

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TORRANCE
GENERAL PLAN WORKSHOP #2
RESIDENTIAL**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance General Plan Workshop convened in a workshop at 7:10 p.m. on March 9, 2005, in the Toyota Meeting Hall at the Cultural Arts Center.

2. FLAG SALUTE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Planning Commissioner Muratsuchi.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Planning Commissioners Faulk, Horwich, and Muratsuchi.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Planning Manager Isomoto, Senior Planning Associate Chun, Planning Associate Joe, Transportation Manager Semaan and others.

4. SELECTION OF A COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Commissioner Faulk nominated Commissioner Horwich to serve as Committee Chairperson. Commissioner Muratsuchi seconded the motion and a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. INTRODUCTIONS

Planning Manager Isomoto introduced staff members Greg Lodan and Jenny Gough and Senior Planning Associate Chun introduced Laura Stetson, Jeff Henderson Diana Gonzales and Sam Gennawey with Cotton Bridges Associates (CBA) who were present for a discussion of residential development facts and a mapping activity.

6. UPDATE MEETING DATES, COMMITTEE STRUCTURE, AND TOPICS

Planning Manager Isomoto announced that an additional workshop was scheduled for Wednesday, April 13 in Council Chambers before the entire Planning Commission to discuss circulation issues with material from that meeting forwarded to the Traffic Commission prior to finalizing the draft General Plan. She acknowledged that Historic Preservation has been a topic of great concern and she noted that the conservation element is discussed in the current General Plan. She anticipated scheduling an additional workshop on the item for the entire Planning Commission with the matter then going to the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission and she reiterated that there would be additional opportunities to address

Historic Preservation noting that the meeting tonight would focus broadly on residential land use.

7. PRESENTATION: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FACTS

Jeff Henderson, CBA, summarized meeting objectives including a review of residential facts, discussion of issues and perceptions, identifying stable neighborhoods, identifying areas where change may occur over the life of the Plan and receiving community input. He reported gathering data and facts requested at the last meeting and talking with several key department heads, Councilmembers, and a cross section of community residents and business people and wanted bring forward issues from that process.

Diana Gonzalez, CBA led a discussion of demographics noting that 43% of Torrance residents are in the 35-64 age group, 52% of the population is white, the median household income is \$63,600 which is substantially higher than the county average of \$47,500, 60% of the housing stock is single family homes, 31% of Torrance residents work in the city and 65% work within Los Angeles County, 93% commute less than an hour to work, almost 72% of Torrance housing stock was built before 1970, and the median housing price increased 62% between 1992 and 2004. Most renters have lived in the city five years or less while owners have lived in their homes 11 years or more, residents over 25 years old have more education than the county average resulting in higher paying jobs and lower poverty levels and she observed that employment in the city may grow faster than the population.

Ms. Gonzalez explained the concepts of density and intensity as they relate to residential land uses noting that residential land uses are described in terms of dwelling units per acre: low density accommodates 1-9 units per acre with single family homes; and high density accommodates more than 44 units per acre and is characterized by medium and high rise apartments and senior housing.

Ms. Gonzalez explained Floor Area Ratios (FARs) which are derived by dividing the gross floor area of the building by the land area and she presented a slide illustrating different configurations for the same FAR.

Jeff Henderson reported that AB1866 amended two key sections of the California Government Code which describes and encourages granny flats, ancillary or auxiliary units which are second dwelling units placed on a lot along with a single family home. Section 65852.2 (The Second Unit Law) indicated that if a local jurisdiction does not adopt an ordinance on second units they have to abide by the state ordinance which was implemented as a way to meet the regional housing need.

Mr. Henderson reviewed Torrance's Accessory Unit Ordinance (TMC 92.2.10) which allows for attached or detached accessory units, prohibit units located above detached garages unless the garage is accessed from a public alley, requires one accessible parking space per bedroom in the unit and prohibits the unit from being larger than 1,200 square feet or 30% of the existing living area. The exterior design is required to be compatible with the primary unit with a minimum distance of six feet between residences unless attached using a solid six feet wide roof, and the property owner must live on the property when requesting an accessory unit. The ordinance does not validate illegal accessory units.

