

April 27, 2005

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF A COMMITTEE OF THE
TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR A
GENERAL PLAN WORKSHOP #6
INDUSTRIAL LAND USE**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance General Plan Planning Commission Workshop convened in a regular meeting at 7:00 p.m. on April 27, 2005, in the West Annex meeting room at City Hall.

2. FLAG SALUTE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Drevno.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Drevno, Guyton, and Uchima.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Senior Planning Associate Chun and
Environmental Administrator Cessna.

4. SELECTION OF A COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

MOTION: Commissioner Drevno nominated Commissioner Uchima to serve as Chairman. Commissioner Guyton seconded the motion and a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

Chairman Uchima explained policies and procedures of the meeting.

5. GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Environmental Administrator Cessna introduced Senior Planning Associate Chun and others present. She indicated that the meeting was to be a brainstorming session with questions raised but not necessarily answered.

Senior Planning Associate Chun announced the City Yard Open House on June 4 in conjunction with the Public Works Department annual open house with a General Plan booth and slide show. She indicated that workshops previously scheduled for June 8 and July 13 had been rescheduled to coincide with the traffic study, and Planning Commissioners will attend workshops where alternatives will be evaluated. Senior Planning Associate Chun introduced Jeff Henderson, Diana Gonzalez and Sam Gennaway from Cotton Bridges Associates (CBA) also known as P&D Consultants who were present to review issues and perceptions as well as facilitate discussions.

6. PRESENTATION: INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT FACTS

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Mr. Henderson indicated that the purpose of the meeting was to review key facts of industrial development. CBA has met with community members and councilmembers which has helped them to identify issues and perceptions, identify industrially zoned areas and potential transitions, identify areas where change may occur over the life of the General Plan and receive community input.

Diana Gonzalez, CBA, discussed 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 units are 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 employment in the city may grow faster than the population. Torrance is expected to grow relatively slowly at a rate of less than 1% per year

Torrance has 16% of all available industrial square footage in the South Bay with the lowest vacancy rate in the area for industrial properties and only the LAX/EI Segundo/Hawthorne area have a higher lease rate than Torrance. No consistent pattern has been identified in building activity but industrial zones are influenced by zoning, traffic, and available land.

Torrance has higher employment in manufacturing, retail and health care than most of Los Angeles County and only Manhattan and Redondo Beach have a lower unemployment rate than Torrance which has a rate that is almost half of the county level.

Mr. Henderson reviewed trip generation data for various types of land uses indicating how many daily trips would be generated from a 10-acre parcel: low density residential - 861 trips, medium density residential - 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. Figures are based on weekday trips generated which accounts for the low regional park figure and Mr. Henderson explained that commercial and industrial calculations were based on developable square footage and open space is based on the acreage of open space.

Mr. Henderson noted there were three industrial zone designations: ML - Limited Manufacturing, M1 - Light Manufacturing and M2 - Heavy Manufacturing. The last General Plan created a business park designation but no implementation to establish the zone was made.

Torrance has an industrial redevelopment project area and the Torrance Redevelopment Agency has significant power to assist in promulgation and development in key industrial uses to benefit the city as a whole. The Agency was instrumental in bringing American Honda and several other industries into the area adjacent to original plat of Torrance and the total assessed property valuation of the project area has gone from \$112 million in 1982 to \$467 million in 2004.

7. PRESENTATION: REVIEW OF ISSUES AND PERCEPTIONS

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Mr. Gennaway reported meeting with community members at the beginning of the project as well as with various sized industrial organizations and they heard the following issues and perceptions: current high land values have contributed to the conversion of industrial land to residential land uses resulting in a loss of industrial lands; many underutilized or obsolete industrial areas have been targeted by the development community for residential development; incompatible land use is becoming an issue and there is concern about setting up conflicts; port related big rig truck traffic growth over the next 20 years will bring benefits as well as safety and infrastructure concerns; railroad grade crossings will continue to become a problem as traffic increases; Torrance provides a wide range of industrial facilities and is a desirable location for start up businesses; and logistics businesses are growing but the downside is that they don't tend to hire a lot of employees but they generate truck traffic and affect the quality of life.

