Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

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101 Purpose And Objectives

This West Pico Corridor Specific Plan is intended to expand upon and implement the policies contained in the General Plan for the West Pico Corridor area, located along Avenida Pico between the Interstate 5 freeway and North Beach Village (see Figure 1-1). In addition to the State-mandated Elements, the General Plan includes an Economic Development Element which has identified the need to create a flexible zoning document for the West Pico Corridor. The major planning considerations include:

I. Evaluation of the issues, opportunities, and constraints unique to the area;

II. Involvement of the property owners, business owners, and nearby residents during the initial stages and throughout the planning process;

III. Focusing the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan in addressing the challenges presented by each land use designation;

IV. Integration of policies and guidelines from other planning programs such as the City's Design Guidelines and Master Landscape Plan for Scenic Corridors;

V. Establishment of a set of land uses and site development standards for the West Pico Corridor, allowing for its orderly evolution into a thriving hub for commercial and industrial uses.

The purpose of this Specific Plan is to provide a planning and regulatory program that will enable the West Pico Corridor to realize its true potential as a vibrant asset of the City of San Clemente. The process, as critical to the ultimate success as the plan itself, has stressed the fullest participation of members of the community. Public involvement has been established and promoted from the earliest planning effort. Consensus
building has been the goal of the process, recognizing that total agreement on all issues is unlikely. However, the community participation process has ensured that the full range of issues has been explored. Every concern expressed by a group or individual has been considered in the formulation of the policies, guidelines, and regulations of this Specific Plan.

The rationale for this Specific Plan is founded upon recognition of the area's unique history, current status, and future potential. Therefore, it requires an urban planning approach that is flexible, comprehensive, and inclusionary. It must be focused upon the unique needs and challenges of the area. It must acknowledge and apply the goals and policies of the General Plan, as well as other City planning programs. Most importantly, it must include the full participation and involvement of the affected community -- the property owners, business owners, and nearby residents.

102 Applicability And Organization Of Specific Plan

The West Pico Corridor Specific Plan is both a planning and a regulatory document to implement the goals, policies, and objectives of the San Clemente General Plan. The plan is intended to guide and regulate land use and development in a manner unique to the West Pico Corridor, while implementing City-wide plans and policies.

The provisions of this Specific Plan apply to all real property within the area known as the West Pico Corridor, depicted on Figures 1-1 thru 1-4. The following is an outline of the chapters in this Specific Plan:

Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: General Plan Goals and Policies
Chapter 3: Design Guidelines
Chapter 4: Public Improvements
Chapter 5: Development Standards
Chapter 6: Development Review and Applications
Chapter 7: Definitions

103 Relationship To Other City Planning Documents

I. GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is the fundamental planning policy document of the City of San Clemente. It defines and sets forth rules by which the community will be permitted to develop in the future. It is intended to guide all planning environmental decisions, and land use in the City for the next ten to twenty years. Goals, objectives, and policies are established by the various General Plan
Elements. These Elements include Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Urban Design, Coastal, Growth Management and Circulation among others.

The General Plan establishes what types of land uses will be permitted and where and the proportional relationship of the built environment to the natural environment. The General Plan also identifies the location and amounts of open space to be preserved; the basic design and phasing of the circulation system; future infrastructure and public services needs; and how environmental resources will be protected. The City's physical form and image, economy, and social fabric are greatly influenced by the General Plan. The West Pico Corridor Specific Plan is a tool for the implementation of the General Plan and all of its elements that apply to the West Pico Corridor.

II. LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM

The California Coastal Act mandates that all local jurisdictions located entirely or partially in the coastal zone, prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP). The purpose of the LCP is to establish policies, procedures, and implementation measures that preserve coastal resources as defined in the Coastal Act. The City's LCP consists of:

A. A Coastal Element with goals, policies and objectives for the preservation of coastal resources within San Clemente;

B. Zoning documents for all land within San Clemente's coastal zone. The Pier Bowl Specific Plan, the North Beach Specific Plan, portions of this West Pico Corridor Specific Plan and portions of the Zoning Ordinance make up the coastal zoning portion of the City’s LCP;

