

**MINUTES OF A GENERAL PLAN WORKSHOP #10
OF THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance General Plan Planning Commission Workshop #10 convened in a regular session at 7:05 p.m. on Wednesday, February 22, 2006, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. FLAG SALUTE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Browning.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Browning, Busch, Drevno, Faulk, Gibson, Horwich, and Chairperson Uchima.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Senior Planning Associate Chun,
Senior Planning Associate Lodan,
Planning Associate Joe,
Environmental Administrator Cessna,
Public Works Director Beste, and
Transportation Manager Semaan.

Chairperson Uchima explained policies and procedures for the meeting.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: WORKSHOP #9, SEPTEMBER 14, 2005

MOTION: Commissioner Faulk moved for the approval of the September 14, 2005 General Plan Workshop #9 meeting minutes as submitted. Commissioner Horwich seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected approval by Commissioners Faulk, Horwich, and Chairperson Uchima, with abstentions by Commissioners Browning, Busch, Drevno, and Gibson. [CITY CLERK NOTE – MINUTES WILL STAND AS RECEIVED.]

5. OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

Chairperson Uchima stated that this and the next General Plan Workshops were intended to help bring new Planning Commissioners up to speed on the General Plan update process and would be largely informal. He welcomed Community Development Department staff members and advised that goals and policies would be discussed at the March 22, 2006 General Plan Workshop.

Senior Planning Associate Lodan introduced staff members and provided background information about the General Plan update process. He noted that new Planning Commissioners have received staff reports, notes, minutes, and correspondence associated with the progress so far.

Senior Planning Associate Chun provided background information regarding the purpose and goals of the General Plan, noting its four main characteristics: physical, comprehensive, long-term, and statement of policy. She discussed General Plan land use designations and policy statements included in the seven mandated elements—land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety—and in the Parks and Recreation optional element. She advised that the Land Use Element was the first priority for the Planning Commission and lays out the broad vision for the City, while the Zoning Ordinance is the primary tool for implementing the General Plan and makes the vision a reality. She reported that the General Plan provides a plan that guides the physical development of the City and outlines land use and circulation as well as environmental, economic, and social goals of the community. She noted that the General Plan was last updated in 1992 and the Housing Element was last amended in 2001. The Housing Element will be updated again after completion of the current General Plan revision.

Environmental Administrator Cessna provided information about the City's Strategic Plan that was formulated in 1996 through a process of extensive community involvement. She reported that the Strategic Plan contains a Vision Statement, a Mission Statement, and a Citizen's Preamble as well as a number of strategic areas of focus with goals for achieving that vision. She noted that the goals and vision contained in the Strategic Plan form a basis for the more specifically focused programs and policies of the General Plan. She stated that the Strategic Plan should be revised every three years and is looked at on a regular basis to ensure that it still reflects what citizens want for their community. She observed that the Strategic Plan should be reviewed when the goals, policies, and programs of the General Plan are being updated.

Planning Associate Joe discussed the General Plan update process and provided an overview of the process to date that has included nine public workshops, an Open House at the City Yard, input from City Commissions and Torrance Youth Council, as well as interviews with City Council members, community leaders, members of the private business sector, and senior staff members. He stated that residents have had, and will continue to have, opportunities to voice their opinions on issues relating to land use, circulation, density, conservation, open space, recreation, noise, green initiatives, economic development, safety, and historic preservation.

He briefly described activities at the nine public workshops and reported that the Planning Commission formed three subcommittees to address specific issues relating to residential, commercial, and industrial land uses to assist in the formulation of goals and policies for each category of land use. He stated that seven focus areas in the City have been identified as transitional and where change is desirable, that these areas represent less than 2% of the total area of the City, and that various options for the areas have been suggested and analyzed.

Senior Planning Associate Lodan reported that in the next few weeks, staff intended to address concerns and questions regarding housing trends as well as provide feedback on how existing General Plan goals and policies have been met. He announced that a representative from Torrance Unified School District would be present at the March 22, 2006 General Plan Workshop to answer questions and address concerns. He advised that a draft General Plan would be brought back for review and additional input prior to conducting an environmental review of the document, with adoption of the plan anticipated in 12 to 18 months.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE CONDITIONS

Public Works Director Beste reported on the City's main three infrastructure systems related to land use: water, sewer, and storm drains. He stated that master plans exist for each system that allows the Department to examine what upgrades might be needed in the future. Referring to the City's water system, he advised that Metropolitan Water District, through their Integrated Resources Plan, has assured that there will be an adequate, safe, and reliable supply and storage of water until 2025. He stated that the Urban Water Management Plan also shows that the City has an adequate supply of water for whatever kinds of growth or change may occur. He noted that the City's water consumption has changed very little in the last 20 years, mainly due to increased conservation efforts. He stated that the Department was continuously looking for ways to diversify water sources and to improve local resources.