Accessory units can: increase affordable housing stock, maximize limited land resources, assist homeowners with supplemental incomes and can increase the local property tax base. They may also impact local infrastructure, cause increased demand for limited parking, and contribute to impacts to school system and key public services.

Mr. Henderson explained student generation associated with various types of residential development based on information provided by the Torrance Unified School District (TUSD) noting that a 10 acre lot with 44 dwelling units (residential medium-high designation) would require 58 elementary school spaces, 33 middle school spaces and 45 high school student spaces.

Mr. Henderson reviewed trip generation data for various types of land uses describing how many daily trips would be generated from residential, commercial, business park, and park uses on a 10-acre parcel: low density - 861 trips, medium density - 1,641 trips, low rise apartment buildings - 2,900 trips, a shopping center - 5,609 trips, business park - 1,819 trips, and a regional park - 46 daily trips.

8. PRESENTATION: REVIEW OF ISSUES AND PERCEPTIONS

Sam Gennawey, CBA , summarized key issues identified based on interviews with residents, Councilmembers, department heads and business representatives: Torrance has a shortage of affordable housing for renters and homeowners with the Office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defining affordable housing as requiring less than 30% of the household's gross annual income spent on housing; Torrance has a lack of work force housing and North Torrance is perceived to be disconnected from the rest of the city; FAR needs to be reviewed; gated communities can add a 10% premium to housing prices but may damage connectivity and appearance to the rest of the neighborhood; the value of historic preservation has been recognized but conflicts need to be resolved between rehabilitation, adaptive reuse and property rights; the city needs to consider the impacts of residential development on the school system; infill development may be hampered by current zoning regulations; the city needs to define appropriate densities as well as design requirements for higher density housing; homeowner associations present opportunities to increase public participation and awareness of land use issues; maintenance of Torrance's high level of public service delivery should be a key consideration for future development; and more pedestrian connections are desired between residential neighborhoods and commercial areas.

Mr. Gennawey asked Commissioners whether they felt any issues had been left out.

Commissioner Muratsuchi reviewed the summary from the first workshop noting that there had been some discussion regarding the lack of a comprehensive public transit system and he added that the League of Women Voters report identified a FAR issue in the R-2 and R-3 zones.

Commissioner Fauk questioned the city's obligation regarding providing housing in light of regional requirements.

Chairman Horwich asked for a clear definition of the differences between hillside and flat land and questioned whether the city had been discriminating against flat lands since some of the same impacts occur everywhere in the city like second story additions, privacy, sunlight, etc. He added that he felt it important to have discretion with regard to FAR in the R-2 and R-3 zones and suggested reviewing current FARs to see if they are reasonable.

9. ACTIVITY: IDENTIFYING STABLE NEIGHBORHOODS AND AREAS OF POTENTIAL TRANSITION

Mr. Gennaway reviewed those areas deemed stable at the February 23, 2005 workshop and noted that stability was characterized by continuity and conformity in land use and zoning, there is no need or interest for change and he noted that property ownership led to deep roots in the community and minimal rental properties, creating a community memory with long time residents.

Areas previously identified as stable at the previous meeting were reviewed and Mr. Gennaway suggested that Hawthorne Boulevard be considered separately because of its non-residential character and that the Lomita Boulevard corridor be considered an area to watch for potential change.

The commission discussed whether some multi family areas should be considered stable as there are a high percentage of renters which does not correlate with the definition of stable but Mr. Gennaway clarified that if those properties are in good shape and reflect the positive qualities of Torrance then they can be considered stable areas.

Chairman Horwich asserted that Old Torrance would require special treatment and indicated that it would be considered separately.

It was agreed that Redondo Beach Boulevard in North Torrance, which has commercial corridors, should be looked at for change over time but the rest of the North Torrance area was deemed stable with the exception of the area bordered to the west by the city limits and on the east by 180th Street, Bailey Drive, 186th Street and south to Hawthorne Boulevard. Also, the residential neighborhood between Del Amo and the railroad tracks needs to be examined to determine conditions and status.