C. An Implementation Ordinance to establish Coastal Development Permit application and review procedures.

III. ZONING ORDINANCE

The City's Zoning Ordinance is the document that implements the General Plan. It provides regulations regarding permitted land uses, development standards, the development entitlement process, etc. for all parcels of land within the corporate boundaries of the City of San Clemente. Certain areas of the City, e.g., the Pier Bowl, North Beach Village, Rancho San Clemente, Forster Ranch, Marblehead Inland, Marblehead Coastal, the West Pico Corridor and Talega are zoned SP (Specific Plan). The various adopted Specific Plans for these areas are incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance by reference. They establish regulations applicable to the land within the boundaries of a particular Specific Plan. Likewise, the Zoning Ordinance provides certain regulations that apply within the Specific Plan areas. Each Specific Plan incorporates these sections of the Zoning Ordinance by reference.
IV. NORTH BEACH VILLAGE SPECIFIC PLAN

The North Beach Village Specific Plan will parallel the West Pico Corridor Specific Plan in function. It will differ in that it applies to a separate geographic section of the City, with different land use designations, goals and policies.

V. SIGN ORDINANCE

The Sign Ordinance contains regulations pertaining to signs throughout the City, including unique areas that may have special sign regulations contained in a Specific Plan. This West Pico Corridor Specific Plan incorporates the Sign Ordinance by reference.

VI. DESIGN GUIDELINES

The City's adopted Design Guidelines, which are used to implement the General Plan Urban Design Element, contain architectural and site design guidelines for use by planners, architects, landscape architects and other design professionals, when considering new development or modifications to existing development. Those guidelines that apply to the various land use designations within this West Pico Corridor Specific Plan have been incorporated into Chapter Three of this document.

VII. MASTER LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR SCENIC CORRIDORS

The Master Landscape Plan for Scenic Corridors contains streetscape design standards for all arterial highways identified in the Scenic Highways Element of the General Plan. In a manner similar to the City's Design Guidelines, this West Pico Corridor Specific Plan incorporates guidelines from the Master Landscape Plan for Scenic Corridors for Avenida Pico, a designated scenic corridor.

104 Project Size And Location

The West Pico Corridor is an area stretching from the northern edge of North Beach Village to the San Diego Freeway (I-5) in the vicinity of Avenida Pico (see Figures 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, and 1-4). Immediately adjacent to the North is the Marblehead Coastal Specific Plan area. The West Pico Corridor encompasses approximately 80 acres of various land use designations, mostly developed with public and private land uses and structures. The Avenida Pico/I-5 interchange provides the primary access to the West Pico Corridor, with secondary access via the intersections of N. El Camino Real and Avenida Pico, as well as N. El Camino Real and Calle De Los Molinos. Avenida Pico is heavily used by tourists and beach-users, and therefore, is significant in the public’s perception of the quality and character of the City.
105 History And Background

The West Pico Corridor is one of the oldest sections of the City. Some lots were created by the original subdivisions designed by San Clemente's founder, Ole Hanson, in the 1920's. His vision recognized that the potential of the City's location, climate, topography, and beaches is ideal for the creation of a special place with activities, architecture, and landscape features to create the “art of living”.

This vision was reinforced by the adoption of the 1992 General Plan. The proximity of the West Pico Corridor area adjacent to North Beach Village and the Metrolink Station, gives it a unique potential for future development. The Pico commercial and Los Molinos industrial areas are planned to develop into an integrated commercial, business and industrial hub, providing an employment center and tax base for the City.

In spite of San Clemente's unique beginning as a planned community, the urban pattern of the West Pico Corridor area is the result of random development. The depression of the 1930’s disrupted the careful implementation of Ole Hanson's plan. Instead, economic forces shaped development of the area in a manner never contemplated by the City’s founder. The result is a somewhat incompatible mix of land uses and a wide range of architectural styles. As a consequence, the area remains under-developed and under-utilized. Without a long term program to facilitate the revitalization of the West Pico Corridor, both public and private investment in the area might be inhibited. The goals of this Specific Plan are to encourage implementation of the General Plan over the long term, while protecting the economic stability and rights of existing businesses, property owners, and nearby residents.

106 General Plan And Zoning

The City’s General Plan land use designations for the West Pico Corridor area are shown on Figures 1-1 thru 1-4. They include the following:

- **NC2** Neighborhood Commercial
- **CC2** Community Commercial
- **I2** Light Industrial
- **I3** Heavy Industrial
- **P** Public

The Zoning for the Pico Corridor area is WPCSP - West Pico Corridor Specific Plan. This Specific Plan sets forth permitted uses and development standards. Development within the West Pico Corridor shall conform to all provisions contained in this Specific Plan, as well as the sections of the City's Zoning Ordinance adopted herein by reference.
107 Area Profiles

Throughout the West Pico Corridor, the land is divided into a patchwork of parcels with irregular shape and size. The majority of individually owned land parcels range in size from 5,000 to 20,000 square feet. The irregularity of the parcels, combined with the multiple ownerships presents a challenge to the establishment of new development or re-use of the properties in the area.