Public Works Director Beste reported that the City's sewer system was aging and that the Department's main focus was on repair and updating the lining rather than expanding the size. He stated that occasionally a developer is required to upgrade a lateral to a main line. He explained that much of the storm drain system was built with corrugated metal pipe rather than concrete and therefore repairs were necessary. He discussed the retention basins and the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan for entire watershed management and to reduce the amount of flow that goes directly to the ocean. He noted that Torrance was a built-out City and that there were not major capacity concerns.

In response to Commissioner Busch's inquiry, Transportation Manager Semaan stated that developers can be assessed fees for infrastructure and explained the development impact fee for four categories recently approved by City Council.

Responding to Commissioner Horwich's inquiry, Public Works Director Beste stated that change in land use designation for the seven focus areas would not significantly alter water supply or demand.

Commissioner Gibson received clarification that reclaimed and recycled water are the same.

In response to Commissioner Browning's inquiry, he explained that the City receives its recycled water from Hyperion, that it comes from all of Los Angeles County, and that captured storm drain water is not reused.

7. STATUS OF TRAFFIC STUDY

Transportation Manager Semaan provided an update on the Citywide Traffic Study to determine citywide traffic volumes on City streets and intersections. He stated that this study would provide a foundation for the vehicular component of the Circulation Element of the General Plan. He advised that data has been collected at 170 locations on major arterials and collector roadway segments, noting that overall the volumes are consistent with what they have been the past five years. He reported that the consultant has completed a level of service analysis for the intersections which will provide the opportunity to determine what improvements are necessary to improve level of service where needed. He stated that the consultant was currently preparing a short-range mitigation plan that includes traffic projections with the addition of approved

developments as well as a long-range improvement plan that will reflect any land use changes and growth in the South Bay in general. He advised that, once completed, the Department would be able to utilize the projections to request dedications and improvements from new developments and to allow them to apply for outside funding sources.

In response to Commissioner Browning's inquiry, Transportation Manager Semaan explained that, unless there are right-of-way issues, a developer would be responsible for paying their fair share of necessary improvements if there is significant impact.

Responding to Chairperson Uchima's inquiry, Transportation Manager Semaan explained that there was always potential to improve an intersection in the future as properties recycle, noting that the Citywide Traffic Study will identify what needs to be done to make a level of service more acceptable.

In response to Commissioner Browning's inquiry, he stated that the Citywide Traffic Study would be completed prior to completion of the General Plan update, and that staff was waiting to learn of any forthcoming land use designation changes before making final projections.

Commissioner Busch received clarification that traffic flow of surrounding cities is monitored and reviewed by staff to determine its traffic impact on the City.

8. COMMUNITY INPUT

At 7:58 p.m., Chairperson Uchima welcomed public input.

Robert Feldman, Cathann Street, read and entered into record his letter expressing concerns regarding overdevelopment, the approval process, infrastructure, and local and pass through traffic congestion in the City. He stressed the need to take a more global view when revisiting the overall vision for what a balanced community will look like in 15 to 20 years. He urged the Commission to make a concerted effort to get a wide contingent of all stakeholders involved in the update process.

Tom Brewer, Evalyn Avenue, concurred with Mr. Feldman's sentiments and reminded new Commissioners that a year and a half ago citizens demanded that the General Plan be updated. He expressed concern that land use designations were being changed to increase residential development and urged Commissioners to keep Torrance a balanced city.

Sandi Monda, Talisman Street, echoed Mr. Feldman's concerns and suggested that staff look into each neighborhood school capacity and the number of transfer students at each school. She observed the need to have a clearer understanding of State housing requirements and expressed concern that the General Plan was being updated based on a Strategic Plan that is seven years old.

Tom Rische, Carlow Road, expressed concern that Torrance was becoming a "great metropolitan blob" and that nothing has been ascertained, only guessed at. He discussed the need to determine best case/worst case scenarios in the update process, traffic conditions near the Wilson Park development, and traffic problems caused by

neighboring cities. He urged the Commission to seek balanced development growth to make Torrance the best it can be.

The Commission was in recess from 8:25 p.m. to 8:40 p.m.

Commissioner Horwich noted the thoughtful quality of comments and questions raised tonight.

Joy Feldman, Cathann Street, asked who pays to run the City and to make infrastructure improvements, and if this was being taken into consideration when making a balanced community.

Public Works Director Beste described the variety of ways that capital work and utilities are paid for.

Commissioner Horwich commented that commercial, residential, and industrial land uses all contribute to generate revenue for the City and that each needs to be present to have a balanced community.

