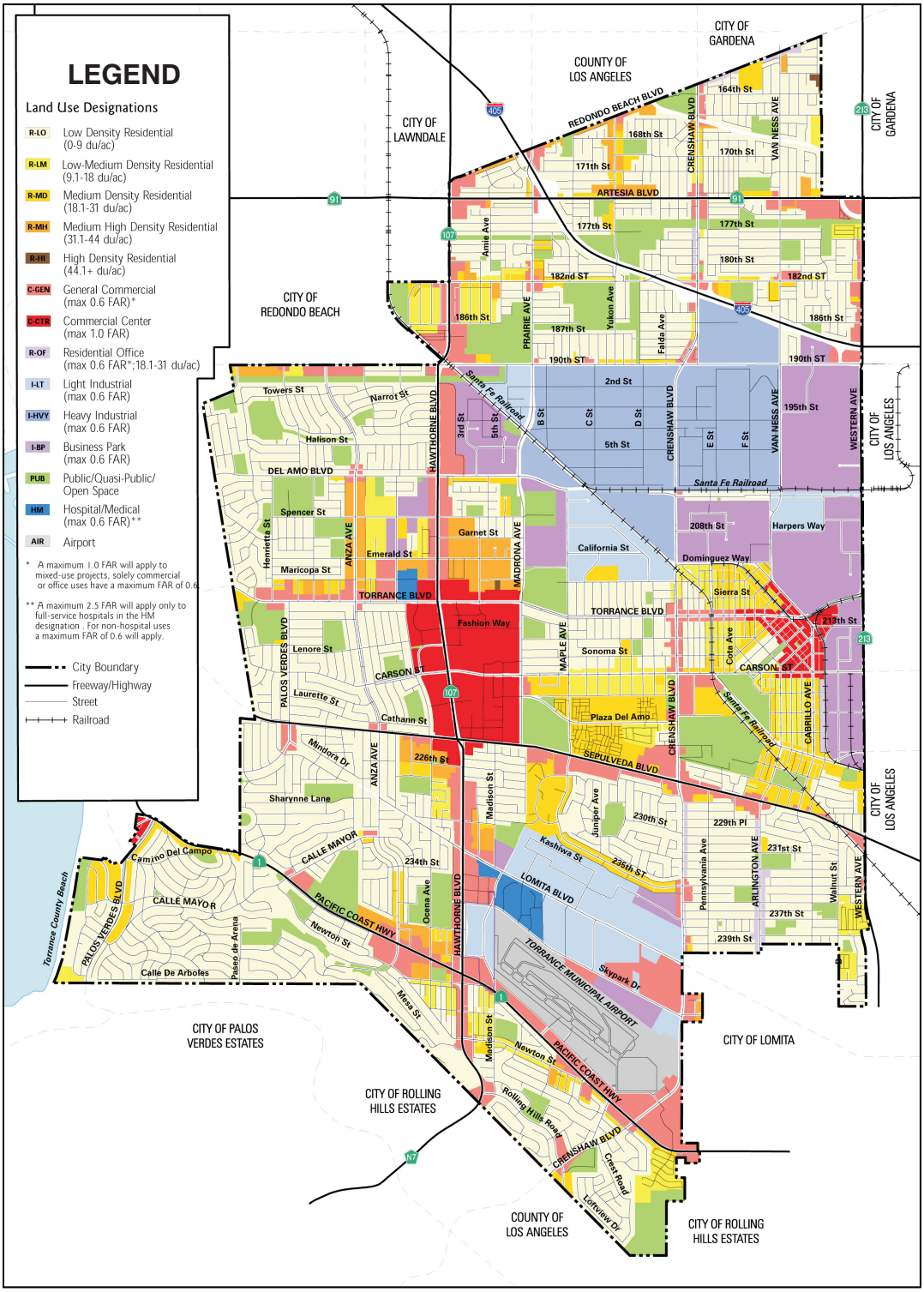
Proposed Land Use Plan



City Boundary

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Study Areas

Seven study areas were identified; however, further analysis revealed that only six of these study areas necessitated land use changes. Altogether, the land use designation changes in the study areas cover less than 1 percent of the total area in the City.

Several of the study areas have been in transition since the adoption of the City's 1992 general plan, and the proposed land use designations reflect land use changes that have occurred since. Land use changes in the study area aim to improve otherwise underused or poorly maintained areas that have not lived up to the potential envisioned in prior general plans.

Study Area 1 – Crenshaw/Amsler

This area consists of approximately 10 acres located at the City's eastern edge. The area is underutilized given its prime location along one of the City's major corridors and its proximity to Torrance Crossroads, a major shopping center. The area contains a mix of older business park and commercial uses.

Study Area 2 – Western Avenue South

Western Avenue forms the City's eastern boundary between Artesia Boulevard and 238th Street, and the study area extends along Western Avenue between Plaza Del Amo and 228th Street. Older offices and industrial and business uses are the predominant land uses along this portion of the Western Avenue corridor. The study area is surrounded on the west, south, and east by residential neighborhoods.

Study Area 3 – Border Avenue

Historically, Border Avenue has supported office and light industrial uses, with several small-lot homes interspersed within. Due to the small lot sizes and the presence of residential uses, the plan to create a business park environment has not been realized. The area is adjacent to a successful industrial district to the east and a residential neighborhood to the west.

Study Area 4 – Western Avenue North

Historical land uses include neighborhood commercial businesses and general commercial uses at major intersections. Issues in this area include the presence of outdated industrial and commercial properties, an influx of newer commercial and residential uses, and a need to develop a clear vision of how the corridor should develop over the next 20 years.

Study Area 5 – Redondo Beach Boulevard

Issues in this study area include the lack of gateways to signify entry to Torrance, shallow parcels, and underutilized commercial properties. The area includes a variety of land uses, including local-serving commercial, regional-service commercial, single-family residential, and institutional.

Study Area 6 – Jefferson/Oak

Historical uses within the study area include business park and heavy industrial. The study area is at the southeast corner of Carson Street and Crenshaw Boulevard, and is bounded by Jefferson Street to the south, and the Burlington Santa Fe railroad to the east.

Study Area 7 – East Victor Precinct

Land use alternatives for this area were proposed; however, they were ultimately withdrawn in acknowledgement that current land uses in this study area functioned effectively. The study area

experienced a transition from business park and industrial uses to commercial, residential, and medical use, which provides the city with employment and tax revenue.

3.4 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

This is a program EIR which examines the potential environmental impacts of the proposed general plan update. This DEIR is also being prepared to address various actions by the City and others to adopt and implement the general plan. It is the intent of the DEIR to enable the City of Torrance, other responsible agencies, and interested parties to evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed project, thereby enabling them to make informed decisions with respect to the requested entitlements. The anticipated approvals required for this project are:

Lead Agency	Action
Torrance City Council	• Certification of the General Plan Update EIR • Adoption of the General Plan
Torrance Planning Commission	• Comment on the General Plan EIR • Recommendation to City Council to adopt any ordinances, guidelines, programs, or other mechanisms that implement General Plan policy • Recommendation to the City Council to adopt the General Plan Update EIR
Other City Board and Commissions	• Review of ordinances, guidelines, programs, or other actions that implement the General Plan and General Plan policy
City Departments	• Adoption of programs or other actions that implement the General Plan and General Plan policy
Responsible Agencies	**Action**
Southern California Association of Governments	• Revision of regional models related to growth and development projections