Planning Manager Isomoto pointed out that a planned development at Jefferson and Oak needed to be considered and the group agreed that another area to be examined included the industrial properties located at Crenshaw and Amsler Street.

Commissioner Muratsuchi expressed concern with blocking off major portions of the city based on having minimal rental properties noting that one of the problems in the city is lack of affordable housing which includes lack of affordable rentals. He felt if rentals were excluded for consideration that would be exempting certain areas from responsibility.

Mr. Gennaway explained that the process was to eliminate areas in order to focus the subcommittee on a very small number of areas in the community that are worthy of detailed research and also an acknowledgement that for the most part

Torrance is working well. If the process results in only a small area being deemed stable then alternatives can be explored, but most people feel that Torrance doesn't need significant change.

Laura Stetson, CBA observed that the commercial corridor along Pacific Coast Highway needed to be reevaluated along with FAR issues relating to hillside and flatlands.

Commissioner Faulk did not think the area from Skypark to 235th Street was stable though the neighborhood north of that between Sepulveda, Crenshaw and Madison is considered stable. Commissioner Muratsuchi commented that was inconsistent as there are apartments there but Mr. Gennaway stated that if the apartments were meeting the Torrance standard they could be left in.

Chairman Horwich felt that Sepulveda, excluding the commercial areas, south and west to the city borders was stable with single family homes and some apartments along Arlington. Planning Manager Isomoto noted that just south of there is a little area that goes east of Crenshaw and the group agreed it should be considered a transition area.

Mr. Gennaway observed that the entire western side of the city had been marked as stable. The commercial corridors in the area north of the airport need to be looked at as well as the historical district. He agreed to analyze two neighborhoods around Madrona and Garnet and Anza West of Hawthorne to be put in a third category requiring a further look.

Commissioner Faulk commented on the potential for higher density in the area around 182nd Street as it is designated high density although it has not yet been utilized.

Mr. Gennaway reiterated that all of North Torrance is considered stable except for a small pocket, and north of the airport and south of Sepulveda is considered stable as well. He added they would look at FARs for all areas designated as stable to see what it would look like if people maximized their FARs and the two other subcommittees would deal with commercial and industrial which is about all that is left. All single family on the west and south side is considered stable and additional information will be brought back on multi family dwellings along Hawthorne Boulevard. Areas around the airport are stable but north of that area could be in transition. Old Town should be looked at but the area adjacent to it in new old town is stable. Commercial areas will be defined in more detail through other subcommittee meetings and there are not a lot of areas with potential transition in existing residential areas.

Mr. Gennaway observed that there were not a lot of opportunities for additional housing.

Commissioner Faulk commented that the airport area to be examined should be expanded going toward Lomita Boulevard.

Commissioner Muratsuchi received clarification that the Lomita Boulevard project is going through the entitlement process and an EIR is currently being prepared.

10. COMMUNITY INPUT

Chairman Horwich read a set of ground rules for public speaking and called a 10 minute recess from 8:25 p.m. to 8.35 p.m.

Janet Payne, Engracia, reported that they were not allowed to call the area within the original boundaries of Torrance the Olmstead Tract but she asked that some sort of name be created other than Old Town because people tended to associate that with the Old Town Mall on Hawthorne. While she expressed respect for the Planning Department, she noted that there was not enough expertise in the city to properly address historic preservation and she suggested bringing in experts to make the appropriate recommendations. She offered the assistance of the Torrance Historical Society, the Old Torrance Neighborhood Association and Save Historic Old Torrance (SHOT) and she noted that Main Street programs were not utilized during the downtown redevelopment 14 years ago but there is an opportunity to do that now.

Tom Brewer, Evalyn Avenue, asserted that new facilities and infrastructure were not being added to accommodate the new people living in the city and he noted that new residences going into historically stable areas can create problems such as residential development in the middle of commercial land in West Torrance. He expressed concern with the Council overturning decisions and wanted to make sure that when the General Plan is adopted it will be adhered to.