Three distinct areas comprise the West Pico Corridor: 1) the Pico Community Commercial Area; 2) the Los Molinos Industrial Area; and 3) the City Corporate Yard/Water Reclamation Plant. Each area has its own unique character and embodies a set of conditions that act to either empower or limit future potential. These conditions can be either opportunities or constraints. A description of these areas follows:

I. PICO COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL AREA

Both sides of Avenida Pico from Calle de Los Molinos to the I-5 freeway are included in this area which contains approximately twenty-four (24) acres of land. It is chiefly comprised of mixed commercial uses with some vacant parcels, light industrial land uses, and the San Clemente Post Office.

A. General Plan Policy Intent

Plan policy "provides for the continuation and enhancement of commercial centers and districts that provide for the needs of community residents and are compatible with adjacent residential neighborhoods." (General Plan Land Use Element: Section IV., B., 1., i., 1.20) "Existing light industrial uses as of the date of adoption of the General Plan, located north of Avenida Pico, along Avenida Navarro, Calle de Industrias, and Calle de Los Molinos (behind the Pico Pavilion) within the CC2 area, shall be considered conforming uses within the CC2 community commercial land use zone." (General Plan Land Use Element : Table 1-3, Footnote 2)
B. Existing Development Pattern

The Pico Pavilion on the north side of Avenida Pico typifies the type of uses envisioned by the General Plan for this area. It was built prior to adoption of the City’s Urban Design Guidelines, and while the Pico Pavilion does not exhibit a true Spanish Colonial Revival style of architecture, it does reflect a contemporary Spanish style of architecture which sets a minimum standard for new development in the Pico Community Commercial Area.

The area behind Pico Pavilion is divided into small lots with multiple ownerships. The existing light industrial uses will be permitted to stay as conforming uses in accordance with General Plan policy. The appearance of the area could be improved by undergrounding the utilities, installing sidewalks and landscaping, and rehabilitating the streets. Off-street parking is deficient, sometimes resulting in obstruction of the public right-of-way. This condition hinders the delivery of emergency services to the area.

C. Opportunities And Constraints

The Pico Plaza area, located on the south side of Avenida Pico at the terminus of Calle de Industrias, has a narrow access and is set back so far from Avenida Pico that visibility is impaired by distance. One opportunity to be explored, in order to provide a better entry to Pico Plaza, would be the conversion of the Post Office to some commercial use. This action would be dependent upon cooperation from the Federal Government in the relocation of the Post Office to an alternate site. Another possibility would be to reconfigure the traffic circulation pattern for entering the Post Office parking lot in order to alleviate an existing traffic problem, while directing cars in a manner that provides better visibility to the Pico Plaza area.

The area behind Pico Pavilion (on the north side of Avenida Pico) could be better utilized if individual private landowners were to voluntarily form partnerships and consolidate property. If certain property consolidation were to occur, much of the right-of-way of Calle De Los Molinos, Calle de Industrias, and/or Avenida Navarro could possibly be abandoned from public use to the adjacent private property owner for expansion of future development opportunities. Access to each individually-owned parcel and utility easements would have to be guaranteed. Future development of the adjacent Marblehead Coastal property may increase the potential for retail development in this area.
II. LOS MOLINOS INDUSTRIAL AREA

This area, located between North Beach Village and the Pico Community Commercial Area, encompasses approximately thirty-five (35) acres of land. Existing land uses include a variety ranging from heavy industrial (auto towing, auto wrecking, and a concrete batch plant) to light industrial (predominantly manufacturing, auto repair, trades, and contracting), and some retail businesses.

A. General Plan Policy Intent

"Plan policy provides for the transition of the existing industrial and commercial parcels in the Los Molinos area as a unified, well-designed business park. Light manufacturing, research and development, professional offices, and supporting retail uses would be permitted, as well as heavy manufacturing uses. Standards provide for unifying streetscape amenities and signage, a high level of architectural design, and extensive site landscape. This area will be physically linked through sidewalks and pedestrian paths to the mixed commercial and residential North Beach center and adjacent Avenida Pico commercial center." (General Plan Land Use Element - Section IV., B., 3., b.)

