

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF A TORRANCE
GENERAL PLAN WORKSHOP #3
COMMERCIAL LAND USE**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance General Plan Workshop convened in a regular meeting at 7:00 p.m. on March 23, 2005, in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

2. FLAG SALUTE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Muratsuchi.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Drevno, LaBouff, and Commissioner Muratsuchi.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Senior Planning Associate Chun, Planning Associate Joe, Housing Administrator Richardson, Planning Associate Crecy and Planning Associate Lodan.

4. SELECTION OF A COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

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

5. UPDATE MEETING DATES AND TOPICS

Chairperson Drevno read rules and guidelines for the meeting and for public speaking.

Senior Planning Associate Chun introduced meeting participants, noting that a variety of issues related to commercial land use would be discussed which may include reviewing key facts about commercial development, discussing issues and perceptions about commercial development in the city, identifying commercially zoned areas and identification of areas where change may occur over the life of the plan. Topics will include demographics, economic conditions and trends, commercial zones and uses in Torrance and trip generation.

Planning Associate Lodan indicated that historic preservation would be addressed in the Conservation Element at a workshop on April 7 before the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission. Transportation and circulation issues will be addressed at a meeting held on April 13 before the Planning Commission and material will then be sent to the Traffic Commission for their review and participation with additional public input taken prior to finalizing the draft of the General

Plan Circulation Element. He asked that the focus of the meeting tonight remain on the issues of commercial land uses in Torrance.

D.R. Richardson introduced Jeff Henderson, Diana Gonzalez and Sam Gennaway of Cotton Bridges Associates (CBA).

7. PRESENTATION: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT FACTS

Jeff Henderson, CBA, summarized meeting objectives including a review of commercial development facts, discussion of issues and perceptions, identifying stable commercial areas, identifying areas where change may occur over the life of the Plan and receiving community input. He reported 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. He noted that they would discuss Torrance demographics, economic conditions and trends, commercial zones and uses in Torrance and trip generation.

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 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

Ms. Gonzalez discussed economic conditions and trends noting that the city has a significant proportion of manufacturing, health care and retail trade compared with the county. Recent changes in the types of jobs and industries available include a significant increase in state government and transportation warehousing jobs but information related jobs, entertainment, and local government employment saw a decrease within the same time period. The city has a strong and stable employment base and therefore has a lower unemployment rate than most cities.

Consistent sales tax contributes significantly to the economic health of the city, with the largest portion coming from retail sales and a significant increase in auto dealers and supply businesses since 1992 constituting 20% of taxable retail sales. Torrance has twice the amount of per capita retail sales than the county and central Torrance has the largest number of buildings and the lowest vacancy rate of surrounding areas.

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 - 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. Commissioner Muratsuchi received clarification that the figures were based on weekday trips generated which accounts for the low regional park figure.

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Per the material of record, Mr. Henderson reviewed commercial zones and uses present in Torrance.

8. PRESENTATION: REVIEW OF ISSUES AND PERCEPTIONS

Sam Gennaway, CBA, summarized key issues and perceptions identified based on interviews with residents, Councilmembers, department heads and business representatives: Torrance has two world class medical institutions which will need to expand during the life of the plan due to seismic issues and demand; the city's internal circulation system is not connected to the regional transportation system in a significant way; visitors help to keep money coming into the city but increase congestion; fiscal stability is highly dependent on revenues from the commercial sector that support the highly valued public services; the original plat of Torrance is becoming a desirable location; the airport continues to balance jobs and revenues with impacts on the quality of life while providing recreation opportunities and jobs; there is a lack of upscale retail and dining; vertical mixed use projects along transportation corridors may provide housing while minimizing traffic aspects; and revitalization of the Del Amo Mall as an upscale center will re-establish Torrance as the center of the South Bay's retail market.

8. ACTIVITY: IDENTIFYING STABLE COMMERCIAL AREAS AND AREAS OF POTENTIAL TRANSITION

Mr. Gennaway explained that they were seeking to establish those areas that are functioning well and do not need the higher level of scrutiny for this General Plan update. He explained that stability is characterized by continuity and conforming in zoning and land use, property ownership leads to deep roots in the community, stable areas are characterized by a small transient population, there are more owners than renters, there is no apparent need for change and a deep community memory exists. He noted that retail has to recreate itself every 10-15 years and although the physical form is expected to change over the life of the General Plan, the land use is expected to remain the same.