Rudy Jimenez, Patronella, questioned how to keep developers and politicians from finding their way around the new General Plan, reported that 104 condos had been built in his area with no parking and he asked for help with a possible development on Maricopa noting that he wanted it stopped at the Magnavox site.

Commissioner Muratsuchi noted that if the General Plan is not going to be followed then they are engaged in a pointless exercise and he expressed hope that the consultants would work an enforcement mechanism into the process.

Robert Thompson, President of the Madrona Homeowners Association, asked that a limit on the discretionary power of city officials be included in the plan as well as regulations on condo conversions. He reported that a letter from the wastewater district indicating that the sewer line was at its design limit was not taken into consideration for the Maricopa project and he asserted that the school district does not respond negatively to developers even though the schools are negatively impacted by the developments, they simply decrease the area they serve. He pointed out that sumps need to be addressed and protected in the General Plan and he asked that the 104 unit project on Maricopa be added to the map. He reported that the homeowner associations were surveying all members and are in the process of interpreting all the input they have received from the city.

Kurt Nelson, JCC Homes, Torrance Boulevard, the developers representative for the 104 unit Magnavox area project stated that there were no residential areas left to develop. He indicated that infrastructure was crumbling all over the country and new development is required to do most of the only work that gets done in terms of undergrounding utilities. He commented that the school district did not oppose development as they receive money per square foot of each development.

Mr. Nelson stated that infill development has gone forward at Maricopa where there were fallow industrial buildings that have been vacant for some time and he asserted that if there isn't going to be infill then everyone should admit that the goal is to have no residential growth in Torrance. He stated that infill development was necessary otherwise the state would take control of zoning in the city, felt that traffic was a regional problem, and felt that the FAR in some areas should be broader and for others should be tighter.

Mary Steinkamp, Acacia, presented a picture of a rental behind her home facing the alley and she questioned whether the city was prepared to turn the alley into a street. She asserted that if there are many more double driveways there would be no on street parking for anyone and she questioned what her R-1 neighborhood would look like if extra units were allowed.

David Henseler, Singingwood Drive, commented that Torrance residents do not want more condos, only developers and schools who are going to make money want more. He noted that residents are looking to maintain their quality of life, questioned when the rights of the 175,000 people who live here become more important than the 5-10,000 people who want to live here and hoped that the General Plan would give more weight to resident opinions.

Bea Virobik, Paseo de Pablo, a volunteer for Focal Point on Aging, reported that she provides referrals for seniors 55 and older and the requests for affordable rental housing have increased to 42% of all requests received. She observed that many developments are being called senior housing but they are not affordable and she reported speaking with managers of senior apartments in Torrance who have four to six year waiting lists for one bedroom apartments.

John Mirassou, Susannah Avenue, Anastasi Development Company, reported attending seminars and workshops that project a 30% population growth over the next 20 years and he favored protecting R-1 lots to keep them single family. He reported that a law almost passed that would have made granny unit laws more lenient and that the Director of HUD indicates that the greatest single environmental concern faced by the state of California is lack of housing. He asserted that Proposition 13 allowed residents to stay in their homes after their children have grown up rather than moving to smaller homes and therefore the turnover is less and housing is in short supply. Mr. Mirassou encouraged residents to attend a UCLA Conference about Smart Growth on May 18 to find out what the state and the experts are saying about housing in California and what needs to be done.

Dee Hardison, West 236th Street, didn't think Torrance had grown anywhere near 30% since the 60s and 70s and she even noted a period where the city lost population. She suggested looking at what future housing needs would actually be and determining where in the housing arena the needs were rather than plotting maps right away. She noted that the city can't build anything affordable unless it is subsidized and those monies are almost all gone leaving very little opportunity for affordable housing. Ms. Hardison observed that the city had never built low income units and smaller units are encouraged because they are more affordable to buy, but by the time the project goes through the process the number of units is reduced and the units are bigger.

Responding to Commissioner Muratsuchi, Ms. Hardison stated that senior rental housing is needed for those Torrance seniors who can't afford to stay in their homes.

