

**MINUTES OF A GENERAL PLAN WORKSHOP #13
OF THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance General Plan Planning Commission Workshop #13 convened in a regular session at 7:05 p.m. on Wednesday, April 26, 2006, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. FLAG SALUTE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Horwich.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Browning, Drevno, Gibson, Horwich, and Vice-Chairperson Faulk.

Absent: Commissioner Busch and Chairperson Uchima.

Also Present: Senior Planning Associate Lodan, Planning Associate Joe, and Environmental Administrator Cessna.

Due to the absence of Chairperson Uchima, Vice-Chairperson Faulk led the meeting.

Vice-Chairperson Faulk explained that the purpose of this workshop was to review the guiding principles that would be used as the foundation for the General Plan update and to discuss goals, objectives, and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan.

Senior Planning Associate Lodan relayed requests from Commissioner Busch and Chairperson Uchima for excused absences for this meeting.

MOTION: Commissioner Browning moved to grant excused absences to Commissioner Busch and Chairperson Uchima for the April 26, 2006 General Plan Workshop #13. Commissioner Drevno seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

4. CONSIDERATION OF WORKSHOP MINUTES – MARCH 8, 2006 AND MARCH 22, 2006

MOTION: Commissioner Browning moved for the approval of the March 8, 2006 and March 22, 2006 General Plan Workshop minutes as submitted. Commissioner Horwich seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Busch and Chairperson Uchima, and with Commissioner Drevno abstaining from approval of the March 8, 2006 minutes).

5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES – CITY STAFF

Senior Planning Associate Lodan introduced staff members and General Plan consultants. He reported that staff has developed a set of guiding principles that they condensed from public testimony, interviews with officials, public workshops, and the City Yard Open House last year. He stated that the guiding principles rely to a large extent on both the existing General Plan as well as the Strategic Plan, and coalesce into what several individuals have asked for in terms of a vision for the City.

Environmental Administrator Cessna and Planning Associate Joe read highlights of the proposed guiding principles:

Future development will occur consistent with the high standards we have set and that make Torrance a desirable place to live.

Development decisions will be based upon the availability of infrastructure, schools, and public services to meet anticipated needs and to avoid compromising high service levels to established homes and businesses.

All development will reflect the special characteristics that distinguish the City's many neighborhoods and districts by considering the scale, urban form, design, character, and quality of the existing community.

Modest growth will be directed to the City's periphery where the gradual turnover and the enhancement of uses can improve districts and neighborhoods and enhance property values.

The City will preserve its valuable industrial core and job space.

The City will accommodate a diverse range of commercial uses at locations throughout Torrance to meet local shopping and service needs of residents, and to create opportunities for revenue generation at regional centers.

The City will encourage the revitalization and conversion of older, underperforming, blighted commercial and industrial areas.

Modest residential growth will accommodate a diverse demographic and maintain the City's family friendly environment.

The City recognizes the demand and need to increase housing opportunities for working families and seniors.

On a limited basis, the City will support mixed use development approaches where such development is compatible with surrounding uses.

Future growth will be respectful towards the City's cultural resources and architectural heritage.

The City will encourage the preservation of Old Torrance's distinct character and encourage preservation of its unique characteristics, such as the street layout and its structures.

The City will encourage alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, bicycling, and transit.

New development will be encouraged to provide pedestrian linkage between commercial sites and between residential neighborhoods and commercial districts.

The City will seek ways to enhance the level of service for the roadway systems while minimizing traffic intrusion into residential neighborhoods.

The City will 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, open space, and community centers.

Senior Planning Associate Lodan stated that these guiding principles were utilized in moving forward with the recommendations for goals, objectives and policies of the Land Use Element. He advised that at least two workshops would be devoted to the goals, objectives and policies of the Land Use Element, noting that many people were unable to attend this workshop due to a candidate's forum.

Commissioner Browning requested a copy of the guiding principles. When he noted that there was no mention of bicycle paths, Environmental Administrator Cessna stated that the principles were broad in nature and that alternative modes of transportation would be addressed in detail in the Land Use Element.

6. DISCUSSION OF LAND USE ELEMENT GOALS AND POLICIES – LAURA STETSON AND DIANA GONZALES, COTTON BRIDGES ASSOCIATES

Diana Gonzalez, Cotton Bridges Associates, explained meeting objectives and gave a power point presentation on the goals, objectives, and policies review process for all General Plan Elements. She described the eight Elements included in the General Plan, noting that the Planning Commission's primary responsibility was to review the Land Use and Safety Elements. She stated that other City Commissions were in the process of conducting reviews of the goals, objectives, and policies for other Elements that were related to their areas of expertise.

Ms. Gonzalez explained the differences between goals, objectives, policies, and implementation actions, noting that the consultants were working with staff to update implementation programs that the Commission would have an opportunity to review at a later date with the draft General Plan. She noted that in the first draft of the goals, objectives, and policies update of the Land Use Element, some of the current goals, objectives, and policies have been deleted, combined or modified, and that several have been added in response to input received during the update process

Laura Stetson, Cotton Bridges Associates, presented the first draft update of the goals, objectives, and policies of the Land Use Element, advising that it was the Commission's foundation for decision-making. It was decided to open the meeting for public comment at 9:00 p.m. Commissioners participated in an interactive exercise to review the list of existing goals, objectives and policies up to Objective 10.0. Ms. Stetson provided an overview of each objective that included land use compatibility and consistency; compatibility between land uses; economic base; areas, districts and

neighborhoods; residential/commercial mixed use; urban design; commercial and industrial environment; redevelopment; and housing.