Mr. Gennaway noted that most commercial areas were along corridors, Redondo Beach Boulevard, Hawthorne Boulevard, Crenshaw Boulevard, etc., and he questioned whether Redondo Beach Boulevard fit the definition of stability. Commissioner Muratsuchi felt the area was unstable due to the quality of the businesses and Mr. Gennaway acknowledged if the area is not meeting its fullest mission it should be looked at.

Commissioner Drevno suggested that Hawthorne Boulevard between 190th and Torrance Boulevard needed upgrading and the commissioners agreed that design guidelines were needed.

Responding to Commissioner Muratsuchi, Mr. Gennaway indicated that he had conducted interviews with Councilmembers, staff, department heads, focus groups, homeowner associations, business organizations, medical institutions, and large employers about the social life of the community, technical aspects, infrastructure and the economic and environmental health of the community as well as the political leadership.

Commissioner Muratsuchi suggested that if the city were to explore mixed use it would be along the Hawthorne Boulevard Corridor down to Sepulveda and Mr. Gennawey stated that would be consistent with the Hawthorne Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan which seeks to improve design standards and provide public transfer connections. He suggested adding that to the list of transitional areas in order to explore how mixed use can be integrated between Del Amo and Torrance.

Responding to Commissioner Drevno, Mr. Gennawey indicated that Torrance had some limited internal circulation and is connected to the Metropolitan Transit Authority in the regional network but not with the Metro Rapid Bus which has the technology to keep signals open to facilitate movement through corridors and improves speeds up to 25%. He agreed to explore whether there would be negative impacts associated with establishing higher densities in corridors if the transportation infrastructure is not in there to support it.

Mr. Gennawey indicated that the principal commercial uses along Hawthorne Boulevard between Torrance and Sepulveda are considered stable but the opportunity or potential for mixed use is something to explore. The commissioners agreed that the portion of Hawthorne from Sepulveda to Pacific Coast Highway was stable, but the area from Pacific Coast Highway to Waverly could use some improvement to aesthetics and consideration of impacts to the local neighborhood including circulation issues.

The commissioners agreed that Crenshaw Boulevard from the northern city border to Sepulveda Boulevard was stable but should be considered to ensure the uses are serving the neighborhoods and they felt that the area from Sepulveda to the southern border should be considered for aesthetics.

Mr. Gennawey reported that the Community Development department would like to see the area around the bowling alley be considered for change and he noted that in the land use sense, Crenshaw Boulevard was in good shape.

Mr. Gennawey explained that their process included collaborative planning which takes advantage of the true experts who live in the city and their role is to ask good questions, provide education to make informed choices and work through the unintended consequences of the choices.

The commissioners discussed Pacific Coast Highway and agreed that the area around the airport was in good shape but traffic calming and the neighborhood impacts of the car dealerships should be explored. Pacific Coast Highway west to the city's border has undergone change in recent years and land uses are good but buffering from the neighborhoods and making uses more compatible are things to be considered.

The commissioners agreed that Torrance Boulevard from the city's border to Hawthorne Boulevard should be upgraded and neighborhood impacts should be considered and Commissioner Drevno expressed concern with a vacant gas station on Torrance Boulevard. Mr. Gennawey proposed that all commercial areas abutting residential areas be examined for the impacts of cut through traffic.

Mr. Gennawey suggested that Torrance Boulevard from Hawthorne to the original plat of Torrance be considered separately as the area is scheduled for consideration as part of the Conservation Element for historic preservation. Scattered

commercial sites along Western and other areas were considered mostly stable and Mr. Gennaway indicated that they would be looked at to make sure they are serving the residential neighborhoods that they abut.

Sepulveda between Hawthorne and Crenshaw was also deemed stable by the commissioners and Commissioner Drevno asserted that West Torrance off 190th to Anza is an underutilized area in terms of retail and she wanted to see some improvement to the commercial development on the south side west of Anza.