8. ACTIVITY: IDENTIFYING INDUSTRIAL AREAS AND POTENTIAL TRANSITIONS

Mr. Gennaway defined stable areas as those characterized by continuity and conformity of land use, a small transient population, no apparent need or interest for change, and community memory. He indicated that he would work with commission to highlight those areas that are stable and those areas that need to be researched for potential change and he noted that redevelopment areas are mostly in the original plat of Torrance which was historically laid out as industrial zones.

Areas deemed in transition and tagged for further investigation included: Artesia and Western; south of Artesia and north of 182nd by the freeway between Crenshaw and Prairie; north of Plaza del Amo near Wilson Park; north of Torrance Memorial Hospital; and the airport and surrounding areas.

Stable areas included: North of 190th Street, south of the 405 abutting the original plat and original industrial zone; the eastern edge of the city in the redevelopment zone area along the edge of Los Angeles from Cabrillo to Harpers Way; and north of Del Amo, south of 190th between Hawthorne and Western Avenue.

The old Magnavox site located south of Del Amo and north of Maricopa has residential development going in now so residential has to be considered the appropriate land use since it already is but the commission agreed that it should remain industrial. They felt the same way about the area south of Del Amo and north of Maricopa between Anza and Hawthorne that has transitioned from residential into industrial and although now some residential development is going in, the commission felt it appropriate to maintain the area as industrial and not allow anymore residential encroachment.

Tom Brewer, Evalyn Avenue, questioned whether lots along the Santa Fe Railroad would be split lots and Mr. Gennaway explained that they need a detailed analysis of what is there so they can consider all possible impacts if the area is going to transition to residential.

Mr. Brewer asked if the area around Crenshaw went residential whether the impact to infrastructure would be higher than with single family homes and Mr.

Gennaway indicated that they would provide a range of possibilities and explain what impacts would be to traffic, services, and schools. The idea is to look at unintended consequences and recommend a threshold of redevelopment that can actually be sustained.

Lola Unger, Bluff Street, expressed concern that the city was becoming unbalanced and asserted that if the industrial land keeps being eliminated there will be nothing left. She felt that transportation corridors had been erased with dump trucks on Hawthorne Boulevard not being taken into consideration when projects are approved and a key factor to keep in mind is the cumulative impacts of the changes.

Kurt Nelson of JCC Homes pointed out that projects cited again and again were all examined by staff, the Planning Commission and the City Council. The Maricopa project had a huge study behind it and a General Plan amendment and he noted the tremendous amount of industrial land and the shortage of residential properties.

Gladys Meade, Paseo de Gracia, expressed concern about the changes in the industrial, residential and commercial zones and wanted to see buffers provided between those zones.

Mr. Gennaway clarified that much of Torrance would not change and energy would be focused on a limited number of areas that might need change. Once those areas are identified then the options will be explored and debated by policy makers and he noted that incompatible land use is a major concern and they are sensitive to buffers. He noted that much of the industrial use was changing to light, non-polluting industrial.

June Armstrong, Wayne Avenue, received clarification that fast food establishments are categorized commercial and she asked that additional information be brought forward regarding the Chandler Land Fill.

Robert Thompson, President of the Madrona Homeowners Association, was concerned about maintaining commercial areas close to the Magnavox site and also about the number of industrial buildings being converted to non traditional churches. He cited a mega-church on the eastern city boundary that takes up almost a block and most of the parking at Wilson Park on Sunday and he pointed out that churches don't pay taxes, but rather take the tax base out of industrial areas.

Mr. Gennaway encouraged consulting the City Attorney regarding the churches as there are a series of Federal laws relating to religious freedom. He observed that industrial lands were subtly changing and constraints should be examined to better understand the issues.

Maryann Reis, Engracia, expressed support for keeping the existing industrial land in Torrance.

Tom Rische, Carlow Road, questioned whether the city was working to attract industry to Torrance as he felt the city should be more aggressive than they have been in recent years.

Mr. Brewer questioned whether the vacancy rate for industrial was good; whether the buildings were being regenerated and where new schools could be located in the city.

Mr. Gennawey indicated that the vacancy rate of 1.1% is extraordinarily low and the city is getting good money for all the land. He agreed that the church issue was important as they were replacing industry and he clarified that the General Plan had little to do with schools as the district has their own policies and at present feel that they have adequate supply throughout the city but the city has been working with them. Torrance has an outstanding public school system which is critical to the community's success and joint partnerships with Parks and Recreation are being examined to encourage sharing facilities.