Commissioner Busch noted that there was also a user tax. When he inquired what percentage of taxes paid to the State and Los Angeles County is returned to the City, Public Works Director Beste stated that the Finance Director would have that information.

Irene Griffith, West 229th Street, inquired if residents who will be moving into approved developments are being taken into account when conducting traffic surveys. She expressed concern about the lack of a central bus terminal and increased traffic in the City, and suggested implementing a program to increase bus usage and encourage pedestrians.

Transportation Manager Semaan assured her that approved projects are being accounted for in the evaluation for both short-term and long-range consideration.

Raymie McCoy, West 220th Street, expressed concern about increased traffic in the City and speeding on 220th Street. He suggested the installation of speed humps on West 220th Street as a speed control tool. He inquired if the new developments in the City would impact power capacity and contribute to rolling blackouts.

Public Works Director Beste, with Transportation Manager Semaan concurring, responded that Southern California Edison has plans to accommodate for growth and that their infrastructure has the full capacity to convey electricity into the City.

Robert Thompson, Madrona Homeowners Association, stated that it would be nice to know the background of the new Planning Commissioners and that the Planning Commission should represent the citizens of Torrance. He stated that the General Plan update process so far has been a waste of time and money and that the Commissioners should safeguard the City and protect the citizens. He expressed concern about sewer system improvements needed for new developments on Maricopa Street, Ocean Avenue, and Torrance Boulevard.

Chairperson Uchima assured Mr. Thompson that all the Planning Commissioners are dedicated citizens of Torrance and are responsive to resident concerns.

Transportation Manager Semaan stated that there was a condition to upgrade the sewer lines on Torrance Boulevard before the development could get occupancy permits. Referring to the development east of Ocean Avenue, he explained that there was also a required upgrade to the sewer system to provide the necessary capacity to accommodate the improvement.

Bonnie Mae Barnard, Gramercy Avenue, welcomed new Commissioners and stated that she felt encouraged by the Strategic Plan for the City. She stated that Old Torrance should be included in the focus areas that were considered to be unstable due to demolition of historic buildings and structures and the increase of condominiums. She noted that at previous meetings when asked about unstable areas, she believed that the areas were considered unstable because of zoning; it was not clarified that identification of the areas meant the increase of medium to high density housing. She stated that there was an extreme disproportionment of projects approved for 90501 since the year 2000. She discussed Frederick Olmstead Jr.'s master design for a balanced city and urged Commissioner's to read her book, look at cumulative effect, and to preserve our heritage with a vision.

At 9:07 p.m., Chairperson Uchima closed the public hearing.

Referring to Ms. Barnard's comments, Commissioner Browning noted that at times historic buildings did not meet today's safety standards and that this was taken into consideration when approving projects.

Commissioner Busch thanked staff and audience for their input and stated that he would like to see maximum participation in the General Plan update process.

Planning Associate Joe stated that General Plan workshops are advertised in the Daily Breeze and on CitiCable, and that previous participants, the League of Women Voters, and homeowner associations are also notified of meetings.

Commissioner Busch stated that he was very proud of Old Torrance, noting that most people are proud of where they live which includes New Horizons where he lives.

Chairperson Uchima stated that he enjoyed hearing tonight's testimony and welcomed constructive rather than confrontational comments. He agreed that the overall vision of the General Plan needed to be reexamined.

9. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Senior Planning Associate Lodan announced the next General Plan Workshop on March 8, 2006, adding that a Torrance Unified School District representative will be present at the March 22, 2006 Workshop.

Responding to Commissioner Fauk's inquiry, he stated that a listing of goals and policies in the current General Plan would be provided in the upcoming workshops. He stated that how these goals and policies have been addressed, what needs to be done, and identifying new goals and policies will be examined.

When Commissioner Faulk noted the concern regarding the integrity of zoning in the City and questioned where and if it would be addressed in the General Plan.

Senior Planning Associate Lodan responded that the General Plan was a long-term vision while zoning implements it. He stated that the identified focus areas would require alterations in zoning to implement the long-term vision.

Responding to Commissioner Busch's inquiry, he explained that if an area wanted to become part of the overlay district, typically it would go before the Planning Commission or City Council to request that a study be conducted.

Environmental Administrator Cessna added that zoning changes could be addressed and better defined in the goals and policies of the General Plan.

Commissioner Faulk observed that diverse recommendations were made for the seven identified focus areas.

Commissioner Browning thanked staff for always being prepared.

Commissioners Browning, Gibson, and Busch introduced themselves and provided information about their background.

10. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:32 p.m., Chairperson Uchima adjourned the meeting to March 1, 2006 at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Submitted March 22, 2006 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