Bob Hoffman, Via Sevilla, questioned whether Torrance was obligated to increase housing by law and he asked whether there more jobs were being created here noting that he thought density should reflect the trend within the contingent area. He asked about density transition zones similar to what Orange County has and he noted that infrastructure has to be planned before things are allowed in. He asked about environmental impacts noting that the air quality is mostly affected by cars and is a transportation management issue, and he wanted to see more bike paths.

Sara Guyan, Gramercy Avenue, asked that current residents be taken care of before considering those who want to move in and she noted that quality of life was important with more public places, parks, and open spaces needed. She questioned how it would be possible to make condo developments that profess to provide senior housing actually do that and she asked for accountability noting that she did not like it when they cut all those trees down after they agreed not to.

Charlie Saulenas, Acacia Avenue, asserted that Carson and Acacia Avenue was not an appropriate place for a large lighted billboard, which he felt to be an eyesore and a safety hazard. He asked that bike paths be added to the list of issues to be addressed and suggested outreach and incentives offered to increase bike traffic in Torrance

Judy Weber, Border Avenue, asked for additional discussion on what constitutes a stable neighborhood because she didn't understand what they meant and found it scary because so many things are changing. She questioned whether Torrance was a chartered city and how much effect that had on the General Plan and she wanted to know where the growth is coming from noting that there has been a problem with illegal growth in several states. She commented that redevelopment built better housing and developed a community of higher income and asserted that Proposition 13 protected people from being thrown out of their houses.

Ms. Weber discussed creative redevelopment noting that refining design characteristics meant they could have density that doesn't look like density. She commented that R-1 lots were really not stable because of AB1866 and she questioned how the state could make the community more affordable unless they subsidized housing. She asserted that empirical decision making is what triggered the General Plan review and she did not want to see leeway for the governing body, she wanted them to follow the municipal code.

June Lee, Vanderhill Road, received clarification from Planning Manager Isomoto that R-2 allows two units per lot which could be a duplex, apartments or attached or detached condos and with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) the 27 foot height limit can be exceeded. Ms. Lee observed that the Planning Department had denied several projects which the City Council then approved and she asserted that the city was supposed to be protecting the community; she reported that developments have complied with landscaping requirements to gain approval and then removed the landscaping a few years later; she suggested that apartments be converted to senior housing; she cited issues of traffic in residential areas resulting from construction; and she reported concerns with aggressive door knockers after dark which she felt needed to be addressed by the city.

Dan Withee, Withee Malcolm Architects, reported losing employees because they can not afford to live anywhere nearby and he felt the issue would continue to grow due to the large employment base here. He asserted that traffic is generated by people coming to Torrance to work and to shop and he felt stable neighborhoods should be left alone noting that there were not many neighborhoods left to build housing in. He suggested putting senior housing in blighted industrial areas and he noted that senior housing usually has huge subsidies by Redevelopment Agencies but Torrance's Agency doesn't have the resources.

Bonnie Mae Barnard, Gramercy, SHOT, commented that no one seemed to have a clear understanding of whether the city had met the requirements, how they are calculated and or whether the city can have a part in the calculation. She questioned whether there was a requirement to accommodate projected growth and noted that because Torrance is a charter city there should be different variables from other communities.

Ms. Barnard pointed out that senior housing and worker housing were included in the original city design and she suggested careful consideration be given to the needs of the city noting that it appeared the city had to accommodate new development regardless of the quality of life. She expressed concern with zone changes and asserted that there was not a single stable area in the city because the current General Plan has not been adhered to under the guise of accommodating housing and seniors but they have not been accommodated at all resulting in a huge loss of trust in the city by the residents.

Ms. Barnard asserted that Olmstead designed worker's housing had been allowed to be demolished and replaced by 30 condos with a wall around them which do not meet senior needs or young family needs. She requested reconsideration of the current housing stock to determine how to better utilize it and also asked that real city designers be brought into the process for the historic district and remaining parts of the city. Ms. Barnard expressed concern that open space in the city is not on the list and it sounds like density is going to be increased in the unstable areas which the citizens don't want. She wanted to see limited, controlled, well planned growth and pointed out that the Palos Verdes Land Conservancy is not talking about an influx of population that they have to accommodate and they have ten times the open space that Torrance has. She added that funds and grants were available for historic areas if structures that already exist are used rather than torn down.