Ms. Gonzalez recorded Commissioners' input, noting which objectives and policies they recommended to be retained, modified, or deleted.

Commissioner Browning questioned the use of subjective words such as "attractive" and "high quality."

Referring to supplemental material received from the League of Women Voters of Torrance, Commissioner Horwich noted that their comments did not refer to the current workbook and questioned if they were aware of revisions that have been made. He suggested that history of an item was not relevant in the update, only the present and the future.

In response to Vice-Chairperson Faulk's inquiry, Ms. Stetson stated that there was no universal definition of "spot zoning" but that it generally refers to an anomaly within a cohesive neighborhood.

Vice-Chairperson Faulk expressed concern about the trend that is taking place across the country of taking a person's business or private property and giving it to another through eminent domain. The item was later addressed under the Redevelopment section.

Responding to Commissioner Drevno's inquiry regarding Objective 3.0, Ms. Stetson explained possible meanings of the word "buffer."

Referring to Policy 4.1, Commissioners Horwich expressed concern regarding rights of individual property owners. Ms. Stetson stated that clarification could be made or a new policy added stating "to respect the rights of people to develop consistent with the land use regulations of the City".

When Commissioner Gibson expressed concern about "mansionization," Ms. Stetson stated that they would make sure that implementation actions were added that clarified zoning regulations and how the policy is put in place.

Commissioner Horwich expressed concern about the encouragement of "intensification of commercial uses on underutilized commercial properties" in Policy XX under Commercial and Industrial Environment. He stated that there was a point when an underutilized commercial property becomes blighted, and that a change in designation would need to be made. Ms. Stetson suggested that the policy be reworded to say "consistent with the land use policy map."

Vice-Chairperson Faulk noted that there have been projects before the Commission where the owners of a property did not do due diligence to have the property leased or developed as the designated zoning. He suggested that at times use of a run down, blighted property is created by a property owner who sees a higher and better use for it.

Ms. Stetson stressed the importance of developing a General Plan that achieves the balance that Torrance wants and puts land use designations where they seem

appropriate; if it is underperforming commercial, then incentivize it to have a more intense use it can support.

There was a brief discussion regarding clarifying and establishing guidelines to address assembly of people uses in industrial areas.

Referring to 9.0, Ms. Stetson advised that the Housing Element would not be updated at this time, but the Land Use Element would contain policies that address housing in a broad nature. Following discussion, she recommended that all housing goals and policies be kept under the Housing Element.

The Commission was in recess from 8:45 p.m. to 9:05 p.m.

7. COMMUNITY INPUT

At 9:05 p.m., Vice-Chairperson Faulk welcomed public comments.

Dale Lincoln, Wayne Avenue, discussed the importance of identifying, restoring, and preserving ecosystems and wildlife habitat areas in the City in the General Plan update.

Ms. Stetson advised that there would be discussion on the Conservation Element at the May 4, 2006 Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission meeting.

Arthur Plourde, West 169th Place, noted that the public's handouts contained different information and were in a different format than what was presented at this meeting. He stated that the General Plan update should be as broad in nature as possible, and that specifics should be left to supporting documents for definition. He questioned the omission in the update of City-owned property, toxic sites on industrial complexes, as well as federal, State, and local regulations.

Robert Thompson, Madrona Homeowners Association, stated that the General Plan update should be more specific to ensure safeguards for the community. He suggested that condominium conversions should be addressed in the update to safeguard rental units. He expressed concern about blanket rezoning, asserting that the General Plan should not be an instrument for rezoning parts of Torrance. Referring to Policy 4X, he stated that some industrial uses are viable even though they don't look it, and that allowing mixed use development would lead to high density residential development.

Tom Rische, Carlow Road, stressed the importance of maintaining the community feel of the City and not having it become part of a great "metropolitan blob" and to identify and preserve what makes Torrance unique, such as downtown Torrance.

8. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Senior Planning Associate Lodan stated that at the next public General Plan Workshop on May 10, 2006 the Land Use goals, objectives, and policies would be addressed as well as the Public Safety Element.

He encouraged members of the audience to attend the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission meeting on May 4, 2006.

Commissioner Horwich stated that he attended the 6th annual Regional Housing Summit on April 20, 2006 and offered to share literature from that meeting.

Commissioner Horwich questioned the comparison of the General Plan to a constitution of the City, noting that Torrance was a charter city and the charter is the constitution.

Senior Planning Associate Lodan responded that the General Plan is characterized as the vision for the City's development and is a broad-based living document that is meant to be a guide for decision making for future land use actions and policy decisions.

Commissioner Gibson requested an excused absence for the May 10, 2006 General Plan Workshop.

Commissioner Browning expressed his condolences and regrets at the passing of Commissioner Busch's mother. He announced the birth of Commissioner Busch's daughter on April 24, 2006.

9. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:35 p.m., Vice Chairperson Faulk adjourned the meeting to a Planning Commission meeting on May 3, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

Approved as Submitted May 10, 2006 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