Responding to Mr. Brewer, Mr. Gennawey explained that if an area is transitioning to residential then they have to examine whether the children can be accommodated and how they would travel to the school.

Charles Deemer, Talisman, suggested that with more people coming into the city there must be some mechanism to provide funding for the city to acquire additional land for more parks. He pointed out that the city has no land use anywhere for a cemetery and he suggested using areas with heavy land contamination. He pointed out issues with schools and Mr. Gennawey asserted that school facilities need to be adequate and in the right place.

Kay White, Via Los Miradores, expressed concern that there had been no discussion of parks and open space and Mr. Gennawey indicated that would be addressed in the plan.

Robert Abelson asked about railroads and Mr. Gennawey indicated that railroad crossings would remain active regardless of the level of traffic.

Charlie Saulenas, Acacia, expressed concern with noise and crowds in the area by Wilson Park and Commissioner Drevno indicated that the church allowed people to park in their lot for the Farmers Market.

Karen Harrison, Palos Verdes Boulevard, wanted to see the area south of Del Amo, north of Maricopa behind Little Company of Mary examined as more residential and multi residential development is going in there since light manufacturing has been phased out over the years in the Earl Street area.

Steve Fechner, felt it was pointless to prohibit more residential development in the Spencer and Earl Street area and he did not feel the area was stable as it is now out of conformance with the plan.

The Commission agreed that the residential project had changed the area and Mr. Gennawey indicated that when they suggest a transition, the area could become mixed use or vertical mixed use with a store on the bottom and condos or offices upstairs and horizontal mixed use with retailers on Hawthorne Boulevard but residential behind it with connectivity. He commented on the demand for senior housing noting that

the area could be converted to stores that serve the community and homes with connectivity.

Mr. Gennawey thanked the public and turned the meeting over to the Commissioners.

9. COMMUNITY INPUT

Gladys Meade, the League of Women Voters of Torrance, reported that the Southern California Association of Governments had issued a new housing element compliance and building permit issue reflecting the most recent building activity data through February 2005 which reported that Torrance had a construction need for the past seven year planning period of 1,384 units or 17% of the total South Bay sub regional allocation and during that period from January 1998 through February 2005 1,551 units were permitted representing 112% of what had been assigned so she felt taking a pause in building in Torrance to be reasonable as the city has exceeded the requirement. Ms. Meade encouraged everyone to look at the entire report.

Ms. Meade distributed copies of her testimony presented to the City Council on the Shea Development noting that they had suggested that the General Plan needed an update in June 2004 including a definition and delineation of mixed use. She pointed out that the Shea project had presented itself to be mixed use but was not, she commented that the most successful mixed developments had public transportation and she asserted that the Hawthorne Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan assumed there would be public transportation.

Ms. Meade emphasized the importance of the cumulative impacts of development and she acknowledged the difficult task of the Planning Commission dealing with one project after another noting that the Shea Development had not addressed surrounding density and traffic or provided for open space. Chairman Uchima reported that he had suggested a sky bridge and had opposed the Shea project.

Sandi Monda, Talisman, requested that the Planning Commission provide figures for the increase in housing tenure and type for 2000-2004 by the next meeting on July 27 and she felt that the SCAG figures were very important. She expressed disappointment that the school district has not shown up for or been involved in any of the workshops and she requested that effort be made to get them to appear.

Ms. Monda pointed out that senior housing has become a halo and she requested trip generation figures for those developments. She acknowledged the reduction in train travel in the city and the positive impact of that on traffic and she suggested involving the Economic Development Department within the city to get an idea what their agenda is. Ms. Monda commented on the current General Plan process noting that it was markedly different from the 1992 General Plan process which she participated in as a Planning Commissioner.

Robert Thompson, Madrona Homeowners Association President, asserted that it is important to maintain the commercial and industrial areas of Torrance and not convert them to residential. He pointed out that the school district has never had a negative

response to any developer but this year there are only three openings for Kindergarten classes this year at Fern Elementary School.

Tom Brewer, Evalyn Avenue, received clarification that the residential trip generation figures were for week days only even though residential use is seven days a week while commercial and industrial use is more likely Monday through Friday only. He questioned how industrial property could be called under utilized if the vacancy rate is 1.1% and Mr. Gennawey explained that that is a comment they have heard. Ms. Gonzalez pointed out that just because the land is occupied, that doesn't mean it is occupied to its full potential and she noted that churches are not really what they want to see on industrial land.