Responding to Commissioner Muratsuchi, Planning Manager Isomoto agreed to bring back additional information on pressures placed on the City of Torrance for additional housing.

Tom Rische, Carlow Road, commented that Mr. Gennaway had referred to the General Plan as a constitution and he noted that there is an orderly process at the federal level for amending the constitution as needed rather than being changed by individuals on a case by case basis. He questioned what the standards were and suggested formulating a vision of what they want the city to be rather than molding the city to what is required. He observed that families were moving out because they can not afford to live in the city unless their parents give their houses to them and he emphasized the need for balance. Mr. Rische reported benefiting greatly from

General Plan Workshop #2
Residential
March 9, 2005

Proposition 13, noted that he could not afford to buy his house if he had to do it today, questioned what would happen in 10 years, and he commented that it always seemed strange that the no one from the school district was ever involved in the process.

Gene Higginbotham, Arlington, suggested that FAR could be judged on a case by case basis following criteria which could include an incentive for applicants who offer to improve their properties using green building guidelines. He suggested an additional workshop to explore sustainable city goals and green building ordinances and Planning Manager Isomoto indicated that the conservation element would be looking at that issue.

Charles Deemer, Talisman, felt the concept of stable neighborhoods should be examined and was not sure that North Torrance qualified as stable because housing there was not built as tracts and has a much more eclectic style with varying sizes making it much more vulnerable to buying a small house and knocking it down and putting in a duplex which would create a greater impact. He observed that the area on both sides of Hawthorne is in two separate census tracts and he questioned figures which he felt did not correlate. He questioned what expectations were on how much would be built in the next 20 years and suggested that the General Plan be examined every 10 years looking 20 years out.

Frank Kenny, Evalyn Avenue, a realtor, suggested that housing is only affordable when it is built and first sold and affordable housing does not really exist in the city. He asserted that the homes built in Palos Verdes were a problem as those people have to pass through Torrance so the issue of pass through traffic and how to deal with that is crucial. He suggested working with neighboring cities to come up with a solution.

Dick Perkins, Christine Avenue, questioned whether the residential zoning designation for the Edison right of way around 177th Street, south of Artesia and east of Yukon was really correct. He noted that the railroad right of way through downtown Torrance and Sartori is adjacent to residential and pointed out that the map was missing recently approved residential projects. He commented that the Torrance Drive In area was not shown as residential and he asked that the map be updated to match the March 2005 date.

Mr. Perkins indicated that the Maricopa residential project made the commercial area east of Maple and north of Maricopa unstable as well as other areas around it, he added that the new residential project at Spencer and Earl has created instability around it, he felt that the area around Lowe's should be considered unstable as well and he asserted that the Walteria neighborhood west of Hawthorne, south of Pacific Coast Highway is an R-2 neighborhood undergoing tremendous change with condominiums going in.

Mr. Perkins pointed out that streets and alleys in residential neighborhoods are excluded when calculating the area of the parcel that is considered for the FAR in R-1 neighborhoods but when building condos, the roadways, driveways, alleys, that serve condos are included in the area of the lot. The differing ways of measuring FARs mean that R-1s are forced into a higher FAR and condos get the benefit of a lower FAR and he suggested that condos exclude driveways and alleys even though they are private so the FAR is used in the same context.

Mr. Perkins asked for the estimated number of dwelling units that could be built in the city today based on current zoning and observed that most of the discussion had been focused on new projects but he noted a large number of R-2 zoned areas ripe for housing to go in with no action necessary from the city whatsoever.

11. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Mr. Gennawey explained that their projections were from SCAG and their estimate of 0.7% annual growth is for the city but the 30% figure is for the entire five county region, mostly in the inland empire.

Chairman Horwich summarized key points of the meeting and received clarification from Ms. Hardison that the current population of Torrance is 139,000.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:19 p.m.

Approved as Written September 14, 2005 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