B. Existing Development Pattern

Most of the land parcels in the Los Molinos Industrial area, are designated I2 - Light Industrial, with a few designated I3 - Heavy Industrial, or NC2 Neighborhood Commercial. Currently, there is a lack of private and public maintenance in some areas. Public improvements in the area are in need of repair and rehabilitation. The appearance of this area would be enhanced by a program to rehabilitate the public right-of-way improvements, increase landscaping, improve off-street parking availability, and underground the utilities. Such a program to improve the public property in the area would likely encourage private improvements and investment.
A small portion of the area depicted on Figure 1-3, the Los Molinos Industrial Area, is designated NC2 - Neighborhood Commercial. The NC2 area is the row of lots that have frontage on North El Camino Real and back up to Los Obreros Lane and the I2 - Light Industrial area. There are a few retail businesses and one residential building that take access from North El Camino Real. Parking to the retail area would need improvement in order to comply with the City’s current design standards for off-street parking.

The majority of the lots designated NC2 - Neighborhood Commercial are partially developed, and take access from Los Obreros Lane. Though they have traditionally been zoned for commercial use, they relate more to the light industrial uses on the opposite side of Los Obreros Lane. The reason for this is that the topography falls off dramatically from North El Camino Real downhill to Los Obreros Lane. Unless individual landowners form partnerships and consolidate lots, future development opportunities will be severely constrained.

C. Opportunities and Constraints

Aside from the deterioration of public and private improvements in the Los Molinos industrial area, the biggest inhibitor to new investment is the manner in which the land has been subdivided into small, irregularly shaped lots with poor access and/or topographic constraints. Successful businesses have endured where several lots are consolidated through ownership or lease arrangements. However, the high turnover in business licenses on smaller lots seems to indicate that many businesses do not survive due to the small size of the lot which results in poor access, visibility, lack of parking, etc.

There are opportunities to overcome this obstacle through development of common parking, a master sign program, and/or the formation of public/private partnerships. As the word "partnership" implies, these arrangements would have to involve the voluntary cooperation of private landowners and the City.

Much of the right-of-way of Rincon Court, Calle Valle, and Los Obreros Lane could be abandoned for public use and turned over to private ownership, if adequate access to all individually-owned parcels could be guaranteed. Opportunities for public improvements to stimulate investment in the area include the under-grounding of utilities and landscaping the public right-of-way along Calle de Los Molinos and North El Camino Real and a well-designed streetscape in order to create a cohesive uncluttered appearance.
III. CITY CORPORATE YARD/WATER RECLAMATION PLANT

This 20 acre area west of the Los Molinos Industrial Area along Avenida Pico is owned by the City of San Clemente and is occupied by the City's maintenance yard and water reclamation plant.

A. General Plan Policy And Intent

"Lands are designated for public and institutional uses such as governmental administrative, recreational, cultural, and educational to support the existing and future population and development of the City." (General Plan Land Use Element: Section IV., A., 6.)

B. Existing Development Pattern

All of the land within this sub-area is currently owned by the City and dedicated to public uses such as the water reclamation plant, the City's maintenance yard, and the vacant former site of the animal shelter. The City has made a substantial investment in upgrading the wastewater treatment facility in the areas of aesthetics and odor control. The City has assured that it is a "state-of-the-art" facility and a good neighbor. The external appearance has been extensively landscaped and upgraded with architecture consistent with the City's Design Guidelines.

C. Opportunities And Constraints

The former animal shelter site could be combined with the U-Haul site in a public/private partnership. Potential uses for the combined sites could include time-share condominiums, a business-class hotel, or a commercial/residential mixed-use development. Any private use of the site would require reimbursement to the Utility Fund for the expenses the City has incurred for the reconstruction and stabilization of the site.
108 Authority And Severability

I. LEGAL AUTHORITY

This Specific Plan has been prepared and adopted pursuant to Sections 65450 through 65457 of the California Government Code (applicable Government Code sections reproduced as Appendix A).

II. SEVERABILITY

In the event that any plan, diagram, regulation, condition, program, or other portion of this Specific Plan is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such portion(s) shall be deemed separate, distinct, and independent provisions of the Specific Plan and the invalidity of such provisions shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions of the Specific Plan.

III. TERMINOLOGY

Within this Specific Plan, words used in the present tense shall include the future; words in the singular shall include the plural. The word “shall” is mandatory and the word “may” is permissive. The word “should” refers to policy guidance which must be followed in the absence of important opposing considerations recognized by the City as valid and overriding. For the purposes of this Specific Plan, certain terms shall be defined as set forth in Chapter 7. Terms not listed shall be defined per the City's Zoning Ordinance, or if not listed in the Zoning Ordinance, shall be construed in accordance with accepted usage.