Kurt Nelson, JCC Homes, Torrance Boulevard, pointed out that utilization is in particular spots and he pointed out that the old Magnavox Building lay fallow for six years in a hot real estate market. He noted that Torrance is rich in industrially well used property with almost as much property as Long Beach Harbor but one third the vacancy rate. He reported attending a SCAG summit last week on infill housing where he learned that regardless of past projections, the amount of people coming whether they are planned for are not is mind boggling and there is not much conventional residential property left with most of that topographically challenged and not very useful.

Mr. Nelson commented on the resources Torrance is spending to invite the public to give input on the General Plan but he felt more people should be participating. He noted that his company is not much into high density development but if the developments are planned well there is room for residential development which is necessary to have a valid General Plan and the only thing Torrance is really short of is residential housing. He agreed that the school district should attend meetings but noted that although there are aberrations like Kindergarten where there is not enough space there are approximately 2,500 permit students in the school district for people outside of the area. He asserted that new residential development paid its way and then some as it has to step up and provide the infrastructure it creates.

Don Barnard, Gramercy, Save Historic Old Torrance (SHOT), expressed concern that the industrial development in his area which is a mixed community with industrial, commercial and residential could be turned into houses. He noted that Jefferson by the park is being changed over and he is already seeing things starting to happen without knowing what the repercussions will be in terms of transportation and schools in the area. He encouraged everyone to attend the City Council Community Planning and Design Committee meeting on Thursday, April 28.

Charles Deemer, Talisman, questioned office park designations and Mr. Henderson explained that the last General Plan introduced the Business Park designation which called for a new zone to be created to put forward design and setbacks but that was never completed and it will be carried out in this update of the General Plan. He explained that business parks have both commercial and industrial components and Mr. Deemer observed that it would be a bridging classification. He questioned whether that was the only change in zoning classifications being considered and Mr. Henderson indicated that that would depend on changes in the plan noting that it was not their intention to change zones but possibilities must be evaluated. He added

that if there were a need to adjust the zoning ordinance that would occur as a separate process down the road after completion of the General Plan.

Mr. Deemer suggested that when land use is changed that zoning should be brought into conformity to reflect those changes made.

Tom Rische, Carlow Road, noted that if zones are going to change residents want to know why and he acknowledged that sometimes there are good reasons for changes but many residents feel they are treated as though they stupid and they are not being told the truth. He encouraged the city to look at all the factors involved and consider the cumulative effects of development and noted concerns with the large condo development on Jefferson next to Wilson Park and how traffic will be handled at that very busy intersection. He suggested that city and commission consider the infrastructure when approving large developments and noted that the Seaside area had waited 40 years to fix the storm drain problem where standing water has been an issue.

Steve Fechner, Surf Management, Van Ness Way, felt that the word developer was used as a negative with negative connotations. He reported that no one has built a business park for lease in Torrance for the past ten years because land prices are so expensive and he felt the city should support industrial developers. He asserted that industrial land should be converted to residential where it makes sense but he felt it made poor sense to create condo islands in the middle of other zoning and he encouraged the city to focus on that in the long term. He observed that the General Plan is ignored by councilmembers who vote in projects that should not be there.

Mr. Fechner indicated that his company owned much property in the city that would probably always be industrial business parks in addition to a few projects that make more sense to develop into other things. He noted that several of their business parks are completely surrounded by condos or retail and he felt that each place was different but business parks should be encouraged as they are the heart and soul of industrial space for small businesses. He added that it is not feasible to require developers to add three acres of park to be able to locate there and he indicated that Magnavox had not been bought because they were asking \$60 per foot for land when it only charges \$1 to rent.

Maryann Reis, Engracia, supports small businesses but would not like to see what happened on Torrance and Van Ness happen again where Torrance condemned the small businesses, bought them out and sold the land to Honda and she felt it was wrong for the city to take businesses or homes away to build something else.

10. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Senior Planning Associate Chun announced a workshop with the Environmental Quality Commission to discuss Green Building issues on May 5 and Chairman Uchima thanked CBA and the public for their input.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8 52 p.m.

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