Mr. Gennaway took input from the audience:
[CITY CLERK NOTE: Individuals were not asked to give names during this portion of the workshop and all answers are derived from the tape as transcribed by the recording secretary.]

Hawthorne Boulevard from 190th to Del Amo is on the list of areas to be examined but the majority of the property on the eastside is the Promenade and therefore does not require examination.

Concern was raised about the area around Crenshaw and 208th Street and it was noted that the area is zoned manufacturing and will therefore be considered under that category.

Parking problems on Redondo Beach and Hawthorne Boulevards make commercial development difficult whether the area has been deemed stable or not.

An MTA station was suggested at 208th Street.

Parking problems and circulation issues were cited on Hawthorne Boulevard between Pacific Coast Highway and Newton.

Western Avenue is commercial with the City of Gardena on the other side and there can be issues of whether Torrance and Gardena want the same thing for the area.

Palos Verdes Boulevard has a small commercial area that acts as a buffer zone for the neighborhood and should be looked at.

Traffic backs up when the train comes through.

Finding the proper balance for mixed use was discussed with noise generated by commercial businesses noted as a potential issue.

The Mills Corporation was cited as an opportunity to turn around a run down area.

Clustering was discussed so there is not just one long strip of commercial area and the issue of the quality of commercial establishments was raised. It was noted that there are no parking structures along Hawthorne and the concept of openness was discussed.

Hawthorne Boulevard received an F rating five to seven years ago and concerns were raised about increasing the density without real consideration or funding for transportation.

It was noted that there will be bus stops at the mall but not a transit center and transportation and land uses must partner together or there will be problems.

A workshop was suggested for the major attributes that Torrance would like to maintain and Mr. Gennawey explained that the first meeting discussed related issues.

The location of the Torrance transit station was discussed and the Galleria as well as Crenshaw from Lomita to Pacific Coast Highway was deemed to be stable.

Several large empty lots should be examined on Western Boulevard north of Torrance Boulevard as well as south of Torrance Boulevard.

Height limits and aesthetic considerations were noted as well as the need for senior rental housing.

Commissioner Muratsuchi commented he was hearing a collective vision for the city being articulated including a desire to protect the quality of life, build affordable senior rental housing and create a walkable community with nodes. He challenged developers to build affordable senior housing near markets and the type of retail that seniors can walk to.

It was noted that commercial is more important than industrial and residential in terms of cash flow and Torrance has always been business friendly.

Chairperson Drevno noted that seniors needed to be carefully considered and she expressed concern with changing too much commercial zoning because of potential impacts to city revenues.

9. COMMUNITY INPUT

Barbara Riegel, Little Company of Mary Hospital, Torrance Boulevard, discussed future needs of the hospital and provided a brief history of the hospital and services provided adding that SB1953 requires upgrades to meet earthquake requirements and greatly impacts the hospital. She noted that hospital closures in the state of California have increased their emergency room visits by 10% and additional capacity is required to meet increasing demands with the senior population being the largest consumer of medical services. She asked that the city consider expanding the medical zone around the hospital and reconsider height and density restrictions to allow them to grow to meet the needs of the community.

Responding to Chairperson Drevno, Planning Associate Lodan indicated that the Hospital Campus is currently part of the Hawthorne Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan but some peripheral medical uses are commercially zoned. The specific plan provides flexibility in terms of height and FARs but adjacent areas do not provide as much flexibility as an HMD zone.

Linda Gottshall-Sayed, President of the West Torrance Homeowners Association, suggested visiting Long Beach to see how they have revitalized their city with mixed use zoning that turned a slum into a destination for surrounding areas. She indicated that homeowners were against high density but interested in mixed use that compliments the area and she noted a general distain for public transportation but added that shuttle buses could accommodate the handicapped, those with special needs and seniors.

Janet Payne noted for the record that the Jared Sydney Torrance Memorial Hospital was the first hospital opened in Torrance in 1925 and she questioned whether the figures noted were based on just the Torrance campus or also on their San Pedro facility.

Ms. Riegel clarified that the numbers for the increased emergency room visits were based just on the Torrance campus.

10. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Planning Associate Lodan announced that the Historic Preservation Workshop would be held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 7 in Council Chambers and the Transportation and Circulation workshop would be held on Wednesday April 13 at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

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